Propositions

“That-clauses”, e.g. ‘that snow is white’, ‘that Frege is a genius’, appear to function as singular terms (at any rate when they are not being quantified into). The things, if any, that they refer to are called ‘propositions’. Going by grammatical appearances, when Vann believes that snow is white, he stands in the belief-relation to one of these propositions. (Hence ‘propositional attitude’, a term derived from Russell.) Also going by appearances, propositions are the meanings of sentences: ‘La neige est blanche’ means (in French) that snow is white. All this is basically Fregean doctrine in modern jargon.

However, one might doubt whether the appearances do support the claim that when Alfred believes that snow is white he stands in the belief-relation to the proposition that snow is white, on the grounds that one often cannot substitute salva veritate ‘the proposition that snow is white’ for its corresponding that-clause. For instance, ‘Vann said the proposition that snow is white’ is not even grammatical, and ‘Vann fears the proposition that snow is white’ (true, apparently) may diverge in truth value from ‘Vann fears that snow is white’ (implausible). For a defence of the “relational theory of believing” against this sort of worry, see King, “Designating Propositions”, Phil Rev (forthcoming).

What is the proposition that Frege is a genius? According to Lewis and Stalnaker, it is the set of all possible worlds in which Frege is a genius. According to the neo-Fregean, it
is a structured entity composed of the sense of ‘Frege’ and the sense of ‘is a genius’ (whatever these may be). According to the neo-Russellian, it is a structured entity composed of Frege and the property of being a genius, a so-called “singular proposition”. According to Quine, propositions are “creatures of darkness” (an opinion shared by Davidson, who developed a theory of meaning in the style of a Tarski-style truth theory, and a semantics for propositional attitudes, that supposedly do not need propositions); cf. Russell in PLA, lect. iv.

See Cartwright, “Propositions”; many of the papers in Salmon and Soames (eds), *Propositional Attitudes*; and Schiffer, *Remnants of Meaning*.

**The Slingshot**
The argument, “derived from Frege” (according to Davidson in “Causal Relations”), that shows, given certain assumptions, that all true sentences refer to the same thing, ditto false sentences. Apparently so-named by Barwise and Perry after the famous bout between David and Goliath. It’s unlikely that Frege had anything like the slingshot in mind.


**Quotation marks**
A useful survey of the differing accounts of quotation marks is in Cappelen and Lepore, “Varieties of Quotation”, *Mind* 106 (1997). See also Davidson, “Quotation”, in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*. 
Frege on ‘I’

Kaplan’s character
Consider:

(*) I am hungry

Suppose Smith and Jones both utter (*). It may be that what Smith said is true, and what Jones said is false. Hence they say different things—in the sense that their utterances express different propositions. This is because (of course) the referent of ‘I’, as uttered by Smith, differs from the referent of ‘I’, as uttered by Jones.

Thus, there is a sense of ‘meaning’—content, in Kaplan’s terminology—in which the meaning of (*) and ‘I’ varies across contexts.

But there is also a sense of ‘meaning’—character, in Kaplan’s terminology—in which Smith and Jones uttered words with the same meaning. In particular, there is a sense in which ‘I’, as uttered by Smith, means the same as ‘I’, as uttered by Jones. What these two tokens have in common is that the type ‘I’ has (something like) the following rule attached to it:
An utterance of ‘I’ in a context refers to the speaker in that context.

We can think (as Kaplan suggests) of the character of ‘I’ as a function from possible contexts to contents.

See Kaplan, “Demonstratives”, in Themes from Kaplan, ed. Almog et al.

Scope
In artificial logical languages, the scope of an expression (quantifier, name, predicate, connective) in a sentence is the smallest well-formed formula in which it occurs in that sentence.

Thus, the scope of ‘&’ in ‘(p & q) v r’ is ‘(p & q)’, and the scope of ‘v’ is ‘(p & q) v r’. The scope of ‘∀y’ in ‘∃x∀y Lxy’ is ‘∀y Lxy’. The scope of ‘~’ in ‘∃x (Cx & ∀y (Cy ⊃ x =y) & ~Ix)’ is ‘~Ix’, and the scope of ‘∃x’ is the whole formula.

α has wide scope with respect to β (β has narrow scope with respect to α) in some sentence σ iff the scope of β in σ is a proper part of the scope of α in σ. (Cf. Russell’s “primary occurrence” and “secondary occurrence”.)

By transferring this talk in a natural way from a sentence σ of a logical language to a sentence s of a natural language that is formalized by σ, we can speak of various expressions of a natural language as having scope, and as taking wide scope with respect to other expressions. A scope ambiguity occurs when a sentence has at least two readings that are due to a difference in scope (e.g. ‘Everyone loves someone’, and Russell’s examples of ‘The King of France is not bald’ and ‘I thought your yacht was longer than it is’).
De dicto and de re

Consider:

(3) George believes, of the author of *Waverley*, that he is Scotch.
(4) George believes that the author of *Waverley* is Scotch.

(5) Lois believes, of Superman, that he is a reporter for the Daily Planet.
(6) Lois believes that Superman is a reporter for the Daily Planet.

(3) is an example of a *de re* (concerning the thing) attitude report. Intuitively, (3) may be true even though George doesn’t think of Scott under the description ‘the author of *Waverley*’. (4) is an example of a *de dicto* (concerning what is said) attitude report (more exactly, the natural interpretation of (4) is de dicto, where the belief operator takes wide scope with respect to the description. But there is a scope ambiguity, as Russell in effect pointed out). The truth of (4) (given a suitable context) does seem to require that George think of Scott under the description ‘the author of *Waverley*’. And similarly (although considerably more problematically) for (5) and (6).

(Attitude reports like ‘Scott believes that he wrote *Waverley*’ and ‘Dr Lauben has the thought that he was wounded’ are sometimes said to be *de se* (concerning oneself). See the Lewis paper cited above.)

There is a similar distinction for modal claims:

(7) The number of planets is such that it is necessarily odd.
(8) Necessarily the number of planets is odd.
(7) says that a certain object (in fact, nine) has a property (being odd) essentially (de re). Arguably, that’s true. (8) (on the most natural interpretation, where the necessity operator takes wide scope with respect to the definite description) says that in every possible world there is an odd number of planets (de dicto), which is surely false.

On the attitudes: see (e.g.) Quine “Quantifiers and Propositional Attitudes” in *The Ways of Paradox* and Dennett, “Beyond Belief”, in *The Intentional Stance*). On modality, see (e.g.) Quine, sec. 41 of *Word and Object*, and Fine, “The Problem of De Re Modality”, in *Themes from Kaplan*. Ch. 4 of Neale’s *Descriptions* is useful for both.