

# The Ontological Problems of Reference

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the different interpretations of the concept of "meaning" and "reference" in the theory of sign systems. Based on the analysis concludes that the theory of reference by Hilary Putnam, the theory of "language games" by L. Wittgenstein and semiotics by C. S. Peirce, despite the methodological differences, in general, similar to interpret the concept of meaning and reference, seeking to overcome them "mentalist" element. The value is interpreted as a sign of the way of its use and interpretation.

**Keywords:** Sign, Denotation, Reference, Meaning, Denoting, Signification

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years, many theorists of semiotics gave up trying to learn *the meaning* instead the concept of *the referent* [5, p.134]. Reason is that if you want to clearly distinguish between the content of expression and possible object of this expression, the risk to get into tie-up mentalist or psychology. Since the time of Descartes and Locke philosophers usually were of the view that the words and phrases in our language are signs of ideas, and are used primarily to express our thoughts. Frege put an end to the understanding of language, proclaiming that our words are used to refer to objects in reality, not the ideas in our minds. The primary function of language, from his point of view, is the isolation of objects in the world around us in order to give those true statements. Placing on the place of mental images of objects of the world, Frege, however, is not completely expelled ideas from the theory of value. Thus, according to Frege, the word is a two education: the word refers to an object, and expresses some sense (or idea), i.e., what we mentally grasp when we understand the word.

## 2. The Concept of Reference

The brightest result of influence of correspondence-representative representations about communication of language with a reality is the concept of reference. Under reference usually understand a kind of direct connection language expressions with a subject in the world. In narrow sense this communication can be understood as

characterizing expressions in such a manner that they, being are used definitely in a certain context, specify in the unique object in the world and more on any. In this representation there were mixed at least two: on the one hand, it is generalization of the facts of successful instructions on subjects by means of such expressions; on the other hand - the belief called by correspondent-representative model that successes of such instructions are not casual, and are results of an existing state of affairs. Successfully and regularly to specify in something there is a function of the expressions, which in itself possess property to be directly connected with objects in which they can specify, i.e. have them as the reviewers. Thus in understanding reference it is possible to allocate at least two treatments:

1. Expression can be directly connected the relation reference with the unique subject or object in the world and more with any so only this object and any another can be its reviewer at the correct use;

2. Or expression can be so is connected with a certain set of objects, it is possible, even not obligatory final - such expansion reference usually name in volume or extensional of the term.

Such representation about semantic characteristics of certain group of expressions and, accordingly, a certain structural part of language, has in turn generated a certain direction in the philosophical analysis of the language, characterized by construction of theories of reference. As it is theories, their problem not simply to specify in certain character of communication of expressions with subjects, but to explain it, i.e. to reveal those factors in the world, in

language or, perhaps, in us which have caused such state of affairs.

However, if a sense reference theory of meaning that names admit specifying on something and thanks to this characteristic having values it appears unimportant, on what type of essence they specify. Meanwhile, our usual representations about the world are that, that if we try to judge him not through a language prism we, as a rule, give due to those distinctions which we name the ontological. At higher level of a discourse we can distinguish them as essence of different kinds concerning which to "exist" each time a miscellaneous means. Reference, according to ordinary representations, a word and word-combinations meanwhile do not fix these distinctions: "unicorn" as a name grammatical is worse nothing, than "bull"; "The thought", "sense" - do not differ grammatical from "a table" and "a chair" etc. We can designate with equal success thus the subjects possessing various ontological statuses, including concepts about subjects. It is obvious, that such terms as, for example, "the bull" and "a unicorn", reflected corresponding ontological distinctions, their meanings - semantic characteristics - should allow establishing these distinctions. But, if value of the term consists in its reference on what basis such can be made? On the other hand, we have ways to fix the necessary ontological distinctions through the statement of distinctions between types of signs which can characterize those or other kinds essences and which, say, for individual objects, localize in space and time, intuitively not such as for senses or mental essences. The simple decision to which philosophers sometimes resorted is based on such intuitions - to spend a line of demarcation between existing and nonexistent on these qualitative distinctions. But at such approach reference does not guarantee existence and then, for example "anything", whose use in language so is similar to the use of names, it can quite be treated as a name of any essence (for example, not existing). Other known objections against such decision consist in instructions on absurdity following from it not only statements of existence concerning something nonexistent, but also - negations of its existence.

W. V. O. Quine has named problems such problems "Plato's beard": nonexistent in any sense exists, as there is something about what there is a speech [7]. But in what relation it is possible to say what any named subject exists so far as is instructions subject?

If the theory of reference accepts a call from the party of ontology she should solve somehow and these problems: concerning the same factors which, according to the given theory, cause of reference, it should be established, that they give the bases as well for carrying out of corresponding distinctions in borders assumed reference to a significant part of language. These distinctions should be spent or so that to cut everything, that only it seems reference, but is not that, as assumes a recognition undesirable essence, or - somehow differently. To solve these problems - ontological problems of reference - it is possible at least in two ways: metaphysical - it consists in searching for the factors causing reference, in the world or in ourselves, but not in language. The second

deserves the name analytical (under the name of that tradition in which frameworks it has received the greatest development in the XX-th century) - it consists in search of factors of the specified type (in other words, criteria) in the language.

One known decision of problems of the marked kind consists in a recognition language unit not the term - not which is supposed reference significant - and certain comprehensive in relation to the term whole - offers, a proposition or the statement. Obvious communicative advantage of such comprehensive units (than them considered) consists that we can solve certain communicative problems with their help without attraction of additional theoretical preconditions. Easier to say the term, as a rule, happens insufficiently for that understanding, that speaking wishes to tell, whereas pronouncing of the offer which are switching on the given term, with an enviable regularity reaches the necessary result. Thus such comprehensive units will possess the various semantic statuses, at least, in one essential relation: one is considered true, and another - false. So, Frege recognizes, that value of the offer is its truth value. Under truth value of the offer he understands that circumstance, that it is true or false. «Any narrative offer, depending on values of words making it, can be considered, thus, as a name which value if, of course, it is available, will be either true, or lie» [4].

### 3. Traditional Reference Theory

Under the "sign" Frege understands "any sign serving as a proper name, the value of which is a particular object (in the broadest sense of the word), but not the concept and attitude" [4, p.26].

In the sign of the two components: the meaning and significance. "... Some sign (word, phrase or graphic symbol) is conceived not only in connection with labeling, which could be called the value of the sign, but also due to the fact that I would like to call the meaning of the sign containing the given method" [4, p.26]. Designation of one object can also consist of several words or other signs. For brevity, each such designation Frege calls proper name.

In his view, the meaning of a proper name will be clear to anyone who is sufficiently fluent in the language or set of symbols to which it belongs; however, the value names, if any, is illuminated with only one hand. Proper connection between the sign and its meaning and value should be such that the sign corresponded to a definite meaning, and meaning, in turn, - a certain value, while the same value (one subject) corresponds not only one character. The same meaning is expressed differently not only in different languages, but also in the same language. True, there are exceptions to this right connection. Of course, in a perfect set of characters each expression must match only one definite meaning, but natural languages do not always satisfy this requirement. Thus, even if we understand some sense, it does not ensure the availability of value.

When the word is used in the usual way, then what they

want to say is its meaning. But sometimes want to say anything about the words themselves or their sense. This happens, for example, when we pass the words of others through direct speech. Then we have spoken words represent primarily speech of another person, and only the latter have the usual meaning. In this case we are dealing with signs of signs, i.e., with meaning.

This notion of "sense" and forms the "mentalist" element, which allowed a number of contemporary philosophers attributed to Frege's theory of meaning Cartesian "mentalist" tradition. This mentalist element further enhanced Frege postulate that the meaning of a linguistic expression defines its objective meaning, or, in modern terminology, its references. It should be understood that the referent of the word is the object that satisfies the specifications included in the meaning of the word, i.e., defines the meaning of "path" to the referent, allows to relate the word with a certain element of the world. Their semantic concept Frege largely set the paradigm of all subsequent arguments about the meaning within analytic philosophy.

Much attention is also paid theory of reference Bertrand Russell. In his article «On Denoting» Russell introduces the concept of "denoting phrase," by which he understands of the following phrases: a man, a certain man, any man, every man, all the people of the Earth around the Sun, the center of mass of the solar system for the first time the twentieth century, etc. Such phrases are signifiers solely by virtue of its shape. Russell distinguishes three types of sentences: 1) the phrase may be denoting, and yet does not mean anything; 2) the phrase can refer to a particular object; 3) The phrase may be ambiguous to [6, r.118].

Considering the theory of meaning Frege, Russell admits that his selection in the phrases denoting two elements - the sense (meaning) and value (denotation) generally productive, since to avoid violations of the law of contradiction.

However, he noted that the adoption of the view that denoting phrase expresses the meaning and denotes a value leads to certain difficulties in cases where the value is missing. It may seem that such judgments are absurd. In fact, they are not due to the fact that their initial hypotheses are false. Thus, according to Russell, if we recognize that denoting phrases have two sides - the meaning and significance, the cases in which, as it seems, there is no value, causing difficulty in accepting that the value is indeed present, and in the adoption of that it no [6 r.119].

In contemporary analytic philosophy in the formulation of the traditional theory is not commonly used concepts proposed by Frege's meaning and objective meaning, and they are synonymous concepts in intensional and extensional introduced Carnap. In addition to these Frege two components values and determination of extensional intensions traditional theory also contains a provision stating that the meaning (or the intension) of linguistic expression is a set of descriptions of features and characteristics that are inherent in it designates the object (or objects). This provision goes back to the theory of descriptions Russell, according to which even ordinary proper name is "hidden" or "condensed"

descriptions. A very important role in the traditional theory of meaning is the notion of analytic truth, which allows us to describe a mechanism for establishing reference. The proposal is considered to be analytic if its truth is established based on intensions of its constituent terms. If P - property, part of the intension of the term T, then the statement "All T is P" is analytically true, and according to the traditional interpretation of the analytical truth it is a priori and necessary. It follows that the possession of characteristics included in the intension of the term, forms a necessary and sufficient condition for classifying an object to extensional this term.

At the same time in the development of the philosophy of language after Frege is a clear tendency to get rid of the notion of meaning and, therefore, to complete the work begun by him. This is not least the fact that the concept of "meaning" cannot be an expression in the form of formal and difficult to analyze the logical-mathematical methods. Thus, the content of the expression is that "space" in the mind of the interpreter; we obtain the expression. It is because of such a "pilgrimage" impossible to follow; some theorists prefer not to deal with the *meaning*. But the only alternatives were either replacement *meaning of* the relevant state of the world (strictly extensional interpretation according to the "new theory of reference"), or to reduce *meanings* to behavior caused by mark (according to the late Morris). However, since there is an expression whose value which cannot be seen through the observed behavior, behaviorist criterion is very poor [5, 241].

If this distinction is accepted as criterion of the ontological importance it becomes clear - as expressions "bull" and "unicorn" ontologically differ. However, value of corresponding comprehensive units of language - not less problematic matter, than reference of the term: conditions of definability of such values far are not always clear, and is far not for all language units such. In this case the question can be put so: whether it is possible to consider in general compound values definable irrespective of definiteness of values (terms) making them?

The positive answer to this question means, that value of the corresponding compound whole is directly defined by its communications with something out of language - with a reality: it enters into considerations other kind of correspondence-representative relations - or with any even more comprehensive whole. It, in turn, assumes the decision of other question: whether it is possible to count on the decision of ontological questions one or in another way, accordingly? The negative answer from its part, assumes search of such semantic characteristics of terms which, on the one hand, would not require a prop from ontological preconditions and, with another - would allow fixing demanded ontological distinctions: the decision of the specified problems in this case remains theory business reference.

In the modern philosophical literature some preliminary distinction meanwhile is entered, that the reference theory, and to what there can correspond concept" the meaning

theory "can be designated by the term". As for the same expressions which, being considered reference language units, are subjects of theories reference, can exist and there are the theories explaining them of value without a mention reference, it will be pertinent to clear demarcation principles between two kinds of theories from which we want to proceed:

1. Meaning theories assume, what offers or statements are primary carriers of semantic value in language, i.e. to know, what does these units of language significant, for the answer to a question "That can essentially do significant all other expressions of language (which values in general can have)?" The reference theory, on the contrary, consider terms and other expressions of language from which such complexes as offers or statements, can consist, primary in similar, but opposite sense - i.e. to know that does their significant, means to know, at least, partly in what value of the offer or the statement consists. At such understanding of this distinction of the theory of value for expressions, presumably, reference the type, asserting, that other factors - not reference-constancy concerning established values, pertinently to subdivide into two kinds. The first - the theories building the explanations on the basis of preliminary established roles of corresponding expressions in formation of values of larger language complexes - offers or statements, or propositions if those admit primary carriers of value - will be value theories in the sense specified above. The second, more likely, find out signs reducing in relation to concept reference the theories aimed at distribution of characteristics, usually connected with reference, between other factors, but it is not obligatory with attraction of general theory of value any more (in the sense specified above).

2. Whether if the negative answer to a question is accepted it is possible to consider compound values definable irrespective of definiteness of values making them, the value theory (for natural languages), most likely, cannot be constructed without a support on any theory of reference; in this sense reference constancy in relation to values, at least, some (but, probably, rather considerable number) types of language expressions.

Preceding from distinction of the theory of value and the theory of reference it is necessary as well to distinguish concepts "subject" and "object". It is supposed to understand everything As a subject, that can be reference connected with language expressions, irrespective of the ontological status whereas "object" here designates not only that is qualitative, but also numeral, excellent others reality unit, i.e. the reviewer, individualization which depends on the ontological status ordered corresponding - subject - qualities.

## 4. The New Reference Theory

Representative of a new theory of reference Hilary Putnam put forward two main arguments against the traditional interpretation of the values of common terms. The first argument, according to which the inadequacy of the traditional understanding of the meaning of common terms

will be quite obvious when attempting to determine the value in the traditional spirit of a natural kind term. In the traditional approach the meaning as stated in the descriptions and assumes that any object that has the properties listed above, is the object. The inadequacy of such an interpretation of Putnam sees that natural look can have anomalous terms that do not satisfy the appropriate conjunction of properties, but nevertheless belong to this natural kind. Another difficulty faced by the traditional theory, is the inability to specify a conjunction of properties that would highlight the natural look unique way. There is never a guarantee, according to Putnam, that will not be detected such a substance or an animal that fully satisfies the descriptions of the corresponding properties of the natural look, but which, nevertheless, by virtue of its inner nature does not belong to this type.[3, 378]

So, the basic idea of this argument is the following: none of the properties, usually included in the intension of the term natural appearance, not suitable for the analytical determination of this species, because according to the traditional interpretation of the analytical truth it must be a priori and necessary, but none of these properties cannot be considered necessary because the object belongs to a certain natural kind cannot depend on the possession of these properties.

The second argument against the traditional theory of Putnam's value raises a deeper layer of problems. According to this argument values traditional theory is based on two assumptions which may not simultaneously be true. The first assumption states that the understanding of the meaning of the word is associated with being in a certain mental (or mental) condition. This assumption underlies the characteristic of the traditional theory of identification intension (or meaning) to the concept and the recognition that concepts must somehow mediated by mental representations. The second assumption is related to the fact that the word intension determines its extensional, in the sense that the intension forms a necessary and sufficient condition for the occurrence of an object in the extension. If we accept these assumptions, it must be admitted that "what is happening in our head" should determine what the point of our words. However, according to Putnam, the mental state can not determine the extensional term.

Putnam argues as follows. According to the traditional theory of meaning one understands a word, if learned its meaning. But given that the meaning of the word is often a rather complex set of information, it should be recognized that a very small number of people possess meanings and, therefore, understand the words. Whereas the vast majority of speakers could be blamed for what they do not understand the words that are used. But such an assumption, according to Putnam, is absurd, because in order to understand and use the word, it is not necessary to know the full "Frege's" sense of the word. Enough said Putnam, rely on experts who possess this sense, and in addition, owned by object recognition and thanks to which this method has the whole language community. From this it follows that in the linguistic

community there is a division of labor associated with the knowledge and use of different aspects of the "value" of words and relying on the conventional division of labor. Consequently, the linguistic division of labor to the definition of the terms of reference of natural species is related not fragmentary and incomplete "meanings" that are localized in the minds of some people, and that detailed information and recognition methods that are owned by experts.

Along with the division of linguistic labor Putnam points to the second factor, which, in his opinion, plays the most important role in establishing the terms of reference of natural species. This factor is that the extension of the term natural look "partially installed outside world." The basis of this statement is an assumption that any natural kind (whether a species, a natural substance or physical quantity) implies the existence of its members total internal nature (or essence), expressed in a common internal structure, the general material properties or the general objective laws, control the behavior or development of members of a natural kind. This man knows the inner nature of native species in the course of the development of science, therefore, according to Putnam, "in the definition of extensional paradigms and research programs to discover laws (or increase the accuracy of existing laws), takes place which previously was given strictly formulate necessary and sufficient conditions" [3, p.384]

## 5. Conclusions

The new solution offered by Putnam, is fully in the spirit of Wittgenstein. According to this decision the value of linguistic expressions is what *shows itself* in our words and sentences. When we hear or read words and sentences, we do not perceive them as a simple "sounds and signs," which should be "inserted" value outside them and present in our consciousness as a kind of "mental entity." We see value in themselves words and sentences, but it does not follow Putnam believes that the value inherent in them by nature. Our words and sentences have meaning, because there is a certain "technology use" by which value *shows his face* in them. One activity may *show* itself in another due to the fact that all human activities are closely linked to each other, forming a complex and extensive system. Therefore, thinking - this is not a stand-alone activity, does not support any other activities. It is woven into a complex system of practices both

linguistic and non-linguistic.

Thus, the new theory of reference is closely linked with the theory of language games Wittgenstein. Under the *language-games* are understood model (samples, types) *working* languages, its varied functions. Like any model, intended to clarify complicated, incomprehensible, "language games" appear in Wittgenstein's concept primarily as *simple* or *simplified* methods for the use of language, giving the key to the understanding of more mature and often unrecognizable mutated cases. [1, p.42]

Consequently, value is, in its primary sense, translation of the mark into another system of signs, and the value of the sign is the one sign, in which the sign is to be moved [2, p.162]. Thus, the interpretation by the interpretant - a way that is familiar to manifest (seen) as the meaning.

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