

**Theory of semantic value.**  
**A case study on disciplinary identities within philosophy :**  
**philosophy of mathematics and philosophy of language**

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I will present a case study in the intersection of the contemporary philosophy of mathematics and the philosophy of language (semantics). The study is meant to show how the emergence of subdisciplines can lead to one and the same problem being dealt with as two ostensibly different problems, and how comparing these two seemingly different problems, belonging to two different subdisciplines and usually studied by different people, can lead to a deeper understanding of the subject.

Historically, thinkers used to be interested in more than one discipline and we know that most important figures in the history of human thought worked seriously in several different areas at once. In the modern period, great philosophers were also scientists, but even in the 20th century the examples of Kurt Gödel and Albert Einstein show that fruitful ideas, even the most important ideas of the century, were probably arrived at as a result of multi-domain interests. Both Kurt Gödel and Albert Einstein claimed interest in philosophy, and what motivated them was a desire to understand important things about the world in general. Such an attitude goes strikingly against the prevailing contemporary strive for specialization and the down-to-earth reflection that the body of human knowledge has grown so much that it is not possible anymore for a single person to be informed in more than just one narrow branch.

Certainly, the cooperative spirit of our times is a necessity: we really have to rely on secondary sources, and in fact we always do, starting with the very choices we make when we even begin to deal with a possible research theme (like for example when we take a decision as to which textbooks to use first). The formation of further and further divisions and the emergence of still new academic (sub)disciplines is also a natural result of institutional support, which is a necessary and helpful framework for our work. In my presentation I want to argue that such divisions are, at the same time, both potentially beneficial, and risky. They are beneficial, because a newly defined discipline allows researchers to do important work on fundamental issues, finding clear definitions of the discipline's notions and good, sharp formulations of its research questions. It is risky, because an isolated discipline is closed for insights from other disciplines.

Presently, even a discipline with a scope as general as philosophy is divided into various fields, subfields, and subfields of subfields. In my presentation, I will show, using an example taken from contemporary philosophy, the possible effect of the emergence of new disciplinary identities. I will discuss two problems studied in two branches of contemporary philosophy, one in the philosophy of mathematics, and one in the philosophy of language. In the philosophy of mathematics, one of the major problems is the existence of mathematical objects and the question what mathematics is about. In the philosophy of language, one of the major problems is the right attitude to the study of language. In both disciplines a number of positions have evolved and numerous arguments in their favor have been analyzed. I shall show that these problems are closely related, and that comparing linguistic theories with solutions to the problem of the existence of mathematical objects can be fruitful and mutually enriching. In particular, I will show how certain (light platonist) arguments from the philosophy of mathematics may be applied to the philosophy of language, and how certain (anti-externalist) arguments from the philosophy of language may be applied to the philosophy of mathematics. I intend to show that arguments from both disciplines speak in favor of the same views, and that, as a result, taking both disciplines into account in parallel allows us to gain better insights into both of them, and, consequently, to solve at once problems concerning both disciplines.

In addition, the case study will illustrate a point about disciplinary identities concerning the development of a discipline and its language and methodology. The question asked is: What are the factors that make it possible to compare the results of a discipline with the results of other disciplines and what factors facilitate interdisciplinary communication? On the basis of the case study I will identify three factors: I think that the comparison in the case study is possible because both disciplines are still sufficiently close to each other (the complexity of the disciplines has not yet led to their “closure”), because both of them have developed sharp languages (proper work on the fundamentals of the disciplines has been done), and because both have a sufficiently broad subject-matter for the issues they deal with to be more generally relevant and not exclusively discipline-specific (the subject-matter of the disciplines is sufficiently broad).