

# Introduction

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During the last decades, philosophy of language has progressively discovered and recognized that it not only has, as it is obvious, a history behind, but also, so to say, inside itself. It is a history that, whether noticed or not, has during the last century conditioned in different ways the research on language, and it can contribute, if it is carefully investigated, to make that research more conscious of its own object and, above all, more theoretically fruitful.

The twentieth century has certainly not lacked a series of studies about some prominent moments in the history of the research on language. A particular reference must be done to the studies devoted to the first phases of the analytical philosophy of language; those phases that have in Frege, Russell, and Wittgenstein as the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, their main representatives. As for the age of Romanticism, it suffices to remind the importance of Herder's philosophy of language in Ch. Taylor's thought or M.N. Foster's investigations on German philosophy of language from Schlegel to Hegel. For the early modern age, the most obvious examples are the studies on Locke's semantics or on Leibniz's linguistic ideas, but also the debates and controversies provoked by Chomsky's notion of "Cartesian linguistics". Going further back in time, for medieval philosophy we find numerous studies on the problem of the universals, the notion of the *suppositio*, etc. And it is of particular interest the research on the philosophy of language in ancient Greece and Rome, from the studies on the linguistic ideas of the Sophists to the investigations on Plato's *Cratylus*, and from the studies on Cicero and the problem of the Latin translation of Greek philosophical terms to the numerous investigations on Augustine's notion of *signum*.

In some cases, that on this occasion are for us the most significant, those studies have not been simply guided by a historical-reconstructive spirit or by an exclusively critical-philological motivation, but also by the conviction that a wider or deeper awareness of the history of the reflection on language, in its different moments and articulations, could give and provide new reading keys to contemporary research on language, which, after the peaks reached in the twentieth century, often seemed to have come to a dead end – or, at least, to an excessively specialised point – or to have lost its original philosophical impulse.

The essays collected in this issue of *The Journal for the Philosophy of Language, Mind and the Arts* coincide, each one of them according to the specificity of its author, in that spirit that, as it was said above, assigns not only a historical-reconstructive value, but also a theoretical one, to the re-reading of the texts on language pertaining to our immense and complex philosophical tradition. After the preceding issue devoted to Leibniz, the present issue focuses on the comparison between some moments in contemporary philosophy of language and the conceptions of language developed within the context of ancient Greek philosophy. The fundamental idea driving it is to bring together specialists in language who consider to be essential for their theoretical undertaking to confront what was said about language in classical tradition, and specialists in Greek philosophy of language who think that, read in the light of contemporary philosophy of language, many ancient pages may reveal new aspects to us, and that the historical reconstruction may come out richer and more perceptive.

This issue, therefore, has not been conditioned, in the selection of authors and topics, by any preference with respect to one school of thought or another. If an analytical spirit pervades, so to say, some of its essays, in others the atmosphere is much more ‘continental’, not lacking references to Foucault or to Heidegger. It can also be remarked that the three essays, by James C. Klagge, Anthony Bonnemaison, and Felice Cimatti, devoted to Wittgenstein – on his relation with Socrates and Plato, in the first two cases, and with Stoicism, on the last one – are inspired by theoretical attitudes that are very different from each other.

In the essays collected here many topics are dealt with: from the idea of philosophy as a way of acting to the question of the relation between philosophy and poetry; from the problem of the relation between persuasion and truth to the presence of Aristotelian motifs in the contemporary debate – analytical, but also “continental” – about self-consciousness and meaning; from the centrality of the question about names in Plato to the relation between Wittgenstein’s notion of linguistic use and the Stoic theme of λεκτόν, and even to the ways in which Plato and Wittgenstein work out a grammar of knowledge.

That philosophy, and so much more philosophy of language, “works as a discourse, and that this discourse is also a discourse on the limits of language”, is the idea discussed by Marcello La Matina in “Acting and Behaving: The Philosopher in Ancient Greece and Late Modernity”. Trying to answer the question about the role, the discourse, and the way of operating of philosophy, and asking himself, in particular, whether they should be redirected to a way of acting instead of to a way of behaving, La Matina, through a confrontation between ancient Greek and modern philosophy’s practices, arrives at the answer that it is a prerogative of philosophy that it “enables us to reflect (especially historically) on the meaning of a life in theory, the role of *logos*, and the praxis within current discursive and philosophical practices”. This “characterizes the work of the philosopher as a ‘doing’ or practice and saves him from lapsing into mere behaviour”.

In most of the essays contained in this issue, Greek philosophy is put in dialogue with philosophers, authors, or themes of contemporary philosophy. In his “The Efficacy of True Speech: Gorgias between Rorty and Foucault”, Mauro Serra, in contrast with the traditional interpretation of Gorgias’ philosophy – according to which for this sophist there would not be any place for truth, but only for persuasion – proposes to “investigate the complex relationship between truth and efficacy in the functioning of language” that is traceable in Gorgias’ philosophy and to bring it closer to the thought of Rorty and Foucault, as they both, “albeit in different way, place this relationship in a political framework”.

In her essay “Being Worthy of One’s Name: Platonic Tensions between Language and Reality”, Lidia Palumbo centres on the crucial role played in Plato’s *Dialogues* by names as they “represent something akin to models to be imitated or goals to be attained”. Throwing light particularly on the Homeric origin of this centrality of names, and putting it into the context of the *παιδεία*, she shows that Plato’s *Dialogues* “lead us towards philosophy by encouraging us to become *worthy of our names*”.

Three essays of this issue deal with Wittgenstein’s relation with Greek philosophy. “Wittgenstein vs. Socrates: Wittgenstein and Plato”, by James C. Klagge, presents and discusses some aspects of Wittgenstein’s disagreement with Socrates’ attitude, starting from the fact that Wittgenstein excludes all kind of essentialist definition of words. Klagge emphasises Wittgenstein’s differences with Socrates also focusing on the case of good. On the contrary, there emerges a sympathy for Plato, particularly for its ability to characterise the people in his dialogues and to find “ways of making philosophy poetic”, offering “myths that supplement his arguments”. The essay by Anthony Bonnemaïson, entitled “What Does ‘To Know Something’ Mean?: Plato and Wittgenstein on the Grammar of Knowledge”, provides an attempt to read some important aspects of Plato’s thought,

in particular and mainly the infallibility of knowledge, in the light of Wittgenstein's analysis of the grammar of knowledge. Felice Cimatì, in his "Λεκτόν and Use: Wittgenstein and the Incorporeal", deals with the topic of the "'incorporeal' character of the meanings of linguistic expressions", comparing Wittgenstein's solution of meaning as use with the Stoic solution based in the notion of λεκτόν, as something "incorporeal", but also "the corporeal product of what human speakers do when they utter a verbal utterance".

Two essays are devoted to Aristotle and his modern interpretations. "Aristotle and Inner Awareness", by Manuel García Carpintero, locates Aristotle's views, as found in his *De anima* and as interpreted by Victor Caston, in the context of the current debate on consciousness and self-awareness, also offering some considerations in favour of following Aristotle on this matter. As regards the essay by David Hereza Modrego, "Λόγος as an Anti-Psychologicistic Conception of Meaning: Heidegger's Interpretation of the Aristotelian Notion of Language in the Light of Its First Courses (1921-1927)", it presents and tries to clarify Heidegger's interpretation of the Aristotelian concept of λόγος. As Hereza Modrego tries to show, in the Aristotelian notion of λόγος Heidegger discovered an anti-psychologicistic conception of meaning and language that can provide a better understanding of the role of truth and of phenomenology.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the scholars who have contributed to this issue of *JoLMA* and to those who evaluated their essays. I also want to thank Filippo Batisti for his invaluable collaboration in the preparation of this volume, and José García Roca for his support in this project, as in many others.