

## Essay Unit 9 – John StGeorge

What is the point of Frege's distinction between sense and reference?

Meaning in use seems to lead, inexorably, to words containing the attributions of sense and reference. The point to Frege's distinction between sense and reference may be more readily identified via a practical exercise in sentence and analysis.

"It is extremely important that you clean your teeth after eating food".

Here is an indirect statement asserting a belief that the cleaning of your teeth is important after eating. The concept is that the residual food adhering to the teeth is in some way deleterious to the health of the teeth.

The sense of this sentence is captured in the route to reference of the debilitating effect of residual food, not cleaned from the surface of the teeth following the act of eating. Also encapsulating in the sense of this concept is the extension to knowledge in the verification of the assertion, "It is important to clean your teeth after eating."

The sense component of the sentence is verified in the breakdown of the composition of the food with the residues piercing the protective enamel encasing the teeth. Under these criteria, it shows how the sense of the words connects up to the practicality of eating food and the vulnerability of the teeth. In this example, sense is conceived as the route to reference in the form of knowledge garnered from the breakdown of the destructive components of food.

The factual knowledge is something acquired through the objectivity of the words contained in the sentence. Each component word of the sentence is eventually verified as to its sense in the mode of presentation. The point made in this proposition is that the verification of the sense is obtained through the reference. Without this conjunction, the sentence would not achieve the attribute of sense.

Perhaps a rearrangement of the sentence would show more clearly that the use of semantics can alter sense.

"It is important to clean your teeth before eating food."

One word only has been changed in this proposition, having the effect of a total alteration of the concept. The sense element of the sentence has disappeared in terms of verifiable truth conditions. The point here being that the sense component and reference do not coincide.

For me, this sentence does not offer any route to verifiable information or sense. Perhaps this is where the point of Frege's distinction between sense and reference is evident.