

Frege on Subjectivity and Objectivity in Meaning

Frege takes great care to distinguish senses from *conceptions*, which are psychological entities.

Two properties of conceptions.

- (A) they are *internal*: conceptions are parts, properties, or modes of individual minds.
- (B) they are *subjective*: everyone has their *own* conception of the same thing.

Frege gives the example of how an artist, biologist, and equestrian might conceive of Bucephalus. Another of Frege's analogies:

Two people observe the moon through a telescope v.	Two people each hear a word with the same sense
The moon	The referent of the word
The image of the moon on the telescope lens	The sense of the word
The images of the moon on the retinas of the observers	The conceptions of the word.

Why insist that senses, and Thoughts in particular, are not conceptions and hence lack (A) and (B)? Frege:

"For one can hardly deny that mankind has a common store of thoughts which is transmitted from one generation to another."

Frege seems to be claiming that the shared nature of Thoughts, and the possibility of their *exchangeability* in communication precludes them from being anything like conceptions.

- Two people can have the same Thought occur to them at different times (unlike conceptions)
- When I tell you something, you come to believe what I said, and believe what I believe (but our conceptions might yet be different).

A tension: Frege grants that much of the time we do not always attach exactly the same sense to the words we use. But can Frege allow this? If this is true, can senses embody the cognitive significance of a word for those who use it?

Background on Russell

Bertrand Russell (1872-1970): a British philosopher, essayist, and activist based at Cambridge with noted contributions in logic, the philosophy of language, and epistemology.

Some special terminology in "On Denoting"

(Russellian) Proposition: Russell's version of a Thought. These are the objects of attitudes like belief and doubt, and the things we communicate to each other. A Russellian proposition is *structured*: it has constituents (which correspond to the meanings of the words in a sentence expressing the proposition). And it is made up of what Frege would have called referents: actual things in the world.

Sometimes (following convention) I'll use angled brackets to talk about Russellian propositions. E.g. "Superman flies" might be noted:

<Superman, the property of flying>

Some explanation of Russell's terminology:

Meaning: Russell's version of reference. (The meaning of a whole sentence is a Russellian proposition.)

Denoting Phrase: Noun phrases that begin with "any", "some", "all", or "the". (e.g. "All the King's men", and "The death of Proust" are denoting phrases).

Denoting Concept: Russell's earlier version of Fregean sense. An element which stands in for a referent in a proposition when the referent is, in some sense, 'unavailable' to a thinker or speaker.

Important: Russell does not have 'two tiers' of meaning like Frege. For him, there is just one kind of meaning: *meaning*.

The goals of Russell's article:

- to present three puzzles about how denoting phrases work.
- to make a proposal which resolves all three puzzles.
- to present challenges to two rival views: those of Frege and Meinong.