*Abstract*

# Homo Loquens Meets Homo Informaticus: Exploring the Relationship between Language and Information †

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**Abstract:** This paper explores the relationship between natural language and the phenomenon of information. It argues that the Philosophy of Information can provide a bridge between linguistics and information science by offering a deeper understanding of how these two spheres of experience are entangled. Proceeding from the author's 2002 Foundations of Information Science Online Conference paper 'The Phantom of Information' it first asks the question 'How can we best define information'? The author then offers a brief historical perspective on the Philosophy of Language (PL) and the Philosophy of Information (PI) and highlights where the two fields overlap and interact. He indicates how the 'information turn' of the 1990's grew organically out of the 'linguistic turn' in philosophy. The author treats the phenomenon of information as a new language with distinctive features akin to syntax, person, tense, aspect, voice and mood. Specifically he examines Chomsky's concept of recursion and redundancy, Wittgenstein's language as game, Saussure's *langue* and *parole*, Benveniste's *énonciation*, informative illocutionary acts (Austin, Searle), the semantic approaches of Dretske Floridi and Barwise, Grice's implicature and Carl Friedrich von Weizsacker's 'inevitable circle between language and information'. He briefly discusses Terrence Deacon's recent work in biological anthropology on language and information as it relates to his concepts of deixis, reciprocal reference and incompletion. Secondly, the paper indicates how the notion of 'information' is embedded in traditional grammar through adpositions which empower language as a faculty for thought and communication. The Subject/Object template of historical grammar imposed on all natural languages is reviewed from the perspective of pragmatics. The notion of 'information' itself is traced back (by way of Capurro's *informatio*) to a configuration of ideas and concepts in classical Greek philosophy, specifically those of Epicurus and Chrysippus—the founder of formal grammar. Implications for the history and science of information are discussed. Finally, it proposes future directions for this area of study to explore how our total experience of the sphere of language and that of information are interconnected within a broader framework of mind. A distinction between cognition and *connaissance* is made. The faculty of human language, once the hallmark of humanism, is now under threat by the omnipresent Datocracy and its champion, *Homo Informaticus*. The informed and informing citizen, *Homo Informationis*, as defender of the information commons and infoversity, will need to ally with Herder's *Homo Loquens* if s/he is to survive. Information philosophers can provide a deeper understanding of these intriguing twin phenomena necessary for our civilization.

**Keywords:** Philosophy of information; philosophy of language; information science; linguistics; semantics