

# **On Sense and Reference**

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# Definitions

- Sign: the raw letters of the word, the words themselves stripped of actual meaning
- Sense: (intension or mode of presentation) contextual meaning of the word or sentence
- Reference: (extension) the actual object to which the words of a statement point to
- Idea: the unique personal interpretation of a statement or object

# Differentiation

- “The reference of ‘evening star’ would be the same as that of ‘morning star,’ but not the sense” (37)
- The terms ‘evening star’ and ‘morning star’ point to the same star, thus having the same reference, but are used in different contexts, giving them different senses
- “The words ‘the celestial body most distant from the sun’ have a sense, but it is very doubtful if they also have a reference... In grasping a sense, one is not certainly assured of a reference” (38)
- “The expression ‘the least rapidly convergent series’ has a sense but demonstrably has no reference, since for every given convergent series, another convergent, but less rapidly convergent, series can be found” (38)

# Ideas

- Ideas are subjective: “one man’s idea is not that of another” (39)
- “If two persons picture the same thing, each still has his own idea” (39)
  - Their idea of that object is going to be different, therefore their sense would be different, while their reference would be the same
  - Two people can never have the exact same idea
- “Without some affinity in human ideas art would certainly be impossible, but it can never be exactly determined how far the intensions of the poet are realized” (40)
  - Since no two people can have the same idea, one can never fully understand the ideas of an artist

# Moon Analogy



reference



sense idea

(mode of presentation)

“...the idea aroused in the hearer by a word shall not be confused with its sense or reference” (40)

# Truth Value

- The truth value of a sentence can either be true or false
- To designate the truth value of a sentence, one must consider its sense and reference
- The truth value of a sentence depends on the sense and reference of its parts
  - “Odysseus was set ashore at Ithaca while sound asleep” (41)
  - Does this sentence have sense?
  - Does this sentence have reference?

# Truth Value

- Yes, the sentence has sense
- The term ‘Odysseus’ has no reference, therefore the whole sentence has none
- We accept “the *truth value* of a sentence as constituting its reference” (42)
- So the truth value of the sentence is false
- Therefore, the reference of the sentence as a whole is the truth object, False
  - If every statement within the sentence has reference, and the sentence is logically true, then the reference of the sentence as a whole is the truth object, True
- The reference of a sentence points to a truth object, True or False

# Questions

- Does Frege's breakdown make sense?
- Do you think that Frege's use of 'idea' or 'experience' is fully explained? Was it random?
- "James Brown often performed in a blue velvet suit"
- Do you agree with Frege that two people cannot have the exact same thought?
- Could a computer potentially replicate a specific human thought