

Against the Speaker-intention Theory of Demonstratives

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It is commonly held that an utterance of a bare demonstrative, such as “that”, refers to an object *o* only if the speaker intends it to refer to *o*. First, I argue that the theory is best formulated as a thesis concerning the conditions under which a formal context pertains to an utterance. Second, I pose three objections to this theory: It is question-begging; it is psychologically implausible; and it is inconsistent with the plausible assumption that thoughts too can contain bare demonstratives. Finally, I sketch an alternative theory of the reference of demonstratives, according to which the reference of a demonstrative is that which is identified by an all-things-considered judgment that takes into account various accessibility criteria.