

Preface

In 1975 we published an article, "Knowing who" (*Philosophical Studies* 28 (1975), 299–344), in which we explored the little-understood notion of "knowing who someone is," and offered a semantical theory of ascriptions of "knowing who." Our analysis has been cited variously in the literature, with gratifying approval, but to our knowledge not a single objection has been made against it. For some time we ascribed this absence of criticism to our theory's manifest plausibility and power, and we are still tempted to do so. But only rarely is a philosophical theory's ring of truth as clear and as strong as its creators fondly suppose; and in this book we are moved to expand and ramify the theory in a more comprehensive and provocative way, applying it to some more familiar philosophical issues, the bearing on which of our semantical concerns would not have been immediately apparent.

We begin by offering a revised analysis of "knowing who someone is," "knowing a person's identity," and the like. Our account is now set in the context of a general theory of believing and a semantical theory of belief and knowledge ascriptions. Our main contention is that what one knows when one knows who someone is, is not an *identity* in the numerical or logical sense of "a = b," at all, but rather a special sort of predication: To know who someone is is just to know that that person is F, where "F" is a predicate that is "important" (in a technical sense that we define) for the purposes determined by context. We go on in part II to offer a rigorous formal semantics for ascriptions of knowing and of "knowing who" in particular; this treatment solves some well-known problems and paradoxes, such as Kripke's puzzle and Quine's difficulties regarding *de re* belief. Once the analysis has been entirely developed and refined, we apply it in part III to each of several more traditional philosophical issues in which the previously unexamined notion of "knowing who" has loomed large: linguistic referring, the foundations of epistemic logic, self-knowledge and self-regarding belief, universalizability and "Golden Rule" arguments in ethics, and moral "personalism" versus "impartialism."

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success, we try to acknowledge all our particular debts in notes, but we are especially grateful for the more general and extensive contributions of Michael T. Carlsen-Jones, Hector Castañeda, Max Cresswell, Dan Dennett, Richard Garner, Gilbert Harman, Charles Kielkopf, Murray Kiteley, Robert Kraut, Keith Lehrer, Michael McKinsey, John Pollock, Jay Rosenberg, George Schumm, Ernest Sosa, the late Gail Stine, and especially Michael Devitt. Finally, as if anyone had to ask *who* are Bradford Books, we thank Harry and Betty Stanton for their expert help in producing this essay.