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On complex demonstratives in propositional attitude ascriptions

ABSTRACT:

Jeffrey King has famously endorsed an influential argument for the conclusion that complex demonstratives are not directly referential terms. According to this argument, there are certain propositional attitude ascriptions whose intuitive truth value apparently cannot be handled on the assumption that complex demonstratives are in fact devices of direct reference. The argument in question essentially relies on the so-called principle of harmony, according to which any attitude ascription requires for its truth that the subject believe the proposition which the ascription's embedded sentence would express, were it uttered in isolation. I suggest that we may preserve our intuitive judgments about the truth value of attitude ascriptions, while at the same maintaining the direct reference view, if we drop Harmony and provide an alternative thesis about the necessary condition for the truth of attitude-ascribing sentences. This is what I shall do in this paper. One result of this endeavour is that the direct reference view of complex demonstratives is not clearly refuted by facts about ascriptions of propositional attitude.