

**Sergei Nirenburg, Victor Raskin, *Ontological Semantics***  
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In the philosophy of language and linguistics the idea of “bringing ontology back to semantics” is linked to *Situation Semantics*, the approach introduced by Jon Barwise, John Perry, Keith Devlin and their co-authors in the 1980s. “Ontology” in this approach meant on the one hand a theory of the kinds of entities that reality is composed of, and on the other hand modeling semantics and information flow using these entities, the models also containing a meta-theory how they relate and refer to parts of reality. “Ontology” here is used in the traditional (philosophical) sense. In the artificial intelligence community, however, “ontology” is unfortunately often used in quite another sense. (This leads—as one may witness occasionally at conferences—to talking past each other.) “Ontology” here, and so in *Ontological Semantics*, is introduced as a canonical description of the world. This alludes to the first sense of “ontology” mentioned above, but involves no claims about linking models framed in the model language to reality or even withholds commitment as to the real existence of the kinds of entities used in the model language. The “world” that is modeled is a more or less comprehensive representation (true or not), and is not reality. Ontology in the AI sense, therefore, can freely make use of fictional entities and kinds of entities supposedly not belonging to the ultimate furniture of the universe. Ontology in *Ontological Semantics*, in fact, turns out to be a conceptual structure, which is outlined in a meta-language. Ontological modeling means to use a conceptual scheme of an explicitly defined format: “it belongs in epistemology” (p. 135).

*Ontological Semantics* is employed to derive a canonical interpretation given some input text. As it should be used by automata this means that such an artificial system comprises sub-systems responsible for (syntactic) parsing and analysis of text structure and other sub-systems deriving an interpretation by making use of a lexicon and a stored knowledge repository. The input text is ultimately translated

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