

Editorial: ‘Key Topics in Philosophy of Language and Mind’

Robyn Carston^{1,2} · Kapa Korta³

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1 Context of this Special Issue: The Philosophy of Language and Mind Network

In September 2015, the third biennial conference of the Philosophy of Language and Mind network (PLM) took place at the Centre for the Study of Mind in Nature (CSMN), University of Oslo. This PLM special issue of *Review of Philosophy and Psychology* contains six papers, five of them based on talks delivered at the Oslo conference and one based on a talk given at the previous PLM conference, held at the Central European University (CEU), in Budapest. The five papers arising from the Oslo conference are by Peter Brössel, Herman Cappelen, Christopher Gauker, Kathrin Glüer and Nat Hansen, and the one from the Budapest conference is by Peter Pagin.

PLM, founded in 2010, is a network of European centres, devoted to the Philosophy of Language and Mind. The main purposes of PLM are to further work in philosophy of language and mind in Europe and to provide a platform for cooperation between its members in research and research training. It organises a major language and mind conference every two years, an internal workshop, also every other year, and masterclasses for graduate students. It has already organised three conferences (in Stockholm, Budapest and Oslo), three workshops (‘Mental Phenomena’ in Dubrovnik; ‘Indexicality’ in Donostia; ‘Subjectivity in Thought and Language’ in Barcelona) and three masterclasses (with Dan Sperber in Paris; with David Chalmers in Stockholm; with Timothy Williamson in London). The fourth conference has recently taken place at the Ruhr University Bochum, in September 2017.

✉ Robyn Carston
robyn.carston@ucl.ac.uk

¹ UCL Linguistics, London, UK

² CSMN, Oslo, Norway

³ Institute for Logic, Cognition, Language and Information (ILCLI), University of the Basque Country, Donostia, Spain

The PLM members are Arché, St. Andrews; Department of Philosophy, CEU, Budapest; CLLAM, Department of Philosophy, Stockholm University; CSMN, Oslo; ILCLI, University of the Basque Country, Donostia; ILLC, University of Amsterdam; Institut Jean Nicod, Paris; Institut für Philosophie II, Ruhr University Bochum; Institute of Philosophy, London; LanCog, Universidade de Lisboa; LOGOS, University of Barcelona.

Further information is available at the PLM website: projects.illc.uva.nl/PLM

2 Overview of the Contributions

We now give a brief introduction to each of the papers in this special issue:

Peter Brössel's paper, 'Rational relations between perception and belief: the case of colour', develops the foundations for a theory of rational belief acquisition on the basis of perceptual experiences. For the purpose of this paper, Brössel restricts his focus by concentrating on the case of color perception and perceptual beliefs about color. The paper combines a formal epistemology perspective with recent advances in the philosophy of cognition, and it develops the account in two steps. First, it outlines a formal theory of the non-conceptual content of perceptual experiences (PEs) and a theory of the conceptual content of perceptual beliefs (PBs). Here Brössel draws inspiration from theories of computer vision, as championed by, for example, David Marr, and approaches within cognitive science, such as those advocated by Peter Gärdenfors, to understand the content of concepts. In the second step, the paper outlines a theory of rational reasoning from perceptual experiences to perceptual beliefs. In particular, it discusses what a rational relation between the non-conceptual content of PEs of color and the conceptual content of PBs about color might be, by defining a rational degree of belief function that captures how one could reason from such perceptual experiences about the specific color shade of an object to beliefs about the color of that object.

Herman Cappelen's paper, 'Why philosophers shouldn't do semantics', starts by questioning the philosophical significance of natural language semantics. He argues that while some semantic facts about, say, French, Hungarian or English, have some *piecemeal* interest to philosophers, such facts are *more* relevant to philosophy than they are to any number of other disciplines. Law, literature, history, psychology, archaeology, and sociology are all disciplines where semantic facts are of some relevance to some of their research questions. Natural language semantics has no distinctive philosophical significance and so philosophers should leave natural language semantics to linguists (and make use of their results as and when relevant). He maintains that philosophy of language should be construed as a discipline that has two core parts: (i) Work on foundational issues about language, communication, and representation; (ii) Conceptual engineering. This latter component, according to Cappelen, was the original core of philosophy of language, and the idea that philosophy of language should have as a central goal the description of semantic features of various languages is a recent distortion. For philosophy of language to retain its philosophical significance, he maintains, it has to return to its origins.

Christopher Gauker's paper, 'Three kinds of nonconceptual seeing-as', contributes to his larger ongoing project, which is to establish imagistic cognition as a kind of cognition that can function in problem-solving independently from concepts and conceptual (i.e. discursive) thought. If this is the right way to think about imagistic

cognition, then an account of the representational content of imagistic representations must not rest on the assumption that these representations represent kinds in the manner of concept-bearing representations. As part of this project, what Gauker sets out to do in this paper is to show that we can account for the various phenomena of 'seeing-as' without treating imagistic representations as representing kinds in a conceptual way, but rather as marks in perceptual similarity space which map onto locations in objective quality space. His ultimate further aim is to establish that there is a concept-independent form of cognition on which the use of language rests (including language learning, language production and comprehension) and, from there, to identify conceptual thinking with thinking in language.

Kathrin Glüer, in her paper, 'Talking about looks', examines the way we talk about the looks of things. She starts with the traditional three-way distinction between three different "uses" of looks expressions: the epistemic use, the comparative use, and the non-comparative or "phenomenal" use, and addresses some of the questions that this taxonomy raises. In particular, the very existence of the phenomenal use has become a bone of contention in the current debate about the nature of perceptual experience: Relationalists have a tendency to deny the existence of phenomenal "looks", while Intentionalists tend to interpret it as a propositional attitude operator. Glüer brings to bear a variety of observations regarding the use of "looks" in natural language to argue that there is at least some support for the three-way polysemy view. At the same time, there is little support, she argues, for construing phenomenal "looks" as a propositional attitude operator. The significance of the existence of a phenomenal use of "looks" for the metaphysics of experience is, therefore, quite a complex matter. Glüer herself argues that the phenomenal use of "looks" is ultimately best construed as encoding a "phenomenal" metaphysics of looks (according to which looks are relational properties of objects involving experiences). This, she concludes, squares well with her phenomenal intentionalism, a doxastic account of experience according to which (visual) experiences have "phenomenal" or "looks-contents".

In 'Color comparisons and interpersonal variation', Nat Hansen examines comparative color judgments, of the form "x is greener than y", and the problem that interpersonal variation in such judgments poses for a recent objectivist (non-subject-involving) theory of the meaning of color adjectives. An appealing objectivist response to the argument has been proposed which draws on the semantics of gradable adjectives and which does not require a defence of the implausible idea that there is a single correct location for each of the unique hues. However, Hansen has shown that this recent objectivist response doesn't apply to *comparative* uses of color adjectives, so a revised (comparative) version of the argument from interpersonal variation remains a strong objection to objectivism. After addressing several unsatisfactory objectivist attempts to respond to this problem, Hansen proposes a more sophisticated account of the meaning of comparative occurrences of color adjectives. This new account provides an objectivist with the resources to defuse the argument from individual variation in comparative judgments about color and so removes this apparent threat to objectivism about the meaning of color terms.

In 'Constructing the world and locating oneself', Peter Pagin considers the analogy between, on the one hand, the problems of the world construction projects of Russell and Carnap and, on the other, the problems of self-locating beliefs of Perry, Lewis, Kaplan, and Stalnaker. In both cases, the problem can be framed as the problem of linguistic reduction,

and thereby a problem of expressive completeness. In the world-construction case, the question is whether the external-world language can be reduced to the internal-world language of experience talk, and therefore whether this internal language is expressively complete. In the self-location case, the question is whether indexical language can be reduced to non-indexical language, and therefore whether non-indexical language is expressively complete. Pagin argues that, in both cases, the attempted reduction fails because expressions of location reference in the source language cannot be adequately translated into the target language. He maintains that the problem is that the totality of external-objective facts together with the totality of experience-facts jointly underdetermines their correlation, even when general laws concerning the causal impact of the environment on experience are taken into account. It is still left underdetermined *where* an experience is taking place. To this extent, then, Pagin claims, the problem of world-construction and the problem of self-location are equivalent.

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