New essays in the philosophy of language and mind

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Introduction

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Although philosophical interest in natural language and the mind has been prevalent since Plato, the Twentieth Century produced some of the more significant contributions in their philosophical study. This was due to new working methodologies for each area of study, some of which were crucially influenced by the advent of cognitive science, including theoretical linguistics.

Some saw theorizing about language as dependent on theorizing about the mind, and vice versa. Donald Davidson, for example, considered that theorizing about a language depended on having an interpretation of the user of that language, that is, an interpretation of her linguistic and non-linguistic actions based on a belief–desire schema. But he also considered that one could not theorize about the mind of an individual, without interpreting a speaker's language. Noam Chomsky, on the other hand, considered the study of language as the study of a human cognitive capacity, but believed that one could study the linguistic capacity without needing to study the belief–desire systems of speakers. Whilst it is right to think that there are deep connections between the study of language and that of the mind, there are issues about the study of mind which are largely independent of the study of language, and there are issues in the study of language which are largely independent of what one thinks about the connection between language and mind.

In this volume, we include recent essays on the philosophy of language, the philosophy of mind, and their intersection, which show

some of the topics and methodologies that are still present in the Twenty-first Century. Section A includes five essays in the philosophy of language. Section B contains three essays in which issues about mind and language can be seen to come together. Section C includes six essays on questions and arguments that pertain to the philosophy of mind. It is in this last section that the influence from cognitive science, in particular of cognitive psychology, will be most evident.

Not only did the relation between language and mind receive much attention in the Twentieth Century, but also that between language and the world, either because language could teach us about the nature of the world, or because objects, events, properties, relations and/or facts could be construed as part of the semantics of linguistic expressions. Both concerns are addressed in the papers of Section A. The papers by Cappelen and Lepore, Dever, King, and Macià deal with issues concerning the semantics of phrases, whilst Hurtado's addresses the question of to what extent linguistic enquiry can be used to investigate the nature of change.

In their contribution, Herman Cappelen and Ernie Lepore defend Semantic Minimalism against two objections. According to Semantic Minimalism, the semantics of a sentence is determined to a great extent independently of context, such that context has an influence on the truth-conditions of the sentence only when the grammar of the sentence requires it. If a sentence contains an indexical word, context is allowed to help fix the semantic value of that word, which then figures in the truth-conditions expressed by the sentence. In all other cases, context plays no role in determining the semantics of a sentence. Still within the topic of context-sensitive expressions and semantic content, Josh Dever discusses the semantics of indexicals and argues that their character level does not exhibit the features Kaplan (1977 and 1989) took it to have, in particular that character is not autonomous with respect to content, where the latter corresponds to the propositional level and the former to the semantic rule which determines the content-level contribution of a phrase or expression. The sort of autonomy envisaged by Kaplan, and against which Dever argues, is one that does not allow operators on content-level contributions of phrases to operate on the character-level aspects of such phrases.

In his paper, Jeff King argues for a particular account of what is known as *donkey anaphora* that brings it into line with what he calls "discourse anaphora." An example of the latter is that exhibited by the pronoun 'she' in the second sentence of (1):

(1) *A woman* was running down the street. David believed she was a famous philosopher.

Examples of donkey anaphora are those exhibited by the underlined pronouns in (2) and (3). These have as their anaphoric antecedents the italicized phrases, yet occur outside the scope of the quantifier phrase 'a donkey'.

(2) If Jennifer owns *a donkey*, she beats it.

(3) Every woman who owns *a donkey* beats it.

Pronouns not anaphoric (bound or unbound) are indexicals, and these are referential expressions, expressions whose contribution at the level of content (if any) just are their referents. Proper names are taken to be another example of referential expressions. It is proper names that occupy Josep Macià in his contribution. Whilst supporting Kripke's general picture of how names are transmitted from speaker to speaker, Macià presents and defends a descriptive view of proper names, on which communication with sentences containing proper names requires the transmission of senses of names.

In his contribution, Guillermo Hurtado provides an example in which the complexities involved in an ontological phenomenon – namely, change – do not always show up in language. Some definite descriptions like 'The conquest of Mexico' have a structure that does not exhibit the enormous and complex chain of changes it denotes. Hurtado proposes, rather, that changes are just conjunctive facts of certain sorts.

The group of papers in Section B are devoted to issues that arise at the intersection of philosophy of language and the philosophy of mind. One of the ways in which we exercise our linguistic abilities is in the understanding of linguistic phrases. Dorit Bar-On examines and rejects the view that what enables us to exercise this ability, to make

judgements about speakers' utterances, is a tacitly known theory of the relevant language. This (supposed) theory is taken to be part of our general folk-psychological theory, a theory by means of which we interpret, predict, and explain our own and other people's behaviour, including linguistic behaviour; it is also meant to determine the conditions for a phrase to be meaningful. Her objection depends on the claim that, as with any theory, this theory would be subject not only to the possibility that it might be wrong but that a better theory may replace it, a theory that does not posit meanings. One avoids such semantic eliminativism, according to Bar-On, if one rejects that our linguistic ability is grounded on tacit knowledge of a theory at all.

Diana Pérez's contribution defends the view that the concepts expressed by mental terms such as "pain", "belief", "fear", etc, are concepts of a particular theory, our folk psychology, and argues in favour of their being natural-kind concepts. Unlike Bar-On, however, she argues in favour of the usefulness of taking folk psychology to be a theory, and gives reasons for why ultimately it will not be eliminated.

Although the question of whether there is any *a priori* knowledge is essentially an epistemological question, the answer that is given may depend on certain views about our minds. According to Georges Rey, many of the answers given to this question (whether negative or positive) depend on the mistaken view that the nature or structure of our minds should be more or less readily available through introspection or behavioural tests. However, as much of the work in the cognitive sciences has taught us, this is just not so. The nature or structure of our minds is itself something on which empirical sciences have a say. According to Rey, even the question of whether there is any *a priori* knowledge of analytic truths based on the existence of semantic rules, will depend on theorizing about the structure of our minds in the sort of way in which Chomskian linguistics has theorized about the structure of our language faculty.

Section C includes six papers on topics in the philosophy of mind that do not touch directly on issues about language. They have more to do with metaphysical and epistemological issues about the mind and mental states.

Irwin Goldstein's article is concerned with the mind–body problem, and more particularly, with the claim that a mental event or prop-

erty is a neural event or a neural event's orthodox material property, i.e., a defining property that provides a necessary condition for something being physical. Goldstein's aim is to show that there are some properties of mental states or events that are not orthodox material properties of neural events.

Mark Lance and Alessandra Tanesini's paper focuses on the role of certain types of mental states, *viz.*, emotions, in rationality. Although it is widely recognized that rationality depends on the beliefs had, and that agents' actions depend (at least partly) on their emotions, little is said of how the rationality of an epistemic agent depends on her emotional states. This is perhaps because emotions are not typically thought of having an epistemic role. In contrast, in their contribution Lance and Tanesini defend the claim that emotions not only have an epistemic role, but further, that they have a crucial and essential role in characterizing a rational epistemic agent.

Concerning the issue of our epistemic access to our own mental states which was touched upon by Rey's paper, and continuing with connections to cognitive science, Shaun Nichols and Stephen Stich explore an account of what is involved in being aware of our own mental states. They consider and reject the account according to which individuals might use a theory in becoming aware of their own states, a theory that is also used in coming to know, explain and predict others' behaviour. This is the Theory Theory of Mind.[1] In their paper, Nichols and Stich present their own theory of self-awareness, the Monitoring Mechanism Theory, and argue that evidence from developmental psychology favours their view and counts against the Theory Theory, contrary to what their defenders usually hold.

One of the more recently discussed arguments in favour of an intentionalist account of experience, be it a sensation or a perceptual state, and against the existence of *qualia*, is one which appeals to what we are aware of in our experience. Harman (1989) and Tye (1992 and 2000) have suggested (as Strawson (1979) did previously) that what we are aware of upon seeing a scene are not certain qualities that are intrinsic to our experience of seeing, but rather the objects seen: the door, the ocean, etc. This argument is sometimes called "the argument

1 See Pérez's and Bar-On's contributions.

from the transparency of experience", or as Daniel Stoljar calls it, "the argument from diaphanousness." In his paper, Stoljar identifies various versions of this argument, including its use in favour of the claim that the phenomenal aspects of our experience are intentional, and argues against all of them.

The mental state of doubting a proposition is usually taken to be a state of epistemic uncertainty, of neither believing nor not believing a proposition. Paul Thagard construes doubt not only as a cognitive state but also as an emotional state – specifically, as a form of emotional incoherence, on the basis of which he provides a framework for determining when it is reasonable or unreasonable to doubt in certain contexts.[2]

Our volume ends with Rob Wilson's discussion of a recently held view by Fodor (2000), according to which the mind is only modular where the perceptual systems are concerned, and some forms of cognitive processing are global. These two claims pose a threat to computation models of the mind that claim that the mind is to a great extent, if not wholly, modular, and that all cognitive processing is computational processing, hence local processing. Wilson examines not only the development of Fodor's ideas since his initial work on modularity, but also the arguments given by Fodor against extending the modularity hypothesis to central cognition. Fodor's arguments are, according to Wilson, essentially *a priori*, rather than empirical, yet the sorts of considerations that might settle the question whether all cognitive processes could be understood computationally or whether the mind is mostly or fully modular come from the empirical sciences. Wilson points to work in developmental neuroscience and artificial intelligence that seems relevant to answering this question.

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2 See Lance and Tanesini's contribution.

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