

Descriptions
By: Bertrand Russell



KATIE HUTCHINS
KATIE PETERSON

Russell vs. Frege



- Grammatical form is not a sure guide for logical form
- Account for propositions that are meaningful, even though they contain symbols without meaning

Russell's Tools



- **Propositional function**
 - Logical framework for the meaning of propositions
- **Descriptions**
- **Names**
- **Symbol**

Propositional Function



- “This ball is red”
 - $F(x) = x \text{ is red}$
 - ✦ $F(\text{This ball}) = \text{This ball is red}$
- Provides a logical form to parse out the meanings of propositions

Symbol



- **“Simple” symbol**
 - Symbol where no parts are symbols
 - “Plato”
- **“Complex” symbol**
 - Made up of parts which are symbols
 - “the author of *The Republic*”

Names



- **Only for sense data**
 - Logically proper names
- **Disguised descriptions**
 - Katie, Katie or Russell, Russell
- **Simple symbol “whose meaning can only occur as subject” (69)**
 - “Directly designating an individual which is its meaning, and having this meaning within its own right, independently of the meanings of all other words” (70)
- **What is an example of a logically proper name?**
- **Can you point to a name?**

Descriptions



- The meaning of the constituent symbols form a description
- Definite Descriptions
 - “*the so-and-so*”
 - “the Santa Claus”
- Indefinite Descriptions
 - “*a so-and-so*”
 - “a Santa Claus”
- What is the logical difference between “*the so-and-so*” and “*a so-and-so*”?

Definite Descriptions



- **“The implication of uniqueness” distinguishes definite from indefinite descriptions**
 - **“The inhabitant of London”**

- **“Always imply the corresponding propositions about a “so-and-so,” with the addendum that there is not more than one so-and-so” (71)**

Hierarchy of Meaning



- **Concept**
 - Always exists
- **Significant**
 - Either “unicorn” or a proposition containing the symbol “unicorn”, indefinite or definite
- **Meaning**
 - Depends on the logic of the Propositional Function
- “I met a unicorn”, “a unicorn”- Are these meaningful?