

## RUSSELL'S ATTACK ON FREGE'S THEORY OF MEANING

*Herbert Hochberg*

Russell's attack on Frege's theory of meaning occurs in one of the most puzzling passages in the 1905 paper that introduced his theory of descriptions. The passage has been the occasion for much commentary and abuse. According to Searle,<sup>1</sup> Russell's discussion is *unclear, obscure, confusing, slipshod*, either *superfluous* or *irrelevant* to Frege's argument, *inconsistent*, involving a *misstatement* of Frege's position "combined with a persistent confusion between the notions of *occurring as a part of a proposition...and being referred to by a proposition*,"<sup>2</sup> *nonsensical*, and, finally, Russell mistakenly states the negation of Frege's theory instead of Frege's theory.<sup>3</sup> Geach agrees that Searle has shown the irrelevance of Russell's criticism of Frege and explains it as an excusable confusion, on Russell's part, between Frege's theory and Russell's earlier views in *The Principles of Mathematics*.<sup>4</sup> Thus Russell, according to Geach, wasn't really arguing against Frege. He was led to think he was since "Russell, like Aristotle, so often distorts others' thought into his own mould...."<sup>5</sup> Geach advises the reader of "On Denoting" to ignore the "use of Frege's name." To Church, Russell is merely confused about use and mention.<sup>6</sup> Carnap, politely and correctly, finds Russell obscure.<sup>7</sup> Chrystine Cassin, in an article pleasantly free from rhetorical abuse, develops Geach's suggestion and holds that Russell was criticizing his own earlier view and that there is "no *direct* textual support"<sup>8</sup> for the claim that Russell was arguing against Frege's view. According to Cassin, the sole textual basis for treating Russell's arguments as criticisms of Frege would be Russell's use of "meaning and denotation" and the assumption that such use corresponds to Frege's use of "sense and reference."<sup>9</sup> Cassin is thus gentler with Russell than are Searle, Geach, Church and others. While Geach seems to believe that Russell distorted Frege's thought, thus confusing Frege's views with his own, Cassin doubts that Russell was

intending to argue against Frege's views. Hence, as she sees it, Russell can be saved from the charges of not understanding Frege or of distorting Frege's views.

I do not know what Cassin would count as direct textual support but there is abundant textual support to show that Russell believes that he is disputing Frege's views. A few pages before the passage that concerns us he speaks of Frege's theory involving the distinction between *meaning* and *denotation*.<sup>10</sup> The footnote is to the now celebrated paper generally translated as "On Sense and Reference." A second footnote states that :

Frege distinguishes the two elements of meaning and denotation everywhere, and not only in complex denoting phrases. Thus it is the meanings of the constituents of a denoting complex that enter into its *meaning*, not their *denotation*. In the proposition 'Mont Blanc is over 1,000 metres high', it is, according to him, the meaning of 'Mont Blanc', not the actual mountain, that is a constituent of the *meaning* of the proposition.<sup>11</sup>

and a third footnote, immediately following, reads :

In this theory, we shall say that the denoting phrase *expresses* a meaning; and we shall say both of the phrase and of the meaning that they *denote* a denotation. In the other theory, which I advocate, there is no *meaning*, and only sometimes a *denotation*.<sup>12</sup>

*I think that it is perfectly clear that Russell is taking the notions of meaning and denotation to be those involved in Frege's paper, irrespective of any differences between his own earlier notion of a denoting complex and a Fregean sense or of his own earlier notion of a proposition and a Fregean proposition or thought. The attempt to save Russell from criticism like Geach's and Searle's by holding that he didn't intend to argue against Frege's view is simply not plausible. Thus, if one believes that the view Russell is arguing against is not Frege's, he will have to hold that Russell either misunderstood Frege or distorted, perhaps knowingly, Frege's view. I shall argue that, properly understood, Russell's arguments are not only directed against Frege's view but are fatal to it. That is, I shall attempt to establish the astounding and unfashionable claims that (A) Russell understood Frege; (B) Russell also understood his own earlier view and how it was related to Frege's view; (C) Russell's arguments are, as Russell clearly believed them to be, directed against Frege; (D) Russell's statement of Frege's view is correct and neither a distortion nor the result of a confusion; and, finally, (E) Russell's arguments are cogent.*

From the opening sentence of the supposedly unintelligible

discussion it is clear that Russell is concerned with the connection between *the meaning* and *the denotation* on a view which recognizes both sorts of entities. As he puts it :

The relation of the meaning to the denotation involves certain rather curious difficulties, which seem in themselves sufficient to prove that the theory which leads to such difficulties must be wrong.<sup>13</sup>

This delineates quite clearly the target of his argument. He proceeds to state that a natural way of talking about the meaning of a denoting phrase is to put the phrase in inverted commas, whereas we denote the denotation by a straightforward use of the phrase. Thus

1) The O is U.

2) 'The O' is a *meaning* or a denoting complex and not a U.

or, to use his example,

1') The first line of Gray's *Elegy* states a proposition.

2') 'The first line of Gray's *Elegy*' does not state a proposition.

All (2') says is that the meaning of the phrase "the first line of Gray's *Elegy*" does not state a proposition, as meanings of *phrases* are not the sort of things that state propositions. The trouble begins with Russell's next sentence. He writes :

Thus taking any denoting phrase, say C, we wish to consider the relation between C and 'C', where the difference of the two is of the kind exemplified in the above two instances.<sup>14</sup>

A contemporary reader may be led to think that when Russell speaks of the relation between C and 'C' he is talking about the relation between *a phrase* and something else. He is not doing that; he is raising the question I mentioned above — a question about the relation between the denotation and the meaning of the phrase. Keeping this simple point in mind will help us to unravel and follow the argument. The modern reader would no doubt be helped if Russell had put the first occurrence of the letter C in inverted commas or double quotes. But note two things; first, he naturally would not put it in inverted commas since he has just cited the convention whereby the putting of a phrase in commas forms a sign that denotes the meaning of the original phrase and not the phrase. Second, he need not do so to be clear enough, just as I did not do so in the above sentence when I spoke of "the letter C." If he had introduced the use of double quotes to speak about the phrase, the passage would run as follows :

Thus taking any denoting phrase, say "C", we wish to consider the relation between C and 'C', where the...

But this wouldn't help in that he is using the letter "C" as a variable and does not want to talk about the letter, but about any denoting

phrase. In short, part of the problem is precisely the kind of difficulty associated with Quine's use of corner quotes and with a problem that led to Tarski's results in connection with the definition of a truth predicate. The simplest way of putting it, given Russell's concern, is the way he does put it, assuming that the reader have, not charity, but understanding.

Russell then reiterates that when sentences like (1) and (1') are used we are speaking about the denotation and when sentences like (2) and (2') occur we are speaking about the meaning. He then states that

...the relation of meaning and denotation is not merely linguistic through the phrase: there must be a logical relation involved, which we express by saying that the meaning denotes the denotation.<sup>15</sup>

He follows this assertion with a statement of the two-fold conclusion of his argument.

But the difficulty which confronts us is that we cannot succeed in *both* preserving the connexion of meaning and denotation *and* preventing them from being one and the same; also that the meaning cannot be got at except by means of denoting phrases.<sup>16</sup>

Before looking at his argument, it behooves us to attempt to be clear about what it is he wishes to prove.

On the view he opposes there is, associated with the *phrase C*, a meaning, which I will refer to as MC, and an object or denotation, which I will refer to as DC. Russell thinks there are two problems with such a view. The first problem is that there must be a relation between MC and DC that requires explanation and it is not explained by speaking of the *merely linguistic* relations between *the phrase "C"*, on the one hand, and the entities MC and DC, on the other hand. That is, suppose we hold that

(I) "C" *denotes* DC

and

(II) "C" *means* MC

with the letter C in quotes, as it occurs in (I) and (II), standing for the phrase. We also have

(III) R(MC, DC).

If we now ask what relation does the sign "R" stand for in (III), one response might be that (III) is elliptical for the conjunction of (I) and (II). In short, a meaning, MC, and a denotation, DC, stand in R if and only if there is a denoting phrase which both means MC and denotes DC. Call this response or claim (F). That (F) will not do is one thing Russell wishes to establish. It should be clear that what I mean by

saying that (F) will not do is that it will not do as a proposed explication or analysis of (III). It should also be clear why it is that Russell speaks of (F) as establishing a “merely linguistic” relation between MC and DC. A relation between two non-linguistic items is merely linguistic if the predicate indicating the relation is defined in terms of relational predicates standing for relations between a linguistic item and a non-linguistic item. Thus, if

$$R(x,y) =_{df} (\exists z)(z \text{ means } x \ \& \ z \text{ denotes } y)$$

provides a definition of “R”, then R is a merely linguistic relation, since the conjuncts in the defining phrase employ only relations between signs and things, and not relations between non-linguistic items. Similarly, we may say that an entity has been specified in a “merely linguistic” way if it is specified solely by denoting phrases mentioning a sign such as “the meaning of ‘C’” and “the denotation of ‘C’”.

It should already be evident that the comments of some commentators as to the ineptness of Russell’s understanding of Frege or as to the irrelevance of Russell’s discussion to the views of Frege are gratuitous. Whatever else Frege’s view involves, it certainly involves a relation between the meaning or sense of a denoting phrase and the denotation of the phrase. In fact, as Russell sees it, any view that recognizes a meaning (or something playing the role of a meaning) and a denotation, which differs from the meaning, must recognize such a relation. In this essential respect his own earlier view can be taken as similar to Frege’s. What he will argue is that one can only give an inadequate account of that relation and, hence, any such view must be inadequate. Consequently, both Frege’s view and Russell’s earlier view must be inadequate.

Russell, then, is clearly arguing against Frege’s view, as he himself explicitly said and obviously thought. Insofar as we have grasped merely the initial phase of Russell’s argument, as set out above, we understand that to dismiss Russell as not understanding Frege, or of distorting Frege, or to save Russell by claiming that he does not intend to argue against Frege, but against himself, or to claim that his argument is unintelligible reveals a failure to comprehend a basic and elementary aspect of Russell’s argument: namely, what it is he argues against. To repeat, since, in view of what has been written, it bears repetition, the argument is that any view that recognizes both a meaning and a denotation for denoting phrases must account for the relation between the meaning and denotation and that (F) does not furnish an adequate account, since (F) establishes a merely linguistic relation between the two entities, MC and DC. Let it be clear that I have not, so far, considered Russell’s argument, but merely one thesis

he wants to argue for: an account of R must be given and (F) is not an adequate account. What I have said is not that his critics have not understood his arguments, but that they have not understood this basic thesis that he wishes to argue for, though, in due course, I will assert that they also have not understood the specific arguments he proceeds to give.

Setting it out the way I have also suggests what one of Russell's lines of argument is. A Fregean type view involves a relation like R. An account of R like (F) will not do, but no other account is feasible. Hence a Fregean type view will not do. More generally, the argument is that on any view which recognizes something like MC, as well as something like DC, where there is a denoting phrase, C, there must also be a relation, R, between MC and DC. This relation will either be merely linguistic or not. It is not cogent to hold that it is merely linguistic. To hold that it is not is doomed to failure. Therefore, no view recognizing MC, in addition to DC, will do. This is Russell's approach. It is obscured since Russell almost takes it for granted that if R is merely linguistic the view introducing MC is inadequate. We must then fill out why he thinks this. But, since he does think this is so, we can understand why he tries to show that a Fregean style view must take R as merely linguistic by arguing that attempting to avoid taking it so introduces unpalatable consequences. His detailed arguments thus attempt to show that if R is not merely linguistic, there is an insoluble problem for the view he attacks. The Fregean must retreat to the inadequacy of a merely linguistic connection between MC and DC. Such a connection is inadequate since MC and DC are *entities*, on the Fregean view. Therefore, the relation between them ought to hold independently of our assigning signs to entities. Thus, (F) does not constitute an adequate explication of R. To put it another way, a sign which means MC and denotes DC ought to be connected to one of the entities in virtue of a relation that holds between MC and DC. In short, R ought to be involved in the explanation of either the connection between the term and its meaning or the term and its denotation. But this precludes attempting to explicate R by appeal to (F). To explicate "means" or "expresses" in terms of R and *denotes*, where the latter relation is taken as the relation between a sign and its denotation, is not feasible. It is not because several meanings can stand in R to one and the same referent. Thus one could not specify MC as *the M such that R(M, DC)*. Consequently, one cannot specify "means" as standing for a relation holding between a name and a meaning, M, where the name denotes *the x such that R(M, x)*. As Russell put it;

...there is no backward road from denotation to meaning, because every object can be denoted by an infinite number of different denoting phrases.<sup>17</sup>

The alternative, to explicate *denotes* in terms of R and *means* is also not feasible. It would involve holding for example, that

(I) "C" denotes DC

is to be understood as elliptical for

(IV) ("C" means MC) and R(MC, DC).

But (IV) presupposes that we have specified *what* a meaning, like MC, is and *which* meaning MC is. The only way we have of doing so is by stating that MC is the meaning expressed or meant by the phrase "C". Doing this involves two problems. First, we still specify MC in a "merely linguistic" way, for, MC is specified as the meaning of the sign "C". By contrast, whereas we can denote DC by the denoting phrase "The denotation of the sign 'C'", this is not the only, nor, indeed, the fundamental way of denoting the object DC. It is, in fact, parasitic on our having ways of connecting the sign "C" with the object DC without using a phrase like "the denotation of the sign...". In the case of MC there are no alternatives; we must specify MC as the meaning of the sign "C", and hence specify it in a *merely linguistic* way or "through the sign", as Russell puts it. It is worth noting that Frege apparently thought it was perfectly all right to specify MC in this way :

In order to speak of the sense of an expression 'A' one may simply use the phrase 'the sense of the expression "A"'.<sup>18</sup>

If we could specify MC by means of R and the denoting relation between a sign and an object this problem would not arise. It would not arise since we can specify the denotation, say DC, of a sign by other than "merely linguistic" means; by the use of denoting phrases that do not indicate the object as the denotation of a sign or phrase. But this alternative is not open since, as Russell put it, we cannot go backward from denotation to meaning. In short, this would return us to the attempt to explicate *means* in terms of *denotes* and R.

The second problem with the present alternative is that R remains a mysterious relation, as it would on the first alternative; and there seems to be no hope of explicating it solely in terms of the denoting relation between a sign and its denotation. R must be taken as basic or primitive on the view Russell attacks. But then, just as the meaning MC is a mysterious and parasitic entity, since it is indicated solely as "the meaning of a sign", so is the relation R, since it seems to be postulated as a basic relation between the mysterious entity MC and the object DC. All this ought to be evident since we can only speak of MC as the meaning of a phrase and of R as the relation

between the meaning and the denotation of a phrase. In a way the point stems from the peculiarity of the relation *means* or *expresses*. We have a sign "C", a meaning MC, and a relation *means* holding between them. But both MC and the relation are dependent on the term and specified by reference to a phrase or term. What is MC? It is what the phrase "C" means. What is the meaning relation? It is what holds between a phrase and its meaning. The case of denotation is different in that, first, we can specify denoted objects independently of mentioning phrases which denote them, and, second, such objects are often familiar objects of experience in an unproblematic sense of "experience". Meanings appear to be problematic by contrast. But, even if one maintains that he is familiar with such entities and hence holds that *means* is no more problematic than *denotes*, he is left with R as a basic and problematic relation, which must be specified "through the phrase", i.e., as holding between a meaning and a denotation when some phrase means the one and denotes the other.

Before pursuing the question of the mysterious status of R and MC, it is significant to note that Frege appears to agree with the contention that R and *means* are involved in the explication of *denotes*, as a relation between a sign and its denotation. This would seem to be the import of his statement :

The regular connection between a sign, its sense, and its reference is of such a kind that to the sign there corresponds a definite sense and to that in turn a definite reference, while to a given reference (an object) there does not belong only a single sign.<sup>19</sup>

This suggests that Frege takes the referent to be determined by the sense, and hence that he agrees with Russell that R should not be taken as a merely linguistic relation. For, if the sense determines the referent one need not appeal to (F) to explicate R.

That portion of Russell's argument that we have considered so far is, I take it, unquestionably intelligible. Its cogency appears to rest on the force of the claim that R is mysterious, if it is not merely linguistic. One could seek to refute the claim by construing the meaning in such a way that R ceases to be problematic or "mysterious." Taking the meaning to be a property which only the denotation has would be one possible initial move. R would then become the exemplification relation between a property and an object. If pursued, however, this gambit would amount to no more than the view Russell is developing in connection with his theory of description in "On Denoting." Other alternatives were attempted by Moore and Russell at the turn of the century and Frege can be



interpreted along similar lines. While I believe all such views fail, I will not attempt to substantiate that claim here, though such arguments clearly are a necessary part of an overall consideration of the issue. The reason I will not take up the issue here is that Russell develops, later in the passage, a different line of argument to establish that R is problematic and, in this paper, I am primarily concerned with unpacking Russell's attack on a Fregean style view. We will postpone for the time, consideration of Russell's argument against R. Before proceeding with Russell's discussion, there is a feature of his use of the term "mysterious" that requires comment.

To hold, as Russell does, that R is mysterious if it is taken as primitive or basic or, perhaps more accurately, if it is taken to be indicated by a primitive term, does not mean that Russell holds that all relations indicated by primitive terms are mysterious. Consider a referring relation as holding between a name and an object, when I stipulate that the name is to refer to or denote that object. Assume that we accept a Russellian type principle of acquaintance to the effect that primitive predicates must stand for (1) a property or relation that is instantiated and (2) a property or relation that is experienced in at least one instantiation by the user of the predicate. A primitive predicate is mysterious if it does not fulfill condition (2) while it is assumed that it fulfills condition (1). R is purportedly mysterious in this sense. Reference, as I used it in the case of the naming of an object just above, is not mysterious. One *experiences* the relation of referring to just as one *perceives* the relation of left of when one sees one object to the left of another. Let me explain. Moore introduced a relation of direct acquaintance in his analysis of perception.<sup>20</sup> Roughly, such a relation held between a mental act, a perception, and an object. A sense datum would be one example of such an object. He held that he knew what such a relation was since there were other acts of direct acquaintance which experience the relation of direct acquaintance holding between an act and an object. So we have two acts,  $ma_1$  and  $ma_2$ , a sense datum,  $sd_1$ , and the relation of direct acquaintance, DA, such that

(I)  $DA(ma_1, sd_1)$

(II)  $DA(ma_2, DA)$  or, perhaps (III)  $DA(ma_2, DA(ma_1, sd_1))$ .

(II) would state that  $ma_2$  stands in the relation DA to that relation, whereas (III) would state that  $ma_2$  stands in the relation DA to the fact that  $ma_1$  stands in DA to  $sd_1$ . In either case we know what we mean when we speak of a relation of direct acquaintance because such a relation is "experienced" by acts like  $ma_2$ . In a similar way, we know what we mean when we say "let 'C' refer to that" on a given occasion. We know that without necessarily being able to give an

explication of the term “refer” and without needing to give such an explication. We do not so know what we mean when we say “R(MC,DC)”. R is parasitic on stipulative reference, but as such is not what it ought to be in the Fregean-style scheme. This is a theme I take to be involved in Russell’s rejection of Frege’s scheme via his rejection of the “mysterious” relation R.

A second matter I wish to discuss before proceeding to Russell’s argument that R is problematic is Russell’s argument that MC cannot be gotten at except by means of denoting phrases of the kind “the meaning of...”, where the dots are replaced by a phrase denoting or mentioning a sign or phrase. This argument purports to establish that we must indicate MC in such a way as to make R parasitic on reference, as a relation between a sign and its denotation and hence turn R into a merely linguistic relation. In other words to be able to indicate MC in some other way would be to indicate it and R in such a way that “R(MC, DC)” could be expressed as a genuine relation between entities and not as a mere ellipsis for “‘C’ means MC and denotes DC”. The point is simple enough, but Russell’s way of putting it requires explication.

Russell says :

But if we speak of ‘the meaning of C’, that gives us the meaning if any of the denotation.<sup>21</sup>

It is clear, in our terms, that the expression he uses is

(C<sub>1</sub>) the meaning of the *object* C

so that we would be talking about *the meaning* of DC, the denotation. There would be such a thing only if DC had a “meaning” in the sense that it stood to something in the same relation that the sign “C” purportedly stands to MC. So, to get at MC, we cannot use (C<sub>1</sub>), and, hence, we cannot use the phrase “the meaning of C.” Russell continues,

...in order to get the meaning we want, we must speak not of ‘the meaning of C’, but of ‘the meaning of “C”’, which is the same as ‘C’ by itself.<sup>22</sup>

Here, recall, we indicate the meaning of the phrase “C” by putting the phrase in inverted commas. So, Russell is quite clear and quite correct. The point is simple. We are forced to indicate the meaning, MC, by speaking of the words or phrases that, so to speak, mean the meaning. This reduces R, as Russell sees it, to a merely linguistic relation, something that is parasitic on talk about words as opposed to things like MC and DC. Nor should it be puzzling that I have referred to MC all along by using the phrase “MC”, if we remember how that phrase was introduced.

What Russell intends is clear enough, but an example he uses in

the course of the discussion may be a source of confusion for the reader. He illustrates the point by writing :

But if we speak of 'the meaning of C', that gives us the meaning (if any) of the denotation. 'The meaning of the first line of Gray's *Elegy*' is the same as "The meaning of "The curfew tolls the knell of parting day"", and is not the same as 'The meaning of "the first line of Gray's *Elegy*"'.<sup>23</sup>

The problem is posed by his having introduced the inverted commas for a specialized purpose, denoting an entity like MC, and yet he also uses them in a more ordinary way : to mark off a phrase. All he is saying here is that the phrase

(A) The meaning of "the first line of Gray's *Elegy*"

does not refer to the same thing as the phrase

(B) The meaning of the first line of Gray's *Elegy*

*and that the latter phrase does indicate the same thing as the phrase*

(C) The meaning of "The curfew tolls the knell of parting day".

Thus, if we want to refer to the meaning of the phrase

The first line of Gray's *Elegy*

we must use (A) or the expression

(D) 'The first line of Gray's *Elegy*'

with the special convention about inverted commas. Thus, the example, is, as he obviously intends, merely an illustration of his claim about the expression "the meaning of C".

The next part of Russell's paragraph is not really essential to the discussion for he simply applies the point which he has just made about the expression "the meaning" to the expression "the denotation." But, as an example he uses appears to be responsible for much of the abuse heaped upon him, it is worth explicating the passage. The passage reads as follows :

Similarly 'the denotation of C' does not mean the denotation we want, but means something which, if it denotes at all, denotes what is denoted by the denotation we want. For example, let 'C' be 'the denoting complex occurring in the second of the above instances'. Then

C = 'the first line of Gray's *Elegy*', and

the denotation of C = The curfew tolls the knell of parting day.

But what we *meant* to have as the denotation was 'the first line of Gray's *Elegy*'. Thus we have failed to get what we wanted.<sup>24</sup>

The first sentence of the passage, stating Russell's point, is unproblematic. He is simply stating that the phrase "the denotation of C" denotes, if it denotes at all, what the object C denotes, for such a phrase refers to the denotation of C, the object, not to the denotation of "C", the phrase. But, once again, the example he gives

complicates the matter, for it also involves a use of inverted commas that is distinct from the announced convention whereby the meaning of the phrase "C" will be indicated by that phrase in inverted commas. But, it is understandable, for we must recall the sign "C" is not a phrase but a variable. Russell is asking us to consider the "denoting complex"

( $\alpha$ ) the denotation of C

where the occurrence of "C" is replaced by the phrase "the denoting complex occurring in the second of the above instances", so we get

( $\beta$ ) the denotation of the denoting complex occurring in the second of the above instances

from ( $\alpha$ ) by the appropriate replacement. Here, it makes no difference whether we think of the denoting complex as a phrase or some sort of entity associated with the phrase (expressed by the phrase), though we shall return to the double sense of "denoting complex" shortly. I think, however, that it is quite clear that Russell is here taking the phrase to be the denoting complex. He is simply specifying a definite phrase to replace the letter "C". Russell assumes that we want to denote the denoting complex

The first line of Gray's *Elegy*

just as, in the immediately preceding sentences, he assumed we wanted to denote the meaning of "The first line of Gray's *Elegy*". His point here is that we cannot do so by the use of ( $\beta$ ). We cannot because the expression "the denoting complex occurring in the second of the above instances" denotes "The first line of Gray's *Elegy*" and, hence ( $\beta$ ) denotes the denotation of the denoting complex "The first line of Gray's *Elegy*", and does not denote that denoting complex. Thus, we end up denoting

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day  
and not

The first line of Gray's *Elegy*,

just as in the earlier example we ended up referring to the meaning of "The curfew tolls the knell of parting day" and not to the meaning of "The first line of Gray's *Elegy*" by using the phrase "The meaning of the first line of Gray's *Elegy*."

All this merely illustrates, in an overly complicated way, that one cannot denote anything, say O, but the use of the phrase "the denotation of O", since we then denote what the object O denotes and do not denote the object O. What has caused all the confusion is Russell's use of the inverted commas to specify which denoting complexes he is talking about, after he has introduced the inverted commas as a device to indicate the meanings of phrases. But, there are several things worth noting: first, it is clear that he is using the

commas to emphatically mark off the denoting complexes through the whole paragraph as is evident from his use of a whole series of expressions employing them :

‘the meaning of C’

‘The meaning of the first line of Gray’s Elegy’

etc.

Second, he has used inverted commas throughout the paper in a variety of ways, for emphasis, to mark off an expression, to speak about an expression, etc. Third, Russell has in a way announced this ambiguous use, for he is treating both *meanings* and *phrases* as denoting complexes. Critics who find him confused as to whether a denoting complex is a phrase or an entity might find it helpful to recall what Russell writes earlier in the paper.

In this theory, we shall say that the denoting phrase *expresses* a meaning; and we shall say both of the phrase and of the meaning that they *denote* a denotation.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, both phrases and meanings are denoting complexes. Moreover, it makes no difference whether one takes him to be talking about the phrases, as the denoting complexes, or about the entities associated with the phrases — the meanings. Russell’s point applies in both cases. It is only if one takes him to be talking about the phrases at *some* points and about the entities at *other* points that he appears to be confused.

Just as he uses the inverted commas in a number of ways, Russell uses the term “means” in two ways. Thus, when he says :

Similarly ‘the denotation of C’ does not mean the denotation we want, but means something which, if it denotes at all, denotes what is denoted by the denotation we want.

he is stating what could be more clumsily, but more clearly stated as :

Similarly ‘the denotation of C’ does not denote the denotation we want, but denotes something which, if it denotes at all, denotes what is denoted by the denotation we want.

He is clearly using “means” in the sense of “I meant this book, not that one,” as he finishes the paragraph with :

But what we *meant* to have as the denotation was ‘the first line of Gray’s Elegy’. Thus we have failed to get what we wanted.

Hence, again, one can accuse him of being confused instead of expending minimal effort to understand what he says. Looked at, as I have suggested, Russell is hardly confused; simply not, here, a master of literary style. The contrast between the simplicity of the line of argument and the unfortunate complexity of style comes to a head in the next passage which is clearly, from the context, meant to

sum up what has been said. Russell writes :

The difficulty in speaking of the meaning of a denoting complex may be stated thus : The moment we put the complex in a proposition, the proposition is about the denotation; and if we make a proposition in which the subject is 'the meaning of C', then the subject is the meaning (if any) of the denotation, which was not intended.<sup>26</sup>

If we equate the proposition with the sentence and thus take the denoting complex to be the verbal expression, there is no problem of interpretation. Russell is merely summing up what he has said. A problem is only created if one, who is aware of Russell's earlier view about denoting complexes, insists on taking him to be speaking of some sort of entity, rather than a linguistic phrase, and of a proposition as what is "expressed" by a sentence rather than the sentence itself. One can then proceed to poke fun at Russell. But we should note first, that Russell clearly distinguishes between a proposition and its verbal expression and then, as one may easily do, employs the term "proposition" for the verbal expression; and, second, that Russell explicitly states in this paper that both the verbal expressions and the entities expressed by them will be spoken of as denoting the denotation.

But, even if we take him to be talking about the non-verbal proposition, *expressed* by the sentence, and the entity *expressed* by the denoting phrase his point is still clear. Take MC as the denoting complex and 'O(MC)' to stand for a proposition which contains that complex as a constituent, i.e., as its subject. The propositional entity, O(MC), is about the denotation of MC and not about MC, just as the phrase 'the meaning of MC' is not *about* MC but about something which MC *means*. So, we cannot consider a proposition (non-verbal) which *contains* a meaning, MC, as its subject to be about that meaning. We must recall that Russell, in *The Principles of Mathematics*, considered denoting complexes or concepts to be constituents of propositions, which were thus about the *objects* denoted by such complexes.

...That is to say, when *a man* occurs in a proposition (e.g. "I met a man in the street"), the proposition is not about the concept *a man*, but about something quite different, some actual biped denoted by the concept. Thus concepts of this kind have meaning in a non-psychological sense. And in this sense, when we say "this is a man," we are making a proposition in which a concept is in some sense attached to what is not a concept. But when meaning is thus understood, the entity indicated by *John* does not have meaning, as Mr. Bradley contends [Logic, Book I,

Chap. I, ,17, 18 (pp. 58-60).]; and even among concepts, it is only those that denote that have meaning. The confusion is largely due, I believe, to the notion that *words* occur in propositions, which in turn is due to the notion that propositions are essentially mental and are to be identified with cognitions.<sup>27</sup>

Russell's view in *The Principles* has puzzled his commentators for a very simple reason. For Russell, when a sentence contains a denoting phrase, such as "the author of *Waverly*", the corresponding proposition contains a denoting complex. However, when the sentence contains a *name* (a *referring* as opposed to a *denoting* expression) the corresponding proposition contains *the referent* as a constituent. For Russell, at this stage, Scott is a constituent of the proposition expressed by the sentence 'Scott is a man' :

whatever may be an object of thought, or may occur in any true or false proposition, or can be counted as *one*, I call a *term*. This, then, is the widest word in the philosophical vocabulary. I shall use as synonymous with it the words unit, individual, and entity.<sup>28</sup>

...But a proposition, unless it happens to be linguistic, does not itself contain words: it contains the entities indicated by words.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, Searle's shocked tone in his discussion of Russell's "confusion" regarding the constituents of propositions may indicate a lack of familiarity, rather than a lack of sympathy, with Russell's earlier views. We can also see how the earlier view will provide a basis for the theory of descriptions, since that theory is designed to illuminate the "logical" difference between sentences like 'Scott is tall' and sentences like 'The author of *Waverly* is tall', where the latter, but not the former, contains a denoting phrase. As we will see, one of Russell's basic criticisms of Frege is that Frege's theory does not preserve, let alone explicate, the difference between names and descriptions.

It is true that Russell speaks of both the object and the name for it being constituents of propositions. "A proper name, when it occurs in a proposition..."<sup>30</sup> but this is not merely due to his confusing use and mention. He clearly distinguishes at a number of places, between a proposition as a nonverbal entity and a proposition as a verbal expression of the former. Rather than seeing his view as a result of such a simple confusion it would appear more reasonable to take his view to lead him to write, at places, as if he confuses a sign with a thing. As he later writes :

It may be expressed as the distinction between verbs and

substantives, or, more correctly, between the objects denoted by verbs and the objects denoted by substantives. (Since this more correct expression is long and cumbersome, I shall generally use the shorter phrase to mean the same thing. Thus, when I speak of verbs, I mean the objects denoted by verbs...<sup>31</sup>)

At the time of *The Principles* Russell recognizes three senses of 'proposition'. Propositions<sub>R</sub>, as entities, which contain constituent objects, like Scott, and concepts like *is human*. Propositions<sub>F</sub>, as entities, which contain denoting complexes, or denoting concepts, like the denoting complex *the man*, as well as concepts like *is tall*. Propositions<sub>V</sub>, as linguistic expressions, which contain words, either names or denoting phrases, predicates, etc. The second sort of propositional entities, propositions<sub>F</sub>, are very like the Fregean propositions. In "On Denoting" Russell is moving toward the elimination of such entities by eliminating denoting complexes as entities.

So far, then, a simple result has been argued for. Expressions like "the meaning of C" and "the denotation of C" cannot be used to denote, respectively, that which is expressed by the term "C" and that which is denoted by the term : the meaning of the term in the first case and the referent in the second. About this Russell is clearly correct. He is really concerned with the first case : to hold that we cannot use the expression "the meaning of C" to denote what the term "C" expresses, on the view he attacks. Recall that, for Russell, to speak of the meaning of the term "C" is not acceptable, since it involves us in treating the denotation relation R, between a meaning and a denotation, as merely linguistic. We can then understand Russell's bothering to argue that we cannot use the phrase "the meaning of C" to denote what we want to denote. He is implicitly claiming that since we cannot use either denoting phrase, "the meaning of C" or 'the meaning of "C"', for different reasons, we have no unproblematic way of denoting MC. What we must do is simply stipulate that by distinguishing meaning from denotation we are, in a way, dealing with the meaning. That is, in holding that a meaning as well as a denotation is connected with a denoting phrase we introduce a way of talking about meaning. This is one point involved in Russell's next statement :

This leads us to say that, when we distinguish meaning and denotation, we must be dealing with the meaning : the meaning has denotation and is a complex, and there is not something other than the meaning, which can be called the complex and be said to *have* both meaning and denotation.<sup>32</sup>

Russell is not conceding that such a move is legitimate. It still



involves us in treating R as a merely linguistic relation. But he wants to move on to another argument. Forgetting the supposed inadequate treatment of R, on a view that has MC, DC, and R, we can consider such a view to construe MC as something which denotes DC but which does not itself have both a meaning and a denotation. That is both the phrase "C" and the meaning, MC, denote, but while the phrase both *means* and *denotes*, the meaning only denotes. One kind of denoting complex, a phrase, has both meaning and denotation: the other kind of denoting complex has a denotation and is a meaning. So Russell concludes this section by saying:

The right phrase, on the view in question, is that some meanings have denotations.<sup>33</sup>

There is a second aspect to his claim. On the Fregean view, the connection between a denoting phrase and its denotation is via the meaning or sense of the phrase. The *basic* denoting relation is between the meaning and the latter's denotation, *i.e.*, the relation R. What stands in R to a denotation does not also *express* a meaning. A phrase expresses a meaning but does not stand in R to anything. One may then say that the phrase is directly connected only with the meaning. Hence, if we introduce meanings on such a pattern, a phrase, by itself, determines only a meaning, which in turn denotes. Given the phrases, we are "dealing with the meaning" and this latter "has denotation and is a complex." The phrase, in short, should no longer be taken to be a denoting complex that has *both* meaning and denotation, for to say it has the latter is to say it has a meaning which stands in R to a denotation. If one agrees that a stipulated referential connection between a sign and an object is not a mysterious relation, whereas R, as a connection between entities is, then the Fregean view can be looked at as one which abandons an unproblematic connection between a sign and an object in favor of two problematic notions: *expresses* (or *means*) and R.

All this leads to a further, and fundamental, objection to the Fregean view and the relation R. Russell's argument, which is one of the most misunderstood parts of his paper, begins

But this only makes our difficulty in speaking of meanings more evident. For suppose C is our complex; then we are to say that C is the meaning of the complex. Nevertheless, whenever C occurs without inverted commas, what is said is not true of the meaning, but only of the denotation, as when we say; The centre of mass of the solar system is a point. Thus to speak of C itself, *i.e.*, to make a proposition about the meaning...<sup>34</sup>

Having introduced meanings, irrespective of the difficulty about R, we should be able to talk about them. The attempt to do so will lead

to further problems. The first mistake an interpreter of the above passage is prone to make is to consider, in spite of what Russell says, that he is using the term "C" as he used it earlier in the discussion, to denote something other than a meaning. "C" is a variable denoting phrase, which Russell specifies differently at different points in the paper. If one reads the second and last sentences of the just quoted passage with care, it is clear that Russell is telling us that he is now taking C to be the meaning MC. C is the denoting complex, and a meaning, recall, is taken to be something that can have a denotation. C, then, is a meaning, MC, say, and Russell is now concerned with stating something about it. A problem of interpretation arises since Russell speaks, first of C being the meaning of the complex, after saying that C is the denoting complex, and, second, of C occurring without inverted commas. Phrases, not meanings, are the sorts of things that appear with or without commas. But, once again, what he is arguing is clear enough and, once we understand what that is, we can see that the alternative possible interpretations make no difference to his argument.

The argument is simple enough. To state something about the meaning involves denoting it. Hence, there will be a non-verbal proposition containing "something" which *denotes* that meaning; just as the verbal expression of such a proposition will contain a denoting phrase that *means* such a "thing" and *denotes* the meaning we talk about. Hence, there will be, on the view he attacks, a further meaning which denotes it. MC denotes DC and is involved in our talk about DC. Our talk about MC involves us with another entity, say MMC, which denotes MC. The point involves a familiar objection to a Fregean view. If we refer to a meaning by a denoting sign or phrase, then such a sign will have a meaning as well as a referent. Some have felt that we thus introduce a mechanism for producing an unending series of entities. Russell raises a related question. He asks whether MMC can be identified with MC or whether it must be a new entity. He is concerned to prove that *they* must be different. The heart of this argument is the previously established point that, for any denoting complex O, the denoting complex — *the denotation of O* — cannot be taken to denote what O denotes. If MMC were identical with MC, then MC would denote itself, for, recall, MMC denotes MC. Perhaps a more familiar way of putting matters will help. Let the term "MC" denote the entity MC. Let the entity MMC be the meaning or what is expressed by the term "MC". Thus, the term "MC" denotes MC and means or expresses MMC. But, MMC stands in R. or denotes, MC. Hence, if MMC is identified with MC, then MC

will stand in R to itself : i.e., it will denote itself. Now, however, we must recall that on the pattern in question MC denotes DC. Thus, consider a proposition, in the sense of a Fregean thought, which is a proposition *about* the meaning MC. A constituent of the thought or proposition will be something which denotes MC, namely MMC. After all, that is what MMC was introduced for in the first place. But, if MMC is identified with MC, then the relevant constituent of the proposition will be what the proposition is supposed to be about. Hence, the proposition will be about DC, not MC, because DC is what is denoted by MC. This is Russell's argument. Understanding it, we can then readily understand Russell's continuation of the just cited passage :

Thus to speak of C itself, i.e. to make a proposition about the meaning, our subject must not be C, but something which denotes C. Thus 'C', which is what we use when we want to speak of the meaning, must be not the meaning, but something which denotes the meaning. And C must not be a constituent of this complex (as it is of 'the meaning of C'); for if C occurs in the complex, it will be its denotation, not its meaning, that will occur, and there is no backward road from denotations to meanings, because every object can be denoted by an infinite number of different denoting phrases.<sup>35</sup>

When he uses the letter C in inverted commas he is speaking about MMC, distinguishing such an entity from MC. Moreover, he is claiming that MC cannot be taken as a constituent of MMC. What he has in mind by this claim can be understood as follows. MMC denotes MC, hence it occurs in a proposition (Fregean thought) that is about MC. Suppose MC is taken to be a constituent of MMC, so that the latter is composed of MC and a further *sense* associated with the phrase "the meaning of ...". Thus, as Russell sees it, MMC would not denote MC, but *the meaning* of whatever MC denotes. In short, he is reiterating the same argument we discussed earlier; only here, he is putting it in terms of his views, from *The Principles of Mathematics*, of meanings (or denoting complexes) as compounds of entities. Thus, the meaning or denoting complex associated with the phrase "the father of the author of Waverly" would contain, as a constituent, the meaning or denoting complex associated with the phrase "the author of Waverly" just as the latter, in turn, might be taken to have as a constituent the *concept of being an author*. In the case of the denoting complex *the father of the author of Waverly*, no problem would arise, since, the object we wish to denote is, so to speak, determined by the *object* denoted by the complex: the author of Waverly. Thus, what the denoting complex or Fregean

meaning *the father of the author of Waverly* denotes can be taken as a function of what the denoting complex or Fregean meaning *the author of Waverly denotes*, without our losing what we want the former to denote. This is not the case with the two denoting complexes or meanings: MMC and MC. Here, what the former denotes cannot be taken as a function of what the latter denotes.<sup>36</sup> Again, Russell's exposition is overly repetitive and complicated, but that is not the same as being confused, mistaken, and ignorant.

Understanding what Russell's argument is we can then see why he proceeds to assert that MC is not to be identified with MMC. Thus, he goes on to conclude:

Thus it would seem that 'C' and C are different entities such that 'C' denotes C; but this cannot be an explanation, because the relation of 'C' to C remains wholly mysterious; and where are we to find the denoting complex 'C' which is to denote C?<sup>37</sup>

Here he is taking C and 'C' to be the MC and MMC of my exposition: A meaning and a further entity that denotes the meaning (*i.e.*, a "second level" meaning). So, since we are forced to distinguish MC from MMC we must recognize a new double mystery. First, MMC is a new mysterious entity, even more so than MC, since in the case of MC we at least have an anchor to an object we are familiar with, DC. In the case of MMC, we have a denoting relation holding between two things, both meanings, neither of which we are familiar with, and, therefore, second, the relation R, as holding between MMC and MC, is even more mysterious than as a relation between MC and DC. Moreover, it is clear that we not only have an infinite series of such meanings, but that the series is built on the merely linguistic denoting phrase "the meaning of the phrase 'C'". So concludes Russell's argument against the relation R which, as he sees it, is a necessary ingredient of the Fregean view. Let us now return to the two expository problems we noted above.

C is a meaning or denoting complex. What could it then mean to say "C is the meaning of the complex." A simple explanation is that Russell momentarily mixes the two senses of denoting complex, the entity and the phrase, and speaks of the entity as the meaning of the phrase. This would explain his going on to speak of C occurring without commas, and thus simply solve our second problem of interpretation as well. There is a more complicated interpretation we might consider, in spite of our having noted Russell's tendency to use the same term for both the term itself and its referent.

Recall that just before the problematic passage, Russell had concluded that the meaning of a phrase could be said to have a denotation but it was not something that had both a meaning and a

denotation. But if the meaning, MC, does not, in turn, have a meaning what can be the constituent of a non-verbal proposition that will be about MC? The only candidate seems to be MC itself. Thus, such a proposition will contain MC. The role of a meaning here, we remember, is to occur in a proposition as a denoting complex: it stands in R to that entity the proposition is *about* and about which we speak when we utter a sentence (verbal proposition) which *expresses* the (non-verbal) proposition. In this sense, the meaning of the complex MC — that which occurs in a proposition and which denotes the complex — must be MC itself. That it cannot be is what Russell proceeds to argue. Even his statement about C occurring without inverted commas need not be puzzling. It is just a way of saying that if MC occurred in a (non-verbal) proposition that proposition is about DC, not MC. To be about MC a proposition must contain an entity such as 'MC', *i.e.*, MMC. This leads directly to the objection to such an entity that we considered above.

Cassin, as I understand her paper, bases much of her discussion on Russell's supposed concern with a denoting phrase like "The denoting complex MC". The idea is that Russell is trying to show that such a phrase, and the denoting complex *it expresses*, is paradoxical. In terms of our discussion, such a phrase could be taken to express MMC. Then, if MC is taken as a constituent of MMC there is the problem of having MMC *denote* MC (stand in R to MC) while being a function of what MC denotes. That is, let MMC be composed of the sense of the expression "the denoting complex" *plus* (in some unspecified sense of 'plus') the entity MC. Then, as the entity MC denotes DC, MMC will supposedly denote something determined by DC. But, DC cannot determine anything in the realm of meanings, since no meaning is, so to speak, a function of it. Thus, the denoting complex MMC will not denote what we want it to denote, since MMC cannot both denote MC and denote what it does as a function of MC's denoting what it does, DC. *If correct*, the point would be that the phrase "the denoting complex MC" presents us with a specific case where MMC cannot contain MC, but, apparently, should. However, the point is not correct. What should be taken as a constituent of MMC is not MC but *the meaning expressed* by the sign "MC". Such a meaning would, like MMC, denote MC, and MMC *could* denote what it does as a function of what that meaning would denote. All one need do here is to take the phrase "the denoting complex" to express an identity function. The case is no different from that where we take "the individual Scott" and "Scott" to stand for the same thing.

Cassin also thinks that Russell's discussion is confused since he

fails to distinguish between, in our terms, a proposition<sub>F</sub>, containing MC, and a proposition<sub>R</sub>, containing DC. If she is correct that would account for some of the terminology and the obscurity. But such a confusion would neither touch Russell's main arguments nor need it be attributed to him. The relevant passages in *The Principles* do not indicate that Russell either confuses or clearly separates the two propositional entities in the case of a proposition<sub>V</sub> with a denoting phrase.<sup>38</sup>

At this point Russell has ended one line of argument. He proceeds to another line, which leads directly to his theory of definite descriptions. The final argument against a Fregean style theory of meaning is stated as follows :

Moreover, when C occurs in a proposition, it is not *only* the denotation that occurs (as we shall see in the next paragraph); yet, on the view in question, C is only the denotation, the meaning being wholly relegated to 'C'. This is an inextricable tangle, and seems to prove that the whole distinction of meaning and denotation has been wrongly conceived.<sup>39</sup>

To prevent obvious misunderstanding, it should first be noted that all Russell means by the claim that "it is not only the denotation that occurs" is that the denotation is *not* the only thing that is relevant. This is clear from three assertions in the next paragraph :

That the meaning is relevant where a denoting phrase occurs in a proposition is formally proved by ...

... hence the meaning of 'the author of Waverly' must be relevant as well as the denotation ...

... we are compelled to hold that only the denotation can be relevant.<sup>40</sup>

With this simple observation in mind we can grasp Russell's argument and see that he is not stating the "negation" of Frege's view in place of Frege's view. However, he has not used the term "proposition" univocally throughout the passages we have considered. In the present passage he is clearly using the term in the sense of a "verbal expression", *i.e.*, a meaningful sentence, rather than in the sense of a Fregean thought or as a proposition in the sense of his discussion in *The Principles of Mathematics*. This ambiguous use can lead one to see Russell as confusing "being a part of a proposition" with "being referred to by a proposition" and of *use* with *mention*. For, as we noted earlier, in *The Principles* Russell thinks of a sentence like "Scott is tall" as expressing a proposition which contains the object Scott as a constituent. However, even if he is thinking in terms of his old view, and hence speaks about a proposition<sub>R</sub> in the above passage, the point of his argument can still be put in the simple terms

he uses in the following paragraph regarding the relevance of the meaning. If we then ask "relevant for what?", the answer is not very elusive. Granting that the argument is intelligible to this point, it behooves us to attempt to seek to understand the remainder of his argument, rather than taking the easy way of dismissal on the basis of an understandable variable use of the term "proposition." In fact we do not have to look far or try very hard in order to understand Russell. What Russell is getting at is the following. Consider the *sentence*

(S<sub>1</sub>) Scott = the author of Waverly.

Suppose we raise a question about the truth condition for the corresponding "proposition," *i.e.*, what must obtain for the proposition to be true? On the Fregean pattern there are only two possible answers, if we ignore the reply that the proposition denotes the True, which is no answer at all. The latter is no answer since it merely invites a repetition of the question in another form. One answer is that the denoted object is self-identical, which would be the same condition that obtains if we considered

(S<sub>2</sub>) Scott = Scott.

A second reply is that the meaning of the denoting phrase "the author of Waverly" denotes what the name "Scott", or the meaning of the name, denotes. This means that meanings enter into the truth-condition. Suppose we held that propositions, to be significantly employed, must state or express or indicate what truth conditions obtain if they are to be true. What Russell is claiming is first, that the conditions for (S<sub>1</sub>) and (S<sub>2</sub>) must be different. The first reply, on the Fregean view, does not allow for that. If we offer the second reply, then the proposition somehow states that a constituent of it, a meaning, denotes an object (or that the object "Falls under" the sense or meaning). Such a proposition is then *about* a meaning which is a constituent of it. But, *it cannot be*; or so Russell has argued in the preceding paragraphs. Thus the Fregean view fails. The assumption is that a Fregean proposition must connect with or indicate a truth condition: what obtains in order for the proposition to be true. This assumption Russell does not argue for, nor will I argue for it here, except to claim that Fregean propositions are useless as entities expressed by sentences if they do not, in turn, indicate such conditions. Frege, by talk of the True and the False, avoids the question in much of his writing. Given this assumption, Russell's criticism is cogent. As Russell sees it (S<sub>2</sub>) will be true if a certain object is self-identical while (S<sub>1</sub>) will be true if that object has the property of being the only author of Waverly. Thus, an adequate view must construe (S<sub>1</sub>) and (S<sub>2</sub>) in a way that

reflects that difference. The theory of descriptions he proceeds to offer does exactly that. For, on the theory Russell proceeds to present, verbal propositions like  $(S_1)$  will differ *logically* from verbal propositions like  $(S_2)$ , since they will express different truth conditions (or *propositions* in the sense of propositions<sub>R</sub>); what Russell will come to speak of as *facts*. Frege's theory does not capture the difference since both names and definite descriptions express senses and denote objects. Thus, the *Fregean propositions* expressed by  $(S_1)$  and  $(S_2)$  are of the *same kind* though they differ in "constituent" senses or meanings. Frege's theory does not, for Russell, capture the purely referential or indicating function of names. This is a theme that not only lies behind his criticism of Frege but which links the earlier theory of 1903 with the new theory of 1905. Thus, when Russell holds that the meaning must be relevant what he means is that the denotation of 'the author of Waverly' is not all that is relevant to the truth of  $(S_1)$ , whereas on the Fregean view one must either hold that it is or hold that the sense of the denoting phrase enters into the truth condition. As Russell sees it, either alternative is problematic.

To insist that Russell's discussion reveals a misunderstanding of Frege or that Russell discusses the "negation" of Frege's view is to miss the point. Of course, on Frege's view,  $(S_1)$  and  $(S_2)$  express different propositions. The question is how, on Frege's view, one *shows* that the truth conditions are different, assuming that they must be. One interpretation of Frege acknowledges that they are not different. The other interpretation makes the correspondence between senses and objects the truth condition. This leads Russell to hold that a Fregean proposition, in stating what must obtain for the proposition to be true, is *about* its constituent senses or meanings, and not just about the denotations of the phrases (or the senses, for that matter). It may help to think of Russell's argument as somewhat analogous to the claim that identity statements like 'Scott = Sir Walter' cannot be treated metalinguistically, as the claim that the two names name one thing, since then the sentence would be *about* words that refer and not just *about* the referent of the words. In Russell's critique of Frege the claim is stronger, since Russell finds the Fregean view paradoxical in that the non-verbal proposition *cannot* be about its constituent senses. By contrast, on the metalinguistic treatment of identity statements, one advocates the *replacement* of the sentence by another. Such a move is not open to Frege without basically changing his analysis.



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>J. R. Searle, "Russell's Objections to Frege's Theory of Sense and Reference," reprinted in *Essays on Frege*, ed. by E. D. Klemke (University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1968), pp. 337-345.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 342.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 344.

<sup>4</sup>P. T. Geach, "Russell on Meaning and Denoting," reprinted in *Essays on Bertrand Russell*, ed. by E. D. Klemke (University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1970), pp. 209-212.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 212.

<sup>6</sup>A. Church, "Carnap's Introduction to Semantics," *Philosophical Review* (52, 1943), p. 302.

<sup>7</sup>R. Carnap, *Meaning and Necessity*, (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1970), p. 140.

<sup>8</sup>Chrystine E. Cassin, "Russell's Discussion of Meaning and Denotation," in *Essays on Bertrand Russell*, pp. 256-272.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 271.

<sup>10</sup>B. Russell, "On Denoting," reprinted in *Essays on Logic and Knowledge*, ed. R. C. Marsh (Allen and Unwin, New York, 1968), pp. 45-55.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>18</sup>G. Frege, "On Sense and Reference," in *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1970), p. 59.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>20</sup>G. E. Moore, *Some Main Problems of Philosophy*, (Allen and Unwin, London, 1958).

<sup>21</sup>Russell, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>25</sup> See note 12 above.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>27</sup> B. Russell, *The Principles of Mathematics*, (Allen and Unwin, London, 1956), p. 47.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>31</sup> B. Russell, "On the Relations of Universals and Particulars," reprinted in *Logic and Knowledge*, pp. 107-8.

<sup>32</sup> *On Denoting*, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>36</sup> The reason, to repeat, why the denotation of MMC cannot be a function of the denotation of MC or, to put it another way, why MMC cannot be a function of MC, is that we want MMC to denote MC, but a denotation does not uniquely determine any meaning which denotes it. Thus, we could use the phrase "the denoting complex (meaning) which denotes DC" to *express* MMC and *denote* MC only if there was a unique meaning which denoted DC. There is not. Hence, Russell ends the just quoted passage by pointing that out. Moreover, all Russell means by saying "the denotation occurs" is that if MC is a constituent of MMC, then MMC denotes DC or something uniquely determined by DC. Hence, MMC does not denote MC.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>38</sup> It is worth noting that in the 1918 "Philosophy of Logical Atomism," Russell holds that "the constituents of propositions, of course, are the same as the constituents of the corresponding facts ..., " *op. cit.*, p. 248. By then, however, denoting phrases do not indicate constituents of anything.

<sup>39</sup> *On Denoting*, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.