

The Wednesday

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Editorial

On Intellectual Conscience

Following up on the editorials of the last two issues, this editorial explores more Nietzschean texts that are relevant to the philosophical unconscious. I referred previously to unconscious influences on philosophers due to their psychological make up or social determinants - their historical social, moral and intellectual environments. How can philosophers, or anyone for that matter, get beyond such determinants? I would suggest that they can achieve this by examining their background assumptions and prejudices. Nietzsche calls this 'intellectual conscience'. It is a commitment to truth, certainty, and consistency of thoughts and character - although all these concepts have to be interpreted in the Nietzschean sense.

Nietzsche, in *The Gay Science*, complains that 'the great majority of people lack an intellectual conscience'. He goes on to explain that 'the majority of people do not consider it contemptible to believe this or that and to live accordingly, without first having given themselves an account of the final and most certain reasons of the pros and cons, and without even troubling themselves about such reasons afterwards: the most gifted men and women still belong to this "great majority"' (Book 1, section 2). Nietzsche's reference here to reasons for pros and cons might be in tension with his distrust of reason and truth in the abstract and general sense. However, these reasons could be unconscious motivations either in line with certain drives within the psychology of the individual, or internalised bias and prejudice taken from his social context, for example the feeling that the values they advocate are right because they are the product of a highly industrialised and developed society, or reflect the religion they follow or the party they subscribe to, or the race they belong to. Such unconscious bias needs to be brought to consciousness and analysed, so that one is fully aware of their reasons, and fully justified in taking the position they take or the point of view they adopt.

Reasons in the text above could be taken in a more limited and individualistic way by considering them as perspectives. In this case, the reasons people give to justify their positions to themselves or others are not considered timeless and absolute but revisable. Philosophical views are of this nature, they are not absolute but perspectival,

something Nietzsche is proud of proclaiming in many places of his writings, especially in his *Genealogy of Morals*. To take philosophical views as absolute is to be dogmatic, much like dogmatism had done in the past. There are lots of dogmas around in the philosophical scene, especially of the physicalist, materialist, reductionist nature. These views were often projected back into the history of philosophy, from Plato to Kant, to make philosophers appear to say the opposite of what they really said. That is why my advice to readers of secondary literature is to be aware of the underlying assumptions of the writer and his or her worldview. Even before considering to the reader's response, it is the responsibility of the philosopher to be committed to intellectual honesty and conscience.

In the final analysis, it is the philosopher's task to be consistent and truthful to him or herself before their readers. This could be expanded to all fields from ordinary life to the most intellectual. What Nietzsche lamented is the absence of intellectual honesty, because such honesty puts its practitioner at odds with the general public. 'Everybody looks at you with strange eyes and goes right on handling his scales, calling this good and that evil. Nobody even blushes when you intimate that their weights are underweight; nor do people feel outraged; they merely laugh at your doubt' (GS, 1.2).

But just when one is ready to accuse Nietzsche of being nihilist and allowing conflicting beliefs to exist in the same mind or personality, Nietzsche defends himself. In one of his later books *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche has a section specifically on intellectual conscience where he argues that one should take his belief seriously. He calls such a person a hypocrite, in the sense that he sticks to his belief while publicly pretending otherwise. Nietzsche even calls this evil and encourages more of it, in order to combat nihilism, because for him, evil is related to a strong will (see *TI*, Skirmishes, section 18). Could this be justified after all that has been said above? I would say yes, if one takes the belief in question to be fully examined, and their unconscious bias exposed and dealt with.

The Editor

Sense and Reference: A Novel Approach

Gottlob Frege writing at the end of the nineteenth century suggested a distinction between the *sense* of a term, and the *reference* of a term. In this article I demonstrate that he and subsequent philosophers have built unnecessarily complex and ultimately inadequate accounts of language based on a naive interpretation of the common-sense notion of terms *referring* to objects.

CHRIS SEDDON

Frege's initial aim was to explain how some statements of identity are informative but others are not. For example, of the two statements below, only the first is informative:

- The morning star = the evening star
- The evening star = the evening star

Frege suggested that designating terms such as 'the morning star' potentially have two components of meaning:

- The *reference* - the actual object to which the term refers
- The *sense* - the way in which the reference is made (the mode of designation)

Thus, according to Frege, the morning star and the evening star both have the same reference, but different senses. The first identity above is true, because the terms both refer to the planet Venus. It is informative, because they do so in different ways. The second identity is also true, but it is not informative.

Shortly after, Bertrand Russell suggested replacing Frege's distinction with the idea of a *definite description*. For example, 'the morning star' and 'the evening star' are different definite descriptions. For Russell such denoting phrases have no meaning in isolation - they merely play a part in forming implicit generalisations about terms that do have meaning. For example, according to Russell, to say that the morning star is identical with the evening star is to say that there is one and only one thing to which 'is the morning star' applies, one and only one thing to which 'is the evening star' applies, and those things are identical.

Thus, according to Russell, the first identity is significant but the second is not, because they are generalisations about different descriptions. According to Russell's account meaning is completely referential, but sometimes the reference is to a description as a form of words, rather than the object described.

Russell also used this idea of definite descriptions to

explain how we can at least make consistent sense of statements referring to entities which may not exist, or suggesting that certain entities may not exist.

Russell's theory still depended on the idea of proper names such as 'Venus' making a unique reference. Alfred Tarski developed more sophisticated accounts of how names - as opposed to longer descriptions - are attached to the objects to which they refer, based on protocols of social consensus.

Outline

In this paper I demonstrate that the idea of reference relied upon by all three logicians does not form any useful part in explaining how language works. First I outline some general features of natural language, which I hope will not be contentious, but will serve as useful reminders when considering alternative accounts of how language works. Then I briefly outline my own account of language, which does not rely on Frege or Russell's idea of *reference*. Then, for each of five fundamental ideas, I describe how the idea of reference is popularly supposed to explain it, explain why it fails, and provide a simple alternative explanation in my own terms.

The fundamental ideas for which I hope to provide alternative explanations are:

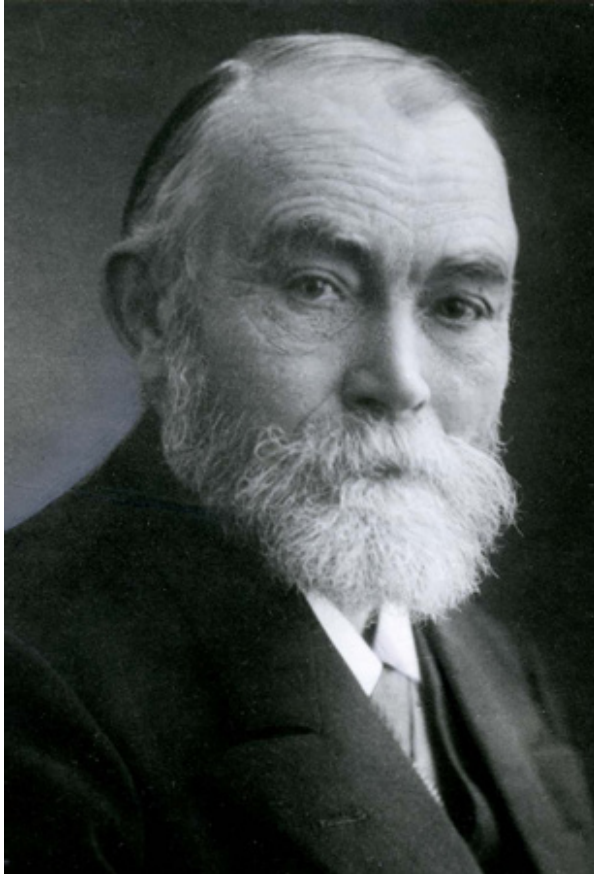
1. Identity
2. Description
3. Predication
4. Change
5. Reality

Features of Natural Language

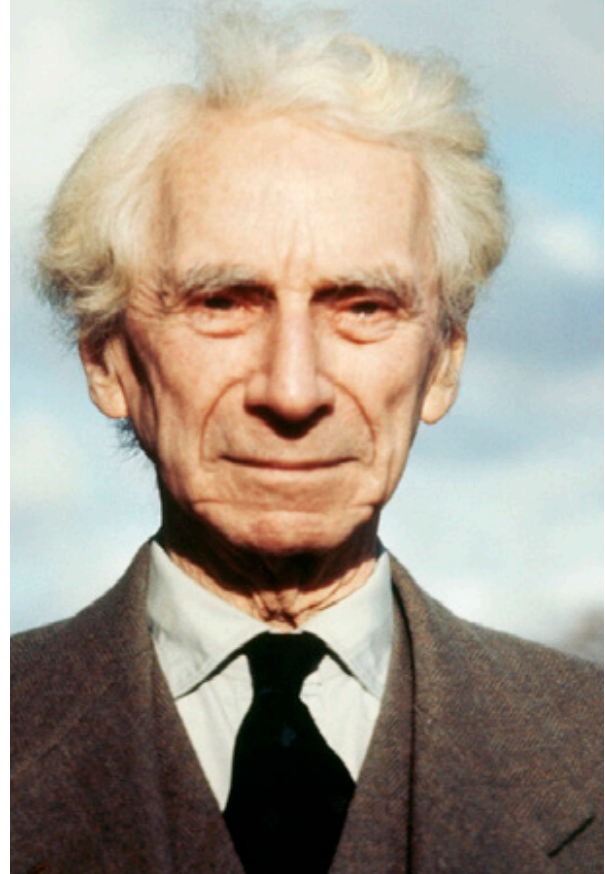
In the ensuing discussion, it is worth bearing in mind the following features of natural language:

Vagueness

Natural language often depends on vocabulary that is only vaguely understood and approximately shared



Gottlob Frege



Bertrand Russell

Implicit parameters

Natural language often depends on implicit parameters, deduced from the context but not explicitly stated

Undercommitment

Natural language is put to many uses, not all of which involve a commitment to precision or literal truth

Alternative analyses

There are often alternative ways to describe how these features interact in any given example of natural language usage

For example:

Vagueness

We probably will not agree in every instance whether a certain object is orange or red, or whether a certain accent is Cockney or Estuary, and indeed we may come across borderline cases in which we ourselves are no longer certain. This might be because we are considering different samples, or under different conditions, but it might also be because we are using different criteria - that we mean slightly different things by those terms, or have not made up our minds where to set a boundary.

Implicit parameters

In many contexts when I refer to the Queen, I mean the current Queen of England. In other contexts I might mean the previous Queen of Eng-

land, or the Queen of the Netherlands, the Queen of Narnia, or a chess piece under attack. This is not mere vagueness, because I do mean a queen of some sort, but I often omit many relevant qualifications, simply because they are obvious from the context.

Undercommitment

If I say nobody queues up at a British pub, I probably would just shrug it off if someone pointed out an exception. I probably did not literally mean nobody, I just meant hardly anybody. Or perhaps I meant, do not put too much effort into trying to follow a completely orderly queue. More soberly, a general scientific theory may be disproved by a single counter-example, but still be considered good enough as the basis for a new theory and most current practice.

Alternative analyses

Describing an accent as Estuary rather than Cockney may be accounted for by vague or different understanding of those terms (vagueness) but it may also be a rhetorical device to disparage someone priding themselves on a genuine Cockney accent (undercommitment). Maintaining a scientific theory in the face of evidence may be pragmatic (undercommitment), or through re-framing some of its terms (vagueness) or by re-interpreting it to be relative to newly discovered limits (implicit parameters).



The Morning Star

Language

Language is a way to help us consider what may or may not be true or desirable, through the use of shared vocabulary (which links signs to ideas) and grammar (which links ways of combining signs to ways of combining ideas).

This account links signs and combinations of signs to ideas in a simple and natural way. That a sign is linked to one or more ideas in a person's vocabulary is a recognition and a prediction that they have seen that sign used and will use that sign in a certain way. That way of using signs is very close to what Frege called the *sense* of a term, except that it is not assumed to be a way of *referring*, simply a way of building expressions associated with beliefs and desires. That certain ideas are combined to form a person's beliefs or desires is a recognition and prediction that they will behave in certain ways to achieve those desires.

For example, you may have seen from previous examples that I associate the sign 'Dolly' with someone or something that I can love, and that I associate the sign 'love' with a certain emotional disposition. You may also have realised that I associate the combination of signs 'Chris loves Dolly' with a certain belief. The idea of that belief in turn may be supposed to play a part in explaining my behaviour, under certain circumstances. The belief expressed by 'Chris loves Dolly' is an idea.

If it expresses the same idea to you that it expresses to me, then we will agree on which circumstances would make it true. But those circumstances are not something separate, to which the idea refers. They are the idea. We might be inclined to say that the idea is true if and only if the circumstances exist, but this achieves nothing, except to convert the truth of an idea into the existence of certain circumstances. It is a mere grammatical conversion, not an explanation. It is like saying 'Chris loves Dolly' is true if and only if Chris loves Dolly. I prefer to ask or explain what 'Chris loves Dolly' means by example, linked to action.

Similarly, the emotion expressed by 'love' is an idea. The personalities expressed by 'Chris' and 'Dolly' are ideas. The reification of the meaning of all these signs and combinations of signs as ideas is also a mere grammatical conversion, except that, unlike the conversion from the truth of a belief to the existence of a circumstance, it has the advantage of being able to use the idea of an idea to explain how language achieves its purpose of expressing beliefs and desires.

Identity

Frege and Russell both recognised the relationship that I will call *absolute identity*. The more usual term 'numerical identity' is a misnomer because so-called numerical identity is not often used in counting - counting more often uses weaker forms of equivalence



The Evening Star

to distinguish the individual items being counted. In my terms, to say that two ideas are absolutely identical means that nothing can be said of one that cannot be said of the other. In that sense, what might have been supposed to be two ideas were but one idea.

Frege and Russell both hypothesised that terms had meanings, but they thought of those meanings as the objects or circumstances referred to by those terms. That left them without the conceptual apparatus to define ideas in terms of other ideas, so they defined absolute identity in terms of terms. In their terms, to say that an expression of identity between two terms is true, is to say that any imaginable expression containing one would be equally true if it contained the other.

This, however left them with the problem outlined above. Both examples of identity statements are true, but only one of them is informative. Frege suggested that they both had the reference 'true', but they each had a different sense, because although the reference of the terms they used was the same, the sense of their terms was different. Russell pointed out several problems with Frege's account, making instead a distinction between *Primary* and *Secondary* occurrences of terms, which in effect allowed him to hypothesise different analyses of the underlying logic of natural English, so that some occurrences of a term meant something - that is, referred to something - but other instances were in

effect quotations being generalised. Tarski spotted further problems with Russell's account, but continued to regard meaning as essentially referential, and so built further complications into their account of meaning.

My analysis rejects the idea that the morning star and the evening star are identical because both terms refer to the 'same thing', that is, the planet Venus. Instead I suggest that we have in that putative explanation merely three different descriptions: the morning star describes a celestial object that appears low on the horizon in the morning at certain times of the year; the evening star describes a celestial object that appears low at a different point of the horizon in the evening at certain times of the year; and the planet Venus describes a celestial object orbiting the Sun a little closer than the Earth. Of course, we do not know the exact definition of those terms, so we do not share precisely the same three ideas, but that is simply the vagueness typical of natural language. These descriptions are not absolutely identical, because it could turn out that the morning star merely remained out of sight whilst the evening star was in view.

Descriptions

That leaves me to explain the relation between two different ideas, that is expressed by saying that the morning star is the evening star. It is first necessary to explain what is meant by a description. Russell suggested

Logic

that it was a form of words which had meaning only as part of a generalisation. Frege suggested that it was like a mathematical function. My explanation combines aspects of both accounts. I suggest that it is an idea, that is, something that could, but might not, be expressed by a formula of words. In my account of language, ideas can be combined in certain ways to form new ideas. One fundamental way to combine ideas is as function and argument yielding a result - strictly speaking a partial function and argument which may yield a result, but no more than one. Frege notated this form of combination by putting the function followed by the argument in parentheses, and might have notated the English phrases as follows:

Venus is a planet

Planet(Venus)

The morning star is a planet

Planet(MorningStar)

The function *Planet* is a description. According to Frege and Russell, the arguments *Venus* and *MorningStar* are names. In their terms, descriptions require arguments to form expressions which make references, but a name already makes a reference without any arguments. Typically, names are supposed to refer to objects, and function/argument combinations are supposed to refer to circumstances. So, *Venus* and the *MorningStar* are supposed to refer to a certain object, and *Planet(Venus)* is supposed to refer to the circumstance that *Venus* is a planet.

A descriptive idea like *Planet* takes one argument. That is, it forms a different idea when combined as a function on a different set of arguments. It ignores further arguments, in the sense that it forms the same idea even if further arguments are specified. An idea that varies with just one set of arguments is called *monadic*.

A relational idea like *love* takes two arguments. That is, it forms a different idea when combined as a function on a different set of arguments. For example, loving Chris is not the same as loving Dolly.

However, the idea so formed also forms a different idea when combined as a function on a further set of arguments. For example, Dolly loving Chris is not the same as Mariam loving Chris. It ignores further arguments. An idea that varies with just two sets of arguments is called *dyadic*.

Unlike monadic or dyadic ideas, which require one and two arguments respectively, a *niladic* idea requires no arguments. That is, it forms the same idea regardless of any arguments.

It is possible to regard the idea of *Venus* in the above



Shakespeare

example as monadic, even though no arguments are actually specified. However, in those examples, that would require the monadic idea of *Planet* to be of a higher order - that is, to generalise about the arguments of its argument. In line with the feature of alternative analyses, that analysis is possible but sub-optimal, because it implies unnecessary and unwieldy hierarchies of different orders.

It is not justifiable however, to regard the ideas of *Venus* or the *MorningStar* as niladic. Indeed, it is not justifiable to attempt to define any niladic idea, except in exceptional circumstances in the case of a mathematical term. This is because a niladic idea does not vary with any arguments, so giving a definition of a niladic idea logically implies that the definition applies only to one idea. Because of the vagueness of natural language, we do not have a single absolutely unambiguous definition of terms such as *Venus* or the morning star, but in any given context, we will want to apply a definition that is good enough for that context. Whatever definition we select, we must not restrict our language to a logical commitment that only one idea satisfies that definition. We may know for certain, scientifically, that there is only one planet second in orbit from our Sun, but if we define a niladic idea meaning in effect 'The planet second in orbit from our Sun' then that idea will not allow us to either assert or deny that there is any other planet equidistant from our Sun. On the other hand, if we treat it as a descriptive idea, we can then at least



Language includes many languages

assert as well as question our belief that there is only one planet second in orbit from our Sun. In conclusion, to avoid unnecessarily limiting the facts that we can express in our language, we must avoid defining contingent niladic ideas.

Thus, a better analysis of the descriptions in our opening example is:

Venus is a planet

For all x , if $\text{Venus}(x)$ then $\text{Planet}(x)$

The morning star is a planet

For all x , if $\text{MorningStar}(x)$ then $\text{Planet}(x)$

Note that the variable x is generalised, but not defined. Because Russell could only accept meaning as reference, he could only account for variables by supposing that they 'stood for' other expressions, specifically for names. However, having simply generalised the meanings of expressions as ideas, and related them to action via beliefs and desires, we can regard variables as 'standing for' ideas. There is no need to limit those ideas to objects, or references to objects. There is indeed no need to limit them at all. The conditions 'if $\text{Venus}(x)$ ' and 'if $\text{MorningStar}(x)$ ' provide precisely the limitation we require to express the ideas we wish to express. It simply does not matter what kind of idea x is nor how many ideas it stands for. All that matters is that, as argument to the relevant function ideas, its values each either produce the relevant ideas to satisfy the conditions and hence the conclusion, or they do not.

Thus, in our examples of identity statements, it might be argued that, although the descriptions are different, the object or things described are absolutely identical. That would suffice to explain how it is that only one of the examples above is informative. Then the two examples above might be analysed as follows:

- For any x and y , if $\text{MorningStar}(x)$ and $\text{EveningStar}(y)$ then $x = y$
- For any x and y , if $\text{EveningStar}(x)$ and $\text{EveningStar}(y)$ then $x = y$

The first says that both the morning star and the evening star describe at most one and the same 'thing', but the second merely says that the evening star describes at most one 'thing'.

However, this analysis does not accurately describe the commitment actually made by positing the identity of the morning and evening stars. We have no need, and would be foolish, to suggest that everything described as the evening star is absolutely identical with everything described as the morning star. The star (or in modern terminology, the planet) has changed between the morning and the evening. Not only is it in a different place, but it probably has a different temperature, some of its chemicals will have reacted, some of its atoms will have decayed, and so on. What we mean is not that the instances of the morning and evening star are absolutely identical, but that they are the same star - according to the same notion of being the same star that relates all the instances of Venus as it orbits the Sun.



Community of languages

Thus instead of regarding x and y in the formulation above as absolutely identical objects, it would be more accurate to regard them as ranging over many different ideas - which we need not further define, but which you might think of as events - except to say that some of them fit the description of the morning star, some fit the description of the evening star, and all fit the equivalence relation of being the same star as each other:

- For any x and y , if $\text{MorningStar}(x)$ and $\text{EveningStar}(y)$ then $\text{SameStar}(x, y)$
- For any x and y , if $\text{EveningStar}(x)$ and $\text{EveningStar}(y)$ then $\text{SameStar}(x, y)$

Thus, according to my account, statements of identity in natural language are usually generalisations about describing ideas and an implied equivalence relation between the ideas which they describe.

As another example, if my English Literature teachers are to be believed, the author of Macbeth is also the author of Hamlet. We might be tempted to suppose that the term 'the author of Macbeth' means the same as 'the author of Hamlet'. However, this is not the whole story, because an historian might discover that someone else wrote Hamlet. Even if no historian ever makes such a discovery, the mere possibility demonstrates that 'the author of Macbeth', whilst it may in fact refer to the same person as 'the author of Hamlet', does not have

the same meaning. Referring to the same person is not an absolute relation between designating terms and absolutely identical referents, but a contextually implied equivalence relation between generalised but otherwise undefined ideas to which the putatively identical ideas have been applied.

- For any x and y , if $\text{AuthorOfMacbeth}(x)$ and $\text{AuthorOfHamlet}(y)$ then $\text{SamePerson}(x, y)$

By contrast, an absolute identity can also hold between describing ideas:

- Evening star = étoile du soir

Predication

Implied equivalence relations play a key role in predication, providing a key insight into the distinction between objects and their properties. Instead of relying on an incoherent notion of 'the same object', or one which relies on an unjustified appeal to absolute identity, we can see the role of an implied equivalence relation in most predications, for example:

I have a red car

There is some x such that $\text{Mine}(x)$ and $\text{Car}(x)$ and $\text{Present}(x)$ and $\text{Red}(x)$

All my cars are red

Every x is such that if $\text{Mine}(x)$ and $\text{Car}(x)$ and $\text{Present}(x)$ then $\text{Red}(x)$

My car is red

Every x and y are such that if $\text{Mine}(x\ y)$ and $\text{Car}(x\ y)$ and $\text{Present}(x\ y)$ then $\text{Red}(x\ y)$ and $\text{SameCar}(x\ y)$

Note the use of the temporal present to distinguish my past and future cars from my present car(s). In this structure it becomes clear that the subject of the predication is precisely that to which an implied equivalence is applied to express its comparative uniqueness.

Russell's examples about George IV wishing to know whether Scott was the author of Waverley could be analysed as follows:

In the sense that George IV wished to know whether one and only one person wrote Waverley and Scott was that man

George IV wished to know whether every x and y is such that if $\text{AuthorOfWaverley}(x\ y)$ then $\text{Scott}(x\ y)$ and $\text{SamePerson}(x\ y)$

In the sense that one and only one person wrote Waverley and George IV wished to know whether Scott was that man

Every x and y is such that if $\text{AuthorOfWaverley}(x\ y)$ then $\text{SamePerson}(x\ y)$ and George IV wished to know whether every x is such that if $\text{AuthorOfWaverley}(x)$ then $\text{Scott}(x)$

Similar ambiguities can be resolved by deploying precisely the right logical structure:

My beautiful new car is red

Every x and y is such that if $\text{Mine}(x\ y)$ and $\text{Car}(x\ y)$ and $\text{Present}(x\ y)$ then $\text{New}(x\ y)$ and $\text{Beautiful}(x\ y)$ and $\text{Red}(x\ y)$ and $\text{SameCar}(x\ y)$

My beautiful car (at least, the new one) is red

Every x and y is such that if $\text{Mine}(x\ y)$ and $\text{Car}(x\ y)$ and $\text{Present}(x\ y)$ and $\text{New}(x\ y)$ then $\text{Beautiful}(x\ y)$ and $\text{Red}(x\ y)$ and $\text{SameCar}(x\ y)$

Change

In accounting for the difference between significant and insignificant identities, I suggested that in many instances the actual identity did not hold between the ideas named, but between the ideas to which those ideas applied, as functions to arguments. Thus, 'the author of Macbeth', 'the author of Hamlet', 'the morning star', 'the evening star' are all describing ideas. In logical jargon they are monadic, because they express different things when applied to other ideas. I suggested that 'Shakespeare' and 'the planet Venus' are also monadic, describing ideas.

I also suggested that the actual identity was not usually absolute identity, in the sense that there was absolutely no difference between the arguments, but an implicit equivalence relation, in the sense that the arguments have something relevant in common, but not necessarily everything in common. I suggested that "being the

same star" or "being the same person" were the relevant implicit equivalence relations in the above examples.

One of my arguments for the latter suggestion - referring to implied equivalence relations instead of the relation of absolute identity - relied on the phenomenon of change, and I use similar ideas to account for that.

A traditional more naive account of change is to posit the idea of the essential and accidental properties of an object. When an object changes, it retains its essential properties, even though the accidental properties may change.

This 'essence' should not however be attributed to some object to which an idea refers, but to a relation between the descriptive ideas used in a predication. For example, it is essential of a spouse that they are married. It is essential of a woman that they are female. It is essential of an author that they have written a book. But none of these things are essential to J K Rowling. It is a contingent fact, not a necessary one, that J K Rowling is a female spouse and author. It is not essential of a spouse that they be a woman, or of an author that they be a spouse, and so on.

Similarly, in a description of change, the unchanging essence - as opposed to the changing accidental properties - is identified by its position in the logical structure of the description. That a specific object changes to acquire a specific property at some specific time, means that before that time, the object did not have the property, but from that time onward, it did have that property. More specifically:

That an Object changed to acquire a Property for some TimePeriod means

Every x is such that if $\text{Object}(x)$ then, $\text{Property}(x)$ if and only if $\text{TimePeriod}(x)$

Thus, there is no puzzle as to whether a real object can ever change. We understand that to be an object is simply to fit a certain description. Some things fitting the description of the object will have certain properties, and belong to certain time periods, others will not.

For example, the UK was part of the European Union between January 1, 1973 and January 31, 2020. Everything that was the UK within that time period was part of the European Union, but nothing that was the UK outside that time period was part of the European Union. An unfortunate ambiguity of natural language is that it does not always distinguish between identity and description - in this example, between something being identical with the UK, and something fitting the description of being the UK.



Greetings: Saying the same thing

The UK was part of the European Union between January 1, 1973 and January 31, 2020

Every x is such that if UK(x) then, EU(x) if and only if 1973-01-01To2020-01-31(x)

Reality

We have seen above how an attempt to account for language in terms of reference leads to the idea that there is some REAL object that explains identity. Russell was tempted to view Scott as the REAL identity corresponding to the author of *Waverley*. Frege was tempted to view the planet Venus as the REAL identity corresponding to both the morning star and the evening star. We might be tempted to Shakespeare as the REAL identity of both the author of *Macbeth* and the author of *Hamlet*, or my car as the REAL identity of that beautiful new red thing.

However, I hope to have shown that these supposedly REAL identities are merely additional descriptions - typically those that have a corresponding implied equivalence allowing us to count those ideas which they describe. There is no justification or explanatory power in supposing that they have a referent - although that appears to be the naive explanation of whether something is 'real'.

This is not to say that nothing is real. Instead, it indicates that we need a better explanation of what it

means to say that something is real. Unfortunately, the right explanation is disappointingly trivial. Whether something is regarded as real or not is dependent on whether it fulfils certain properties, but which property something requires to be counted as real, is wholly implied by the context.

I have written about this before. Monopoly money is not real money - if the context is about using it to buy things outside the game of Monopoly. On the other hand, if the context is within the game of Monopoly, then genuine Monopoly money is more real than a handwritten forgery, and a handwritten forgery is more real than a note I thought I still had left but did not. Conversely, a pound note is not real money outside the UK - according to some definitions of real money - but data stored on certain financial databases might be real money in that sense.

The rainbow in the Millais painting to which the blind beggar girl's little sister is looking is real, in the sense that she is not just imagining that it is there. But it is not real in the sense that it exists outside the painting. The rainbow I saw the other day is not real in the sense that I could touch it, but it is real in the sense that others could also see it.

What is real is related to what is essential. Neither are inherent in the objects being described, but in the part

played in logical structures by the ideas used to describe them.

It has been said, for example, the water is REALLY H_2O . The suggestion is that, before scientists discovered the chemical constituents of pure water, that we did not know what water REALLY was. Instead, I suggest that, again, what we have here are two different descriptions, neither of them precisely defined, but each of them fit for different purposes.

Despite the lack of a precise definition, we can probably agree that pure water is liquid, changes to ice below a certain temperature, to vapour above another temperature and, most importantly, is healthy to drink. We might or might not know that the freezing and boiling points depend on the pressure, and that a certain proportion of impurities is practically inevitable even in the purest water.

The temptation is to regard H_2O as a more precise description, in the sense that water really is H_2O . But this is not the case. H_2O is a chemical substance formed of molecules that each have two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom. Pure ice, water, and water vapour are all H_2O - or would be, if they could ever be sufficiently free of impurities. So not all H_2O is water, because ice and vapour can be H_2O . but they are not water until they have been melted or condensed. But more importantly, pure H_2O is not always healthy to drink. H_2O includes not only ordinary water - which contains small quantities of heavy water, as well as other impurities - but also pure heavy water. Drinking heavy water instead of normal water would quite soon prove fatal.

Thus reality is not an intrinsic independent property of certain things, but properties implicit in the predications and other generalisations on which we choose to focus. We may properly speak of our reality being comprised of the ideas we have available to us to form beliefs and desires. This is why exploring ideas, and trying to be clear about how they work together, is so important.

Summary

Language is not adequately described in terms of words referring to objects or sentences referring to circumstances. Such accounts not only fail to explain anything, but introduce significant errors. Instead, words and combinations of words express ideas, which ultimately combine to form beliefs and desires, which in turn explain and predict intentional actions.

Most of the ideas we express are descriptions (monadic) or relations (higher adicity). Objects are descriptions



The Blind Girl by Millais

with implicitly associated equivalence relations which differentiate them through change. Descriptions and relations ultimately deal with ideas which are generalised rather than defined.

Ordinary identity statements relate different descriptions and express, not absolute identity, but a looser implied equivalence between the ideas described.

Predicative statements and statements of change likewise typically express generalised conditional statements with the persistence of the object of predication or change expressed by an implied idea of equivalence between instances of the object and predicates.

Our reality comprises not merely the true beliefs we may hold, but the ideas that we are able to use to construct and consider beliefs and desires.

Cats

I

Many hide in half forgotten gardens
where they sit and watch the clouds sail by.
Off and on they move a whisker, try
catching this or that, a butterfly ...

Not regretting or say "beg your pardon" -
but the beetles ran off undisturbed.
Dragonflies, they flutter in the breeze,
while the cats keep looking, still uncurbed
from the buzz around of flies and bees.

And their ears twist and their amber eyes
stare ahead at ghosts that no one sees.

II

Cats, the poets are the ones who learn
from your solitudes and how to master
all those different layers of concern,
how in dawns beneath a paling moon
or a hazy sunny afternoon
shadows of the dead they may discern.

Let them quietly sleep under old trees,
where in winds of ease the grasses bow,
where the earth lends shelter for their dreams
and they know of then and know of now.

Leave, it's dark now! All the senses quieten.
But the cats awaken, eyes a-glow -
Little mice are moving to and fro
and the stars appear in turns and tighten
rules of heaven, in their overflow.



Poem and Artwork by Scharlie Meeuws

*‘Tell them
I’ve had a
Wonderful Life . . .’*



Wittgenstein

I
So many ways those last words might be meant!
Let’s try: sincere, face-value, meant as said.
How else construe a dying man’s intent?

And yet, we’ve read you, read about you, spent
Long hours, years, lives absorbing all we’ve read.
How many ways those last words might be meant.

Small sign you gave of some ironic bent
That should have told us straight: we’d been misled.
How else construe a dying man’s intent?

A serious man, not apt to circumvent
The truth, or seek to have false witness spread.
How many ways those last words might be meant!

We must believe you, else your life’s work went
For naught when you, naysayer, struck it dead.
How else construe a dying man’s intent?

We trusters say: let us reorient
Our thinking, not break faith at your deathbed.
How many ways those last words might be meant!

Yet let’s not duck the challenge they present
To those who’d thought to live inside your head.
How now construe a dying man’s intent?
How many ways those last words might be meant!



CHRIS NORRIS

II

Let's say '*vita nuova*, life renewed,
Transfigured instantly in retrospect'.
Why think life-options end as lives conclude?

More than a change of outlook, mind or mood,
Those words make good your 'seeing-as' effect.
Let's think *vita nuova*, life renewed.

Life-aspects from death's door thus briefly viewed
May leave no scene unaltered since last checked:
Why think life-options end as lives conclude?

Blithe spirits counsel 'change of attitude'
But no such soul-malaise can touch their sect.
Let's think *vita nuova*, life renewed.

On wanhope's egg you melancholics brood
Till, long tight-sealed, it's revelation-pecked.
Why think life-options end as lives conclude?

This reading has your tortured life imbued
With hopes redeemed from hopes mislaid or wrecked:
Let's think *vita nuova*, life renewed.

Else how might any life as dark-side skewed
As yours catch sight of joys they'd once neglect?
Why think life-options end as lives conclude?
Let's think *vita nuova*, life renewed.

III

Maybe we'd best account you satirist,
Self-disabused of hope's deceptive gleam.
What's then to save of each last chance you missed?

The last we hear of, just before your tryst
With Tolstoy's God, was every saint's stock theme.
Maybe we'd best account you satirist.

Your gift to those who seek yet further grist
To their harsh mill, this pietistic seam:
What's then to save of each last chance you missed?

No cynic who'd apply the devil's twist
To dying words but buys this handy scheme:
Maybe we'd best account you satirist.

Then it's your life's-work pivots on the gist
Of words fit to perplex the Seraphim.
What's then to save of each last chance you missed?

Call in some sense-inverting casuist
And they'll have you take one for satire's team.
Maybe we'd best account you satirist

And hide our scorn when those recidivist
Truth-sticklers next revive their old regime.
What's then to save of each last chance you missed?
Maybe we'd best account you satirist.

IV

'Tell them', you said, but who knows what's to tell,
What change of heart those seven last words may bear?
How conjure paradise from psychic hell?

The ambiguous rumour of a passing bell
Is how they fall on ears caught unaware.
'Tell them', you said, but who knows what's to tell?

That ambiguity exerts its spell,
Fills some with cautious hope, some with despair:
How conjure paradise from psychic hell?

Some say the known facts of your life compel
An earthbound gloss not offered up as prayer.
'Tell them', you said, but who knows what to tell?

'Spent all his life as if in a monk's cell',
They say; 'why think the torment ended there,
By conjuring paradise from psychic hell?'

'Why claim to know what soul-event befell',
Some counter, 'beyond what those plain words declare?'
'Tell them', you said, but who knows what to tell?

What if your manic paths ran parallel,
The moment's bliss, the *saison en enfer*,
The conjured paradise, the psychic hell?
'Tell them', you said, but who knows what to tell?

Burke vs. the Moderns: Liberalism Then and Now

DR. ALAN XUEREB

In a time when political ideologies often collapse into tribal slogans, it is worth revisiting the ideas of Edmund Burke, the 18th-century Irish statesman and philosopher often regarded as the father of modern conservatism. Burke's thought, however, was deeply rooted in a form of classical liberalism — one that is starkly different from the contemporary liberalism we see today in much of the Western world. Comparing these two versions of liberalism illuminates not only how political thought has evolved but also what might have been lost in the process.

The Foundations: Tradition and Change

Burke's political philosophy is built on a reverence for tradition and a wariness of abstract rationalism. He famously criticized the French Revolution not because he was opposed to liberty, but because he believed that the revolutionaries had severed themselves from the accumulated wisdom of the past. In *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), Burke argued that 'no generation should ever be so rash as to consider itself the last and wisest', urging society to treat its institutions as inherited trusts rather than experimental playgrounds.

Contemporary liberalism, particularly in its progressive form, often views tradition with suspicion. It sees historical norms as potentially oppressive and prefers a more activist and transformative posture toward social structures. While Burke believed reform was necessary, he insisted it must be 'with due regard to the manners and prejudices of the people' — gradual, not revolutionary.

Individual and Society

At the heart of Burke's liberalism is a balance between individual liberty and social responsibility. Individuals are not isolated units of desire and will; they are 'social animals' embedded in families, communities, and a moral order that predates them. Burke wrote of society as a 'partnership... between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born'. This view contrasts sharply with the modern liberal emphasis on individual autonomy and self-expression.

Contemporary liberalism tends to prioritize individual rights over collective obligations, and increasingly defines liberty in terms of personal identity — gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and self-determination. While such autonomy may appear empowering, Burke would have warned that severing freedom from a shared moral

and cultural framework risks social fragmentation and moral relativism.

Today's more radical expressions of this ethos — often grouped under the term wokism — seek to remake society around an ever-evolving catalogue of grievances, identities, and corrective measures. While motivated by ideals of inclusion and justice, such movements can inadvertently erode the cultural and institutional continuity that Burke saw as essential to human flourishing.

Equality: Legal vs. Social

Burke supported legal equality and the rule of law but rejected the idea of radical egalitarianism. He believed in natural inequality — people have different talents and social roles, and warned against efforts to flatten society through force or ideology. 'It is said that twenty-four millions ought to prevail over two hundred thousand. True: if the constitution of a kingdom be a problem of arithmetic', he wrote sarcastically in *Reflections*.

Modern liberalism, particularly since the 20th century, has leaned increasingly toward redistributive justice. Thinkers like John Rawls (*A Theory of Justice*, 1971) have emphasized equality of opportunity and, to some extent, equality of outcome. The liberal state today often plays a corrective role, using taxation, affirmative action, and social programs to address disparities.

However, in the contemporary moment, the pursuit of equality can become so fixated on group identity and historical reparation that it risks hardening the very categories it seeks to transcend. A Burkean critique might suggest that such efforts, though well-intentioned, can treat citizens as abstract representatives of groups rather than as complex individuals shaped by history, community, and character.

The Role of the State

For Burke, the state should act as a guardian, not an engineer. He defended representative government, but distrusted direct democracy and populist impulses, which he saw as vulnerable to demagogues and mob rule. Parliamentarians, in his view, should exercise judgment, not merely mirror public opinion.

Contemporary liberalism is generally more trusting of technocratic governance and large-scale bureaucratic



Edmund Burke

interventions. From public healthcare to climate policy to diversity mandates, the modern liberal state is expected to actively shape social outcomes. Burke's suspicion of concentrated power — whether in the hands of kings or majorities — would regard this as dangerously naïve.

Religion and Moral Order

Burke, though not dogmatic, saw religion — particularly Christianity — as an essential foundation for civic virtue and moral restraint. He feared that a society untethered from transcendent values would descend into either licentiousness or authoritarianism.

By contrast, today's liberalism is largely secular, often viewing religious traditions as private matters at best and oppressive systems at worst. The 'moral imagination' Burke praised has been replaced, in many quarters, by moral relativism, or by new secular orthodoxies which, ironically, resemble the dogmas they claim to replace. In some corners of progressive activism, there is even a performative zeal — ritualized outrage, public confession, excommunication — that mimics the structure of religious fervour without its humility or forgiveness.

Conclusion: What Can Burke Teach Us Today?

Burke's liberalism was not a rigid ideology but a temperament: prudent, modest, cautious, and rooted in lived experience. It stood for freedom, but not for libertinism; for rights, but not for entitlement; for change, but not for rupture.

In an age of polarized politics and ideological purity tests, Burke reminds us that political wisdom involves humility, historical consciousness, and moral responsibility. His liberalism does not fit neatly into the left-right binary, but it might offer a vital corrective to both.

As we debate the role of the individual, the meaning of freedom, and the legitimacy of institutions, Burke's voice urges us not to discard the past in pursuit of abstract ideals, but to build upon it with care.

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Editor: Dr. Rahim Hassan

Contact Us:

rahimhassan@hotmail.co.uk

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