

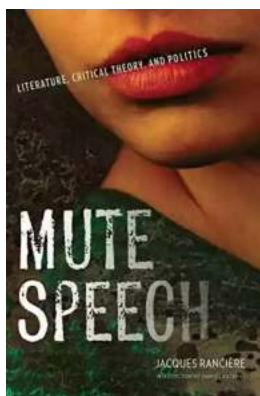
The Case Against Two Dimensionalism: A Comprehensive Analysis

Two-dimensionalism, also known as 2D semantics, has been a widely discussed topic in the field of philosophy of language. This theory attempts to provide a comprehensive account of reference and description, but is not without its critics. In this article, we will delve into the arguments against two-dimensionalism and explore alternative perspectives.

Understanding Two Dimensionalism

To begin our exploration, we must first establish a basic understanding of two-dimensionalism. According to this theory, the meaning of a sentence is determined by two dimensions of meaning: the primary and the secondary dimension.

The primary dimension captures the objective content of a sentence and is responsible for its reference. It deals with the way things are in the actual world. On the other hand, the secondary dimension captures the subjective content and represents the way things could have been in alternative scenarios or possible worlds.



Reference and Description: The Case against Two-Dimensionalism by Scott Soames(Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 1865 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Print length : 374 pages



Two-dimensionalism suggests that understanding a sentence involves grasping both dimensions of meaning. This theory argues that the primary dimension determines the reference of a sentence, while the secondary dimension accounts for the truth or falsity of the sentence in different possible worlds.

The Case Against Two Dimensionalism

While two-dimensionalism offers an intriguing approach to understanding meaning, it is not without its critics. Let's explore some of the main arguments against this theory:

1. The Incoherence Argument

One of the central criticisms against two-dimensionalism is the Incoherence Argument. Critics argue that the two-dimensionalist framework is inherently flawed as it fails to properly account for the necessary connections between meaning, reference, and truth. They claim that the attempt to distinguish between the primary and secondary dimensions is arbitrary and lacks a solid foundation.

Additionally, opponents of two-dimensionalism argue that this theory is unable to provide a satisfactory explanation for how the primary dimension determines reference, while the secondary dimension determines truth. Critics contend that the proposed separation of dimensions is artificial and does not align with our everyday understanding of language usage.

2. The Problem of Rigidity

Another key argument against two-dimensionalism revolves around the problem of rigidity. Two-dimensionalism suggests that words and phrases have primary

and secondary intensions, representing their reference and sense, respectively. However, critics point out that the proposed distinction between these intensions is problematic.

They argue that the notion of rigidity, which is crucial to two-dimensionalism, fails to adequately explain how linguistic expressions can retain their reference across different possible worlds. Furthermore, critics contend that the concept of rigidity undermines the flexibility of language usage and does not fully capture the dynamic nature of meaning in communication.

3. The Context Dependency Argument

Opponents of two-dimensionalism also raise concerns regarding the theory's lack of consideration for contextual factors in meaning determination. Critics argue that meaning is highly context-dependent and cannot be solely captured by a rigid two-dimensional framework.

They contend that understanding the meaning and reference of a sentence requires a careful analysis of the current linguistic, social, and cultural context in which it is used. Critics posit that two-dimensionalism fails to adequately account for the contextual aspects of meaning and overlooks the rich interplay between language and its surroundings.

Alternative Perspectives

In light of these criticisms, several alternative perspectives have emerged. Let's briefly examine two of the most prominent alternatives to two-dimensionalism:

1. Direct Reference Theory

Direct Reference Theory challenges the two-dimensionalist assumption that meaning is determined by both primary and secondary dimensions. This theory

argues that meaning is primarily determined by the immediate extension of a linguistic expression in the actual world.

Direct Reference Theory suggests that understanding a sentence involves accessing the referent directly, without the need for secondary dimensions. This perspective emphasizes the importance of context and situational factors in meaning determination, aligning more closely with our natural language intuitions.

2. Contextualist Semantics

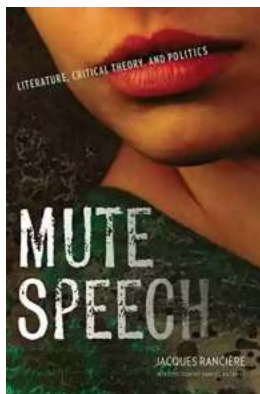
Contextualist Semantics takes an even stronger stance against two-dimensionalism by arguing that meaning is entirely context-dependent. This perspective posits that the meaning of a sentence is determined by the context in which it is uttered.

Contextualist Semantics stresses that the same sentence can have different meanings in different contexts, and the meaning of a sentence may change over time. This theory emphasizes the importance of pragmatics and the dynamic nature of meaning in communication.

The debate surrounding two-dimensionalism and its alleged shortcomings continues to be a subject of intense philosophical discourse. While this theory offers an intriguing approach to understanding reference and description, its critics raise valid concerns regarding its coherence, rigidity, and lack of contextual sensitivity.

Alternative perspectives, such as Direct Reference Theory and Contextualist Semantics, provide valuable alternatives to further explore the complexities of meaning determination. By engaging in this ongoing dialogue, philosophers strive to refine their understanding of language and meaning, shedding light on the intricacies of human communication.

, the case against two-dimensionality challenges its fundamental assumptions and highlights the need for a more comprehensive and contextually sensitive approach to reference and description.



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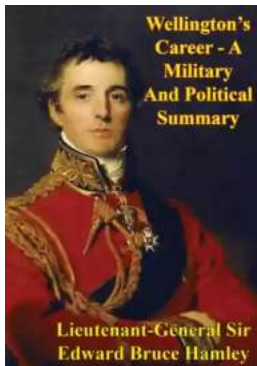
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In this book, Scott Soames defends the revolution in philosophy led by Saul Kripke, Hilary Putnam, and David Kaplan against attack from those wishing to revive descriptivism in the philosophy of language, internalism in the philosophy of mind, and conceptualism in the foundations of modality. Soames explains how, in the last twenty-five years, this attack on the anti-descriptivist revolution has coalesced around a technical development called two-dimensional modal logic that seeks to reinterpret the Kripkean categories of the necessary a posteriori and the contingent a priori in ways that drain them of their far-reaching philosophical significance.

Arguing against this reinterpretation, Soames shows how the descriptivist revival has been aided by puzzles and problems ushered in by the anti-descriptivist revolution, as well as by certain errors and missteps in the anti-descriptivist classics themselves. Reference and Description sorts through all this, assesses

and consolidates the genuine legacy of Kripke and Kaplan, and launches a thorough and devastating critique of the two-dimensionalist revival of descriptivism. Through it all, Soames attempts to provide the outlines of a lasting, nondescriptivist perspective on meaning, and a nonconceptualist understanding of modality.



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