

Introduction

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Questions about the interplay between certainty and language cut through the whole history of western philosophy, from ancient to contemporary debates.

One traditional line of thought considers language as some sort of obstacle to the acquisition of absolute certainty. Certain knowledge seems to require a direct doubt-free access to the way things are. Yet language seems to mediate our access to the way things are, thereby creating the space for doubt and uncertainty.

This strand of thought interacts with a great variety of classical and contemporary debates on the interplay between language and certainty: one debate concerns the very possibility of there being doubt-free certain foundations for knowledge and the way in which we should think about these foundations; on this line, one classical picture thinks about foundations in terms of some strong epistemic relation with reality, such as acquaintance or intuition; another connected set of questions concerns the very possibility of unmediated language-free epistemic relation with reality, a question which is often nowadays explored in the debates surrounding what Sellars famously described as the myth of the given.

Another recent line of inquiry which tightly connects certainty and language concerns the normative profile of speech and thought. Certainty is one candidate among many (truth, knowledge, justification, etc.) for being the aim or norm of assertion, belief and related key ingredients in inquiry. The question whether certainty plays any normative role for speech and thought in turn interacts with another historically important, yet recently neglected, question: that is, the question whether certainty (of the kind Descartes was looking for in his *Meditations*) is or should be the aim of philosophy or inquiry more generally.

The interplay between certainty and language also plays an important role in a variety of philosophical projects that have been highly influential in the history of philosophy and that still inspire philosophical projects nowadays. In the transcendental tradition - from Kant to German Idealism and Husserl, up to the recent debates on transcendental arguments - one fundamental question, to which a variety of transcendental strategies attempt to answer, is whether we can know with certainty whether our conceptual schemes can reach the way things are.

In Wittgenstein's reflections in *On certainty* and in more recent debates at the intersection of philosophy of language and epistemology that draws inspiration from Wittgenstein's work, we find both lively debates on our language of certainty - that is, how the way in which we speak about certainty reveals how we should think of knowledge, justification and certainty - and debates on the very nature of the psychological state of being certain. These are just illustrations of some among many noteworthy interactions between certainty and language in a variety of influential philosophical debates. In this special issue we invited contributions that explore these and other aspects of the relationships between certainty and language both from theoretical and historical perspectives.

Genia Schönbaumsfeld's contribution - *Lo scetticismo sullo scetticismo o sull'idea stessa di un 'linguaggio della vasca' globale* - explicitly illustrates the interplay between philosophy of language and epistemology which is addressed in this special issue. Drawing on insights from Wittgenstein's anti-private language considerations, she argues that the truth of a global scepticism would presuppose the possibility of a private language, a notion that cannot be rendered coherent.

In *Language, all said and done*, Moyal-Sharrock discusses a variety of questions on the nature of language - drawing on a variety of authors, chief among them Wittgenstein and Merleau-Ponty - and explores the way in which creative uses of language (such as in literature) create the conditions for change and evolution in our language.

In *Certainty's Bulwark at Rationality's Edge? Reframing the Disagreement between Humean Sceptics and Constitutivist Hinge Epistemologists*, Kwing-Yui Wong explores the disagreement on rationality between Humean skeptics and constitutivist hinge epistemologists inspired by Wittgenstein's remarks in *On Certainty*. In particular, the paper critically scrutinizes recent contributions by Annalisa Coliva and Michele Palmira on conceptual disagreements between Humean and hinge epistemologies.

In *Unger's Epistemic Condition for Illocutionary Acts and Hinge Certainty*, Lisa Paravan discusses Unger's skeptical view on knowledge. Unger's work is a fruitful context where to explore the interplay between epistemology and philosophy of language, for Unger's argument for skepticism draws on claims about language and the role of certainty in our knowledge attributions. Paravan's paper clarifies Unger's argument and responds to it by drawing on contemporary hinge epistemology.

In *Feeling of Certainty and the Shiftiness of Knowledge Utterances*, Sergiu Spatan and Alan Semencescu discuss the shiftiness of knowledge utterances (the phenomenon by which our inclination to ascribe knowledge shifts with the mentioning of non-epistemic factors) and argue for a certainty condition on assessments of knowledge utterances.

As noted above, in many philosophical discussions of the connection between language and certainty, language is somehow regarded as an obstacle to a direct certainty-conferring access to what things are. In *Inverted Time: Unraveling Bergson's Philosophy of Language and Certainty*, Letizia Cipriani explores this and related issues in the context of Bergson's philosophy, offering a systematic and comprehensive exposition of Bergson's views on the interplay between language and certainty.

As the articles in this special issue illustrate, the theme of certainty plays a central role in a wide range of debates concerning the philosophy of language, epistemology, and their many areas of intersection. These debates increasingly benefit from contributions by philosophers and approaches rooted in both the analytic and continental traditions.