

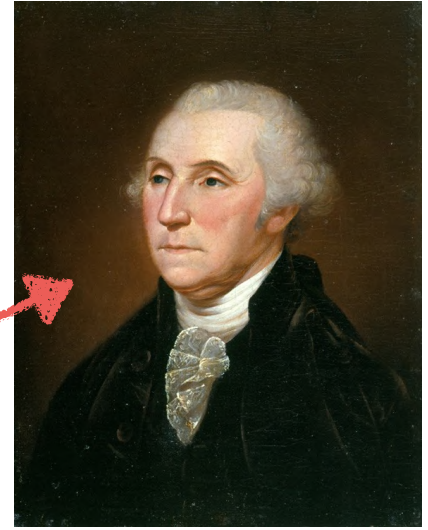
Yes. I mean, this is what makes covering _____ so very difficult. What does he mean when he says words?

– Zachary Wolf

Meaning and reference

- Words vs. concepts
 - *Dog* and *chien* mean the same thing.
What do they mean? DOG
 - Words are in *italics*. Concepts are in ALLCAPS.
- Words and concepts aren't the same thing. But *what* are concepts?

Proper names



- The simplest case is **proper names**.

George Washington was the first president.

- The phrase *George Washington* seems to “point” to a particular individual.
 - It is a **rigid designator**.
- That “pointing” is called **reference**.

But what about other words?

- Words that **aren't** proper names seem more difficult.
 - *Dogs bark.*
- What does *dogs* mean? It doesn't refer to a particular individual or individuals, but to the category DOG.
- But what **is** that category? Is it a thing in and of itself?
- This is called **the problem of universals.**

The problem of universals

- Aristotle (~350 BCE) asked: Does the category DOGS exist, separate from individual dogs?
- Democritus (~400 BCE) had asserted that the world was made entirely of atoms—tiny, indivisible units of matter.
- The implication of this assertion is that non-physical things do not exist.
 - This is called atomism or materialism.
 - This implies that individual dogs may exist, but the category DOG does not exist apart from the individuals that make it up.

(Review of): Materialism, dualism, etc.

- But Plato (~400 BCE) argued that there were two independent spheres of existence, aka **Platonic dualism**
 - Everyday physical things vs. a higher plane of ideals, or **forms**
- This later evolved into the Christian division between the profane and the divine, e.g. the body and the soul.
- René Descartes (~1625) argued that the world consists of two distinct substances, mind and body (aka **Cartesian dualism**)
- But his careful naturalistic reasoning helped make the case for (modern) scientific monism/materialism:
 - “Everything is made of physics.”

Back to universals

- So if DOG is not a physical thing, what is it?
- Perhaps it is just a **name** we have for the set of dogs (e.g. William of Ockham, ~1300 CE)
 - This is called **nominalism** (= “name-ism”).
- Some have argued that **everything** exists only in our heads
 - This is called **idealism** (= “idea-ism”)
- While others argued that the things we perceive are real and exist in approximately the form we perceive them to have (**realism**)

Berkeley

- Bishop George Berkeley (1685-1753) argued that entities do not exist unless they are perceived
- Hence the continued existence of objects when nobody is perceiving them can be attributed to the ever-present perception of God
- His conclusion is that all reality is mental—aka **subjective idealism** or **Berkeleyan idealism**



Berkeley on concepts

- Berkeley argued that an object is a “collection of sense-impressions”
- He argued against John Locke’s distinction between **primary and secondary qualities**
 - Primary qualities correspond to “real” physical attributes
 - Secondary qualities are purely “mental”
- One of his key points is that physical objects and mental objects (concepts) are **not the same thing** and cannot be directly compared
- This is a central issue as we consider the nature of concepts: do they correspond to reality or are they mere psychological biases?

Sober reading

- Knowledge as **justified true belief**
 - If you know something “by accident”, do you really know it?
- Gettier cases: Is JTB the right definition of knowledge?
 - What if your justification is wrong?
- **Analytic** vs. **contingent** knowledge
 - Analytic propositions are true in virtue of the meanings of their terms
 - Contingent propositions must be evaluated based on the state of the outside world—e.g. empirically

Content, intension, extension

- Frege (1892) distinguished between reference and **sense**
- In modern philosophy, sense or meaning is sometimes called **content** or **intension**
- Two concepts can be **co-referent** without having the same sense
 - *Evening star vs. morning star*
 - *cordates vs. renates*
 - *square root of 16 vs. number of Beatles*
- **Intension** (meaning, mental representation) vs. **extension** (set of things picked out by the intension)

Are intensions mental?

- To a psychologist:
 - the extension is in the world (the **referent**)
 - the intension is in the head (the **mental representation**)
- But philosophers debate whether the intension is actually “in the head” (called **psychologism** or **mentalism**).
Alternatively:
 - the extension is in the world
 - intension is meaning **independent of mental states**
- Exactly what this means is still hotly debated—see Fodor reading