

MATT MOSS Dissertation Abstract

Title Defining Marks: A Defense of the Predicate View of Proper Names

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Proper names are devices for referring to individuals. But what must names be like to be such devices of reference? Referentialism is the orthodox view according to which names just stand for the things we refer to with them, and have no content other than what they stand for. The Predicate View of names, by contrast, asserts that a name such as “Bambi” expresses a property, bearing-“Bambi”, satisfied by a class of things, the Bambis. I argue that the modal intuitions that motivated referentialism are better explained by the Predicate View. I further show that the relevant data are best explained by modifying our semantics for names, and not by appealing to other linguistic mechanisms. I conclude that the linguistic data, along with broader considerations about the place of names in the overall economy of referring expressions, should move us to abandon Referentialism and embrace the Predicate View.