

SCIENTIFIC DIALOGUES

ACADEMIA EUROPAEA BARCELONA KNOWLEDGE HUB

FRONTIERS OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN SOCIETY

Frontiers 2: 22-11-2023 from 18.00 h to 19.30 h

The bases of language: from tabula rasa to biological determinism

Royal Academy of Sciences and Arts of Barcelona (RACAB)

La Rambla, 115, 08002 Barcelona

The transition from the concept of language as a "tabula rasa" to one influenced by "biological determinism" represents a significant shift in our understanding of language acquisition and development. These two perspectives offer different explanations for how humans acquire and use language, and they have been central to debates in linguistics, psychology, and biology. The "tabula rasa" perspective, often associated with philosophers like John Locke, suggests that the human mind is a blank slate at birth, and language acquisition is primarily a result of environmental factors and learning experiences. On the other side, the "biological determinism" perspective posits that humans have innate, biologically predetermined mechanisms for language acquisition.

In contemporary discussions, many researchers and theorists seek to reconcile these perspectives. Where are we in the debate? Has the incursion of computer sciences and physics changed the arena?

Invited speakers:

Cedric Boeckx, ICREA Research Professor at the Department of Linguistics, University of Barcelona, Barcelona

Ramon Ferrer-i-Cancho, Professor of Computer Science at Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, Barcelona

Moderator: **Toni Badia**, Pompeu Fabra University, Barcelona

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