**Compact course: Metaphysics and Natural Language**

Friederike Moltmann

IHPST

**Time:**

Monday, May 22, 2017

11h-13h, 15h-17h

Tuesday May 23, 2017

11h-13h

**Place:**

Grande salle, IHPST, 13 rue due Four, 75006 Paris

**Description**

Metaphysics in the past was considered mainly a pursuit of philosophers, asking questions about being in most general terms. While some philosophers made appeal to natural language in order to argue for a ontological category or metaphysical notion, others have rejected such an appeal arguing that the ontology reflected in language diverges significantly from what there really is, from any philosophically accepted ontology. Whatever one’s view may be of what a philosopher should pursue, it has become clear, especially with the development of natural language semantics (and syntax), that the metaphysics reflected in natural language is an important object of study in itself, as the subject matter of natural language ontology or more generally natural language metaphysics. This compact course gives an overview of the sort of appeals philosophers have made to natural language, of the ways natural language reflects ontological notions and structures, of cases of discrepancies between the ontology implicit in natural language and the reflective ontology of philosophers or non-philosophers, of the ways the relation of natural language metaphysics can be conceived with respect to other projects in metaphysics, and of the ways in which degrees of ontological commitment may be reflected in the semantic structure of language.

**Recommended reading**

'[Natural Language Ontology](http://friederike-moltmann.com/uploads/Natural%20Language%20Ontology-2016%283%29.pdf)'. To appear in [*Oxford Research E*ncyclopedia of Linguistics](http://linguistics.oxfordre.com/page/forthcoming/). Oxford UP, New York, 2017 (online).

Schedule:

Monday, May 22, 2017

11h-13h

Metaphysics – ontology - semantics

How does natural language reflect metaphysics

Appeals to language by philosophers

discrepancies

Projects in metaphysics

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How to characterize the ontology of natural language

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Cases of discrepancy