

The roots of nominality, the nominality of roots  
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The first question raised in the title asks what it means for a linguistic construction to be a noun. The second question asks how roots can encode those word-particular properties of nouns that are not grammatically determined. The two questions are related: decomposing nominality leads to asking how much of the structure is determined by the root. This paper outlines an answer by arguing for a specific view on the semantic basis of nominality and its relation to morphological roots. Being a noun doesn't reduce to being a nominalization; primary nouns denote kind-level concepts distinct from their object-level denotation (where the mass / count contrast arises). The distinction has empirical explanatory value, showing that nominal concepts have linguistic reality. Such concepts aren't the content of roots; in fact, roots are 'names' for lexical words (specifically nouns). Like cranberry morphs, they syncategorematically determine lexical meaning but aren't themselves contentful morphemes. This, I argue, solves the tension between claiming that roots are category-free and ascribing them category-determining content.