

Against Fantology Again

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Abstract

It is old news that language can make us form different and false opinions about the world. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is well known in both linguistics and philosophy, and in the same vein Bertrand Russell has argued that the Aristotelian subject-predicate logic mislead some famous philosophers into ontological monism. Barry Smith has made a similar claim about the language of first-order predicate logic. This logic has, according to him, become a language that seduces analytic metaphysicians to subscribe to false ontological positions. He refers to this fact as ‘fantology’, because of the symbol ‘*Fa*’, in which predication is always predication of a particular-as-particular.

The paper “Against Fantology Again” develops Smith’s views further. It introduces an ontologically neutral operation called *a default ontologization of a language*, which makes it possible to put the term ‘fantology’ in a wider framework, and then it zooms in on Quine and his so-called *canonical language*. He is the most outspoken fantologist, even though Smith mentions him only in passing.

It is claimed that Quine is doubly incoherent. First, he is of the opinion that his physicalism-with-classes ontology needs no other logic than first-order predicate logic, but this is shown to be wrong. Second, since first-order predicate logic is extensional, fantology deletes the whole realm of intentional phenomena and the referents of intensional propositions from ontology. Nonetheless, however, Quine takes a distinction between appearance and reality for granted, in which the appearances can contain intentional phenomena.