

MARTIN HINTON\*, PIOTR STALMASZCZYK\*\*

## PREFACE

The disciplines of general philosophy, philosophy of language, and linguistics have in common an interest in saying what it is that we can infer: what meaning, what truth; and how those inferences are to be justified. To do this, philosophers and linguists have endlessly discussed the concepts of truth and of meaning, and also the means of inference and its degrees of reasonableness and reliability. These debates do not narrow down to definitive answers, rather they broaden and spread their concerns into ever-widening fields of investigation. One of those areas thriving now as a result of the combination of insights from philosophical and linguistic research is the theory of argumentation; and it is a particular goal of the editors of this collection that the authors of those insights be brought together with researchers studying argumentative discourse for the mutual benefit of all. The papers collected in this special issue of *Studia Semiotyczne* all contribute further to these continuing discussions and to this aim: they exhibit a wide range of approaches and starting points, which may take readers to territories unfamiliar, and, we trust, stimulating; yet they are united by the desire to explore the connections between truth, meaning, and reasoning, by looking at language and all that it carries with it, unbeknownst to the humble conversationalist.

The authors whose work is gathered in the following pages were brought together at the 6<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Philosophy of Language and Linguistics (*PhiLang 2019*), held in Łódź, Poland, in May 2019, and organized by the Department of English and General Linguistics, University of Łódź. Incorporated within this meeting was a workshop dedicated to the Philosophy of Argu-

---

\* University of Łódź, Department of English and General Linguistics. E-mail: martin.hinton@uni.lodz.pl. ORCID: 0000-0003-0374-8834.

\*\* University of Łódź, Department of English and General Linguistics. E-mail: piotr.stalmaszczyk@uni.lodz.pl. ORCID: 0000-0002-1407-7610.

mentation (*PhilArg*), and the first three of the authors presented below were participants in that event. The conference has a long and rich history of publications (<http://filologia.uni.lodz.pl/philang/archive>) and we trust this special issue will prove a valuable and significant addition to that library of work.

The papers are organized within this issue in a way that sees a progression into increasingly abstract concerns: beginning with discussion of patterns of inference in practical reasoning, moving through studies of the nature of language and meaning, and finally into the consideration of the concept of truth. The first article, *Slippery Slopes Revisited* by Martin Hinton, contains a discussion of the reasoning pattern known as the slippery slope argument, generally considered to be fallacious. Hinton attempts to show where earlier characterizations of the argument form have gone wrong by trying to unify arguments which share only superficial features, and points out that there must be something distinct and unique about the reasoning employed in such arguments if slippery slopes are to be considered a type of argument and not simply a rhetorical device. This involves a strong criticism of Douglas Walton's account of slippery slopes, in particular. In the second part of the essay, Hinton finds the special nature of slippery slope arguments in their evocation of logical, rather than material, consequences, leading to an impossibility to prevent other, unwanted and unacceptable conclusions being made. The paper ends with a description of how this treatment of slippery slopes fits into his broader framework of argument assessment, instantiated in the Comprehensive Assessment Procedure for Natural Argumentation.

The second contribution to the issue also touches upon fallacy theory, leading to fundamental questions about the relationship between formal logical fallacies and the reasonableness of everyday human practices of inferring from evidence. Richard Davies writes persuasively *In Defence of a Fallacy*; the fallacy in question being the deductively indefensible error of affirming the consequent. Davies provides a detailed scholarly analysis of how the concept of fallacy develops in the work of Aristotle, and how discussion of affirming the consequent in modern accounts relates to that earlier foundation. Finally, the author analyses the examples of *epomenon* put forward by Aristotle in the Sophistical Refutations and finds them to be cases of abductive reasoning, similar to those which we employ continually in normal life, and consider quite respectable. This conclusion brings into stark relief the difference between logically sound inference and reasonable practical inference, bringing yet further doubt onto traditional conceptions of fallacy.

The third work which deals with argumentation, Cristina Corredor's *Speaking, Inferring, Arguing. On the Argumentative Character of Speech*, turns more explicitly towards the relationship of inference with language. She argues, contrary to some other approaches, that while speech is an inferential activity, language is not inherently argumentative. The main interest in the study is the degree to which meaning can be said to be dependent on argumentation if communication is based on inferring. This involves the careful examination of three major theories: Grice's account of communicated meaning, Brandom's normative pragmatics and Anscombe and Ducrot's notion of radical argumentativity. The conclusions

reached from this are that communication is an inferential activity due to its calculability, since meaning is reconstructed through inference; that arguing can be seen as the practice of evaluating reasons given to justify what has been communicated; and that the obligations assigned through speech acts are dialectical in character; but that this does not entail that language is itself argumentative.

The three remaining papers discuss various issues in the semantics/pragmatics interface, interpretation, use/meaning distinction, meaning ascriptions, truth and Kantian pragmatism.

The notions of speaker's reference and semantic reference were introduced by Kripke in order to counter the contentious consequences of Donnellan's distinction between the referential use and the attributive use of definite descriptions. Palle Leth argues in his paper that these notions do not have any application in the interpretive interaction between speaker and hearer. This is the case because hearers are solely concerned with speaker's reference: either, in cases of cooperation, as presented as such by the speaker, or, in cases of conflict, as perceived as such by the hearer. Any claim as to semantic reference is irrelevant for the purposes of communication and conversation. In conclusion, Leth observes that if the purpose of semantic theory is to account for linguistic communication, there is no reason to take definite descriptions to have semantic reference.

According to the quotational theory of meaning ascriptions, sentences like "‘Bruder’ (in German) means brother" are abbreviated synonymy claims, such as "‘Bruder’ (in German) means the same as ‘brother’". Andrea Raimondi argues against the quotational theory of meaning ascriptions. He first discusses a problem with Harman's version of the quotational theory, next he presents an amended version defended by Hartry Field and addresses Field's responses to two arguments against the theory that revolve around translation and the understanding of foreign expressions. Finally, Raimondi formulates two original arguments against both Harman's and Field's versions of the theory. One of them targets the hyperintensionality of quotations, and the other raises a problem pertaining to variant spellings of words.

The last paper investigates the notion of truth and Kantian pragmatism. According to Jürgen Habermas, each class of statements raises a distinct validity claim (namely, that of truth, rightness or truthfulness). And each must be justified in a discourse, a special sort of dialogue, in which the validity claim is directly questioned and its justification is required; this validity claim and its relationship to Kantian pragmatism is an important topic in Habermas's theory of communicative action, explicitly discussed in *Truth and Justification*. Tomoo Ueda concentrates on Kantian pragmatism (as interpreted by Habermas) and the anti-deflationist account of truth. He observes that Habermas's notion of truth relies on the reliabilist conception of knowledge rather than the internalist conception that defines knowledge as a justified true belief. Ueda's interpretation is consistent with Habermas's project of weak naturalism and strongly suggests that Habermas's Kantian pragmatism counts as a pragmatist project. The author also draws some more general implications about the pragmatist notion of truth.

Taken together, we believe that this collection of papers provides a stimulating overview of some key current concerns in the fields of argumentation, linguistics, and philosophy of language, in particular the role of inferring in both reasoning and understanding. We wish to thank all the authors and the reviewers who have made this issue possible, as well as all those who attended *PhiLang 2019* and took part in the discussion around these papers and the issues they raise.