

Phil 435: Philosophy of Language

[Handout 8]

John Stuart Mill: Of Names

§ 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

§ The definitions of 'singular names' and 'general names':

* [general name] = a name which is capable of being truly affirmed of each of an indefinite number of things.

* [collective name] = a name which cannot be predicated of each individual separately, but only of all taken together.

* [singular name] = a name which is only capable of being truly affirmed of one thing.

Singular names: proper names, definite descriptions

§ Concrete Names vs. Abstract Names

[concrete name] = a name which stands for a thing

[abstract name] = a name which stands for an attribute of a thing

Abstract names can be either general names (.e.g. color, whiteness, magnitude, attribute), or singular names (e.g. visibleness, equality, squareness, milk-whiteness). It should be put in a separate class.

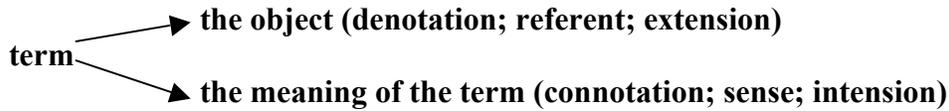
Discuss p. 268

___ A name can only be said to stand for, or to be a name of, the things of which it can be predicated.

§ **Connotative vs. Non-Connotative Terms**

Note: denote vs. connote

_____ Mill's distinction between the things to which a term refers (its denotation) and the meaning of the term (its connotation). In modern logic, this distinction is often assimilated to the distinction between the extension and intension of an expression.



[connotative term] = a term which denotes a subject and implies (indirectly signifies) an attribute. (e.g. 'white,' 'long,' 'virtuous,' 'man,' etc.)

[non-connotative term] = a term which signifies a subject only (e.g. 'John,' 'London,' or 'England'), or an attribute only (e.g. 'whiteness,' 'length,' 'virtue'). ⇒ denotative

Mill's Claims:

1. All concrete general names are connotative. (e.g. The word 'man' is applied to all men because they possess, and to signify that they possess, certain attributes.)
2. Abstract names may, in some instances, be justly considered as connotative.
3. All proper names are denotative. (They denote the individuals who are called by them, but they do not indicate or imply any attributes as belonging to those individuals.) e.g. 'Johnson,' 'Heavy-Foot,' 'Dartmouth,' 'Grace,'



Discuss p. 269

_____ the example of 'Dartmouth' [Proper names are attached to the objects themselves and are not dependent on the continuance of any attribute of the object.]

4. Some individual names, 'the sun,' 'God,' for example, are connotative. These are exceptions.
5. All definite descriptions are connotative. (e.g. 'the father of Socrates,' 'the man who broke into my house,' etc.) They include a general name that applies to many things and a definite article or description that makes it an individual name. (e.g. 'the present prime minister of England,' 'the present President of the United States.')

Discuss p. 270

_____ Whenever names have properly any meaning, the meaning resides not in what they denote but in what they connote.

_____ **The only names of objects which connote nothing are proper names, and these have, strictly speaking, no signification.**

- It is to this second claim that Frege's theory tries to show counterexample.

- Russell uses this criterion and declares all proper names in natural languages to be not proper names.

Discuss p. 270

___ A connotative name ought to be considered a name of all the various individuals which it is predicated of (denotes), and not of what it connotes. But by learning what things it is a name of, we do not learn the meaning of the name; for to the same thing we may, with equal propriety, apply many names, not equivalent in meaning. E.g. 'Sophroniscus' or 'the father of Socrates.'

§ Summary

The Naïve Theory of Names:

- 1. Names denote their objects and connote the attributes of these objects. They signify directly the objects and indirectly the attributes.**
 - 2. The denotation is the object, the connotation is the meaning of these names.**
 - 3. Proper names, however, have denotation but no connotation. In other words, proper names signify objects and nothing else. They have no meaning.**
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Gottlob Frege: On Sense and Reference

[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.

[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) ≠ 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*.

(3) 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).

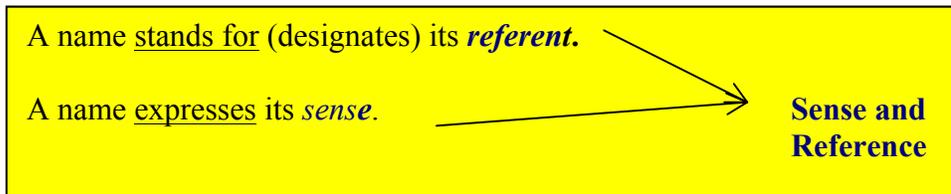
e.g. London is Londres.

e.g.

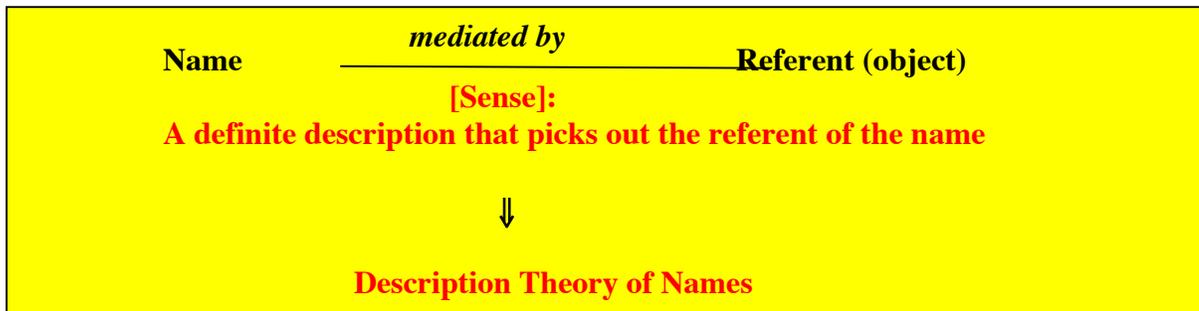
- (a) B. J. Ortcutt is Ralph’s next door neighbor.
- (b) The man wearing a hat = the man on the beach = Ralph’s next door neighbor = B. J. Ortcutt.
- (c) Ralph believes that the man wearing a hat is a spy.
- (d) But: Ralph does not believe that his next door neighbor is a spy.

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

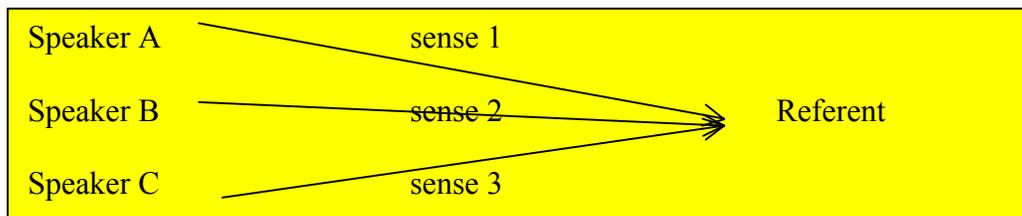
3.



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]:

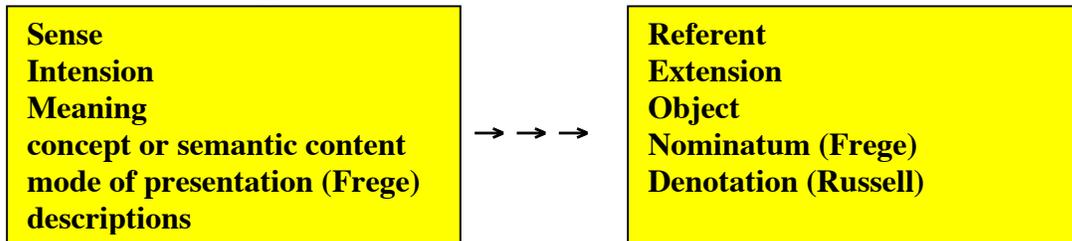
1. Two propositions, p and q, are the same if they carry the same cognitive value such that for everyone, p and q express the same thing.
2. But *someone* could consent to "the morning star is a body illuminated by the sun" while denying that "the evening star is a body illuminated by the sun," even 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.

9. Other terminology:



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.



How does Frege solve the problem of substitution failure in indirect discourse?

- ❖ **The reference of a sentence: the truth-value of the sentence.**
 ___ **Truth-values: the True and the False.**

- ❖ **The relation of a proposition to the True must not be compared with the relation of subject and predicate.**

e.g. In stating ‘the proposition that 5 is a prime number is true’, nothing more is said than is said in the simple sentence ‘5 is a prime number’.

- ❖ **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.**

§ Frege’s Argument for the Truth-value being the reference of a sentence:

- 1) **Leibniz’s law: any two expressions that have the same reference can substitute each other, without changing the truth-value of the sentence.**
- 2) **Whatever that remains invariant after the substitution of sentence-components with the same reference, must be the reference of the sentence itself.**
- 3) **Therefore, the reference of a sentence must be its truth-value.**

- ❖ **A sentence in direct discourse designates a sentence but in indirect discourse, it designates a proposition. 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.**

- ❖ **[Summary of indirect discourse]:**
 ___ **‘believe that’, ‘it seems (to me) that...’, ‘to be glad that...’, ‘regret that...’, ‘approve that...’, ‘disapprove that...’, ‘hope that...’, ‘fear that...’**

- ❖ Therefore, in indirect discourse, we do not substitute sentence-components with the same reference (the True or the False) and preserve the same truth-value. We can only substitute one sentence-component with the same proposition (or the same sense) to save the original truth-value.

e.g. 'The grass is green' and 'the snow is white.' → T
 'The grass is green' and 'the ocean is blue.' → T

Mark Twain is the author of *Tom Sawyer*. → T
 Samuel Clemens is the author of *Tom Sawyer*. → T
 Jodi believes that **Mark Twain is the author of *Tom Sawyer***. → T
 Jodi believes that **Samuel Clemens is the author of *Tom Sawyer***. → F

Focus Questions for Essay #8: (Due April 3)

Read: Russell, On Denoting [Skip Russell, Descriptions]

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