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“Modality with Content”

Abstract: In his *Begriffsschrift*, Frege famously holds that necessity modals do not affect semantic content but only carry an evidential signal, indicating that the speaker has established the prejacent claim via an indirect inference rather than on the basis of a direct observation or trustworthy report. Though this view has fallen outside the mainstream, I show that Frege’s insights fit comfortably in a modern expressivist framework where informational modal talk does not serve to describe reality. In particular, I argue that a speaker who asserts that it *must* be raining does not describe the weather but still expresses propositional content by virtue of the communicative impact of her speech act, the same content that would be expressed by instead asserting that it *is* raining. Moreover, I propose that the inferential signal transmitted with the modal assertion stems from its purely expressive nature.