Friday, October 7, 2016 Boylston Hall 105

Title: Common Nouns as Variables: Evidence from Conservativity and the Temperature Paradox

Common nouns and noun phrases have usually been analyzed semantically as predicates. In quantified sentences, these predicates take variables as arguments. For example the English sentence like *Every man smiles* is translated into predicate logic $\forall x[M(x) \rightarrow S(x)]$, where *man* corresponds to the predicate M. This talk will develop and defend an analysis in which common nouns and noun phrases themselves are treated as variables, rather than as predicates taking variables as arguments. Several apparent challenges for this view will be addressed, including the modal non-rigidity of common nouns. Two major advantages to treating common nouns as variables will be presented: Such an analysis predicts that all nominal quantification is conservative, rather than requiring conservativity to be stipulated as a constraint on determiner denotations; and it makes possible some improvements to the analysis of the temperature paradox, allowing for quantificational examples without adding a spurious layer of modal variability. Additional advantages in treating donkey anaphora and in correlating semantic types with syntactic categories will also be briefly sketched.