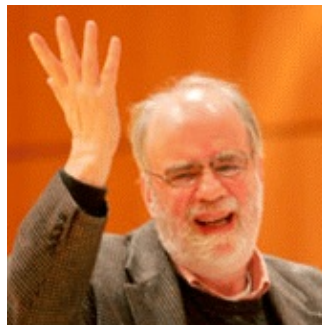# The Language Revolution
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Hamilton College, Fall 2015

Class #10
Finishing Donnellan's
Attributive/Referential Distinction
Leading to Kripke and the Revenge of 'Fido'-Fido

Business

- Midterm

- Today: Finish Donnellan and start Kripke

- Thursday: Finish Kripke and direct reference for singular terms
  - Hunter
  - GTA

- Next Tuesday on Putnam and natural kinds
  - Caleb

The Descriptivist Background for Attributive/Referential Distinction

- Mill presented a view, which we can call naive referential semantics.
  - ‣ 'Fido'-Fido/ direct reference theory
  - ‣ The semantic value of a singular term is just the object it picks out

- Frege presented three puzzles apparently devastating to the 'Fido'-Fido theorist.
  - ‣ Two kinds of semantic values
    - – The sense of a singular term is the mode of presentation of the object.
    - – The reference of the term is the object itself
  - ‣ Sense descriptivism

- Russell (mostly) followed Frege in rejecting direct reference semantics
  - ‣ Abbreviational descriptivism
  - ‣ The semantic value of a (so-called) name is the set of descriptions for which it is shorthand.

- Strawson picks nits with Russell, but mainly follows his descriptivism for singular terms.
  - ‣ The semantic value of a name is the rules for using the name, the various descriptions or claims we believe about the referent.
  - ‣ "A name is worthless without a backing of descriptions which can be produced on demand to explain the application" (*Individuals*, 20)

Donnellan's Distinction

- Frege, Russell, and Strawson fail to notice a referential use of a definite description.

- 'The person who got the best grade in Logic is smart.'
  - ▸ Attributive case, *de dicto*
  - ▸ Referential case, *de re*

- The referential case seems directly referential and does not depend on anything meeting the description for successful reference.

Maria is worried that descriptivism might not explain referential uses of definite descriptions.

Why Does the A/R Distinction Matter?

Donnellan's Version

- Donnellan believes the attributive/referential distinction is a blow for the logical analysis of language.
  - ▸ An analysis of what is said depends on a speaker's intentions and not merely on the sentences used and their meanings.
  - ▸ Intentions (mental states) are not the kinds of things available for logical analysis in any obvious way.
  - ▸ Piggybacking on Strawson?
- But we can analyze and represent any proposition, whether its terms are taken as attributive or referential.
  - ▸ Fine-grained propositions lack ambiguity.
  - ▸ Logic is powerful.
- This is not the real problem raised by Donnellan's cases.

Donnellan's Attributive/ Referential Distinction

The Real Issue

- Donnellan's cases undermine the descriptivism which solved (variously) Frege's puzzles.

- Donnellan's referential use of definite descriptions (and names) is Millian.
  - ▸ The semantic value of a singular term is just the object to which it refers.
  - ▸ And not just for Russell's weird logically proper names.

- Following Donnellan, Kripke revives the direct reference theory of names.
  - ▸ aka the 'Fido'-Fido theory
  - ▸ aka naive semantics
  - ▸ Note: Kripke believes that Donnellan's A/R distinction fails - a great, if challenging, paper topic

The Return of the 'Fido'-Fido Theory

An Overview

Challenges for Direct Reference Semantics

- Solve Frege's Three Puzzles
  - ‣ Cognitive Content
  - ‣ Empty Reference
  - ‣ Opaque Contexts
  - ‣ Put these aside for now.

- Answer Strawson's challenge
  - ‣ How can our words hook onto the world?
  - ‣ And: how can we communicate them successfully?
  - ‣ Again, put aside for now.

- Capture Actual Linguistic Practices

- Provide Some Philosophical Benefits
  - ‣ To understand the consequences of Kripke's view, we have to think about the relations between semantics, epistemology, and metaphysics.

Linguistics, Epistemology, Metaphysics

- Semantics: analytic and synthetic claims
- Epistemology: *a priori* and *a posteriori* methods of justification
- Metaphysics: necessary and contingent claims

The Analytic and the Synthetic

A Semantic Distinction

- Analyticity and syntheticity concern concepts, whatever they are.

- 'Bachelors are unmarried' is analytic.

- 'Bachelors are unhappy' is synthetic.

- Two kinds of analytic containment
  - ‣ Kant: beams in the house
  - ‣ Frege: plant in the seeds
  - ‣ The difference is in how much unpacking one needs to do.
  - ‣ For Frege, a statement is analytic if it follows using the rules of logic.
  - ‣ All of arithmetic is analytic, for Frege.

Apriority and Aposteriority

An Epistemological Distinction

- *A posteriori* = empirical
- The analytic/synthetic distinction is independent of the distinction between *a priori* justifications and empirical ones.
- 'Snow is white' is knowable only empirically.
  - ‣ We need to see particular snow in order to know that snow is white.
- '2 + 3 = 5' is knowable *a priori*.
  - ‣ We need experiences with no particular objects in order to know that 2+3=5.
  - ‣ No empirical experiences with undermine that claim.
    - – Two cups of water and three cups of salt
    - – Three chickens added to two foxes

Necessity and Contingency

A Metaphyical Distinction

- Some claims hold necessarily, like mathematical claims.
  - ‣ Leibniz: true in all possible worlds
- Other claims are merely contingent, like the claim that snow is white.
  - ‣ Could be false

The Traditional View

- Necessity - apriority - analyticity
  - ▸ Claims are necessary only if they are believed *a priori*.
  - ▸ All *a priori* claims are analytic.
    - – One reasons to the truth of an analytic claim without appeal to experience.

- Contingency - aposteriority - syntheticity
  - ▸ A claim is contingent when it is justified by appeal to sense experience.
  - ▸ Contingent claims bring together concepts that are not necessarily related.

- Hume:
  - ▸ Relations of ideas are justified *a priori* and analytic.
    - – and thus necessary
  - ▸ Matters of fact are justified empirically (by tracing ideas back to initial impressions) and synthetic.
    - – and thus contingent

	A priori	Empirical
Analytic	Relations of Ideas	--
Synthetic	--	Matters of Fact

Kant's Big Claim

- All empirical claims are synthetic.
- But some synthetic claims are *a priori*.
  - ‣ metaphysics
  - ‣ mathematics
  - ‣ some physics
- Still, the class of necessary claims is the same as the class of *a priori* claims.

	A priori	Empirical
Analytic	Logic/ Beams in the House	--
Synthetic	Most Mathematics, Metaphysics, and Some Physics	Empirical Judgments

Kripke's Cleavage

- We should distinguish
  - ‣ semantic claims (involving analyticity, syntheticity, and synonymy)
  - ‣ epistemic claims (involving apriority and aposteriority)
  - ‣ metaphysical claims (involving necessity and contingency).
- This will help him solve the problem of cognitive content.
  - ‣ 'Hesperus is Hesperus' is necessary and known *a priori*
  - ‣ 'Hesperus is Phosphorus' is necessary but known *a posteriori*.
    - – The names are rigid designators.
  - ‣ But we're getting ahead of ourselves.

The Fall of Descriptivism

Simple Descriptivism

- Frege: the sense (meaning) of a name is the description associated with it by the user of the name.

- Russell: a correct analysis of sentences including proper names would replace the name with the description for which it is an abbreviation.

- Standard objection re analyticity
  - mentioned in the second footnote in Frege's "On Sense and Reference"
  - Let's say that we associate with Aristotle the description that he was Plato's most famous student.
  - It follows that the meaning of 'Aristotle' includes that he was a student of Plato.
  - If Aristotle just means or abbreviates the description, all we have to do is analyze the term 'Aristotle' to find out that he was a student of Plato.
  - 'Aristotle was a student of Plato' is an analytic truth.
  - The claim should be knowable *a priori* and necessary.
  - But it is contingent, knowable only *a posteriori*, and synthetic.
  - So, the simple descriptivism of Frege and Russell is untenable.

Kripke on Aristotle
And Contingent Properties of Persons

It just is not, in any intuitive sense of necessity, a necessary truth that Aristotle had the properties commonly attributed to him. There is a certain theory, perhaps popular in some views of the philosophy of history...according to [which] it will be necessary, once a certain individual is born, that he is destined to perform great tasks and so it will be part of the very nature of Aristotle that he should have produced ideas which had a great influence on the western world. Whatever the merits of such a view may be as a view of history or of the nature of great men, it does not seem that it should be trivially true on the basis of a theory of proper names. It would seem that it's a contingent fact that Aristotle ever did *any* of the things commonly attributed to him today, *any* of these great achievements that we so much admire...

The Argument Against Simple Descriptivism

More Abstractly

SD1 For simple descriptivism, 'x is p' is analytic, knowable *a priori*, and necessary for any property p in the characteristic description of a subject x.

SD2 But, many characteristic properties of many objects are synthetic, knowable only *a posteriori*, and contingent.

SDC So, simple descriptivism is wrong.

Cluster Descriptivism

CD1. Every name 'n' is associated with a cluster of properties: the properties that x believes are true of n.

CD2. x believes that these properties pick out a unique individual. (Feynman)

CD3. If y has most of these properties, then y is the referent of 'n'. (Gödel)

CD4. If nothing has most of these properties, 'n' doesn't refer. (Jonah)

CD5. The sentence 'n has most of these properties' is known a priori by x. (Aristotle)

CD6. The sentence 'n has most of these properties' as uttered by x expresses a necessary truth. (Aristotle)

CDC. These properties must be chosen in such a way that there is no circularity. (The properties must not use the notion of reference.)

For Thursday!