

Gottlob Frege: On Sense and Reference

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[Introduction]

I. Language and the World

___ How does language depict reality? Does reality have the same structure as the structure of language? For instance, the basic linguistic structure is a subject and a predicate, and the basic structure of the world is a particular and a universal (Socrates is wise). The subject usually is something of the world and we describe some property it has or does not have. A is F is true is A is really F, is false when A is not|F.

II. Different Elements of Language

Singular terms: Terms that designate particular things

Proper names

Indexicals: now, today, here, I...

Demonstratives: that, this...

Pronouns (singular): he, she,...

Definite descriptions (the so-and-so):

Indefinite (singular) descriptions (a so-and-so)

General terms: Terms that designate a kind of things or a certain property

Mass nouns

___ natural kind terms ('water,' 'tiger,' 'lemon')

___ non-natural kind terms ('bachelor,' 'contract,' 'chair')

Adjectives (predicates): colors, shapes, etc.

III. Traditional Theories of Meaning Prior to Frege

[A] The Ideational Theory

___ The meaning of a linguistic expression is the speaker's idea that is associated with the expression.

[B] Mill's Theory [the Object Theory]

___ The meaning of a singular term is the thing designated by that term;

___ the meaning of a name is just what the name stands for; the name does not have any other meaning

e.g. 'Socrates' means Socrates

e.g. 'Dartmouth'

e.g. 'Johnson'

___ The reasons people have for giving a name does not constitute the meaning of that name. A name is like a "tag" or a "label" onto a thing.

§ Hobbes' view:

Two purposes of names:

- (i) as a mark to recall to ourselves the likeness of a former thought or idea
- (ii) as a sign to recall in others a similar former thought or idea (in communication)

Mill's view: Names are names of things, not of our ideas

- (i) All names are names of something, real or imaginary → there are singular names and there are fictional names
- (ii) All things have not names appropriated to them individually → there are general names

Frege's Theory

(1) Frege's Criticism of The Ideational Theory

[The Publicity Requirement]

___ Meaning must be sharable, objective and communicative; i.e., it must be public.

*** The Ideational theory fails to meet this requirement. But the Millian view seems to meet it.**

(2) Frege's Criticism of the Millian View

[The Puzzle of Identity]

On Mill's theory, the meaning of the name is simply its object. Thus, there is no difference in (i) and (ii):

- (i) Cicero = Cicero [a = a]**
- (ii) Cicero = Tully [a = b]**

Q: What is an identity statement?

___ a statement concerning the equality between two objects

___ a statement concerning self-identity

___ a statement concerning co-referential relations of two names

*** Frege's Argument against Mill**

- 1. On Mill's theory, the meaning of a sentence is composed of the meaning of its parts.**
- 2. On Mill's theory, the meaning of a name is just its object.**
- 3. Since Cicero = Tully, the two names mean the same.**
- 4. Therefore, the meaning of (i) = the meaning of (ii)**
- 5. But the meaning of (i) \neq the meaning of (ii)**
- 6. Therefore, Mill's theory must be wrong.**

[The Problem of Substitution of Co-referential Names]

Mark Twain is Samuel Clemens.

Mark Twain is the author of *Tom Sawyer*.

Leibniz's Law: $x = y$, then $Fx \rightarrow Fy$

Samuel Clemens is the author of *Tom Sawyer*.

Jackie believes that Mark Twain is the author of *TS*.

Leibniz's Law: $x = y$, then $Fx \rightarrow Fy$

Jackie believes that Samuel Clemens is the author of *TS*.

Frege's Theory

1. **There must be additional information contributed by the names to the meaning of the sentences.**

Q: What are the additional information given by names?

2. The different ways of knowing or getting to the object are the “senses” of the names.

→ “modes of presentation”

e.g. Hesperus is Phosphorus (The Morning Star is the Evening Star).

e.g. London is Londres.

e.g.

(a) B. J. Ortcutt is Ralph’s next door neighbor.

(b) The man wearing a hat = the man on the beach = Ralph’s next door neighbor = B. J. Ortcutt.

(c) Ralph believes that the man wearing a hat is a spy.

(d) But: Ralph does not believe that his next door neighbor is a spy.


* Question: What is a mode of presentation? How is it established?

3.

A name stands for (designates) its *referent*.

A name expresses its *sense*.

**Sense and
Reference**



4.

Name $\xrightarrow{\text{mediated by}}$ Referent (object)

[Sense]:

A definite description that picks out the referent of the name



Description Theory of Names

5.

Speaker A

sense 1

Speaker B

sense 2

Speaker C

sense 3

Referent



**6. The sense of a name carries the “cognitive value” of the name. The sense of the whole sentence is called ‘Thought’ (or ‘proposition’) by Frege.
_____ the explanation for the substitution failures in belief context.**

[Frege's Argument]:

1. Two propositions, p and q, are the same if they carry the same cognitive value such that for everyone, p and q express the same thing.
2. But *someone* could consent to "the morning star is a body illuminated by the sun" while denying that "the evening star is a body illuminated by the sun," even though the two terms "the morning star" and "the evening star" have the same reference.
3. Therefore, "the morning star is a body illuminated by the sun" and "the evening star is a body illuminated by the sun" do not have the same cognitive value; hence, they do not express the same proposition.

7. A sentence in indirect discourse designates a proposition. Substitution can only preserve truth value in indirect discourse when one proposition is replaced by another one with the same cognitive value.

8. Publicity Requirement:

___ Thought and sense are sharable (but not necessarily shared) in that we can grasp what others associate with the term/sentence.

9. Other terminology:

Sense

Intension

Meaning

concept or semantic content

mode of presentation (Frege)

descriptions



Referent

Extension

Object

Nominatum (Frege)

Denotation (Russell)

10. Summary of the Description Theory (Descriptivism) of names:

___ Descriptions associated with names by speakers *give the meanings* of names, and/or *determine (fix)* their referents (in the actual world; in any arbitrary world-state).

___ The meaning of a name is its *sense*, which is a mode of representation of the object (the referent).

___ Reference is mediated by the sense or the description the speaker associates with the name.

Next Week's Task

- **Read: Russell,**
 - **On Denoting,**
 - **Descriptions**

Questions:

What are Russell's three puzzles? What are his solutions? (Give brief explanations.)

2 pages (due next week)

- The Reference of a proposition is its truth value