

Iterated privation, positive predication, and technical malfunction

ABSTRACT

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The standard rule of single privative modification replaces privative modifiers by Boolean negation. This rule is valid, for sure, but also simplistic. If an individual a instantiates the privatively modified property (MF) then it is true that a instantiates the property of not being an F , but the rule fails to express the fact that the properties (MF) and F have something in common.

We replace Boolean negation by property negation, enabling us to operate on contrary rather than contradictory properties. To this end, we apply our theory of intensional essentialism, which operates on properties (intensions) rather than their extensions. We argue that each property F is necessarily associated with an essence, which is the set of the so-called requisites of F that jointly define F . Privation deprives F of some but not all of its requisites, replacing them by their contradictories. We show that properties formed from iterated privatives, such as being an imaginary fake banknote, give rise to a trifurcation of cases between returning to the original root property or to a property contrary to it or being semantically undecidable for want of further information. In order to determine which of the three forks the bearers of particular instances of multiply modified properties land upon we must examine the requisites, both of unmodified and modified properties. Requisites underpin our presuppositional theory of positive predication.

Whereas privation is about being deprived of certain properties, the assignment of requisites to properties makes positive predication possible, which is the predication of properties the bearers must have because they have a certain property formed by means of privation.