

Phil/Ling 375: *Meaning and Mind*

[Handout #13]

Gottlob Frege: On Sense and Reference

Professor JeeLoo Liu

[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 (e.g. “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.

[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. [T]

Mark Twain is the author of *Tom Sawyer*. [T]

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

Samuel Clemens is the author of *Tom Sawyer*. [T]

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

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

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

(3) Frege's Theory

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

Q: What is 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"

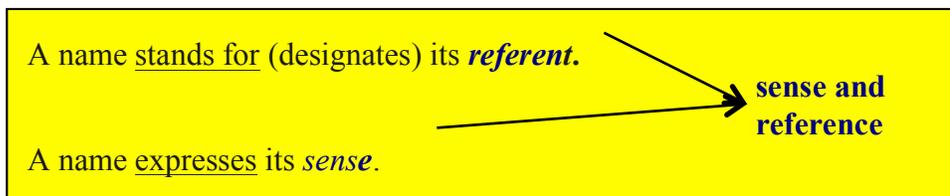
e.g. Hesperus is Phosphorus (The Morning Star is the Evening Star).

e.g.

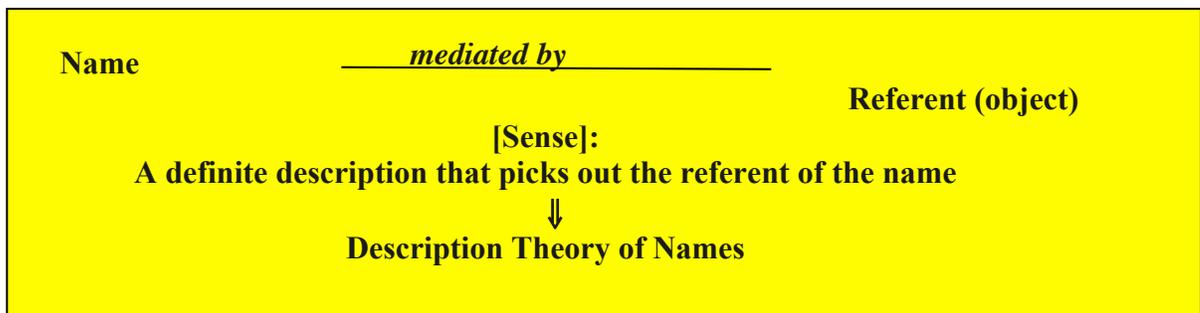
- (a) B. J. Ortcutt is Ralph's next door neighbor.
- (b) The man wearing a hat = the man on the beach = Ralph's next door neighbor = B. J. Ortcutt.
- (c) Ralph believes that the man wearing a hat is a spy.
- (d) But: Ralph does not believe that his next door neighbor is a spy.

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

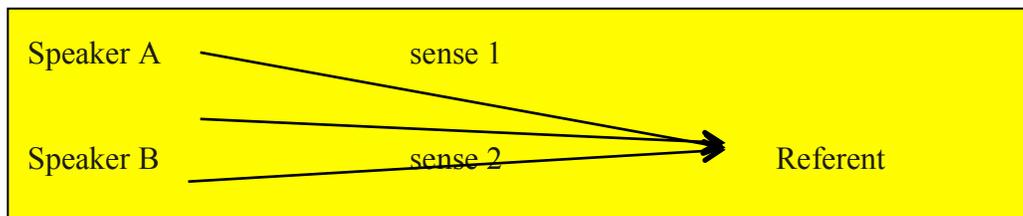
3.



4.



5.



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.

[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.

§ Supplement: Frege on Reference of A Sentence

- ❖ All true sentences have the same reference, and all false sentences have the same reference.
- ❖ Knowledge lies in the proposition together with its reference, i.e., its truth-value.
- ❖ Judgment is a movement from a proposition to its reference, i.e., its truth-value.
- ❖ The truth-value of a sentence, which contains another sentence as a part, must remain unaltered when we substitute for the part another of the same truth-value.
- ❖ A sentence in direct discourse designates a sentence, but in indirect discourse, it designates a proposition (a Thought). Frege's point is that in indirect discourses, we do not have the customary reference; we only have *indirect* reference – which is the sense for a singular term, or a proposition for a sentence.