

(Empty) Names and Higher-Order Logic

Wednesday, 17 April 2024, 4pm – 5.30pm
Venue: AS3-05-23

There is a longstanding puzzle about empty names. On the one hand, the principles of classical logic seem quite plausible. On the other hand, there would seem to be truths involving empty names--such as: Pagesus doesn't exist--that require rejecting certain classically valid principles. In this talk, I'll argue that there is a natural and principled way of reconciling the truth of such claims with classical logic. This account, however, is not neutral with respect to other principles of a broadly logical character. In particular, on this account, claims like Pagesus doesn't exist are incompatible with the validity of the controversial Barcan Formula. I'll argue that this fact may be marshalled to provide an argument against this principle.



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Michael Caie is an associate professor of philosophy at the University of Toronto. He works in philosophical logic, epistemology, metaphysics and philosophy of language.