



## Aboutness (Carl G. Hempel Lecture Series)

*Stephen Yablo*

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Aboutness has been studied from any number of angles. Brentano made it the defining feature of the mental. Phenomenologists try to pin down the aboutness-features of particular mental states. Materialists sometimes claim to have grounded aboutness in natural regularities. Attempts have even been made, in library science and information theory, to operationalize the notion.

But it has played no real role in philosophical semantics. This is surprising; sentences have aboutness-properties if anything does. *Aboutness* is the first book to examine through a philosophical lens the role of subject matter in meaning.

A long-standing tradition sees meaning as truth-conditions, to be specified by listing the scenarios in which a sentence is true. Nothing is said about the principle of selection--about what in a scenario gets it onto the list. Subject matter is the missing link here. A sentence is true because of how matters stand where its subject matter is concerned.

Stephen Yablo maintains that this is not just a feature of subject matter, but its essence. One indicates what a sentence is about by mapping out logical space according to its changing ways of being true or false. The notion of content that results--directed content--is brought to bear on a range of philosophical topics, including ontology, verisimilitude, knowledge, loose talk, assertive content, and philosophical methodology.

Written by one of today's leading philosophers, *Aboutness* represents a major advance in semantics and the philosophy of language.

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