

The Varieties of Content

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Abstract

In this paper I defend a view about the nature of propositional content by, among other things, showing how it can solve Frege's puzzles about the substitution of co-referring names in identity and belief sentences. The view I will defend is that propositions are types of actions performed in speech and thought. For example, the proposition expressed by the sentence 'George is clever' is, I propose, the type of act a speaker performs when she asserts or judges that George is clever. One component of this type is spoken or mental reference to George. This type of referential act is the semantic contribution of the name 'George' to the proposition expressed by 'George is clever'. I hold, therefore, that the semantic contents of proper names are types of referential acts. As we will see, this account accommodates the rigidity of proper names while offering simple solutions to Frege's puzzles.