

## EDITORIAL

John Searle identified in *Speech Acts* (1969) the following questions as forming the subject matter of the philosophy of language: “How do words relate to the world? (...) How do words stand for things? What is the difference between a meaningful string of words and a meaningless one? What is it for something to be true? or false?” (Searle 1969, p. 3). These questions are echoed by Michael Morris in his *Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*: “What is language? What is it for words to have meaning? What is the meaning of words?” (Morris 2007, p. 1),<sup>1</sup> and they are reflected in the division into three parts applied in the second edition of the monumental Blackwell *Companion to the Philosophy of Language* (Hale, Wright and Miller, eds. 2017). The respective parts of the *Companion* deal with meaning and theories of meaning; language, truth, and reality; and reference, identity, and necessity. Martin Davies observed in *The Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of Language* (2006) that the “foundational questions in philosophy of language concern the nature of meaning, understanding, and communication” (Davies 2006, p. 29), which basically means that “philosophers are interested in three broad aspects of language: syntax, semantics and pragmatics” (Martinich 2009, p. 1). This last remark implicitly stresses the overall importance of the semiotic approach to the discussed field, since, as observed by Umberto Eco in the introductory comments to his *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (1984):<sup>2</sup> “[a] general semiotics is nothing else but a philosophy of language and

---

<sup>1</sup> More recently, Chris Daly has extended the list to ten key questions, see Daly (2013, p. 1–11).

<sup>2</sup> For a brief background discussion of these issues and relevant references, see Stalmaszczyk (2015).

(...) the ‘good’ philosophies of language, from *Cratylus* to *Philosophical Investigations*, are concerned with all the semiotic questions” (p. 4).<sup>3</sup>

Max Kölbel has recently discussed the ‘new directions in the philosophy of language’, and observed that “much recent work in the philosophy of language has been concerned in one way or another with questions concerning the interaction between the standing meaning of expressions and the context in which they are used” (Kölbel 2012, p. 251). Among the new directions, Kölbel mentions double index semantics, the relations between what is said and implicatures, between unarticulated constituents and compositionality, and contextualism and relativism. The constant importance of the foundational questions notwithstanding, recent studies devoted to philosophy of language document a further broadening of the scope of research.<sup>4</sup> Some of the topics currently discussed and analyzed include a wide range of linguistic phenomena, various speech acts, different aspects of non-literal language, the complex relations between language and cognition, and the interconnections between philosophy of language and other fields (especially linguistics, philosophy of mind, philosophy of literature, and argumentation theory).

Themes discussed in this issue of *Semiotic Studies* testify to the recent extension of the field of philosophy of language, they offer a fresh look at some old puzzles and problems, and they include modifications to the theory of mental files, intentional identity and coordination, meaning holism and semantic minimalism, an intensional semantics for generative grammar, the ambiguous semantics of ‘ought’, metalinguistic value disagreement, a scalar approach to moral adjectives, the liar paradox perceived from the Wittgensteinian perspective, and linguistic relativity in relation to analytic philosophy.

As observed by François Récanati, the idea of a mental file or ‘dossier’ was introduced by several philosophers in connection with the referential use of definite descriptions or with identity statements (see Récanati 2012, p. vii). For Récanati, mental files are the

---

<sup>3</sup> For an early discussion of semiotics, considered as the general theory of the mind and language, see the work of Jerzy Pelc, especially Pelc (1971).

<sup>4</sup> This tendency is very clearly seen in companions, handbooks, and guides to philosophy of language, see García-Carpintero and Kölbel (eds.) (2012), Russell and Graff Fara (eds.) (2012), Odrowąż-Sypniewska (ed.) (2016), Hale, Wright, and Miller (eds.) (2017), to mention just four major recent publications.

vehicles of singular thoughts, or “cognitive structures which store information about entities. They are entries in the mental encyclopedia, that is, concepts” (Récanati 2016, p. vii). In the opening contribution, Mieszko Tałasiewicz sketches a modified model of mental files, connected with the debate between singularism and descriptivism. He discusses triggering mechanisms for opening files, and introduces a bipartite structure of a file. This bipartite structure combines an objectual part, encompassing what traditionally has been associated with the notion of a mental file, serving the purpose of storing information about the referent of the file, and a metadata part, serving the purpose of storing information about the file itself. Tałasiewicz demonstrates how such a structure can account for cognitive discernibility of files containing identical objectual information and grounded with the same acquaintance relations.

Hsiang-Yun Chen focuses on intentional identity and coordination. She observes that though the concept of intentional identity has aroused considerable interest since Geach’s classic short paper (Geach 1967), its real import is still not fully appreciated. In her contribution she draws on three sets of data (such as intersubjective intentional identity, intrasubjective intentional identity, and cross-speaker anaphora), and provides a unified analysis of coordination that is the key to a proper understanding of intentional identity.

Filip Kawczyński attempts to rejuvenate the theory of meaning holism. In this contribution he assumes the meaning holism principle, according to which the meaning of a single expression depends on the meanings of all other expressions in a given linguistic system. He further observes that, in recent years, the philosophical reflection on language has often concentrated on the problem of the influence of context upon semantic content, and that contextualism and minimalism constitute two dominating approaches to the issue. Kawczyński offers a fresh look at the debate and demonstrates that meaning holism is compatible with minimalism (and hence far more distant from contextualism than usually assumed).

Adriano Marques da Silva devotes his contribution to the relation between Chomskyan generative grammar and semantics. He claims that in order to account for the explanatory role of syntax in the generative program it is necessary to review certain foundational assumptions commonly accepted in formal semantics. In order to do

so, he applies the intensional approach to semantics, developed over the years by Paul Pietroski (most recently in Pietroski 2017, and comprehensively in Pietroski 2005). The methodological background to the discussion is provided by the heuristics of the scientific research programme rooted in the work of Imre Lakatos.

Joanna Klimczyk is concerned with the semantics of 'ought' and the ambiguity connected with its agentive and non-agentive senses. This contribution reviews research interconnecting linguistic semantics, deontic logic and logic of agency, and discusses more comprehensively and critically the approach advocated by Mark Schroeder (2011). The author proposes a coherent philosophical study of the meaning of 'ought' which takes into account different aspects of agentivity and authorship of appropriate actions.

Erich Rast offers a fresh look at metalinguistic value disagreement. He distinguishes two meanings of general terms and value predicates: core meanings represent the lowest common denominators between speakers and they are primarily based on the needs to coordinate behaviour, on the other hand, the noumenal meanings of general terms or value predicates are intended to capture crucial aspects of reality. According to Rast, metalinguistic value disputes (similarly to other disputes about other theoretical terms) are about noumenal meanings on the basis of shared core meanings.

Federico Faroldi and Andrés Soria Ruiz analyze the scale structure of moral adjectives (such as 'good', 'bad', '(un)ethical', 'cruel', '(im)moral', 'virtuous', etc.). They provide an overview of the relevant literature in semantics (including formal semantics), pragmatics, and meta-ethics, and discuss how and whether moral adjectives fit a semantics for gradable adjectives. They also test whether moral adjectives are relative or absolute adjectives. The preliminary results suggest that moral adjectives do not fall neatly under either category, but rather they are multidimensional, relative-standard adjectives.

Jakub Gomułka and Jan Wawrzyniak offer a new analysis of the liar paradox, based on the Wittgensteinian approach to semantic and logical paradoxes. Their main aim is to point out that the liar sentence is only seemingly intelligible. In order to do so, they present the traditional solutions of the paradox and analyze their shortcomings, and claim that the liar sentence is mere nonsense: such sentences do not have any role in any language game or linguistic practice, hence they

are completely useless. The authors also discuss several possible objections to their approach.

In the final contribution, Filippo Batisti discusses linguistic relativity in relation to analytic philosophy. He first presents a brief history of linguistic relativity (distinct waves, associated with Romantic Philosophy, Sapir and Whorf, Berlin and Kay, the research conducted by John Lucy, and Analytic Philosophy, respectively). Next, following several recent accounts, he assumes that language and cognition are conceived as intrinsically social phenomena, and hence argues that relativistic effects should be investigated in social realms, and that, within a multidisciplinary approach, analytic philosophy could help with this task. Batisti also proposes an appropriate definition of the very concept of linguistic relativity, which stresses the fact that some forms of linguistic relativity involve domains that exceed individual experience, such as patterns of language-mediated social interaction, or the by-products of social reality, which is created and accessible only through language.

According to the often quoted metaphor formulated by Scott Soames “philosophy of language is (...) the midwife of the scientific study of language, and language use” (Soames 2010, p. 1); contributions to this issue clearly demonstrate that recent developments in philosophy of language provide appropriate background and tools for the study of language, knowledge, thought, and mind.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Papers in this volume were read during the Fifth International Conference on Philosophy of Language and Linguistics (*PhiLang2017*) in May 2017. The conference series is organized by the Department of English and General Linguistics, University of Łódź. I wish to thank all the participants of the conference for creating a stimulating atmosphere, the reviewers of the papers for their insightful comments, the authors for participating in the project, Tadeusz Ciecierski and Andrzej Biłat for the invitation to edit this volume and their encouragement, and Krystyna Komorowska for her excellent editorial support.

## REFERENCES

- Daly, C. (2013). *Philosophy of Language. An Introduction*. London, etc.: Bloomsbury.
- Davies, M. (2006). Foundational Issues in the Philosophy of Language. In M. Devitt and R. Hanley (Eds.), *The Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of Language* (pp. 19–40). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Devitt, M., Hanley, R. (Eds.) (2006). *The Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of Language*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Eco, U. (1984). *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- García-Carpintero, M., Kölbel, M. (Eds.) (2012). *The Continuum Companion to the Philosophy of Language*. London: Continuum.
- Geach, P. T. (1967). Intentional Identity. *Journal of Philosophy*, 64(20), 627–632.
- Hale, B., Wright, C. (Eds.) (1997). *A Companion to the Philosophy of Language*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Hale, B., Wright, C., Miller, A. (Eds.) (2017). *A Companion to the Philosophy of Language*. Second Edition. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Kölbel, M. (2012). New Directions in the Philosophy of Language. In García-Carpintero, M. & Kölbel, M. (Eds.), *The Continuum Companion to the Philosophy of Language* (pp. 251–265). London: Continuum.
- Lepore, E., Smith, B. C. (Eds.) (2006). *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Martinich, A. P. (2009). General Introduction. In A. P. Martinich (Ed.), *Philosophy of Language. Volume 1* (pp. 1–18). London and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Morris, M. (2007). *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Odrowąż-Sypniewska, J. (Ed.) (2016). *Przewodnik po filozofii języka [Companion to Philosophy of Language]*. Kraków: WAM.
- Pelc, J. (1971). *Studies in Functional Logical Semiotics of Natural Language* (Janua linguarum 90). The Hague: Mouton.
- Pietroski, P. (2005). *Events and Semantic Architecture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pietroski, P. (2017). Semantic Internalism. In J. McGilvray (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Chomsky* (pp. 196–216). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Récanati, F. (2012). *Mental Files*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Récanati, F. (2016). *Mental Files in Flux*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Russell, G., Graff Fara, D. (Eds.) (2012). *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Language*. New York – London: Routledge.
- Schroeder, M. (2011). *Ought*, Agents and Actions. *Philosophical Review*, 120(1), 1–41.
- Searle, J. (1969). *Speech Acts. An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Soames, S. (2010). *Philosophy of Language*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Stalmaszczyk, P. (2015). Kant and the Platypus and Umberto Eco (and the Philosophy of language). In A. Galkowski (Ed.), *Potęga intelektu. Umberto Eco: Recepcja i reminiscencje w Polsce / The Power of Intellect. Umberto Eco: Reception and Reminiscences in Poland* (pp. 409–424). Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego.

*Piotr Stalmaszczyk*  
*Chair of English and General Linguistics*  
*University of Łódź*  
*piotr.stalmaszczyk@uni.lodz.pl*