Chaire d'Excellence 'Ontological Structure and Semantic Structure'

ANR, 2006-2010

Project description

The project aims to establish a new direction of research in the interface between linguistic semantics and those areas in philosophy that are concerned with reference and ontology, namely metaphysics (contemporary and ancient), philosophy of language (contemporary and medieval), and philosophy of mathematics. While linguistic semantics has made enormous progress in the last thirty years in the range and refinement of its empirical research, it has developed quite separately from philosophy of language, metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophy of mathematics. This is highly unsatisfactory, especially for questions dealing with ontology, which cannot be answered without the cooperation of linguistics and philosophy, and more particularly for questions regarding reference to abstract objects, which can hardly be addressed seriously without taking into account the various approaches in the philosophy of mathematics. While there are a few places in the US with some interaction between linguists and philosophers, a systematic bridge between the two disciplines has never been built. The objective of the project is to establish a long-term tradition of collaborative interdisciplinary research, in order to obtain significant advances on questions dealing with reference and ontology and to produce a range of exemplary publications. The aim is to develop and promote work in the interface of linguistic semantics and ontology not only within France, but also beyond, by building lasting reciprocal relations with scholars and institutions with similar interests throughout Europe as well as the US.

The project is not committed to any particular theoretical approach, but rather focuses simply on the importance of taking the range of empirical linguistic data and recent theoretical work in syntax and semantics seriously for addressing philosophical questions and conversely by showing the importance and fruitfulness of exploring a broader range philosophical views and concerns for the linguistic analysis of natural language data.