READING QUESTIONS/HW #1 – GOTTLOB FREGE – ON SENSE AND REFERENCE

HW 1 – DUE THURSDAY IN CLASS – 1 PAGE TYPED, 1.5 SPACING, .7” MARGINS, 1 LINE ON THE TOP FOR YOUR NAME, HW#, TITLE: FREGE – SENSE AND REFERENCE (ie, don’t use valuable space on the top of your HW paper to tell me your name, date, etc – just ONE line!), font no larger than 12 pt: answer anywhere from 3 to 5 questions of your choosing from the list below (or you can also choose from my next set of questions to be posted tomorrow but these are “easier”!). Don’t worry if you get the “wrong” answer – just do your best and come to class with questions!

I. PAGES 23 – 34 and last page (from online reading) or pages – 36 - 47 and last page (from the pdf version)

1. Frege says that “equality” (a=b) gives rise to “challenging questions.” What are these “challenging questions?”

2. Frege mentions “a priori” (before experience) which is analytic (“the predicate of a sentence is “contained” in the subject of the sentence) and then says that some statements are not established as “a priori.” He gives an example, “the discover that the rising sun…”. Based on this what do you think would be the characteristics of these “non-apriori” statements? (Hint: the opposite of a prior – yes?)

3. Frege says that the connexion of two signs with the same designated thing is “arbitrary.” He gives reasons for why this is the case. What is the reason(s) he gives?

4. Frege seems to be saying, OK, we are free to use different words to mean the same thing. But is there a difference between using different words to mean the same thing and using the same words to mean the same thing? (ie, cat = small feline animal VS cat = cat). If there is difference just what sort of difference is this? He then says, that when we use different words to mean the same thing “we no longer refer to the subject matter, but only to its mode of designation… (and) this is just what we want to do.” Question: what do you think he means by “mode of designation” and why do we do this anyways? (why is this “just what we want to do”?)

5. Make your best educated guess based on the context of the reading: what does frege mean by “cognitive value”?

6. Try out his triangle example. Note: vertices are the apex, the “points”, there are three, of a triangle. He points out that the intersection of a,b = b,c and yet the “mode of presentation” of a,b is NOT the same as the mode of presentation of b,c and thus a,b = b,c is NOT the same as a,b=a,b… So what do you think he means here by “mode of presentation” and “that “the statement” gives us “actual knowledge.”?

7. Back in the day, like, when telescopes/astronomy was unsophisticated compared to nowadays, folks thought that the “evening star” was a different object in the sky from the “morning star.” Then it turned out that they were the same object: VENUS! OK, so
based on Frege’s discussion of these “stars”, and signs, what is the difference between “REFERENCE” and “SENSE”, and “SIGN”? How do all three fit together?

8. Can a given reference have only ONE sign? Yes or no? Explain.

9. Do all expressions/statements ALWAYS have a reference? Explain.

10. Given an example of “signs of signs.” Use “quotation marks” in your example.

11. I “see” a cellphone. I then “say”, “There is a cellphone over there.” What does Frege say “cellphone” refers to? Is the object of the sign, “cellphone,” the same as the IDEA of the sign, “cellphone.”? Explain.

12. If I place cellphone on the table in our classroom (hopefully an air-conditioned classroom!), do we all “see” the “same” cellphone? Is the reference of “cellphone” (the sign), the same for all of us? What would Frege say here?

13. How about the “sense” of cellphone? Could these be the same for all of us?

14. Frege concludes this section by noting three “levels of difference” between signs (words, etc): Level 1: IDEAS only or Level 2: SENSE w/no reference OR Level 3: sense+reference. He then says (I think), “we are going to now ignore Level 1 stuff (ideas)( and only focus on level 2-3. Why does he do this (decide to ignore level 1?)

15. Frege takes on the “idealists” and “skeptics” and refutes both. Note: idealists hold that ideas are the only reality, there are no “material objects”. How does he use his “language analysis” in order to refute both idealism and skepticism?

16. What is the difference for Frege between “proper names” and “declarative sentences”?

17. The notion of “reference” and the notion of “truth value” are intimately connected for Frege. What does Frege mean by “truth value” and how is this connected to reference? If a statement has no reference, does it still have truth value?

18. What about the relation of subject to predicate? Doesn’t this express the relation of a though to “the True”? Why does Frege reject this approach?

19. When we speak of an entire sentence being “true” or “false” how exactly does this work? This section is quite confusing but you might be able to get the general “gist” of Frege's inquiry. What sort of questions is Frege raising here? What sort of approach does he use to try and answer the questions that he raises?

20. From Frege's discussion on "subordinate clauses", noun clauses, etc, what does he seem to mean by the word THOUGHT? How is THOUGHT distinct from "SENSE' vs. TRUTH VALUE?

21. Compare these two sentences: 1) "the thought that, Frege is really difficult to understand, occurred to him. and 2)"Frege is really difficult to understand." What would Frege point out here? What is different, with respect to "truth values" between these two sentences?

22. Can you give an example of two sentence that REFER TO THE SAME THING but... this fact alone does not mean that the two sentences have THE SAME TRUTH VALUE?
23. Declarative sentences, imperative sentences, questions - of these three sentence types two of these have no "reference." Explain.

24. THE READING QUESTIONS STOP AT ROUGHLY PAGE 34 and pick up again at the last page.

25. LAST PAGE OF READING: Frege wants to know a few things: 1) is grammatical structure the same as logical structure when it comes to sentences? 2) which parts or part of a sentence account for the "truth value" of the sentence (ie, that make it true or false)? My questions to you: 1) does he think that logical structure is always equal to grammatical structure? 2) if we divide a sentence into "independent" and 'dependent" clauses, which of these, or combo of these accounts for a sentence's "truth value"? 3) how does Frege use "substitution" to test various ideas about "truth value" and components of a sentence?

26. In the end what does he conclude about knowledge and sentences? What's most important, the "sense" or the "reference" of a sentence? If two sentences have the SAME REFERENCE, do they always have the same truth value?

27. BASED ON LECTURE/HANDOUT - Our understanding of singular terms cannot be based only on knowing the reference. We must also consider the sense. Thus sense is not the same as reference. What is his argument for this position?

28. BASED ON LECTURE/HANDOUT - What is the COMPOSITIONALITY thesis?

29. BASED ON LECTURE/HANDOUT - If sense is not reference then what the heck is "sense"? Does Frege ever clearly explain this?

30. BASED ON LECTURE/HANDOUT - Is natural language (ie, the way we "naturally speak") an adequate tool, for Frege, for rational inquiry? for scientific inquiry? for getting at the "real truth" of things?

31. BASED ON LECTURE/HANDOUT - What is the "sin of psychologism" for Frege?

32. BASED ON LECTURE/HANDOUT - Are thoughts "objective"? In what way is Frege a realist?

Note: Frege’s Begriffsschrift (or literally “concept-script” in German) was perhaps the most important publication on logic since Aristotle. It was written in 1879, and was intended as a logical language/formula-language modeled after arithmetic that would represent “pure thought.” Quote from 1879 text: “‘If the task of philosophy is to break the domination of words over the human mind [...] then my concept notation, being developed for these purposes, can be a useful instrument for philosophers [...] I believe the cause of logic has been advanced already by the invention of this concept notation.” (Preface to the Begriffsschrift)” (Wikipedia)