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Denoting and Disquoting

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Abstract

Fregeans hold that predicates denote things, albeit things different in kind from what singular terms denote. This leads to a familiar problem: it seems impossible to say what any given predicate denotes. One strategy for avoiding this problem reduces the Fregean position to form of nominalism. I develop an alternative strategy that lets the Fregean hold on to the view that predicate denote things by re-conceiving the nature of singular denotation and of Fregean objects.

Keywords: denotation, concept horse paradox, singular terms, predication

1 Introduction

Properties can be conceived of in different ways. They might be conceived of as what ground the causal powers of things. Or as what account for facts of resemblance. Another conception accords them a semantic role — they are what predicates denote. For each of these conceptions, one can ask whether there are properties in the relevant sense. My focus will be on the third.

Some claim that there are no properties in this sense: that predicates do not denote things, that there is no such thing as the denotation of 'wise', say. Davidson (2005), for example, endorses a nominalist view of this sort, holding that the semantic contribution of a predicate is instead to be given via a clause of the following sort:

$\ulcorner \alpha$ is wise$\urcorner$ is true iff the denotation of α is wise.

This treats the singular term α as having a denotation, but not the predicate. It rather provides a *syncategorematic* treatment of 'wise': it specifies the truth conditions of atomic sentences that contain this predicate, but it doesn't treat the predicate as denoting anything.[1]

[1] Compare the following familiar clause for disjunction:

The competing realist view holds that properties in the relevant sense do exist. According to this view, predicates denote things just as much as singular terms do. Atomic sentences of the form $\ulcorner\phi(\alpha)\urcorner$ are true just in case the individual denoted by the term α has, instantiates, or falls under the property denoted by the predicate ϕ. Frege, for example, can be read as endorsing such a view:

> The denotation of a proper name is the object it designates or names. A concept word [viz. predicate] denotes a concept ... The fundamental logical relation is that of an object's falling under a concept.[2]

Frege added an important wrinkle to the view, however, holding not just that predicates denote properties, but that *only* predicates do so. No singular term denotes a property — what singular terms denote are rather objects.

This aspect of the Fregean conception of properties leads to notorious difficulties collected under the heading 'paradox of the concept *horse*' or 'Kerry's paradox.' These difficulties have to do with the thought that if no singular term denotes what any predicate denotes, then we cannot use singular terms to say anything about predicate denotations, or properties.[3] In what follows, I will focus on one particular manifestation of the paradox: that the Fregean seems unable to say which particular property any given predicate denotes. There is a certain strategy Fregeans can employ to avoid this problem, but it reduces the Fregean position to a kind of crypto-, or concealed, nominalism. My aim in this paper is to explore an alternative Fregean strategy, one which avoids the paradox while steering clear of nominalism. It does so by re-conceiving the nature of singular denotation and the attendant notion of a Fregean object.

Let me say up front that my aims are not historical. Frege says many things (including in the quote above, incidentally) that are incompatible with the proposal I shall put forward. But the central Fregean idea that the kinds of things predicates denote are to be sharply

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$\ulcorner\phi$ or $\psi\urcorner$ is true iff ϕ is true or ψ is true

This specifies what is required for the truth of any compound sentence formed using 'or', but doesn't treat 'or' as denoting anything. Contrast the following clause:

Den($\ulcorner\phi$ or $\psi\urcorner$) = Truth iff Den('or') applied to Den(ϕ) and Den(ψ) yields Truth

which treats 'or' as denoting a function on pairs of truth values (and sentences as denoting truth values).

[2]Frege (1892a, p. 173). I've here used cognates of 'denote' for the German 'bedeuten', following the usage in Furth's translation of *Basic Laws*. I will also generally use the term 'property' in place of Frege's term 'concept'. Frege himself uses the term 'property' in a different but related sense: 'I call the concepts under which an object falls its properties' (Frege, 1892b, p. 189). So Frege is willing to identify concepts with properties, it's just that he conceives of properties always as properties *of* an object. I will here use 'property' in the way Frege uses 'concept': as a label for the kinds of things predicates denote.

[3]See Proops (2013) for an overview of the various interrelated problems this generates.

distinguished from what singular terms denote is found in one form or another in many contemporary works in logic and semantics. Since this basic idea is what gets Kerry's paradox going, the paradox and strategies for avoiding it are of interest independently of Frege interpretation.

2 The Fregean Framework

The Fregean position can be developed as follows. We begin by taking two types of expressions as primitive: the type of singular terms, N, and the type of complete sentences, S.[4] Complex types are defined recursively in terms of these two basic types: given types α and β, $\langle \alpha, \beta \rangle$ is the type of expressions that combine with expressions of type α to produce expressions of type β. For example, since predicates can combine with singular terms to form sentences, predicates are of type $\langle N, S \rangle$. Similarly, since transitive verbs can combine with singular terms to form predicates, they are of type $\langle N, \langle N, S \rangle \rangle$. And so on.

We arrive at the Fregean position if we supplement this combinatorial categorization of expressions with the semantic claim that expressions belonging to these different categories denote entities of mutually exclusive kinds. Beginning with the basic categories, the Fregean claims that expressions of type S denote truth values and those of type N denote objects. Type $\langle N, S \rangle$ expressions then denote properties (or 'concepts'), construed as functions from objects to truth values. A subject-predicate sentence will be true if the property denoted by the predicate maps the object denoted by the subject to Truth. More generally, expressions of type $\langle \alpha, \beta \rangle$ denote functions from the kinds of things denoted by expressions of type α to the kinds of things denoted by expressions of type β.

The difficulty the Fregean encounters emerges if we ask which property in particular it is that a given predicate, say 'wise', denotes. One might think one of the following would do the trick:

(1) 'Wise' denotes the property of being wise.

(2) 'Wise' denotes the function which maps an object to Truth iff it is wise.

But on reflection it looks like neither of these qualify as acceptable ways of stating the denotation of 'wise'. After all, the expression 'the property of being wise' which we are here attempting to use in order to state the denotation of 'wise' is of type N, meaning that it denotes an object. But an object is precisely not what the predicate 'wise' is supposed to

[4] Compare Ajdukiewicz (1935). Frege himself might have set things up differently, since he regarded sentences as singular terms or names (of truth values). Again, my aims are not historical.

denote according to the Fregean. Similarly for the second example.

The problem is general. *No* completion of the schema:

(3) 'Wise' denotes ...

by a singular term can result in a true claim according to the Fregean. For whatever N type expression we use to complete (3) will denote an object, and thus something of a kind that is not eligible to be denoted by the predicate 'wise'. As (Dummett, 1973, p. 212) puts it, the Fregean seems forced into the intolerable conclusion that 'it is not possible by any means whatever to state, for any predicate, which particular concept it stands for.'

3 Predicativist Strategies

The foregoing sketch of the problem makes it look like it has its source in our attempt to use a singular term, or object-denoting expression, to state the denotation of a predicate. To avoid that problem, it seems, we should therefore look for a way to use a property-denoting expression, that is to say, a predicate, rather than a singular term, to state the denotation of 'wise'. The obvious candidate is of course just the predicate 'wise' itself. We want, in other words, to find a way to state the denotation of 'wise' by simply using that very predicate.

How should that go? The following is a non-starter:

(4) 'Wise' denotes wise

'Denotes' is a transitive verb that demands N type expressions in its argument positions. Since 'wise' is an expression of type $\langle N, S\rangle$, (4) doesn't even rise to the status of a well-formed sentence, let alone one that manages to accurately state the denotation of 'wise'. We appear to face a dilemma: any attempt to state the denotation of a predicate will result in a claim that is either ill-formed (if we use a predicate) or well-formed but false by Fregean lights (if we use a singular term).

There are various epicycles we could go through at this juncture[5], but let me cut to the chase. What we are after is a sentential context $\psi(\_\_, \ldots)$ that, unlike '$\_\_$ denotes ...', can be completed by the quote name of a predicate and that predicate itself to produce a

[5]One natural starting point would be Dummett's (1973) proposal, inspired by remarks in Frege (1892a), that we state the denotation of predicates by means of constructions of the following sort: wise is what 'wise' denotes, on analogy to how we might say that wise is what Socrates was. For critical discussion of this and other proposals in the vicinity see my (2016). Objections of a somewhat different sort to Dummett's proposal are raised by Dudman (1976); Wiggins (1984); Wright (1998); MacBride (2006); Textor (2010) and Hale and Wright (2012) among others.

well-formed sentence that specifies the denotation, or semantic contribution, of the quoted predicate. The following looks like a candidate:

(5) ⌜α is __⌝ is true iff the denotation of α is ....

This can be completed by the quote name of the predicate 'wise' and the predicate 'wise' itself to produce the following well-formed statement:

(6) ⌜α is wise⌝ is true iff the denotation of α is wise.

Sticking more closely to the Fregean view that sentences denote truth values, this could alternatively be put as follows:

(7) ⌜α is wise⌝ denotes Truth iff the denotation of α is wise.

Indeed, Furth (1968) as well as Heck and May (2006) argue that this is precisely how Frege's talk of predicates 'denoting properties' should be understood.[6]

But although this strategy solves our problem, it does so at the cost of abandoning the idea that predicates denote things. After all, the treatment of 'wise' we are here envisioning is exactly the syncategorematic treatment espoused by nominalists like Davidson (2005). It treats singular terms as denoting things, and sentences as denoting truth values, but it doesn't treat the predicate 'wise' as denoting anything. The difference between denoting an object and denoting a property is, on this view, more properly characterized as a distinction between two different ways of contributing to the truth conditions of sentences: categorematically, by denoting things, versus syncategorematically. The proposal resolves Kerry's paradox about predicate denotation, but only by reducing the Fregean position to a crypto-nominalism.

To be clear, I don't intend this as a criticism of the position, nor of the interpretive claim that this (or something like it) was Frege's own view.[7] I also don't mean to claim that given enough flexibility, there aren't ways of interpreting notions like 'denotation' so that even a position along these lines counts as one according to which predicates 'denote properties'.

[6] Compare also Jones (2016) and Krämer (2014) for similar proposals about predicate 'denotation'.

[7] Frege appears to endorse the nominalist conclusion in a letter to Russell:

> We cannot properly say of a concept name [predicate] that it denotes something; but we can say that it is not denotationless. It is clear that function signs or concept names are indispensable. But if we admit this, we must also admit that there are some that are not denotationless, even though, strictly speaking, the expression 'the denotation of a function name' must not be used. (Frege, 1902, p. 136-7)

Predicates, in other words, are not meaningless (*bedeutungslos* or 'denotationless') since they occur as parts of meaningful sentences. But their meaningfulness does not lie in their denoting anything.

Furth (1968), for example, holds that the view I've characterized as nominalist remains one according which predicates 'have denotation' in a suitably broad sense. Viewing (7) as an instance of the second-order generalization:

(8) $\exists X(\ulcorner \alpha$ is wise$\urcorner$ denotes Truth iff the denotation of α is X)

for example, casts it in a light in which it can perhaps be regarded as invoking a relation between the predicate 'wise' and a property, in some sense. This take on the matter is also defended by Jones (2016).

The points I wish to make are just the following. First, that the predicativist holds that neither (1) nor (2) from earlier, nor any other completion of "wise' denotes . . . ' by a singular term counts as true. I take it that this is one clear sense in which the predicativist holds that predicates don't denote anything, and this is all I mean when I label the view 'nominalist.' Second, and more importantly, what I ultimately want to emphasize is that whatever we label this view, it is not forced on us by Kerry's paradox. One can hold on to the central Fregean commitment — that no singular term denotes what, for example, 'wise' denotes — without resort to the nominalist maneuvers I've been discussing. Or so I shall argue.

4 Kerry's Paradox and Disquotation

Let's return to the paradox. It was alleged that no statement along the lines of:

(1) 'Wise' denotes the property of being wise.

nor any other completion of the schema "wise' denotes . . . ' can be accepted by the Fregean. This because whatever singular term we use in our attempt to state the denotation of 'wise' must denote an object, whereas 'wise' is supposed to denote a property.

This argument relies on a suppressed premise, however. We can grant that the expression 'the property of being wise' as it appears in (1) denotes an object, and thus something other than what 'wise' denotes. But the Fregean is saddled with the conclusion that (1) is false only if she holds not just that 'the property of being wise' denotes an object, but that the property of being wise is an object. Of course, it's a short step from:

(9) 'The property of being wise' denotes an object.

to:

(10) The property of being wise is an object.

All we need to add is:

(11) 'The property of being wise' denotes the property of being wise

This in turn follows from the claim that 'denotes' functions disquotationally when applied to *N* type expressions, that is, that instances of the following schema:

'τ' denotes τ

hold for singular terms.

The role of this suppressed disquotational assumption is perhaps even more evident in the generalized version of the argument. It was alleged that no completion of:

(3) 'Wise' denotes ...

could be acceptable to the Fregean because whatever *N* type expression we complete it with will denote an object, and thus something other than what 'wise' denotes. But the fact that the term used to complete (3) must denote something different in kind from what 'wise' denotes does not show that the resultant statement is false. That conclusion follows only if we further hold that whatever singular term we use to complete (3) must *by disquotation* itself denote the very thing we wanted to say 'wise' denotes. Our Fregean could therefore avoid the problem of being unable to offer any true completion of (3) by simply giving up on the disquotational principle.[8]

Is that even an option, however? In their recent discussions of Kerry's Paradox, Trueman (2015) and Jones (2016) argue that versions of the disquotational principle must be adhered to. Let us look at their arguments. Jones (2016) considers the following disquotational schema:

(RS) *n* refers to α

instances of which are to be generated by replacing '*n*' with the name of a singular term and 'α' by a translation of that term into the metalanguage. Jones argues that any instance of this schema must be true on the following grounds:

> A translation of an expression is co-referential with it. So in any instance of (RS), the referent of the expression that replaces '*n*' is co-referential with the expression that replaces 'α'. So each instance of (RS) is true. (Jones, 2016, p. 6)

[8] I have previously noted the role disquotation plays in generating the paradox, and the possibility of avoiding it by rejecting disquotation, in Rieppel (2016). In that work I pursued an alternative, non-Fregean approach to predicate denotation.

This argument does not succeed, however. Take the following instance of the schema, in which 'n' is replaced by the quote name of the term 'Alice' and α by the term 'Alice' itself:

(12) 'Alice' refers to Alice.

Jones' observation is that the referent of the quote name 'Alice' is co-referential with 'Alice', or more straightforwardly, that 'Alice' is co-referential with 'Alice'. And in general that the expression mentioned on the left in any instance of (RS) must be co-referential with the expression used on the right, given that the latter is a translation of the former into the metalanguage. That is fine. But the fact that 'Alice' refers to the same things as 'Alice' does not establish that (12) is true, that is, that 'Alice' refers to Alice. More generally, the fact that two expressions are co-referential does not in general entail anything about what either expression refers to.

Trueman's (2015) argument takes a different form. He argues that the referent of 'Julius Caesar' must be none other than Julius Caesar as follows:

> When we use the words 'the referent of 'Julius Caesar'' ... our ambition is to talk about the semantics of our language; we want to stop just using 'Julius Caesar' to refer to something, and start talking explicitly about what the term 'Julius Caesar' refers to. If we are to fulfill this ambition, it is obviously necessary that what we refer to with the words 'the referent of 'Julius Caesar'' is the same thing that we refer to when we actually use 'Julius Caesar'. More simply put, 'the referent of 'Julius Caesar'' and 'Julius Caesar' must co-refer. (Trueman, 2015, p. 1895)

Trueman concludes that since these two terms co-refer, the relevant identity statement involving them — that the referent of 'Caesar' = Caesar — must be true, since identity statements are true whenever the terms flanking the identity sign are co-referential.[9]

Where this argument falters, to my mind, is with the claim about what is 'obviously necessary' if we are to talk about the semantics of our language. One difficulty is that Trueman's argument moves freely between talk of what we as speakers refer to using words and talk of what words refer to. These notions should be kept apart, however: one concerns a speech act, something speakers do with words, whereas the other concerns something that words do, or better put, a relation words bear to things. To keep these notions apart, let's

[9] Although I'm not convinced by Trueman's argument, it does demonstrate an intriguing point: that the co-referentiality of two terms *can* entail something about what one of the terms refers to, provided one of the terms itself involves the notion of reference (and granted some auxiliary assumptions about the semantics of identity statements and the disquotational character of the truth predicate). Still, the fact that two expressions are co-referential does not *in general* entail anything about what either of them refers to.

reserve ‘refer’ for what speakers do, and again use ‘denote’ for the semantic relation words bear to things.

What seems correct is that when we do semantics, we want to talk explicitly about, or refer to, what, for example, ‘Caesar’ denotes. We can also grant that we should be able to use the metalinguistic description ‘the denotation of ‘Caesar”’ to do this, that is, to refer to, talk about, or say what it is that ‘Caesar’ denotes. Trueman’s claim, then, appears to be that in order for us to succeed in doing this, the metalinguistic description ‘the denotation of ‘Caesar”’ must itself denote what ‘Caesar’ denotes. More generally, the thought seems to be that in order to use a certain form of words to refer to or talk about some particular thing, those words must denote that thing.

This, however, is not the case. Or more cautiously put, there is a plausible construal of what ‘talking about’ or ‘referring to’ amounts to on which it isn’t the case. Let’s say that the entity we ‘talk about’ or ‘refer to’ using a given term is the entity that figures in the truth conditions of sentences containing that term. For example, since Alice figures in the truth conditions of sentences containing the term ‘Alice’, Alice is who we in this sense talk about or refer to when we use the term ‘Alice’. The claim, then, is that in order for us to use the term ‘Alice’ to refer to Alice — that is, in order for sentences containing this term to receive truth conditions that concern Alice — she must be what the term ‘Alice’ denotes.

This is not obvious, however. The denotation of a term must uniformly contribute to determining the truth conditions of sentences that contain that term. So ‘Alice’ has to denote something fit to play a role in determining truth conditions that concern Alice, the person. It doesn’t however follow that Alice herself is the only thing that can do this, and that she is therefore what the term ‘Alice’ must denote. There is, in other words, a gap between figuring in the truth conditions of sentences, on the one hand, and playing a role in determining those as the truth conditions had by those sentences, on the other. Of course, it’s one thing to say this and another to produce a workable theory that has this features. So let us turn to that.

5 Anti-Disquotational Fregeanism

I’ve said that the denotation of ‘Alice’ must contribute to determining truth conditions that concern Alice. In order to do this, ‘Alice’ must presumably denote something which in turn somehow determines Alice. Alice herself of course fits this bill, since she determines Alice in a particularly straightforward way: by being identical to her. But there are other options that depart from the disquotational paradigm. We could, for instance, hold that ‘Alice’ denotes not Alice but the singleton set $\{\text{Alice}\}$. This set also determines Alice, not

by being identical to her, but by having her as its sole member. Or we could say that 'Alice' denotes the ordered pair $\langle \varnothing, \text{Alice} \rangle$, which determines Alice by having her as its second element.[10]

In the end it doesn't much matter what category of entities the anti-disquotationalist picks to play the role of Fregean objects, that is, of the kinds of things singular terms denote. Rather than reducing objects to an extant category like singleton sets or ordered pairs, our Fregean could just as well introduce 'object' as a primitive, *sui generis* category of semantic entity. What ultimately matters is that these Fregean objects behave in a certain way. In particular, what is needed is a pair of operations, one of which 'wraps' or 'boxes things up' into Fregean objects, and the other of which 'unpacks' Fregean objects to recover the boxed-up entity. Our boxing operation b must be such that applied to an entity x it returns something $b(x)$ of the kind Fregean object. And the unpacking operation u must undo the boxing operation to recover the original entity, so that $u(b(x)) = x$. In the case of singleton sets, for example, the boxing operation would be one that, applied to an entity, returns its singleton, and the unboxing operation would be one that, given a singleton, recovers its sole member. But again, whether we take $b(\text{Alice})$ to be $\{\text{Alice}\}$, $\langle \varnothing, \text{Alice} \rangle$, or a *sui generis* kind of entity doesn't matter much so long as $u(b(\text{Alice})) = \text{Alice}$.

At this point a difficulty seems to loom, however. Our anti-disquotationalist claims that 'Alice' doesn't denote Alice, but rather $b(\text{Alice})$, a Fregean object that boxes up Alice. Such Fregean objects now play the role of e-type entities, the kinds of things singular terms denote, and predicates will accordingly denote functions from such entities to truth values. Now consider an atomic predication like:

(13) Alice is wise.

Isn't the anti-disquotationalist committed to the claim that (13) says, or is true just in case, $b(\text{Alice})$ is wise? That would be an unwelcome result. $b(\text{Alice})$ presumably isn't wise. Suppose, for example, that $b(\text{Alice})$ is the singleton $\{\text{Alice}\}$. Since sets aren't wise, (13) would come out false. More generally, the problem is that the anti-disquotationalist seems to predict the wrong truth conditions for this sentence. After all, the truth of (13) should turn on whether Alice, a certain person, is wise, not on whether the Fregean object $b(\text{Alice})$ is wise. Put another way: we still want (13) to 'say something about' Alice, even if that is

[10] Compare Kaplan (1989, fn. 27) and Pryor (2007, fn. 15) who articulate proposals involving singletons and ordered pairs respectively. Another non-disquotational view in the vicinity is Montague's (1973) proposal that singular terms denote second-order properties. E.g., 'Alice' denotes (not Alice but) the property which holds of all properties under which Alice falls. However, this proposal is open to the charge that it is not an anti-disquotational account of singular denotation, but rather a proposal to eliminate the category of singular terms by assimilating them to quantifiers phrases.

not what the subject term in that sentence denotes.

What this difficulty demonstrates, however, is not a flaw in anti-disquotationalism *per se*, but rather that the proposed adjustment to the semantics of singular terms also demands a compensatory adjustment to the semantics of predicates. In particular, the anti-disquotationalist can no longer go with the proposal put forward in (2) above, according to which the property denoted by 'wise' maps an object to Truth iff it's wise. For again, applied to the Fregean object b(Alice), this function would return Truth just in case the Fregean object b(Alice) is wise, which is not what we want. The property or function denoted by 'wise' must map a Fregean object to Truth not if that object itself is wise, but rather if it unpacks into something wise.

Let's use the lambda-term '$\lambda o[o$ is wise]' as an abbreviation for the description 'the function which maps an object to Truth iff it is wise'.[11] The view we've arrived at, then, is that 'wise' does not denote $\lambda o[o$ is wise], as proposed in (2) earlier, but rather $\lambda o[u(o)$ is wise], a function that maps a Fregean object o to Truth iff o unpacks into something wise. Putting this together with the claim that 'Alice' denotes b(Alice), we get the desired result that (13) is true just in case Alice is wise: applying $\lambda o[u(o)$ is wise] to b(Alice) yields Truth iff $u(b(\text{Alice}))$ is wise, and since $u(b(\text{Alice})) = \text{Alice}$, that means it yields Truth iff Alice is wise.

Parallel adjustments are of course needed in the case of relational predicates as well. In the sentence 'Desdemona loves Cassio', for example, the verb 'loves' now cannot be held to denote the relation that holds between a pair of objects just in case the one loves the other. Rather, it must denote the relation $\lambda o_1 \lambda o_2[u(o_2)$ loves $u(o_1)]$ that holds between a pair of Fregean object o_1 and o_2 just in case the second unpacks into something that loves what the first unpacks into. The sentence is then true just in case this relation holds between b(Cassio) and b(Desdemona), that is, just in case Desdemona loves Cassio.

Putting it all together, we arrive at an anti-disquotational semantics that works as advertised. The singular terms 'Alice' and 'Desdemona' denote things that contribute to determining truth conditions that concern Alice and Desdemona, meaning that we can use these terms to talk about or refer to Alice and Desdemona in the sense described above. But they do not denote Alice and Desdemona themselves.

[11] See Heim and Kratzer (1998, §2.5) who recommend reading lambda-expressions as terms. This contrasts with a view sometimes found in the literature according to which lambda expressions like '$\lambda o[o$ is wise]' are predicates.

6 Anti-Disquotationalism and Kerry's Paradox

With this setup in place, the Fregean is in a position to block Kerry's Paradox. The problem was supposed to be that no completion of the schema "Wise' denotes ...' can be true by Fregean lights because whatever singular term we complete it with will denote an object, whereas 'wise' is supposed to denote a property. The response is that this argument fails once disquotationalism is rejected. Our Fregean claims that:

(14) 'Wise' denotes the function which maps o to Truth iff $u(o)$ is wise. Or:

(15) 'Wise' denotes $\lambda o[u(o)$ is wise].

The singular term '$\lambda o[u(o)$ is wise]' — or its unabbreviated counterpart in (14) — that we are here using to state the denotation of 'wise' must indeed, *qua* singular term, denote an object. But what it denotes is not, as the disquotationalist would have it, the property $\lambda o[u(o)$ is wise] denoted by the predicate 'wise'. It rather denotes $b(\lambda o[u(o)$ is wise]), a Fregean object that 'unpacks' into the property $\lambda o[u(o)$ is wise] that the predicate 'wise' denotes according to (15). So the troublesome conclusion that (15) must be false by Fregean lights is avoided.

The assumption that gets Kerry's Paradox going is that in order to use a singular term to say or 'talk about' what a predicate denotes, that singular term must itself denote the very thing the predicate denotes. Since this is impossible by Fregean lights, no singular term can be used to say what a predicate denotes. Our proposal belies the underlying assumption. In (14) or (15) we are talking about the property denoted by 'wise', but we are not using a singular term which (per impossible, according to the Fregean) itself denotes the very thing denoted by this predicate. Again: the property denoted by 'wise' is $\lambda o[u(o)$ is wise], a certain function from Fregean objects to truth values, whereas the singular term we're using to say this denotes $b(\lambda o[u(o)$ is wise]), a Fregean object that 'boxes up' the property or function denoted by the predicate 'wise'.

The reason (15) nevertheless succeeds in being about what 'wise' denotes is that 'denotes' does not denote the denotation relation, that is, the relation which holds between the predicate 'wise' and $\lambda o[u(o)$ is wise]. It instead denotes the relation $\lambda o_1 \lambda o_2[u(o_2)$ denotes $u(o_1)]$ which holds between a pair of Fregean objects whenever the second unpacks into something that denotes what the first unpacks into. With these elements in place, our Fregean can coherently claim that what (15) 'says', or requires for its truth, is that 'wise' denotes $\lambda o[u(o)$ is wise], even while holding that (15) contains no expression that denotes this property, nor for that matter any expression that denotes the word 'wise' or the de-

notation relation.[12] This is parallel to how 'Desdemona loves Cassio' manages to say that Desdemona loves Cassio, even though, according to our anti-disquotationalist, no expression in the sentence denotes Desdemona, Cassio, or the loving relation.

Or consider again Trueman's claim that in order for us to be able to use the metalinguistic description 'the denotation of 'Caesar'' to talk about what the name 'Caesar' denotes, that description must itself denote what 'Caesar' denotes. The proposal we've been examining undermines this claim for similar reasons. According to it, the name 'Caesar' denotes the Fregean object b(Caesar), rather than Caesar himself. The metalinguistic description 'the denotation of 'Caesar'', however, does not in turn denote b(Caesar), that is, does not denote what the name 'Caesar' denotes. It rather denotes $b(b\text{(Caesar)})$, a Fregean object that unpacks into the denotation of 'Caesar'. Nevertheless, we can use the metalinguistic description to talk about b(Caesar) just as we can use 'Alice' to talk about Alice even though that is not what 'Alice' denotes.

7 Concluding Remarks

The anti-disquotational proposal I've articulated can be regarded as a generalization of the 'proxy-object' view hinted at by Frege (1892b) and developed by Parsons (1986) and Chierchia and Turner (1988). On that view a singular term like 'the property *horse*' denotes an object that goes proxy for the property denoted by the predicate 'horse'. The present proposal generalizes this view in that it introduces proxy-objects not just for properties, but for everything. That is, the anti-disquotationalist doesn't only introduce objects like $b(\lambda o[u(o)$ is wise]) that 'go proxy for' — or, in the present idiom, 'unpack into' — predicate denotations, but also objects like b(Caesar) that go proxy for things like Caesar, and objects like $b(b\text{(Caesar)})$ that go proxy for other proxy-objects.

This generalization of the strategy serves to respond to an objection Liebesman (2015) levels against the traditional proxy-object view. Suppose singular terms like 'the property horse' denote objects that go proxy for properties, thereby giving us a means of using those singular terms to talk about properties. How, Liebesman now asks, can we then talk about those proxy-objects themselves? We will want to do just that in order to, for example, explain that a given proxy-object is in fact not a property, but merely an object that goes proxy for a property (or to say that a certain term denotes a proxy-object rather than a property). It seems that speaking of proxy-objects themselves must be impossible. For to say something about a proxy-object, we must apparently use a term that denotes that proxy-

[12] On the anti-disquotationalist view, the quote name ' 'wise' ' doesn't denote the predicate 'wise' but rather b('wise'), a Fregean object that unpacks into the predicate 'wise'.

object, but if we use such a term we will inevitably end up instead speaking about whatever property it goes proxy for. We began with a problem about how to talk about properties, introduced proxy-objects to solve it, but are now left with a problem about how to talk about those proxy-objects themselves. The proxy-object view thus 'introduces an expressibility problem just as difficult as the one it set out to solve' (Liebesman, 2015, p. 536).

The reply our anti-disquotationalist offers is that this problem is avoided by introducing proxy-objects for everything, including for proxy-objects themselves. The basic point is by now a familiar one: in order to talk about a given entity, we do not, as Liebesman supposes, need to use a term that denotes that entity, but instead a term that denotes an object that goes proxy for that entity. As noted above, for example, the way to talk about the Fregean object b(Caesar) denoted by 'Caesar' is to use a term that denotes $b(b(\text{Caesar}))$, an object that goes proxy for, or unpacks into, the Fregean object denoted by 'Caesar'. Similarly, the way to speak about the proxy-object b(the property horse), that is, the Fregean object which goes proxy for the property denoted by the predicate 'horse', is to use a term that denotes $b(b(\text{the property horse}))$, an object that unpacks into the Fregean object b(the property horse).[13]

This is not to say that it's all beer and skittles for the anti-disquotationalist. In particular, as noted by Parsons (1986), proxy-object strategies faces the threat of Russell's Paradox. Views that appeal to objects that go proxy for properties are arguably committed to an injective mapping from properties to the proxy-objects that unpack into those properties. Now consider $\lambda o[u(o)$ is a property which does not hold of $o]$, that is, the property which maps a Fregean object o to Truth just in case o unpacks into a property which doesn't hold of o. To this property, call it r, there should correspond a Fregean object $b(r)$ which unpacks into r. If we now ask whether the Russell property r holds of this Fregean object $b(r)$, we get the paradoxical result that it does just in case it does not.

But there are strategies the anti-disquotationalist can appeal to when faced with this difficulty. One option would be to adopt a theory of indefinitely extensible domains, for example. The thought would be that for any domain of Fregean objects, there is a property defined on that domain (viz. that domain's Russell property) which corresponds to a Fregean object that is not in the original domain. Or the anti-disquotationalist might institute a type-hierarchy of Fregean objects, holding that properties quite generally are only defined on Fregean objects that belong to levels lower than the level to which the Fregean

[13]The problem Liebesman (2015) raises is reminiscent of a problem about 'denoting concepts' that Russell (1905) discusses in his Gray's Elegy Argument, having to do with how to construct propositions that are about denoting concepts themselves, rather than the things they denote. (Thanks to an anonymous referee for noting this.) Here too the natural suggestion is that such propositions must contain 'second-level' denoting concepts, i.e., ones that denote denoting concepts. Russell rejects this proposal, although his reasons are not entirely clear. For attempts at reconstructing Russell's argument, see Salmon (2005), Noonan (1996), and Hylton (1990), among others.

objects that go proxy for those properties belong. Alternatively, the anti-disquotationalist might appeal to the revision-theoretic approach to Russell's Paradox that Chierchia and Turner (1988) deploy in their development of a proxy-object view. I won't here attempt to defend any particular such strategy. The point is just that even though Russell's Paradox certainly poses a threat to the anti-disquotational view, there are various options that the anti-disquotationalist could appeal to when faced with that problem.

Another worry concerns the extent to which the anti-disquotational proposal stays true to the type theoretic approach to semantics Fregeans favor.[14] Viewed in one way, the proposal captures that goal. Type t continues to be the type of truth values, and type e, the type of entities denoted by singular terms, is now the type of Fregean objects. There are then functions of various derived types generated from these primitive types. Thus predicates denote functions of type $\langle e,t\rangle$ from Fregean objects to truth values; transitive verbs denote functions of type $\langle e,\langle e,t\rangle\rangle$ from Fregean objects to functions of type $\langle e,t\rangle$; quantifier phrases denote functions of type $\langle\langle e,t\rangle,t\rangle$; and so on. As far as the realm of denotations or semantic values is concerned, we thus continue to have a standard type theoretic structure.

In another respect, however, the anti-disquotational proposal departs significantly from the type theoretic framework Frege envisioned. For Frege, everything there is occupies some position in his type theoretic structure (bracketing the familiar problem about expressing this claim). Not so for the anti-disquotationalist. Take Alice. She is not the denotation of any expression, and as such does not figure in our type theoretic structure. Similarly for the relation of loving, or the denotation relation: they are not semantic values, and as such don't occupy positions in the type theoretic structure. For the anti-disquotationalist, the realm of semantic entities therefore does not exhaust what there is. The relations and functions in this wider realm of non-semantic entities furthermore do not obey the type restrictions in force in the semantic realm. For example, whereas the function denoted by 'denotes' is, like all $\langle e,\langle e,t\rangle\rangle$ type functions, only defined on Fregean objects, the relation of denotation itself does not obey this type restriction, since it relates expression (non-semantic entities) to semantic entities of different types.[15] What the anti-disquotationalist has to offer, in other words, is a strictly-typed semantic framework. But a more metaphysically ambitious Fregean who wants the realm of semantic values to encompass everything there is, and who wants her semantic theory to issue in a typed conception of reality as a

[14] Thanks to an anonymous referee for pressing this point.

[15] Or to take a more mundane example: I've been investigating the denotation of 'wise', but I could also investigate a crime scene, so the investigation relation can relate me to both semantic and non-semantic entities. An example of functions that occupy the non-semantic realm (in the sense of not being denotations) and that don't obey type restrictions are our pair of b and its inverse u: the latter, for example, has among its values semantic entities of different types, as well as non-semantic entities like Alice.

whole, will have to look elsewhere.

Nothing I have said is intended to show that the disquotational view of singular denotation is incorrect. But I do hope to have made it clear that it isn't inevitable. In particular, the anti-disquotational proposal is just as adequate when it comes to the task of developing a semantic theory that delivers appropriate truth conditions. What I have been concerned to argue, furthermore, is that making this move has its attraction in a Fregean setting. As we've seen, the Fregean claim that predicates denote things, albeit things different in kind from what singular terms denote, is *prima facie* hard to sustain given disquotationalism about singular denotation. At the very least, some rather subtle qualifications are needed about how to rightly understand such claims as that 'predicates denote properties' and what a specification of the 'denotation' of the predicate 'wise', for example, amounts to. The anti-disquotationalist can embrace these Fregean claims in a much more straightforward manner. There is no particular difficulty about saying what 'wise' denotes. The anti-disquotationalist can straightforwardly say that 'wise' denotes $\lambda o[u(o)$ is wise], a certain function from Fregean objects to truth-values. We can also unproblematically infer from this that there is therefore something that 'wise' denotes, and that there are thus properties in the relevant sense.[16]

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