

DOSSIER

## Carving cognition and language at their joints

Echoing Socrates' remarks to Phaedrus — namely, that it is by “perceiving and bringing together in one idea the scattered particulars, that one may make clear by definition the particular thing which he wishes to explain,” and that we shall divide things “where the natural joints are, and not trying to break any part, after the manner of a bad carver” (*Phaedrus*, 265d-e) —, one could say that in some ways each of the papers in this special issue aims at carving an aspect of cognition, or language, or both, at its joints. This does not imply that this is a volume of Platonist variations. However, it calls our attention to the metaphysical framework of contemporary understandings of cognition and language.

The role of philosophy in the study of cognition and language goes beyond the epistemological task of interpreting data in light of philosophical categories. Although relevant, this ‘epistemic function’ is in itself insufficient when it comes to clarify the place of mind and language in nature. Progress in this direction depends on sound claims about “where the natural joints are,” but this ‘metaphysical function’ is also insufficient in itself.

This special issue aims to contribute to the advancement of our understanding of cognition and language. The papers here published attempt to jointly fulfill, although not always explicitly, the metaphysical and the epistemic functions mentioned above.

In “Artefacts: the big picture in broad terms,” André Leclerc explores the relations between intentionality, dispositions and artefacts. In his view, the sentences we use can be considered artefacts, and so can concepts, which he takes to be dispositions. Just like artefacts, the concepts we have are, in a certain sense, the products of human intervention. He also holds the view that sentences in a natural language are all we need to specify our thoughts. It is just that sometimes we might need to expand the initial sentence to express the complete thought. In his view, thought and language are closely connected.

Also on the topic of the relation between thought and language is Hannes Fraissler's paper, “A Private Language Argument to elucidate the relation between mind and language.” Inspired in Wittgenstein's private language argument, he argues that we should distinguish between thinking and reasoning, and that while thinking can occur without language, reasoning is constitutively dependent on language.

In “A dilemma for naturalistic theories of intentionality,” Michael James Hegarty presents a dilemma for naturalists who accept Brentano's thesis — that intentionality is the mark of the mental — and attempt to naturalize the mental via naturalizing intentionality. He argues that if naturalists accept Brentano's thesis, they end up committed to eliminative materialism. But if they reject Brentano's thesis, then, in having naturalized representation alone, they have not succeeded in naturalizing the mental as a whole.

Beatriz Sorrentino Marques, in “The sense of agency does not evidence regulative control,” questions the common assumption that our sense of agency supports the libertarian view that agents have free will, or the ability to have done otherwise. She elucidates the mechanisms that give rise to this sense of agency and argues that it is compatible with determinism, and so does not support the libertarian position.

The topic of free will reappears in Jonas Gonçalves Coelho's paper, “Brain as agent and conscious mind as action guide: from Libet-like experiments to necessary conditions for free will”

As he notes, some experiments suggest that it is possible to predict the conscious choice of an agent before she is aware of it, which appears to challenge the idea that people have free will. But in Coelho's view, to tackle the problem of free will one needs first to consider how the conscious mind relates to the brain. He proposes a way to conceive that relation, as well as some necessary conditions for free will, and suggests that, if understood in a certain way, these experiments do not show free will to be an illusion.

Osvaldo Pessoa Jr., in "The colored-brain thesis," presents the historical roots of and adopts the controversial colored-brain thesis, a strong qualitative physicalism that considers subjective phenomenal qualities to be brain properties. He considers and responds to several criticisms against this thesis. He then proposes how "physical" should be understood, compares the colored-brain thesis to two close views (Russellian monism and panprotopsychism), and makes explicit certain assumptions of qualitative physicalism.

This special issue ends with a symposium on the book *Linguistic Bodies: the continuity between life and language*, by Ezequiel A. Di Paolo, Elena Clare Cuffari, and Hanne De Jaegher (MIT Press, 2018). Three papers discussing issues raised in the book are followed by a response from the authors.

In "The shared know-how in *Linguistic Bodies*," Eros Moreira de Carvalho clarifies some aspects of the notion of shared know-how, which appears in the book in order to explain the social and participatory interactions associated with linguistic skills and agency. In his paper, Carvalho deals with two issues related to this notion: (1) how to conceive the agent behind shared know-how, and (2) whether shared know-how is reducible to individual know-how. He takes the side of the authors of the linguistic bodies theory and offers a non-reductive account of shared know-how.

In the next paper, "Nature-Life continuity: is there a necessary method of inquiry?," Sofia Stein takes issue with some aspects of the anti-reductionist approach developed in *Linguistic Bodies*. According to her, the anti-reductionist attitude runs the risk of ignoring the continuity between nature and life, and of dissociating the physical investigations from

the biological investigations. She also notes the Hegelian roots of the dialectical method employed in the book, and calls attention to some of its limitations.

The dialectical method, and more generally the notion of dialectics employed in *Linguistic Bodies*, is also a topic of discussion in Nara Miranda de Figueiredo's contribution, "On the notion of dialectics in the linguistic bodies theory." She takes it that the notion of dialects, as used in the book, can be understood in three different ways: as something related to methodology, as something related to ontology, as well as a feature of the model being employed. She then suggests that the notion should instead be understood in only two ways: a methodological way and an epistemological way.

"Letting language be: reflections on enactive method," the final paper in this special issue, is a response from Elena Clare Cuffari, Ezequiel A. Di Paolo and Hanne De Jaegher, the authors of the book *Linguistic Bodies*, to the three previous papers. Here they clarify their views in the face of the previous comments, making clear their starting point and the method adopted in the book. As they note, holding tensions is a central aspect of their method.

This special issue features original contributions presented at the 2nd Meeting on Cognition and Language, held at the Federal University of Uberlândia in November 2019. We would like to thank UFU's Institute of Philosophy and all the people who contributed to the success of that event, especially Nara Miranda de Figueiredo, Leonardo Ferreira Almada, Sertório de Amorim e Silva Neto, Alexandre Guimarães Tadeu de Soares and Marcos Henrique Macedo Vieira. We also wish to thank the authors of the papers for their strong commitment to this special issue, the Editor-in-Chief of UJP and his team for their rigour and attentive support throughout the editorial process, and the anonymous reviewers for their valuable work.

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