

Frege, “On Sense and Nominatum”

Frege’s Puzzle:

‘Cicero = Cicero’ is uninformative. (Frege: it is analytic and *a priori*.)

‘Cicero = Tully’ is informative. (Frege: it extends knowledge and isn’t always *a priori*.)

Does this show that sameness is a relation between the *signs* ‘Cicero’ and ‘Tully’ rather than between the *person* Cicero and himself? If the latter, it seems the sentences could not be different, since both “would express a relation of a thing to itself” (p. 217).

However: If sameness were between the signs, “a sentence like ‘a = b’ would no longer refer to a matter of fact but rather to our manner of designation.” (ibid.)

Hence, “A difference could arise only if the difference of the signs corresponds to a difference in the [mode of presentation]” (ibid.)

“it is plausible to connect with a sign...besides that which the sign designates, which may be called the *Bedeutung* of the sign, also what I should like to call the *sense* of the sign, wherein the mode of presentation [*Art de Gegebenseins*] is contained” (Beaney, p. 152)

Thus, the object of ‘Cicero’ and ‘Tully’ are the same, but their sense is different (because their MOP is different).

Slip in first column, middle, p. 218?

“The sense of a proper name is grasped by everyone who is sufficiently familiar with the language...but this serves to illuminate only a single aspect of the *Bedeutung*, supposing it to have one. Comprehensive knowledge of the *Bedeutung* would require us to be able to say immediately whether any given sense attaches to it. To such knowledge we never attain.” (Beaney, p. 153)

Normally, the relation is many-one between signs and senses (though between contexts, it will be many-many.) Without exception, however, the relation is many-one from senses to *Bedeutungs* (This is Frege’s principle that “sense determines reference.”) Although, “this is not to say that to the sense there always corresponds a *Bedeutung*” (Beaney, ibid.)

Indirect Discourse and Substitution *Salve Veritate*

We can talk about signs using quotation marks, and we can talk of the sense of an expression, e.g., as used by someone else, in “indirect discourse.”

“In indirect discourse we speak of the sense, e.g., of the words of someone else. From this it becomes clear that also in indirect discourse words do not have their customary [*Bedeutung*]; they here name what customarily would be their sense... Thus we distinguish the *customary* sense from its *indirect* sense” (p. 219).

What is Frege Talking About??

This woefully brief passage gestures at one of the most important puzzles in logic and philosophy of language. Examples of indirect discourse:

- (1) Obama said that Thanksgiving is a great day of national pride.
- (2) Obama said that the day that signals the beginning of European imperialism (incl. the genocide of the Native Americans) is a great day of national pride.

Both are cases of “indirect discourse,” since both report on what someone else said. Notably, however, (2) *does not follow* from (1), even if we assume that Thanksgiving = the day that signals the beginning of European imperialism (incl. the genocide of Native Americans). N.B., if you say (2) indeed follows from (1), you are committing the “intensional fallacy.”

But why is this? If we are talking about *one and the same day*, then why doesn't Obama's remarks carry over?

Frege's answer: ‘Thanksgiving’ does not really denote *Thanksgiving* in indirect discourse, but rather the “sense” of the term ‘Thanksgiving’. (Similarly for ‘the day signaling the onset of the European genocide of the Native Americans’)

Later: With a sentence in indirect discourse, its *Bedeutung* is the thought it expresses, though in direct discourse, the thought is the sense and the *Bedeutung* is the truth-value. (See p. 222)

Vorstellung (Skippable)

“Both the [*Bedeutung*] and the sense of a sign must be distinguished from the associated [*Vorstellung*]” (p. 219). ‘*Vorstellung*’ can translate as ‘idea’ or ‘image’.

Try to unpack this one: “If the [*Bedeutung*] of a sign is an object of sense perception, my [*Vorstellung*] of the latter is an inner picture arisen from memories of sense impressions and activities of mine, internal or external. Frequently this [*Vorstellung*] is suffused with feelings; the definiteness of its various parts may vary and fluctuate. Even with the same person the same sense is not always accompanied by the same [*Vorstellung*]” (p. 219)

Vorstellung is subjective.

Vorstellung ≠ connotation [some are part of a “common treasure of thoughts”]

“When two persons imagine the same thing, each still has his own [*Vorstellung*]. It is true, occasionally we can detect differences in the images or even in the sensations of different persons. But an accurate comparison is impossible because these images cannot be had together in one consciousness.” (p. 219) Analogy with observing the moon.

It seems that *Vorstellung* = MOP: “We can now recognize three levels of differences of words, expressions and complete sentences.” (ibid.)

Differences in *Vorstellung* include differences in “the coloring and shading which poetic eloquence seeks to impart to the sense” [Beaney, p. 155]

Objection from Idealists/Skeptics:

“How do you know that ‘the moon’ has in fact a [*Bedeutung*]?” (p. 220).

Frege: We presuppose a *Bedeutung*, though that presupposition may be mistaken. Nonetheless: “We would miss the *Sinn* altogether if we assumed that we [*bedeuten*] images in the sentence ‘the moon is smaller than the earth’. Were this intended we would use some such locution as ‘my image of the moon’.” (ibid.)

Declarative Sentences

It “contains a thought” [Beaney, p. 156]. But a sentence does not [*bedeutet*] the thought, since substituting a co-referring word would normally change the thought: “the morning star is a body...” is a different thought from “the evening star is a body...” (ibid.) So the thought is the sentence’s sense.

‘Odysseus deeply asleep was disembarked at Ithaca’ has a sense, but it is *dubious* whether it has a *Bedeutung* since ‘Odysseus’ may not have a *Bedeutung*.

NONETHELESS: “it is certain that whoever seriously regards the sentence either as true or false also attributes to the name ‘Odysseus’ a [*Bedeutung*]...for it is obviously the [*Bedeutung*] of this name to which the predicate is either ascribed or denied. He who does not acknowledge the [*Bedeutung*] cannot ascribe or deny a predicate to it” (ibid.)

But if the thought is what matters, then it may not matter whether ‘Odysseus’ or its containing sentence has a *Bedeutung* or not. That’s because “The thought remains the same whether ‘Odysseus’ has a *Bedeutung* or not” [Beaney, ibid.]

Still, “it is the striving for truth which urges us to penetrate beyond the sense to the [*Bedeutung*]” (p. 221).

The True and the False

“we are to look for the [*Bedeutung*] of a sentence whenever the [*Bedeutung*] of the sentence-components are the thing that matters; and that is the case whenever and only when we ask for the truth value.//Thus we find ourselves persuaded to accept the *truth-value* of a sentence as its [*Bedeutung*]” (ibid.) HOWEVER: “By the truth-value of a sentence I mean *the circumstances* of its being true or false” (emphasis mine, ibid.)

“Every declarative sentence...is therefore to be considered as a proper name; and its [*Bedeutung*], if there is any, is either the True or the False.”

Why? “The thought that 5 is prime is true” is equivalent to “5 is prime.”

“This makes clear that the relation of a proposition [*Gedanke*] to the True must not be compared with the relation of subject and predicate [since] Subject and predicate...are,

after all, components of a proposition... Just as the sun cannot be part of a proposition, so the truth-value, because it is not the sense, but an object, cannot be either" (ibid.)

"if...all true sentences have the same [*Bedeutung*]...[t]his implies that all detail has been blurred in the [*Bedeutung*] of a sentence. What interests us can therefore never be merely the [*Bedeutung*]; but the proposition alone does not give knowledge; only the proposition together with its [*Bedeutung*], i.e., its truth-value, does" (ibid.)

Other cases (Skippable)

Imperatives: "Imperatives have no [*Bedeutung*]; they have only sense [even though] commands or requests are not propositions, but they are the same type as propositions" (p. 223)

Dependent Questions, as in "I don't know who Tully is." These *bedeuteten* their sense, since substitution *salve veritate* fails for their terms.

Dependent Clauses, as in 'He who discovered the elliptical shape of the planetary orbits, died in misery'. Frege: "the sense of the clause is not a complete proposition and its [*Bedeutung*] is not a truth-value, but Kepler" (ibid.)

Empty terms

'Kepler died in misery' presupposes that 'Kepler' designates something. However, this thought is not contained in the sense of the sentence. (If it were, then the denial of the sentence would be: "either Kepler did not die in misery or the name 'Kepler' is empty")

Subordinate Clauses in general

"The sense of a subordinate clause is usually not a proposition but only part of one [e.g., "the root of 4 which is smaller than 0]. Its [*Bedeutung*] is therefore not a truth-value. The reason for this is *either*: that the words in the subordinate clause have only indirect [*Bedeutung*], so that it, not the sense, of the clause is a proposition, *or*, that the clause, because of a contained indeterminately indicating constituent, is incomplete, such that only together with the principle clause does it express a proposition. However, there are also instances in which the sense of the dependent clause is a complete proposition, and in this case it can be replaced by another clause of the same truth-value without altering the truth-value of the whole, that is, inasmuch as there are no grammatical obstacles in the way" (p. 226).

Exception to the last claim: "that the clause, while it does denote a truth-value, is not restricted to this function in that its sense comprises, besides one proposition, also part of another." (p. 228). *Example*: "After Schleswig-Holstein was separated from Denmark, Prussia and Austria fell out with one another."

Frege, “The Thought: A Logical Inquiry”

Part I: Truth

“[I]t falls to logic to discern the laws of truth,” where ‘laws’ is used not in the prescriptive but in the descriptive sense (although: “[prescriptive] Rules for asserting, thinking, judging, inferring follow from the [descriptive] laws of truth”). (p. 36).

Anti-Psychologism: “one might come to believe that logic deals with the mental process of thinking and the psychological laws in accordance with which it would take place. This would be a misunderstanding” (ibid.)

Uses of ‘true’: It is used (1) to mean “genuine”, (2) when truth in art is discussed, (3) when it prefaces a word to indicate that the word is understood in its “proper, unadulterated” sense, (4) to mean “the goal of science” (p. 37).

(Remarks on pictures, middle of 1st column, ibid.)

Against Correspondence Theory: “Correspondence is a relation. This is contradicted, however, by the use of the word ‘true’, which is not a relation-word and contains no reference to anything else to which something must correspond” (ibid.)

“A correspondence, moreover, can only be perfect if the corresponding things coincide and are, therefore, not distinct things at all”

Banknote example: “It would only be possible to compare an idea with a thing if the thing were an idea too. And then, if the first did correspond perfectly with the second, they would coincide” (ibid.)

Objection: “Can it not be laid down that truth exists when there is a correspondence in a certain respect?”

Reply: “We should have to inquire whether it were true that an idea and a reality, perhaps, corresponded in the laid-down respect. And then we should be confronted by a question of the same kind and the game could begin again.” (ibid.)

Against Any Other Truth-Definition:

“every other attempt to define truth collapses too. For in a definition certain characteristics would have to be stated. And in application to any particular case the question would always arise whether it were true that the characteristics were present. So one goes round in a circle” (ibid.)

Truth, Sense, and Thought:

A sentence is “A series of sounds; but only when it has a sense...And when we call a sentence true, we really mean its sense is...I call a thought something for which the question of truth arises....So I can say: the thought is the sense of the sentence...The

thought, in itself immaterial, clothes itself in the material garment of a sentence³ and thereby becomes comprehensible to us” (p.37-8).

Truth and the Senses (Skippable)

“Truth is not a quality that corresponds with a particular kind of sense-impression. ..But do we not see that the sun has risen and do we not then also see that this is true? That the sun has risen is not an object which emits rays that reach my eyes, it is not a visible thing like the sun itself. That the sun has risen is seen to be true on the basis of sense-impressions. But being true is not a material, perceptible property” (p. 38).

Analogy with magnetism.

“we cannot recognize a property of a thing without at the same time realizing the thought that this thing has this property to be true. So with every property of a thing is joined a property of a thought, namely, that of truth” (ibid.)

BUT: “ ‘I smell the scent of violets’ has just the same content as the sentence ‘it is true that I smell the scent of violets’. So it seems, then, that nothing is added to the thought by my ascribing to it the property of truth. And yet is it not a great result when the scientist after much hesitation and careful inquiry, can finally say ‘what I supposed is true?’” (ibid.)

Part II: Sentences and Thought (Skippable)

(1) Imperatives, (2) Requests, expressions of desire, (3) “exclamations in which one vents one’s feelings, groaning, sighing, laughing,” (4) interrogatives (4a) “word questions” (4b) “sentence-questions”

“An interrogative sentence and an indicative one contain the same thought; but the indicative contains something else as well, namely, the assertion. The interrogative sentence contains something more too, namely, a request” (ibid.)

Indicative sentences: (from p. 39)

- (1) the apprehension of a thought—thinking,
- (2) the recognition of the truth of a thought—judgment,
- (3) the manifestation of this judgment—assertion.

The Force of Assertion

“We declare the recognition of truth in the form of an indicative sentence. We do not have to use the word true for this. And even when we do use it, the real assertive force lies, not in it, but in the form of the indicative sentence and where this loses its assertive force the word ‘true’ cannot put it back again” (p. 39) Acting example, poetry.

Emotive components: ‘alas’, ‘thank God’

“The more exactly scientific an exposition is, the less will the nationality of its author be discernible and the easier will it be to translate. On the other hand, the constituents of language, to which I want to call attention here, make the translation of poetry very

difficult, even make a complete translation almost always impossible, for it is in precisely that in which poetic value largely consists that languages differ most” (ibid.)

The thought is unaffected by transformations from active to passive voice, from changing ‘and’ to ‘but’, etc., though the “intimations” may be different.

“To a mind concerned with what is beautiful in language what is indifferent to the logician can appear as just what is important. // Thus the contents of a sentence often go beyond the thoughts expressed by it.” (p. 40)

Present tense can be used to indicate that a state-of-affairs obtains presently, or eternally as in mathematical truths. Moreover: “if a time indication is needed by the present tense, one must know when the sentence was uttered to apprehend the thought correctly. Therefore the time of utterance is part of the expression of the thought.” (ibid.)

Dr. Lauben, Leo Peter, and Rudolph Lingens. Frege: “the thought which Leo Peter expresses is not the same as that which Dr. Lauben uttered.” (ibid.)

Add Herberg Garner: “as far as the proper name ‘Dr. Gustav Lauben’ is concerned, Herbert Garner and Leo Peter do not speak the same language, since, although they do in fact refer to the same man with this name, they do not know that they do so” (ibid.)

But suppose LP uses ‘Dr. Lauben’ and HG uses ‘Gustav Lauben’
“it is possible that Herbert Garner takes the sense of the sentence ‘Dr. Lauben has been wounded’ to be true while, misled by false information, taking the sense of the sentence ‘Gustav Lauben has been wounded’ to be false. Under the assumptions given, these thoughts are therefore different. // Accordingly, with a proper name, it depends on how whatever it refers to is presented...and every such way corresponds with a particular sense of a sentence containing a proper name.” (p. 41)

Self-presentation: Dr. Lauben “cannot communicate a thought which he alone can grasp. Therefore, if he now says ‘I have been wounded’, he must use the ‘I’ in a sense which can be grasped by others, perhaps in the sense of ‘he who is speaking to you at this moment.’...// Yet there is a doubt...” (ibid.)

Ideas vs. Thoughts vs. External Objects

Unlike external objects: (1) Ideas cannot be sensed, (2) ideas belong to the “content of consciousness,” (3) ideas are mind-dependent, and (4) ideas are private.

Thoughts are not ideas: Unlike ideas, thoughts are public (on pain of relativism).

Thoughts are not external objects: Thoughts aren’t perceptible.

“So the result seems to be: thoughts are neither things in the external world nor ideas. // A third realm must be recognized” [Beaney, p. 336-7]

Part III: Frege's Cartesian Meditations (Skippable)

"I have assumed several times that the same thing as I see can also be observed by other people. But what if everything were only a dream?" (Beaney, p. 337)

"Either the thesis that only what is my idea can be the object of my awareness is false, or all my knowledge and perception is limited to the range of my ideas, to the stage of my consciousness." (Beaney, p. 338) Frege chooses the first horn.

The *cogito* in a linguistic guise.

"if everything is an idea, then there is no owner of ideas...If there is no owner of ideas then there are also no ideas, for ideas need an owner." (Beaney, p. 339)

Hence, I am not an idea. Yet since I can be the object of my own awareness (as when I judge "I am the owner of these ideas"), it's false that all objects of awareness are ideas.

"Now the way is clear for me to acknowledge another man likewise as an independent owner of ideas...[I]f I state something about my brother, I do not state it about the idea that I have of my brother...But may I not be making a mistake about this?...Nothing now stops me from acknowledging other men to be owners of ideas, just as I am myself. And, once given the possibility, the probability is very great, so great that it is in my opinion no longer distinguishable from certainty." (Beaney, p. 340-1)

A Second Argument from Anti-Psychologism: "Not everything is an idea...Otherwise, psychology would rule even over logic and mathematics. But nothing would be a greater misunderstanding of mathematics" (Beaney, p. 342)

Knowledge of the External World and of Thought "Having visual impressions is certainly necessary for seeing things, but not sufficient. What must still be added is not anything sensible...[S]ince the decisive factor lies in the non-sensible, [it] could also lead us out of the inner world and enable us to grasp thoughts" (p. 343, Beaney)

Part IV: Thought Again

Thoughts are timeless and unchangeable. Objection: What about the thought expressed by 'This tree is covered with green leaves'? Frege: It expresses different thoughts at different times, since "without the time-specification thus given we have not a complete thought, i.e., we have no thought at all....But this thought, if it is true, is true not only today or tomorrow but timelessly" (ibid.)

A New Epistemic Problem: "And yet what value could there be for us in the eternally unchangeable, which could neither be acted upon nor act on us?...Even the timeless, if it is to be anything for us, must somehow be implicated with the temporal" (Beaney, p.344)

Frege's Answer: "Grasping." "This is a process in the inner world of a thinker which may have further consequences in this inner world, and which may also encroach on the sphere of the will and make itself noticeable in the outer world as well." Communicating thoughts as a special case of this.