

“Metaphysics and semantics in the Mates examples.”

Some notorious examples given by Benson Mates have often been thought to support the idea that intersubstitutability gets more stringent, the more embedded a word is in the scopes of attitude verbs. A natural thought is that a hierarchical semantic theory, such as the (alleged) Fregean hierarchy, is perfectly suited to explain such phenomena. I take this idea as a case study, showing how difficult it can be at times to disentangle semantic phenomena from metaphysical phenomena. Once we carefully formulate two distinct ideas of intersubstitutability we see that a hierarchical semantics is not at all suited to explain Mates-like phenomena. The general moral is that it is for psychology, not philosophy of language, to tell us what the “objects of belief” are.