

## Frege, “that”-clauses, underlining

I draw attention to two questions which arise from: Frege’s underlining in a letter to Russell, some of his remarks in ‘Meine grundlegenden logischen Einsichten’/‘My basic logical insights’, and a plausible thesis regarding indirect Bedeutungen. Addressing these questions is necessary for a proper understanding of Frege’s account of „dass“-sentences/“that”-clauses.

In a letter to Russell dated 28.12.1902, Frege wrote:

10 Da »*M*« an den beiden Stellen verschiedene Bedeutungen hat im Satze „der Gedanke, dass alle zur Klasse *M* gehörenden Gedanken wahr sind, gehört nicht zur Klasse *M*“ [(A)], so muss auch in dem Ausdrucke „der Gedanke, dass der Gedanke, dass alle zur Klasse *M* gehörenden Gedanken wahr sind, nicht zur Klasse *M* gehöre“ [(B)] eine Verschiedenheit der Bedeutungen von »*M*« bestehen bleiben. Man kann sagen, dass wir im doppelt  
15 Unterstrichenen die ungerade Bedeutung zweiten Grades haben, in dem einmal Unterstrichenen dagegen die ungerade Bedeutung ersten Grades.<sup>1</sup>

(Frege 1976: 236)

20 Since ‘*M*’ has different Bedeutungen in the two places in the sentence “the thought that all thoughts belonging to class *M* are true does not belong to class *M*”, there must also be a difference in the Bedeutungen of ‘*M*’ in the expression “the thought that the thought that all thoughts belonging to class *M* are true does not belong to class *M*”. One can say that in the twice-underlined part we have the indirect Bedeutung of the second degree, whereas in the once-underlined part we have the indirect Bedeutung of the first degree.<sup>2</sup>

25 [(Frege 1980: 154)]

Frege’s underlining shows that he thought: that „dass“ had its normal Bedeutung and not one of its indirect Bedeutungen in (A); that „dass“ had its normal Bedeutung and not one of its indirect Bedeutungen in the first place in which it occurred in (B); and that „dass“ had its singly indirect  
30 Bedeutung in the second place in which it occurred in (B).

I infer that Frege would think that „dass“ has its normal Bedeutung and not one of its indirect Bedeutungen in „der Gedanke, dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“ [“the thought that seawater is salty”].

Now, in ‘Meine grundlegenden logischen Einsichten’ Frege wrote:

35 Wenn ich das Wort „salzig“ prädikativ den Worten „das Meerwasser“ hinzufüge, bilde ich einen Satz, der einen Gedanken ausdrückt. Um deutlicher zu machen, dass nur der Gedanke ausgedrückt, aber nichts behauptet werden solle, setze ich den Satz in die abhängige Form

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1 I have altered the formatting of the text to better represent what it looked like in Frege’s letter to Russell. I have consulted a scan of a photostat copy of the letter courtesy of the McMaster Russell Archives.

2 The translations given in this paper are similar to but differ from already published translations. Citations of those published translations appear in brackets.

40 um: „Dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“. ... Die Kenntnis des Sinnes der Worte „ist salzig“ ist  
 zum Verständnis des Satzes erforderlich, da er einen wesentlichen Beitrag zum Gedanken  
 gibt – in den blossen Worten „das Meerwasser“ hätten wir ja überhaupt keinen Satz und  
 keinen Gedankenausdruck. Ganz anders ist es beim Worte „wahr“. Wenn ich dieses  
 prädikativ den Worten „dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“ hinzufüge, bilde ich ebenfalls einen  
 45 Satz, der einen Gedanken ausdrückt. Aus demselben Grunde wie vorhin setze ich auch  
 diesen in die abhängige Form um: „Dass es wahr ist, dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“ [(U)].  
 Der hierin ausgedrückte Gedanke fällt zusammen mit dem Sinn des Satzes „dass das  
 Meerwasser salzig ist“.

(Frege 1983: 271)

50 If I predicatively attach the word “salty” to the word “seawater”, I form a sentence that  
 expresses a thought. In order to make it clearer that the thought is only being expressed, but  
 nothing is meant to be asserted, I put the sentence into the dependent form: “That seawater is  
 salty”. ... Knowledge of the sense of the words “is salty” is required for an understanding of  
 the sentence, since the sense makes an essential contribution to the thought – indeed, in the  
 55 mere word “seawater” we would have no sentence and no thought-expression at all. It is  
 quite different with the word “true”. If I predicatively attach this to the words “that seawater  
 is salty”, I likewise form a sentence that expresses a thought. I put this too into the  
 dependent form, for the same reason as before: “That it is true that seawater is salty”. The  
 thought expressed herein coincides with the sense of the sentence “that seawater is salty”.

60 [(Frege 1997: 322–3)]

What Frege says there suggests that he thought that „dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“ *expressed* a  
 thought.<sup>3</sup>

65 Now, if he thought that „dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“ *expressed* a thought, and he thought that  
 „dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“ *designated* that thought in „der Gedanke, dass das Meerwasser  
 salzig ist“, then wouldn’t he have thought that „dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“ had its indirect  
 Bedeutung in „der Gedanke, dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“?

But the following three propositions form an inconsistent triad:

70 „dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“ has its indirect Bedeutung in „der Gedanke, dass das  
 Meerwasser salzig ist“.

75 If a complex expression<sub>1</sub> has its singly indirect Bedeutung in some more complex  
 expression<sub>2</sub>, then at least one constituent of that expression<sub>1</sub> has its singly indirect Bedeutung  
 in that more complex expression<sub>2</sub> and every constituent of that expression<sub>1</sub> has one of its  
 indirect Bedeutungen in that more complex expression<sub>2</sub>.<sup>4</sup>

3 Textor thinks so too: (2023: 177–178), (2021: 223–224), and (2018: 2686). See also (Greimann 2004: 428).

4 Angelelli attributed a similar thesis to Frege (Angelelli 1967: 64). Numerical subscripts are used to assist the  
 recognition of anaphora.

Suppose that “Monte Bianco” designates itself in ““Monte Bianco” is the Italian name for Mont Blanc”.  
 Suppose also that “Monte Bianco” designates in “Peano thought that “Monte Bianco” was the Italian name for

„dass“ has its normal Bedeutung and not one of its indirect Bedeutungen in „der Gedanke, dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“.

80 The first question is “which of those propositions would Frege reject?”

I don’t know how Frege could reject the second proposition. I assume he would accept it. Based on Frege’s underlining in his letter to Russell, Frege would accept the third proposition too.

So Frege should probably reject the first proposition. Hence we should look closer at the argument which was hinted at above for that proposition:

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1. „dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“ expresses a thought.
2. „dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“ designates that thought in „der Gedanke, dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“.
- 90 3. If „dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“ expresses a thought and „dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“ designates that thought in „der Gedanke, dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“, then „dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“ has its indirect Bedeutung in „der Gedanke, dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“.

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„dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“ has its indirect Bedeutung in „der Gedanke, dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“.

[1, 2, & 3]

100 The second question is “which of the premises could Frege reject?”

Frege might not be committed to the first premise being true. Perhaps in speaking of the expressions „dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“ and „dass es wahr ist, dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“ in ‘Meine grundlegenden logischen Einsichten’, Frege was really only speaking obliquely of „Das Meerwasser ist salzig“ and „Es ist wahr, dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“. In which case, what Frege  
105 says there entails that „Das Meerwasser ist salzig“ expresses a thought, but it does not entail that „dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“ expresses a thought.

Frege might not be committed to the third premise being true. Perhaps Frege would think that „dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“ has more than one normal Bedeutung and more than one normal sense, that it can be used to designate a truth-value and express a thought, but also that it can be  
110 used to designate that thought and express a mode of presentation of that thought without it thereby being used *indirectly*. In which case, Frege would think that there is no such thing as *the* normal Bedeutung or *the* indirect Bedeutung of „dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“, hence he would think that the third premise is false, or neither true nor false.

How could „dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“ have more than one normal Bedeutung and more

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Mont Blanc” the sense that it expresses in ““Monte Bianco” is the Italian name for Mont Blanc”. Call that sense “the quotational sense of “Monte Bianco”” or “the singly indirect quotational Bedeutung of “Monte Bianco””. I would count the singly indirect quotational Bedeutung of “Monte Bianco” as one of its indirect Bedeutungen.

115 than one normal sense? Perhaps Frege thought:<sup>5</sup>

that „dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“ designated a truth-value whenever its constituent „das Meerwasser salzig ist“ designated a truth-value,

120 that „dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“ designated a thought whenever its constituent „das Meerwasser salzig ist“ designated a thought, and

125 that „dass das Meerwasser salzig ist“ designated a truth-value or a thought whenever its constituent „dass“ designated a function which maps any truth-value to itself and any thought to itself.

In conclusion: “which of the propositions that form the inconsistent triad would Frege reject?”, I think that he should and would reject the first proposition; “which of the premises of the argument for that proposition could Frege reject?”, I think that he might be able to reject the first and that he  
130 might be able to reject the third.

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5 What I say here with “whenever” might not be exactly what I mean, but I trust that this inaccurate way of speaking still enables the reader to grasp what I mean while allowing for concision.  
I think Textor thinks he thought these things (Textor 2021: 221–224).

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