

***The Language Revolution***  
**Russell Marcus**  
**Fall 2014**

Class #8  
Reviewing:  
Still More on Frege  
And  
A Bit on Russell's "Descriptions"

# Frege's Puzzles

Frege's sense/reference distinction solves all three.

- The problem of cognitive content is solved by distinguishing the meaningfulness of names from the identities of their bearers.
  - ▶ 'Hesperus' means 'the evening star' but refers to Venus
  - ▶ 'Phosphorus' means 'the morning star' but refers to Venus
  - ▶ 'a=b' means that the signs 'a' and 'b' refer to the same object.
- The problem of empty reference is solved by showing that a sentence containing an empty name can be meaningful.
  - ▶ Sentences containing empty names have sense, but no reference (truth value).
    - **Truth-value gaps! (I left this out of our earlier discussion.)**
  - ▶ 'Santa Claus does not exist' also lacks truth value.
    - Oops!
    - New problem of negative existentials
- The problem of opaque contexts is solved by showing that reference within opaque contexts can be to the ordinary senses of names and subordinate clauses.

# Properties of Fregean Propositions

- Propositions are abstract, objective, mind- and language-independent entities that exist in a third ontological realm, neither private, nor physical.
- Compositionality: propositions are structured entities built out of their parts.
- Both sentences and sub-sentential expressions have both sense and reference.
  - ▶ The sense of a whole expression is determined by the senses of its (often sub-sentential) parts.
  - ▶ The reference of a whole expression is determined by the references of its parts.



# Components of Fregean Propositions

that Friskers is a kitten

- A proposition (the sense of a sentence) is composed of the sense of its subject, or the subject under a mode of presentation, and the sense of its predicate, or the property under a mode of presentation.
- Friskers instantiates the sense (or individual concept) of the subject part of the proposition
- The property of being a kitten is an instance of the sense of the predicate, of the concept of kittenhood.
- If both concepts (of Friskers and of kittenhood) are instantiated, then the proposition that Friskers is a kitten will be true or false depending on whether or not Friskers is a kitten.
- Otherwise, the proposition has no truth value.

# Opaque Contexts Revisited

Lois Lane believes that Superman can fly.  
Superman is Clark Kent.  
So, Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent can fly.

- 'Lois Lane' refers to Lois Lane.
- If discourse within opaque contexts were direct, 'Superman' would refer to Superman, 'Clark Kent' would refer to the same person, and the inference would be legitimate.
  - Leibniz's law: substituting equals for equals.
- But, such discourse is indirect.
  - 'Superman' refers to its ordinary sense, the mode of presentation of Superman for Lois Lane.
  - 'Clark Kent' refers to its ordinary sense, the mode of presentation of Superman for Lois Lane
- Since Lois Lane associates different senses with the two signs, the substitution is impermissible.



# Opaque Contexts

- Propositional attitudes
  - know
  - believe
  - fear
  - hate
  - seek
  - want
- temporal expressions
- modal expressions
  - necessarily
  - possibly
- Indirect speech
  - That's what she said
- Belief, belief, belief

# Three Concerns for Frege

1. Ontological Profligacy
2. Something about analyticity and sentences
3. Something about opaque contexts
4. Truth-Value Gaps

# Concern #1: Frege's Ontological Profligacy?

- Inscriptions or utterances of sentences
- Objects (e.g. Marina, kittens)
- Properties (e.g. being a kitten)
- Individual concepts (e.g. of Marina).
- Modes of presentation (senses)
- Propositions
- Frege argues that such posits are not excessive.
  - ▶ Senses are available to us; we can think about them (or apprehend them).
  - ▶ The property of being a kitten (or the set of kittens) is the referent of 'x is a kitten'.
  - ▶ We think about that property, or that set, only under a mode of presentation to us, i.e. its sense.
  - ▶ The multiplication of entities is exactly how we solved the identity and empty reference problems.



# Concern #2: Analyticity

- The sense of 'Aristotle' for one person:
  - ▶ teacher of Alexander the Great, student of Plato, born in Stagira, author of *Posterior Analytics*
- Another person could associate a different sense with 'Aristotle':
  - ▶ Author of *Metaphysics*, guy who believed in four causes
- Is 'Aristotle was a student of Plato' an analytic truth?



# Concern #3: Opaque Contexts



- Stephen Schiffer
  - ▶ ‘Marina’s owner believed that Marina is a kitten.’
  - ▶ I am making a presumably true statement.
  - ▶ I have no access to the mode of presentation by which her owner knows that Marina is a kitten.



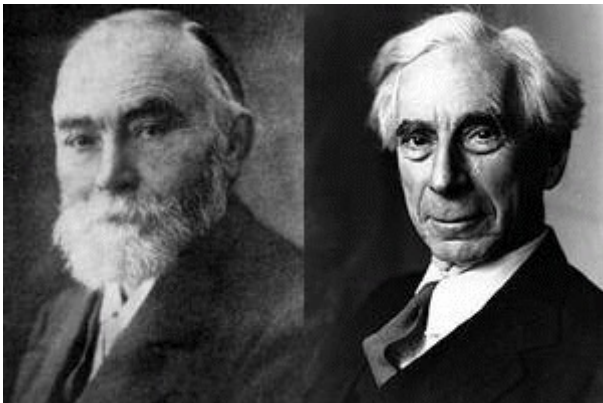
- Bob Hale
  - ▶ ‘My copy of the *Grundlagen* was on my desk but I thought that it was in my bag.’
  - ▶ Since the ‘it’ occurs in an opaque context, it should refer to its sense, not to its ordinary reference.
  - ▶ But it refers to the same thing that the term at the beginning of the sentence refers to.
  - ▶ ‘It’ is just ‘my copy of the *Grundlagen*’, not that object under a mode of presentation.

# Concern #4: Truth-Value Gaps

- For Frege, some propositions lack truth values.
- Weird

# Russell's Response to Frege

- Russell is partly motivated by his concerns about Frege's profligacy and largely motivated by his desire to avoid truth-value gaps
- He does not oppose propositions.
- But he doesn't want quite so many abstract objects.
- And the notion of a proposition having meaning but lacking truth value seems odd.
- Russellian propositions are different from Fregean propositions.
- His solution to Frege's puzzles avoids senses for names.
  - He also avoids the second concern about analyticity.



# Russellian Propositions

- Grammatical form is not (in many cases) proper logical form.
  - Logical form reveals truth.
- A real name has to name something.
- Most so-called names are really abbreviations.
  - Names are really definite descriptions.
  - Definite descriptions are really general quantified formulas.
- Fregean propositions contain senses.
- Russellian propositions contain objects and their properties.
  - Logically proper propositions contain the actual thing named.
  - 'That (spot in my field of vision) is red.'
  - avoids senses - Ockham's razor
- We must recast sentences with so-called names to reveal their true logical form.

# Russell on Cognitive Content

- 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' are abbreviated descriptions.
  - Thus 'Hesperus is Phosphorus' is not really of the form 'a=b'.
  - It has content only because it is not really an identity.
- Logically proper names never raise questions of various cognitive content.
  - 'a=a' and 'a=b' have the same content when logically proper names are used.



# Russell on Empty Reference

- ‘Sherlock Holmes lives at 221B Baker Street’ is a disguised description.
  - ▶ Frege packs the description into the mode of presentation: the sense of ‘Sherlock Holmes’.
  - ▶ Russell sees the name as an abbreviation for the description.
- Frege has truth-value gaps
  - ▶ Referential compositionality + names without bearers = sentences with no truth value
- Russell recasts such sentences as including an existential claim.
  - ▶ There is a thing, called Sherlock Holmes, with such and such other properties.
  - ▶ Since there is no such thing, the claim is false.
  - ▶ Look, Ma! No truth-value gaps!



# Russell on Opaque Contexts

Lois Lane believes that Superman can fly.  
Superman is Clark Kent.  
So, Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent can fly.

- 'Lois Lane believes that Superman can fly' does not contain a thing called Superman.
  - We must replace 'Superman' with a description.
- The description of Superman (according to Lois Lane) is different from the description of Clark Kent.
- So, the invalid inference is blocked.



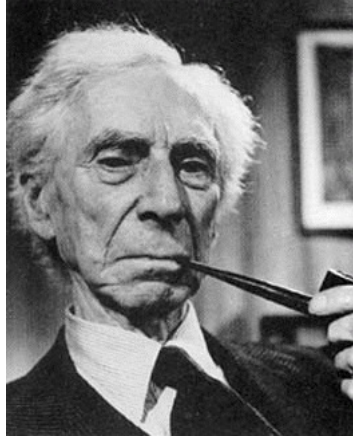


# Russell on Definite Descriptions

The king of France is bald.

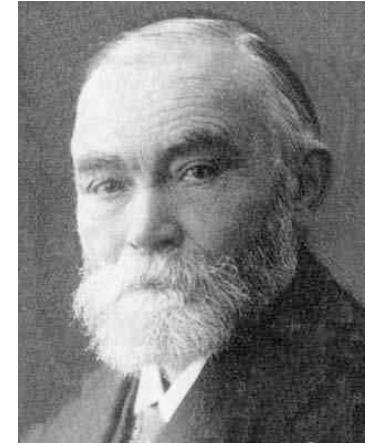
- There is a king of France.
- There is only one king of France.
- That thing is bald.
- “Propositions verbally about “a so-and-so” are found to contain no constituent represented by this phrase. And that is why such propositions can be significant even when there is no such thing as a so-and-so” (68)





# Russell versus Frege

## Extensionalism versus Intensionalism



- Frege and Russell agree that names are not just Millian denotations.
- Frege thinks that names have connotation, too.
  - Each object has different senses associated with it.
  - Different people can grasp the object under different modes of presentation.
- For Russell, ordinary names are abbreviations for the description which Frege associates with the sense of a name.
  - Descriptions are themselves disguised existential assertions.
- Frege sees sense and reference.
- Russell sees hidden logical form.

# Descriptivism

- Both Frege and Russell are description theorists.
  - ▶ Frege could be called a sense descriptivist .
  - ▶ Russell is an abbreviational descriptivist.
- Descriptivism is opposed to Mill's theory of non-connotative names.
  - ▶ direct reference theory
  - ▶ 'Fido'-Fido
- We'll see the revenge of Fido soon!



# Jeremy On Strawson