

**THEORIES OF MEANING AND REFERENCE:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF
GOTTLOB FREGE AND BERTRAND RUSSELL**

**Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the award of the degree of**

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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DECLARATION

I, Pragyanparamita Mohapatra, do hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **Theories of Meaning and Reference: A Comparative Study of Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell** submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of **Jawaharlal Nehru University** is my original work and has not been submitted by me or by anyone else for any other degree or diploma of this or any other University.

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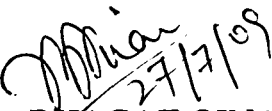


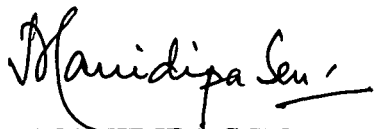
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CERTIFICATE

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*For Mama, Bapa and Bablu
For everything...*

Contents

Acknowledgements	iii–v
Introduction	1–13
Chapter 1: Gottlob Frege’s notion on Sense and Reference	14–48
Introduction	
1.1 Concept/Function and Object	
1.2 Frege’s Puzzle	
1.3 Frege’s view on Sense and Reference	
1.4 Indirect Reference	
1.5 Objectivity of Thoughts	
Conclusion	
Chapter 2: Bertrand Russell’s Theory on Names and Definite Descriptions	49–86
Introduction	
2.1 Russell’s attack on Frege	
2.2 Russell’s view on Denoting Phrases	
2.3 Russell’s Theory of Descriptions	
2.4 Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description	
2.5 Descriptive Phrases versus Referring Expressions	
2.6 Comparing Frege and Russell	
Conclusion	

Chapter 3: Some Contemporary Responses to the Theory of Meaning and Reference	87–128
Introduction	
3.1 Strawson’s response to the Theory of Definite Description	
3.2 Donnellan’s view on Definite Descriptions	
3.3 Evans on the Theory of Sense and Reference	
3.4 McDowell on the Theory of Sense and Reference	
3.5 Salmon on Frege’s Puzzle	
Conclusion	
Conclusion	129–135
Select Bibliography	136–145

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- Plato

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Introduction

Language is a means of communication. It is an instrument through which human beings transmit their thoughts. Through language the world is represented. It is the sole medium of expression of meaning. The concept of meaning brings with it the concept of reference. We relate to the world through language via its reference. So, by sharing reference and meaning we can communicate with each other. The relationship between language and world in which a group of people participate is possible through reference and meaning. We also use language to represent the world to ourselves.

One question that may arise here is: Why is language being discussed in Philosophy? The answer may be given by taking Wittgenstein's remark in *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*, 'All Philosophy is "the critique of language".'¹ This work by Wittgenstein remains a classic presentation of the thesis that Philosophy can only be undertaken through the critical study of language. Here, the idea of critique is introduced as a device of explaining how Philosophy became central in the analysis of language. Thus, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, philosophical approach to language, i.e., known as "Philosophy of Language", have been developed in a context in which linguistic analysis has been taken to be a primary resource for Philosophy. The structure of language which is revealed by an analysis of language, is the only key to the structure of our thought and experience of the world. Thought is supposed to be the inner structure which is expressed through the medium of language.

¹ Wittgenstein, (1922), p. 37, (4.0031).

The distinction between the philosophy of language and linguistic philosophy is that, linguistic philosophy is an attempt to solve particular philosophical problem by attending to the ordinary use of particular words or other elements in a particular language. The philosophy of language is an attempt to give philosophically illuminating descriptions of certain general features of language, such as reference, truth, meaning, and necessity. "Linguistic philosophy" is primarily the name of a method; "the philosophy of language" is the name of a subject.

Philosophy as a critique of language studies the nature of meaning and truth of language. Philosophy is not interested in the empirical aspects of language, rather it is concerned with what language is as such and how it is intimately connected with thoughts and experiences.

"Analytic Philosophy," which is one of the movements in philosophy in the twentieth century, is very deeply engaged in analyzing language. It presents a systematic view regarding the concepts of language, meaning, truth, mind, world etc. which together constitute the whole body for philosophical analysis. So, Analytic Philosophy in general is very much concerned with the understanding of the structure of language. Along with meaning, other concepts which have attracted philosophers' attention are the concepts of reference and truth, all of these are brought out by the logical structure of language. This is the reason why "Analytic Philosophy" has in general constituted the questions of meaning, truth and reference in the context of the overall structure of language. This linguistic orientation of philosophy has been the basis of Analytic Philosophy.

Analytic philosophy is not only a method of philosophizing but also a system of thought presenting a world view, not in the way the classical system building metaphysical philosophy is. As Dummett writes,

"What distinguishes analytic philosophy in its diverse manifestations, from other schools is the belief first that a philosophical account of thought can be attained through a philosophical account of language, and secondly, that a comprehensive account can only be so attained."²

² Dummett, (1993b), p. 4.

Analytic philosophers concerned with four central problems in the philosophy of language:

- The nature of meaning,
- The nature of language use,
- The nature of linguistic cognition,
- The nature of the relation between the language and the reality.

Firstly, philosophers of language inquire into the nature of meaning, and seek to explain what it means to “mean” something.

Secondly, they try to understand what speakers and hearers do with language in communication and how it is used socially.

Thirdly, they try to know how language relates to the minds of both the speaker and the interpreter/hearer.

Finally, they investigate how language and meaning relate to truth and world.

Language makes thought shareable, which becomes the common possession of mankind, so there is a need to understand the logical structure of thought as expressed in language. Thus analytic philosophy studies the meaning of linguistic expressions which constitute broadly the language that expresses human thought. In this context the following statement of Frege seems appropriate, as he says,

“Language may be a distorting mirror, but it is the only mirror that we have.”³

This brings out Frege’s project of investigating the structure of thought through the analysis of language. Thus, the two notions, that is, the structure of thought and the structure of language should be developed together. And thought can be grasped in grasping the meaning or semantic properties of sentences expressing that thought. The meaning of a sentence or a word drives us to think about its reference. The main focus of this dissertation is an understanding of the notions of meaning and reference, with special reference to the two founder figures of analytic philosophy, Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell.

³ Frege, (1997), p. 270.

According to Dummett,

“Analytic philosophy born when the ‘linguistic turn’ was taken.”⁴

“Linguistic turn” is a search for the roots of our understanding of thought and reality via a study of language. It is the turn towards language as the basis of our understanding of the world. The linguistic turn makes philosophers to be aware of the limits of our conceptual constructions of language.

Although all analytic philosophers would agree that the study of language is of the greatest importance, there is no general agreement about which language can most fruitfully be studied by philosophers. Indeed, it is just at this point that a fundamental cleavage has occurred between various philosophers who practice analytic philosophy. Some of them have concluded that philosophical analysis ought to consist primarily in the construction of new, ideal language systems. The rules of these newly constructed languages are intended to be clearer, more complete, and more precise than the rules that govern our use of language in ordinary discourse, say a sentence about ordinary language philosophy.⁵ Ordinary language philosophy is also called natural or linguistic philosophy, because it emphasizes upon the use of language by common people. So it can be considered as more sociological in nature as it essentially focuses on the use of language within social context.

So, there are two threads that weave through in the tradition of analytic philosophy, they are ordinary language philosophy and ideal language philosophy. The most important representatives of ordinary language camp are G.E. Moore, Gilbert Ryle, J.L. Austin, Paul Grice, P.F. Strawson, and later Wittgenstein. The ideal language philosophers are Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell and early Wittgenstein.

But early analytic philosophy had a less positive view of ordinary language. According to Russell, ordinary language is too confused to help in solving metaphysical

⁴ Dummett, (1993b), p. 5.

⁵ Ammerman (ed.), (1965), pp. 2–3.

and epistemological problems. Frege, the Vienna circle (especially Rudolf Carnap), the young Wittgenstein and W.V.O. Quine, all attempted to improve upon it, in particular, using the resources of modern logic. Logic, therefore, was taken as a device to explore the real structure of language, which would lead to solve many philosophical puzzles. This kind of language is called as an “ideal language.” Analytic philosophy takes formal or mathematical logic as its foundation, since in analyzing the logical structure of language and thought, we can bring out the analytic truths underlying the structure of concepts. This itself, they thought, will amount to the study of the logic of language. This logic-inspired revolution in Philosophy takes place in Frege, Russell and early Wittgenstein. Frege⁶ being one of the founders of analytic philosophy was of the view that philosophy is a critique of pure thought as expressed in a pure language.

Russell’s distinction between grammatical form and logical form becomes significant in this context. This distinction leads to the critical awareness of the logical structure of language, and attempts to see, how the surface grammatical structure misleads us. So, it is the misuse of language which is the reason for many puzzles in Philosophy. Russell, Frege and Wittgenstein held that many philosophical problems arise due to our being misled by the surface structure of language. Thus, we need to uncover the real logical form of language in order to understand the structure of language. Even if ideal language is an artificial language, it replaces the ambiguous grammar of natural languages. It was, therefore, a perfect language that is made free of the defects of natural language.

Early Wittgenstein agreed with Russell that natural language need to be formulated as to be unambiguous and so as to represent the world. So, that we could better deal with the question of Philosophy, we need an ideal language. Along with Frege and Russell, Wittgenstein also tried to construct a logically perfect language. Like Frege he had a firm belief in the idea that language needs to be understood in its logical structure because in it alone we can discover the structure of world, and thus he says,

“Philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts.”⁷

⁶ See Dummett, (1981a).

⁷ Wittgenstein, (1992), p. 49 (4.112).

But Wittgenstein in his later work (in *Philosophical Investigations*), argued that our ordinary language itself is in perfect logical order and it possesses a real logical form. Thus there is no reason why there should be a search for a logical language as if it were something different from the ordinary language. Thus the concern for an ideal or artificial language is unwarranted since the thoughts, which are expressed in ordinary or natural language are already in logical order. Thus the so-called ideal language is redundant. His opposite view is expressed thus:

“On the other hand it is clear that every sentence in our language ‘is in order as it is’. That is to say, we are not *striving after* ideal as if our ordinary vague sentences had not yet got a quite unexceptionable sense, and a perfect language awaited construction by us.—On the other hand it seems clear that where there is sense there must be perfect order.—So there must be perfect order even in the vaguest sentence.”⁸

Unlike later Wittgenstein and in line with Russell, Frege also holds that, natural language is incapable of expressing logical thoughts as the logical thoughts are very precise and subtle. These logical thoughts are helpless without a logical notation. Logical notation aids our capacity to express thoughts which otherwise would remain unexpressed in our ordinary language.

The formal language of logic involves primarily the symbols that stand for the propositions, predicates, and quantifiers, etc. The propositional variables like “p,” “q,” “r,” etc., predicate variables such as “F,” “G,” etc. and quantifiers which includes, universal quantifier (\forall), and particular quantifier (\exists). These expressions are specifically designed to express logical thoughts. For example, instead of saying, “some politicians are intelligent”, we can symbolically express it as $(\exists x) (Px.Gx)$, where “Px” stands for “x is a politician” and “Gx” stands for “x is intelligent”. Therefore the language of logic is a tool of logical thoughts and also is a device of expressing them.

⁸ Wittgenstein, (1953), sect. 98.

Another significant reason for which logic has been taken as an instrument to solve the philosophical problems is that, logic is free from psychology and other empirical disciplines. As Frege admits that

“Logicians job is not to enquire into what is happening in human mind but rather to give expression to what is logical and universal in human thought. The mental processes are subjective and private in nature and are variable from person to person.”⁹

That is why mental processes are incapable of explaining the universal and necessary character of the laws of logic. These laws of logic are true for everybody and at all times and places. Hence they are universal in character. So, an ideal language analysis would be free from, what Frege termed, “psychologism”, and would be able to capture the structure of both our thought and the world in their purity.

Now, meaning and reference are of major concern for analytic thinkers as they have been concerned with logical form of language. In their analysis of logical form of language, both natural and formal, they have come upon the twin concepts of reference and meaning as constituting the semantic structure of sentences. In these structures they have discovered the conditions under which the sentences function as meaningful as unites in language.

The problem of meaning arises when we want to know what a sentence or the group of sentences express. Meaning of a sentence is not the same as the thought of the sentence. Though meaning is associated with thought, yet we cannot equate meaning with thought. If meaning were to be the same as thought, then it cannot be maintained that thought itself is meaningful. Besides, it will mean that language does not have meaning as its internal property, since thought in general is supposed to be independent of language. These and many others related questions led Frege to hold that meaning cannot be matter of psychology and that mental processes cannot be the meanings of the sentences in which they are expressed.¹⁰ This antipsychogistic view of Frege is discussed in chapter: 1 in the context of his famous theory of sense and reference.

⁹ Frege, (1997), p. 7.

¹⁰ See Frege’s “Thought: A Logical Inquiry”, in *Philosophical Logic*, edited by P.F. Strawson.

Chapter: 1 consists of Frege's main arguments for introducing the notion of sense over and above the notion of reference, nature of sense, relation between sense and reference and non-psychological nature of thought/sense which leads to a successful communication between the speaker and the hearer as they possess common thoughts towards a sentence. Thus, sense is that which is expressed by sentences and that, like thought, objectively exists in language. So, he says: *sense is objective and intersubjectively communicable.*¹¹ Sense cannot be conceived as a mental content nor can it be something of the nature of a thing in the physical world, though Frege has characterized them as a determinant of reference of a name. Therefore, it must be such that it is the semantic possession of a sentence and yet it must be apprehended by mind. That is why *Frege conceives that the sense belongs to the "third realm,"*¹² a realm over and above the realm of external world and internal thoughts.

Further he assumes that sense is independent of reference. Sense determines reference so far as the reference fulfills the demands of sense. Because of this independent nature of sense Frege viewed that some names which do not have any bearer can also have sense. Through the application of sense in language, he tried to solve some philosophical problems.

This independent character of sense has been rejected by Russell which is discussed in second chapter. Chapter: 2 deals with Russell's analysis of denoting phrases and names. Russell's "Theory of Definite Descriptions" has been a major achievement in illustrating how the ordinary use of descriptive phrases could be a source of philosophical puzzlement. Therefore, the concept of reference plays a significant role in the semantics of natural language. His theory of perfect language centers on his theory of denotation as expounded in his well-known article "On Denoting". In his Theory of Definite Descriptions he undertakes an analysis of the so-called denoting phrases which are really not names but

¹¹ Ibid., p. 34.

¹² Ibid., p. 29.

The 'third realm' is the realm of logical and mathematical thoughts which is granted for the objective nature of senses.

descriptions. He makes a distinction between complete and incomplete symbols. Names are complete symbols and the denoting phrases which are either definite or indefinite descriptions, are incomplete symbols. Complete symbols have meaning on their own, whereas the incomplete ones are dependent for their meaning on the propositions in which they occur. Thus, the incomplete symbols fail to name anything and are used only as predicative expressions. These are all discussed briefly in this chapter.

So, both Frege and Russell were determined to show that logic is far more of a universal science than mathematics. The perfect language which they build up is a great step towards showing that mathematics and logic are identical and that both presuppose, that the structure of thought and of the world are ideally reflected in the structure of logic.

Chapter: 3 deals with some important contemporary responses to Frege and Russell regarding their theory of meaning and reference. These views were found in the writings of Strawson, Donnellan, Evans, McDowell and Nathan Salmon. Strawson and Donnellan were inspired by later Wittgenstein's view on meaning and reference, as according to Wittgenstein,

“For a large *class* of cases-though not for all-in which we employ the word “meaning” it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language. And the *meaning* of a name is sometimes explained by pointing to its bearer.”¹³

Strawson has given emphasis on the use and utterance of both the sentence and expression. He has drawn following distinctions:

- Distinction between sentence and expression,
- Distinction between the use of sentence and utterance of a sentence,
- Distinction between the use and utterance of an expression.

He holds that the sentence is not itself true or false but it can be used truly and falsely. Meaning of a sentence also depends upon the rules, habits, conventions governing

¹³ Wittgenstein, (1953), sect. 43.

its use. The important point is that the question of whether the sentence is significant or not is quite independent of the question that can be raised about particular use of it, namely, the question whether it is a genuine or a fake. The question whether the sentence is significant or not is the question whether there exist such habits, conventions or rules that the sentence logically could be used to talk about; and is hence quite independent of the question, whether it is being so used on a particular occasion. Similarly, an expression does not itself mention or refer; it is something that someone can use an expression to do. According to Strawson, Russell confused meaning with mentioning. But meaning is something different from mentioning or referring, it is not a set of things or the single thing it may correctly be used to refer to, the meaning is the set of rules, habits, and conventions for its use in referring. Like Russell, Strawson does not believe that meaning depends upon the truth-value of the sentences or propositions. Strawson also believes that natural language is logical in the sense that its expressions acquire a grammar in the course of use and thus remain perfectly intelligible.

Donnellan draws a distinction between two kinds of use of definite descriptions, referential use and attributive use. He is of the opinion that a speaker who uses a definite description attributively states something about whoever or whatever is the so-and-so. And a speaker uses a definite description to enable his audience to identify to whom or what he is talking about. In the referential use we may succeed in identifying the object, even though it does not really satisfy the description or may fit the description. In case of attributive use if nothing satisfies the description, then there would not be any chance of misidentification. Thus for Donnellan reference is independent of definite description. This distinction by Donnellan leads him to distinguish between names and definite description. As he says that, names are independent of definite description and reference can take place without the interference of definite description.

There are some philosophers in recent times who would like to maintain the Fregean distinction between sense and reference, for example, both Evans and McDowell accept the notion of sense over and above reference and in this respect they reject Russell's complete abandonment of sense. But they reject sense to empty singular terms. According

to them we cannot have thought of something which does not exist. Evans though, agreed with Frege's notion of singular term, viewed that the Fregean notion of singular term is more of a Russellian than Fregean. He tries to show some of the pitfalls of Frege's theory. For example, Evans does not accept Frege's treatment of name and definite description are being same. He says that though we can understand a name by some definite description but we cannot interchange one for the other. He has also mentioned that for a successful communication, it is not necessary that both the speaker and hearer would possess a same content of thought towards the object or description, their content of thought may be different, but associated with the same object. He has accepted Russell's analysis of knowledge of things, that is, we can have knowledge of things in two ways, knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description. Evans, has also said that in order to make Russell's principle a substantial principle, a person should possess a discriminating capacity. That means a subject must have a capacity to distinguish the object of his judgment from all other things. This suggests, we have the idea of certain sufficient conditions for being able to discriminate an object from all other things. This is called *discriminating knowledge*.¹⁴

John McDowell in his two articles "On the Sense and Reference of a Proper names" and "*De re* Senses," has highlighted the need for the distinction between sense and reference. He holds that to specify the content of saying we need a sentence and the theory of sense would have power to give us a sentence to meet that need.

According to McDowell, a theory of understanding involves the knowledge of what speakers of a language are doing on a particular occasion and under the descriptions that report their behavior with a specified content of speech act. He says that in order to be a possessor of language one must have the power of grasping the information posed by language and also must be able to deliver that information. Accepting Frege's anti-psychologistic view of thought, he says that though the study of psychological behavior is important in theory of language, here we are not in search of psychological mechanism. We are simply concern with an extended description of that use consists in.

¹⁴ Evans, (1982), p. 89.

As it is mentioned above, McDowell does not accept that we can have thought of bearerless names. That means thought is essentially *De re*, that is, thought is always related to an object, it is not like Fregean idea that thought is also associated with empty singular terms. For McDowell, Frege has himself committed to *de re* senses for singular terms as he held that singular term is that which refer to an object.

Nathan Salmon, another interpreter of Fregean and Russellian theories of meaning, tried to solve some problems in sense and reference theory in a different way. He has attempted to solve Frege's puzzle of identity by saying that it is not a problem of identity, but it is a problem concerning pieces of information. If two proper names in two different sentences refer to the same object then they will have different piece of information. Salmon called the encoded piece of information in a declarative sentence as information content of the sentence. He has used the word "informative" for the word "thought." According to him, "informative" can be understood by understanding the clear cut distinction between semantically encoded information and pragmatically imparted information. The basic function of a sentence is to encode information that is the information which is semantically encoded. But pragmatically imparted information is something, which can be non-linguistically attained. As Salmon says,

"Actions speak louder than words. In uttering a sentence, one produces a symbol that semantically encodes a piece of information, and in so doing one performs an action or several actions that, like any other action, may impart information in the non-semantic way. And the information which is semantically encoded by a sentence will be pragmatically imparted by utterances of the sentence. But the two notions are different."¹⁵

Frege was aware of this distinction but he has not applied this to solve the puzzle of identity. If one is not careful about this distinction then it is easy to confuse information pragmatically imparted by the utterances of "The Morning Star is the Evening Star," for semantically encoded information. An utterance of the sentence may give information concerning speaker's beliefs, intentions and attitudes. Information imparted can often be of

¹⁵ Salmon, (1986), p. 59.

greater significance than the information semantically encoded by the sentence. So this distinction needs a careful attention.

The problem centering around the notion of reference has been felt acutely by philosophers in the analytic tradition. The old problem of denotation is carried over into the problem of reference and meaning.

The act of referring already presupposes that there exist objects to which the speaker is referring and the hearer is able to understand which objects are being pointed out for the purpose. Thus both speaker and hearer must have requisite skill to identify the object in their environment such abilities and skills depend upon certain rules and conventions which have to be necessarily laid down by the linguistic community. Therefore, the concept of reference plays significant role in the semantics of natural languages. And meaning has been shown to be constrained by the language that is used by the people themselves in various contexts. So, analytic philosophy in general is concerned with the understanding of the structure of language. And providing an adequate theory of reference has been taken as an important problem in understanding the structure of language by the two most important philosophers of language, Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell. Their views, and the impact their views have had on some contemporary philosophers of language will be discussed in this dissertation.

Chapter 1

Gottlob Frege's notion on Sense and Reference

Introduction

Language provides the foundations for the structure of thought and experience, and hence it is considered as an importance subject matter of philosophical analysis. The world and our experience of it conform to language in the sense that only through language we can explore the structure and limits of our thought and experience. According to many philosophers of language the structure of language is the only key to the structure of our thought and experience of the world. That is the reason why philosophy turns to language to understand the world and also to determine the logical limits of our representations of the world.

So there is a connection between language and world. For example, we can use sentences to say things about the world. There is also a relation between language and thought which leads to the connection between language and world. Thus, these two connections that is the connection between language and thought, and language and world propose two different pictures about how language gets its content, about how sentences can be used to say things and express the thoughts that they are used to do. The first picture concentrates on the relation between language and the world. This picture says language gets its content directly from the world: it is the objects, properties and relations in the world that determine what the content of language is. The second picture by contrast, focuses on the connection between language and thought: it is the things that we think that determines what the content of language is. These are the competing views in the philosophy of language and in this chapter we will mainly deal with the second picture which is developed

by Gottlob Frege. We will analyze what Frege's views regarding language, thought, meaning and object, which were led many philosophers to read Frege, to analyze and interpret Frege's philosophy. As Davidson says about the relationship between language and meaning:

"Language without meaning does not have any use. So it is acknowledged by most of the philosophers of language and also by some linguists that a satisfactory theory of meaning must give an account of how the meanings of sentences depend upon the meaning of words."¹

Frege has also emphasized the concept of "meaning" in order to understand a sentence. He emphasized that it is only in the context of a sentence that a word has meaning. And also, he rightly said that the bare reference of an expression is not enough, along with reference we need the notion of 'sense'² in order to understand words and sentences. He has given a framework for judging how linguistic expressions have dual semantic character, i.e., they on the one hand, have sense and, on the other hand, have reference. This distinction will be taken up for further discussion and clarification.

One of the consequences of Frege's philosophy is that, because language makes thought shareable and thus makes it the common possession of mankind, there is the need to understand the logical structure of thought. Frege's idea was that human thought has a logical structure which is the universal basis of all sciences including mathematics. So if we can capture through a conceptual language all the basic elements of the logical structure of thought, we can very well map out the total scheme of all possible knowledge of universe. That is why he has taken the logic as the device to understand the world.

Gottlob Frege (1848-1925) was the pioneer of modern mathematical logic. The three major works that Frege published in his life were the *Begriffsschrift (Conceptual Notation)* (1879), *Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik (The Foundations of Arithmetic)* (1884), and the *Grundgesetze der Arithmetik (Basic laws of Arithmetic)* the first volume of which was published in 1893 and the second volume in 1903. In his book *Basic Laws* three of his

¹ Davidson, (1967), p. 304.

² Frege, (1970), p. 57.

best known articles “Function and Concept” (*Funktion and Begriff*), “On Sense and Reference” (*Über Sinn und Bedeutung*), and “On Concept and Object” (*Über Begriff und Gegenstand*)³ occur. All these are now regarded as classic works in Frege’s philosophy of language. As my work is basically to deal with his philosophy of language, these three articles will be my primary sources for bringing out Frege’s notion of linguistic meaning.

In philosophy of language *meaning* and *reference* have their own significant status, without which understanding of language is not possible. In language there are certain words which seems synonymous to each other but when we analyze them we can mark the difference lies between them.

Though our primary concern is to deal with his theory of meaning and reference, in order to present a clear picture of Frege’s view concerning meaning and reference, we need to explain his views regarding the distinction between concept/function and object because with this distinction he has moved on to explain what is “sense” and “reference.” This is what we are going to discuss in the next section.

So now I am going to discuss Frege’s view on concept/function and objects.

1.1 Concept/Function and Object

The notion of concept is central to Frege’s argument, he has regarded concepts as the reference of the predicate and treated them as functions. One of his fundamental contentions is that a statement of number is an assertion about a concept. For him, numbers are objects which are not perceptible, he termed them as abstract objects. And according to him numbers are not concepts or functions which are incomplete, they are complete abstract entities. Frege introduces a distinction between “sense” and “reference” after making a distinction between concept and object. In the article “On Sense and Reference”, he has made a distinction between the sense of a complete sentence which is called ‘thought’ and its reference.

³ See Noonan, (2001).

Frege has made a distinction between human thoughts and its relation to the object thought about. He has also made a distinction between singular term or proper names and functional expressions at the level of language and correspondingly made a distinction between objects and concepts/functions at the level of ontology.⁴

According to Frege, though objects of our thought do exist independently, there can be no entity in the world about which we cannot in principle, have a thought. Along with this association between a thing and the thought, Frege, committed himself to a certain relation between thought and language. As the structure of thought can only be expressed through the structure of language and through the structure of language we can understand the structure of reality and the things of such reality, essentially are our objects of thought. According to Dummett,

“... our ontological commitment depends upon what expressions of our language (including incomplete expressions) have to be taken as logically significant units and therefore, as having reference, and this will in turn depend upon the analysis we give of the sentence of the language.”⁵

According to Frege, in sentences of the subject-predicate form, subject position is occupied by a *singular term*, while the predicate position is taken by *functional expression*. According to Frege, a singular term refers to an object and a functional expression refers to a concept. So the distinction between subject and predicate, concept and object, singular term and functional expressions may be regarded as co-extensive.

Before going to these discussions in detail I would like to state why Frege regarded concepts as functions and what are the common principles which he tried to apply in case of mathematical expressions and also in case of sentences and complex expressions, of ordinary language.

What is a function? Frege in his article “Function and Concept” defines function as an expression in which variables like “x,” “y,” can be replaced by names. In an

⁴ Sen, Manidipa, (1966), p. 75.

⁵ Dummett, (1981a), p. 474.

expression like “ $y=2x$,” the sign of equality represents a function. So, function is a kind of relation. The function itself is an incomplete expression, which needs arguments to complete itself. The argument of a function does not belong to the function, but goes together with the function to make up a complete whole. In this respect functions are different from numbers.⁶ This remark contrasts with the case of proper names and sentences which have no such unsaturatedness. In contrast to functional expressions, the objects they stand for are complete and saturated.

Again Frege holds that sentences are truth-functions and truth values are their reference. Now consider an expression like

1. X is the teacher of Y.

This expression is having a truth value which is true. And the truth value of (1) will be same if we will replace “Plato” in place of “X” and “Aristotle” in place of “Y”. So the sentence,

2. Plato is the teacher of Alexander.

is also true and the truth value is same as the (1), but the difference is that they express different thoughts. And if we will say

3. Alexander is the teacher of Plato. Then the truth-value will be false.

So the different expressions correspond to different conceptions and aspects, but nevertheless always to the same thing.⁷

When we are using the phrase “the value of an expression” what we mean is that “the value” is a definite value. When we say “the teacher,” not “a teacher”: we make use of the definite article “the.” By so doing we indicate that there is only a single person that we are referring to. So Frege has made a distinction between definite and indefinite article. When we use a definite article “the,” it means we are referring to a definite object but when we use an indefinite articles “a,” “an” that means we are referring to a concept. In this sense Frege treated numbers as objects and as complete in themselves. They don’t have to depend on

⁶ Frege, (1970), p. 27.

⁷ See Frege’s “Function and Concept.”

anything in order to be complete or meaningful. But functions without arguments are incomplete, therefore, they are termed as *unsaturated*. In case of ordinary sentences the same pattern can be found. For example, “London is the capital of England,” the proper name “London” is complete in itself that is we don’t need any other expression in order to understand the term “London”. But the expression, “x is the capital of England” does not provide any meaning in isolation, therefore, this is an *unsaturated* part of the sentence. Thus concepts, like functions, are incomplete. Again concept is a function whose value is always a truth-value. If instead of “London” we use the word “India” then we will get the sentence, “India is the capital of England” which is a false proposition. So an object is anything that is not a function, so that an expression for it does not contain any empty place, thus “that which is complete in itself is called as an object.”⁸ So being the reference of a singular term an object is complete or *saturated*.

Lastly *functions* are fundamentally different from *objects*. For example, in the above example, “London is the capital of England”, we have proper names (as for Frege proper name is that which refers to an object) “London” and “England,” which are the arguments of the total functional expression, “x is the capital of y.” Frege name the former example (i.e., “London is the capital of England”) as *first-level function*. He has also said about the *second-level functions*.⁹ According to him a second-level function is a function that takes *concepts* as arguments. Frege viewed that the universal and existential quantifiers as standing for second-level functions, taking concepts as arguments and yielding truth-values as values. Let us consider the universally quantified sentence “Everyone is mortal.” We can formalize this, taking “G” to abbreviate “x is mortal,” as follows: $(X) Gx$. Frege suggested that we view the quantifier as standing for a function $(X)()$, which takes a concept Gx as argument and yields the truth-value T if the concept G is paired with T in its extension. Similarly he has also distinguished between first-level concept and second-level concept which will be discussed later. So we see that Frege does not allow for the existence of functions whose values are not objects. The ground for this is that functions can be

⁸ Ibid., p. 33.

⁹ Ibid., p. 38.

understood only as the references of functional expressions, and functional expressions are obtained from complete expressions by removing the names standing for objects.

From the above characterization of concepts, functions and objects, it follows that concepts are not objects. This is a difference between concept and object which is admitted by Frege in his article "Concept and Object". Thus it is required to analyze this concept briefly.

The most noticeable feature that becomes evident is that concepts are not identical with functions. The notion of function is more general. They are both predicative (which includes first order predication which involves concepts and relations) and non-predicative (which includes truth-functions or reference of propositional connectives like implication, conjunction and disjunction and includes functors or reference of term operator like, "the," "a," "an"). While non-predicative functions are of two kinds, truth-functions and functors, predicative functions are of different kinds and concepts are only one of them.¹⁰

"Frege has made a clear cut distinction between 'concepts' and 'objects' though he is of the opinion that an object and a concept would belong to the same logical type as a singular term and a functional expression respectively, because everything that signifies can do so by belonging to the same logical type as what it signifies."¹¹

The concept according to Frege is predicative. It is in fact reference of a grammatical predicate. But the concept itself is not predicate; the grammatical predicate stands for a concept. The concept cannot be an object neither can object be a concept, let us take the following two sentences:

1. The Morning Star is Venus
2. The Morning Star is a planet

In (1) we have two proper names "the Morning Star" and "Venus," while in the latter we have just one proper name, "the Morning Star." The sentence (1) is obviously reversible,

¹⁰ See Sen, Manidipa, (1996), p. 83.

¹¹ See Dummett, (1981a).

while (2) indicates an irreversible relation. In the first sentence, i.e., “The Morning Star is Venus” here “is” is not the mere copula; it is a sign of identity. The same sentence can be expressed in another way, i.e., “The Morning Star is no other than Venus.” Here in “is no other than” the word “is” here plays a role of being a copula that establishes a relationship between the subject term and the predicate term. So what is predicated here is not only *Venus* but *no other than Venus*. These words represent a concept (no other than Venus), in which one object falls but such a concept still should always be distinguished from the object. Thus, the word “Venus” can never be a predicate but it can form a part of a predicate.¹² The reference of this word is something that can never occur as a concept, but only as an object. But this distinction between concept and object can be effaced if there are concepts that can also be objects. In order to be replaced by an object the concept should be first converted into an object or it should be represented by an object. Thus, object and concept are two different entities.

So, this is the deceiving nature of language in which a word which seems to be used as a concept can also be seem to be used as an object. We cannot avoid this awkwardness of language. The predicative nature of a concept like a functional expression, is *unsaturated* and thus needs supplementation. The concept word like, e.g., “x is intelligent,” is not a complete sentence, because in order to get a complete sentence from “x is intelligent” we need to put a proper name, say for example, “Newton” and now the sentence “Newton is intelligent” expresses a complete meaning. Another remarkable point is the significance of proper names that is, the term “Newton” in isolation is complete or *saturated* in itself and this is a proper name referring to a person. In order to understand its complete sense, we do not need any supplementation.

Thus it becomes clear from the above explanation that concept is not the reference the proper name or it is not an object. Concept is the reference of the predicate, whereas an object is something which can never be the whole reference of the predicate. The object can only be the reference of the subject. Now the concept may fall under a higher order concept because the sentence does not present the concept as a subject, it asserts

¹² Frege, (1970), p. 44.

TH-17345

something about it; it can be regarded as expressing the fact that a concept falls under another concept. Take the sentence:

(a) "There is at least one square root of 9."

This example is not an assertion about a definite object say '3' or '-3', rather it is a contention about the concept "square root of 9". Let us contrast this sentence with the sentence:

(b) "The concept square root of 9 is realized."

The sentence (b) is not an assertion about a concept but is an assertion about the object referred to by the singular definite description "the concept square root of 9". So it is noticeable that what is asserted in the first sentence is not analogous to the second one. But the question may be asked that where does the difference lie? The difference is that the first sentence is an assertion about a concept whereas the latter one is an assertion about an object. This difference is not noticeable to a person who fails to see that a thought can be split up in many different ways, i.e., sometimes it appears as subject and sometimes appears as predicate. Now the point is that the thought itself does not determine what it is to be regarded as the subject. The same thought can be expressed by different sentences. The first sentence can also be expressed in another sentence with the same thought content like:

(c) 'The number 9 has the property that there is something of which it is the square'.

The thought can be split up in many ways, so it is not impossible that the thought would be appear as a singular judgment in one analysis (that is a judgment about one and only one entity), another as particular judgment (judgment about a group of entities but not all or a definite entity) and third as a universal judgment (judgment about 'all' a particular kind of entity). Similarly it is also not impossible that the same sentence may be conceived as an assertion about a concept and also as an assertion about an object. Only what we have to observe is that what is asserted is two different things, i.e. what is asserted about a concept can never be asserted about an object, such that the assertion of a concept cannot be replaced by the assertion of an object and vice-versa. Like in the

sentence “there is at least one square root of 9” which is an assertion of a concept, the expression “square root of 9” cannot be substituted by the expression “the concept square root of 9”. Thus, the conclusion is that an assertion which suits for a concept does not suit an object. From this it implies that a proper name can never be a predicative expression, though it can be a part of one. Hence what is referred to by “x is intelligent” cannot be the same as what is referred to by “the concept inteligtness”. Thus, either “x is intelligent” does not refer to the concept in question, or if it does then “the concept inteligtness” cannot refer to it as well. Frege choose the later solution: He says, e.g., “the concept *horse* is not a concept”; it is an object.¹³ Apparently this is a contradiction, but Frege regards it as no more than a mere inconvenience of language.

Frege said that it is not false to assert about an object what is asserted about a concept, rather it is impossible and senseless to do so. Language often misguides us by using some words sometimes as a proper name, sometimes as a concept-word. According to Frege the sentence “There is Julius Caesar” is neither true nor false but senseless. The sentence “There is a man whose name is Julius Caesar” has a sense, but here again we have a concept as the indefinite article occurs.

Since the concept is predicative in nature, if we want to replace the concept then this must be with the help of predicate, that means *a concept can only be replaced by another concept but not by an object*. Thus the *second-level concept* in which the concept falls under another concept is essentially different from the *first-level concept* in which object falls under the concept.¹⁴ Thus, the distinction between concept and object cannot

¹³ Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 54–5. To explain the sentences like “The king of France is bald” which does not have any reference, Frege states that “The king of France” is not a name of an object, what it stands for is something incomplete, a second-level concept within which a concept ‘bald’ is falsely asserted to fall. This second-level concept is one within which a concept falls if and only if there falls under it someone who is a king of. In that case the phrase designates an object and is to be regarded as a France and apart from whom no body is a king of France. Thus the definite article in from of the sentence is logically justified only if it is known i) That there is such an object ii) That there is not more than one proper name corresponding to that object.

be wiped out and not all parts of a thought can be complete; at least one must be *unsaturated* or predicative, otherwise they would not be held together.

Thus, knowing or having the concept and grasping the thought or sense are two different things. We cannot say that we know the concept means that we have grasped its sense. Thus the connection between the concept/object distinction and sense/reference distinction needs clarification. As a concept is subordinated to the object, does the sense also need to be subordinated to the object in order to make it apprehensible or are senses and references independent of each other? Do we need sense in order to understand the reference? Why should we think about the sense at all? And if we really need sense for communicate of our thought then what is the relation between sense and reference? And what will happen when two different names refers to the same object, is the sense of those two names same as the same reference they have or it varies? How do we differentiate having a sense from having an idea? And what is the distinction between sense and thought?

So, we need to discuss how Frege has dealt with these above questions and how, by introducing sense into the language, he has tried to solve some of the basic problems like the problem of informativeness of identity statements, problem of the bearerless names, problem regarding empty singular terms etc.

1.2 Frege's Puzzle

Gottlob Frege's article "On Sense and Reference" explains his two tiered theory of meaning. The first tier consists of sense (*sinn*) of words, phrases and sentences, the second tier consists of reference (*Bedeutung*), the things that the sense picks out. The distinction can be grasped by thinking about the difference between what a linguistic expression talks about and how an expression presents what is talked about to the mind of the user of the language. The way an expression presents an object to a user of language seems to determine what the expression is about. Suppose we have four balls of different colors say white, red, blue, green which are kept in a line in that order. Then the phrase

“the third ball from the left” and the phrase “the second ball from the right” talk about the same ball, that is the blue one. But these two phrases appear to the speaker’s mind in different ways. The phrase “the third ball from the left” involves thinking of something as related to things to its left. And it is possible that nothing is to its right. The phrase “the second ball from the right” involves thinking of something as related to things to its right and it is possible that nothing is to its left. So, the two phrases have different senses. It can be said that sense is operative in the connection between thought and language and reference is relevant in the connection between language and world. I think this actually is the reason why philosophers engaged themselves to find out the relation between thought and language in one side and corresponding to this, the relation between thought and reference on the other side. By analyzing these two sides, a complete picture of the relationship between language, thought and reality could be established. The difference between reference and sense with respect to phrases can be extended to sentences. And *Frege’s puzzle*¹⁵ is that how sentences composed out of expressions with the same meanings can have different cognitive values.

Frege introduces the notion of sense, over and above the notion of reference to solve certain problems in our language. They are:

- Puzzle concerning understanding of *identity statements*,
- Puzzle regarding *bearerless names*,
- The problem of *substitution* of co-referential expressions in the context of propositional attitudes ascribing sentences.

So, let us discuss them in order to understand the arguments for introducing the notion of sense.

Frege explains how a statement of the form “a=b” can differ in cognitive content from a statement of the form “a=a”. Both of these sentences are statements of identity, though “a=a” is tautologous and uninformative, while “a=b” is informative. In

¹⁵ See Salmon, (1986).

his view identity statements can be informative due to the fact that the sense of the two sides of the identity operator differs and they are informative because they refer to the same object. To explain this he has given an example,

1. The Morning Star is the Evening Star.

Both the names “the Morning Star” and “the Evening Star” refer to the same entity that is the planet Venus. The reason why Frege gives this example can be stated thus:

“There is no doubt that the first and the most important discoveries in science are often a matter of recognizing something as the same again. However self-evident it may seem to us that it is the same sun which went down yesterday and rose today, and however insignificant therefore this discovery may seem to us, it is certainly one of the most important in astronomy and perhaps the one that really laid the foundations of the science. It was also important to recognize that the morning Star was the same as the evening Star, that three times five is the same as five times three.”¹⁶

So exactly what does one learn when one discovers that “The Morning Star is identical to the Evening Star”? How does that differ from what is contained in the thought that “The Morning Star is identical with the Morning Star”? So we have two sentences

1. The Morning Star is the Evening Star, and

2. The Morning Star is the Morning Star.

Now let designate the phrase “Morning Star” with “a” and let “b” designate “Evening Star” and we get

1* $a=b$ (for (1))

2* $a=a$ (for (2))

is there any difference between (1) and (2)? From the point of view of reference there is no distinction between them, but the difference lies in the two kinds of knowledge

¹⁶ Tylor, (1998), p. 1.

embodied in these two sentences. The two sentences “a=b” and “a=a” are obviously sentences of different cognitive value, “a=a” holds a priori and does not give any information whereas “a=b” is a posteriori and informative. But, assuming that “a=b” predicates the relation of identity between the reference of the name “a” and the reference of the name “b,” and that “a=a” predicates the relation of identity between the referent of “a” and the referent of “a,” then if “a=b” is true, it predicates the same relation between the same pair of objects as does “a=a.” From this it would seem, that “a=b” and “a=a” ought to convey the same piece of information. But clearly they do not.

According to Frege, the identity statements express not a relation between signs, but a relation between objects, a relation which each object bears to itself and to no other object. Then the question may arise if an identity statement expresses a relation between an object and itself, then how can a statement such as,

“The Morning Star is identical to the Evening Star.”

say, if true, anything different from what a statement such as,

“The Morning Star is identical to the Morning Star?” Does each not assert one and the same relation, namely, identity, between one and the same object and itself, viz, the Morning Star?

Frege answers that the way to solve this puzzle is by saying that there is a difference of sense between these two proper names. He maintains that the distinction between sense and the reference is key to resolving this puzzle. With each proper name there is associated both a sense and reference. Frege’s notion of proper names corresponds roughly to the notion of a (definite singular) noun phrase. Thus phrases like “The present King of France,” “John’s favorite sports” are counted as proper names for Frege. A name designates or denotes its reference and expresses its sense according to Frege. A sense is said, in turn, to determine a reference and the reference of a name is typically an individual object. For example, the reference of the name “John” is the man John, the reference of the noun phrase; “Smith’s favorite color” is whatever color happens to be most favored by Smith. So he says,

The regular connection between a sign (name, combination of words, letters, sign or name may designate a proper name, which has its reference definite object but not a concept or a relation) and its sense and its reference is of such a kind that to the sign there corresponds a definite sense and to that in turn a definite reference, while to a given reference or an object there does not belong only a single sign the same sense has different expressions in different languages or even in the same language.”¹⁷

That means for a single object we may have different signs. These different signs have a single reference. So the reference of “Evening Star” would be same as that “Morning Star”, i.e., the planet Venus but not their sense.

Now we will discuss what is the theory of sense according to Frege and what constitutes the relation between sense and reference.

1.3 Frege’s view on Sense and Reference

We have discussed the first puzzle about the identity statements in the above analysis. Here we will discuss the other two puzzles mentioned above because it is difficult to understand Frege’s solution to these problems without understanding his analysis of sense and reference. To the solution of the second puzzle that is the puzzle of empty singular terms, his view is that, *names with no semantic value (reference) are not necessarily meaningless, because they can nevertheless possess a sense. And a sentence that contains an expression that lacks a semantic value is neither true nor false.* Regarding the third problem he holds the view that the substitution into belief context or substitution in case of propositional attitude case make a true sentence as false.

¹⁷ Frege, (1970), p. 58.

The term “Evening Star” refers to the planet Venus as it appears at dusk, while the term “Morning Star” refers to the planet Venus as it appears at dawn.

Actually to understand the nature of an object and concept in reference to two different kinds of expressions we should mention the distinction between sense and reference of an expression.

According to Frege, any expression of a language may have two ingredients:

- (a) Reference or that which the sign designates and (b) sense or the mode of presentation or the way of identifying the object designated by the term.

As Dummett in interpreting Frege's notion of sense, points out,

"To know the sense of a proper name is to know the criterion for identifying any given object as the meaning of that name, to know the sense of a predicate is to know the criterion for deciding whether it is true of an arbitrary object."¹⁸

But it is obvious that the criterion of identifying an object or the criterion of deciding whether the predicate is true of an object is not same as the object referred to by a singular term/proper name or the concept referred to by the predicate/functional expression. So the difference lies in the difference between sense and reference.

One might ask a question as to why Frege talked about sense while talking about reference or why we need sense? The reason is that reference without sense seems inexplicable. Ways of presenting and representing world requires the presence of sense and sense can give the right means of locating the object named in the world. Sense in fact provides the information-content of the name and so sense is cognitively available in the domain of language use.

Frege's theory of sense is not a theory about meaning of expressions. Knowing the meaning of a sentence and its constituents is not the same as knowing what is expressed on a particular occasion of its utterance, i.e., what thought is thus expressed. The meaning of an expression is what one understands when one understands how to use

¹⁸ See Dummett's article on Frege in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 3, Paul Edwards (ed.), 1972.

it. Its sense consists of what is said by its utterance on a given occasion.¹⁹ Dummett in this context said,

“To grasp the meaning of an expression is to understand its role in the language: complete theory of meaning for a language is therefore, a complete theory of how the language functions as a language. Our interest in how the language works....”²⁰

That is to say that the meaning of an expression lies in how it works and how it is used in the actual transactions of the language. Without seeing the word or sentence in its actual employment we cannot tell what it means.

The distinction between sense and reference take an account of the cognitive aspects of language use. We can think of the theory of reference, very generally, as concerned with relations between expressions of the language and entities in the world. Frege said that an objective semantic difference between two expressions is not distinguishable by the theory of meaning (two expressions with the same meaning) - this difference having to do with the different ways in which the expressions are to be understood by competent speakers. These different ways, in turn, ultimately rests upon the different thoughts and propositional attitudes that competent speaker will have on hearing and understanding sentences containing the two expressions. If we look at matters in this way, there can be no more question of regarding the theory of sense as quite independent of the theory of meaning than there is of regarding the semantic relations between words and the world as quite independent of the thoughts and propositional attitudes associated by competent speaker with these words.

In order to understand the distinction between sense and reference clearly we need to introduce Frege’s well-known “Context Principle,” according to which,

“It is only in the context of a sentence that a word has a meaning.”²¹

¹⁹ The concept of use and mention of terms can be brought out while analyzing the concepts of sense and reference.

²⁰ Dummett, (1993a), p. 2.

²¹ Dummett, (1981a), p. 6.

On Frege's view, we don't have knowledge directly of things. Knowledge of a thing is always knowledge of some proposition (thought) concerning that thing, and hence thought mediate, as it were, between us and the things about which we have knowledge. Thus it can be affirmed that the basic unit of knowledge is the "thought" rather than the concept. Since it is only in the context of a proposition that words have any meaning, our problem comes to this: to explain the sense of a proposition in which words occur. For example, our knowledge of numbers is never, as it were, "bare knowledge" of the numbers themselves, but rather knowledge of some proposition about them.

The knowledge we gain from this "Context Principle" is that as Frege puts it, "thinking is the grasping of a thought." For according to that principle it is thoughts which are the direct objects of our knowledge. It was the picture theory of ideas which made Frege to reject the identification of thinking with the having of ideas.

According to Frege only thoughts are real because our cognition of non-propositional objects is merely secondary. It is via the mind's grasping of a thought that we know objects, and thus all the weight of accounting for our epistemic states is thrown on the relationship between the mind and thought.

Now we should come back to our main discussion on sense and reference. According to Frege,

"The sense of an expression is that ingredient of its meaning that determines its semantic value."²²

By having semantic values expressions also have semantic properties that determine what those semantic values are. The property that determines semantic value is the property of having a certain sense. Thus, a name has a sense and some means of determining which particular object is this.

So, for any term T and person P, there is a sense S such that when we say P understands T, he attaches S to it.²³ When we are uttering the name "the Evening Star",

²² From Miller, (1998), p. 28.

²³ See Evans, (1982), p. 16.

the sense of this expression, would be defined as some conditions that an object has to satisfy in order to count as the reference of the name. May be the easiest way of identifying such condition would be to define some descriptive condition, such as “that object which appears in such and such a place in the sky at such and such times in the evening.” If an object satisfies this condition, then it is the reference of “The Evening Star.” The planet Venus satisfies this condition, so it follows that the name “The Evening Star” refers to the planet Venus.

Someone who knows which descriptive condition an object has to satisfy in order to count as the reference of “The Evening Star,” understands the name, but it does not follow that he knows what the reference of the name actually is. We can know whatever object it is that appears at such and such a place in the sky at such and such time in the evening is referred to by “The Evening Star” without knowing which particular object that is. So it is possible to know the sense of an expression without knowing its semantic value or reference.

Thus, Frege has defined the sense as a mode of presentation of semantic value or reference. An object which is a reference of certain names can have different senses. So the relation between sense and reference is a many-one relationship. That means the information we get from an expression does not only come from its reference, there is something else from which we get and that is called the sense of an expression.

The notion of sense, as developed by Frege, is a notion of *sentence-meaning*. The sense of an expression is intended to capture what a sentence strictly and literally means: in other words, the sense of an expression gives its *literal meaning*....²⁴

Frege further explains that proper names, demonstratives (this, that), and other indexical singular terms, as used in ordinary contexts, are descriptive. What is a descriptive term? An expression “a,” as used in a particular context, is descriptive if there is a set of properties or concepts semantically associated with “a” in such a way as to create a semantic relation, which may be called “reference” or “denotation.” So a descriptive

²⁴ From Miller, (1998), p. 56.

term is one that refers or denotes by way of properties or concepts. It is a term that expresses a way of conceiving something, and its reference or “denotation” with respect to a possible world and time is secured indirectly by means of this conceptual content. And a non-descriptonal singular term is one whose reference is not semantically mediated by associated conceptual content. The paradigm or example of non-descriptonal term is the individual variable.²⁵ This theory of Frege is known as “Orthodox Theory.”

This orthodox theory was being challenged by some philosophers like Keith Donnellan, David Kaplan, Saul Kripke, and Hilary Putnam. According to them the ordinary proper names, singular terms are non-descriptonal, since they deny that the reference of names is mediated by descriptive concept. So, their view is called direct referential theory. According to this theory names and indexical have reference but not sense. What this theory denies is that the conceptual content associated with an individual constant secures the reference. Thus, for example, the direct reference theory would hold the proper name “Shakespeare” is not as an abbreviation for any cluster of descriptions, such as “England’s greatest poet,” “the author of *Romeo and Juliet*,” etc. The central thesis of direct reference theory is that the ordinary proper names are not similar to definite descriptions, they are disguised definite descriptions as Russell suggested. Whereas according to orthodox theory ordinary proper names are either thoroughly descriptonal or descriptonal relative.

Frege has also rejected the naïve theory of reference. Naïve theory is a theory of the information value of certain expressions. According to naïve theory, the information value of a singular term, as used in a possible context, is simply its reference in that context. Naïve theorists are actually Russellian in their view. For them any meaningful expression, whether a sentence component or a complete sentence, semantically refers to something. The sense of an expression is purely conceptual

²⁵ Salmon, (1982), pp. 64–5.

representation, and reference of the expression is whatever uniquely fits the representation.²⁶

According to Frege, none of these alternative accounts of reference can account for the puzzles that he wants to solve. So, Frege has emphasized that the sense of a compound expression, such as, a sentence, is a product of the sense of its parts and similarly that the reference of a compound expression is a function of the references of its parts. The reference of a sentence like "Socrates is wise" is simply its truth value that is either true or false. Whereas, its sense is its cognitive information content and is purely conceptual in nature. Frege called these special senses "thought." It is not "Socrates" himself but a conceptual representation, the sense, of "Socrates" that goes into the information or thought that "Socrates is wise." Information cannot involve concrete individuals as constituents, but must consist solely of conceptual entities. For Frege the thought that "Socrates is wise," though about "Socrates," does not have "Socrates" as a component part. There are thus countless ways of conceiving any object, countless purely conceptual modes of presenting the object to the mind to grasp and each can go into the makeup of a thought that is about an object only by virtue of containing a sense that determines the object, and not by containing the object itself. So it is possible to know the sense of an object without knowing its semantic value. Thus the sense of an expression is what someone grasps when s/he understands the expression and the sense of the complex expression is determined by the sense of its constituents.

The introduction of sense also as part of meaning enables Frege to solve the problem of bearerless names. The term can be understood by us because understanding

²⁶ Salmon, (1982), p. 47. This Naïve theory is similar to what Gilbert Ryle called the 'Fido-Fido' theory, according to which the 'meaning' or content of a singular term is simply its reference. Within the framework of the naïve theory, the meaning of an expression might be identified with the expression's character, i.e. the semantically correlated function from possible contents of utterance to information values. But this theory was certainly modified its view which is called 'Modified naïve theory'. According to this theory instead of identifying The information value of the individual on a particular occasion, with its reference, one should look instead for some complex entity made up partly of the relational property of having that property and partly of something else that serves as the information value of the definite description.

the sentence in which it occurs, like the description or an expression say, “The twelve-headed student in the class,” can be understood by understanding the sentence, “the twelve-headed student in the class X has more than two heads.” That is, we know what would have to be the case for someone to be referred by the term, and we can possess this knowledge even when there is no twelve headed student. So, an expression can have a sense even if it lacks a semantic value.

Thus empty singular terms which do not have any bearer may have a sense and that the sentences containing them may express thought. For Frege proper names include both definite descriptions and names whose reference is fixed by descriptions and in both cases it is a very serious lapse to hold that nothing is said, no thought is expressed, by someone who utters a sentence containing an empty term of either category. The terms like “unicorn,” “the twelve-headed student” are empty singular terms. They do not have any reference. But the sentence containing empty singular terms, would still express thought and would be meaningful. And these sentences themselves do not have any semantic value, or truth value. Thus they are neither true nor false but indescribable for Frege.

1.4 Indirect Reference

After having discussed how Frege resolve the problem of bearerless of names, we will move on to try and understand how Frege uses sense to solve the problem of substitution into belief context. As it is mentioned earlier Frege’s principle of compositionality states that the substitution of an expression in a sentence with another expression having the same logically relevant content must leave unchanged the logically relevant content of the sentence as whole. In the context of a sentence, it means that one expression could be replaced by another expression in case the truth value of the whole sentence remain unchanged. For example, in the sentence “Plato is Greek,” if we replace the proper name “Plato” by the description “the teacher of Alexander” in the sentence then the truth value

will be same as true but the sense does not remain as same. Similarly if we will replace “Plato” by “Cicero” then the truth value will be false.

According to the principle of compositionality, the semantic value of a complex expression is determined by the semantic values of its parts. *It followed from this that substitution of a part of a sentence with another having the same semantic value will leave the truth-value of the whole sentence unchanged.* This means, in particular, that substitution of one name in a sentence by another having the same reference should leave the truth-value of that sentence unaffected. But this appears to be false in some important contexts. Consider a case, where Joe is a person with absolutely no knowledge about Cicero, except that he is a great Roman orator, and we say about Joe

1. Joe believes that Cicero is a Roman orator.

This will be true. Now the two names “Cicero” and “Tully” have same reference: they are different names for a same person. So the following, which results by substituting the occurrences of “Cicero” by “Tully,” would yield the sentence:

2. Joe believes that Tully is a Roman orator.

But, this sentence is actually false, since Joe does not know that Cicero is Tully. This suggests that we are either going to have to give up the principle that the semantic value of a name is its bearer, or the law of compositionality. But these are both central and indispensable principles.

According to Frege, the way forward in solving this problem is to claim that in these kinds of cases words do not have their customary reference and designate what is usually their sense. So in belief context one must adopt some sort of favorable disposition or attitude towards the belief. Frege, in order to accommodate sentences in indirect speech brings in a distinction between *indirect reference* and *customary reference*. In case of indirect speeches words are used indirectly, they do not have their customary reference as direct speeches have. But the customary sense, i.e., the sense in ordinary context becomes the (indirect) reference in case of indirect speech of above kind. So “Cicero” can be replaced by “Tully” in (1) only if “Cicero” and “Tully” have the same

customary sense to which reference is being made in (1). This shift of reference can be made clear by another example, let us consider an example, like,

1. John believes that George Orwell wrote *Animal Firm*.

Now suppose that John does not know that “George Orwell” is in fact the same person as “Eric Blair”. That is John does not know that

2. George Orwell is Eric Blair.

Suppose that “George Orwell,” and “Eric Blair” are proper names referring to the same person, i.e., having the same semantic value. Then, they have semantic value, since they picked out the same person. So we should be able to substitute “Eric Blair” for “George Orwell” in (1) without changing the truth value. But in the fact the substitution results the false sentence,

3) John believes that Eric Blair wrote *Animal Firm*.

The main reason is that substitution of co-referential expression in case of belief reports are unacceptable. The only way to account for these kinds of cases is by introducing the above mentioned idea of referential shift. Thus the identification of indirect references with customary sense allows us to avoid the problem of substitution into belief context. But Frege was not clear about what is indirect sense.²⁷

²⁷Dummett suggests that the whole difficulty arises from interpreting the assumption that the sense determines the reference or the semantic value. This is a mistake, based on a misleading tendency to speak about the semantic values of expressions in isolation from the sentential context in which they appear. Indeed Frege himself has said in his book *The Foundations for Arithmetic*:

“Never to ask for the reference of a word in isolation, but only in the context of a proposition.”(1953: p.x.)

Dummett interprets this as a claim that only a particular occurrence of an expression in a sentence has a semantic value and that this semantic value is determined jointly by the sense of the expression together with the kind of context in which it occurs.

The upshot is that Frege’s solution to the problem of substitution into belief context is not entirely satisfactory.

According to Frege, the sense of an expression determines its semantic value and the semantic value of a sentence is determined by the semantic values of its parts. If we put these two views together we get the result that sense of an expression determines the truth-values of sentences in which it occurs. As Dummett puts it,

“The sense of a word as opposed to any other ingredient its meaning may have – constitutes the contribution which it makes to determining the truth-conditions of sentences in which it occurs precisely by associating a certain reference with it.”²⁸

This becomes problematic because it is uncomfortably close to our definition of semantic value that it determines the truth-value of an expression in which it occurs. Doesn't it follow from this that we have to identify sense and semantic value, so that there is after all no distinction to be drawn between sense and reference/semantic value? Such that Frege's theory of meaning, which rests on the distinction, is unacceptable?

This objection is, however, misplaced, because to say that sense is an ingredient of meaning suggests that sense of an expression is what someone who understands the expression grasps. Semantic value of an expression is not an ingredient in meaning because semantic value of an expression is not part of what someone who understands the expression grasps.

This indeed, is the consequence of Frege's solution to the problem of informativeness. The argument is that if the semantic value of an expression was grasped by someone who understands it, there would be no possibility of, for example, understanding a sentence without knowing its truth-value. Thus the two assertions about sense and semantic value ensure that the characterization of semantic value, together with the characterization of sense (that is an ingredient of meaning of an expression that determines its semantic value), do not force the identification of sense with semantic value.

²⁸ Dummett, (1981a), p. 93.

But although semantic value is not in the special sense introduced above as an ingredient in meaning, it is still part of the intuitive notion of meaning, and something that has to be dealt with in a systematic way by a philosophical theory of meaning. Dummett writes,

“ To say that reference [semantic value] is not an ingredient in meaning is not to deny that reference[semantic value] is a consequence of meaning, or that the notion of reference[semantic value] has a vital role to play in the general theory of meaning: it is only to say that the understanding which a speaker of a language has of a word in that language—even just that part of his understanding of it which is relevant to his recognition of sentences containing it as true or as false—can never consist merely in his associating a certain thing with it as its referent[semantic value]; there must be some particular *means* by which this association is effected, the knowledge of which constitutes his grasp of its sense.”²⁹

Now,

“The sense of a sentence is a thought. The sentence can be regarded as an image of the thought in 'that to the relation between the part of the sentence and sentence.”³⁰(Frege wrote this in his letter to Dermstaeder.)

Sense of a sentence or thought is something objective, which is capable of being shared by several thinkers. In this sense, the reference and sense are to be distinguished from the associated idea. If the reference of a sign is an object perceivable by the senses, my idea of it as internal image, arising from memories of sense impressions which we have had. The idea varies from person to person. One man's idea is not that of another. There may be many ideas connected to the same sense. Thus, idea is subjective. According to Frege sense is not an idea. If the sense of a name was something subjective, then the sense of the proposition in which the name occurs, and hence thought, would also be something subjective, and the thought of the one man connected with a proposition would be different from the thought that another man connects with it. So, a common store of thought, a common store of science would be impossible. It would be impossible for what one man said to connect with what another man says, because the two would not express the same thought at all.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 93.

³⁰Frege, (1997), p. 255.

What actually Frege wanted to suggest is here that grasping a sense or understanding an expression is not a matter of associating that expression with some subjective item like a mental image, picture or idea. This is in opposition to John Locke's understanding of word meaning:

“Words in their primary or immediate signification stand for nothing but the ideas in the mind of him that uses them.”³¹

According to Locke, we can grasp the sense of an object if and only if we are liable to have mental image of that thing whenever we hear or utters the word.

But Frege rejects this account of sense because there will be a conflict between the public nature of meaningful language and the private nature of ideas and mental images. Language is public such that different speakers can attach the same sense to their words, and one speaker can know what another speaker means by his words. Different speakers can communicate with each other in virtue of the common senses that they have attached to their words. On other hand ideas are private. As Locke puts it,

‘A man’s ideas are “all within his own breast, invisible, and hidden from others, nor can of themselves be made to appear.”’³²

My “internal conceptions” are visible only to my consciousness, and someone else’s “internal conceptions” are visible only to that person’s consciousness. But when we are attempting to give an account of sense, that account should help to explain how we are able to communicate with each other. One crucial role of sense is to explain how linguistic communication is possible. So, the success of language in facilitating communication is to be accounted for in terms of their grasping the same sense. Private, inner items have no role to play in explaining the practical success of language in facilitating communication between two speakers.

³¹ Locke, (1995), III, ii, 2.

³² From Miller, (1998), p. 38.

Frege's objectivism of sense leads to his view against psychologism. His view on "thought" is an antipsychologistic view which will be discussed now.

1.5 Objectivity of Thoughts

In this section we shall examine Frege's antipsychologistic view, his theory of objectivity of abstract objects and subjectivity of "idea." It is important to note that for Frege, a thought is not something psychological or subjective. Rather, it is objective in the sense that it specifies some condition in the world the obtaining of which is necessary and sufficient for the truth of the sentences that expresses it. But before we move to the explanation about what Frege's antipsychologistic view amounts to, we will first try to show what his objectivity of abstract objects is, because sense is taken to be a kind of abstract object.

As we have discussed in "Function/Concept and Object," numbers are abstract objects because they are not perceptible and Frege assumes that our knowledge of these numbers are objective in nature, because they do not vary according to the different conceptions that people have of them. Now "thoughts" occupy a special place in Frege's list of abstract objects, for they belong to a special metaphysical category. Let me first explain how this "thought" plays role in our understanding of sentences which do not refer to any object that means thoughts associated with expressions having reference and thoughts associated with expressions that are empty.

Frege has said that whether a term has its reference or not the thought will remain the same. This has been mentioned in earlier discussion. But can it really be possible to have thought involving any term which does not have any bearer? How can a person really think about an object which is an unreal or non-existent entity? When the thought is associated with something that exists, that thought would be different from the thought about an unreal entity. One can say that thought towards some empty singular terms does not have any truth-value, or thoughts associated with empty singular terms are deprived of having any truth-value. The question may be asked, why do we want every proper

name to have not only a sense or thought, but also a reference? Why is the thought not enough for us? This is only because we are concerned with its truth-value. It is true that truth-value is related to our thought, but in some cases we may be only concerned about the sense of the sentence and thereby the images and feelings that are aroused by it and not its truth-value. Like, hearing an epic poem or a fantasy story where none of the names have any reference, we can legitimately entertain thought. Hence it is a matter of no concern to us whether the name which is empty, say “unicorn,” has reference, so long as we accept the poem as a work of art. It is the striving for truth that drives us always to advance from the sense to the reference. In this “thought” also stands in the close connection with the question of truth, but it is not necessarily connected with truth-value. Frege writes in his article “The Thought: A logical Inquiry,”

“Without wishing to give a definition, I call a thought something for which the question of truth arises. So I can say: the thought is the sense of the sentence without wishing to say as well that the sense of every sentence is a thought. The thought, in itself immaterial, clothes itself in the material garment of a sentence and thereby becomes comprehensible to us. We say a sentence expresses a thought.”³³ (Frege, “The Thought: A Logical Inquiry”)

Truth is not quality of a particular kind of sense impression. It is a property conjoined with thought. That means every property of a thing is a joined property of a thought, namely, that of truth. But there are certain sentences in our language for which we do not require the guarantee of truth-value like in case of imperative sentences. We cannot however deny that these sentences do not have sense. But no question of truth arises in case of an imperative sentence. Therefore, according to Frege we cannot call the sense of an imperative sentence a thought. Sentences expressing desire and requests are also ruled out in the same way.³⁴ Interrogative sentences, themselves, do not have any truth-value too. An interrogative sentence and an indicative sentence may contain the same thought, but indicative sentence contains assertion which interrogative sentences do not have. So it is possible to express thought without laying it down as true. Words like “alas,” “thank

³³ From Strawson, (1967). p. 20.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 21.

God,” used in a sentence may not be grasped by thought, but they have their justification of being used in sentences. Thought would not change if we use the word “horse” or “steed” or “cart-horse.” The assertive force does not extend over that in which these words differ. Similarly we can replace “receive” in place of “give,” (where we make active sentence into passive). Such kind of transformations does not change our thought or they do not touch what is true or false. Thus Frege writes,

“It is just as important to neglect distinctions that do not touch the heart of the matter as to make distinctions which concern what is essential. But what is essential depends on one’s purpose. To a mind concerned with what is beautiful in language what is indifferent to the logician can appear as just what is important.”³⁵

A tensed or temporally indexical sentence, according to Frege, is incomplete and must be supplemented by a time specification before it can properly express a thought and refer to a truth-value whenever such a sentence is uttered, the very time of utterance is relied upon as needed time specification of itself, for example, “Yesterday” is a temporal indexical word. The same utterance containing the word “I” will express different thoughts in the mouths of different men, of which some may be true, others false.

But this occurrence of “I” in a sentence raises the question against the objectivity of “thought,” which is one of the essential features of thought by which communication is possible. When I say “I am feeling hungry,” then this sentence is expressing a subjective feeling. And this subjective feeling is different when someone else would say about me. Even the thought also will not be same if it is uttered by someone who was present at the time of occurrence. So this makes thought subjective. As Frege says,

“Everyone is presented to himself in a particular and primitive way, in which he or she is presented to no-one else.”³⁶

But Frege has tried to provide answer to such kind of problem where thought seems to be subjective but it is objective in nature, which we will now discuss.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 23.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 25.

Frege has pointed out that cognitive processes like, our thinking, believing, judging etc., are to be explained as certain kinds of mental attitudes towards our idea, which can be conceived as mental pictures or images of things. On this account the immediate material of our thought is certain subjective image which we can combine in many ways. His point is that there clearly are cases where thinking takes place but where we are incapable of forming an adequate mental picture of what we are thinking about. This is the evidence for Frege that the materials of our thinking must be something other than subjective ideas. Thus, thinking is not just a subjective psychological process and that “grasping a thought” is not just a convenient or even essential way of describing a mental event,” but denotes a real relationship between the mind and its object.

Now, if, because of the objectivity of thought, our communication is possible, that is, the thought expressed by the speaker is also entertained by the hearer, then subjectivity of thought must be inconsistent with communicability. How are subjective thoughts communicate? How do I manage to communicate to others that “I am hungry” or “I am feeling pain”? Frege in his essay “The Thought: A Logical Enquiry,” has tried to address this problem. What he suggested is that in case of communication of subjective thoughts, what is really communicated is not the subjective thought itself but something really related to subjective thought. One can say following this idea suggested by Frege is that, in order for thoughts to be communicated, they must undergo a process of interpretation; therefore, what will at the end be communicated is not the subjective thought itself but an interpretation of that thought.

Thus we see that Frege has denied the subjectivity of “thought.” Now the question that may arise is: What this mental picture is and how this mental picture is different from “thought?” What are the properties the mental picture possess or do not possess, for which we cannot equate them with our “thoughts,” which is objective in character?

One such property is that a mental picture or idea has only one bearer; no two men can have the same idea. From this it can be implied that an idea needs a bearer, they are relative to the bearer. Things of the worlds are however independent. The inner world presupposes the person whose inner world it is. It seems absurd that a pain, a mood, a wish should exist in the world without a bearer, entirely independently. An experience is

impossible without an experiencer. And it is impossible to compare my sense-impression with that of someone else's. So each of my ideas which are the contents of my consciousness are different from the ideas which are the contents of another person's consciousness. No other person has my pain, someone can have sympathy for me because of any pain but still my pain always belongs to me and other's sympathy belongs to them. They could not have my pain and I do not have their sympathy. Thus, every idea has only one bearer, no two men have the same idea.

Let us apply this bearer concept to "thoughts." If every thought requires bearer, to the contents of whose consciousness it belongs, then it would be a thought of this bearer only and there would be no science common to all, on which many could work. For example, if it is not the same thought at all which is taken to be the content of "the Pythagorean theorem" by me and by another person, then we should not say "the Pythagorean theorem," instead we should say my Pythagorean Theorem, John's Pythagorean Theorem, etc. Then my thought can be the content of my consciousness and John's thoughts are the contents of his consciousness. Then could it be possible that my idea of Pythagorean Theorem is true and John's is false?³⁷ The answer is 'No', precisely because truth and falsity could not be subjectively determined. If it would be, then truth would be restricted to the contents of my consciousness and it would remain doubtful whether anything at all comparable occurred in the consciousness of others. Then no contradiction between the two sciences would be possible and no common science will be established. In that case everyone's perception will be limited to his range of ideas only. He should know nothing of other people.

It is true that the apprehension of thought presupposes someone who apprehends it, who thinks it. But he is the bearer of the thinking but not of the thought. Although the thought does not belong to the contents of the thinker's consciousness yet something in his consciousness must be aimed at the thought. But this should not be confused with the thought itself. Thoughts belongs neither to my inner world as an idea nor to the world of material, perceptible things. Frege regards them as belonging to the third realm.

³⁷ See Frege, "The Thought: A Logical Inquiry", p. 26.

Another question can be raised here is that whether the thought is changeable or is it timeless? Some thoughts like the thought of Pythagorean Theorem are surely timeless, eternal, and unchangeable. But the thoughts like, thought about the person now when he is 25 yrs old will not be same as when the person will be 55 yrs old. It is not the same thought at all. The thoughts which are true today, may be false in next time. Without the time-indication the thought would not be complete. Thus Frege writes,

“By apprehending a thought I come into a relation to it and it to me. It is possible that the same thought that is thought by me today was not thought by me yesterday. In this way the strict timelessness is of course annulled.”³⁸

*Thoughts are actual because they can 'act' upon things.*³⁹ They have actuality and reality. How does a thought act? By being apprehending it and taking it as true. This is the process in the inner world. We grasp the thought and apply it. Thus our actions are usually prepared by thinking and judgment. One brings about changes in the common outside world due to these acts, which is perceived by another person, and stimulates him to apprehend a thought and take it to be true.

Thoughts are not unreal but their reality is of quite a different kind from that of things and their effect is brought about by an act of thinker without which they would be futile. Thinkers do not produce them but must take them as they are. One sees a thing, one has an idea, and one apprehends or thinks a thought. When one apprehends or thinks a thought one does not form it but only comes to stand in a certain relation to it, which is different from seeing a thing or having an idea, etc. Frege's puzzlement about how we grasp thoughts is really puzzlement about how, a use of language as an event which takes place in the physical and mental worlds, enables us to grasp an abstract thought.

Frege has also said that the nature of thoughts need not be only psychological and there is a sense in which thoughts can be conceived as the logical contents of judgments which we express in language. That is to say, thoughts can be conceived in a purely

³⁸ Ibid., p. 37.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 38.

logical way such that they are not only taken to be independent of subjective consciousness but are also taken as objectively real in a logical sense. In this sense, thoughts are to be identified with sense⁴⁰ or the meaning of the language in which they are expressed. Regarding thoughts Frege writes,

“Thoughts are by no means unreal but their reality is of quite a different kind from that of things. And their effect is brought about by an act of the thinker without which they would be ineffective, at least as far as we can see. And yet the thinker does not create them but must take them as they are. They can be true without being apprehended by a thinker and are not wholly unreal even then, at least if they could be apprehended and by this means be brought into operation.”⁴¹

This is to maintain that thoughts as non-psychological as well as non-physical entities, having the character of logical entities that do not depend for their existence on a particular mind. Thus thoughts are distinguishable as real entities to be accorded an independent status.

Conclusion

Thus sense is the ultimate semantic significance of a name and hence the descriptive content alone is necessary but not sufficient to express the thought or sense.

For Frege, sense meant something fundamental and hence something ultimate in the semantic structure of language. That is why he equated sense with the thought of a sentence such that thought is something constitutive of the linguistic framework. From this perspective, we can say proper names like any linguistic category, must be placed within a linguistic framework, and then its sense can unfold itself to the language user in his effort to understand the language.

⁴⁰ See Frege, “On Sense and Reference.”

⁴¹ Strawson, (1967), p. 38.

Thus sense and reference must be linked in the use of names because they are inseparable so far as our actual use of language is concerned. The language which we use and understand requires the sense that situates reference in the right perspective. The world is well referred to if sense is fully manifested in the language of naming. Naming is the way the world is talked about in an intelligible fashion. Thus we really need sense in order to give the right location to the object named in the world. So sense is a function of language use and so the naming function itself must have sense in the territory of speech activity of referring to objects in the world.

The theory of reference thus really faces the need of Fregean sense for the reason that reference without sense seems incomprehensible. Reference must be situated in a framework of language use and so sense re-emerges in the language of referring expressions. But there are some uncomfortable points in Frege's theory, like his application of sense to empty singular terms, his treatment of sense and definite description as same and the inadequacy of the idea of indirect sense. Russell has tried to solve some of these problems in his theory of descriptions which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 2

Bertrand Russell's Theory on Names and Definite Descriptions

Introduction

In the present chapter, we shall attempt to show how Bertrand Russell has responded to Gottlob Frege's theory of reference. Here I shall try to explain why Frege's theory did not satisfy Russell and how Russell has put forward his arguments against Frege and supplements his objections by giving his own theory of reference, which is known as "The Theory of Definite descriptions."

Before we move into a discussion on the above matter, I would like to make some general observation on Russell's works in philosophy of language. Bertrand Russell (b. 1872 – d. 1970) is generally credited with being one of the founders of analytic philosophy, but he has also produced a body of work that covers logic, the philosophy of mathematics, metaphysics, ethics and epistemology. His most influential contribution includes his defence of "Logicism" (the view that mathematics is in some important sense reducible to logic) and his theories of *definite descriptions* and *logical atomism*.

Among many of his writings, there are a few books and articles which should be taken as primary requirements for understanding his philosophy of language, some articles, like, "On Denoting" (1905), "Mathematical Logic as Based on the Theory of Types" (1908), "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description" (1910), "On the Relations of Universals and Particulars" (1912), "The Philosophy of Logical

Atomism”(1918), “Logical Atomism”(1919), etc., and, books, like, *The Principles of Mathematics*(*Principia Mathematica*) (1903), *The Problems of Philosophy* (1912), *The Analysis of Mind* (1921), *An Outline of Philosophy* (1927), *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* (1940),*The Philosophy of Logical Atomism* (1949).¹ I shall not trace the connection between Russell’s philosophy of language and his epistemology and metaphysics. I am concerned with the views Russell held on reference for a relatively brief period of his life, the views he explained in “On Denoting,” “Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description,” and *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*. All these views are co-related with each other. In his article “Logical Atomism,” he sets forth his concept of an ideal, isomorphic language, a language that would mirror the world, whereby our knowledge can be reduced to terms of atomic propositions and their truth-functional compounds. Russell believed that most important requirement for such an ideal language is that every meaningful proposition must consist of terms referring directly to the objects with which we are acquainted, or they are defined by other terms referring to objects with which we are, at least indirectly acquainted. One of the central themes of Russell’s atomism is that the world consists of logically independent facts, a plurality of facts and that our knowledge depends on the data of our direct experience of them (i.e., Knowledge by Acquaintance).²

Besides his logical analysis of the world, perhaps his most significant contribution to Philosophy of Language is his theory of descriptions in which he extends his application of logic in case of sentences and propositions. It draws attention to what he regards as a discrepancy between grammatical form of a sentence and its logical form. The implication is that the imperfect constructions of natural language must be translated into logically correct form before they can provide suitable subject matter for philosophical analysis.

In the first section of this chapter I will discuss what the points on which Russell rejects Frege are.

¹ See Nicholas Griffin (ed.), (2003).

² Craig, Edward (ed.) (1998). *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 5, p. 774.

Some of the points of Frege's theory upon which Russell has reacted are,

1. Frege's introduction of sense over reference.
2. Frege's innovation of the "law of compositionality."
3. Frege's treatment of names as definite descriptions.
4. And thus taking definite descriptions as referential expression.

We will now discuss how Russell criticized Frege on the above points and whether, in doing so, he was successful in raising objections towards Frege on the following points. After having done that we will present his arguments regarding a theory of reference and meaning.

2.1 Russell's attack on Frege

Russell's famous article "On Denoting" which is a response to Frege's notion of sense and reference is one of the most significant and influential philosophical essays of twentieth century and was published in the famous philosophy journal *Mind* in 1905. Russell's theory of descriptions was usually introduced with the goal of showing that many noun phrases in English, despite appearances, are not referring expressions but are in some sense quantificational. It is a work of which has provoked many discussions and debates among philosophers of language and linguists for over a century.

In fact, Russell raised two distinct sorts of criticism of Frege. On the one hand, he accepted, in broad outline, Frege's account of semantic value, but he argued that Frege had gone wrong on some important points of detail. On the other hand, he attacked Frege's introduction of sense over and above that of semantic value.

As we know, Frege has the view that proper names are those expressions that have objects as their semantic values. In this sense, it is held that ordinary names, such as "Plato," "Aristotle" are proper names. He goes on to saying that definite descriptions,

like, “the teacher of Aristotle” are proper names in this sense. A definite description is a phrase of the form “the-so-and-so,” for example, “the present King of France,” “the least rapidly convergent series.” He thus held that the semantic value of a definite description is the object that it stands for, the contribution a definite description makes to the truth-values of complex sentences in which it appears is determined by the fact that it stands for certain object.

Russell in response viewed that a definite description, such as “the King of France,” does not refer to any individual. So, if we view it as a proper name (as suggested by Frege), it would follow that it has no semantic value. If it be so then there is no property in virtue of which it makes a contribution to the truth-value of complex sentences in which it appears. According to Frege’s view, the sentence,

“The present King of France is bald.”

has no truth-value, it expresses a thought that is neither true nor false. One can hold a view like Meinong that “the King of France” does refer to an object, but to a non-existent one. The King of France even though he does not exist, nevertheless subsists.³ (“On Denoting”) Russell tries to avoid both these positions by denying that definite descriptions are proper names. If definite descriptions are not proper names, their semantic values are not given by the object (if any) they refer to. So, the fact that there are many definite descriptions that do not stand for any object, and so does not lead to the problem faced by Frege. But if the semantic behavior of definite descriptions is not to be explained in terms of their standing for objects, how is it to be explained? What are definite descriptions if they are not proper names? We will deal with these questions in detail with reference to Russell’s account of definite descriptions and referential expressions.

³ Russell, (1956), p. 45.

According to Russell, definite descriptions are not proper names, but rather *functional expressions*⁴ that do not have objects as their semantic values and the failure of a definite description to stand for an object does not imply that it has no semantic value. For example, “the present King of France,” though does not refer to any object, that does not mean that it is meaningless or neither true nor false, rather Russell assumes that the sentence is a false meaningful sentence. In fact, Russell attempts to avoid the problem of bearerless names by treating ordinary names as *disguised definite descriptions*⁵. He claims that ordinary names are not logical proper names. He thinks that the only genuine proper names might turn out to be demonstratives expressions, such as “this”, “that”, pronouns (I, he, she, you.....): and what seems like proper names are really descriptions. According to him, proper names are the names of sense data.

Another problem which Russell tries to explain is this: When we say that the sentence

“The present King of France is bald,”

is false, the question may arise as to what about the sentence

“The present King of France is not bald:”

Is this a true sentence or a false one? As Russell says,

“By the law of excluded middle, either ‘*A is B*’ or ‘*A is not B*’ must be true. Hence either ‘the present King of France is bald’ or ‘the present King of France is not bald’ must be true. Yet if we enumerated the things that are bald, and then the things that are not bald, we should not find the present King of France in either list.”⁶

Russell appeals to two different ways of reading “the King of France is not bald.” On one reading, the sentence is false, but is not really the negation of “the present King of France is bald,” so, that no counter example to the law of excluded middle is generated. On the other reading, it is the negation of “the present King of France is bald,” but is actually true, so, that again there is no threat to the law of excluded middle. In order to distinguish

⁴ Miller, (1998), p. 62.

As it is discussed in the previous chapter that *functional expressions* are not singular terms those refers to objects. *Functional expressions* are a kind of concepts which are incomplete in nature. In Russellian sense they have semantic value but their semantic value does not depend upon any object of reference.

⁵ Ibid., p. 63

⁶ Russell, (1956), p. 48.

between the two readings he uses the notion of scope of a quantifier. Take a sentence like,

1. No students are intelligent.

If we will take “F” as “... is a student” and “G” as “...is intelligent”, then this would symbolically become

2. $(X) (Fx \rightarrow \sim Gx)$ (for all x, if x is a student then x is not Intelligent)

Here the negation operators occur inside the part of $(Fx \rightarrow \sim Gx)$ which is governed by the universal quantifier (X). Hence it has narrow scope with respect to the universal quantifier or universal quantifier has wide scope with respect to the negation operator.

But if we say,

3. It is not the case that all students are intelligent.

Symbolization of the above sentence would be,

4. $\sim(X) (Fx \rightarrow Gx)$

Here the negation operator has wide scope with respect to the universal quantifier.⁷ Thus Russell points out that “the present King of France is not bald” is not, an ultimate analysis, the negation of the sentence “the present King of France is bald” (which itself is a false sentence). It should be interpreted as, “It is false that the present King of France is bald” and in which negation operator has wide scope.⁸

Now the second puzzle raised by Russell is concerning the “law of identity” and the “law of compositionality” in Frege’s theory. The puzzle is that even though “Scott is the author of *Waverly*” is true, it does not follow that two referring terms “Scott” and “the author of *Waverly*” are interchangeable in every situation. According to

⁷ We can also distinguish between their having wide or narrow scopes with respect to definite description. The case where the description has wide scope with respect to the negation operator described by Russell is one in which the description has a “primary occurrence,” the case in which the description has narrow scope with respect to the negation operator is one in which it has “secondary occurrence.”

⁸ Miller, (1998), pp. 65–6.

Russell, although “George IV wanted to know whether Scott was the author of *Waverly*” is true, “George IV wanted to know whether Scott was Scott,” is presumably, false. Russell’s distinction between the logical forms associated with the use of proper names and definite descriptions shows why this is so. When someone wants to know whether “Scott was the author of *Waverly*” is true, obviously he does not want to know whether Scott is Scott, which is presumably false. Russell’s distinction between the logical forms associated with the use of proper names and definite descriptions shows why this is so.

In addition to making criticisms about Frege’s assignment of semantic value, Russell also criticized Frege’s introduction of the notion of sense. There are two main criticisms of the notion of sense. The first is that the distinction between sense and semantic value is actually incoherent. And the second point of criticism is concerning the notion of sense itself. About the first objection Russell hold the view that

“The whole distinction between [sense] and [reference] has been wrongly conceived.”⁹

Regarding the second point of rejection Russell tries to show that the invocation of the notion of sense is simply superfluous or redundant. Frege introduced the notion of sense as an attempt to solve a number of puzzles. Russell argues that these puzzles can be solved in a way that does not involve any appeal to the notion of sense, so that Frege’s basis of introducing sense is simply unnecessary.

As we have discussed in the previous chapter that Frege’s introduction of sense was motivated by the desire to solve three main problems, they are, the problem of bearerless of names, the problem of substitution into belief context, and the problem of informativeness.

Russell holds that empty definite descriptions and ordinary names still have a semantic value because they are not actually genuine proper names, they are actually disguised definite descriptions, and also they have second-level function (the semantic value of a predicate is a first-level function from objects to truth-values; the

⁹ Ibid., p. 50. Russell has used “meaning” for “sense” and “denotation” for semantic value.

semantic value of a sentential connectives is a first-level function from truth-values to truth-values; the semantic value of a quantifier is a second-level function from concept to truth-values) as their semantic values.

Now the third puzzle is regarding the “law of substitution” in belief context, which, as we know, is as follows,

Suppose,

1. Smith believes that the Morning Star is the planet Venus.

Now, suppose that Smith does not know that the “Evening Star” is in fact the same as “Morning Star” and therefore they refer to the same object, the planet Venus. That is to say Smith does not know that

2. The Morning Star is the Evening Star.

Since “The Morning Star” and “Evening Star” are taken to be proper names. By Frege they have the same semantic value; since they pick out the same object, Venus. So, we should be able to substitute “The Evening Star” for “The Morning Star” without changing (1)’s truth-values. But in fact substitution results in the false sentence,

3. Smith believes that the Evening Star is the planet Venus.

According to Russell if we analyze the above examples in terms of logical symbolism by taking “x” for “the Morning Star,” “y” for “the Evening Star” and “F” for “is the planet Venus,” then the above sentences would be symbolized as:

1* Smith believes that Fx.

2* $x = y$, and

3* Smith believes that Fy

.

Russell’s reply to the problem is that 1*, 2*, 3* wrongly presents the logical form of (1), (2), and (3). When we see their true logical form, we will see that there is simply no scope for the sort of substitution that takes us from (1*) and (2*) to (3*). For Russell

“the Morning star” and “the Evening Star” are not proper names at all, since he has described ordinary names are the disguised definite descriptions.

Russell points out that substitution of descriptions which pick out the same individual are fine, so long as the descriptions have wide scope (or primary occurrences) in the relevant sentences like:

4. One and only entity is “the Morning Star,” and Smith believes, that entity is identical with planet Venus.

But matters are different when a description has narrow scope, as in

5. Smith believes that one and only one entity is “Morning Star” and that entity is “the planet Venus.”

Here the expression “the Morning Star” has a secondary occurrence.¹⁰ He says,

“A secondary occurrence of denoting phrase may be defined as one in which the phrase occurs in a proposition *P* which is a mere constituent of the proposition we are considering, and the substitution for the denoting phrase is to be effected in *P*, not in the whole proposition concerned. The ambiguity as between primary and secondary occurrences is heard to avoid in language; but it does no harm if we are on our guard against it.”¹¹

Thus when definite descriptions appear in sentences that contain propositional attitude operator, such as “believes that...” the ambiguity in scope arises. And by recognizing the ambiguity in scope and by noting that definite descriptions are not genuine proper names, the puzzle of substitution into belief context can be solved without invoking the notion of sense.

This reflects Russell’s treatment of definite descriptions. According to Russell proper names are merely disguised definite descriptions and therefore, they are second-level functions (a function from concept to truth-values) rather than referring expression,

¹⁰ See Russell, (1956), p. 52

¹¹ Ibid., p. 52.

as their semantic values. So, for definite descriptions have second-level functions as their having semantic values. Russell's criticism of Frege's view of definite description can be summed up as follows:

Frege assigns definite descriptions the wrong sort of semantic values: Frege views definite descriptions as proper names, as having objects as their semantic values; but in fact definite descriptions have second-level functions as their semantic values.

After discussing the pitfalls of Frege's theory raised by Russell now we shall move on to my discussion on Russell's theory of reference.

2.2 Russell's view on Denoting Phrases

Russell's methodology consisted of the making and testing of hypothesis through the weighing of evidence, together with a rigorous analysis of problematic propositions using the machinery of first-order logic. It was Russell's belief that by using the new logic of his days, philosophers would be able to exhibit the underlying "logical form" of natural language statements. A statement's logical form, in turn, would help philosophers to resolve problems of reference associated with the ambiguity and vagueness of natural language. On this view the subject matter of philosophy is distinguished from that of the sciences only by the generality of philosophical statements, not by the underlying methodology of the discipline. In philosophy, as in mathematics, Russell believed that it was by applying logical machinery and logical insight that advances would be made. He has originally coined the phrase "logical atomism" to distinguish his picture of the world as containing many separate things from the opposing pictures advocated by the British idealists, such as P.H. Bradley.

Russell's most famous example of his "analytic" method concerns "denoting phrases" such as descriptions and proper names. His theory of descriptions is designed to

deal with the same problems which bothered Frege, but his attack on these problems is radically different. The theory appeared in full, for the first time, in "On Denoting," in which Russell presents his theory of "denoting phrases" (he later divided these phrases into "indefinite" and "definite" descriptions). He holds that the denoting phrases never have meaning in themselves but that every proposition in whose verbal expression they occur has a meaning.

For Russell a "denoting phrase" is a singular noun phrase, preceded by a quantifier, whose predicate term is satisfied by some particular. Such a phrase does not contribute objects as the constituents of the singular propositions in which they occur. In his view, denotation is a semantically inert property.¹² Whereas Frege held that there were two distinct aspects of the meaning of every term, phrase or sentence its *Sinn und Bedeutung*, Russell explicitly rejects the notion of sense and replaces it with the idea of a *propositional function* (i.e., a function from objects to abstract propositions which are contents of sentences). Russell in "On Denoting" uses the term "Meaning" for "sense" and the term "Denotation" for "semantic value". For him, this is so, because propositions must have concrete and real existing entities as their constituents. Russell goes on to saying that a "denoting phrase" can either a definite description (i.e., a singular noun phrase with the determinative article "the" at the beginning) or, an indefinite description (a noun phrase with the indeterminate article "a," "an" at the beginning). As he write in "On Denoting",

"By a 'denoting phrase' I mean a phrase such as any one of the following: a man, some man, any man, every man, all man, the present King of England, the present King of France, the centre of the solar system at the first instant of twentieth century, the revolution of the earth round the sun, the revolution of the sun round the earth. Thus a phrase is denoting and yet not denotes anything; e.g. (1) 'the present King of France', (2) a phrase may denote the definite object; e.g. 'the present King of England' denotes a certain man. (3) A phrase may denote ambiguously; e.g., 'a man' denotes not many men, but an ambiguous man."¹³

Thus the class of singular terms or denoting phrases seems to be very vast. It contains proper names (Socrates, London, Alexander), definite descriptions ("the author of

¹² See Russell's "On Denoting".

¹³ Ibid., p. 41.

Waverly,” “the present King of France,” “the point of intersection of two lines”), singular pronouns (“he,” “she,” “it”), demonstratives (“this,” “that”), indefinite descriptions in some of their uses (“a man”), variables (“x,” “y,” “z”), and expressions with indexical “that”-clauses (“that man,” “this house”). We will see how the ordinary names like ‘Aristotle’, ‘Plato’...which seems to be proper names, but are not, according to Russell, proper names and therefore not directly referring to any person (i.e., when we are using these names in a sentence for a particular person, then the person itself does not enter into the sentence.)

What is Russell’s view on singular terms? As Evans puts it very nicely, he writes,

“... where a clear descriptive condition exists for something’s being the referent or denotation of a term, a quite determinate true-condition is associated with sentences containing the term, whether or not it is empty; the sentence is true just in case there exists something which uniquely satisfies the condition, and which satisfies the sentence’s predicate.”¹⁴

This is the concept of Russellian singular terms. Language embodies the peculiar signs for indicating the place for the use of singular terms or naming expressions, alongside the expressions standing for predication.

A singular term, according to Mill, falls into two kinds: those which are connotative and those which are not.¹⁵ The non-connotative singular terms, are what called “proper names”. It is the connotative singular terms, which are the definite descriptions. What is characteristic of a connotative term, whether it is a singular term, like “the man in the iron mask,” or a general term, like “a man,” as opposed to a term which is non-connotative, is that its denotation is determined by its connotation.

Frege’s view of definite description seems to be fundamentally of the same nature as Mill’s. In Frege’s theory, definite descriptions, along with proper names like “John,” “Aristotle,” have both sense and reference, and their reference is determined by their sense. But we might say that this view is the same as Mill’s argument if we could identify

¹⁴ Evans, (1982), p. 47.

¹⁵ Sen, Pranab. K. (1991), p. 18.

sense and reference respectively with connotation and denotation. But this we cannot do, because the reference of the predicate is a concept for Frege, but the denotation of a predicate, for Mill, is any object of which it is true.

Thus singular terms occupy a significant place in the sentences of our natural language. They are clearly marked as “referring expressions” in language for the possibility of predication. Singular terms behave in a certain way as far as they occupy the subject place in a sentence. They identifyingly refer to the object and thereby make it fit for the ascription of the predicate. Reference as implemented by the singular term is predicational and its presence facilitates predication.

Thus the singular term does the identifying job in such a manner that makes predication possible. Predication requires identification in very visible way such that the speaker as well as the hearer know that there is already an object identified to which they are referring to as well as ascribing a certain property. There is no reference without a predication and the consequent involvement of the attribution of predicates and concepts.

If the task of the singular terms is to identify in the above way then the task of the general term is predicative one. And the distinction between singular terms and general terms is matched by the distinction between spatio-temporal particulars and their attributive properties, the properties which are called universals, which specify what the particular in general, share amongst themselves. Strawson pointed out,

“The ontological distinction between the particular and the universal is valid because it provides categorical support to the distinction between singular and general terms.”¹⁶

Thus, reference to singular objects as well as to objects in general, is undoubtedly an important aspect of all kinds of communication. And of all the diverse forms of reference like, singular reference (i.e., reference to single particular object as distinct) seems to be the most fundamental.

¹⁶ See Strawson, (1959).

Regarding all these assumptions about singular terms, singular references and their nature, Russell says that he is neither against singular reference, nor does he deny that the predicative expressions are very useful in sentence. All that he has emphasized is that the logically proper names must be kept logically separate from descriptions whether disguised or obvious. According to him, singular terms are referring expressions and definite descriptions should not be kept under the category of referring expressions. And proper names, being distinguished definite descriptions, should also be distinguished from referring expressions.

Russell's rejection of Frege's theory of sense opens up a new theory of proper names and singular noun phrases or denoting phrases. Russell argues that "denoting phrases" are those involving a noun preceded by a, an, any, every, all, the, or. They are incomplete symbols; that is they have no meaning of their own, but have meaning only in the context of complete sentence that expresses a proposition.

Besides, Russell was worried that ordinary names and denoting phrases, when not properly analyzed, can have unacceptable ontological implications, that means that those names which are empty may be taken to be referring to objects existing in some other realm. The first step to avoid this problem should be to analyze the so-called "descriptive phrases" which appear to be names of some sort denoting some objects or the other. Such phrases are "the author of *Waverly*," "the present King of France," "the round square" etc. Not all these phrases are problematic, but some of them are, especially those like "the present King of France," and "the round square," etc. which are referentially empty may nonetheless be meaningfully used in a sentence. Thus, there is a need for logical language in which such denoting phrases can be perfectly used without any ambiguity. The search for this language is the main thrust of Russell's "Theory of Definite Descriptions." Regarding the logical analysis of denoting phrases he talks of a principle that is,

"This is the principle of the theory of denoting, I wish to advocate: that denoting phrase never have any meaning in themselves, but that every proposition in whose verbal expression they occur has a meaning."¹⁷

¹⁷ Russell, (1956), pp. 42-3.

That is to say that denoting phrases have a peculiar logic of their own such that they are not complete symbols in themselves and have meaning only in the context of the sentences in which they occur.

Russell's definition of the "fundamental" notion of a propositional function or denoting phrases is basically a modified version of Frege's idea of *unsaturated concepts*.

Russell writes,

Hence "C(x) stands for a proposition in which 'x' is a constituent and where 'x', the variable, is essentially and wholly undetermined. The notion of *everything, nothing, and something* (the most prominent denoting phrases)' are not assumed to have any meaning in isolation, but a meaning is assigned to every proposition in which they occur."¹⁸

So, these notions have no meaning apart from that which is assigned to them within propositions in which they occur. This is the foundation of Russell's theory of "descriptions."

The incomplete character of denoting expressions leads to the fact that they have been treated differently in logical grammar of language. They are not such that they have meaning of their own and can be used independently of a context. That is why they have to be taken as those which can refer to an object only in a context and on the condition that the object is already named directly. This presupposes that names are a separate logical category of expressions which are complete in themselves so far as their meaning is concerned. So they have a distinct logical status in the logical grammar of language.

2.3 Russell's Theory of Descriptions

We have seen what is Russell's view regarding "denoting phrases" and what is the role of a denoting phrase in sentence in which it occurs. He writes,

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 42.

“The sentence containing a denoting phrase like ‘The father of Charles II was executed’ (where ‘the father of Charles II’ is a denoting phrase), asserts, there was an x who was the father of Charles II and was executed. Now *the*, when it is strictly used, involves uniqueness; we do, it is true, speak of ‘*the* son of So-and-so’ even when So-and-so has several sons, but it would be more correct to say ‘*a* son of So-and-so’. Thus for our purposes we take *the* as involving uniqueness. Thus when we say x was *the* father of Charles II’ we do not only assert that x had a certain relation to Charles II, but also that nothing else had this relation.”¹⁹

So, these expressions as “the father of x,” “the son of x” are defined as descriptive functions. A description may be of two sorts, *Definite* and *indefinite (ambiguous)*. An *indefinite description* is a phrase of the form “a so-and-so,” and a *definite description* is a phrase of the form “the so-and-so.”²⁰

Definite descriptions are noun phrases of the form “the so-and-so” with noun complex (“the square of five,” “the author of *Hamlet*”) or of the form possessive with noun phrase (e.g. Sparta’s defeat of Athens’s). As Russell realized, it is important in philosophy to be clear about the semantics of such expressions. In the sentence “Aristotle was the teacher of Alexander,” the function of the subject, “Aristotle,” is to refer to something; it is a referential noun phrase (or singular term). By contrast, in the sentence “All men are mortal.” the subject noun phrase, “all men,” is not referential but quantificational. Definite descriptions appear at first sight to be referential. Frege treated them as referential. But Russell shows that they should be treated quantificationally in accordance with his theory of descriptions and argued that certain philosophical puzzles can thereby be solved.

Suppose, we make statements, like “I met a man” and “I met Jones.” Though these two statements seem to have the same grammatical form but logically they are different. The sentence “I met a man” is an “indefinite description” because it does not indicate any particular man and the sentence “I met Jones” is a definite one because it refers to a particular person or individual whom I met. So when I say “I met a man” that does not assert that “I met Jones.” Here not only “Jones” but no actual man, enters into my statement or utterance. This becomes obvious when the statement is false, since then

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 44.

²⁰ Ammerman, (1965), p. 16.

there is no more reason why Jones should be supposed to enter into the proposition than why anyone else should. But the statement (I met a man) would remain significant, though it could not possibly be true, even if there were no man at all. The statements like "I met a Unicorn" or "I met a Pegasus" are perfectly significant assertions, if we know what it would be to be "a Unicorn" or "a Pegasus" that is what is the definition of these non-existent monsters. (This is not the same as Frege's definition of empty singular terms though they don't have any object to refer but they possess some meaning because we have sense or thought of these words).

There is nothing unreal which may be called "Pegasus" or "Unicorn" in this case the *concept* enters into the proposition. Therefore, since it is significant (though false) to say "I met a Unicorn," it is clear that this proposition, rightly analyzed, does not contain a constituent "a unicorn" and though it does not contain it as a constituent, it does contain the *concept* "Unicorn."²¹

So the question of "unreality" leads to make a significant investigation that is the logician are often misguided by the "grammatical form" of propositions, they took "grammatical form" as a surer guide in analysis than in fact it is.

Among the possible theories which admit that denoting phrases stand for genuine constituents, Meinong's and MacColl's theory are important. Meinong's view is that, any grammatically correct denoting phrase stands for an object. Thus "the round square," "the present King of France," "the golden mountain" are supposed to be about genuine objects. It is admitted that such objects do not *subsist*, but nevertheless they are supposed to be objects. Russell in his article "On Denoting" quoted MacColl as,

"Individuals are of two sorts, real and unreal; hence he defines the null-class consisting of all unreal individuals. This assumes that such phrases as 'the present King of France', which does not denote a real individual, does, nevertheless, denote an individual, but an unreal one."²²

Russell, in contrast to these theories, claims that such views are ontologically impossible or sometimes self-contradictory. Both these criticisms made by Russell originate from

²¹ Ibid., p. 16.

²² Ibid., p. 54.

Meinong's theory that there is an object, whether it *exists or subsists*, for every set of properties. Therefore, there is an object which is both round and not round, or round and square. Russell argues that Meinong's theory leads to the conclusion such as "the present King of France" both exists and does not exist. However, Meinong does not attribute *existence* (or any other sort of being) to non-existent objects. Russell accuses Meinong for violating the "law of non-contradiction" by asserting that "the round square" is both round and not round. Meinong on the other hand, maintains that the laws of logic do not apply to such phenomena as "impossible" objects which have no being.

Russell has tried to show the defects in sentences where empty or non-referring definite descriptions are employed. He used logical language with its logical grammar for the above purpose. Sentences containing non-referring expressions such as "the present King of France" in the sentence "the present King of France is bald" appears to talk about the person who is the present King of France and is also bald. So, it seems to tell us that such a person exists, even if in a possible world, though not in the actual world and that he is bald. This means that, for the sentence in order to be meaningful, it is necessary that there must be a possible person if not real one; it must refer to somebody however unreal. Russell finds this position uncomfortable as it forces us to introduce unreal entities such as "the present King of France," "the round square" etc... into our ontology. These entities are mythical entities that have no existence in reality and are the unwarranted outgrowths of two misleading surface grammar of sentences using such expressions. Russell says,

"It is admitted that such objects do not *subsist*, but nevertheless they are supposed to be objects. This is in itself is a different view; but the chief objection is that such objects, admitted, are apt to infringe the law of contradiction." ²³

In Meinongian scheme the law of contradiction is obviously violated because of the fact that the same object is being said to be both existing and not existing at the same time. This untenable situation can be solved if we will not be misguided by the grammatical form of the sentence i.e. we should not take the grammatical form as a guide to its logical

²³ Ibid., p. 45.

form. Because of the surface grammatical form of the sentence we are persuaded to think of the existence of an unreal or non-existent thing. If we will analyze the logical form²⁴ of a sentence then this contradiction will not arise. The sentence “the present king of France is bald,” breaks down into the following three sentences:

- i. There is at least one King of France.
- ii. There is at most one King of France.
- iii. Anything that is a King of France is also bald.²⁵

Here the conjunction of (i), (ii) and (iii) amounts to claim that “the present King of France is bald.” This analysis shows that there is simply no object for which the definite description “the King of France” stands and therefore, it is not a “proper name” referring to an object. All that it does is to ascribe a certain property to an individual in case he exists. The presence of the definite article “the” in the original proposition which is used to take as involving “uniqueness” wrongly suggests the presence of an object which fulfills this condition. But in the above logical analysis of the original proposition, we don’t find the definite article “the”. Also, the sentence, in this analysis turns out to be false because one of its constituent “there is at least one King of France” is a false proposition. However, the sentence is still meaningful. For Russell, the above original sentence appears to have logical structure of subject-predicate sentence in which the definite description “the King of France” appears to be logical subject. But as it is said, it is the surface grammatical form of the sentence which misleads us into believing that the subject term is directly referring it a person. The real grammatical form of a sentence is not in subject-predicate form but is of the character of an existential sentence in which the descriptive phrase is no more in the subject place at all. Thus meaning does not lie in whether the person actually exists but in the fact that we can characterize such a person in case he exists. Thus the sentence in order to be meaningful need not to be associated with reference and descriptive phrases are safe on this account.

²⁴ Edward, Paul (1998). *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol 5, p. 771.

The logical form of a sentence of a natural language is what determines both its logical properties and its logical relations to other sentences. The logical form of a sentence of natural language is typically represented in a theory of logically pure language which is only logically meaningful (quantifier).

²⁵ Miller, (1998), p. 61.

Russell claims that those who admitted “unreal” entities corresponding to meaningful expressions that lack reference must have been misled by surface grammar of the sentence. According to Russell,

“In such theories, it seems to me there is a failure of that feeling for reality which ought to be preserved even in the most abstract studies. Logic, I should maintain, must no more admit a unicorn than Zoology can: for logic is concerned with the real world just as truly as Zoology, though with its more abstract and general features.”²⁶

Russell sticks to the point that the absence of a satisfier of the description is no obstacle to someone’s correctly understanding an utterance of the sentence as having truth-conditions.

Thus a thought may be conveyed; and a belief (that the conditions are satisfied) may also be induced.²⁷

He further opines that it is not possible for a person to have a thought about something unless s/he knows which particular individual in the world he is thinking about and there are only two ways of discharging this requirement: one is to be, or to have a memory of being “acquainted” with the object concerned and the other is to think of the objects as the unique satisfier of some description.

So, to understand an atomic sentence needs either of these two requirements. An atomic sentence consists of simple symbol which are divided into proper names and predicates. Simple symbols have simple things (Russell’s logical form) as their meanings. The mark of a simple symbol is that understanding, it consists in being acquainted with its meaning. Russell held that one cannot be acquainted with an ordinary object such as “table,” but only with the perceptual experience, the sense-data, one has in perceiving the table, such as the visual experience of a brown rectangular patch and the tactile experience of a rough and hard surface. He also allowed that one can be acquainted with the meaning of predicates, properties and relations. So, atomic sentences feature proper

²⁶ Martinich, (1985), p. 240.

²⁷ See Evans, (1982). p. 43.

names standing for sense-data, e.g., “this is red” is an atomic sentence in which the indexical expression “this” stands for sense-datum and the predicate “... is red” stands for a property ascribed to the sense-datum.²⁸

From the above assumptions it is deduced that in the analysis of propositions, nothing “unreal” is to be admitted. According to Russell, replied that in dealing with propositions, we are dealing firstly with symbols, as it is discussed in the above paragraph. And if we attribute significance to groups of symbols which have no significance, we will fall into the error of admitting unrealities. In the proposition “I met a Unicorn” the whole four words together makes a significant proposition, and the word “unicorn” itself is significant in the same way as the word “man.” But the two words “a unicorn” do not possess any value in itself... thus if we falsely attribute any meaning to these words (a unicorn) we will be burdened with the problem how there can be such a thing in the world where there are no “unicorns.” “A unicorn” is an indefinite or ambiguous description (as it is combined with an indefinite article “a”) which describes nothing particular.

Propositions which contain ambiguous descriptions like “a so-and-so,” if properly analyzed, are found to contain no constituent represented by this phrase. And that is why such propositions can be significant even when there is no such thing as a so-and-so.

In case of definite descriptions on the other hand of the form “x is the so-and-so” (where “x” is a name) can only be true for one value of “x” at most.

There is a point of similarity between these two kinds of descriptions (definite and indefinite) that is, we are not concerned with the definition of phrases in isolation, rather the definition of propositions in which these phrases occurs. That is, the phrase “a man” could not be defined by itself. But when it occurs in a sentence like “Plato is a man,” “Aristotle is a man,” then only it has meaning. But we cannot infer that “a man” means the same as “Aristotle” means and also the same as “Plato” means, since these names

²⁸ Craig, Edward (1998), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 5, pp. 774–5.

have different meanings. So, the indefinite descriptions do not have meaning in themselves but propositions in which they occur. In case of definite descriptions also we don't have any meaning of them in isolation, we can know their definition when they occur in a proposition (this incompleteness of descriptive phrases is same as the Frege's unsaturatedness of concept/function).

Though at first sight this incompleteness of descriptive phrases is less obvious but this happens due to the inability of making a distinction between a name and definite descriptions. Russell has treated names and definite descriptions differently. A name is a simple symbol whose meaning is something that can only occur as subject.

"Names" are simple symbols because they admit of no parts. On the other hand the definite descriptive phrase "the author of *Waverly*" is not a simple symbol, because these separate words that compose the phrase are parts of the symbols. So, we have now two things to compare, one is name which is a simple symbol directly designating an individual which is its meaning and having this meaning in its own right independently of the meanings of all other words, second one is a description, which consists of several words whose meanings are already fixed, and from which results whatever it is to be taken as the "meaning" of the description.²⁹ So, names and definite descriptions are not identical. That means neither can we use definite descriptions in place of names nor names in place of definite descriptions; even if the name names the same object as the description describes.

The only thing that distinguishes "the so-and-so" from "a so-and-so" is the implication of *uniqueness*.³⁰ We cannot speak of "the inhabitant of India" because being an inhabitant of India is an attribute, which is not unique. Similarly, we cannot speak about "the present King of France," because there is none; but we can speak about "the

²⁹ Martinich, (1985), p. 242.

Though the name has parts in the sense that it's a combination of separate letters but letters are not symbols. For example, "Scott" is a simple symbol and letters 's', 'c', 'o', 't', 't' are not symbols though they are parts the name, these parts are not symbols.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 243.

present King of England”. Thus the propositions about “the so-and-so” always imply the corresponding propositions about “a so-and-so,” with an assertion that there is no more than *the one so-and-so*.

According to Russell, we cannot ignore the predicative nature of the descriptive phrase and the logical point that it does not directly refer to the person concerned though it attributes certain properties to him. In the logical analysis of the sentence like “the present King of France is bald,” it becomes clear that the unique reference which is intended in the sentence is carried through the existential quantifier itself. And the quantificational structure of the sentence disambiguates the nature of the denoting phrase by placing it in the predicate-place of the sentence. Thus there is no reason to view the denoting phrase as the name of a person.³¹

Therefore, corresponding to the definite description, such as “the King of France” there is simply no object for which it stands. So if we view it as a proper name, we have to say that it has no semantic value. Hence, there is no property in virtue of which it makes a contribution to the truth-values of complex sentences in which it appears. Thus in Frege’s view, the sentence “the present King of France is bald” has no truth-value: it expresses a thought that is neither true nor false.

Russell’s attempts to avoid this problem by denying that definite descriptions are proper names, they are rather functional expressions that do not have objects as their semantic values. As we noted earlier, Russell makes another claim that ordinary names are not logical proper names. He treated ordinary names as *disguised definite descriptions*. In fact, Russell viewed that only genuine proper names might turn out to be demonstratives expressions, such as “this,” “that”. He writes,

“We may even go so far as to say that, in all such knowledge as can be expressed in words – with the exception of “this’ and “that” and a few other words of which the meaning varies on different occasions – no

³¹ Pradhan, (2002), p. 254.

[genuine proper] names occur, but what seems like [genuine proper] names are really descriptions."³²

Russell's view here gives the impression which is more drastic than it actually is. Not only are "this" and "that" the only possible genuine proper names, but even they cannot be construed as proper names if they are taken as referring to physical objects. They can only be viewed as proper names if they are taken to refer to sense-data or "objects of sense." He says,

"We say 'this is white'. If you agree that 'this is white', meaning the 'this' that you see, you are using 'this' as a proper name. But if you try to apprehend the proposition that I am expressing when I say 'this is white', you cannot do it. If you mean this piece of chalk as a physical object, then you are not using a proper name. It is only when you see 'this' quite strictly, to stand for an actual object of sense, that it is really a proper name."³³

Thus the only genuine proper names according to Russell are those for which the problem of bearerless names cannot possibly arise. Sense-data are good candidates for objects whose existence cannot possibly be doubted, if it seems to me that there is a red sense-datum in my visual ground, then there is such an object. So, the only genuine proper names are names of sense-data, demonstratives applied to currently existing experiences.

According to Russell, if "x" is a name, it must name something; what does not name anything is not a name. The definite description "the present King of France," is a complex symbol, of whose meaning is derived from that of its constituent symbols. So when we ask whether Homer existed, we are using the word "Homer" as an abbreviated description. We may replace it by "the author of Iliad and the Odyssey." The same considerations apply to almost all uses of what look like proper names.

After making a distinction between names and definite descriptions Russell has made a distinction between "primary" and "secondary" occurrences of descriptions in propositions. When we say "George IV wished to know whether Scott was the author of *Waverly*" we mean "George IV wished to know whether one and only one man wrote

³² Russell, (1919), p. 178.

³³ Russell, (1956), p. 201.

Waverly and Scott was that man.” But we may also mean: “one and only one man wrote *Waverly*, and George IV wished to know whether Scott was that man.” In the latter “the author of *Waverly*” has a primary occurrence; in the former, a secondary. A secondary occurrence of a denoting phrase may be defined as one in which the phrase occurs in a proposition “p” which is a mere constituent of the proposition we are considering, and the substitution for the denoting phrase is to be effected in “p” and not in the whole proposition concerned.³⁴

The distinction between primary and secondary occurrences helps us to deal with logical status of denoting phrases that denote nothing. Russell has described this in the following manner. He writes,

“If ‘C’ is a denoting phrase, say ‘the term having the property *F*’, then

C has property ϕ means ‘one and only one term has the property *F*, and that one has the property ϕ .’

If now the property *F* belongs to no terms, or to several, it follows that ‘C has property ϕ ’ is false for *all* values of ϕ . Thus ‘the present king of France is bald’ is certainly false; and ‘the present King of France is not bald’ is false if it means

‘There is an entity which is now King of France and is not bald’, but is true if it means

‘It is false that there is an entity which is now King of France and is bald’.

That is, ‘the King of France is not bald’ is false if the occurrence of ‘the King of France’ is *primary*, and true if it is *secondary*. Thus all propositions in which ‘the King of France’ has a primary occurrence are false; the denials of such propositions are true, but in them ‘the King of France’ has a secondary occurrence. Thus we escape the conclusion that the king of France has a wig.”³⁵

Thus with the help of “the theory of denoting,” we are able to hold that there is no unreal individuals; so that the null-class is the class containing no members, not the class

³⁴ Ibid., p. 52.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 53.

containing unreal entities. The whole realm of non-entities, such as the present King of France, the Round square, unicorn, *Hamlet* etc can be dealt satisfactorily.

Russell holds that the *truth value of a proposition depends upon its reference*, for example, it is true that the planet Venus is known as Morning Star and it is false that Mercury is called Morning Star. So, the proposition “Venus is Morning Star,” denotes an entity, so, it is true and the proposition “Mercury is Morning Star” does not denote any entity and thus it is false.

From the above analysis regarding denoting phrases and objects of reference it may be deduced that if there is something with which we do not have immediate acquaintance, but only have acquaintance via denoting phrases, then the proposition in which this thing is introduced by means of denoting phrase do not really contain this thing as constituent, but contain the constituents expressed by the several words of denoting phrase. Every proposition which we can understand must be composed wholly of constituents with which we are acquainted. All these explanations leads to the famous distinction made by Russell, between two kinds of knowledge, “knowledge by acquaintance” and “knowledge by description,”³⁶ which we shall now discuss.

2.4 Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description

After clarifying the sense of the term “denoting phrases” and providing several examples to illustrate the idea, Russell explains the epistemological motivations for his theory. This theory has been elaborated in his famous article “Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description” (1910). Russell declares that there are essentially two modes of knowing: knowledge by description and knowledge by (direct) acquaintance. Knowledge by acquaintance is limited to the sense data of the phenomenal world and to one’s own private inner experiences, while knowledge of everything else (other minds,

³⁶ See Russell, (1980).

physical objects and so on) can only be know by way of general descriptions. This distinction is what I intend to discuss in this section. Russell says,

“There are two sorts of knowledge: knowledge of things, and knowledge by truths. Knowledge of things is of two kinds ‘knowledge by acquaintance’ and ‘knowledge by descriptions.’³⁷

“Knowledge by acquaintance” is clearly non-judgmental. With the help of this we have knowledge of sense-data or universals. It gives us meanings of the subject term and the predicate term of an atomic sentence, according to the Russellian position of the denotative theory of meaning. Knowledge by description, however, is judgmental, according to Russell. By “description” he means definite descriptions. He writes,

“We shall say that an object is ‘known by description’ when we know that it is ‘the so-and-so’, i.e., when we know that there is an object, and no more, having a certain property....”³⁸

We shall say that we have acquaintance with anything in case it is presented to us directly, without the need for any other knowledge, like, inferential knowledge or any knowledge of truths. Thus in the presence of a table we are acquainted with the sense-data that makes possible the appearance of that table, its color, shape, hardness, smoothness, etc., all these are things of which we are immediately conscious of or aware of when we are seeing and touching the table. Thus for sense-data which make up the appearance of any object are things with which we have acquaintance, things immediately known to us just as they are.

So, in Russell’s view, it is not possible to doubt the sense-data. Our knowledge of the table, over and above the knowledge of sense-data, is of the kind which we shall call “knowledge by description.” However, the table is a physical object which causes such-and-such sense-data. This descriptive phrase describes the table by means of the sense-data. In order to know anything at all about the table we must know truths connecting it with things with which we have acquaintance. We must know that “such-and-such sense data are caused by a physical object.” There is no state of mind in which we are directly aware of the table; all our knowledge of the table is really knowledge of *truths*, and the

³⁷ Russell, (1980), p. 25.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 29 .

actual thing which is the table is not, strictly speaking, known directly to us at all. We know a description, and we know that there is just one object to which this description applies, though the object itself is not directly known to us. In such a case, we say that our knowledge of the object is knowledge by description. Thus we have descriptive knowledge of an object whether it exists or does not exist. Physical object does not belong to the classes of objects with which we are acquainted (as opposed to sense-data), nor does other people's mind.

Russell goes on to saying that all our knowledge rests upon knowledge by acquaintance as its foundation.³⁹ This statement of Russell may raise a question about the knowledge of past and knowledge about one's own self. That is if knowledge is what we are directly acquainted with then what about the knowledge of past. In order to answer these questions Russell assumed that we have acquaintance by memory and acquaintance by introspection.

In case of acquaintance by *memory*, we often remember, what we have seen or heard, and that in such cases we are still immediately aware of what we remember, in spite of the fact that it appears as past and not as present. This knowledge by *memory* is the source of all our knowledge concerning past. In case of acquaintance by *introspection* we are often aware of my doings. This kind of acquaintance, which may be called self-consciousness, is the source of all our knowledge of mental things. But from our acquaintance with the contents of our own minds, we should be unable to imagine the minds of others, and therefore we could never arrive at the knowledge that they have minds. We can know what goes on in other's mind through our perception of their bodies, i.e., through the sense-data which we associate with their bodies.⁴⁰

Thus we have acquaintance in sensation with the data of the external senses, and in introspection with the data of the inner sense that is, thoughts, feelings, desires, etc., we have acquaintance in memory with things which have been data either of the outer

³⁹ Ibid., p. 26.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 26–7 .

senses or of the inner sense. We also have acquaintance with what we call *universals*, that is to say, general ideas, such as whiteness, diversity, brotherhood, and so on. Every complete sentence must contain at least one word which stands for a universal. Awareness of universals is called *conceiving*, and a universal of which we are aware is called *a concept*. Many universals, like particulars, are only known to us by description. But in case of particulars, knowledge concerning what is known by description is ultimately reducible to knowledge concerning what is known by acquaintance.

In the context of knowledge by description, we will not consider the descriptions which are ambiguous (a phrase of the form “a so-and-so”), but we will reflect on the description which are definite (a phrase of the form “the so-and-so”).

Russell on the basis of knowledge by description holds the view that common words, even proper names, are usually descriptions. That is, the thought in the mind of a person using a proper name correctly can generally only be expressed obviously if we replace the proper name by a description. Moreover, the description required to express the thought will vary for different people or for the same person at different times. The only thing constant is the object to which the name applies. But so long as this remains constant, the particular description involved usually makes no difference to the truth or falsehood of the proposition in which the name appears.

A description known to be applicable to a particular must involve some reference to a particular with which we are acquainted, if our knowledge about the thing described is not to be merely what follows logically from the description. For example, “the tallest men” is a description involving only universals, which must apply to some man, but we can make no judgments concerning this man which involve knowledge about him beyond what the description gives.

A particular object does have many descriptions or we can say people may have more than one particular description about an object or a person. But it may be also possible that people have description without knowing or being acquainted with an actual

object or person. What enables us to communicate, in spite of the varying descriptions we employ, is that we know there is a true proposition concerning the actual object and that however we may vary the proposition described it is still the same.

The fundamental principle in the analysis of propositions containing descriptions is this: Every proposition which we can understand must be composed wholly of constituents with which we are acquainted.⁴¹ That is we must attach some meaning to the words we use, if we are to speak significantly and meaningfully. And the meaning we attach to our words must be something with which we are acquainted. When we make a statement about a person or an object, then that person or the reference of the statement is not before our mind, since we are not acquainted with him. For example, when we say "Shakespeare was the author of *Romeo and Juliet*," the person Shakespeare is not present before our mind when we are uttering the sentence. So, the chief importance of knowledge by description is that it enables us to pass beyond the limits of our private experience. In spite of the fact that we can only know truths which are wholly composed of terms which we have experienced in acquaintance, we can yet have knowledge by description of things which we have never experienced.

From the above discussion it follows that we should not treat definite descriptions as referring expressions or we should not understand propositions containing definite description as if they are referring expression that is they have some reference or there is a particular reference that the description describes. This leads to our further discussion, that is, definite descriptions are not referring expressions.

2.5 Descriptive Phrases versus Referring Expressions

Here I will discuss what are the characteristics of referring expressions that the denoting phrases lack. The denoting phrase as discussed may denote an object or it may not denote

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 32.

an object. So, our understanding of denoting phrases in a sentence is not characterized by the presence of any object or reference. But in case of referential expressions there must be an object for which the expression is used in a sentence, for example, "it is a red pen." Here "it" could not be used if there were no "red pen." Now, if we say "the King of France is bald," by the parity of form, with the previous sentence this sentence also ought to be about the denotation of the phrase "the King of France." But this phrase, which, of course, has meaning, certainly has no denotation. So, it would seem that "the King of France is bald" should utter a nonsense. However, what it utters is not nonsense, what it says is simply false.

Russell has further argued that since definite descriptions have some descriptive content, it could have a descriptional function only, and couldn't be used for the purpose of referring. Though it seems, definite description as a referring expression, it is not possible to make singular reference by means of it, if by singular reference we mean reference to some definite particular object which the speaker may have in his mind. So, this is the failure of singular reference.

Uniqueness is not singularity we may know that there is a unique object which satisfies a certain condition or description, without knowing who or which that particular object is. According to Russell we cannot refer to the object which satisfies the descriptive condition in the absence of this knowledge.

So, Russell made an attempt to allow the notion of reference in a wider field of application. He did this by trying to assimilate the situation in which one thinks about oneself and the situation in which one thinks about a remembered item, and to the perceptual situation to cover all non-descriptive modes of identification.

In order to be thinking about an object or to make a judgment about an object, one must know which object is in question-one must know which object it is that one is thinking about. This is called Russell's principle. According to this principle, someone

who was in a position to think of an object must have a *discriminating*⁴² conception of that object—a conception which would enable the subject to distinguish that object from all other things. The subject must have a capacity to distinguish the object of his judgment from all other things.

In the absence of knowledge of the identity of the individual, what we can have is only a “blind” reference. This blind reference is also a general reference. To refer to the author of *Waverly*, without knowing who the author is, is to refer to whoever wrote *Waverly*. But, “whoever” involves generality, i.e., in possible worlds in which different individuals may author *Waverly*. Since the definite description picks out just one individual in any given world it can be said to achieve uniqueness of reference. Yet its reference fails to be singular, and remains general across possible worlds.⁴³

One may summarize Russell’s argument thus: if we treat definite descriptions as referring expressions, then we shall be obliged to conclude that, in the absence of a referent, sentences containing them would not be meaningful i.e., would fail to express a thought.⁴⁴

So, what is a referring expression? A genuine referring expression is one which has as its sole function the identification of an object such that if it satisfies the predicate, the sentence is true, and if it fails to satisfy the predicate, the sentence is false. Therefore,

1. A referring expression must be semantically simple.
2. A referring expression must have just one referent.
3. Understanding a referring expression is a matter of knowing who or what its reference is.
4. Referring expressions are scopeless.

⁴²Evans, (1982), p. 65.

⁴³ Sen, Pranab. K, (1991), p. 26.

⁴⁴ Russell claims that if a description was empty, an ‘atomic’ sentence containing it would be nonsense on the referential view, but his worry is not about the failure on the part of the description as an expression type to have a conventional meaning. It was a worry about what if anything, would be said, on the referential view, by an utterance of the sentence.

5. Referring expressions are “rigid designator.”
6. Definite descriptions are not referring expressions.⁴⁵ (M. Sainsbury’s “The Essence of Reference”)

The first assertion suggests that names and genuine proper names or demonstratives are semantically simple, proper names like “London” and demonstratives like “this”, and “that” “this book,” “that book.” But we cannot say that all singular expressions are simple.

The second point that a referring expression must have one reference means that referring expressions have at most and at least one reference. The “at most” condition has generally been taken for granted; and nothing could be thought as opposed to it. However many people and places have the same name. Every example of a name which we think of has more than one bearer. So, we can individuate names more semantically, in terms of their referents. One could know one use of the name and may be ignorant about another use of the same name in a different context. In case of demonstratives also we face the same problem, like the word “that” can be and has been used to refer to countless different things. This does not disqualify it as a referring expression i.e., in each use “that” has at most one referent.

The above assumption leads to the third point that understanding a referring expression involves knowing to whom or what it refers, that is the idea of discriminating knowledge. Gareth Evans suggests that understanding is a form of knowledge. One would not expect that the same piece of identificatory knowledge would be available to every understander: the requirement is only that every understander possesses some identificatory knowledge and this may differ from understander to understander and occasion to occasion.

Referential expressions are scopeless. If sentences which agree in everything, except the relative scope of two expressions, differ in meaning or truth conditions, neither

⁴⁵ Sainsbury, “The Essence of Reference,” in Ernest Lepore and Barry Smith (eds.) (2006). pp. 393–92.

expression is referring expression. Referring expressions manifest no significant scope distinctions with respect to temporal or modal operators, they at least could manifest such distinctions with respect to other operators, in particular negation. That is referential expressions are temporally or modally rigid. This is consistent with their having significant scope interactions with, for example, negation. And as we have seen earlier that definite descriptions show significant scope variation with respect to negation. But no referring expressions show significant scope variation. Thus definite descriptions are not referring expressions.⁴⁶

Referential expressions are rigid designator is basically Saul Kripke's view, which claims that a *rigid designator* has the same reference in all the possible worlds (something is a *rigid designator* if in every possible world it designates the same object). A rigid expression with an actual referent refers to that object at each world at which the object exists, but refers to nothing at other worlds; a rigid expression with no actual referent has no referent at any world.⁴⁷

From Russell's point of view definite descriptions are not referential expressions, because they do not satisfy any of the above features of referring expressions. Russell's position becomes clearer if we compare it with that of Frege's, and that is what we intend to do in the next section.

2.6 Comparing Frege and Russell

Frege's and Russell's views are obviously different, but because of certain superficial similarities in how they handle certain famous puzzles about proper names, they are often assimilated. Where proper names are concerned, both Frege and Russell are often described together as "descriptivists."⁴⁸ But their views are fundamentally different.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 14.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 21–2.

⁴⁸ Descriptivist theory of names is a view of the nature of meaning and reference of proper names generally attributed to Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell. the theory consists essentially in the idea that the meaning

Frege's view may be called "sense" descriptivism and Russell's view "abbreviational"⁴⁹ descriptivism (descriptivism is often referred to as the "Frege- Russell view").

As we have seen in connection with the doctrine of acquaintance, Russell thinks that the only logically proper names of ordinary language, English in particular, are the demonstratives "this" and "that," expressions that are used to refer to one's current sense data, and the pronoun "I."⁵⁰ According to Russell ordinary proper names are really "abbreviated" or "disguised" definite descriptions. Definite description in turn, according to Russell's famous theory of description, functions not as referring expression but as quantificational phrases. We should not be misled by Russell's characterization of "denoting phrases," because for Russell denotation is a semantically inert property. That is, the proposition expressed by sentence in which a description occurs is the same whether the description has a denotation or not. So, its denotation does not enter into that proposition, as he explains,

"The actual object (if any) which is the denotation is not a constituent of propositions, we need acquaintance with the constituents of the description, but do not need acquaintance with its denotation."⁵¹

Thus the bearer of the name does not enter into the proposition expressed by a sentence in which the name occurs. This is not because the name has a sense (in Frege's sense of 'sense') but because it abbreviates a definite description.

Russell makes a further assertion that descriptions will vary for different people, or for the same person at different times, but so long as the object to which the name applies remains the same, no difference to the truth or falsehood of the proposition in which the name appears occur.

or semantic contents of names are identical to the descriptions associated with them by speakers, while their referents are determined to be the objects that satisfy these descriptions. See A.P. Martinich, *The Philosophy of Language*, 2008.

⁴⁹ Back, "Comparing Frege and Russell", p. 1.

⁵⁰ When someone is uttering a statement about himself say 'I am a scientist', here we don't have any doubt about the absence of the reference because the statement presupposes the existence of the bearer.

⁵¹ Russell, (1980), p. 32.

Frege is a descriptivist of a different sort. He does not claim that proper names are disguised descriptions but that they have senses as well as reference. The sense of a name is both the “mode of presentation” and the determinant of its referent. It also functions for Frege as the indirect (as opposed to customary) reference when the name is embedded in a context of indirect quotation or propositional attitude ascription. Frege agrees with Russell regarding the point that words are ordinarily used to talk about things, not ideas. If words are used in the ordinary way, what one intends to speak of is their reference.

So far as our words also express our thoughts, they must correspond to constituents of those thoughts. Thus, for Frege, the semantic and the cognitive significance of expressions are intimately related because an expression can have a sense without having a reference, Frege holds that the constituents of thoughts are senses, not references.

According to Frege, both proper names and definite descriptions have the same semantic status: they are both singular terms. Unlike Russell, he does not assimilate definite descriptions to quantificational phrases but treats them, like proper names, as semantic units capable of having individuals as semantic values (that is, the semantic value of a proposition is its reference) which is determined by their senses. The sense of such an expression plays the semantic role of imposing a condition that an individual must satisfy, in order to be the referent. A proper name, like a definite description, contributes its sense to that of a sentence in which it occurs regardless of which individual actually is its reference. Sense is independent of reference if the expression has no referent at all. This is because the condition imposed by sense, the determinant of reference, is independent of that which it determines. For example, for Frege, the thought remains same whether “unicorn” has reference or not. The same object can be presented in different ways, under different modes of presentation, but it is not essential to any mode of presentation that it actually present anything at all.

“Frege’s conception of sense does not entail that every proper name has the sense of some definite description or the sense of every proper name is an individual concept expressible by some definite description. His conception of sense leaves open the possibility of non-descriptive senses, such as percepts. If one thinks of an object by means of a percept, as one

does when visually attending to it, this is not equivalent to thinking of it under a description of the form 'the thing that looks thus-and-so'. One might verbally express a thought about an object one is looking at by saying something of the form, 'the thing that looks thus-and-so is...', but, as Frege says about indexical thoughts, *the mere wording does not suffice for the expression of the thought*. So he does not explicitly assert that each proper name is equivalent to some definite description, and his whole theory of *Sense and Reference* does not require this equivalence."⁵²

Russell's conception of presentation is quite different from what Frege means by "presentation" (in mode of presentation). For Russell, any object that can be presented at all cannot be presented in different ways. Russell's notion of "acquaintance" is a "direct cognitive relation" in which one cannot think about these objects with which they don't have any acquaintance. By so characterizing, he tried to avoid the puzzle of names without bearers and Frege's puzzles about identity statements and about attitude reports. He avoids introducing sense to solve the puzzles. The notion of sense, as the determinant of reference, has no place in Russell's theory of language or thought.⁵³

So, the difference between Frege's two sided and Russell's one sided semantics is reflected in their different epistemological views on presentation. They are, in their respective ways, descriptivists about singular thought as well as about proper names. For both proper name can play its semantic role whether or not it belongs to anything but this is so for different reasons. For Russell, the reason is the semantic inertness of denotation and for Frege it is the independence of sense from reference.

⁵² Bach, Kent , "Comparing Frege and Russell", p. 4.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 4.

Conclusion

We may conclude by further noting that, though for Russell, ordinary proper names are abbreviated definite descriptions, he did not accept that definite descriptions have two levels of semantic significance. This was the main point of "On Denoting." For Russell what distinguishes both definite descriptions and proper names from genuine "logical" proper names like the individual constants of logic, is not that they do have senses but that they do not have references (they do have denotation, but these are not their semantic values). Both Frege and Russell hold the common view that proper names definitely have semantic significance even if there is nothing to satisfy them.

Russell's name lack the Fregean sense, but are not without reference. In fact, reference is logically generated for these names. The descriptions, on the other hand, have a conventional content that is not the Fregean sense because it is contextually definable and has no independent existence like Fregean senses. Thus Russell believes that his theory has succeeded in resolving some puzzles regarding grammar of names and descriptions, but soon it is realized that Russell theory has been prone to certain difficulties which has been raised by many philosophers, and those views will be discussed in the third chapter.

Both Frege and Russell have given their own points of analyzing the theory of meaning and reference. But from the analysis of their views, it seems that theories of both are inappropriate to explain the theory of meaning and reference. None of them have explained the referential account of definite description. Thus we need something else to give a complete picture of the behaviors of meaning and reference in language.

Chapter 3

Some Contemporary Responses to the Theory of Meaning and Reference

Introduction

In the first and second chapters of this dissertation we have noticed that while Frege talked of sense (a proposition) and reference (a truth-value) of a sentence, Russell rejects Frege's theory sense, and opens up a new theory of proper names and denoting phrases. The notion at the core of Frege's theory was that of reference. The reference of an expression is what it contributes to the truth-value of sentences in which it appears. Reference is a real relation between an expression and an object. The referent of the singular term, is what one would ordinary think the term stands for. The sense of an expression is supposed to be a "mode of presentation" of its reference, the way the reference is presented in thought. Sense is objective and mind-independent. We understand an expression when we associate the right sense with it. Sense was also supposed to account for the cognitive properties of an expression.

Russell provided the obvious solution to the problem of empty ordinary names and empty definite descriptions. Definite descriptions are complex expressions and their parts may be significant. It is obvious that the semantic features of definite descriptions are owed to those of their parts. So long as they all have reference, all should be fundamentally reference based semantics. Russell's theory of description achieves all these explanations.

For most of the early twentieth century the “Frege–Russell” descriptivist view was taken as something of the orthodoxy. There were certain theories which were developed against this idea of descriptivism. They hold the view that names are not equivalent to descriptions that means names do not have senses.

This anti-sense theory has been rejected by many scholars, most strongly by Gareth Evans in his posthumously written book *The Varieties of Reference* and by John McDowell in his article “The Sense and Reference of a Proper Name.” They argued, by following the lines developed by Michael Dummett, that, Frege’s notion of sense should not be equated with a description. Evans further developed this line, by arguing that a sense without a referent was not possible. He and McDowell both took the view that Frege’s discussion of empty names and the idea of sense without reference, are inconsistent and that the interpretation of Frege’s view as descriptivism rests only on a small number imprecise and perhaps offhand remarks.

Some philosophers who were regarded as critics of Russell’s view like P.F. Strawson and Keith Donnellan have given their theory of description in response to Russell. As Strawson throws light on the use and utterance of both sentence and expression in his article “On Referring” and treats them differently from pure reference or denotation which was not done by Russell. Again Donnellan in his article “Reference and Definite Description” has brought out two kinds of uses of definite description namely, attributive use and referential use and has argued that Russell has only emphasized upon the attributive use and ignored the referential use of definite description. Nathan Salmon, who is regarded as a neo-Russellian like Gareth Evans and John McDowell, has attempted to give some new solutions to Frege’s puzzle and to some related problems, by giving emphasis on the pragmatic behavior of a sentence.

There is also an on going debate between the neo-Russellians and neo-Fregeans regarding singular thought and reference. The neo-Russellians affirm that the descriptive account of a referential expression is not reflected in the proposition which is expressed by the utterance. Both the reference and the mode of presentation cannot constitute the content

of referential term. But according to neo-Fregeans both the reference and the mode of presentation can be regarded as the contents of the referential term. Both the neo-Fregeans and neo-Russellians agree with each other regarding the point of difference between referential and non-referential terms. The difference between the two theories lies in the fact that the neo-Russellian theory grants the content of a referential term to be nothing other than the reference, while the other takes the content to be constituted by the reference under certain mode of presentation. There is a constant debate between these two groups of philosophers but we will not go into detail of this particular discussion. In this chapter we shall only take up views of philosophers like Strawson, Donnellan, Evans, McDowell and Nathan Salmon regarding the relationship between sense and reference of expressions.

3.1 Strawson's response to the Theory of Definite Description

Russell's theory of Description leaves a puzzle unanswered, which is, whether the logical proper names can refer without the support of descriptions. Regarding the ordinary proper names, Russell holds the view that they are the abbreviations for descriptions. If Russell is correct then the names which are logically pure would have nothing to do with description. This attempt of Russell has been challenged by Strawson, since he is of the opinion that (1) there is nothing like pure name, and (2) even ordinary names are not fully convertible to descriptions. He has argued that proper names found in our ordinary language are logically acceptable and therefore there is no need for logical proper names of Russell's type. He is of the opinion that ordinary names like "Socrates" are perfectly functional as names in language and they perform just like any other referring expressions. Thus they uniquely refer to the individuals they stand for without any ambiguity. So, there is no need to replace them by some pure names or definite descriptions. These so-called pure names are a myth in natural language. But he did not say that the proper names could stand completely outside of descriptions. If a name is applicable to an object, then some descriptions must be true of the object. In the absence of such descriptions it is difficult, though not impossible to identify the object. So, Strawson holds the view that names must be associated with

descriptions such that we can bring a description into play, if there is a demand for that in some situations. As he writes,

“A name is worthless without a backing of descriptions which can be produced on demand to explain its application. So, it may seem, in the non-descriptive identification of particulars, we depend ultimately on description in general terms alone.”¹

Thus names cannot function as referring expressions without the help of descriptions because names are of no use in the way of identifying an object among many such objects. For example, there may be many persons called “Plato,” so in order to identify the person in a particular context we need a or several appropriate descriptions such as “the pupil of Socrates” or “the author of *Republic*,” etc.

In 1950, Strawson published the article “On Referring,” where he criticizes the applicability of Russell’s theory of descriptions to ordinary language. Russell has also published an article in 1957, “Mr.Strawson, On Referring” in response to the objection raised by Strawson. Russell’ theory of Description has been subjected to severe criticism by Strawson, who has tried to show that Russell’s theory is inadequate to meet the demands of natural language. The main object of criticism is that Russell has adopted a very restricted scope for reference. Strawson argued that there is a deep division between the way the descriptive and other denoting phrases behave in natural language and the way they play role in formal or logical language. Therefore Strawson feels the absolute need of exposing the inadequacies of the Theory of Descriptions developed for formal language.

According to Strawson, Russell has made at least two mistakes: he did not fully realize that a sentence can have a variety of uses, and he mistakenly thought that every meaningful sentence must be either true or false. According to Strawson, a sentence such as “the present king of France is wise,” when used today, is neither true nor false; the question of truth and falsity does not even arise.

¹ Strawson, (1959), p. 20.

According to Strawson the first step towards developing the semantics for natural language is to look at the referring expressions including definite descriptions and their use in the context of the linguistic community and context in general. He does this by drawing our attention to the fact that we must make a distinction between the sentence and its use and also between a descriptive expressions and its use in the language. (“On Referring”)²

In the first part of “On Referring,” Strawson analyzed what is it to say that expressions of certain kind have “uniquely referring use.” He emphasizes that we use expressions of certain kind to mention or refer to particular object or an event, to some individual persons, or place or process. In the course of doing so, we make statements about that object, event, person, place and or process. This way of using referring is called “uniquely referring use.” He writes,

“The *expressions* which are mainly used for this purpose are, like, singular demonstratives pronoun (“this” and “that”); proper names (e.g. “Venice,” “Napoleon,” “John”), singular personal and impersonal pronouns (“he,” “she,” “I,” “you,” “it”); and phrases beginning with the definite article followed by a noun, qualified or unqualified, in the singular (e.g. “the table”, “the old man”, “ the king of France”).³ (“On Referring”)

Strawson did not restrict the use of these expressions. He did not say that expressions belonging to these classes never have any other use. Suppose one utters the sentence “the whale is a mammal”, here the expression “the whale” is used in a general sense which would be different when it is used by someone who had an occasion to utter the sentence “the whale struck the ship.” In the first sentence we are not mentioning a particular whale but in the second sentence there is an obvious reference to a particular whale. So, in the second sentence the expressions “the whale,” “the ship,” are used to refer to a particular object, i.e., it is used in a uniquely referring way. Thus the same expression is used in two different contexts.

Strawson did not accept the analysis given by Russell for showing whether a sentence is significant or not when the expression in it does not refer to any object. That is: How can the sentence “the present King of France is bald” can be significant when there is no king of

² From Ammerman (ed.) (1965).

³ Ibid., p. 315.

France? Russell held the view that the sentences which are significant, and which begin with an expression used in the uniquely referring way should fall under neither of these following two classes:

- (1) Their grammatical form should be misleading as to their logical form; and that they should be analyzable, like the sentence “the present King of France is bald,” as a special kind of existential sentence;
- (2) Their grammatical subject should be a logically proper name, of which the meaning is the individual thing it designates.⁴

But Strawson argues that this is a wrong assumption made by Russell. He did not accept Russell’s analysis of the sentence “the present King of France is bald” as the conjunction of three sentences,

- a) There is a King of France.
- b) There is not more than one King of France.
- c) Whoever is a King of France is bald.

Through the help of this analysis Russell tries to answer the question how can a sentence “the King of France is bald” be significant, when there is no King of France. Strawson argues that

“If this analysis is correct, anyone who utters the sentence ‘the King of France is bald’ today would be jointly asserting three propositions, one of which (*viz.* that there is a king of France) would be false; and since the conjunction of three propositions, of which, one is false, it itself false, the assertion as a whole would be significant, but false. So, neither of the bad arguments for subsistent entities would apply to such an assertion.”⁵

Strawson tried to solve the problem by making certain distinctions (which were not made by Russell). The distinctions are between:

- (A1) a sentence,
- (A2) a use of a sentence,
- (A3) an utterance of a sentence,

and, correspondingly, between:

⁴ Ibid., p. 318.

⁵ Ibid., p. 319.

- (B1) an expression,
- (B2) a use of an expression,
- (B3) an utterance of an expression.⁶

What is meant by the use of a sentence? Strawson defines,

“The sentence “the King France is wise”, it is easy to imagine that this sentence was uttered at various times from, say, the beginning of the seventeenth century onwards, during the reigns of each successive French monarch; and easy to imagine that it was also uttered during the subsequent periods in which French was not a monarchy. So, it is natural to speak of “the sentence” or “this sentence” being uttered at various times during this period; or in other words, that it would be natural and correct to speak of *one and the same* sentence being uttered on all these various occasions...there are however obvious differences between different *occasions of the use* of this sentence. For instance, if one man uttered it in the reign of Louis XIV and another man uttered it in the reign of Louis XV, it would be natural to say (to assume) that they were respectively talking about different people; and it might be held that the first man, in using the sentence, made a true assertion, while the second man, in using the same sentence, made a false assertion. If two different men simultaneously uttered the sentence (e.g. if one wrote it and the other spoke it) during the reign of Louis XIV, it would be natural to say (assume) that they were both talking about the same person, and, in that case, in using the sentence, they *must* either both have made a true assertion or both have made a false assertion.”⁷

This is what Strawson meant by the *use* of a sentence. So, two men can make different uses of the same sentence (one used the sentence at the reign of Louis XIV and another man used the same sentence in the reign of XV). And two men who uttered two different sentences simultaneously (in the reign of Louis XIV), made the same use of the same sentences. So, we cannot say that a sentence itself is either true or false, but only a use of it can help us to make true or false assertion. And the sentence cannot be used only for a particular person, for the same sentence may be used at different times to talk about quite different particular persons. So, the use determines the truth-value of a sentence.

⁶ Ibid., p. 319.

⁷ Ibid., p. 320.

Now the utterance of the sentence is, to say, if the two men who simultaneously uttered the sentence in the reign of Louis XIV made two different utterances of the same sentence though they made the same use of the sentence.

Thus for Strawson a sentence may have different uses and may also have same use. A sentence will have same use if it is said about one person by many people and it would have different use if it is said about different people by one person. Strawson argues that Russell was not careful about these different uses that a sentence may have.

The distinctions made in case of sentences can be made in case of expressions. Though the distinctions are analogous, but they are not identical. In the sentence “the King of France is wise,” the expression “the King of France” is a part of the sentence. Strawson holds that we can use the expression to mention or refer to a particular person in the course of using the sentence to talk about him. But the fact is that, just as the sentence itself is, but a particular use of it makes it true or false, similarly the expression on its own cannot be said to mention or refer to anything. The same expression can have different mentioning or referring uses. As Strawson says,

“Mentioning” or “referring” is not something an expression does; it is something that someone can use an expression to do. Mentioning, or referring to something is a characteristic of a *use* of an expression, just as “being about” something, and truth-or-falsity, are characteristics of a *use* of a sentence.”⁸

This could be clear by an example. Say an expression “I,” which has uniquely referential use, in a sentence “I am in pain.” Many people may use this same sentence, but it is logically impossible for two different people to make the same use of this sentence. The expression “I”, may correctly be used by anyone of innumerable people to refer to himself. To say this is to say something about the expression “I,” that is we are giving meaning to this expression. But that does not mean the meaning of it is the person referred but it is determined by a particular use of the expression.

⁸ Ibid., p. 321.

This leads Strawson to develop a theory of meaning in relation with the use theory of language. He holds that the meaning of the sentence is independent of the particular use of the sentences concerned i.e., meaning is not determined by the truth and falsity of sentences. It is concerned with the rules and conventions which govern the use of the sentence. The rule-structure of a sentence is the source of the meaning of a sentence. Strawson writes,

“Meaning (in at least one important sense) is a function of the sentence or expression; mentioning and referring and truth and falsity, are functions of the use of the sentence or expression. To give the meaning of an expression (in the sense in which I am using the word) is to give *general directions* for its use to refer to or mention particular objects or persons; to give the meaning of a sentence is to give *general directions* for its use in making true or false assertions. It is not to talk about any particular occasion of the use of the sentence or expression. The meaning of an expression cannot be identified with the object it is used, on a particular occasion, to refer to. The meaning of a sentence cannot be identified with the assertion it is used, on a particular occasion, to make. For to talk about the meaning of an expression or sentence is not to talk about its use on a particular occasion, but about the rules, habits, conventions governing its correct use, on all occasions, to refer or to assert.”⁹

Thus whether a sentence is significant or not does not depend upon the use or utterance of that sentence on a particular occasion of being used to make true or false assertion. The question whether the sentence is significant or not is the question whether there exist such habits, conventions or rules that the sentence logically could be used to talk about something; and hence quite independent of the question whether it is being so used on a particular occasion.

Thus for Strawson the truth-value of a sentence depends upon its use and the meaning of a sentence depends upon the rules, habits and conventions governing its correct use. So, his theory of meaning can be termed as use theory of meaning which has an advantage over Russell’s theory of meaning which may be called referential theory of meaning.

Strawson suggests that Russell’s mistake lies in the idea that he thought, referring or mentioning, if it occurred at all, must be identical with meaning. He did not distinguish

⁹ Ibid., pp. 321–2.

an expression from the use of that expression; he was confused regarding the distinction between expressions and their use in a particular context. So, this leads to his confusion of meaning with mentioning, with referring. This is Strawson's second objection to Russell.

Russell holds the view that in case of logical proper names like "this," which is included under the category of having uniquely referring use, and not something disguise, Russell holds that such expression's meaning must be the particular object which they were used to refer to. This caused trouble to the use of logically proper names like "this." Strawson says,

"Meaning of the word changes every time it is used... and knowing the meaning has not anything to do with knowing about any particular use of the sentence to talk about anything."¹⁰

When we are saying that the significance of the sentence does not depend on its use but on the existence of rules and conventions that the sentence logically could be used to talk about something, the sentence "the present King of France is wise" is certainly significant, but this does not state that any particular use of it is true or false. We can use it truly or falsely when we use it to talk about someone, or when using the expression "the present King of France," we are mentioning someone. Thus Strawson writes,

"... the sentence is significant when it *could* be used in certain circumstances to say something true or false, and the expression is significant when it *could* be used in certain circumstances to mention a particular person; and to know their meaning is to know what sort of circumstances these are. So when we utter the sentence without in fact mentioning anybody by the use of the phrase, "the king of France", the sentence does not cease to be significant; we simply *fail* to say anything true or false because we simply fail to mention anybody by this particular use of that perfectly significant phrase."¹¹

Russell, in order to prove the significance of the sentence "the present King of France is wise" has given three analysis of the sentence. He said that it is logically implied from the sentence "the King of France is wise" that there is a King of France, but actually there is no King. So, the though the sentence is false but meaningful. But according to Strawson, to *imply* is not to *assert* or not to *entail*. If I say "I weight fifty kilograms," I logically implied

¹⁰Ibid., p. 322.

¹¹Ibid., p. 324.

that I am heavier than someone who weighs forty kilograms. But I do not assert this. It is neither presupposed nor asserted, but nevertheless follows what I am saying. Similarly, “the King of France is wise *could* be taken as logically implying the existence of one and only one king of France. Strawson holds that

“One of the conventional functions of the definite article is to act as a *signal* that a unique reference is being made— a signal, not a disguised assertion. When we begin a sentence with “the such-and-such” the use of “the” shows, but does not state, that we are, or intend to be, referring to one particular individual of the species “such-and-such”. ”¹²

Russell has mentioned that a phrase of the form “the so-and-so” will strictly be used to refer to one so-and-so and no more. For example, the expression “the table” in the sentence like “the table is covered with books,” would be used to make a unique reference, that is to refer to some one table. So it seems to be quite strict use of the definite article “the” by Russell.

But Strawson holds the view that it is false that the phrase “the table” will only have an application in the event of there being one table and no more. He criticized Russell’s theory by pointing out that a great many commonplace descriptions are context-bound. This is Strawson’s third criticism against Russell. For example, take the sentence “the table is covered with books”, whose subject is a commonplace definite description. Obviously, there is more than one thing which is a table, and obviously there are tables that are not covered by books. Russell can maintain in this sentence, the expression “the table” is an abbreviation of a more unique description which it satisfies, such as “the table in front of me,” “the only table in this room” etc., and thus could avoid the criticism.

Strawson says that to use the sentence is not to assert, but it is to imply, that there is only one thing which is both specified and referred to by the speaker. Again to refer is not to say we are referring unless there is something which is counted as referring. In this sense the demonstratives like “this,” “that” are not proper names because the meaning of the word is independent of any particular reference it may be used to make, though not independent of the way it may be used to refer.

¹² Ibid., p. 325.

So, according to Strawson the unique referential expressions could be used, in many different contexts, to make unique reference. It is no part of their significance to assert that they are being so used or that the conditions of their being so used are fulfilled. So, the distinction should be drawn between:

- (i) sentences containing an expression used to indicate or mention or to refer to a particular person or thing, and
- (ii) Uniquely existential sentences.¹³ (asserting that there is one and only one individual which has certain characteristics).

Russell made a mistake of understanding sentences of class (i) in terms of sentences of class (ii). So, unique reference should be made in case of a particular use in a particular context. And the significance is the set of rules or conventions which allow such references to be made. So,

“We can, using significant expressions, pretend to refer, in make-believe or in fiction, or mistakenly think we are referring when we are not referring to anything.”¹⁴

The above analysis leads to the distinction between two kinds of linguistic conventions or rules: rules for referring and rules for attributing and ascribing.¹⁵

According to Strawson what is in general required for using referringly or making a unique reference is, some device or devices for showing both *that* a unique reference is intended and what the unique reference is; some devices enable the hearer or reader to identify what is being talked about. The requirement for the correct application of an expression in its ascriptive use to a certain thing is simply that the thing should be of a certain kind, have certain characteristics.¹⁶

¹³ Ibid., p. 326.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 327.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 327.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 328.

A perfectly general, difference between conventions for referring and conventions for describing is, namely, the fulfillment of the conditions for a correct ascriptive use of an expression which is stated by such a use; but the fulfillment of the conditions for a correct use of an expression is never part of what is stated, though it is implied by such a use.

Strawson's objections to Russell are not only in matters of detail but also in matter of method itself. Russell looks at language from a formal point of view whereas Strawson seeks to take natural language as significant. Again for Russell, the existential quantification is an important instrument of analysis whereas, for Strawson, it has no immediate significant except where it is operative.

The Russell-Strawson controversy has resulted in the proper understanding of the nature of referring expression. Referring expression has a meaning content even when there is systematic ambiguity in the reference they make. The expressions which are empty are meaningful in spite of the fact that they do not refer to anything. If that were not to be the case, fiction writing would never be possible. Natural language is logical in the sense that its expression acquires a grammar in the course of use and thus remains perfectly intelligible.

3.2 Donnellan's view on Definite Description

Another problem with Russell's theory of definite descriptions has been brought out by Donnellan. He holds that, Russell has not recognized the referential use of definite description.

Again Donnellan points out that Strawson does mention a referential use of definite description, but he fails to see that a definite description may have a different role and may be used non-referentially. Strawson in his article "On Referring" sums up his position by saying "mentioning" or "referring" is not something an expression does, it is something that someone can use an expression to do. But saying this does not suggest that definite

description can never be identified as referring expressions in a sentence unless the sentence is being used. Donnellan assumes that both Russell and Strawson hold a common view that there is a natural presupposition involved when a person uses a definite description, the presupposition being that that something fits into the description. For example, the King of France is bald. One can presuppose that there is a king or anyone can have a doubt that there is a king.

Both Russell and Strawson also assume that where the presupposition or implication is false, the truth value of what the speaker says is affected. For Russell the statement made is false since there is no object satisfying the description, and for Strawson it has no truth value because the sentence itself is not true or false but its use makes it true or false.¹⁷ (Donnellan's Reference and Definite Descriptions)

According to Donnellan, both Russell and Strawson may be correct about the non referential use of definite description but neither position explains the referential use. Russell in fact did not recognize this use in any case. Strawson tries to explain and defend this use of definite description but failed to account for its use completely.

Donnellan thus shows that there are two uses of description; they are *attributive use* and *referential use*.¹⁸ A speaker who uses a definite description attributively in assertion, states something about whoever or whatever is the so-and-so. A speaker who uses a definite description referentially in an assertion, on the other hand, uses the description to enable his audience to pick out whom or what he is talking about. But in the referential use the definite description is merely a tool for doing a certain job, calling attention to a person or thing and in general another device, another description or a name, would do the job equally well. In the attributive use, the attribute of being the so and so is all important, while it is not in the referential use.

¹⁷ From Robert. M. Hamish (ed.) (1994), pp. 175–6.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 177.

The distinction between attributive and referential use can be understood by an example, say the sentence, “Smith’s murderer is insane.” Here the definite description “Smith’s murderer” can have a referential use or an attributive use. If the use is referential then the speaker wants to say that there is a definite person who has cruelly murdered Smith and that that person is insane. The speaker wishes to refer to or mention the person concerned. He is concerned to identify a person who he thinks is the murderer of the Smith even if no body fits that description. That is to say, in a situation where the description is false about the person; the reference might be successfully done. Reference is independent of the definite description on the other side. The attributive use of a definite description, on the other hand is such that the speaker is interested in the fact that whoever be the murderer, he is insane. The speaker is least interested in who the actual murderer is. Of course, some body or the other is the murderer. That is the proposition in any case. If any body is the murderer, the attributive use fails to produce any true or false statement about the murderer. There is a *truth-value gap*¹⁹ in that case. But this situation did not arise in the case of referential use. A true unsuccessful reference may take place even when there is no murderer of Smith.

Suppose, that John has been charged with Smith’s murderer, then John is the one we are referring to, even though we may mistakenly say that he is the murderer. The allegation of his being the murderer may just be an allegation since Smith might have committed suicide. Donnellan says:

“In both situations, in using the definite description ‘Smith’s murderer,’ the speaker in some sense presupposes or implies that there is a murderer. But when we hypothesize that the presupposition or implication is false, there are different results for two uses. In both cases we have used the predicate ‘is insane,’ but in the first case, if there is no murderer, there is no person of whom it could be correctly said that we attributed insanity to him. Such a person could be identified correctly said that we attributed insanity to him. Such a person would be identified (correctly) only in case someone fitted the description used. But in the second case, where the

¹⁹ In logic this truth-value gap concept is that the lack of truth-value of a statement containing an expression that lacks reference. On some views, such a statement is neither true nor false. This phenomenon arises because the truth-value of a statement relies on the success or failure of the application of objects of the general terms it contains. But these general terms would be deprived of success or failure if a singular term in the statement failed to have reference. Other reasons for truth-value gaps include category mistakes, unsatisfied presuppositions, ambiguity and vagueness. The existence of truth-value gaps makes deductive reasoning unreliable.

definite description is simply a means of identifying the person we want to talk about, it is quite possible for the correct identification to be made even though no one fits the description we used.”²⁰

Thus Donnellan bring out the difference between the two uses in the following way,

“In the referential use of the definite description we may succeed in picking out a person or thing to ask a question about even though he or it does not really fit the description; but in the attributive use if nothing fits the description, no straightforward answer to the question can be given.”²¹

This means, the common rules for the referential use are such that even if nobody fits the description, there could be a successful reference made and a true or false statement could follow from this. But in the case of the attributive use, if there is nobody to fit the description, then no assertion, true or false, can be made at all. Nothing could be said and so no question of truth or falsity arises. The latter case is what Strawson had reminded us of in case there is reference failure. Donnellan’s position is that in the real referential use definite description this situation does not arise.

The referential use does not confine itself to the applicability of the descriptions. The fact is that for the referential use the descriptions have only an instrumental value in the sense that they can be served as tools for reference. For example, if we say “the man drinking wine at the window side is happy,” we may succeed in referring to the man even if that man is drinking cold drink and is very miserable that evening. Here what is noticeable is that the description utterly fails in being appropriate for the occasion and yet does not block the reference. On the other hand, if the description “the man drinking wine” is taken in its attributive use, then nothing can be said about the particular man as such.

Donnellan further argues that when a description is used attributively in a command (bring the pen on the table) or question (do you know who is the king of France?) and nothing fits the description, the command cannot be obeyed and the question cannot be answered. This suggests some analogous consequences for assertions containing definite description used attributively.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 177–8.

²¹ Ibid., p. 178.

Thus it is the attributive use not the referential use that needs the help of definite description as an essential part of the primary act of referring. In the attributive use the description is a primary component such that whatever is achieved by the statement is due to the description alone.

Another difference between these two kinds of uses is that, when a definite description is used referentially, not only is there in some sense a presupposition that someone or something fits the description, as that is also in the case of attributive use, but there is a quite different speculation; the speaker speculates some particular something or someone that fits the descriptions. When we say, in a context where it is clear we are referring to John, "Smith's murderer is insane," we are expecting that John is Smith's murderer. No such kind of supposition or expectation is involved in the attributive use of the definite description. There is, of course, the presupposition or implication that someone or other did the murder, but the speaker does not presuppose of someone in particular, e.g., John or Stewart, that he did the insane job.

*So the difference between these two uses of definite description lies in the beliefs of the speaker.*²² It is possible for a definite description to be used attributively even though the speaker believes that there is something which fits into the description and it is also possible for the definite description used referentially where the speaker believes that there is nothing to fit the description.

Donnellan thinks that the presupposition is possible in both the uses but the reason for the existence of the presupposition is different in both cases. In case of referential use there is a chance that the definite description may be prone to misdescription because the speaker wishes to refer to a thing or a person that fits the definite description and the misdescription may occur in case the speaker refers to a wrong person or a thing. But in case of attributive use, there is no possibility of misdescription. In case of the example- "Smith's murderer," used attributively, there was not the possibility of misdescribing John

²² Ibid., p. 180.

or anyone else because we are neither referring to John nor to any other reason by using the description.

So neither Russell nor Strawson's theory signifies a correct account of the definite descriptions. Russell completely ignores the referential use and has given emphasis on the attributive use, whereas, Strawson, though has made a distinction between the referential and the attributive use and mixes together truths about each one of them. According to Donnellan,

"In general, whether or not a definite description is used referentially or attributively is a function of the speaker's intentions in particular case. 'The murderer of Smith' may be used either way in the sentence 'the murderer of Smith is insane'. It does not appear plausible to account for this, either, as an ambiguity in the sentence. The grammatical structure of the sentence seems to be the same whether the description is used referentially or attributively: that is, it is not syntactically ambiguous. Nor does it seem at all attractive to suppose an ambiguity in the meaning of the words; it does not appear to be semantically ambiguous. (Perhaps we could say that the sentence is pragmatically ambiguous: the distinction between roles that the description plays is a function of the speaker's intentions.)"²³

But Donnellan did not provide any further explanation in favor of this assertion.

Thus it seems that Donnellan's theory of reference and definite description ends up making a distinction between names and definite description (John, "the murderer of Smith" respectively). That is names are independent of definite descriptions and reference can take place without the interference by the definite description. This shows his rejection of the description theory of reference according to which the identifying descriptions explain the meaning of the names and other referring expressions.²⁴ The identifying expressions, according to Donnellan, are not synonymous with descriptions and thus categorically different from names. Names stand for reference directly and not through the description as Strawson believe, because the descriptions cannot rigidly refer to the reference concerned.

²³ Ibid., p. 185.

²⁴ Donnellan, (1970), pp. 356–79.

Thus the reference according to Donnellan under no condition is function of the descriptions and that reference can take place even when the description intended serves no purpose.

3.3 Evans on the Theory of Sense and Reference

Evans has been regarded as a neo-Russellian. Though he accepts Frege's introduction of sense to some extent, his aim is to steer between two extremes: he rejects Russell's abolition of the distinction between sense and reference, yet he does not go to the other extreme of allowing sense without reference. Evans positively holds his view that singular terms are Russellian, but he allows the co-referring terms may differ in sense. The *Bedeutung* of Frege is translated as "Meaning"²⁵ by Evans.

Evans pointed out that Frege had suggested that sense is a "mode of presentation" of Meaning and it is also said that expressions with the same meaning but different senses can illuminate the Meaning from different sides. But both these explanations fail to give a clear picture of the relationship between sense and Meaning.

Frege in order to explain the sense as a "mode of presentation" holds the view that when someone is thinking about a particular object, then he attaches sense to the name. Dummett²⁶ holds that it is not possible to have a bare knowledge concerning some object that it is the referent of a term. So, for any term *t* and any person *p*, there is a sense *s* such that if *p* understands *t*, he attaches *s* to it. But what is needed for any singular term to have an objective sense, as an element of a public language, is that for any *t* there is a sense *s* such that for any person *p*, if *p* understands *t*, he attaches *s* to it. As Frege writes in his article "On Sense and Reference,"

"The sense of a proper name is grasped by everybody who is sufficiently familiar with the language or totality of designations to which it belongs."²⁷

²⁵ Evans, (1982), pp. 8–9.

²⁶ See Dummett, (1981a).

²⁷ Frege, (1970), p. 57.

That means, in order to understand the utterance containing a singular term we must not think only of a particular object, as its Meaning, but he must think of in *a particular way*. Evans,²⁸ by following Dummett's line of thought, accepts, that to suppose that in understanding a sentence one would, in one way be thinking of its truth-value, because the sense of an expression is (not a way of thinking about its Meaning, but) a method or procedure for determining its meaning, such that someone who grasps the sense of a sentence will be possessed of some method for determining the sentence's truth-value. The sense of a proper name, for Dummett, is a criterion for, or means of, identifying its referent, and the sense of a concept-expression is a way of determining whether or not something satisfies it; and these two procedures together determine the truth-value of a sentence.

Evans was not satisfied with Frege's analysis of sense and thought. For him, Frege never said anything regarding what it is to think of an object demonstratively. Evans here accepts Russell's view, as Russell holds.

"In order to be thinking about an object, one must know which object it is that one is talking about."²⁹

Evans called this as *Russell's principle*. Russell has suggested that there are two kinds of knowledge of things, knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description. Evans accepted Russell's view and he has given another criterion of getting knowledge over and above these two criteria, i.e., knowledge by recognition or discriminating knowledge. He suggests,

"The subject must have a capacity to distinguish the object of his judgments from all other things. This makes things only a little clearer, but it is enough to get along with. We have the idea of certain sufficient conditions for being able to discriminate an object from all other things: for example, when one can perceive it at the *present* time; when one can recognize it if presented with it; and when one knows distinguishing facts about it."³⁰

²⁸ See Evans, (1982).

²⁹ Russell, (1980), p. 58.

³⁰ Evans, (1982), p. 89.

According to Evans we can get the knowledge about an object by three kinds of identification, they are demonstrative identification (knowledge by acquaintance), descriptive identification (knowledge by description), and recognitional identification (discriminating knowledge).

As we have discussed in first chapter that the sense of a sentence is a function of the sense of its parts, and the sense of the whole sentence is called "thought." Frege holds the objectivity of thought to be essential for communication to be possible. Communication requires speaker and hearer to associate the same thought with the words uses. If two men are thinking in the same way then they are both thinking of it "by description," no matter how different the description may be. But Evans departs from this view, he has put his argument by giving examples like proper names, pronouns ("I," "you," "he," "she"...etc), and demonstratives ("that pen," "this house").

According to Evans, we have two different processes in case of communication. In one process, there is understanding a singular utterance involving not merely identifying the object, but doing so in a particular way. Many proper names have been given less importance on this process: it is not merely that speaker and hearer may communicate successfully while having quite different modes of identification of the name's bearer, but rather that, for the speaker, almost any mode of identification is one whose use by the hearer will not thwart the speaker's communicative intentions. The other process includes the mode of presentation the speaker himself uses must resemble that which an understander is to use.

Two men who are located at different places, but who both think about their immediate locality in a way would naturally express using the word "here." And they are thinking about a place *in the same way*. But if this is so, then this way of thinking about a place can hardly be equated with a Fregean definition of sense as a mode of presentation, since if it were so equated, the sense would not even determine the referent. Since there is no one place that the two subjects in the envisaged case are both thinking of, there is obviously no place that they are both thinking of in the same way. For Evans the difference comes out from the differences in the specific modes of identification. They are similar but they differ on the one occasion the object is located at one place relative to the speaker, on the other at another place relative to the hearer. *Thus Evans opines that the content of thought of both the speaker and the hearer is different as far as understanding the expression is concerned.*

“The Intuitive Criterion of Difference for thoughts cannot by itself fully determine the identity and distinctness of thoughts-questions of identity and distinctness arise in the case of thoughts of different subjects, or of a single subject at different times, while the Intuitive Criterion can be brought to bear only when the same subject is entertaining the thoughts at the same time.”³¹

For Evans, Frege ran together two ideas under the label “thought expressed by a sentence.” One is the idea of what is conventionally required to understand a sentence (i.e., linguistic meaning), another is what is in the subject’s mind in virtue of thinking something expressible by the sentence (i.e., psychological mode of presentation).

So, there are two kinds of modes of presentation one is *linguistic mode*, which is a rule and which, in a given context, determines the reference or semantic value of the term in that context. For example, the way the reference of the “I” is presented is determined by the linguistic rule that “I” refers to the speaker who is uttering the word. Linguistic mode of presentation is therefore, constant and does not vary from context to context.

The second kind of mode of presentation is *psychological mode* of presentation which varies from context to context and cannot be constant. For example, when I utter “I am hungry,” I think of myself as being hungry, and when someone hears me saying this, s/he thinks that the speaker of this sentence is hungry. The linguistic mode of presentation (the speaker) is the same for both me and the hearer. But the psychological mode of presentation is different depending on who the speaker is. Psychological mode of presentation is needed to make sense of our attitudes, that is, make sense of the fact why someone can, at one and the same time, believe “Cicero is roman” and disbelieve “Tully is roman.”

In this sense psychological mode of presentations are such that if X believes Y not to be F, then there are distinct psychological modes of presentation M and M', such that X believes Y to be F under M and X believes Y not to be F under M'.

³¹ Ibid., p. 21.

For Evans if sense is regarded as determining the unit of communication, then the distinction will manifest in the conventional association with different modes of identification of two terms for the same referent.

Now we can move to the next discussion regarding Evans's rejection of sense to empty singular terms.

Frege puts both definite description ("the author of *Waverly*," "the round square") and ordinary names (like "Socrates," "Cicero"...) under a single semantic category (i.e., they are singular terms having both sense and reference). In addition to thinking of sense as mode of presentation of semantic value, he also treated possessing sense as equivalent to being significant. It is obvious that there are significant definite descriptions and proper names which have no referent. Using the equivalence of sense and significance, these expressions can have sense while lacking a referent. And then given the homogeneous treatment of descriptions and names, it would seem inevitable that it should be possible for a name to have sense while lacking a referent.

Evans in his book *The Varieties of Reference* has given some quotations of Frege's earlier work before he has made the distinction between sense and reference. These quotations are from Frege's posthumously published book, named *Gottlob Frege: Posthumous Writing*, are showing that the empty singular terms do have sense.

"A sentence can be true or untrue only if it is an expression for a thought. The sentence 'Leo Sachse is a man' is the expression of a thought only if 'Leo Sachse' designates something. And so too the sentence 'this table is round', is the expression of a thought only if the words 'this table is round', is the expression of thought only if the words 'this table' are not empty."³²(This is from Frege's unpublished article 'Seventeen Key Sentences on Logic')

Another quotation he puts,

"The rules of logic always presuppose that the words we use are not empty, that our sentences express judgments, that one is not playing a mere game with words. Once 'Sachse is a man' expresses an actual judgment, the word 'Sachse' must designate something, and in that case I

³² Frege, (1997), p. 174.

did not need a further premise in order to infer 'there are men'."³³(This is a dialogue between Frege and Punjer)

Evans supposed that from the above explanation it seems that Frege's concept of singular term is more like a Russellian conception than Fregean i.e., someone who uttered a sentence containing an empty singular term would fail to say anything, in the sense that he would fail to express a thought.

Evans states that before Frege made a distinction between sense and reference, both Russell and Frege, were accepting the same model i.e., a genuine referring expression has as its sole function the identification of an object such that it satisfies the predicate and the sentence is true, and if it fails to satisfy the predicate, the sentence is false. But if the expression fails to identify an object at all, then the truth-evaluation of the sentence cannot get started, and the whole sentence is an aberration.

But after Frege made the distinction between sense and reference the model is redefined and the only way Russell's model differed from Frege's is that

"For the name itself is merely a means of pointing to the thing, and does not occur in what you are asserting, so that if one thing has two names, you make exactly the same assertion whichever of the names you use, provided they are really names and not truncated descriptions."³⁴

Evans rejects Frege's redefined model and accepts Russell's criterion, that is, whenever the grammatical subject of a proposition can be supposed not to exist without making the proposition meaningless, then it is clear that the grammatical subject is not a proper name or in other words it is not a name directly representing some object.

Thus Russell holds that it is impossible for a person to have thought about something unless he knows which particular individual in the world he is thinking about. For Russell there are only two ways of discharging this requirement: one is to be, or to

³³ Ibid., p. 60.

³⁴ Russell, (1956), p. 245.

have a memory of being, “acquainted” with the object concerned, and the other is to think of the object as the unique satisfier for some description.

According to Evans, it is not clear, how there can be a mode of presentation associated with some term when there is no object to be presented. This difficulty seems acute; it certainly does not make sense that there can be a way of thinking about something unless there is something to be thought about in that way. Frege holds the view that there were some perfectly meaningful sentences of language, which could be used to express thoughts, but to which his theory of Meaning (reference) would not apply.

According to Evans, Frege has not applied any notion as that of “significance” or “semantic viability”³⁵ after making the distinction between sense and Meaning.

Frege’s notion of thought had strong links with notions embedded in ordinary propositional attitude psychology, i.e., the notions of belief, knowledge, memory, information, judgment and so on. If someone understands or accepts a sentence containing an empty name, then, according to Frege, he thereby forms belief, not a belief about language, but a belief about the world. But what sense can be made of a belief which literally has no truth-value, which is neither correct nor incorrect?

So, according to Evans, if a sentence “S” has no truth value then no embedding of “S” can be true. This assertion has been accepted both by Frege and Russell. But Russellians have something to defend their position, they hold that “failing to have truth-value” amounts to “failing to express any thought at all,” and no complex sentence fails to do so. It follows from this that no embedding of sentence without a truth-value, even within the scope of “negation,” can be true, failing as it does to express a thought. But Frege had nothing with which he could defend his use of this principle.

So, Evans has made a point that if “P” does not exist then the thought that “P” and the thought that it is not true that “P” can both fail to be true.

³⁵ Evans, (1982), p. 23.

Frege in his attempt to put names and definite description under the same semantic category tries to identify the sense of a name with some descriptive conditions, thus freeing sense from reference. For this reason Evans rejected the view that Frege as a forerunner of A.J.Ayer and Searle, as wrong headed on the ground that the possession of a referent by a singular term is simply irrelevant to the question whether or not it has a sense.³⁶

Though not fully but partially Evans appreciates Frege's fictional use of the language. Frege was well aware of that language can be used in fiction, story telling, and drama. He is quite rightly wished to set this use of language aside for empty definite descriptions ("the round square") and empty demonstratives ("that lime tree") to fictional use of language, for which we need sense without reference. Frege in his article "The Thought: A Logical Inquiry" says,

"But if my intention is not realized, if I only see without really seeing, if on that account the designation 'that lime tree' is empty, then I have gone astray into the sphere of fiction without knowing or wanting to."³⁷

Frege instead of "fiction", use the word "mock thought". As He says,

"Names that fail to fulfill the usual role of a proper name, which is to name something, may be called mock proper names. Although the tale of William Tell is a legend and not history, and the name William Tell' is a mock proper name, we cannot deny it a sense. But the sense of the sentence 'William Tell shot an apple off his son's head' is no more true than is that of the sentence 'William Tell did not shoot an apple off his son's head'. I do not say, however, that this is false either, but I characterize it as fictitious.

Instead of speaking about fiction we could speak of 'mock thoughts'. Thus, if the sense of an assertoric sentence is not true, it is either false or fictitious, and it will generally be the latter if it contains a mock proper name.(Foot note: We have an exception where a mock proper name occurs within a clause in indirect speech.) Assertions in fiction are not to be taken seriously: they are only mock assertions. Even the thoughts are not to be taken seriously as in the sciences: they are only mock thoughts. If Schiller's *Don Carlos* were to be regarded as a piece of history, then to a large extent the drama would be false. But a work of fiction is not meant to be taken seriously in this way at all: it's all play...

³⁶ Evans, (1982), p. 27.

³⁷ From Strawson, (1967), p. 28.

The logician does not have to bother with mock thoughts, just as a physicist, who sets out to investigate thunder, will not play any attention to stage-thunder. When we speak of thoughts in what follows we mean thoughts proper, thoughts that are either true or false."³⁸

Thus the above passage suggests that for Frege any sentence containing empty singular terms are expressing mock thoughts which are not real thoughts. So, the story tellers are only pretending to make assertions, only pretending to express thoughts, in the conclusion they expressing only pretend thoughts.

But Evans (McDowell also) suggests that Frege did not think that mock thoughts are thoughts at all.³⁹ He says,

“When empty singular terms are interpreted in the light of Frege’s views on fiction the inconsistency disappears, when he says, a sentence containing empty singular terms may express thought as follows, Yes: sentence containing an empty singular term may have a sense, in that it does not necessarily have to be likened to a sentence containing a nonsense-word. But No: it does not *really* have a sense of the kind possessed by ordinary atomic sentences, because it does not function properly, it is only *as if* it functions properly. Frege’s use of the notion of fiction wrongly directs our attention to just one case in which it is *as if* a singular term refers something, namely when we are engaged in a pretence that it does, but there are others, and if we think of them, we might speak of apparent, rather than mock or pretend, thoughts.”⁴⁰

Evans holds that the relation between Fregean theories of sense and semantic value is attractive, both because it makes the form of a theory of sense so unmysterious and because it explains the central place of a theory of semantic value in the global theory of language.

3.4 McDowell on the Theory of Sense and Reference

McDowell like Evans accepts sense in its relation to reference and rejects sense in case of empty singular terms. In his article “On the Sense and Reference of a Proper Name,” he has

³⁸ Frege, (1997), p. 130

³⁹ But this interpretation is inconsistent with Frege’s repeated claims that sense without reference possible.

⁴⁰ Evans, (1982), p. 30.

discussed about the theory of sense and has emphasized many aspects of this theory. As he is an externalist and a conceptualist, the impression of both these views (i.e., externalism and conceptualism⁴¹) can be seen in this article. May be it is true to say that because he adopts externalist view, he applies this account in order to prove the objectivity of thought in the context of the theory of sense and reference. And it can also be said that he applied his conceptualist view in order to make a distinction between a possessor and non-possessor of information value.

There is a difference of opinion between McDowell and Frege regarding the bearerless of names. Frege in his article "On Sense and Reference," says that the sense of a name, if expressible in some way other than the name itself, is expressible by a definite description. Definite descriptions are taken to have whatever senses they have independently of whether or not any object satisfy to them. Thus a name without bearer could, in Frege's view, have a sense in exactly the same way as a name with a bearer.⁴²

According to McDowell proper names cannot be conceived without any bearer, and therefore, sense is always associated with a reference and we cannot have sense associated with any proper name which is empty. If the reference of the name "a" in "Fa" does not exist, then there is no thought to be expressed by an utterance of "Fa", and so no such thing as understanding "Fa;" "Fa" has no sense because "a" has no sense. Thus thoughts are object-dependent.

"A sincere assertive utterance of a sentence containing a name...can be understood as expressing a belief..., concerning the bearer... there is no such belief as the belief which [the utterance purports] to express."⁴³

McDowell says that the job of a theory of sense should be to fix the content of speech acts with which the total theory of language is concerned. He holds that, this theory of sense is a theory of understanding. As he writes,

⁴¹ According to externalism meaning is determined in part with relations to the external physical world and thus is not wholly determined by what lies within the subject. And conceptualism is that, all cognitive capacities fully determined by conceptual capacities.

⁴² Frege, (1970), pp. 62–3.

⁴³ See McDowell, (1998).

“...in case of any sentence whose utterance command of the language would make fully comprehensible as a saying—any indicative sentence—a theory of sense must fix the content of the saying that an intentional utterance of the sentence could be understood to be.”⁴⁴ (From McDowell’s “On Sense and Reference of a Proper Name”)

Thus he has mentioned that the theory of sense should fix the content of speech acts in order to be adequate. And this adequacy depends upon certain points, which are,

- The speaker’s performance of action can be intelligible under certain descriptions, in the light of propositional attitude.
- The possession of propositional attitude would have to be intelligible in the light of
- Speaker’s behavior, his environment and his linguistic behavior.
- The notion of sense includes our interest in understanding behavior, and ultimately our interest in measuring people.⁴⁵

So, to specify the content of a saying we need a sentence and the theory of sense might have power to give us a sentence to meet that need. Those sentences which were used to specify the contents of language were necessary and sufficient conditions for language use.

The notion of sense according to Frege is the notion of understanding. And our knowledge involves understanding, that means the knowledge of a sentence depends upon our understanding of that sentence. In this sense Frege was right in saying that *only in the context of a sentence that a word has a meaning*. McDowell by accepting this view says,

“We should not search for meaning possessed by words on account of denotation as possessed by names except in terms of the contribution made by words of those kinds to the meanings of sentences.”⁴⁶

But one significant point, McDowell has made in this context is that, knowledge that is related to the understanding of language is the knowledge of truths. This knowledge of truths is not to know the reference of the name or the object which is the bearer of the name. The knowledge of truth does not relate to acquaintance which is related to the knowledge of things.

⁴⁴ McDowell, (1998), p. 172.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 172.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 197.

McDowell appreciates Frege, in solving the problem regarding identity of informative sentences and he also rejects the interchangeability of names having same reference in propositional attitude case.

Now we know that the notion of sense is connected with the notion of understanding. According to Dummett *sense is to capture (in part) by a notion of meaning, and that a theory of meaning is a theory of understanding.*⁴⁷

McDowell holds the same point and says that a *theory of Understanding is a theory of language.*⁴⁸ He argues against Dummett's view that a speaker always has "a route that he uses" for getting from a name to its bearer and sense is the route to the reference. McDowell in response to this idea holds the view that

"Understanding a language involves knowing, on occasion, what speakers of it are doing, under descriptions that report their behavior as speech acts of specified kinds with specified contents. It helps to picture a possessor and non-possessor of the state involved being subjected together to speech in the language. Let us say the possessor is called possessor because he is awake and attentive, the one will know truths expressible by the application of such descriptions; where as the other will not. They are exposed to certain kinds of same information in their shared sensory experience; but these can only be possessed by only one, the possessor of the state would be distinguished by having the information and by delivering the information he possessed. The ability to comprehend heard speech is an information-processing capacity, and theory would describe it by articulating in detail the relation, which defines the capacity, between input information and output information."⁴⁹

This capacity of comprehending speech in a familiar language is matter of *unreflective perception.*⁵⁰ There is no theory to teach us to adopt this unreflective perception. Though the theory may help us to move from input information to output information, that really means the power of grasping information and the power of delivering the grasped information in any of the relevant occasion. But to have the information processing capacity, there does not involve knowing any theory. That means no theory can determine our capacity of grasping.

⁴⁷ Dummett, (1981), pp. 92–3.

⁴⁸ McDowell, (1998), p. 178.

⁴⁹ See John McDowell's "On the Sense and Reference of a Proper name."

⁵⁰ McDowell (1998), p. 179.

The notion of sense is connected with a notion of understanding and the notion of understanding is a psychological notion, which is detested by Frege as being a form of psychologism. McDowell in favour of Frege puts his view that it is true that the psychological explanations of behaviour are central in the conception of a theory of language. But their purpose is to prove the adequacy of a theory, not to explain the mechanism of how it takes place in human beings. The explanation of the intentional behavior of the speaker is different from the explanations of how speakers arrive at knowledge of what others are doing or how they construct expressions that are intentional under their own verbal behavior. It can be said that though Fregean thought is not a psychological entity still we cannot deny the existence of psychological activities. Thus McDowell writes,

“Hostility to psychologism is not hostility to the psychological.”⁵¹

Again according to McDowell only syntactical knowledge of an expression is not enough. Knowledge of what speaker says would be significant only if he showed an ability to use the expression. If someone’s knowledge about a name is limited to the bearer of that name, then his knowledge about the name is not a complete knowledge.

If anyone is having such kind of ability to understand the language then his speech behavior (that is, capacity to understand the semantics of linguistic expression), and also his responses to speech behavior are becoming relevant and it will be made intelligible in terms of propositional attitude possessed by him.

If a person has any kind of propositional attitudes at all about object, then the person must have some beliefs about it. That is a person who knows the sense of a name must have some beliefs about its bearer. But this is not enough to say that it is justified that names have a less austere treatment in a theory of sense. McDowell suggests that to prove the argument for austere treatment of names in a theory of sense we can say that it may be possible that the person’s belief about an object is sketchy or possibly false about the object. It is not guaranteed that the person must know all the truths about the object, and thus capable of

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 181.

generating a definite description that could replace the used name in the relevant clause of the theory of sense.

McDowell asserts that a person's propositional attitude is constrained by the facts in the world. Ascription of belief requires conformity to reasonable principles about how beliefs can be acquired under the influence of environment and are partly due to the subject's dealing with the environment. Now whether a name has a bearer or not makes the difference to the way in which the interpreter can assign beliefs in accordance with the subject's behavior. And an utterance of a sentence containing a name with a bearer can be understood as expressing belief, as a belief correctly is describable as a belief, concerning the bearer, in case it fits into certain environmental condition. Thus this analysis proves the objectivity of thought which is not determined by the individual psychology but by his socio-environment factors.

This leads to McDowell's further argument about *De re* sense or *De re* thoughts. He claims, like Evans, that Frege himself talked of *De re* senses for singular terms. McDowell said that singular utterances and thoughts have to be essentially *De re*, that is, about objects. And this theory is not capable to fit into the framework of the theory sense as being independent of reference.

What is *de re* belief? *De re* belief is a belief in an object that actually exist (*res*). *De dicto* belief, on the other hand, is a belief about a dictum or a proposition. *De re* belief requires a kind of causal acquaintance (however indirect) with its object. One can say that a *de re* attribution involves "Russellian propositions", which are not "completely expressed" but contains objects as constituents along with "expressed" items that are less than "complete" propositions.

So *de re* attributions do not involve any Fregean sense. As in Fregean theory, utterances and propositional attitudes have thoughts as their contents, and thoughts are senses with nothing but senses as constituents: we can't say that an object is a part of thought as a proper name is a part of the corresponding sentence.⁵²

⁵² Frege, (1997), p. 187.

According to McDowell, a *de re* sense is a sense which is specific to its *res*, he says that it seems that Frege is applying this concept only to a thinker himself when he says; “everyone is presented to himself in a special and primitive way, in which he is presented to no one else.” This contention is prone to two objections:

1. Whether this view is consistent with the constant “linguistic meaning” of a context sensitive expression, and
2. Whether it is consistent with Frege’s doctrine that thoughts are objective.⁵³

Regarding the first objection some philosophers have viewed that linguistic meaning is a context-sensitive expressions with mode of presentation which is constant across all univocal uses of it. But such a mode of presentation would not be a Fregean sense, since it would not determine the appropriate sort of reference except in conjunction with a context. Again different *de re* senses (modes of presentation) can present their different *res* in the same sort of way: for instance by exploiting their perceptual presence and the single meaning of a context-sensitive expression can be registered by associating it with a single sort of *de re* sense.⁵⁴

McDowell suggests that Fregean conception of *de re* thoughts can be captured in terms of a special kind of Russellian proposition. Russellian proposition is a proposition with *res* and characters (character is essentially linguistic) as constituents. So, on this view, an ordered pair of *res* and character might represent a *de re* sense. The *de re* sense certainly depends upon the *res* for its existence and it determines the *res*, but itself is not determined by the *res* or *Bedeutung*. According to McDowell though this analysis seems resemble to Fregean analysis, but this resemblance is only superficial. This analysis secures a *de re* nature for these “thoughts” only by violating Frege’s doctrine that thoughts are senses with senses, not reference or *Bedeutung*, as constituents.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 220.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 220. See also Evans, “Understanding Demonstratives,” p. 298.

Second objection is about the consistency of *de re* senses, and particularly Frege's remarks about the pronoun "I," with his doctrine, "thoughts are objective."

Frege truly says that the communication is possible because of the objective nature of thoughts. McDowell claims that it is also true that Frege cannot see how a thought involving the "special and primitive way" in which each person is presented to himself can figure in the communication. What he suggests is that for the purposes of the communication a person "must use "I," in a sense which can be grasped by others, perhaps in the sense of "he who is speaking to you at this moment." As a speaker's remark about himself. But this view is quite unsatisfactory.

But Frege's troubles about "I" cannot be objected only from one side that is, his view of special and primitive senses, rather from the assumption which is what denies the special and primitive senses any role in communication-that the communication must involve a sharing of thoughts between speaker and his audience. Frege accepted this but he did not provide any argument in favour of this line. But McDowell argues that

"There was no reason that why Frege did not hold that, instead that in linguistic interchange of the appropriate kind, mutual understanding—which is what successful communication achieves—requires not shared thoughts but different thoughts that, however stand and are mutually known to stand in a suitable relation of correspondence."⁵⁵

So, there is a correspondence relation between thoughts of speaker and the hearer to make the communication possible, it is not that they are sharing a same thought. From the above analysis it cannot be denied the *de re* attribution for "I," one for each person. This gives one "I"-thought which can only be entertained by him only. But from this it does not follow that they are not available to be entertained by others independently of one's actually entertaining them. So by holding the idea that special and primitive "I"-thoughts are not psychological we can perhaps helped by showing that such thoughts can figure in mutual understanding. McDowell suggests that this could have done by Frege.

⁵⁵ McDowell, (1998), p. 222.

3.5 Salmon on Frege's Puzzle

Nathan Salmon is a neo-Russellian. He, in his book *Frege's Puzzle*, has tried show some of the pitfalls of Frege's theory on sense and reference. He denied Frege's view that the cognitive content of any complete declarative sentence is always a purely general proposition or what is called a thought. In contrast, he holds the view that singular propositions are the contents of thought and beliefs, and that we have propositional attitudes towards singular propositions.

He says that the theory of singular proposition as the contents of declarative sentences is more or less explicit in the writings of Russell. It is Frege's puzzle and the case of non-referring singular terms that led Russell to retreat from the simple-minded version of Russell's theory. Salmon attempts to develop and defend the simple-minded version of the theory that Russell came to reject, and also attempts to extend the theory by dealing with difficulties generated by Frege's puzzle and some other related problems. His purpose is not to invent an entirely new and original theory of reference and cognitive information content, but to develop Russell's original theory in some detail, to reveal some of its important but generally unnoticed consequences, and to make these consequences acceptable.

He has dealt with Frege's identity problem⁵⁶, problem of reference and the failure of substitutive of co-referential proper names in propositional attitude attributes.

About Frege's puzzle, Salmon argued that *Frege's puzzle about identity is not a puzzle about identity. It has virtually nothing to do with identity.*⁵⁷ For example like "Shakespeare wrote *Romeo and Juliet*" is informative, where as "The author of *Romeo and Juliet* wrote *Romeo and Juliet*" is not. The question may arise that both sentences contain the same piece of information as they both attribute the same property(authorship of *Romeo and Juliet*) to the

⁵⁶ Frege's problem of identity as we have discussed in first chapter that is if two names 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' refers to the same entity, planet Venus, then what is the difference between
1-Hesperus is Hesperus. And

2- Hesperus is Phosphorus. Frege answered that these two sentences differs in cognitive value though they refer to the same referent. And the sentence (1) is an a priori and uninformative sentence whereas the sentence (2) is a posteriori and Informative.

⁵⁷ Salmon, (1986), p. 12.

same individual (Shakespeare). Both the examples involve definite description having the same semantic value. What, then, is the general puzzle about according to Salmon if it is not a puzzle about identity? Salmon writes,

“The problem is a problem concerning pieces of information (in non-technical sense), such as the information that Socrates is wise or the information that Socrates is wise if Plato is. The different versions of Frege’s puzzle are stated in terms of declarative sentences rather than in terms of information. This is because there is an obvious and intimate relation between pieces of information (such as the information that Socrates is wise) and declarative sentences (such as ‘Socrates is wise’). Declarative sentences have various semantic attributes: they are true or false, or neither; they have a semantic intentions (i.e., correlated functions from possible worlds to truth values): they involve reference to individuals, such as Socrates; and so on. But the fundamental semantic role of declarative sentence is to encode information. I mean the term ‘information’ in a broad sense to include misinformation (that is, inaccurate or incorrect piece of information) and even pieces of information that are neither true nor false. Pragmatically we use declarative sentences to communicate or to convey information to others (generally, not just the information encoded by the sentence), but we may also use declarative sentences simply to record information for possible future use, and perhaps even to record information with no anticipation of any future use. If for some reason I need to make a record of my marriage, say to recall that piece of information on a later occasion, I can simply write the words “I was married on August 28, 1980”, memorize them, or repeat them to myself. Declarative sentences are primarily a means of encoding information and they are remarkably efficient means at that. Many of their other semantic and pragmatic functions follow from or depend upon their fundamental semantic role.”⁵⁸

The encoded piece of information in a declarative sentence is called information content of the sentence.

The information that is conveyed by the sentence “Aristotle was the pupil of Plato” and “Aristotle was the teacher of Alexander,” are pieces of information directly about Aristotle, hence, they have some common. Similarly the information conveyed by the sentence “Aristotle was the pupil of Plato” has some common component with “Plato was the pupil of Socrates” and that component is different from what it has in common with the information in the sentence “Aristotle was the teacher of Alexander.” The declarative sentence “Aristotle was the pupil of Plato;” shares certain syntactic components with the sentence “Aristotle was the teacher of Alexander” and “Plato was the pupil of Socrates.”

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 12–3.

Salmon further says that these syntactic components like the name “Aristotle” and the predicate “the teacher of” are separately semantically correlated with the corresponding component of the piece of information encoded by the sentence.

The information component semantically correlated with an expression is called the *information-value*⁵⁹. For example the information-value of the name “Aristotle” is that which the name contributes to the information encoded in such sentences as “Aristotle was the teacher of Socrates,” and “Aristotle is the pupil of Plato.” Similarly is the case with the predicate of the sentence. Regarding the indexical expressions in ordinary language (such as ‘I’, ‘you’, ‘here’, ‘there’, ‘now’, ‘today’, ‘this’, ‘that’, ‘he’, ‘she’, and ‘then’) he says that the information value of an expression must in general be indexed i.e., relativized, to the context in which the expression is uttered. Since ordinary language includes indexical, the information value of an expression must be indexed to a context of utterance.

Russell, as opposed to Frege, can be said to have adhered to a naïve theory of meaning. Naïve theory is a theory which holds that the information value of a singular term, in a possible context, is simply its referent in that context. Information value of a predicate, as used in a particular context, is identified with some attribute associated with the predicate in that context. But this naïve theory is exposed to two mistakes; the first mistake is that, it is in a certain sense internally inconsistent. The second mistake is, it is concerned with eternalness of information. These two ideas come into conflict with respect to definite descriptions. So, this theory modified itself into a new theory, what is called “modified naïve theory”. According to this theory instead of identifying the information value of the individual on a particular occasion, with its referent, one should look instead for some complex entity made up partly of the relational property of having that property and partly of something else that serves as the information value of the definite description.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 14.

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 20–1.

The idea of information plays a central role in a theory of meaning. According to Salmon, if two pieces of information, P and Q, are composed of same components in the same way but are distinct, it would seem that there must also be some important aspect in which they differ, that is, some significant property had by P and not by Q or vice versa. But what may be that aspect of pieces of information in which two pieces of information with same components in the same way can differ? In order to address this question Salmon distinguishes between “information content” of a sentence, and “informativeness” of a sentence. But Salmon argues that the informativeness or uninformativeness may depend on some factors other than the “information content” of the sentence, so that two sentences having the same information content may differ in their informativeness. He writes,

“This ‘informative’ can be clearly understood by understanding the sharp distinction between semantically encoded information and pragmatically imparted information.”⁶¹

He says it is important to understand the distinction between information content (semantically encoded) and information imparted (pragmatically imparted) by the particular utterance of the sentence. (This distinction can be compared with Donnellan’s distinction between attributive and referential use of definite descriptions). The information encoded by a sentence is a function of both information values of the sentence components and of the very logical structure of the sentence itself.

The semantically encoded information is the information which is encoded by declarative sentences. Many of the sentence’s semantic and pragmatic functions depend upon their fundamental semantic role of encoding information. And that piece of information is described as information content. So, the basic function of sentences is to encode information.

Pragmatically imparted information is different from semantically encoded information. Let us explain this through an example, Smith may utter a sentence “I have a cold,” in the course of a conversation. One can know that “Smith has cold” not only by hearing the sentence but he can know by simply observing Smith sneeze and then blow his nose. So, Smith’s blowing his nose imparts or can impart the information that he has a cold. It is ridiculous to say

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 58.

that blowing nose has any semantic content. So, without knowing any semantically encoded information, one can know that Smith has cold. Hence,

“‘Actions *speak louder than words*’. The information which is semantically encoded by a sentence will be pragmatically imparted by utterances of the sentence. An utterance of the sentence may give further information concerning speaker’s beliefs, intentions, and attitudes. The further information thus imparted can often be of greater significance than the information actually encoded by the sentence itself.”⁶²

According to Salmon Frege was himself aware of these two distinctions when he says,

“We have to make a distinction between the thoughts that are expressed and those which the speaker leads others to take as true although he does not express them.”⁶³

But Frege did not appreciate the significant of this distinction for his theory of information content.

Thus Salmon holds the point that if one fails to draw the distinction between semantically encoded and pragmatically imparted information, as it is done by many philosophers, it may be that the information pragmatically imparted by (utterances of) ‘a=b’ is mistaken for semantically encoded information.⁶⁴

Frege’s formulation of puzzle contains the notion of information content which is clearly related to the ordinary, everyday notions of *knowledge and belief*. Belief is taken as a type of inward agreement and a disposition toward inward assent, to a piece of information.

Salmon defines belief context as follows:

“To believe that P one must adopt some sort of favorable disposition or attitude toward the information that P, in fact, the adoption of some such favorable attitude toward a piece of information is both necessary and sufficient for belief. That is just what belief is. To believe that P is, so to speak, to include that piece of information in one’s personal inner ‘data bank’. Belief is thus a relation to pieces of information.”⁶⁵

Salmon further claims,

⁶² Ibid., p. 59.

⁶³ Frege, (1997), p. 140.

⁶⁴ Salmon, (1986), p. 79.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 80.

“What we ordinarily say in everyday language is sometimes misleading, sometimes irrelevant, sometimes just plain wrong, but in case where issue concerns the applicability or inapplicability of a certain concept or term ordinary usage is often the best available guides to the facts.”⁶⁶

Salmon shows his complete adherence to ordinary language. He says ordinary language is relevant because it is a reliable guide to the principles and doctrines governing the correct use of ordinary language. Here the question concerns the principles governing the correct use of words such as “believe.” The main philosophical question concerns with the criteria those are implicit at work in the everyday notion of belief and other attitudes, in their crude form, as they arise in real life without theoretical or aesthetic alteration.

So, Salmon maintains according to these criteria that anyone who knows that a Hesperus is Hesperus knows that Hesperus is Phosphorus, no matter how strongly s/he may deny the later. Moreover, anyone who knows that s/he knows that Hesperus is Hesperus also knows that s/he knows that Hesperus is Phosphorus, no matter how self-consciously s/he may disbelieve that Hesperus is Phosphorus.⁶⁷

These claims go against with ordinary usage. But we should not ignore the fact that ordinary language is a reliable guide and we should have philosophical tools for looking at ordinary usage in such matters. Ordinary language is only a guide even when ordinary usage are sometimes incorrect usage. It may happen to the violation of certain rules and principle regarding certain utterances if it is governed by the social conventions. But if we wish to utter what is true, and if we do not care about social conventions, we should speak this way that anyone who believes that Hesperus is Hesperus does in fact believe that Hesperus is Phosphorus. The customary way of speaking involves us in uttering falsehoods.

Thus Salmon suggest when we are considering utterances of statements of propositional attitude, we need a careful understanding about the distinction between semantically encoded information and pragmatically imparted information. Because if one is not careful

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 82.

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 83–4.

to keep the distinction in mind, then it is too easy to be confused the information pragmatically imparted by “Hesperus is Phosphorus” for semantically encoded information.

Conclusion

We can see that there are some common responses to both the Russell's and Frege's theory. They are as follows”

1. All the philosophers tried to make a distinction between name and definite description which is a view against Frege but in line with Russell. (Strawson, Donnellan, Evans, McDowell)
2. All philosophers accept the notion of singular terms which is common to both Frege and Russell. But they claimed that the use of the singular terms in Frege's theory is not Fregean but Russellian. They accept Russell's notion of singular terms. (Strawson, Donnellan, Evans, McDowell, Salmon)
3. All have given emphasis on the referential use of definite descriptions which is ignored by Russell.
4. Some philosophers rejected the application of sense to bearerless names as it is done by Frege. (Evans, McDowell)
5. Some philosophers do not accept the substitution of coreferring expressions in sentences containing propositional attitude operator. (Evans, McDowell, Nathan Salmon)
6. The objectivity of thought is needed for a successful communication is accepted.

So, we can conclude with a common view that meaning lies in the structure of the language which is what is explained when we explain the language. And understanding the language means understanding the rules and conventions that guides these use as it is suggested by Strawson. Understanding a language consists in grasping its functions or uses as a whole, so, McDowell rightly said that theory of understanding is just what thinking of a theory of language. The meaning of a language is in language-use. Meaning cannot stand in isolation from its use. Meaning or as Frege says “thought” is neither mental nor psychological nor is it an entity in the abstract Platonic sense. It is a fact and an ultimate reality in language.

Conclusion

After analyzing briefly the theories of meaning and reference, I wish to conclude with an assumption that an analysis of speech-act theory can bring the complete picture to the theory of meaning and reference. The reason for making such an assumption is that, speaking a language is engaging in a rule-governed form of behaviour or we can say, speaking a language is performing speech-acts, such as making statements, giving commands, asking questions, making promises, and so on; and more abstractly, acts such as referring and predicating. These acts, are in general, made possible by and are performed in accordance with certain rules for the use of linguistic elements.

All linguistic communication involves linguistic acts. Acts performed in the utterance of a sentence are, in general, a function of the meaning of the sentence. The study of the meaning of sentence is not in principle distinct from a study of speech-acts or the study of the use of language. So it is possible to distinguish at least two strands in contemporary philosophy of language: one which concentrates on the uses of expressions in speech situation and one which concentrates on the meaning of sentences as such. A question in respect to the second approach can be made is, "how do the meanings of the elements of a sentence determine the meaning of the whole sentence?" A question which can be asked in respect to the first approach is that "what are the different kinds of speech acts speakers perform when they utter expressions?" Answers to both these questions are necessary for a complete study of the philosophy of language and more importantly, the two questions are necessarily related. They are related because for every possible speech act there is a possible sentence or a set of sentences.

Language is the expression of what the speakers want to express, that is, their thoughts and experiences. Meaning is the very nature of language insofar as it is the

expression of our thoughts and experiences. According to Frege, knowing the meaning of a sentence and its constituent is not same as knowing what is expressed on a particular occasion of its utterance. The meaning of an expression is what one understands when one understands how to use it. From this perspective, its sense consists of what is said by its utterance on a given occasion. For Russell, the meaning of a sentence is an acquaintance with the constituents of that sentence. According to him, we must attach some meaning to the word we use, if we are to speak significantly. Frege holds the view that meaning is dependent on its reference, whereas, for Russell, meaning is independent of its reference, rather it depends upon the truth-value of a sentence. Evans used the word “meaning” instead of reference and accepts Frege’s notion of sense over and above the reference. McDowell also has the similar line of argument as Evans. He assumes that to grasp the meaning of a sentence, we have is to understand the sentence and to understand a sentence is to know how to use it. Strawson maintains that the meaning is neither determined by the truth-value of a sentence nor is determined by the reference of that sentence, meaning, according to him, is determined by the rules and conventions which govern the use of language and the truth-value is determined by the use of a sentence or an expression in a particular context. Donnellan has given emphasis both on the attributive and referential use of definite descriptions, as he says that the one use is not enough to have a complete knowledge of the sentence in which the description occurs. Similarly, Salmon has said that a sentence has semantically encoded information and pragmatically imparted information. And a user of language can rightly use a sentence if he possesses the knowledge of these kinds of information.

So, I can sum up the whole analysis of “meaning” by giving a quotation from Dummett,

“To grasp the meaning of an expression is to understand its role in the language: a complete theory of meaning for a language is, therefore, a complete theory of how the language functions as a language. Our interest in meaning, as a general concept, is, thus, an interest in how the language works....”¹

¹ Dummett, (1993b), p. 2.

The above quotation suggests that the meaning of an expression lies in how it works and how it is used in communication. Without having any knowledge of the word or sentence in its actual employment we cannot tell what it means. When we know the meaning of an expression, we also know what we have to do with that expression. So the sense or the meaning of expressions is fully grasped when we are semantically and pragmatically in control of the language.

The practical application is the means by which meaning can be fully comprehended. This ability should be acquired by speakers of the language which is implicit in the language-using habits of the community of speakers. Meaning is deeply rooted in the inner structure of the language itself. Therefore, it is not psychological.

To quote Dummett again,

“A theory of meaning will, then, represent the practical ability possessed by the speakers as consisting in his grasp of a set of propositions; since the speaker derives his understanding of a sentence from the meanings of the component words, these propositions will most naturally form a deductively connected system.”²

This suggests that the propositions speaker grasps are interrelated and so the grasp of propositions means the grasp of language. It means that the implicit knowledge is of the knowledge of the rules of language and their operations in the use of language.

The main aim of philosophy of language is to study the structure of language, because language is the only key by which the reality can be understood. So, here, some of Wittgenstein’s remarks are appropriate,

“A proposition is a picture of reality; for if I understand a proposition, I know the situation that it represents. And I can understand the proposition without its sense explained to me.”³

“A proposition *shows* its sense. A proposition *shows* how things stand *if* it is true. And it *says that* they do so stand.”⁴

² Ibid., p. 36.

³ Wittgenstein, (1922), p. 41(4.021).

⁴ Ibid., p. 41(4.023).

Further, he says,

“Reality is compared with propositions.”⁵

“A proposition can be true or false only in virtue of being a picture of reality.”⁶

This is to say, propositions in their logical aspect are reminders of the fact that the world has a logical structure and that in virtue of this logical connection propositions are either true or false. Again, propositions should be able to give a new sense to us, that means they should be capable of communicating new sense. So, sense is always there in propositions. By affirming propositions we are not giving sense to it but sense is something which is affirmed.

Understanding of the proposition demands that we must not take truth-values as the marks of sense. Sense or meaning precedes truth-values. But sense goes together with truth-conditions, that is, the conditions under which propositions are true or false. Thus, in order to understand the meaning of the proposition, we must have already known the truth-conditions. That is to say, we must have already grasped the truth-conditions in our grasp of the sense of the propositions. To quote Wittgenstein once again,

“To understand a proposition means to know what is the case if it is true. (One can understand it, therefore, without knowing whether it is true.) It is understood by anyone who understands its constituents.”⁷

The grasp of truth-conditions is conditioned by the language user’s capacity to know the truth or falsity of the propositions concerned. This capacity follows from the language user’s mastery of language. This language-mastery, as Dummett pointed out, is the basis of cognitive availability of the sense or meaning of sentences. Both sense and truth-conditions are immanent to the language we use and thus there is a significant relationship between language and the language-use that is undertaken by the linguistic community. And meaning must belong to the practice of language rather than to the

⁵ Ibid., p. 45 (4.05).

⁶ Ibid., p. 45 (4.06).

⁷ Ibid., p. 41 (4.024).

truth-conditions of sentences. That means, not truth, but language-use, is the source of meaning of a sentence or of a word.

Again understanding language means understanding meaning itself. Thus the meaning of a language can be situated in language-use. And language-use consists in making a particular move according to rules. The linguistic activities are goal-directed and purposive activities and so they must be guided by conventions which manifest the meaning of these activities. So, understanding language means understanding the rules as well as the purposes of these activities.

A word is fully functional when it is used in a sentence, because it is only in the sentence that it is used according to rules. In this case, therefore, meaning cannot be anything other than what the word does. Meaning cannot stand apart as something foreign to the word, it is not something hidden either. So, it is right to say that the use explains the meaning of an expression. As Wittgenstein writes,

“The meaning of a word is what is explained by the explanation of the meaning, i.e., if you want to understand the use of the word “meaning”, look for what are called “explanations of meaning”.”⁸

This suggests that the explanation of meaning shows exactly what meaning is all about. We cannot go out of language to find what the meaning is. So, we have to look into the function of language to know its meaning. Meaning is neither a mental reality nor is it an entity in the abstract sense. It is ultimately a reality in language.

The problem of reference falls within the purview of the problem of meaning. Reference must be situated in a framework of language-use and so sense reappears in the language of referring expressions. The traditional problem of denotation is carried over into the problem of reference and naming in order to bring out the structure of predication. Frege has considered reference of the sentence as its truth-value. According to him, the sense determines the reference but itself is not determined by it. The sense is determined by the senses of the parts of the sentence. Again he has put names and

⁸ Wittgenstein, (1953), sect. 560.

definite descriptions under the same semantic category, that means the semantic value of a name is same as the semantic value of the description associated with that name. In other words he assumes definite descriptions as proper names, which led him to say that the empty definite descriptions also have sense. This view of Frege has been discarded by many philosophers. Russell made a distinction between names and definite descriptions. According to him, denoting phrases should not be considered as referring expressions. So the meaning of a denoting phrase should not be same as the meaning of a name that refers to an object for its meaning. Since denoting phrases are not referring expressions, they don't have to depend on any object to acquire their meaning. We can understand the denoting phrases without having any knowledge about the object (if any) associated with it or in other words we can get the knowledge of a description (whether definite or indefinite) even if there is nothing to satisfy the description. Because the meaning of a description is associated with our acquaintance of the words used in it. So, semantic value is not meaning of a sentence. That means reference is not a determinant of meaning. Russell has rejected completely Frege's introduction of sense over reference. But Evans and McDowell have suggested that thinking of a bare reference is not possible. There must be sense associated with reference. According to them, our sense is always object-directed or intentional, we cannot possess a sense of something which does not exist. According to McDowell, both sense and reference determines our thought. McDowell has pointed out that proper names must have sense and reference in the way Frege demanded it, though in the changed context of language-use. Frege did not introduce the full-fledged notion of language-use and so sense appeared to him to be a pure logical category. According to McDowell, sense is a function of language-use and that is why naming function itself must have sense in the framework of the speech activity of referring to objects in the world. Like Dummett, he holds that sense of a proper name is a function, that is in the way the name is used in language. Sense becomes imperative to show, how names are part of the overall scheme of language to talk about the world significantly and intelligibly. Naming is the appropriate way the world is talked about.

It is a mistake done by Frege and Russell that they ignored the notion of language in its use or its actual functioning. It was explained by Strawson, how the use of language

matters. So, meaning cannot be grasped by analyzing only the semantic structure of language, rather it could be grasped fully by practical ability possessed by the speakers. As Salmon has rightly said, “actions speak louder than words.” So, meaning is determined by the rules and conventions of language those govern the use of language in a particular context. And both meaning and truth utterances can be understood only with speech act. That is to say that what meaning a particular utterance has can be understood only by looking into the rules and conventions of the utterances. The truth of a statement is generally a matter to be decided by what the statements say about the world. The speakers perform the speech act with particular intention, that is, with a view to communicate something to the hearer. Thus, the literal meaning and the speaker’s meaning must co-operate and complement each other. In McDowell’s language, a possessor in order to be a possessor of information must have the ability to grasp the information and should have the ability to deliver that information. And both input information and the output information should be comparable. Thus Putnam ends “The Meaning of ‘Meaning’” with this remark:

“Traditional philosophy of language, like much traditional philosophy, leaves out other people and the world; a better philosophy and a better science of language must encompass both.”⁹

Last, but not the least, I wish to admit that sense forms the core of linguistic framework and is something fundamental and vital in the semantic structure of language. From this viewpoint, we can say that proper names, like any linguistic category, must be placed within a linguistic scaffold, and then its sense can disclose itself to the language-user in his effort to comprehend and master the language. Thus, sense and reference must be linked in the use of names because they are inseparable so far as actual use of language is concerned. The language we use and understand requires the sense that situates reference in the right place.

⁹ Putnam, (1975), p. 271.

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