

Frauke Albersmeier & David Hommen (Heinrich-Heine-Universität/SFB 991)

Title: Concepts as frames: analytical and ontological issues

Abstract: Frame theory is first and foremost a theory of conceptual structure and as such suggests an alternative mode for the philosophical analysis of concepts ("conceptual analysis"). Besides other criticism, the method of conceptual analysis is challenged on the grounds that concepts – construed as mental representations – lack the definitional structure presupposed and aimed for by analysts. The first part of the talk will distinguish a particularly ambitious type of analytical project from a mere clarification of word-use and addresses its supposed reliance on a specific account of the structure of mental representations.

The second part of the talk considers the ontological commitments of frame theory. The issue concerns the question to which kinds of entities the terms for individuals, attributes and values in frames can be said to refer. In this regard, we will concentrate on how one should interpret the denotations of individual frames: Should they be understood as mere bundles of attribute-value pairs or rather as metaphysically compound entities constituted out of properties unified by an underlying substrata? It will be suggested that, while frame theory is formally consistent with both views, the very idea of attribute-value structures fits best with some sort of Aristotelian substance ontology.