

CONCEPTUALIZING MEANING

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Abstract. Descriptions have been the object of attention of many philosophers. The goal of this article is to inquire into the meaning of those descriptions which, due to the peculiar character of the objects of description, have been interpreted in different ways, and to investigate in which sense one is able to speak of the existence (or non-existence) of an object of description. The various sorts of descriptions are inquired; the questions which entities exist and which do not is dealt with, and, in relation to this, how 'meaning' is to be understood.

Keywords: meaning, reference, secondary reference, descriptions.

I. INTRODUCTION

The question what meaning is has led to a large number of approaches. Where may meaning be found? How can it exist? In this article, these questions will be dealt with. In any enquiry it is of importance to try to find a theory that does not rest upon suppositions which cannot be justified, or at least clarified.

When meaning is the subject of enquiry, this entails that theories which defend the existence of a meaning existing independently of (users of) language are to be investigated. This is done in the first section. It has a wider scope, however, dealing with the various sorts of objects which may involve meaning. As it will turn out, it is not enough to discuss a reference and a meaning; a large number of situations cannot be explained without a third element, a secondary reference, as I shall call it.

Section 2 deals with some particular problems concerning descriptions of a difficult nature. In order to demonstrate these problems, a logical analysis is

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