

Seminar four

CUHK

24 March 2006

Frank Jackson

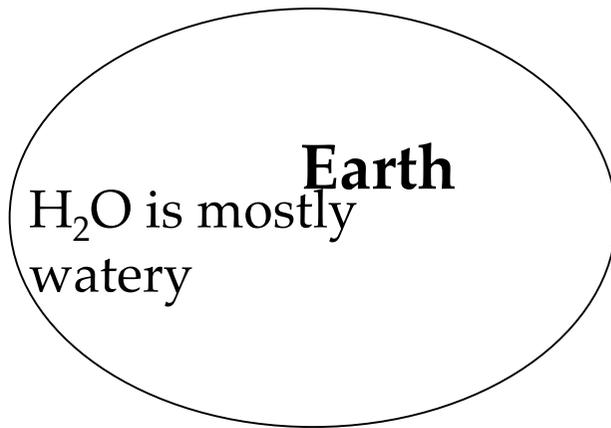
What we did last time

- Saw that the two property strategy didn't work for teleonomy
- Saw that for some sentences how they represent things to be is the worlds at which the sentence is true, but for many it isn't.
- When it isn't, there is a difference between a sentence's *A* and *C* intensions and it is the *A* intension that gives the representational content.

What we will do today

- See how to defang Twin Earth: the example is no kind of support for content being broad or for the anti-descriptivist agenda.
- State and defend a version of the description theory of reference for proper names.

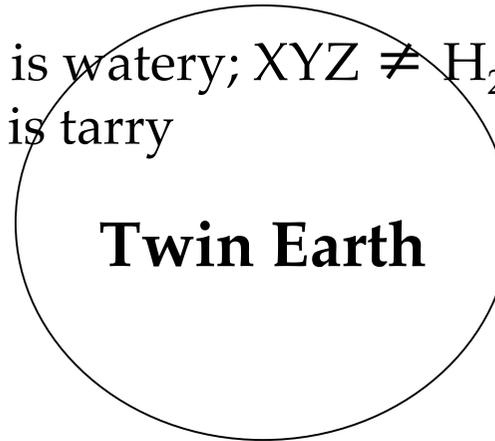
Twin Earth Defanged



'water'

Jackson

XYZ is watery; XYZ \neq H₂O;
H₂O is tarry



'water'

Twin Jackson

There are no word police

- We decided how we'd use the word 'water'. Not at a convention in the way the usage of some scientific terms are settled (temporarily) but implicitly. The key first step is to review the at all plausible candidates for how we use 'water'.
- If we had funding for a survey, we could settle which usage is correct but we don't, so we'll conduct the discussion for each plausible view and show under each that the 'meanings (how things are being represented to be) ain't in the head' conclusion does not follow.

Ways one might use 'water' I

- First, perhaps the word 'water' is a word for any watery substance, any substance that has most of the usual list of properties: clear, odourless, falls from the sky, potable, and so on, and water beliefs are simply beliefs about watery stuff.
- In that case, 'water' in Jackson's mouth refers to XYZ every bit as much as to H₂O, and the beliefs he expresses using the word are about XYZ as much as they are about H₂O (but not the black tarry manifestation on Twin Earth). Likewise for Twin Jackson and H₂O.
- Second, perhaps the word 'water' is a word for the *unique* natural kind that in some good number of manifestations, but not necessarily all, has the watery properties, and water beliefs are beliefs about the unique kind that in many manifestations has the watery properties.

Ways one might use 'water' II

- In that case, 'water' in Jackson's mouth fails to refer. There is no unique kind; there are two kinds that satisfy the specification: H₂O and XYZ. And his belief that there is water in the bath, for example, is false. Similar remarks apply to Twin Jackson.
- Third, perhaps the word 'water' is a word for any natural kind that in some good number of manifestations has the watery properties, and water beliefs are beliefs about any kind that in a good number of manifestations has the watery properties.
- In that case, 'water' in Jackson's mouth refers equally to H₂O and XYZ. Both kinds fit the bill. Similarly for Twin Jackson.

Ways one might use 'water' III

- Fourth, perhaps, the word 'water' is a word for the natural kind that in some good number of manifestations has the watery properties *and stands in such and such a relation to certain users of the word.*
- This is a usage that makes Jackson's and Twin Jackson's word 'water' differ in reference if the classes of users differ to Jackson and Twin Jackson. Likewise for the beliefs they express using 'water'. But it also makes the content of their utterances and beliefs centred, and difference in reference is compatible with sameness of content provided the difference is due to a difference in centre.
- Homework: as above but with 'the natural kind' replaced by '*a* natural kind'.

The bearing on descriptivism

- Descriptivism is the doctrine that words refer to items that have certain properties, satisfy certain descriptions, associated with the words.
- Twin Earth is supposed to make trouble for the doctrine because 'water' in Earthian mouths refers to H₂O on Twin Earth but H₂O on Twin Earth has none of the properties associated with 'water'.
- When you do the 'divide and conquer' exercise with the possible usages of 'water' this claim is revealed as false.

Going through the possible usages of 'water'

- 'water' is a word for any watery substance
 - then 'water' refers to that which is watery.
- 'water' is a word for the *unique* natural kind that in some good number of manifestations, but not necessarily all, has the watery properties
 - then 'water' refers to that which is the same kind as the only kind common to much of the watery.
 - the fact that some bits of water lack the watery nature is neither here nor there: being same-kindred as the watery is a property.

Going through the possible usages of 'water'

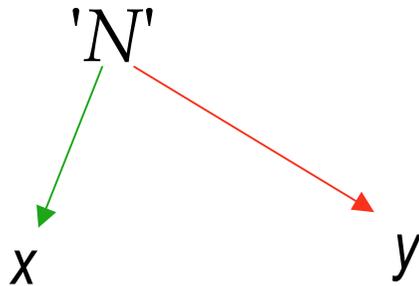
- 'water' is a word for any natural kind that in some good number of manifestations has the watery properties
 - then 'water' refers to that which is the same kind as the some of the watery.
 - the fact that some bits of water lack the watery nature is neither here nor there: being same-kinded as some of the watery is a property.
- 'water' is a word for the natural kind that in some good number of manifestations has the watery properties *and stands in such and such a relation to certain users of the word*
 - then 'water' refers to the kind that is both of the same kind as the watery and stands in such and such a relation to certain users of the word.

The description theory of reference for representationalists

- It holds that '*N* is *F*' represents that the *D* is *F*.
- Rigidity comes into the picture when we ask after the modal properties of the sentence '*N* is *F*', a separate matter.
- Saying it in terms of reference to that which has the associated properties
 - If '*N* is *F*' represents that the *D* is *F*, *D* is the associated property for '*N*'.
 - Our approach makes clear sense of the appeal to intuitions about what we might discover in refuting certain views about the associated properties.

Why we need a good account of associated properties

- Supervenience of reference on nature
- If 'N' refers to x and not to y , there is some relevant difference in how x and y are. So we know reference goes by properties, the issue is does it go by *associated* properties.



The verbalisation issue about associated properties

- It is easy to find words for the associated property – Paris is the only item with the property of being Paris; it is sometimes hard to find *illuminating* ones.
- The representationalist approach tells us this doesn't matter, as the following example shows.
- Might be able to recognise the shape below and ascribe it using 'Fred'. This would be representing that something has the shape despite not being able to provide an illuminating verbalisation.



Why give the description theory the time of day?

- We produce '*N is F*' given information about the distribution of properties – *ab initio* and forever, and our evidence in favour or against such sentences is always from distribution of properties.
- Words don't make beliefs.
- Ergo, we should seek to understand what's represented about how things are in terms of the distribution of properties.
- The 'philosopher as expert' reply to this argument
- The English department doesn't need our advice on 'Mark Twain = Samuel Clemens'; likewise for the person in the street and for 'Shakespeare wrote King Lear'.

How to find the associated properties for a given name ' N '

- The credence we give the sentence ' N is F ' is a function of information about the distribution of properties.
- ' D ' is the associated property or description for ' N ' if the credence profile under the impact of information about properties for ' D is F ' equals that of ' N is F '.
- The following slide gives the core idea in terms of a picture involving Dr Who's *Tardis*.

'Shakespeare wrote *King Lear*'

information
about the
distribution of
properties



$\{I_i\}$ \longrightarrow Cr ('Shakespeare wrote *King Lear*')
 Cr ('The so and so wrote *King Lear*')

What are proper names for?

- Sometimes getting ourselves into a certain relationship to a given object is very important.
- Doing this requires knowledge of a distinctive property of the object. To get to Hong Kong we need to know a property of HK that it alone has.
- This is true even for cases where we know we have seen something before without knowing in any detail what triggers the judgement – e.g. face recognition.
- Problem: there must always be a distinctive property but often we don't know what it is, or it is hard to discern.

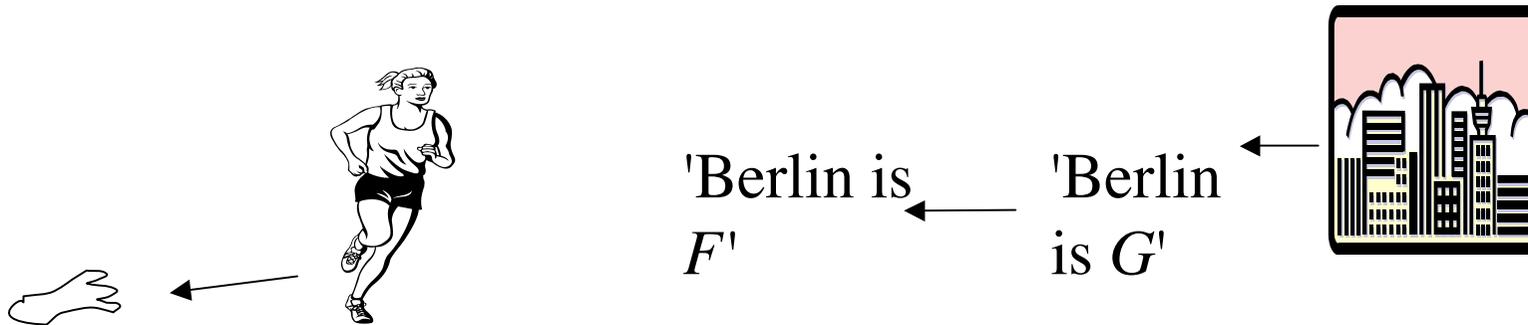
One way to solve the ignorance problem

- Agree to conspicuous tagging or labelling conventions: e.g. room numbers.
- Wittgenstein, PI, §15 "It will often prove useful in philosophy to say to ourselves: naming something is like attaching a label to a thing."
- Labels for people are often subjunctive interaction patterns



'John Smith' cum 'Paris' problem

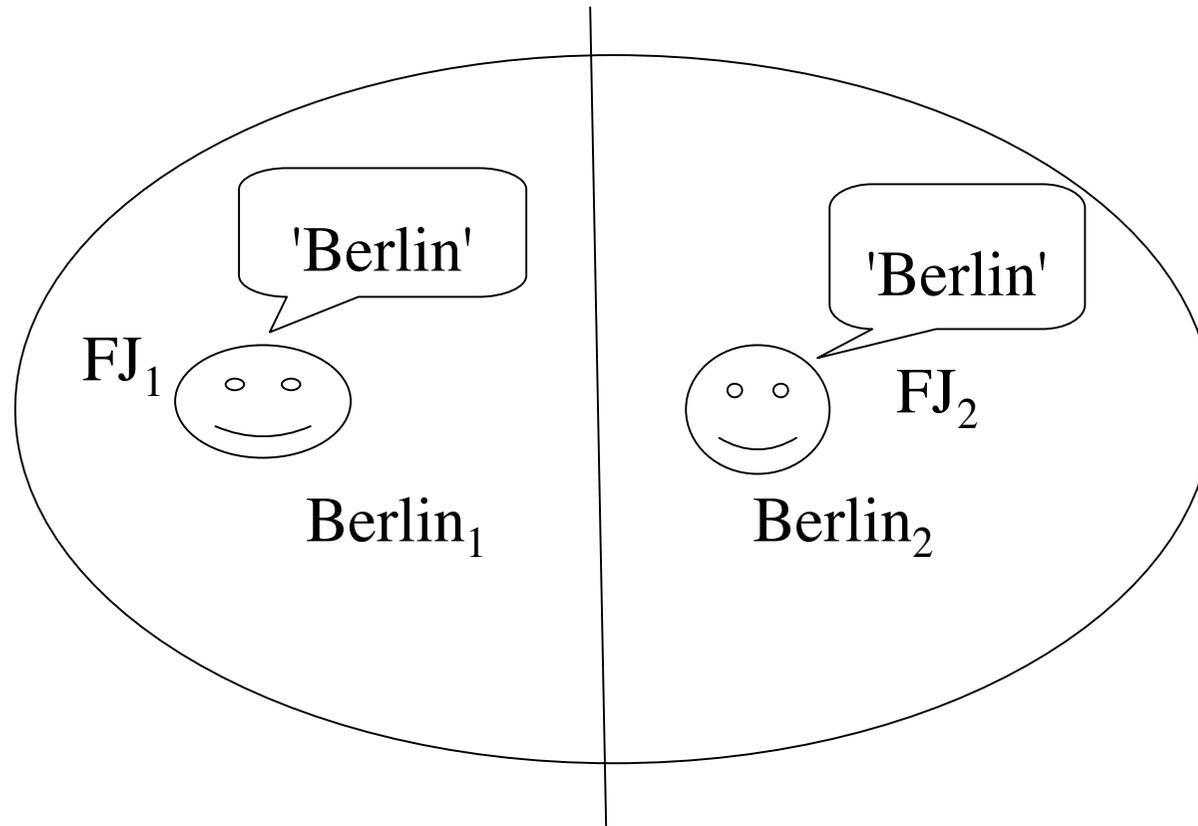
- There are a lot of John Smiths, so where's the known uniqueness to come from?
- We agree to use names in a way that makes them work like traces, footprints and fossils.



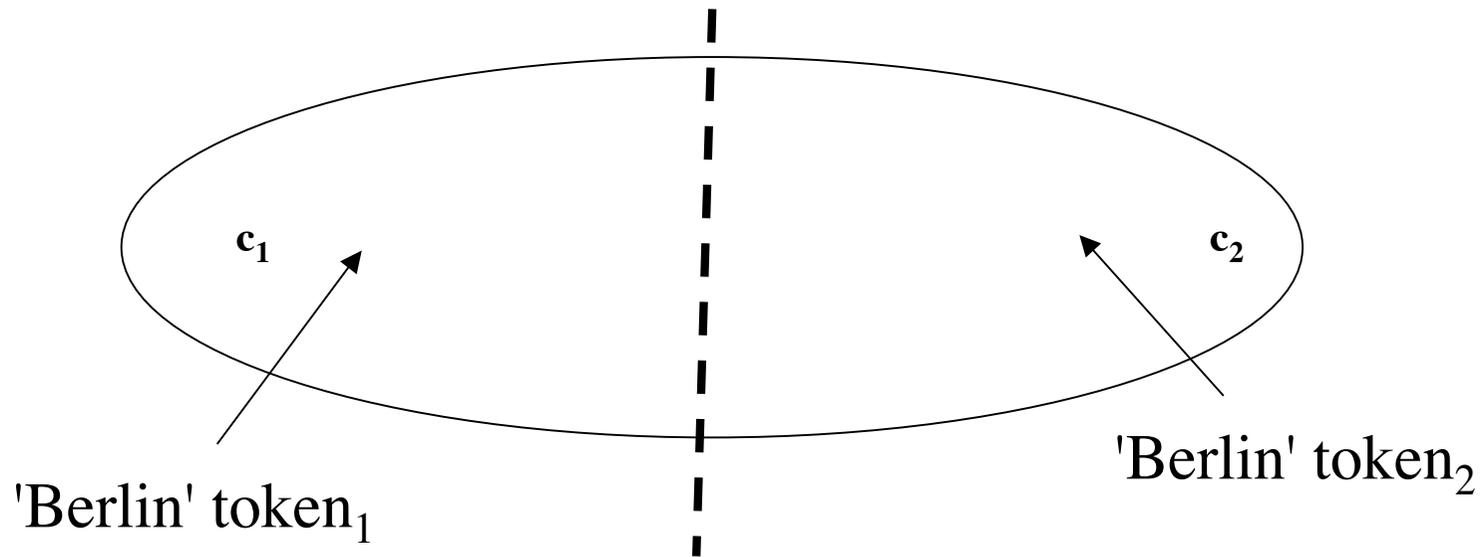
Duplicate regions of space objection I

- Suppose the world divides into two identical regions, both containing someone called 'Jackson' referring to a city with the word 'Berlin'.
- They will have the same descriptions in mind but need not refer to the same thing. FJ_1 will may refer to $Berlin_1$; FJ_2 to $Berlin_2$.
- Therefore, the reference of proper names does not go by description.

Duplicate regions of space objection II



Reply to duplicate regions of space objection – it overlooks the fact we have here a case of centred content.



As long as the relation between referent and centre is 'descriptive', a certain relation in fact, there is no objection to the description theory in the example.