

A FORMAL METASYSTEM FOR FREGE'S SEMANTICS

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1 *Aims* This paper* uses a formal metasystem to clarify Frege's semantics, and it aims at both exegesis and proposed revisions. The point is to preserve Frege's basic insights while shedding some undesirable features related to these three problems:

- (1) The diagonal paradoxes to which his theory is subject.
- (2) The inability of a proper name or definite description to refer to a concept (*begriff*) in Frege's precise technical sense. This is the well-known paradox that for Frege "The concept *horse* is not a concept."
- (3) The role of the notion of sense.

I must argue in appropriate places that my use of a formal metasystem will beg no important questions, but I should first say what I take Frege's basic insights to be. (For simplicity's sake I limit the discussion to objects and *one-place, first-level* functions; but functions of higher degree and/or level could be added by a straightforward extension.)

2 *Outline of Frege's Semantics* Frege opposed psychologism. For him the meaning of language was a matter of how it related to the world in a way not in its essence "routed through a mind". Now a paradigm for this is the relation of *naming* holding between a word and some one particular thing. This motivates the central role of *denotation* in Frege's theory, for that notion is just a generalization of this name relationship. Thus, Frege's first basic insight is that meaning arises from the relation between words and objective, nonpsychological things.

His second insight is a kind of corollary to the first. It is that language must somehow share the structure of the reality it describes. This leads him to posit a basic metaphysical type of *thing* for each basic type of linguistic *expression*. For example, by an *object* Frege means whatever can be named by a proper name. (Here I follow his use of 'proper name' (*Eigenname*)¹ to mean either a proper name in the usual sense or a definite description.)

*A shorter version of this paper was read at the 1971 meeting of the American Philosophical Association, Western Division.

1. I shall use single quotation marks to form metalinguistic names ('example') and double ones for all other purposes, including the "apologetic" one ("example").