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In Gottlob Frege's 1892 paper, *On Sense and Reference*, the central topic is the nature of identity. Frege asks, "Is it (identity) a relation? A relation between objects, or between names or signs of objects?" (Frege, p. 23) He builds upon this by presenting a linguistic quandary for identity. Proceeding from this, he offers what are considered to be possible solutions to the identity puzzle. Consequently, he rejects former assumptions he held and offers a new answer using the concepts of *sense* and *reference*. In this paper, I enter into detail over what, exactly, is the identity puzzle that Frege presents. Secondly, I summarize why Frege doesn't think identity is a relation between objects or names. And lastly, I outline the distinctions he makes between sense and reference, and how this leads to a new answer to the identity puzzle. Be more specific

Frege begins his paper by exhibiting to the reader that there is a difference in cognitive value between the statements $a = a$ and $a = b$, assuming that both are true. To put this in other words, the statements "W.C. Fields is the same as W.C. Fields" is not identical to "W.C. Fields is the same as Otis Criblecoblis", even though they both pertain to the same identical entity: the famous comedian, juggler, and actor from the early to mid-1900s. This is the beginning of the puzzle that Frege develops. Now, while it seems intuitively true that "W.C. Fields = W.C. Fields", it is not the case with the statement "W.C. Fields = Otis Criblecoblis". Frege states, regarding the former type, " $a = a$ holds *a priori* and...is to be labeled analytic." (p. 23) It appears that one does not receive or gain (much) new knowledge from this form. On the other hand, the $a = b$ form, is established as *a posteriori*, and one can gain a relevant amount of new knowledge from it. To expound, one may know of the actor, W.C. Fields, and who he was, but they may not know that one of his common alter-aliases was Otis Criblecoblis, and when the individual is presented with this fact (the truth of $a = b$), they gain this knowledge. As a result of these differences, the central question that arises

from Frege is: if $a = b$ is true, how is it that the two statements have a difference in cognitive meaning?

Before answering this question regarding identity, Frege gives two options: identity as either a relation between objects, or between signs. He assumed the latter originally, primarily because the former implies that if $a = a$ and $a = b$ both refer to the same object or entity, there would be no significant difference in cognitive meaning. Therefore, he settled on identity as a relation between signs or names, originally. However, Frege re-examines this presupposition and rejects it on the basis that, if it were true, "nobody can be forbidden to use any arbitrarily producible event or object as a sign for something." (p. 23) This would mean that anybody has free reign to choose any name or sign for any distinct entity or object. To Frege, this presents a problem, in that arbitrary signification does not necessarily demonstrate accurate knowledge of the thing signified.

This is what Frege meant when he tells us that " $a = b$ no longer reflects the subject matter, but only it's mode of designation," *this is self-identity* we would express no proper knowledge by its means". (p. 23) Thus, if I

Good / am to revert back to my W.C. Fields example, the phrase "W.C. Fields = Otis Criblecoblis", if assumed to be only a relation between names referring to the same entity, is an inconsequential statement. This assumption does not give us any proper knowledge regarding the comedian/actor/juggler. As a result, Frege rejects this assumption and opts for a new one.

Frege presents a new solution to his conundrum by beginning with two aspects of meaning: sense and reference. Frege states:

It is natural now to think of there being connected with a sign (name, combination of words, letter), besides that to which the sign refers, which may be called the reference of the sign, also what I should like to call the *sense* of the sign, wherein the mode of presentation is contained. (p. 24)

So it appears that, according to Frege, the *reference* can be defined as that which an expression refers to. For this reason, if one considers the expression, “W.C. Fields”, as a reference, it is referring to the actor and comedian, W.C. Fields. *Sense*, on the other hand, Frege specifies as the *mode of presentation*. What this seems to mean is that the sense of an expression is given by a specific descriptive phrase. Some considerations of senses for the man W.C. Fields might be “the famous alcoholic juggler who hated children” or “the man who starred in *It’s a Gift*”. So if I were to use both of these senses giving a new identity statement example (the famous alcoholic juggler who hated children = the man who starred in *It’s a Gift*), it displays the same referent (the man W.C. Fields). However, it is obvious that the senses are different. While one sense appeals to him by means of personality and talent, the other does so through a film, in which he is the male lead.

It is also worth noting that Frege also believes that the sense/reference distinction is not only pertinent to distinct single entities, but to whole declarative sentences as well. To Frege, a declarative sentence contains a “thought”. He sheds some light on what he means by this by stating, “By a thought I understand not the subjective performance of thinking but its objective content, which is capable of being the common property of several thinkers”. (p. 28, n. 7) So it seems that this implies that what Frege has in mind for “thoughts” is equivalent to propositions. Resulting from this, Frege equates thoughts with senses. And as for the reference of a declaration, he has this to say:

We are therefore driven into accepting the *truth value* of a sentence as constituting its reference. By the truth value of a sentence I understand the circumstance that it is true or false. There are no further truth values. For brevity I call the one the True, and the other the False. Every declarative sentence concerned with the reference of its words is therefore to be regarded as a proper name, and its reference, if it has one, is either the True or the False. (p. 29)

In developing these concepts of sense and reference, both to distinct entities and declarative sentences, Frege displays his solution to the puzzle. To reiterate, the *a posteriori* statement, $a = b$, demonstrates to us new proper knowledge in a way that the *a priori* statement, $a = a$, cannot. Just as well, the concepts apply to entire declarative sentences as well, in that the sense is the thought and the truth value is the reference. Therefore, the distinction between sense and reference, in regards to identity, is the solution that Frege offers to the puzzle of identity.

Here, I have examined the identity puzzle that Gottlob Frege presents in his paper, *On Sense and Reference*. Not only this, but also a summarization of the potential and rejected assumptions of identity being either a relation between objects, or otherwise a relation between signs. Furthermore, an examination into the concepts of sense and reference establishes Frege's new solution to the identity puzzle, not only for single distinct entities but to declarative sentences as well.

A thorough survey of the basic issues.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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