

***The Language Revolution***  
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**Fall 2015**

Class #5  
Frege's Intensionalism



# Business

- Today:
  - Quick review of the pre-revolutionaries
  - Frege's three principles (*Grundlagen*)
  - Sarah on Frege's intensionalism
- Tuesday:
  - Frege's Sense/Reference Distinction
  - Text Annotation
    - There's no reason we can't start it on the weekend!
- Then, we're off and running
  - The readings will become more contemporary.
  - Mark on Thursday on Russell

# In Three Groups: Locke, Meinong, Mill

How does each philosopher understand each sentence?  
Consider truth and falsity, and meanings of the terms.

1. The Empire State Building is tall, with blue lights.
2. The king of America has a lot of power.
3. Kanye West will run for president in 2020.

# Frege's Three Principles

- Logicism and the *Grundlagen*
- Three guidelines:
  - ▶ FG1. Always to separate sharply the psychological from the logical, the subjective from the objective;
  - ▶ FG2. Never to ask for the meaning of a word in isolation, but only in the context of a proposition;
  - ▶ FG3. Never to lose sight of the distinction between concept and object (Frege, *Grundlagen x*).
- On FG1
  - ▶ In contrast to the Moderns and the nineteenth-century idealists, Frege wants a logical, objective theory of mathematics and language.
  - ▶ Not a psychological account like Locke's.
  - ▶ Not a subsistence account, like Meinong's, but that's maybe closer.

# The Context Principle

FG2. Never to ask for the meaning of a word in isolation, but only in the context of a proposition

- 'Theaetetus' itself has no meaning independently of how we use that term in an assertion.
- There might be many Theaetetuses.
- Even a baby's use of the single term 'Mama', which might be taken as a counter-example to FG2, is best taken as an assertion, 'There is my mother', rather than as a mere label.
- If we take terms, like 'two', as labels, outside of an assertion, we end up looking for the referents of such terms.
  - ▶ Since there are no twos in the world, we end up thinking that 'two' refers to my idea of a two.
  - ▶ We end up believing that the referents of my terms are ideas, and we are back with Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant stuck in our phenomenal worlds.
  - ▶ Or in Meinong's subsisting world.
  - ▶ Giving up FG2 leads to some kind of weirdness.

# Context and Compositionality

- FG2 should not be interpreted so as to contradict the claim that (human) languages are essentially compositional.
- Compositionality requires that the meanings of the whole proposition are constructed out of the meanings of the parts, and that the truth of the proposition depends on the truth of its parts.
- The context principle demands that the meanings of the parts are somehow dependent on the meanings of the whole.
- Compositionality is a fundamental principle of both logic and formal theories of language.
- Compositionality and the context principle are in tension, but they can be seen to work together.

# Frege's Third Principle

FG3. Never to lose sight of the distinction between concept and object.

- Frege and Mill disagree concerning FG3.
  - ▶ Mill thinks of 'blue' as the name of a thing, a general name, rather than the name of a concept.
  - ▶ Frege spends a lot of the *Grundlagen* attacking Mill's empiricist philosophy of mathematics.
  - ▶ FG3 is a central part of both Frege's attack on Mill and his positive account of numbers.