

Understanding 'love' and 'happiness' the conceptual representation of abstract objects

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Abstract: Understanding love and happiness the conceptual representation of abstract objects

In this paper I propose an externalist account of words denoting abstract objects. I suggest that lexical items potentially give access to a range of corresponding concepts (Sperber and Wilson 1998) which get their content from standing in a constitutive relation to properties in the world (Fodor 1998). I argue that this relation can manifest itself in a number of ways, and that deference (Putnam 1975) plays a role in mediating the link between concepts and abstract objects, such as love, happiness and morality. I expand on this by introducing Sperber's (1997) distinction between intuitive and reflective concepts, and suggest that even though concepts locked to moral and emotion properties may be seen as reflective, they are likely to be constrained by an innate intuitive format. By tentatively investigating cross-linguistic data, I explore some consequences of my view for representation, communication and ontology.

References

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