

# Guide to Chapter One of Gareth Evans' *The Varieties of Reference*

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## 1.0 What Happens in Chapter One

In this chapter Evans does several things. First, he introduces Frege's semantic theory, according to which the meaningfulness of **expressions** in language is explained by assigning to these expressions two kinds of entities. (For now, I will use "expressions" and "terms" as blanket words for chunks of language: nouns, noun phrases, predicates, names, even full sentences.) The first, a **referent**, is the entity that the expression refers to. This is very intuitive, but it quickly runs up against a challenge, which is that if the meaning of a **name** (or other expression) is the referent, then it follows that any two names with the same referent will have the same meaning. But this seems wrong. If Betty's mother is in fact the New York Times' movie critic, then the

expressions “Betty’s mother” and “the New York Times movie critic” will have the same referent, and so on this theory will have the same meaning. But intuitively they don’t mean the same thing, despite co-referring (two expressions *co-refer* if they both refer to the same object).

To handle this, Frege added a second layer to his semantic theory. In addition to a referent, every expression has a **Sense**, which Frege glossed as a special proprietary way the word “presents” the referent. So for example, even though “Betty’s mother” and “The New York Times movie critic” might have the same referent (if Betty’s mother is in fact the New York Times movie critic), the two expressions would have different *Senses*. Trying to get clear on what a Sense is is a major task of this book.

A second problem for Frege’s theory is that it can work only for expressions that have a referent. If the meaning of an expression is the referent, and if a Sense is a way of “presenting” the referent, then if an expression has no referent (that is, if it is *empty*), then there is neither meaning nor Sense. But there are many cases where such ‘empty’ expressions seem meaningful, including names like ‘Santa Claus’, or cases where one uses a demonstrative like “that pond” when seeing a mirage.

Evans points out that Frege (with hedges and disclaimers) tried to solve the problem of empty singular terms by saying that they could have a Sense even if they lacked a referent. Evans argues that this won’t work.

So that is the basic structure of Frege’s theory, and how it handles two challenges: the non-synonymy of co-referring expressions, and the apparent meaningfulness of empty names. As will emerge as the discussion moves forward in subsequent chapters, one source of difficulty for Frege, according to Evans, is that his semantic theory was monolithic in that he didn’t

distinguish different kinds of singular terms. *Proper names, demonstratives, indexicals*, what we would now call *definite descriptions*, were all assimilated under the generic *name*. Evans points out that in fact the 'intuitive' category of name has a number of subtypes that require different semantic analyses (a program that started with Russell). A second issue (broached in Chapter 1, but not given sustained treatment until Chapter 10) concerns fiction vs. non-fiction. Evans will argue that uses of a singular term when interlocutors are assuming it refers can't always be given the same treatment as cases where they assume it does not (e.g. discussing characters in fiction.) In particular, although Frege did seem to draw a distinction between i) normal discourse about objects assumed to exist, and ii) discourse (knowingly) about fictional entities, he tried to assimilate non-fictional discourse about entities assumed to exist (but which do not) to discourse knowingly about fictional entities. Evans will argue that this isn't right, that different analyses are required for non-fictional discourse about things that are assumed to exist but don't, and fictional discourse about things that are known to not exist. (This discussion doesn't happen until Chapter 10, but it is the explanation for why Evans, in Chapter 1, makes such sustained reference to Frege's discussion of fiction and 'mock thoughts'.)

Note that Evans uses a good deal of technical vocabulary without explaining it much. There is a glossary to this guide where I try to give quick summaries of key terms. Many of these (atomic sentence, singular term, name, Sense, reference, etc.) appear in Chapter 1. I will underline expressions that have glossary entries the first time they are used in the guide.

## 1.1 Introductory

**Overview:** *This section is straight-forward. Evans rehearses certain basic features of Frege's semantic theory, features which will be examined in greater detail in the remainder of the chapter. First, Frege's theory was officially limited to restricted domains of language — regions that, like the artificial languages of computer science or math, lack certain kinds of trickier expressions (such as demonstratives). Second, it was **systematic**, meaning that it accounted for the meaning of a complex expression (e.g. a sentence) as a function of the meaning of its parts (e.g. names and predicates). And third, ~~that~~ it underwent two phases: an earlier phase that relied exclusively on expressions' **reference** (the things referred to); and a later phase that recognized the necessity of **Senses**.*

Evans draws attention to three aspects of Frege's semantic project. (Note that for now we are using the expressions “meaning” and “significance” and “semantic value” and others in a sort of loose way. We will get more regimented as the chapter proceeds.)

**First**, the theory is constructed against the background of some relatively simple regions of language — regions devoid of complications like indexicals and demonstratives (although Frege did feel that the theory could be extended, at least to some extent, to these cases as well). One reason for this was that these antiseptic regions are more well-behaved and hence more amenable to treatment. Another reason was that Frege's primary target — the artificial languages of mathematics — are similarly antiseptic. Though mathematics was

Frege's main target, he intended his theory to have wider application, including to natural language.

**Second**, the theory was *systematic*, in that it analyzed the significance of complex expressions, including atomic sentences, as dependent upon, or as a function of, the significance of its constituents — a process which bottoms out at lexical items such as words and morphemes. How this works will be explored in Section 1.2.

**Third**, Evans claims that Frege's semantic theorizing underwent two phases. The first phase was what will be called a theory of *meaning*. This theory assigned to each significant linguistic expression of a given grammatical category (some categories are: atomic sentences, singular terms, predicates) a semantic value of a type appropriate to that category — the expression's 'meaning'. This is discussed more in Sections 1.2 and 1.3. In the second phase, Frege recognized that this approach had important limitations, and this led him to supplement it with a theory of *Sense*, according to which all meaningful expressions would be assigned, in addition to a meaning (= referent), a Sense (what a Sense is is the topic of much of the book, and the discussion starts in Section 1.4). This second phase maintained the same theory of meaning as the first phase, but now had another layer added to it, so to speak. Each meaningful expression was now recognized to have not only a meaning (= referent), but a Sense.

## 1.2 Meaning (*Bedeutung*)

**Overview:** *Evans in this section gives a brief introduction to relevant aspects of Frege's theory of Meaning. The central pivots of this theory are the assignation of a **Truth Value** to an atomic sentence as its semantic value, and the assignation of a singular term's referent to the singular term as its semantic value. Two challenges with this theory are discussed. First, on this account any singular term that doesn't have a referent would have no meaning, but in fact such "empty" singular terms often seem perfectly significant (e.g. "Santa Claus"). Second, on this account any two singular terms with the same referent would have the same meaning, but in many cases it seems natural to say that such "co-referring" singular terms mean different things (e.g. "George Orwell" and "Eric Blair").*

This section has four parts, roughly corresponding to the four paragraphs.

**First**, Evans discerns three general features of Frege's theory. These are: i) The conviction that the significance of *sentences* consists in their being true or false; ii) The conviction that for any significant expression (sentence, name, predicate, whatever), its significance, or **semantic power**, just is its ability to affect the truth value of the sentence in which it is embedded; and iii) this *semantic power* is explained by the expression's being assigned an extra-linguistic (not part of language) entity. What this means and how it occurs is the subject of much of what follows.

The **second** part consists of the application of these basics to the semantic power of singular terms — a category that includes proper names as the prototype. Since, according to Frege, expressions have their semantic power in virtue of being associated with some extra-linguistic entity, and since singular terms *typically* have *referents* (e.g. the name 'Patrick Stewart' has, as its

referent, a certain actor most famous for his portrayal of Captain Jean-Luc Picard on a popular television series), the identification of their *referent* as the extra-linguistic entity that imbues singular terms with their semantic power is natural.

Evans hints at two problems with this view. Though Evans here only gives hints, it might be worth saying a bit more about these two problems now. The first is that it seems that so-called *empty* singular terms (singular terms that have no referent) can still be meaningful. Examples include 'Santa Claus' or 'the least rapidly converging series'. In both cases there is no object that is the referent of the expression, yet they still seem to be significant. This is a problem for any theory that claims that an expression's meaning is its referent.

The second is the potential non-synonymy of co-referring expressions. According to the theory as stated, since an expression's significance just is its referent, any two expressions with the same referent should have the same significance. But intuitively they often differ in a way that it can seem natural to describe by saying that the two terms, though co-referential, *mean different things*.

This intuition can be underscored by placing coreferential names in modal or intentional sentences. Consider these two sentences:

- (1) Melanie believes that her mother is an excellent writer.
- (2) Melanie believes that the *New York Times* movie critic is an excellent writer.

It is entirely possible that (1) is true while (2) is false, even though, unbeknownst to Melanie, her mother is the *New York Times* movie critic. On the face of it, this places a good deal of pressure on the idea that the following are all true:

- A. The semantic value of a sentence is its truth value.
- B. The semantic value of a complex expression is a function of the semantic value of its components.
- C. The semantic value of a singular expression is its referent.

Sentences (1) and (2) should have the same semantic value. The only difference between them is that where (1) has the singular term 'her mother', (2) has the singular term 'the *New York Times* movie critic'. But these two singular terms have the same referent, so they should have the same semantic value, as per C.

So the components of (1) all have the same semantic value as the corresponding components of (2). And so, according to B, both sentences should themselves have the same semantic value. According to A, the semantic value of a sentence is its truth value, and so since the semantic value of the sentences should be the same, they should either both be true, or both be false. But *in fact* (1) is true, while (2) is false. So A-C, together with the facts that i) (1) and (2) have different truth values while ii) their component singular terms have the same referent, generates a contradiction.

Some more terminology. Sentences that deal with modality (e.g. *it is possible that P*, *it is necessary that P*), or that ascribe intentional states (*S believes*

that *P*, *S* desires that *Q*) are sometimes called *intensional*. The contrast is with *extensional* sentences, a prototype of which would just be an atomic sentence where a singular term (the cat) is combined with a predicate (... is on the mat). In extensional sentences, a substitution of a singular term with any co-referring singular terms won't change the truth value of the sentence (the Latin expression 'salva veritate' means *preserving truth*). But in intensional sentences, such substitutions often change the truth value of the sentence.

Evans remarks that Frege "Originally concentrat[ed] on **extensional** fragments of language...". The reason is that co-referring singular terms don't generate a problem for A-C in extensional sentences. So by focusing on extensional sentences, Frege was excluding cases that generated problems for his theory.

I characterized this second problem as the problem of "potential non-synonymy of co-referring expressions." But this problem can also be framed as the problem of the informativeness of identity statements. Consider:

(3) Melanie's mother is Melanie's mother

(4) Melanie's mother is the New York Times movie critic

Obviously (3) is not informative, whereas (4) might very well be informative. But if the two singular terms (*Melanie's mother* and *the New York Times movie critic*) have the same referent, then they mean the same thing. And if they mean the same thing, then it's not easy to see why (4) can be

informative. As far as the referents of the singular terms go, (4) is just another way of saying (3), and so shouldn't be any more informative than (3).

These two problems — the problem of the meaningfulness of empty singular terms, and the problem of the informativeness of identity statements — will figure prominently in much of the rest of the book.

The third part of this section consists in the application of the theory to the semantic value of *sentences*. If every meaningful thing is meaningful because of its referent, and if sentences are meaningful, then sentences must have a referent. The claim that the significance of a sentence consists in its being either true or false, together with the claim that an expression's semantic power is found in its association with an extra-linguistic entity, means that the sentence's *truth value* (either The True or The False, conceived as Platonic objects of some sort), was a natural suggestion for the 'meaning' of sentences.

The **fourth** and final part of this section concerns the kind of semantic power of — i.e. extra-linguistic entities assigned to — expressions of types other than singular terms and sentences. With the kind of referents of expressions of the grammatical categories SENTENCE (*S*) and SINGULAR TERM (*N*) fixed, the semantic power (referents) of all other categories of meaningful expressions can be derived. [Note that the material here on categorial grammar won't play much of a role in the rest of the book.] Grammatical categories can be expressed in the following notation. The basic (underived) grammatical categories of SENTENCE and SINGULAR TERM are designated *S* and *N* respectively; other grammatical categories are derived from these two: a one-place predicate, designated *S/N*, is something that yields an *S* when combined with an *N*; a two-place predicate, designated *S/N,N* yields an *S* when combined with two *N* s. In general, a derived grammatical category

is one that yields a grammatical category of type  $\alpha$  (indicated on the left side of the slash) when combined with some specific number of instances of type  $\beta$  (indicated on the right side of the slash). An  $S/S,S$  would be an expression which yields a sentence when combined with two sentences. This would be a binary sentential connective, such as 'and' or 'or': *The cat is on the mat and Patrick Stewart is bald.*

This is a taxonomy of grammatical categories which takes the categories SENTENCE and SINGULAR TERM as basic and derives others from them. The kind of extra-linguistic entity assigned to expressions of the derived categories as their semantic value is a reflection of their grammatical role. Parallel to how the *grammatical role* of a one-place predicate ( $S/N$ ) is to form a sentence ( $S$ ) when combined with a singular term ( $N$ ), the extra-linguistic entity assigned to one-place predicates are *functions* that map objects (the referents of singular terms) to Truth values (the referents of sentences). More generally and perspicuously, the *semantic value* assigned to a grammatical category  $\alpha/\beta$  will be a *function* that yields semantic values appropriate to  $\alpha$ s upon 'input' of a semantic value appropriate to  $\beta$ s. (This obviously generalizes to cases where the category calls for more than one instance of the type  $\beta$ .) Where  $\alpha$  is  $S$  (to which are assigned Truth Values) and  $\beta$  is  $N$  (to which are assigned objects) — an  $S/N$  — the assigned extra-linguistic entity is a function from objects to truth values. The nuts and bolts of categorial grammars will not play any prominent role in the remainder of the book.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It should be apparent that the categorial descriptions  $N$  (singular terms) and  $S/(S/N)$  (quantifier expressions) are similar, in that both are grammatical categories whose semantic value is something that, in combination with an  $S/N$  (a predicate), provides a Truth Value. For instance, '*Patrick Stewart is bald*' and '*Some actor is bald*'. The difference is how they arrive at this semantic value. In the first case, at the grammatical level we combine an  $N$  and an  $S/N$ . At the semantic level we are combining an *object* with a *function from objects to truth values*. This function produces a truth value — an extra-linguistic entity appropriate to  $S$ s. In the second case at the

### 1.3 Empty singular terms: preliminary remarks

**Overview:** *This section is relatively straight-forward. First, Evans walks through an example demonstrating how, on Frege's account, the meaning of an atomic sentence is determined. With this example in hand, he underscores the problem that is created when components fail to have a referent — the problem discussed in the previous section under the heading of 'empty singular terms'. Next, Evans remarks that although Frege recognized this issue, this was not what prompted him to develop his theory of Sense. Rather, it was the second problem (the informativeness of identity statements) that prompted the theory of Sense. Evans then remarks that although it was the second problem that prompted the theory of Sense, with a notion of Sense in hand, Frege tried to use it to address the first problem, that of empty singular terms.*

Evans begins by recounting how the sort of semantic theory outlined in the previous section is supposed to work for an atomic sentence by walking through an example. Consider the sentence 'John is wise.' First, the singular term 'John' has as its semantic value an object: its referent, *John*. The predicate '... is wise' has, as its Meaning, a *function* from objects to truth-values — in this case a function that maps all and only wise objects on to the truth value True, and maps all other objects to False. Because John is one of the wise things, this

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grammatical level we are combining an  $S/(S/N)$  — a quantifier — and an  $S/N$  — a predicate. At the semantic level, we are combining (i) a *function from objects to truth values* (the semantic value of a predicate), with (ii) a *function from functions from objects to truth values to Truth values* — that is, a higher level function that takes as input a lower-level function and produces as output a Truth value.

function yields the truth-value True, and this (*True*) is then the meaning of the sentence as a whole. Note in particular that it is not just that the output of the function specifies that the *sentence is true*, as one might say. Rather (or in addition), it determines that the truth-value True (or for some sentences False), conceived as a sort of platonic object, is assigned to that sentence as its referent. (This is just a remark about Frege's official view, it won't play a significant role in Evans' own account.)

Language	"John"	concatenated with	"... is wise"	forms ->	"John is Wise"
Meaning		inputs to ->	f( ... )	outputs ->	T/F

There are two wrenches which might cause this semantic engine to seize: first, the singular term may fail to be assigned an object (an empty singular term); and second, the function that is the semantic value of the predicate may not be defined over all objects (specifically, it might not be defined over the object assigned to the singular term). In either case, function will not yield an output, and the process will fail to secure a Meaning for the sentence.

Evans says that before Frege developed his theory of Sense, he accepted these consequences. Thus Frege accepted that atomic sentences such as 'That table in the living room belongs to my grandmother' are strictly *meaningless* if there is nothing answering to the expression *that table in the living room*. This view of matters is today more commonly associated with Russell, and Evans will discuss this more in the next section. For now, note the terminological point that Evans will use the expression **Russellian Singular Term** to mean a

singular term whose significance depends on its having a referent — a term such that, if empty, any extensional sentence using it as the grammatical subject will not have a Meaning, that is, will be *meaningless* (or: will be unfit for the expression of a thought). This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.

Evans then briefly discusses Frege's theory of Sense. While the theory of Meaning was concerned with the *Meaning* of linguistic expressions, the theory of *Sense* was developed to account for features of language users' *understanding* of expressions of their language. Of particular interest was the potential *informativeness of identity statements*. According to the theory of Meaning outlined in the previous section, there is no difference *of Meaning* between the following two statements (note that 'Cicero' and 'Tully' were names for the same person):

1. Cicero is Cicero.
2. Cicero is Tully.

Each sentence, according to the theory of Meaning, invokes the same object twice, and presents them as inputs to the identity function. And the identity function returns the value True if the same object is presented to it by both singular terms, and returns False if different objects are presented to it. Thus at the level of Meaning (1) and (2) are identical. But clearly (2) can be informative, though (1) cannot be. Because the theory of Meaning fails to discern any difference between (1) and (2), Frege felt it necessary to supplement the theory of Meaning with a theory of *Sense*. The core idea is that

singular terms (and other grammatical categories) would be assigned not only a Meaning, but also a Sense. And while two co-referring expressions will, by definition, have the same Meaning (=referent), they might nevertheless have different Senses.

Note that aside from saying that Senses are distinct from referents, and that co-referring expressions might nevertheless have different Senses in such a way as to presumably address the problem of the informativeness of identity statements, nothing so far has been said about what, exactly, Senses *are*. This question will figure prominently in the rest of the book.

What about the Senses of grammatical categories other than singular terms? First, Frege stipulates that while the meaning/referent of a sentence is its truth value, the Sense of a sentence is a *thought*. And so while (1) and (2) both *mean* the same thing — they both have the truth-value True as their Meaning — they nevertheless express different *thoughts*. This then is the solution to the problem of the informativeness of identity statements. Such statements, if true, will have the same Meaning, but may nevertheless express different thoughts, one banal and uninformative, the other potentially very informative.

Since every meaningful expression is to be assigned not only a meaning/referent but also a Sense, Evans points out that Frege felt able to address the problem of empty singular terms by claiming that such singular terms, while lacking a referent, nevertheless might have a Sense. And that an atomic sentence employing an empty singular term could have a Sense (express a *thought*) even though it lacked a referent (was neither True nor False). And this explains the (seeming?) significance of such sentences. Evans closes this section by foreshadowing the topic of Section 1.5, which is an

investigation into whether or not Frege's account really can allow for expressions without a Meaning to have a Sense.

## 1.4 Sense: preliminary remarks

**Overview:** *This section is a brief introduction to what Fregean Senses are. Frege used various metaphors, such as that they 'illuminate the referent from a particular angle' or are a 'mode of presentation of the referent', and others. Evans makes an initial stab at a less metaphorical proposal: Senses correspond to ways of thinking of the referent. Or more accurately, ways of thinking of the referent that are conventionally associated with the expression, and are such that in order to properly understand the expression the language user must not only think of the referent, but think of it in the specified way.*

Evans opens with a long quote from Frege. In it Frege does four things. **First**, Frege uses the informativeness of identity statements to motivate the idea that in addition to a referent, singular terms must have something like a *Sense*. **Second**, he gives a quick metaphorical gloss on the idea of what these Senses are, namely, as a way of "determining an object":

An object can be determined in different ways, and every one of these ways of determining it can give rise to a special name, and these different names then will have different senses... (VR, p. 15, quoted from Frege, *Philosophical and Mathematical Correspondence* , p. 80)

**Third**, Frege roughly formulates a criterion for individuating Senses:

... the sense of the proposition 'Ateb is at least 5000 metres high' is also different from the sense of the proposition 'Aphla is at least 5000 metres high'. Someone who takes the latter to be true need not therefore take the former to be true. (*VR*, p. 15, quoted from Frege, *Philosophical and Mathematical Correspondence*, p. 80)

The suggestion is that we know that the singular terms 'Ateb' and 'Aphla' have different senses because it is possible for one to rationally take 'Ateb is at least 5000 meters high' and 'Aphla is at least 5000 meters high' to have different truth values. Evans will return to this shortly.

**Fourth**, Frege provides an argument that these senses should not be understood as mental or subjective items, but as objective features of the expressions used.

Evans picks up on the topic of how Frege characterized Sense, pointing out that in other places, he talked of Senses as a sort of particular *viewpoint* on the Meaning (=referent). He also talked about a sense as a *way of presenting* the referent, or as *illuminating* different aspects of the referent. These 'ways of presenting' the Meaning would be objective, in that anyone who was sufficiently familiar with the language would not only know the Meaning of the expression, but would know the particular way in which a given expression 'presented' that Meaning.

Evans suggests his own gloss on what a Sense is, namely, a *way of thinking of the referent*. That is, given that when one thinks of something, one will be thinking of it in a particular way, these 'ways of thinking' of referents can be equated with Senses — provided, of course, that these ways of thinking are

conventionally associated with expressions in the language. So someone who thinks of the planet Venus as *the object which shines most brightly in the morning sky*, will be thinking of the same object, but in a different way, when thinking of it as *the object which shines most brightly in the evening sky*. The first way of thinking might be conventionally associated with expressions such as 'The Morning Star' or 'Phosphorus', while the second way of thinking of Venus might be conventionally associated with 'The Evening Star' or 'Hesperus'.<sup>2</sup>

Evans then briefly explains that similar considerations apply not only to singular terms, but to any expression assigned a Meaning by the semantic theory. Consider predicates, which for Frege have as their referent a function that takes as input objects and produces as output Truth values. For example, consider the predicate "... is a creature with a heart". The meaning is a function that takes as input an object, and outputs a Truth Value. If you input the object Alice, or Fluffy (the cat), it outputs True. But if you input Slimy (a jellyfish) it outputs False. Notice though that one gives a full specification of a function when one states for which objects it outputs True, and which it outputs False. Note also that the function associated with the predicate "... is a creature with kidneys" will output True for the same objects as the function "... is a creature with kidneys" ~~and also output False for the same objects~~, and also output False for the same objects. This means that they are *the same function*. Consequently the predicates '... is a creature with a heart' and '... is a creature with kidneys' would have the same Meaning (the same function). In understanding either expression, one would be thinking of *this* function. Even so, one would be thinking of this function in different ways

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<sup>2</sup> Notice that I just cashed out senses as sorts of descriptions, such as *the object which shines most brightly in the morning sky*. This is one way to understand a sense on Evans' view — thinking of an object as the object which uniquely satisfies a description is *a* way of thinking of that object (see *VR* p. 18). But Evans will explore other ways of thinking of objects.

in the two cases. These would correspond to the different Senses of the two predicates.

One important clarificatory remark. A *way of thinking* of an object is a feature of, so to speak, psychology. Senses are features of linguistic expressions. The connection between them is that some ways of thinking of an object can get conventionally associated with an expression in such a way that in order to understand that expression, one needs to not only think of the object, but think of it *in that particular way*. Not every way of thinking of an object will be conventionally associated with a linguistic expression in this way, though. Which means that not every way of thinking of an object will correspond to a Sense. (This is one of the issues touched on in footnote 14 on p. 16.)

Evans closes with the following passage:

To summarize, then, I suggest we take Frege's ascription of a sense to a Proper Name to mean that not only must one think of an object — the referent of the term — in order to understand a sentence containing it, but also anyone who is to understand the sentence must think of the referent in the same particular way. It is therefore, for Frege, as much a public and objective property of a term that it imposes this requirement, as that it has such and such an object as its referent. (*VR* p. 17)

## 1.5 Sense and thought

**Overview:** *This section consists of four parts. The first introduces Frege's **Intuitive Criterion of Difference**, which is a constraint on the individuation of Senses.*

*The basic idea is that two sentences differ in Sense if it is possible for a rational subject to take different attitudes to them: for example, taking one to be true and the other false; or being agnostic about one but taking the other to be true. The second part continues the discussion of Evans' own proposal for unpacking the notion of Sense as **a way of thinking of the referent**. The third part consists of Evans countering an objection to his proposal to the effect that it entails that Sense does not determine referent. I can think of a location as 'here', and someone else can think of their location as 'here', and both be thinking, in the same way, of different objects. Evans' reply is that this objection misunderstands his proposal, which is that a sense is a way of thinking of a particular object. The two people in the purported counter-example are thinking of different objects. The fourth and final part is a reconstruction of the Fregean model of the communication of thoughts via language that illustrates the role that senses, as Evans describes them, play. In short, I want to communicate a thought to you, so I select expressions that I know will be conventionally associated with the specific Senses. You understand these expressions, and hence not only think of the right objects, but think of them in the right way. And the result is that I have communicated the desired thought.*

The first part of this section, running from the beginning of the section p. 18 to the bottom of p. 20, Evans points out that Frege doesn't give us a lot to go on concerning what exactly a *sense* is supposed to be. But he does point out that there is one non-metaphorical constraint that is capable of shedding at least some light on the matter. Since Frege's purpose for the introduction of the notion of sense was to account for a *cognitive* phenomenon (the *informativeness* of identity statements), it is incumbent upon Frege to somehow link senses to what Evans calls propositional attitude psychology — that is, he must link Senses to language users' **users'** beliefs and rationality. Frege does this by making a cognitive/psychological test a criterion for the individuation of

senses. Evans calls this test the *Intuitive Criterion of Difference*. Evans states this criterion in the following way, which restricts its immediate application to one particular type of Sense — *thoughts* (recall that *thoughts* are the senses of *sentences*):

The thought associated with one sentence  $S$  as its sense must be different from the thought associated with another sentence  $S'$  as its sense, if it is possible for someone to understand both sentences at a given time while coherently taking different attitudes towards them, i.e. accepting (rejecting) one while rejecting (accepting), or being agnostic about, the other. (*VR* p. 19)

It is possible, though Evans does not do this here, to generalize this criterion to expressions of any grammatical category by exploiting the fact that the Sense of a sentence is a function of the Senses of the constituents, in a way exactly analogous to the way in which the Meaning of a sentence is a function of the Meaning of its constituents. The generalized version would be:

For any two extensional sentences  $S_1$  and  $S_2$  which are identical except for the fact that  $S_1$  employs the grammatical component ' $\alpha$ ' where  $S_2$  employs the grammatical component ' $\beta$ ', ' $\alpha$ ' and ' $\beta$ ' have distinct senses iff: it is possible for a rational and fluent speaker of the language in which  $S_1$  and  $S_2$  are expressed to judge one to be true, while at the same time judging the other to be false or to be uncertain of the truth of the other.

So for example, the two sentences "Obama was born in Hawaii" and "The 44th President of the United States was born in Hawaii". They are exactly the same except that where the first has the singular term 'Obama', the second has

the singular term "The 44th President of the United States". Also, it would be entirely possible for someone to judge the first to be true, but be agnostic about the second (anyone who doesn't know that Obama was the 44th President, for instance). Therefore, those two singular terms differ in Fregean Sense.

The criterion Evans explicitly discusses is obviously a special case of the second, where 'α' is the entire sentence  $S_1$  and 'β' is the entire sentence  $S_2$ .

In the **second** part of this section, from the bottom half of p. 20 to the bottom of p. 21, Evans then turns to his own formulation of Sense as *a way of thinking of the referent*. It's all well and good for Evans to clarify Frege's metaphors about 'presenting' the referent, or 'illuminating it from different angles' in terms of its being *a way of thinking of the referent*, but this will not be useful unless we can say something about what 'a way of thinking of something' means – and it could mean many different things. Evans' proposal is that a 'way of thinking of  $a$ ' can be given by an account of what makes it the case that a subject  $S$  is thinking about the object  $a$ . This account will take a form such as

$S$  is thinking about  $a$  in virtue of the fact that ...  $S$  ...

What follows the 'that' in this formulation will be some account which makes reference to *both* the subject  $S$  and the object  $a$ . It is understood that the account is one that explains why  $S$  is thinking of  $a$  specifically, as opposed to any other object. So for example, you couldn't fill it out by saying that ' $S$  is thinking of Frege in virtue of the fact that  $S$  is thinking of an object that fits the

description 'was a great philosopher' since this would not explain why it is Frege as opposed to Kant that is the object of S's thought. Rather, if *S* is thinking of *a* by description, then the account might be:

*S* is thinking about *a* in virtue of the fact that *S* is entertaining the thought that the object that is uniquely *F* is also *G*, and *a* is the object that is uniquely *F*.

The account is not limited to cases where the subject is thinking of objects by description, but it can accommodate such cases. Much of what Evans has to say about demonstratives and indexicals will concern non-descriptive ways of thinking about things.

Evans then says that another subject *S'* will be thinking of *a* in the same way as *S* if we get a correct account of why *S'* is thinking of *a* by simply replacing *S* with *S'* in the original formulation: i.e.

*S'* is thinking about *a* in virtue of the fact that ... *S'* ...

Notice that on this proposal, a way of thinking of an object is a way that is not tied to any particular thinker. Any subject could be the *S'* substituted into the formula above. This allows that some of these ways of thinking could become conventionally associated with a linguistic expression and hence be their Senses.

**Third**, Evans counters an objection to this proposal. The objection is:

1. Sense determines referent. (This hasn't come up yet in this book, but it is agreed on all sides.)
2. On your (Evans') account, 2 people at different locations thinking of their surroundings in the same way (as 'here') would be employing or grasping the same Sense.
3. But then their Senses would not determine a referent, because the same Sense would lead to, so to speak, two different referents.
4. Therefore, your account cannot be correct.

Evans' answer is to deny (2), because on his proposal, one determines whether  $S$  and  $S'$  are thinking of  $a$  in the same way by substituting *only* occurrences of  $S$  with  $S'$  in the ' $S$  is thinking about object  $a$  in virtue of the fact that ...  $S$  ...' specification. One does not, in addition, substitute  $a$  for some corresponding  $a'$ . But the objection above requires that in the specification we replace mention of  $S$  with  $S'$ , and we also replace  $a$  (the location of  $S$ ) with  $a'$  (the location of  $S'$ ).

Note that while the Intuitive Criterion of Difference applies only to Senses entertained by a single subject at a particular time, Evans' criterion for individuating *ways of thinking* can be applied to two different subjects, possibly at different times. It could also be applied when the same subject plays the role of both  $S$  and  $S'$ , at different times.

In the final and **fourth** part, from the bottom of p. 21 to the end of the section, Evans closes with a recap of the Fregean model of communication that is yielded on this understanding of Senses. The section is pretty straight-forward. The thing to note about this model of communication is that in it, Senses play a pivotal role. While Evans isn't explicit about this, throughout the book he will discuss "Fregean" accounts of semantics, and by

and large, he means accounts such that this communicative model applies. And so expression types for which the Fregean communicative model applies will be types whose functioning depends on their possession of a Fregean Sense.

## 1.6 Empty singular terms: sense without Meaning?

*This section does two things. The first is to clarify the nature of the problem posed for Frege by empty singular terms. The problem is that the most natural way of understanding Frege's theory seems to make no room for a notion of Sense for empty singular terms, and hence the apparatus will assign no Sense to extensional sentences employing such terms. That is, such sentences will express no thought. But in some cases these sentences seem apt for expressing thoughts. Evans then discusses how Frege tried to address this problem, by invoking the idea that such uses are essentially fiction, and hence they don't really express thoughts, but it is **as if** they express thoughts.*

In the first part (from the beginning of the section to the bottom of p. 23) Evans gestures at the problem posed by empty singular terms. First, it's not clear that they should have a Sense. On Frege's metaphor-driven explanations of what senses are (ways of presenting the referent, etc.) there seems to be no way to end up with a Sense unless there is a referent. And the same is true on his (Evans') own account of what Senses are (a way of thinking of the referent). On Frege's account of meaning, sentences employing such terms should be

meaningless, that is, express no thought. Nevertheless, it seems that there are cases where sentences employing empty singular terms are perfectly legit.

Second, the starting point of Frege's theory is that "a body of discourse" is meaningful. And he provides a theory whose point is to explain that fact (expressions' meaningfulness is explained in terms of their referents). If it turns out that some of that discourse is meaningful even though the proposed theory cannot apply to it, then that is a problem. It would be disingenuous to provide a semantic theory that is supposed to explain how sentences can be meaningful and express thoughts and be used in communication, and then respond to this problem by just saying "Well, my theory doesn't apply in these cases." (Compare: I construct a theory that claims that the explanation for why birds can fly is that they have feathers. If it is pointed out that there are things that fly despite not having feathers (e.g. bats), then this is a serious problem for my theory. I can't just say: well, my theory doesn't apply to bats, only to birds.)

The second part of the section, from the bottom of p. 22 to the bottom of p. 27, is where Evans goes into detail as to why Frege should recognize the problem. Note that this discussion is interesting but is also somewhat involved and a little technical at spots. It is skippable for most readers, as it is not crucial for understanding Evans' own proposals.

Frege is driven to say that such sentences *express thoughts*, but these thoughts are neither true nor false. On Frege's theory, this is another way of saying that such sentences have a Sense (recall, the Sense of an atomic sentence is a *thought*), but no referent (recall, the referent of an atomic sentence is a *truth value*). Evans puts pressure on this by claiming that it seems difficult to see what it might mean for there to be a definite thought that was neither true nor false. Many readers don't find this convincing, but think of it this way: the

supposed thought in question isn't just one in which the thinker doesn't know whether it is true or false. Rather it really is neither true nor false. Hence it would be something that could not be demonstrated (true things can be demonstrated), could not be refuted (false things can be refuted), could have no reasons adduced in its favor (what else would a reason adduced in favor of a thought be other than a reason adduced in favor of its truth?). It's not clear that this leaves any room for any recognizable sort of meaning.

Evans' discussion of a wide-scope negation operator (the bottom of p. 24 to the top of p. 25) is meant to counter a proposal by a defender of Frege on this point. Suppose Frege says that such an atomic sentence  $Fa$  (employing empty singular term  $a$ ), express a thought, but that it is neither True nor False. Evans replies that on Frege's account, the referent of a compound is a function of the referents of its components (this was the systematicity discussed in Section 1.2). So if a component lacks a referent, then the compound should also lack a referent. But note that nothing prevents an operator  $Neg$  that produces a True sentence ( $Neg-S$ ) just in case the component sentence is not True. In such a case, if  $Fa$  fails to have a truth value, then it is not true, and hence  $Neg-Fa$  would be True. This would be a case where one could express a Truth ( $Neg-Fa$ ) by using an empty singular term ( $a$ ).

Evans points out that one way out of this bind is to go the way Russell did, namely, to deny that such sentences — sentences with an empty 'logically proper name' — express thoughts.

The discussion from the bottom of p. 25 to the top of p. 27 is meant to counter a certain objection that isn't explicitly stated. The objection is this: "Look, Evans, it might not be necessary for Frege that, as far as sentences go, their possession of a Sense (thought) depends on their having a referent (truth

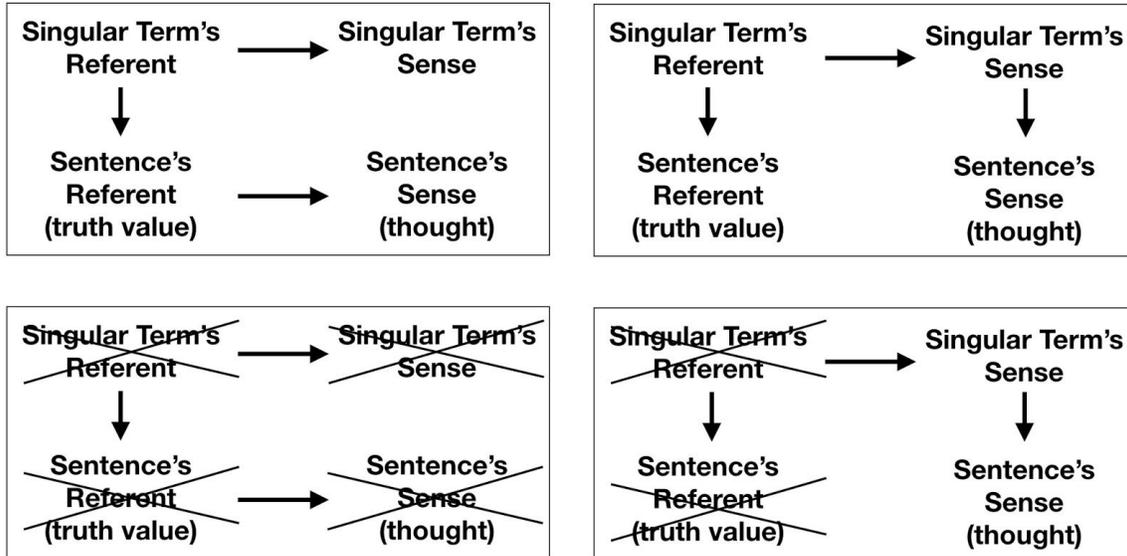
value). Granted, there is a puzzle concerning how *empty singular terms* might have a Sense with no referent, but assuming that can get solved somehow, it might be possible to say that the Sense of a sentence is determined by the Senses of its components, and if this is so, then the sentences that don't have a referent (are neither true nor false) wouldn't present a new problem."

This objection points out that there are two ways to conceive of how the Sense of a sentence (or other derived category) is determined (these are illustrated in the upper left and upper right squares of Figure 2).

Figure 2 (Upper Left): 1. The referent of the singular term plays two roles: a) it determines the singular term's Sense (it is the thing that is being presented in a certain way); and b) it is an input into a function that determines the referent of the sentence (truth value). Once the sentence's referent is determined, the Sense of the sentence (the thought) is determined somehow by that referent — it is a mode of presentation of the referent, or whatever. The chain of explanation for how the sentence gets a Sense goes from singular term's referent to sentence's referent (truth value) to sentence's Sense (thought).

(Upper Right): The referent of a singular term plays the same two roles as above: a) it determines the singular term's Sense (it is the thing that is being presented in a certain way); and b) it is an input into a function that determines the referent of the sentence (truth value). But, the Sense of the sentence is determined by the Senses of its components (including the sense of the singular term). The chain of explanation for how the sentence gets a Sense goes from singular term's referent to singular term's Sense to sentence's Sense (thought).

Either way, if the singular term is empty, the whole process can't get moving. (This is illustrated in the lower left.)



But the objector is suggesting that if we understand the Senses of Sentences as being determined the second way (upper right), then it is possible that sentences that are neither true nor false could still express a thought. So long as the empty singular term can somehow be attributed a Sense, then the sentence could have a Sense (express a thought) without a referent (truth value). This is illustrated in the lower right.

In the page and a half where Evans addresses this his main point is that Frege's theory takes the form of the upper left, not the upper right. As Evans puts it:

... he seems to have envisaged a systematic theory of sense ... as being built upon, or derived from the theory of Meaning. [As in the upper left above - RG] ... Frege nowhere appears to have envisaged a theory which would entail, for any sentence of the language, *S*, a theorem of the form

The sense of *S* is...,  
derived from axioms which would state the sense of the primitive words of the language. [as per the upper and lower right - RG] (*VR* pp. 25-26)

The discussion down to the bottom of p. 27 is emphasizing that the Senses of sentences are determined according to the process sketched in the upper left, not the upper right.

OK, moving on to the third part of the section (which *is* important for understanding Evans' program) he explains how Frege managed the cognitive dissonance caused by the combination of i) the official line according to which atomic sentences employing empty singular terms should be meaningless (like Russell), and ii) his willingness to allow that such sentences could be meaningful (convey a thought). The answer is that Frege characterizes such cases as *fiction*. This despite the fact that in some cases such sentences seem perfectly serious and respectable, and might even play an indispensable role in serious reasoning (e.g. "*The least rapidly converging series* converges less rapidly than the Reciprocal Fibonacci series").

Anyway, the suggestion is that given that Frege recognized that there is good independent reason to accept that the use of language in fiction might require different analysis than its normal non-fictional use, he put all the problem cases under that heading. So according to Evans the official Fregean line is that such sentences don't really express thoughts, despite the fact that Frege sometimes says things suggesting that they do. They only express *mock thoughts*. Evans summarizes with the following passage:

...we may gloss those passages in which Frege says that a sentence containing an empty singular term may express a thought as follows. Yes: a sentence containing an empty singular term may have a sense, in that it does not necessarily have to be likened to a sentence containing a nonsense-word. But no: it does not *really* have a sense of the kind possessed by ordinary atomic sentences, because it does not function properly, it is only *as if* it functions properly. Frege's use of the notion of fiction wrongly directs our attention to just one case in which it is *as if* a singular term refers to something, namely when we are engaged in a pretence that it does, but there are others, and if we think of them, we might speak of apparent, rather than mock or pretend, thoughts. ( *VR* p. 30)

At this point it might help clarity to say a few words about where Evans is going to go with this. Evans points out that Frege is dividing atomic sentences into *three* categories: Those that express thoughts; those that don't express thoughts, and it's obvious they don't; and those that don't express thoughts, but it is *as if* they do. Frege used fiction as the model for this last category. Evans will argue that we need finer distinctions for the last category. In particular, we need to distinguish i) cases where the singular term is empty, and the interlocutors know it is empty (such uses will include fiction as normally understood, and also negative existential statements like 'Santa Claus does not exist', and this is the topic of Chapter 10) from ii) cases where the singular term is empty but the interlocutors think there is a referent (saying "That mountain lion looks dangerous" when one is misperceiving a pattern of shadows as a mountain lion).

## 1.7 Empty singular terms: sense without referent

*In this short section, Evans does two things. First, he summarizes key aspects of Frege's theory. Second, he points out the core reason that Frege's theory is unworkable — it failed to recognize different semantic categories within the “intuitive” category of singular term.*

Evans begins with a gloss on Frege's overall semantic theory. First, in both his earlier and later phases, his theory was Russellian in that *strictly speaking* it holds that atomic sentences employing singular terms which themselves lack a Meaning (= referent) are not significant. Second, in his later work he added a second level of analysis, a theory of Sense. Third, he gestured in a direction to look for an explanation of why sentences using empty singular terms sometimes appear to be significant: the conveyance of something like *apparent thoughts*, or the *pretense of thought-apprehension*.

The core problem with Frege's theory is ~~it is a single theory~~ that Frege tried to apply a single monolithic semantic theory to all members of the “intuitive” category of singular terms. Starting with Russell (Chapter 2) we will start the process of discerning, within the category of ‘singular term’, different semantic categories. For example, according to Evans there are some types of singular term that are *Russellian* (meaning that if they are empty, atomic sentences employing them are meaningless, and convey no thought), as well as some that are not Russellian. Demonstratives would be an example of the former (which

Evans discusses at length in Chapter 6), and descriptive names would be an example of the ~~former~~ **latter** (which Evans will discuss in Chapter 2).

Evans summarizes the point he has been arguing for in this chapter with the following crucial passage:

I have not argued that the entire structure of a Fregean semantic theory would break down if one insisted upon ascribing a Fregean sense to an empty singular term. What I have claimed is that dire consequences follow from the ascription of a Fregean sense to any expression that has no Meaning or semantic value; hence the consequences ensue for Frege because he selected, as appropriate semantic values for singular terms, the objects that would be regarded as their referents. But the equation between semantic value and referent is by no means mandatory. In fact it has to be given up if empty singular terms are to be ascribed a sense. (*VR* p. 32)

Descriptive names (which Evans discussed on the previous page, p. 31) are an example. Evans will argue **descriptive names** are not Russellian (that is, they are meaningful even if empty), but **nevertheless that they** have a Sense. The reason is that descriptive names have a 'semantic value' other than the referent. ~~referent~~. This is discussed in the next section (pp. 35-6) and will be discussed at length in Chapter 2.

Evans closes with a point that is entirely ignorable, it plays no role in the remainder of the book (and indeed causes confusion). He provides one *possible* example of such a proposal that takes the semantic value of a singular term to be something other than the referent: one can assign to singular terms not objects (referents) but *sets*, such that the set assigned to a singular term either contains exactly one object (the referent) or is empty (the empty set). On this

proposal, all singular terms will have a semantic value, an extra-linguistic Meaning. It needs to be stressed that *this is not a proposal Evans is endorsing*. He is merely providing an example of how one can choose entities other than referents to be the Meanings of singular terms, and do so in such a way that the singular term still has a semantic value even if it has no referent. The proposal is prefaced by “one formally adequate possibility would be ...”, *not* “my proposal for addressing this problem is ...”. Evans' own proposals for treating different kinds of singular term will form the bulk of the book, and they have nothing to do with assigning sets as semantic values.

## 1.8 Interpretational semantics and truth theories

*This section is probably the most difficult of the chapter, and for most readers it will also be the most dispensable. The entire purpose is to head off an objection to Evans' enterprise to the effect that his treatment of the difference between Russellian and non-Russellian singular terms will be of interest only to theorists who adopt an interpretational semantic theory, but is not relevant to those interested in Davidson-style truth-theoretic semantic theories. Evans argues that even from within a truth-theoretic approach, the difference between Russellian and non-Russellian singular terms is important. Those uninterested in this issue can safely skip this section — it will be of limited consequence for the remainder of the book. Indeed, this section is a source of common misunderstanding, since many readers think that what Evans is doing here is giving voice to his own theory, which he is not (though he does use it to express some elements of his views). He is just discussing a different approach to semantics to motivate the suggestion that some distinctions he wants to make are important even for those adopting different approaches to semantics.*

Evans begins by pointing out that the Fregean semantic theory he has been discussing is a species of what he calls an *interpretational semantic* theory. Such a theory analyzes the meaningfulness of sentences in natural language by making two kinds of assignments expressions (sentential and sub-sentential) as their semantic value: i) *a kind* of entity as an appropriate interpretation for expressions of a particular semantic *category* (e.g. functions are assigned to predicates); and ii) a particular assignation of a specific entity of the appropriate kind to a specific expression of the semantic category (e.g. the function mapping all and only blue things onto TRUE is the semantic value of the predicate "... is blue").

Evans then introduces a different sort of semantic theory, Davidsonian truth theories. Evans' reason for doing this is not that he thinks such truth theories are preferable. Indeed, he argues that interpretational theories are "unavoidable" even for those who engage in the truth-theoretic enterprise. Rather, he introduces truth theories here in order to show that even from within such theories, the distinctions Evans wants to draw between Russellian and non-Russellian terms can be drawn. The following passage makes Evans' intentions on this matter clear:

... the rather cumbersome theories in which entities are assigned to expressions as their semantic values seem ultimately unavoidable... However, it may help to increase the clarity and appeal of the points I have been making if I express them in terms provided by one of these more familiar and less cumbersome theories. (*VR* p. 34)

Very roughly, these theories explicate the meaning of sentences in the language under investigation (the object language) by means of *theorems* (stated in the metalanguage, the language in which the investigation is conducted) that rely only on a notion of *truth*. For example:

1. 'Schnee ist weiss' is true if and only if snow is white.

This is an analysis of the meaning of the object-language sentence that does not *assign* anything to any elements of the object language.

But a problem faced by this approach is that it would seem to require an infinite number of such theorems to explicate the meaning of the sentences of any actual natural language. A solution to this problem is to treat the analysis as *compositional* by showing how this infinite number of theorems can be derived from a finite number of axioms. These axioms, in turn, provide interpretations of the parts of sentences of the object language. (There is a potential confusion of terms here. Evans uses "Interpretational semantics" to mean a theory that assigns objects and other extra-linguistic entities to meaningful expressions of the language under discussion. The 'interpretations' appealed to in compositional truth theories are not interpretations of this sort. They interpret expressions of the object language in terms of the metalanguage via an enriched semantic vocabulary including 'refers', 'satisfies', etc.)

Consider axioms such as

2. The referent of 'Schnee' = snow

3. The referent of 'Firenze' = Florence.

And similar axioms for other subsentential expressions. A full (finite) complement of such axioms for a language would allow us to derive an infinite number of theorems. In the simplest case, the theorems and axioms are themselves stated in the same language as the language being analyzed (perhaps supplemented with semantic vocabulary). So we would have axioms such as

4. The referent of 'Seattle' = Seattle.

As Evans points out, while strictly speaking the theory is still not assigning extra-linguistic entities to linguistic expressions,

... one can more or less derive, from what it explicitly states about the primitive expressions of the language, the assignment of Meanings (from the appropriate elements of Frege's ontology) which would be made to those expressions upon the distinguished or actual interpretation... ( *VR* p. 35)

But while such axioms could be used to indicate what the 'Meanings' of such expressions would be, they couldn't in that way indicate what the Senses would be, since both of the following would be equally serviceable as axioms:

5. The referent of 'Cicero' = Cicero

6. The referent of 'Cicero' = Tully

And because both will serve equally well as axioms, we can't just read off, from any set of axioms adequate for a truth theoretic account, anything corresponding to the Senses such expressions might have. Nevertheless, of all those axioms that are adequate for truth theoretic purposes, we could choose those that, in addition to being servicable as axioms in the theory, ~~in addition~~ **also** *display* the Senses. As (5) but not (6) does.

OK, all that was mostly preliminary. Here is the first key bit. Suppose in fact that there are Russellian singular singular terms, that is terms such that if they are empty, then sentences employing them are neither true nor false. Evans points out that

...[i]n the event that a term appropriate for treatment in this way lacks a referent, no such clause can truly be stated, so that truth-conditions for sentences containing the term cannot be derived. This is a formal representation of the fact that such a term has no sense and that sentences containing it express no thought. (*VR* p. 35)

These are precisely the features of Russellian singular terms, but they have been captured now in the theoretical framework of truth theoretical semantics.

What about non-Russellian singular terms, such as descriptive names? How can that category be captured in terms of this sort of approach? Such singular terms would need to be associated with axioms that can be used to derive truth conditions for embedding sentences even when those expressions lack a referent. For example axioms of a form such as:

7. (x) (the referent of 'a' = x iff x is  $\phi$  ).

[This sentence reads: for all  $x$ , the referent of 'a' is  $x$  if and only if  $x$  is the  $\phi$ , where 'the  $\phi$ ' is a definite description, like "the tallest person in California". As in Evans' text, underlining indicates the scope, so to speak, of uniqueness, but unlike the text, I use italics to indicate which expression is the one for which uniqueness is being asserted.]

Evans points out that while axioms such as (7) can be used to derive appropriate truth theoretic theorems, they do so non-homophonically, that is, they don't just use the name in the metalanguage that corresponds to the name in the object language. So in this respect they are unlike (5) and (6).

In the rest of the section, Evans points out that this is not a worry, since it is possible to do it homophonically. The argument is that if the metalanguage has descriptive names, then we need to recognize certain free-logic-esque modifications to classical logic in the metalanguage. (And we are presuming the metalanguage has descriptive names, since it is a descriptive name in the object language that we are analyzing, and we are assuming for simplicity that the metalanguage is an extension of the object language.) But once we have the expressive resources of free logic, in particular the resources to indicate the 'scope' of a name, we shall be able to construct axioms that use the name

8.  $(x)$  (The referent of 'Julius' =  $x$  iff [Julius] ( $x$ =Julius) )

Here, the name in brackets ([Julius]) indicates the 'scope' of the name, that is, the section of the formula within which various classical logic inferences employing the name are allowed. So in (8), the name is *used* in the axiom which specifies the contribution that that name will make to theorems

derived from it in such a way that it is not required that the name have a referent.

One way to understand what is happening here is that Evans' is showing how we can make good on the idea that we might be able to understand how a singular term (e.g. 'Julius') might be meaningful even if empty. In this case, the Meaning of the expression is provided ultimately by the descriptive material  $\phi$ . The name will have a referent, namely Julius, if Julius exists. But the fact that the name is associated with clear descriptive content makes it the case that the name will be meaningful even if empty. This will be explored in the next chapter, where Evans will argue that ~~the fact that~~ descriptive names, though they are associated with clear descriptive content, are referring expressions, not definite descriptions.

A few closing remarks are in order. First, the general heading of "truth theoretic semantics" is large, and there are many nuances. The reader shouldn't take anything Evans (or my gloss on Evans) says to be anything other than a comment on one of many ways to understand the program. Second, to repeat what I said above, this section is entirely dispensable in terms of understanding the major themes in the book.

## 1.9 Conclusions

*In this section Evans presents and clarifies the main results he wants to draw from this chapter. In brief, it is that we should be open to the possibility that the*

*intuitive category of singular terms might in fact include multiple semantic categories, that is, multiple kinds of terms that require different semantic analyses.*

Evans closes with the following conclusions:

1. Frege's theory of Sense and reference forced him to be a Russellian about singular terms, at least most of them, whether or not he liked or recognized this fact.
2. Even if (1) were wrong, there was nothing to prevent Frege from recognizing Russellian singular terms.
3. Even granting (2), there was nothing to prevent Frege from recognizing non-Russellian singular terms.

Therefore there is the possibility of an eclectic Fregean theory, recognizing both Russellian and non-Russellian singular terms. This of course requires giving up a monolithic semantic theory for singular terms, and recognizing different semantic categories within that grammatical category. But Evans warns that as yet we have no idea what a Russellian thought could be, how a way of thinking of something could be such that in the absence of the object, there is no such thought to be had. (Note that here Evans has moved from talk of Russellian *singular terms* to Russellian *thoughts*. This will be clarified later in Chapter 2.)

Evans then claims that even such an eclectic Fregean theory will not be able to handle all singular terms. Specifically, *proper names* will not fit into a broadly Fregean semantic theory – and by this he means a theory for which the Fregean model of communication, outlined at the end of Section 1.5,

obtains. The reason is that proper names work, i.e. subserve communication, without it being the case that the interlocutors must share a Sense — that is, they can both understand the proper name correctly and use it for fruitful communication, even though they do not think of the referent in the same way — that is, the thoughts they have that count as legitimately understanding a proper name could be distinguishable by the Intuitive Criterion of Difference.<sup>3</sup>

So there is the possibility — which Evans will explore in the rest of the book — of at least these three semantic categories within the broader grammatical category of *singular term*, each requiring its own semantic theory. Evans doesn't frame it in this way, but I think it is a useful way to conceive of the rhetorical terrain: using *Russellian* for semantic categories of singular term that require a referent in order to function, and *Fregean* for semantic categories of singular term that require a Sense in order to function (as per the Fregean model of communication) we have:

- a. Russellian/Fregean singular terms (e.g. demonstratives and indexicals: *this, that, here, there, I* ); require a referent in order to be significant; theory of Sense is applicable.
- b. Non-Russellian/Fregean singular terms (e.g. descriptive names such as 'Julius'); do not require a referent in order to be significant; theory of Sense is applicable.

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<sup>3</sup> Note that Evans here is making appeal to Frege's Intuitive Criterion of Difference, which is defined only for a single speaker, to a case involving two speakers. Presumably he has in mind a situation in which a single speaker entertains the two thoughts that are being entertained by the two speakers in the situation under discussion.

c. Russellian/non-Fregean singular terms (e.g. proper names such as 'John McDowell'); require a referent in order to be significant; theory of Sense is not applicable.

Evans doesn't discuss this, but note that there is a fourth possibility in logical space: non-Russellian/non-Fregean singular terms. It's not obvious what sort of useful singular term could have these features, however. Because it would be non-Russellian, its usefulness could not derive from any connection to its putative referent (as with proper names). Nor could its usefulness be derived from there being any sort of proprietary ways of thinking (or what-have-you) since those would qualify as Senses. Given that neither of these sources of significance would be in play, it isn't obvious what use such expressions could have in meaningful discourse.<sup>4</sup> This isn't meant to be a knockdown argument, but just a quick consideration as to why that fourth category might be empty. Also, as a reminder, definite descriptions don't fall into any of these categories, since they are not referring expressions. Definite descriptions are treated in more detail in Chapter 2.

In addition to this division of cases (Russellian vs. non-Russellian, Fregean vs. non-Fregean), Evans will eventually be making a distinction along a different dimension. As Evans stated earlier in the chapter, anyone attempting to countenance Russellian singular terms must give some account of why there is an appearance of understanding or thought when they are empty. Evans will eventually distinguish two cases. First, there are cases where the interlocutors are unaware that there is no referent (e.g. they believe the

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<sup>4</sup> Though note that on Evans' proposal in Chapter 11 proper names do not have a Fregean Sense. And if fictional proper names do not have a referent, then assuming that Evans' theory of proper names applies also to names of fictional characters (which is doubtful given the details of his account), proper names of fictional characters *could* be in this category.

term refers to an actual person or thing but it does not, or that there is a lime tree that their talk of “that lime tree” refers to, but there is not). Second, there are cases where the interlocutors know that the term does not refer to a real person or thing, but to a fictional thing (e.g. ‘Zeus’). Though Evans distinguishes these two cases, this is not a case of two different semantic kinds of term. Rather, it is two kinds of situation that can arise where a singular term (of any category, proper name, demonstrative, whatever) doesn’t refer yet it is, in some sense, as if it does.