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Débat public, dénomination et vérité

Public debate, naming and truth

Abstract: John Stuart Mill assigned the quest for truth to public debate. The idea has since fallen into disuse. But it is possible to revive it with regard to naming debates, in which the correspondence between an appellation and a state of affairs is asserted or denied. An examination of naming debates shows that the question of truth is posed in three different ways: truth may be presupposed, it can concern the denotation of a name, or it can concern its meaning. The opposition at the heart of naming debates can relate to the use of an appellation, to the extension of its denotation, to its denotation itself, to its definition, or to the choice between the definition of the appellation and that of another appellation.

Keywords: Truth, naming, public debate, denotation, meaning