

Understanding Meaning and World

Understanding Meaning and World:

*A Relook on Semantic
Externalism*

By

Sanjit Chakraborty

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To my Gurudev

Hilary Putnam,

Who taught me how to love philosophy a little more...

Without whom not!

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INTRODUCTION

For the last few years, the concept of natural kind terms has haunted me, especially the location of these terms. Are the meanings of natural kind terms in the head or in the world? This question has been the most pressing one in the philosophy of mind and language. I realised that we cannot separate the mind from the world. I had in the beginning only a layman's conception regarding mind, meaning and the world. When I entered the field of philosophy, inspired by my mentor Hilary Putnam, I found that semantic externalism is a vexing issue involving a vast area. The nature of meaning regarding propositional contents and natural kind terms gives rise to a fundamental disagreement between the two groups of philosophers called internalists and externalists, as I argue in Chapter 1. The theory of description is a reliable theory which deals with the descriptive sense of a proper name, whereas the causal theory of reference obviously offers much more significance to objective reference. The descriptivist thinks that the meaning of a general term consists in its descriptive contents, so here, the references of proper names can be determined by description. Descriptivism follows the idea that, in the case of referring to an object, a name that refers to the referred object has the property (relational property).

It seems to me that Frege's theory of reference can be found to be about the relation between language and the world, while his theory of sense is regarding the relation between language and mind. Hence we find that Fregeans amongst externalists (like Gareth Evans, Putnam), emphasise Frege's theory of reference, while Fregeans amongst internalists (like Gabriel Segal, Searle) emphasise Frege's theory of sense. So these recent orthodoxies, i.e. internalism and externalism, both have a Fregean root.

There are a lot of cases where a speaker cannot know the reference-determining properties that descriptivists argue for. Putnam (if I am not wrong) is the first thinker who extends the causal theory of reference to proper names and to natural kind terms (though in this thought experiment, he does not take Kripke's "Baptism" seriously). He claims that the causal theory of reference accepts the "social transmission" of the terms and a "causal chain" which is linked with linguistic community. The

elementary question for Putnam is how the user of the word would explain its meaning. Semantic externalism claims that the concepts important for our knowledge become meaningless if and only if they have no causal connection with the referent or the external world.

In Chapter 2, I attempt to see how mental content makes a certain difference to our beliefs. Chalmer's six puzzles indicate the necessity of admitting narrow content. Internalists like Segal, Searle, Fodor, and Block argue in favour of the concepts of non-referentiality, supervenience and micro-structure to establish internalism by holding the dictum that "meanings are in the head". For Searle, intentionality does not depend on any representational background. The mental states that possess objects have some internalistic background. Here we can draw a parallelism between mental states and language in terms of mind, but not through language. To satisfy psychological conditions, mind inflicts intentionality upon language. Besides, Block's "splitting objection" in favour of internalism assumes that if X (person) splits into A and B , two different people, then the principle of identity suggests that X is not equal to A and X is also not equal to B . Even A and B are not equal, as they occupy a distinct location at the same time. Block's "conceptual role semantic" claims that without any change in narrow content, it is quite impossible to formulate a substantial change in the beliefs of A and B . Even Fodor argues that to identify supervenience, it is required to accept narrow contents. His intention is to show that meaning is individualistic. But Putnam refutes this view to suggest that every speaker who counts as fully competent in the use of language might be called upon to face the constraints of publicity. The naturalistic outlook that a human being is inclined towards is the seminal magnetism of externalist appeal. The meaning of a term is generally fixed by two things that traditional theories of meaning ignore. These things are the world and other people, and were first pointed out by Putnam. Putnamian semantic externalism makes explicit the meaning of a natural kind term determined by two different levels: "stereotype" and "division of linguistic labor", where the nature of the paradigm of the terms gets its meaning in conjunction with our transactions with the external objects and socio-linguistic practices.

Chapter 3 covers a crucial part of my analysis, where I look again at the debate, from philosophy of language to metaphysics, by scrutinising the scopes of different externalisms and their interrelations. My purpose here is to preserve the externalist thesis from the strong criticisms of internalists. In natural language, there is an important problem related to the existence of empty terms. If the externalist admits that without any

reference they cannot have any content, then “what will be the reference of ‘water is wet’ in Dry Earth?” From this perspective, the internalist charges that “externalism is catastrophic”. So here we will find that the concept of the “causal chain” in externalism fails to satisfy the semantic requirement. The second great charge against externalism raised by internalists is the problem of self-knowledge and the first person authority, which are by nature much more authoritative and incorrigible. The primary concern is whether externalism leads to a claim that a person may not have first person authority over his or her own mental states. I have tried to respond to these arguments from the externalist background, mainly from Davidson, Burge and Bilgrami’s points of view. Davidson tries to show that externalism is compatible with privileged self-knowledge which tells us about the infallibility and incorrigibility of our mental contents. His sunburn example proved this. We cannot claim that mental states are out of mind, as causal relations make a critical difference to mental states, like water is causally related to H₂O and “twater” is causally related to XYZ. Davidson holds a historical causal theory of representational content, according to which we cannot separate the idea of past causal interaction with external affairs in our constitutive meaningful use of language. He modifies the Wittgensteinian representational thesis to add that the content is individuated by causal and historical environment. Social externalist Tyler Burge claims that the question is not whether beliefs are in the head or constituted by external objects; his claim is more commonsensical, and talks about the location of beliefs’ contents. For him, belief states are located where the believers are located. It seems to me that there is a crucial relationship between belief content and the believer, in the sense that these belief contents are embedded by socio-linguistic practices.

Besides, Bilgrami, as an externalist, offers a unified content theory, in which he finds unity in the narrow and wide contents in our beliefs. He also believes that the first person authority of an agent is not immediately available. It inevitably varies from agent to agent. So these are not concepts that have an *a priori* background, because our concepts are embodied in our social behaviours. Orthodox externalists disbelieve in self-knowledge for the reason that it will lead to inconsistency.

Bilgrami’s thesis of “constraint on externalism” rules out the bifurcation content theory to intimate that social externalism items can well suit the contents that are routed through the agent’s beliefs. Even in different situations, where external items look for social contents, Bilgrami’s constraint thesis clarifies its linguistic requirement through turning these issues into ordinary beliefs like “water is the substance that comes out of

the tap”. Thus Bilgrami protects his constraint theory from the threat of self-knowledge; social and non-social external elements are unified with agents’ beliefs.

Actually, my intention in this book, especially in Chapter 4, is to show how we can reformulate the relationship between internalism and externalism from the perspectives of semantic holism and phenomenology. It seems to me that every sentence has its own semantic imports, and we should understand these semantic imports in terms of separate semantic concepts that are dependent on the entire language. Semantic holism can make a bridge between internalism and externalism only if we accept that analyticity and apriority are possible in our natural language. It is a well-known fact that semantic holism is much closer to semantic externalism, whereas semantic atomism is closer to semantic internalism. It seems to me that we can accept the concepts of apriority and analyticity to some extent in natural language, because there are some “one criterion words”, like the terms “vixens” and “bachelors” etc., and “law-cluster” concepts, like “atoms are indivisible”, which can be regarded as analytic propositions and are regarded as true because they are accepted as true.

Bilgrami’s new theory of externalism emphasises that it is possible for two agents to share a particular concept in their locality of contents, even if they do not share the same concept on the “meaning theoretical” level. He strongly believes that no two agents can have the same concepts at the “meaning theoretical” level, as concepts are very fine grained, so they are hardly ever shared. Bilgrami mainly refutes the bifurcation theory of content for two different reasons. The first commonsensical reason is that it is very unintuitive to say “I always have a thought”. The second is that a thought with wide content is very often the kind of thought that one cannot know that one is having, and Bilgrami does not think that we should ever say that there is failure of self-knowledge unless there is some psychological evidence for it, such as self-deception or some similar Freudian type - one should not deny self-knowledge on the basis of theories of reference of linguistic terms. In other words, we may get to know more astronomy if we discover that the morning star is the evening star, or that water is H_2O , but we do not get to know *our own minds* better).

Most philosophers (externalists) try to consider how intentionality is submerged into the world, though there are some philosophers, whom we call internalists, who think that the world is submerged into intentionality. Here my concern is to show the mind-world relationship from Heidegger’s

point of view. Heidegger's conception of Dasein makes a linkage between the world and Being. We cannot separate Being (mineness) from this mundane world. The conception of Dasein omits the division between the subject-object dichotomies. The mineness or ownness of Dasein discloses that Dasein does not refer to an isolated world, as it is always surrounded with the public world. To refute the *ontic sense* of Dasein, Heidegger argues that Dasein has some *ontological existential sense* that refers to the inseparability of man and world. Similarly, we cannot separate the mind from the world. Meaning and mind are externally embedded and this hooks a referential directness into the objective world.

My reformed externalism, which I call *internalistic-externalism*, considers language a "social phenomenon" of inter-subjective communication, which also tries to make a connection between internalism and externalism. My *internalistic-externalism* believes that intrinsic contents do not rest on a third person's beliefs, as here, the agent is the main authority on his/her beliefs or the contents of these beliefs. The agent has some immediate access to the content that a third person can only infer, like in the case of "toothache". This conception of authoritative self-knowledge may incline toward solipsism or be close to acceptance of a kind of private language, but, like Wittgenstein, I reject any kind of private language or solipsism. It seems interesting to me to believe that intrinsic experiences get their meanings when they are used in public language, and we can also think about these through natural language. An incorrigible private experience finds its external expression when we attempt to see its meaning from our publicly sharable language viz., natural language.

But my theory is distinct from Bilgrami's "unified theory of content" in the sense that, for me, the contents are by nature unified, but division is created because of natural language. It seems to me that there are individualistic minds, but these do not work privately, since they participate in our natural language. I will argue that analytic philosophy and continental philosophy (phenomenology) can meet to make a link between the mind and the world in regards to the theory of meaning, language and phenomenal Dasein or "being-in-the-world". My argument is that there is no private mind, as minds are related with the linguistic world, and natural language is the ground on which minds meet. There is no mind in our linguistic community that can be apart from the environment. So meaning is not something which is only external; the meaning of a term can be determined partly because of the contribution of the mind and obviously partly because of the contribution of the world. There is a symmetrical way of showing the co-relation of mind and world.

CHAPTER ONE

THE INTERNALISM-EXTERNALISM DEBATE IN CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE AND MIND

“Humans are distinguished from other animals by their power of meaning-end-reasoning.”

—David Papineau

Introduction

In this chapter, my aim is to build up the groundwork of the theory of meaning and mind. Here I will emphasise how the theory of description and the causal theory of reference can separately develop their points of view, viz. mentalese individualism and socio-linguistic phenomenon. Descriptivism focuses on the general terms that consist of descriptive content and lead to the mode of presentation of reference through sense. Meanwhile, the causal theory of reference refutes descriptivism to ensure that there is a causal chain of reference between words and objects that helps us to identify an agent’s thought and its relation with the external environment. The debate between internalism and externalism is based on two traditional controversial theses: internalism holds that mental contents are semantic contents and they are in our minds or heads, whereas externalism says that contents are actually linguistic references and they exist in the external world. The externalist slogan is that “the meanings ain’t in the head”, whereas internalists like Segal, Searle, Block and Fodor have argued in favour of internalism by claiming that “meanings are in the head or brain”. Internalists’ arguments feature in the explanation of the mentalese standpoint, e.g. the intentionality, self-referentiality and supervenience hypotheses. On the other hand, externalists (especially Hilary Putnam) try to provide a response to critics with a background of natural kind externalism (physical externalism) which is committed to the theory of casual constraint of reference. My focus in this chapter is to revisit the debate between externalism and internalism and find out its importance in the philosophy of mind and language.

(1.1) Contemporary Debate: Internalism versus Externalism

In tracing back to the internalism versus externalism debate, we find that the onset of the distinction between internalism and externalism dates back to the Cartesian legacy. As intended by Descartes, the idea of the “self-containedness thesis” is that the mind is self-contained with respect to the world, i.e. what is truly mental or internal to the subject can exist without the existence of anybody else. Even the essence of the mentalistic character of an individual mind is capable of distinguishing itself from any material objects. The idea of external or internal and the dualistic idea about body and mind emerge from the Cartesian view. We can see this debate from two alternative perspectives: metaphysical and linguistic. Metaphysically, we can explain this debate about the existence and identity conditions of mental content. When it comes to finding the location of mental content, philosophers are divided into two groups. The fundamental concern between these two groups that escorts their disagreement is the relationship between the mind and the world. Internalists try to defend the thesis that the content of the mind is essentially independent of the external world, while externalists claim that there is a causal relationship between mental content and the non-mental world. So the location of the content is the core of the metaphysical debate regarding internalism and externalism, in the sense that internalism believes that mental properties are intrinsic only if they are preserved across internal replicas, whereas externalism is opposed to this thinking. For externalists, mental properties are dependent on the physical or social environment. In a word, for internalists, mental contents are located in one’s head, whereas externalists’ claim is that they are located in the world.

In his writings, Descartes tries to give some elementary replies, which conceptually stand on epistemology and ontology. The modern philosophy of mind, beginning with Descartes, and its historical journey pave a dominant way of thinking by looking again at the mind-body problem and also challenging the two predominant radical opinions, viz. monism and materialism. Mark Rowlands claims:

The Cartesian conception is not just a single view of the mind; it is an array of interwoven views, like the strands of a rope, each lending support to the others, and each being supported by the others. The strength of the Cartesian picture lies not merely in the strength of the individual theses that make it up but also, and perhaps even more importantly, in the way

these strands bind together to yield a sweeping and comprehensive vision of the nature of human beings.¹

We know that Descartes' substance dualism provides for a causal interaction between mind and body, which are by nature two different substances, and his motivation by science and reason privilege him to think that there is a distinctive place of mind within a metaphysical framework. Descartes' doctrine (Cartesian Dualism) mingles with epistemology and ontology. From the perspective of ontology, he claims that the existence of the mind does not depend on the existence of the body and vice versa. Their interrelated relationship can be regarded as external and contingent. Besides this, from the realm of epistemology, he also claims that we can know and be aware of our own minds, but knowing others' minds is not dependent on first person authority or intuition. In brief, we can be securely aware of our own minds. For Descartes, physical things such as the body have spatio-temporal locations. Actually, extension is the essential part of the body, whereas minds are essentially thinking things, so we can call them immaterial.

Here one can ask: "Is man an amalgam of two things – mind and body?" Descartes' answer would be "yes"! There is a keen interaction between mind and body, but in principle, they could be separated. For Descartes, a body is not only considered heavy, coloured and hard, but can be extended in length, have depth, etc., whereas mind, as a non-physical substance, is an amalgam of thought and extended substance through reason. Dualism not only teaches us that these two different sets of properties encompass the dichotomy between the mental and the physical, but focuses on the notions of autonomy, exclusion, privilege etc. The first set of properties, which we call "mental properties", also includes the features of thought, rationality, consciousness, subjectivity, self-knowledge etc. The second set of properties deals with some of the mundane physical properties like shape, size, weight, extension etc. This autonomy is what externalism questions, which I will focus on later. An agent can bear both these sets of properties, emphasising the mind-body problem by raising some puzzling situations. We can claim that mind and matter are heterogeneous substances, in this sense, but for me it sounds problematic.

However, the problem of Descartes' dualism inflates the question about "interactionism" between the physical and the mental properties. Rowlands says:

The problem of Descartes's dualism is explaining how this interaction between mental and physical takes place. The general problem is that Descartes makes the mental and the physical so different that they don't seem to share the necessary properties to make this sort of interaction intelligible.²

This effect infringes on the first law of thermodynamics, as it accepts that an interaction between physical and non-physical is possible. This is a significant charge against Descartes' dualism. "Interactionism" is not only a metaphysical issue. It has a broad epistemological perspective. In *Discourse on Method*, Descartes considers that to get rid of the imperfection of knowledge, it is required that we must doubt from the very beginning. But permanent scepticism cannot be a reliable method of sincere inquiry. From this fact we can prove that, in spite of denying everything, the denier remains. So the indubitable, fundamental truth of Descartes' philosophy is "Cogito ergo sum" or "I think, therefore I am".

There is a well-proven opinion that consciousness or self (I) is independent in its existence. Self has continuous and identical existence, as it has certain successive modes of thought. One can ask: can we know for certain that material objects are affecting our senses, that it is not that we are producing the material objects, or the existence of these material objects depends on our perception? McCulloch says:

We have perceptual experiences and form beliefs which we take to be generally reliable guides to a material environment which we inhabit. That is, we take ourselves to know things about the material world, where *knowing things about* is a specific relation between minded things and their world.³

We find two types of claims to understanding the mental phenomena: the location claim and the position claim. The location claim emphasises that there is a keen token identity between mental entities and the subject's skin. It actually says that mental events are located inside the skin of the subject that possesses them. The location claim cannot be regarded as a claim about properties; rather, it is exclusively a claim about particulars. Meanwhile, the position claim insists on the idea that the mental properties of the subject do not depend on the external properties of the subject, as mental properties are intuitive and non-relational in nature. So the independence of mental properties can be explained by the notion of individuation, which expresses an externalist approach to the subject of the properties.

There is epistemic containment within a subject that calls for the argument for certainty in Cartesian Dualism. It goes like this:

Premise 1. I can doubt that my body exists.

Premise 2. I can't doubt that I am a thinking being.

Premise 3. So, I am distinct from my body or I, as a thinking being, am not my body.

The idea of certainty cannot work with Descartes' argument for dualism, because the argument for certainty can mislead the basis of the physical world, but the strong approach of the mind has an authority nevertheless deluded by the question of certainty. The question of certainty is not constructed from dualism. It stems from the "self-containedness thesis" and also the fact that our mental states are self-presenting. We are not certain about our knowledge of the external world, as it can be falsified, but knowing one's own mind has a special content, viz. first person authority, takes a better approach to knowing one's own mind rather than knowing the external world. The content of infallibility is associated with the concept of knowing your own mind. If you do not carry out any self-deception, then your mental state will provide you with incorrigible knowledge about the inner world. Descartes' opinion was a little less extreme than the present view about first person authority or self-knowledge, but we can surely claim that the idea of incorrigible knowledge of our own mental state leads to self-intimating content, or it would be better to say that your own mind is transparently available to yourself, and you are the only person who can infallibly think that you know things about "x or y".

(1.2) The Descriptivism of Frege and Russell

Frege has distinguished between the study of word-world relations (theory of reference) and the study of word-meaning relations (theory of sense). However, he wants to see them as working together in a fully integrated theory of language. Frege takes sense as the *mode of presentation of the reference*. In the case of proper names, and also definite descriptions, Frege considers these singular terms to designate their references not directly, but indirectly, i.e. via sense. For him, linguistic expressions have both sense and reference. He attempts to dissolve the concept of proper names into singular terms. Thus, the class of singular terms seems to be ever swelling. Actually, proper names, singular pronouns, demonstratives, definite descriptions, and indefinite

descriptions are all regarded as “singular terms”. Frege believes that the semantic value of a word depends on the particular object that it stands for. In his famous paper “On Sense and Reference”, Frege claims:

Every declarative sentence concerned with the reference of its words is therefore to be regarded as a proper name, and its reference, if it has one, is either the True or the False.⁴

Frege also believes that for traditional philosophers, the conception of identity relation is based on the logical law of identity. We may clarify this by arguing that everything is principally identical with itself. But Frege assumes that it is not the case that all identity relations are of the form “A is A” or “Red is red”. We may even find some identity statements of the form “A is B” or “All mothers are women” etc. Now what is curious is that Frege draws a puzzling picture from a different point of view. Here we will find a difference in cognitive values, because if we consider it a relationship between objects, then we will not find any kind of cognitive difference between two identical sentences. But one cannot deny this kind of difference in our language. To get some ideas of these difficulties, let us look closely at these problems. Here, two different cases have been noted:

- a) The morning star is the morning star.
- b) The morning star is the evening star.

Both “morning star” and “evening star” designate the same planet (Venus) as their reference. So we may find that it is impossible to make a distinction between these two sentences through the referential theory of meaning. We need to see its sense, as here the sense is something different. There is no doubt that the notion of sense is defined as a “mode of presentation” of reference. Let us now consider the sense of “morning star” in this way: a star which obviously rises in the “morning sky”; similarly, the sense of the term “evening star” would be “a star which rises in the evening sky”. Frege cautions us, saying that every term that carries sense has also a reference that can go wrong. Even bearer-less names, numbers and abstract entities have no references at all. We find a new dimension in his well-known work “Logic”,⁵ where Frege introduces the concept of “mock proper names” which have no designation. For instance, proper names like “Scylla has six heads” or fictitious characters like “Falu Da” in Satyajit Roy’s detective stories are to be regarded “mock proper names”. Here it is relevant to mention that Frege actually believes in the context principle, which says that the sense of a term can be understood in terms of the context of the sentence in which the term is used. Frege believes that the term always contributes to the determination of the sense

of a sentence in which it is used. He also thinks that a proper thought can only be expressed by an assertoric sentence. Here it must be noted that an assertoric sentence can be a proper assertion if and only if it expresses a proper thought.

Frege believes that there is a third kind of sentence that is neither true nor false, but logic does not deal with it. Let us see how a sentence might fail to be either true or false. Suppose I say “All of Lalan’s sons are asleep”. Now, if all the sons of Lalan were really asleep, then this sentence would be true. If not all of them are asleep the sentence would be false. But in this case, Lalan has no sons at all; can we say that the sentence is true? The answer would be definitely not. Can we claim that the sentence is false? The answer would be definitely not. So, we see that in such a situation there is no reference to the expression “the sons of Lalan”, so the sentence fails to have a truth value. We may call such a sentence an expression without thought. Frege says:

Names that fail to fulfil the usual role of a proper name, which is to name something, may be called mock proper names.⁶

One may argue that Frege believes in proper names that have sense, though they have no reference. He thinks that some proper names have fictitious sense. R.M. Harnish⁷ tries to clarify this thought from three different perspectives. Let me discuss these one by one:

a) *Fictitious Sense from an Idealistic Interpretation:*

Here, fictitious proper names belong to the realm of ideas. They have no direct relationship with a sentence about physical objects rather than about the world of ideas. We can even try to interpret our sentences in such a way that they would be mere ideas. Frege tends to use such idealistic ideas in his logic, though he had a firm belief that sense is objective and by its nature cannot belong to the realm of mere ideas.

b) *Not True or False:*

Frege believes that “instead of ‘fiction’ we could speak of ‘mock thought’ (*Scheingedanken*). Thus, if the sentence of an assertoric type is not true, it is either false or fictitious, and it will generally be the latter if it contains a mock proper name”.⁸ But we need to confirm that the “mock proper name” is not devoid of sense. Like a genuine proper name, it does not express any thought which is either true or false.

c) *Lack of Seriousness:*

Frege had a firm belief that logic does not deal with any kind of mock thought. We may have these thoughts in language and fictions, but we cannot take fiction seriously the way we take logic seriously. In the movie “2012”, a writer shows that the world is going to be destroyed in 2012, but we do not take it seriously, whereas we would give the same issue much more value or take it more seriously if it were to be raised by scientists. I have clarified this idea elsewhere⁹ that “... in fictions, though names are used there, they are not used in order to genuinely refer to something. It is as though we are playing a game as if referring”.

It would be very relevant to ask: what would happen to fiction about historical characters, like dramas about Julius Caesar or Chandragupta Mourya? Frege replies:

Even the proper names in the drama, though they correspond to names of historical persons, are mock proper names; they are not meant to be taken seriously in the work.¹⁰

The word “mock” is suggestive. It means “as if” a proper name, or a term which seems to function like a proper name but actually does not. It seems to me that Frege is no longer taking mock proper names as proper names without reference, because “Caesar”, in a drama, is definitely a mock proper name, and yet it refers to the great Roman Emperor. We may finally consider that Frege is actually replacing “not to be taken seriously” by “not being used to refer to”. What I want to say here is that in fiction, though names are used, they are not used in order to genuinely refer to something. It is as though we are playing a game of “as if” referring or referring to something that sounds like pretending.

Besides, Bertrand Russell tries to criticise the Fregean notion of sense and bearer-less names, including the concept of “semantic value”, in his well-known “Theory of Description”. F.P. Ramsey considers Russell’s theory of description a paradigm case of philosophy. Russell has two different views about the conception of description. In his *Principia Mathematica*, he first states that “by a ‘description’ we mean a phrase of the form ‘the so and so’ or some equivalent form”. But two years later, in his famous article “On Denoting” (1913), Russell has modified his thinking to mention that a description may be of two sorts, definite or indefinite. An indefinite description is a phrase of the form “a so and so” and a definite description is a phrase of the form “the so and so”. Russell’s main purpose is to make a distinction between names and definite

descriptions. He uses an example to establish his thought: “Scott is the author of ‘Waverley.’” Obviously, here “Scott” is a name and “the author of ‘Waverley’” is a definite description. But in the case of abstract entities or bearer-less names, like “unicorn” or “round square”, Russell believes that these are merely proper names with no designation. He also tries to make a distinction between a definite description and an indefinite description of “uniqueness”. An example of definite description may be as follows: “The present president of India is a man.” Now, an example of indefinite description is as follows: “I met a girl on the way to temple.” He also suggests that we can say “I met a ghost on my way to temple”. Though this sentence is meaningful, the problem is that it has no constituent, therefore we can regard it as false.

Russell thinks that definite descriptions are incomplete symbols which can be used in the context of a sentence. Here, Russell attempts to avoid the problem of identifying definite descriptions in terms of any proper names; therefore, their semantic value does not depend on the objects which they stand for. He also offers a way of paraphrasing the standard type of whole sentence by breaking it up into three different parts which are derived from the main. He also cautions us that only a genuine proper name can turn out to be a demonstrative expression, such as “this” and “that”. We can express the main sentence “Scott is the author of ‘Waverley’” as follows:

- a) At least one person authored Waverley.
- b) At most one person authored Waverley.
- c) The person who authored Waverley was Scott.

Actually, the original proposition refers to the name, but analysis shows that this operation is descriptive. Even in the case of the sentence “The present king of France is bald”, we will find that the object that is referred to by the descriptive phrase does not exist. It would be better to suggest that the sentence should be treated as false rather than lacking in truth value. Ayer writes:

Russell calls these purely demonstrative signs logically proper names and he takes it to be characteristic of a logically proper name that its significant use guarantees the existence of the object which it is intended to denote. Since the only signs which satisfy this condition are, in his view, those which refer to present feelings or sense-data, his philosophy of logic is tied at this point to his theory of knowledge.¹¹

Here, I would like to point out the reason why I have discussed Frege and Russell's descriptivism as preliminary platforms from which the debate between internalism and externalism was initiated. It is difficult to decide whether Frege was an internalist or an externalist. It seems to me that Frege's theory of reference is about the relationship between language and the world, while his theory of sense is closer to the relationship between language and mind. As an internalist, Searle claims:

Both the Fregean and the present account of meaning are internalist in the sense that it is in virtue of some mental state in the head of a speaker and hearer – the mental state of grasping an abstract entity or simply having a certain intentional content – that speaker and hearer can understand linguistic references.¹²

But Putnam considers Frege an externalist. In his paper "Meaning and Reference", he states:

Frege, however, rebelled against this "psychologism." Feeling that meanings are *public* property - that the *same* meaning can be "grasped" by more than one person and by persons at different times – he identified concepts (and hence "intensions" or meanings) with abstract entities rather than mental entities.¹³

At present, Putnam still believes that Frege is an externalist, as he says:

I do not believe I have ever called him (Frege) an "internalist". What I said in "The Meaning of 'Meaning'" is *not* that he thought that *meanings* (*Sinne*, in his terminology) are internalistically identified, but that he thought that *grasping a meaning* was a mental state in the traditional internalists sense, and that too is a mistaken form of internalism. However, I am not a professional Frege scholar and I could be wrong. Today, some philosophers are reading all sorts of "up to date" doctrines into Frege. Perhaps they are right, but I am not yet convinced. My evidence for my reading of Frege as holding that grasping concepts is a mental state in the traditional sense is that he said that "concepts are transparent to reason and reason's nearest kin" [I quote from memory]. Obviously, if externalism is right, the identity conditions for the concept *water* are not "transparent to reason."¹⁴

I agree with Putnam that Frege's theory of meaning has an externalist perspective. But it sounds interesting to me that Frege can also be regarded as an internalist when it comes to his descriptivism. Frege's descriptivism tells us that one can think about an object without having any constitutive relationship to the object. This thesis opens up space for empty terms.

(1.3) Putnam and Kripke's Theses on Reference

We find refutations of descriptivism in Putnam and Kripke's thoughts regarding the meaning of proper names. They refute Lockean descriptivism. Lockean descriptivism states that:

- (a) An ordinary natural kind term (like water) denotes not only a natural kind, but also a nominal kind.
- (b) It does so in a specificatory way, i.e. by a description.
- (c) The term requires association with the right list of superficial properties.

Now one may ask: "What are natural kind terms?" and also "What are nominal kind terms?" Actually, a natural kind term is determined by the properties, the possession of which is necessary and sufficient for membership of the kind. A natural kind term is of course a term that denotes such a natural kind. The fundamental properties of water are H₂O, or one oxygen atom bonded to two hydrogen atoms. Terms like "water" or "gold" are not merely singular terms, but also general terms. Meanwhile, a nominal kind is regarded as a property which is determined by superficial properties that are not necessary or sufficient for natural kind terms, for instance, "bachelor".

Saul Kripke, when he was a fellow of Harvard's society (1963-67), first claimed that the reference of a proper name or a natural kind term is determined by causal chains. There is an initial "baptism" of water (or H₂O) by the term "water". Our successful use of the term "water" depends on causal relations between our use of the term and the event of baptism. Kripke argues that Russellian descriptivism is wrong in considering proper names to be definite descriptions. Kripke also believes that Mill is right to conclude that proper names are non-connotative. Kripke thinks that natural kind terms are like rigid designators, devoid of any connotation. Kripke's theories of direct reference and rigid designators say that a singular term "x" is directly referential if and only if it is non-descriptive, and as a rigid designator, this singular term refers to the same object in all possible worlds.

Though Hilary Putnam extends the causal theory of reference of proper names to natural kind terms, still he does not give significance to baptism, as Kripke proposed. Putnam actually gives more importance to the question of how the user of the word would explain its meaning. He thinks that we cannot define a natural kind term (like "tiger") by merely

conjoining some “defining characteristics”, like striped, four-legged, carnivorous etc. This is so because a natural kind term may have some abnormal members. For instance, a three legged tiger is still a tiger. In *My Intellectual Autobiography*, Putnam says:

On the view I proposed, the meaning of a “natural kind term” such as the word “gold” is partly fixed by the division of linguistic labor and partly by what I was later to call the shared “stereotype”.¹⁵

Here we find a crucial difference between Putnam and Kripke, as we do not find the idea of “division of linguistic labour” in Kripke’s works. But the main issue of the Kripke-Putnam thesis is that the descriptive specification of a natural kind term does not ensure any reference relationship between the term and its referent. Later, the views of Putnam and Kripke are extended to the philosophy of mind. It is supposed that just as the language-world relationship is crucial in deciding what our terms mean, similarly, the thought-world relationship is important in identifying our thoughts and their objects. This thesis gives birth to externalism.

There is a tendency to explain the meaning of sentences in terms of truth conditions, and truth conditions are explained in terms of the references of the constituent terms of a sentence and its synthetic structure. Logicians consider the structure of a sentence from the point of view of symbolic logic, and also seek a reliable logical theory which would explain how its truth conditions are determined. Meanwhile, the Grammarian emphasises the structure of natural language, seeking a mapping of each sentence from the prospective of “semantic representation” or “meaning”. We find radical progress in the structure of semantic theory from the period of Frege to the present. But one important question remains untouched. Putnam takes this point and asks: “Why is the theory of meaning so hard?”

We may find a plausible answer in Putnam’s own point of view. He thinks that the problem lies mainly in the use of general terms, or names, if you like. Actually, general terms can be given meaning in different ways:

First, the transformation of verbal forms, like “hunter”, i.e. one who hunts.

Secondly, natural kind terms, like gold, tiger, lemon etc.

A natural kind term is determined by the properties which are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for membership of the kind. Actually, a natural kind term has some fundamental properties. For

instance, water (H₂O) is a natural kind term whose fundamental property is being composed of molecules of one oxygen atom bonded to two hydrogen atoms. A non-natural kind term has some superficial properties whose possession is not necessary or sufficient for its membership. For instance, “mother” is a non-natural kind term whose essential property is not always “giving birth to a child”. There are some “barren women” who become mothers by adopting a child. I will focus on this issue in more detail later.

There are two different theories that help us to understand natural kind terms. One is called the “description theory” of natural kind terms, and the other the “causal theory” of natural kind terms, as I already mentioned. Description theory claims that to understand a natural kind term, it is important to grasp its sense or intention. The common way of understanding sense or intention is to know the descriptive conditions of the referred term. The sense of a name is given by a definite description, which is mainly associated with the name. For instance, “Wittgenstein was a pupil of Russell and also a teacher of Anscombe”. Here, “Wittgenstein” is the name and “a pupil of Russell and also a teacher of Anscombe” are the descriptions. Gareth Evans mentions that:

The Description Theory of what a name denotes holds that, associated with each name as used by a group of speakers who believe and intend that they are using the name with the same denotation, is a description or set of descriptions cullable from their beliefs which an item has to satisfy to be the bearer of the name.¹⁶

On the other hand, the causal theory of reference describes two different parts through which they are associated with each other:

First, the theory of reference fixing; this tells us how a term is associated with its referent.

Secondly, the theory of reference borrowing; mainly a social transmission of a term which has a causal chain linking it with the linguistic community. I shall discuss this later.

According to the traditional view (description theory), the meaning of a natural kind term is given by specifying a conjunction of its fundamental properties. How can you define a tiger? The answer is so simple: “just conjoin all its properties.” A tiger has different properties, like striped, four-legged, carnivorous etc. Therefore the conjunction of all these properties is the actual meaning of the term “tiger”. Now “the tiger has the properties x, y, z” can be considered an analytic truth. Here, the predicate

term is contained in the subject. But Putnam challenges this point of view. He argues that this is a mistaken idea. The term “tiger” is not definable by merely conjoining some “defining characteristics”, like striped, four-legged, carnivorous etc. One may ask why it cannot be defined in such a way; Putnam clarifies that a natural kind term has some abnormal members. A three legged tiger is still a tiger. Here we can find two different notions: natural kind terms and normal members. We know that a natural kind term has certain characteristics which indicate the “essential nature” of this term, which is generally shared by its normal members. So a normal member is an individual which is essentially associated with that natural kind term. We may call this “essential nature” a characteristic of these natural kind terms. Putnam claims:

*Language is not only used to verify and falsify and classify; it is also used to discuss. The existence of standardized stereotypes, and hence of meaning, is a necessity for discussion, not for classification.*¹⁷

Putnam also believes that sometimes, traditional theory plays an important role in describing “one-criterion” concepts like bachelor, vixen etc. Putnam suggests that we are never able to define a natural kind term by its “defining characteristics”, because normal members of the term (like lemon, yellow, peel, tart taste etc.) may not be the ones we really take to be normal. What we call normal may also change with time and vary under different circumstances. Normally, a stripeless white tiger is also a tiger, or a blue lemon is also considered a lemon. Actually, description theorists try to understand natural kind terms, for instance, a tiger, in terms of such properties as striped, carnivorous etc. We find that these criteria do not necessarily follow from the natural kind term. So the analyticity of a natural kind term is not possible in description theory, though we will find some exceptions here. So Putnam thinks that here it is important to admit a causal theory of natural kind terms. I will briefly clarify his view. According to Putnam, the modified definition of the natural kind term “lemon” will be as follows:

X is a lemon = df X belongs to a natural kind whose... (as before) OR X belongs to a natural kind whose natural numbers used to...(as before) OR X belongs to a natural kind whose normal members were formally believed to, or are now incorrectly believed to...(as before).¹⁸

We find that two ideas are significant in a causal theory: the idea of *reference fixing* and the idea of *reference borrowing*. In the causal theory of reference, we may identify the sense of a term through the type of its causal chains. It has a connection with causal networks, i.e. the social