

Defense of Frege's 'Third Realm'

Reshmee Sarkar

Abstract

Frege's semantic theory is known as sense-reference theory. This semantic theory is primarily associated with the concept of thought. His semantic theory is based on the identification of sense and reference of formalised language. As a referential semanticist, Frege attempted to ensure the meaning of language with regard to the concept of truth. Now, the concept of truth cannot be determined without the concept of thought. The concept of thought is an umbrella term comprising feelings, emotions, sentiments, descriptions, etc. According to Frege, philosophy, thought and language are intertwined with each other. For Frege, the problem of language is not associated primarily with the referential aspect of language, rather it is associated with the mode of presentation of language what he termed as sense. And while determining the sense of a sentence, Frege brings the concept of thought. Thoughts, for Frege, exist independently of human beings and it is for the humans to grasp the thoughts. They are timelessly true, something like Platonic ideas. Being a semanticist, Frege at the very outset of his philosophical career developed his anti-psychological position. To differ from Lockean ideas, he introduced context principle in his philosophy of language. Thoughts, for Frege, are neither physical nor mental. Unlike ideas, thoughts are objective. He admitted third realm as the locus of thought, which is comparable to but different from both physical and mental. The aim of this paper is to redeem Frege from some transgression by contemporary philosophers on his conception of third realm.

Keywords: *Thought, third realm, sense, logic, psychology, truth-value, reference, ideas, philosophical myth.*

The notion of thought is the key issue of Fregean semantics. Like Frege, many contemporary philosophers introduced this picture in their linguistic philosophy. Ludwig Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus*¹ asserted that language constitutes the basis of how we think and understand the world, and that it actively constructs our thoughts. However the gravity of Fregean semantic camp lies in his admission of the 'third realm'. Third Realm, for Frege, is the locus of thought. Unlike Mill and Russell, Frege, being the propounder of sense-theory, emphasizes on the view that a proper name must have sense. So cognizing the sense or mode of presentation of proper names is the main motto of Frege's semantic programme. The concept of

¹ Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1921). *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company.

thought is a pre-requisite to apprehend the sense or mode of presentation of a proper name. That means, the sense of a sentence comprising proper name can be comprehended through thought. That is why, Wolf Carlgang remarked, “It is only by the discovery of the distinction between sense and reference that the notion of thought gets a more clear-cut form” (Carlgang, 1994, p. 76)². Frege opines only assertive sentences contain thought as its sense, if ‘spoken seriously’ (Frege, 1956)³. Thought is neither physical nor mental. Frege distinguished between thoughts and our grasping of thoughts. Thoughts for him belong to the “third realm”, an ideal Platonic realm where thoughts exist by themselves, independently of us, and to which we have access only through language. Language, so Frege thought, is our sole “bridge” from the sensible to the “supersensible”.

Frege’s conception of thought and third realm has been misunderstood by many contemporary philosophers. But to me a better understanding of these concepts is a pre-requisite for successfully indulging in it. In this paper, I shall draw attention to some well-known aspects of Frege’s doctrine, which keep receiving a distorted reading despite a wealth of insightful discussion. A fresh look at some of the main points hopefully helps to undermine some persistent assumptions distorting Frege’s legacy.

An Overview

What then is thought according to Frege? How did the concept of thought play a significant role in developing his referential semantics? Whether thought was conditioned to his development of sense-theory of reference? Frege in his paper ‘The Thought’⁴ opined that the question of truth and falsity comes to light concerning the notion of *thought*. Without the same it is impossible to comprehend the meaning of a sentence, i.e., the concept of truth. He, at the very initial, clearly pointed out that only complete sentences, that is, declarative sentences and interrogative sentences asking sentential question express thought as their sense.

² Carlgang, Wolf (1994). *Frege’s Theory of Sense and Reference: Its Scope and Limits*. USA: Cambridge University Press.

³ Frege, Gottlob (1956). ‘The Thought: A Logical Enquiry’ in *Mind: A Quarterly Review of Psychology and Philosophy*. Vol. 65, No. 259. Oxford Journals: Oxford University Press.

⁴ Ibid.

His distinction of sense and reference (Uber Sinn and Bedeutung, 1892)⁵ is deeply rooted on his concept of thought. He, in spite of being a referential semanticist and anti-psychologist, encompasses the relevance of *empty proper names* in his theory. In this sense, he differs from absolute semantic realists like Russell and Kripke. His semanticism is enriched with the notion of thought where it is emphasized that understanding *thought* is essential for eschewing the sense of an expression.

Sense denotes to physical objects of the world while a thought directs to a truth-value. In this regard, Frege introduced *Compositionality of Meaning* as the holistic approach to meaning. The principle asserts, ‘there is no more to the meaning of a sentence than what is determined by the meanings of the words of which it is composed and the way in which they are arranged’ (Morris, 2007, p.25)⁶. This implies the composition of a sentence’s meaning, that is, the individual parts and the syntactic structure of those parts. The principle of Compositionality shows how the sense of individual linguistic expressions constitutes the thought of the whole sentence.

What is the nature of thought? Frege contends that unlike every other material and perceptible element, the sphere of thought is immaterial. It is neither mental. Thought, for Frege, is objective and independent of humans. He believed that the concept of truth is closely linked with every concept of thought. But what is the locus of thought? Frege prescribed that a *third realm* must be recognised. Thoughts exist independently of any bearer. A thought is not true for the first time when it is discovered. It is true forever. Thoughts exist independent of human beings and it is for the humans to grasp the thoughts. Thoughts and their associated truth-values exist independently of use. Frege in his article described several properties of thought. He argued that thoughts are imperceptible and it cannot be interacted with our senses. Facts are true thoughts. Thoughts are timelessly true or false. The realm of thoughts, that is, the third realm exists outside of time and space, although their constituents are graspable. Now the question may be raised: How

⁵⁵ Frege, Gottlob (1892). ‘Uber Sinn and Bedeutung’ in *Zeitschrift fur Philosophie und Philosophische Kritik*. NF 100.

⁶ Morris, Michael (2007). *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

does a thought function? Frege answered, 'by being apprehended and taken to be true. This is the process of the inner world of a thinker which can have further consequences in this inner world and which encroaching on the sphere of will, can also make noticeable in the outer world' (Frege, 1956, p. 310)⁷. The grasping of thoughts leads us to action. This is how thought exerts its causal influence on the world indirectly. Our actions are usually prepared by thinking and judgement. So thoughts possess an indirect influence on the motion of masses in the human world.

Thought is not idea

The question that may be put after Frege is: If thought involves the matter of grasping by humans and is thus injected into the thinking sphere of conscious beings then how thought is differentiated from ideas? And if so, Frege's whole semantic program will break down. By doing so can Frege be claimed of maintaining a pragmatic convenience in his semantic schedule? This is where I think Frege's conception needs some clarification. Thought is not physical nor mental. To maintain this Frege prescribed a 'realm', labelled as 'third', as the locus of thought. Frege was very conscious of falling into this prey at the beginning of his semantic journey.

Many commentators and critics were sceptical about the functional aspect of thoughts within the realm of Fregean semantics. They assumed that Frege indeed suffered from confusion about the difference in thought and idea. Even though Lockean discussion of the philosophy of language remain unnoticed by many, it has been observed that Frege's basic philosophical concepts are deeply entangled with Locke. Frege's philosophy of language presents a way of accepting what seems most natural and intuitive about the kind of approach to language found in Locke, while decisively rejecting what seems most questionable about it. Secondly, his work offers the prospect of a thoroughly systematic approach to meaning. I do subscribe three key issues that Frege share with Locke. These are (i) the function of language defines its nature, (ii) communication is the key function of language, and (iii) thought is the element which is communicated through language. At the same time, some distinct discrepancies between Frege and Locke are also noticed.

⁷ Frege, Gottlob (1956). 'The Thought: A Logical Enquiry', op. cit.

There are at least two points on which Frege disagrees with Locke. These are (i) words signify or mean the components of what language is meant to communicate, and (ii) the component of thoughts are ideas. A careful examination would reflect that Frege accepts some version of (i), though in a non-Lockean manner. According to me, Locke had the conception of how words are components of sentences. Individual words at least stand for self-standing ideas in the mind of the speaker, and more importantly, these are combined unto something sentential by an action of the speaker's mind. But I think that Frege does not accept that. Frege would like to claim that sentences are basic in some sense and individual words only make sense in the context of sentences. Thus, to me, Lockean conception of the relation between words and sentences has to be rejected if we are to avoid accepting that words mean ideas. Frege here remained obstinate by denying that words mean ideas. This, Frege disagrees with Locke and denies his view that the components of thoughts are ideas.

Thought, for Frege, is *not the act of thinking*. To maintain his position Frege admitted three layers of thought. The apprehension of thought – thinking. The recognition of the truth of a thought – judgement. The manifestation of a thought – assertion. Generally, in science we advance in this way. First, a thought is apprehended which is expressed in a sentence-question and after appropriate investigation, the thought is finally recognised to be true. After that we declare the recognition of truth in the form of an indicative sentence. This is how Frege deviates himself from Lockean standpoint.

Thoughts exist independent of human beings and it is for the humans to grasp the thoughts. While grasping, they become part of human consciousness. On the other hand, ideas can also be said to be part of human consciousness. It is the bearer of ideas. So a question may arise: How one can distinguish between the consciousness directed towards thought and the consciousness directed to ideas? How can the consciousness which is the bearer of ideas can grasp the intersubjective thoughts? Frege initially developed a kind of artificial language with the help of Concept-Notation to develop his semantics. In this regard, Frege initially takes help from logic and mathematics. Language of logic and elementary mathematics cannot be part of an idea. They are thought processes, a certain sort of

abstraction that can never be expressed and comprehended through the idea. It thus seems to me that Frege was very conscious of the closeness of thought and idea. His concept of thought in any standard of imagination can be a part of an idea and Frege was aware of that. Thus Frege begins with the question and says, "I now return to the question: Is a thought an idea? If other people can ascend to the thought I expressed in the Pythagorean Theorem just as I do, then it does not belong to the content of my consciousness, I am not its owner, yet I can, nevertheless, acknowledge it as true". Frege maintained that thoughts are not ideas. Ideas belong to the inner world. Ideas cannot be seen or touched. It belongs to the content of whose consciousness to belong. Thus, an idea always needs a bearer. Again, one bearer has only one idea. No two bearers can have the same idea. For that there needs to be a consciousness which will know that the idea which belongs to the content of one consciousness is the same to the idea which belongs to the content of another consciousness. But this is not possible. If thoughts remain mere items of one's consciousness, they and their truth-value will become relative because it is impossible to share the content of one's consciousness with other. Again, thoughts are not objects of the outer world. Objects of the outer world can be smelled, touched, seen or perceived with the help of sense-impressions. Thoughts cannot be so. For Frege, truth-value is attached to thoughts, but not to sensed objects. Thus thoughts are not external objects. Here Frege admits a third realm as the locus of thought. He argued that if thoughts and ideas were the same thing then there would have been no common science in which we might engage in the discussion of truth and falsity regarding their various contradictions. If it were the case, we could not even assert publicly that a thought is not an idea and all these discussions would have been futile because all these may be one's ideas and belong to the content of one's consciousness only, that is, there is nothing to be public and everything belongs to one's inner world – the world of sense-impressions.

Frege brings the concept of intersubjectivity while elucidating the concept of thought. According to Frege, the intersubjectivity of a judgement essentially means that different people can grasp the same judgement or thought. According to Frege, intersubjectivity of a judgement entails what is acknowledged as true is *intersubjectively accessible*. Thus thoughts differ from ideas (representations).

Frege further ponders that what is accessible in an intersubjective way cannot depend on the existence of a sentient being who acts as its owner. That means, the causal dependence essentially entailed by the owner-relation has to be understood in a peculiar way. For Frege, it is a sort of dependence on something mental, on a private ‘inner world’ and whatever has this kind of dependence is private as well. Thoughts are *timelessly true*, but ideas are not. For example, the thought that he expressed in the Pythagorean Theorem is timelessly true. It is true independently of whether anyone takes it to be true. It thus needs no bearer. Thus *thought is objective*. What is timelessly true is objective. It is not true for the first time when it is discovered. For Frege, it is just like a planet that already exists before anyone has seen it. One has to know the distinction between *seeing and thinking*. When one apprehends or thinks a thought, one does not create it but only comes to stand in a certain relation, which is different from seeing a thing or having an idea, of what already exists beforehand. We do not have a thought, as we have a sense-impression. We do not see a thought as we see a star as a thing or object. So it is advisable, Frege opines, to choose a special expression and that is the word ‘apprehend’. Frege says, “A particular mental capacity, the power of thought, must correspond to the apprehension of thought” (Frege, 1956 p. 307)⁸.

Is Frege’s ‘Third Realm’ a Myth?

The basic question that may be raised against Frege is if his thought is supposed to reside in the ‘third realm’, then how does he use it in the case of a sentence? For Frege, the components of thoughts are not ideas. Now the question is: If the components of thought are not ideas and if thought is neither physical nor mental, then how thought is relevant in determining the sense of a sentence after Frege? At this point Frege is taken to involve in philosophical mythology. Frege in his paper ‘Thought’ asserts that thought is the sense of the sentence. That means thought helps to determine the sense of the sentence. Many contemporary thinkers conceive Fregean conception of thought and third realm as a *philosophical myth*. Some would say that Frege’s mistake is to assume that all objects are self-subsistent. It would be insane to treat chess moves as not dependent in this sense

⁸ Ibid.

on chess pieces; but it is perfectly possible to conceive of what Frege calls thoughts – what is expressed by utterances of sentences, what is judged to be true or false, what are believed, known, doubted – as independent of language and thinking beings. This is in a nutshell what Frege did by conceiving thought as a *third realm*. In doing so, he became guilty of ‘*philosophical mythologizing*’ (Dummett, 1991, p. 249)⁹. According to Michael Dummett, Frege’s conception of thoughts and their constituent senses are *mythological*¹⁰. These eternal changeless entities inhabit a ‘third realm’, distinct from the physical universe and equally distinct from the inner world of any experiencing subject. Despite their separation from the physical world, many of these thoughts are about the world and are true or false. Thus somehow we grasp these thoughts and sometimes judge them to be true or false. Somehow we associate senses with words and so communicate thoughts and judgements to one another.

So thought is mysterious because there is no way of explaining how thoughts, being residing in the third realm, relate to things in other realms of reality. That is, what makes them about anything. There is no way of explaining how we grasp them. No wonder, Frege himself wrote, “This process is perhaps the most mysterious of all” (Frege, 1897)¹¹. Indeed, there is no way of explaining how we attach senses or expressions or what makes them a sense of those words and expressions. All these are obscured because the explanation available to us cannot be reconciled with the mythological picture. In this regard, Dummett remarks, “When we have Frege’s theory of meaning in view, our perspective has wholly altered: the third realm has receded to infinity” (Dummett, 1991, p. 252)¹².

Regarding this point, John Searle has written, “It is at least misleading, if not simply a mistake, to say that a belief, for example, is a two-term relation between a believer and a proposition. An analogous mistake would be to say that a statement is a two-term relation between a speaker and a proposition. One should rather say that a proposition is not the object of a statement or belief but rather its

⁹ Dummett, Michael (1991). *Frege and Other Philosophers*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Frege, Gottlob (1897). ‘Logik’ in Hermes, H. & Kambartel, F. (Eds.) (1969). *Nachgelassene Schriften*. Hamburg.

¹² Dummett, Michael (1991). Op, cit.

content” (Searle, 1983, p.18)¹³. According to Searle, Frege was mainly concerned with thoughts as objects of mental acts, but he did not operate with any distinction between the object and the content of mental acts. Dummett acknowledges the merit of Searle’s argument against Frege. For them, it is in taking thoughts as the objects of mental acts that Frege goes astray. The first false step is an apparently innocent one, namely, to hold that truth and falsity are primarily attached to thoughts and only derivatively to sentences. The truth-value of a sentence stands for the thought expressed as reference (*Bedeutung*) to sense. The thesis is that it is the sense of the sentence to which the reference is primarily to be ascribed and only derivatively the sentence itself. By parity, we can generalize it by saying after Dummett: “It is the sense, not the expression, which primarily refers” (Dummett, 1991, p. 253)¹⁴. According to Dummett, this consequence is seldom explicitly drawn by Frege as it is expressed in the celebrated remark, “The regular connection between the sign, its sense and its reference are such that to the sign there corresponds a determinate sense and to this, in turn, a determinate reference” (Frege, 1892, p. 27)¹⁵. The same concept is also illustrated by the diagram in Frege’s letter of 1891 to Husserl. The point is that if a sense is intrinsically the sense of an expression then a reference may be associated with it as being the reference of any expression with the sense; and this would remain so even if it were only the sense of some expression never in fact uttered. Thus Dummett reveals that when Frege expounds on his distinction between sense and reference, he never treats sense as prior to reference. He never introduces first the notion of sense and subsequently explains that of reference as a feature of sense. On the contrary, he speaks of the expression as having both sense and reference arguing that it has both and explaining the relation between them. In brief, to understand them, we indeed thereby come to grasp the senses of the expression concerned for grasping how the reference of an expression, whatever simple or complex, is to be determined. However, to grasp this we must take the referent to be the referent of the expression. We would not take it as the referent of

¹³ Searle, John (1983). *Intentionality*. Cambridge.

¹⁴ Dummett, Michael (1991). Op. cit.

¹⁵ Frege, Gottlob (1892). ‘Uber Sinn and Bedeutung’ in *Zeitschrift fur Philosophie und Philosophische Kritik*. NF 100.

the sense in advance either of grasping the particular sense or even the general concept of sense.

According to Dummett, if the sense is the route to the reference or the way the reference is given, the general notion of sense cannot be explained except by appeal to that of reference. In such a case, we must have the latter notion first. Here we have the notion of reference in advance of that of sense. We cannot conceive the possession of reference as a property of the sense, but only of the expression. Thus it is to the expression that reference is primarily to be ascribed, even though it has the specific reference that it has in virtue of sense. Dummett further subscribes that since a sense is a way of referring to something and it is the expression which refers, senses are intrinsically the senses of expressions. In this regard, Dummett claims, "Frege says that he is concerned with thoughts rather than with sentences, but his detailed theory of sense does not show what explanation could be given of thought without alluding to a means of expressing them. He also says that there is no contradiction in supposing beings who grasp thoughts without clothing them in language" (Dummett, 1991, p. 256)¹⁶. Here Dummett criticises Frege by pointing out that his theory of sense gives no indication how languageless thought is possible. For Dummett, Frege must have made a distinction between inner reference, that is when someone has a thought he does not voice, and reference made when speaking to another. Dummett did not maintain that languageless thought is impossible, while Frege was wrong in holding human beings to be incapable of it. Dummett opined, "A correct account of languageless thought must therefore show how other things than language can sometimes serve as a vehicle, or a medium, for thought" (Dummett, 1991, p. 262)¹⁷.

One should not forget that Frege began his semantical journey with a kind of language predominantly concerned with concept-notation. Being a semanticist, he was against the functional aspect of the so-called natural language (ordinary language). So he has initiated to formulate a form of artificial language containing the language of elementary logic and mathematics. Accordingly, his form of language is purely an abstract form of language, a sort of private language and the

¹⁶ Dummett, Michael (1991). Op, cit.

¹⁷ Ibid.

content of such language cannot be part of humans. Thus Frege at the initial stage rules out the relevance of psychology and ideas of any sort where there is a role of the bearers of language. Therefore, I think that at the initial stage, Frege was very careful and alert about the program of his semantics. The controversy is centred on the view that “thought is neither physical nor mental, it is the third realm”, and the concept of ‘third-realm’ creates some philosophical debate where many contemporary philosophers have claimed this concept as “Frege’s philosophical myth”. Here I stand with Frege and would justify why I am thinking so.

I think that the above charges can be adequately sorted out by the explanation of the semantic theory Frege held in *Begriffsschrift*. According to this theory, a sentence stands for its content (*Inhalt*). This is understood to be a thought. That means, to know the content of the sentence is to know the sense of the sentence with a thought. This is where the relevance of sense/reference distinction actually hinges. According to Frege, it is more like a state of affairs or a circumstance something could be obtained. The sentence stands for its content. It is a proxy for its content. Accordingly, the parts of the sentence stand for corresponding parts of the content of the sentence. The resulting sentence should have the same content as the original. Only that portion of the content of a sentence that counted for inference is what Frege calls the *conceptual content* (*Begrifflichen Inhalt*) of the sentence.

Of course, one should be careful about the subtle distinction between epistemological response and ontological response while addressing Frege with reference to Dummett. Dummett’s position about Frege’s third realm is primarily epistemological rather than ontological. We think that one can give a viable response of Dummett’s position regarding Frege’s third realm following B. Scot Rouse. Though Rouse did not mention Dummett while developing his epistemological position of Frege’s ‘grasping’ the contents of third realm, but it provides a good response to Dummett’s mythological position.

B. Scot Rouse¹⁸ delves into the complex philosophical problems of how we, as thinkers bound by space and time, can grasp thoughts that are considered by

¹⁸ Rouse, B. Scot (2015). “Demythologizing the Third Realm: Frege on Grasping Thoughts” in *Journal for the History of Analytical Philosophy*, Vol. 3, No. 1.

Frege to be non-spatial, non-temporal and objective. Frege's concept of a "third realm" of thoughts, distinct from both the physical world and the subjective realm of consciousness, raises the crucial question of how we can access and interact with these abstract entities. Rouse focuses on a specific passage in Frege's "The Thought" where he introduces the idea of a "non-sensible something" necessary for grasping thoughts and gaining knowledge of the external world. This "non-sensible something" is the key to understanding how we connect with the objective realm of thoughts. According to Wolfgang Malzkorn¹⁹, this "non-sensible something" is a faculty that processes sense-impressions into perceptions. Rouse finds this interpretation inadequate, arguing that it misconstrues Frege's focus. He emphasizes that Frege's primary concern in discussing retinal images is not to explain the mechanics of perception, but rather to highlight the subjective and private nature of sense-impressions in contrast to the objective and shared nature of perceptions. The fact that multiple individuals can perceive the same object in space, despite having different private sense-impressions, demonstrates that perception involves something more than just the processing of these impressions. Rouse contends that grasping a thought is not simply a matter of having an idea "aimed at" the thought. Instead, for him, it is a more complex process that involves language and symbolic representation. Rouse, while criticizing Malzkorn's understanding of the relationship between ideas and thoughts, argues that this interpretation makes it difficult to understand how grasping a thought could warrant the thought's truth. If the thought is simply the object of an idea, then the connection between the thinker and the thought seems too indirect to allow for genuine understanding and judgement. Rouse contends that this "non-sensible something" is a rational capacity, specifically our capacity for linguistic and communicative competence which is manifested in our ability to distinguish between assertions and mere ventings of subjective states.

The objectivity of thoughts is inextricably linked to their intersubjective graspability and communicability. Thoughts, being essentially communicable,

¹⁹ Malzkorn, W. (2001). "How Do We 'Grasp' a Thought, Mr. Frege?" in A. Newen, U. Nortmann and R. Stuhlmann-Laeisz (eds.), *Building on Frege: New Essays on Sense, Content and Concept*. Stanford: CSLI publications.

must be graspable by multiple thinkers. This communicability is made possible by language, which provides the symbolic tools necessary to represent and share thoughts. We can also notice the importance of spatial location in Frege's examples that our perceptions are not just about subjective impressions, but how things are located in the objective world. Thus the ontological rift between non-spatio-temporal thoughts and spatio-temporally bound thinkers is bridged with language. The ability to use language to make assertions, to agree and disagree, and to communicate about the objective world is fundamental to our understanding and interaction with the realm of thoughts.

Conclusion:

I think, Frege was very conscious of all these tricky philosophical issues when he engaged with the famous sense-reference distinction. Dummett takes the epistemological position of Frege's third realm, i.e. thought. Dummett reviews Frege by arguing that the meaning of a sentence is tied to our ability to provide evidence for or against it. It glimpses Dummett's epistemological nostalgia about Frege's third realm. In a nutshell, Dummett criticises Frege's third realm on the following points: it lacks clear criteria for existence, the third realm is inaccessible to human knowledge, it leads to an infinite regress and fails to account for the normativity of meaning. Burge²⁰, on the other hand, argues that Frege's views on knowing the third realm are complex and nuanced. Frege rejects the idea that we can know the third realm through sense-experience and intuition. Instead cognitive access to the third realm occurs through language, which is through the use of sentences and logical inference, and reason, that is through rational inferential process. Furthermore, Burge emphasizes that Frege's views on cognitive access to the third realm are closely tied to his notion of anti-psychologism and Platonism. Frege's third realm has been interpreted as a form of Platonism, where abstract objects exist independently of human thought and perception. According to Burge, Frege was a Platonist about logical objects, functions and thought contents. By Platonism, I mean, Frege regards some objects and all functions as existing, or being otherwise real, non-spatially and atemporally. Frege may be claimed to be a

²⁰ Burge, T. (1992). "Frege on Knowing the Third Realm". *Mind* 101. Pp. 633-650.

relaxed Platonist mathematician who simply assumes that there are numbers, functions and these are abstract subject-matters which can be accepted without special philosophical explanation. Dummett's position against Frege does not stand as Frege appealed to no other faculty other than reason in his account of mathematical knowledge. While doing so, he also highlighted the intersubjective objectivity of scientific theorizing. Frege asserted that ordinary mathematical practice yields certain knowledge even prior to the execution of any foundationalist program.

However, Burge's position of Frege seems to me an ontological standpoint. Dummett's charge is epistemological and thus ontological remarks would not help assuage them. The thrust of anti-Platonist reading of Frege lies in the claim that, for Frege, logical or epistemological notions are prior to ontological notions. To maintain the objectivity of thoughts, which are nothing but facts, Frege admitted the third realm as its locus. That is how Frege developed his semantic position very well even by mixing a taste of pragmatic convenience to it. In spite of many interpreters, to defend Frege against Dummett's charge I would like to stand by Rouse's interpretation. Rouse sketched an anti-Platonist reading of Frege's conception of thoughts. Rouse proposes a solution to the problem of grasping the third realm by introducing the concept of cognitive intuition. Cognitive intuition, as a non-sensible rational faculty, enables us to grasp abstract objects in the third realm. It is a rational insight that allows us to "see" into the properties and relations of abstract objects without relying on sensory experience. Hence the gap between sensible and non-sensible is bridged with such rational linguistic or communicative capacity. This solution even has implications for the philosophy of language, as it provides a new account of how we can grasp the meaning of linguistic expressions. Frege's third realm remains a central concept in philosophical debates about the nature of abstract objects, knowledge and reality and there is much more to dig out. That is why Frege himself claimed that the process of reaching out to the third realm is a mysterious one.

References:

1. Burge, T. (1992). "Frege on Knowing the Third Realm". *Mind* 101. Pp. 633-650.

2. Bynum, T. W. (ed.) (1972). *Gottlob Frege: Conceptual Notation and Related Articles*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
3. Bell, D. (1979). *Frege's Theory of Judgement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
4. Bell, D. (1987). 'Thoughts' in *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic*. Pp. 36-50.
5. Dummett, M. (1991). "Frege's Myth of the Third Realm" in *Frege and Other Philosophers*. New York: Oxford University Press.
6. Dummett, M. (1991). "Thought and Perception: The Views of Two Philosophical Innovators" in *Frege and Other Philosophers*. New York: Oxford University Press.
7. Dummett, M. (1993). *The Seas of Language*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
8. Kenny, A. (1995). *Frege*. London: Penguin.
9. Malzkorn, W. (2001). "How Do We 'Grasp' a Thought, Mr. Frege?" in A. Newen, U. Nortmann and R. Stuhlmann-Laeisz (eds.), *Building on Frege: New Essays on Sense, Content and Concept*. Stanford: CSLI Publications.
10. Ricketts, T. (1986). "Objectivity and Objecthood: Frege's Metaphysics of Judgement" in L. Haaparanta and J. Hintikka (eds.), *Frege Synthesized*. Dordrecht: Reidel Publishing.
11. Rouse, B. Scot (2015). "Demythologizing the Third Realm: Frege on Grasping Thoughts" in *Journal for the History of Analytical Philosophy*. Vol. 3, No. 1.
12. Wolfgang, C. (1994). *Frege's Theory of Sense and Reference: Its Origins and Scope*. New York: Cambridge University Press.