The Semantics of Special Quantification: Higher-Order Metaphysics and Nominalization Approaches

Prior's problem (the impossibility of replacing clausal complements of most verbs by explicit proposition-referring terms) generalizes to predicative complements of copula verbs, complements of intensional transitive verbs, direct quotes of verbs or saying, and complements of measure verbs. Only a replacement by 'special quantifiers' is possible (and a few other 'special' DPs in certain cases), that is, quantifiers like *something*, *everything*, *several things*, and *a lot*, as well as special pronouns (*that, what*). This was the main theme of my 2013 book *Abstract Objects and the Semantics of Natural Language*, which also developed the Nominalization Theory of the semantics of special quantifiers with the different sorts of predicates.

Special quantifiers constitute an extremely interesting topic for philosophical logic and metaphysics, yet they cannot be properly analysed without taking their actual syntax and semantics very seriously.

In this talk, I will review and extend the range of linguistic generalizations that motivate the Nominalization Theory of special quantifiers, generalizations that are impossible to account for within (recent and not so recent) higher-order approaches to special quantifiers, unless those are supplemented by an account of the nominalizing force of special quantifiers. I will outline a new version of the Nominalization Theory for special quantifiers occurring with attitude verbs and address the question whether there can be a unified semantics of special quantifiers for the various contexts in which special quantifiers display a nominalizing force, including when they replace definite and indefinite plural and mass NPs with extensional verbs.