

Corina Strößner (HHU/CRC 991)

Title: Rational predicate change

Abstract: Belief change and its rationality constraints are a central subject of formal epistemology. Conceptual change has received comparatively less attention. In its first part, the talk uses tools from dynamic epistemic logic to define meaning changing operations in a monadic predicate logic. I discuss how plausibility and typicality laws can be used to restrict and evaluate the rationality of meaning change. In its second part, the talk uses these insights to recapture the historical development of the category “mammals”.

The upshot of the talk is that a large class of conceptual changes, namely reclassifications, are far from being revolutionary. Quite to the contrary, they can be so conservative that they are hardly recognisable.