

Natural Language Metaphysics

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 ontology 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 talk discusses a range of issues that arise for natural language metaphysics, such as the sorts of data that it should and that it should not take into account, the ways natural language reflects ontological notions and structures, why there are discrepancies between the ontology implicit in natural language and the reflective ontology of philosophers or non-philosophers, and how the relation of natural language metaphysics can be conceived with respect to other projects in metaphysics.