

OBJECTIONS TO THE NAÏVE THEORY

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Phil Language

1. Coreferential definite descriptions

Definite description: subject of the form “the F ”, where F is a predicate. E.g.:

the president of the United States

the tallest person in the room

the largest prime number

Problem: the Naïve Theory says that co-referential definite descriptions—definite descriptions that happen to refer to the same thing—have the same meaning. But ‘the teacher of this class’ and ‘the person who was born in New Haven, CT on April 20, 1967’ don’t *seem* to have the same meaning. Can we do better than just relying on our intuitions about meaning?

2. Frege’s argument from analyticity and apriority

...“ $a=a$ ” and “ $a=b$ ” are sentences of obviously different cognitive significance: “ $a=a$ ” is valid apriori and according to Kant is to be called analytic, whereas sentences of the form “ $a=b$ ” often contain very valuable extensions of our knowledge and cannot always be justified in an apriori manner. The discovery that it is not a different and novel sun which rises every morning, but that it is the very same, certainly was one of the most consequential ones in astronomy... If we wished to view identity as a relationship between the objects designated by the names ‘ a ’ and ‘ b ’ then “ $a=b$ ” and “ $a=a$ ” would not seem different if “ $a=b$ ” is true. (p. 217)

- (1) The heavenly body that rose yesterday = the heavenly body that rose today
- (2) The heavenly body that rose yesterday = the heavenly body that rose yesterday

The argument:

- i) Sentence (1) is neither apriori nor analytic
- ii) Sentence (2) is apriori and analytic
- iii) If one sentence is apriori and analytic, whereas another is not, then the sentences do not have the same meaning
- iv) If the Naïve Theory is true, (1) and (2) have the same meaning
- v) Therefore, the Naïve Theory is not true

3. Russell's George IV argument

If a is identical with b , whatever is true of the one is true of the other, and either may be substituted for the other in any proposition without altering the truth or falsehood of that proposition. Now George IV wished to know whether Scott was the author of *Waverley*; and in fact Scott was the author of *Waverley*. Hence we may substitute Scott for the author of 'Waverley', and thereby prove that George IV wished to know whether Scott was Scott. Yet an interest in the law of identity can hardly be attributed to the first gentleman of Europe. (p. 233)

- (3) George IV wished to know whether Scott was the author of *Waverley*
- (4) George IV wished to know whether Scott was Scott.

The argument:

- i) If the Naïve Theory is true, then 'Scott is the author of *Waverley*' and 'Scott is Scott' express the same proposition
- ii) If these sentences express the same proposition, then (3) and (4) have the same truth value
- iii) (3) and (4) don't have the same truth value
- iv) Therefore, The Naïve Theory is not true

An assumption about belief-report sentences A sentence of the form "S believes that ϕ " is true if and only if the referent of S believes the proposition expressed by ϕ