

Peer Review

Review of: "What's in a Name? On the Problem of Meaning-Change"

Michal Místecký¹

1. Department of Czech Language, Faculty of Arts, University of Ostrava, University of Ostrava, Czech Republic

Dear Professor Meixner, thank you for your paper. I am not an expert in philosophy; I see the matter from a linguistic perspective. Even though I admit that the author is a skilled essayist and makes very interesting points about the issue of meaning, I do not see this paper as a research article, but rather as a piece of philosophical literature. In today's linguistics, meaning is studied using quantitative methodology; for the basics, we may make use of keyword and collocation analyses, and continue with more advanced methods, such as word embeddings. Including these methods and focusing more on linguistic units (rather than on concepts) would help researchers see the matter in all its intricacies. Feel free to reach out to me, Professor Meixner, if you wish to know more about these methods.

Employing quantification, we may spot even slight erosions of the old meanings and first emergences of the new ones; this entails, once again, that meaning change works in a far more complicated fashion than it is sketched in the essay. It is influenced by many cultural, social, political, and linguistic factors and constraints. From my perspective, I see the purpose of science in providing explanations of phenomena; I give preference to description over prescription; and the present essay seems to be prescriptive, bordering on a newspaper commentary (e.g., concerning the paragraph discussing the appropriateness of the meaning change of “woman”). That is OK, but it is not in line with what I see as research work.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.