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KNOWLEDGE BY ACQUAINTANCE AND MEANING IN ISOLATION*

1.

Bertrand Russell is justly famous for the following thesis, which I will call, for obvious reasons, the *Meaning in Isolation Thesis*:

> Meaning in Isolation Thesis: phrases of the form 'the so-and-so' lack 'meaning in isolation.'

The Meaning in Isolation Thesis features prominently in Russell's writings on definite descriptions.[1] In those writings Russell sets out to defend the view that definite descriptions "never have any meaning in themselves." (Russell, 1905, pg. 42) He proceeds to say that a definite description "is essentially part of a sentence, and does not, like most single words, have any significance on its own account." (Russell, 1905, pg. 51)

The Meaning in Isolation Thesis is an attractive thesis about the nature and role of definite descriptions in natural language, and Russell provides a number of arguments in support of it. Despite its attractiveness, however, the thesis appears to lead to problems when it is conjoined with another plausible thesis, which I will call, for equally obvious reasons, the *Non-Sentential Assertion Thesis*:

> Non-Sentential Assertion Thesis: speakers can assert propositions using non-sentences.

To see why these two theses appear to lead to problems, suppose that Smith, having been the victim of a robbery, is called down to the police station to look at a line-up. Confronted with five men, Smith utters the following phrase:

(1)   The second man from the right.

It is plausible to suppose that in uttering (1) Smith has asserted that there exists a unique second man from the right and that that man is the man who robbed him. But Smith did this by uttering an isolated definite description, that is, by uttering a definite description that is not itself a sentence and does not appear to be part of any larger sentence. So according to the Meaning in Isolation Thesis, Smith uttered something that has no meaning.[2] But if what he uttered has no meaning then how could Smith have asserted that the second man from the right is the man who robbed him? This is the puzzle with which I will be concerned in the present paper.

To help focus discussion, I will concentrate on a certain conditional linking the Non-Sentential Assertion Thesis with the Meaning in Isolation Thesis. This conditional claims that if the Non-Sentential Assertion Thesis is true, then Russell was mistaken

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in thinking that phrases of the form 'the so-and-so' lack 'meaning in isolation'. Call this conditional *(C)*:

> (C)   If the Non-Sentential Assertion Thesis is true, then the Meaning in Isolation Thesis is false.

This conditional seems to me to be of interest for several reasons. First, because there are very good reasons for thinking that the conditional is true. Second, because — as I shall argue — the antecedent of the conditional is also very likely true. Third, because the truth of the conditional threatens some central aspects of Russell's views on semantics and epistemology. And fourth, because the truth of the conditional raises some interesting methodological issues concerning the relation between empirical facts about language use and general philosophical theses about knowledge and understanding.

The paper proceeds as follows. In section 2 I discuss the conditional (C) in more detail. In sections 3 and 4 I turn to the phenomenon of non-sentential assertion, and indicate why I think we ought to accept the Non-Sentential Assertion Thesis.[3] In sections 5 and 6 I turn to the Meaning in Isolation thesis. I consider a popular view of the meaning of definite descriptions — the so-called *Generalized Quantifier view* — and ask why Russell didn't avail himself of something like the Generalized Quantifier view, given that he had the resources to formulate something very close to it. I argue that the answer to this questions turns on issues having to do with Russell's epistemological views and, in particular, with his Principle of Acquaintance. Finally, in section 7 I make some speculative remarks about how the phenomenon of non-sentential assertion bears on questions of philosophical methodology.

<div align="center">2.</div>

Let me begin with the conditional (C):

> (C)   If the Non-Sentential Assertion Thesis is true, then the Meaning in Isolation Thesis is false.

Part of my aim in this paper is to argue that this conditional is true. In order to assess the truth of this conditional, however, some preliminary remarks are in order.

As I noted earlier, Russell's aim in "On Denoting" is to argue quite generally "that denoting phrases never have any meaning in themselves, but that every proposition in whose verbal expression they occur has a meaning." (Russell, 1905, pg. 43) What exactly does Russell mean by a 'denoting phrase'? By a denoting phrase Russell has in mind "a phrase such as any one of the following: a man, some man, any man, every man, all men, the present King of England, the present King of France, the center of mass of the solar system at the first instant of the twentieth century, the revolution of the earth round the sun, the revolution of the sun round the earth." (Russell, 1905, pg. 41) In Russell's view, to say that an expression has meaning in isolation is to say that there is some *meaning-relatum* that is paired with the expression in question. According to Russell meaning-relata are of two sorts. Names have particulars as meaning-relata; other linguistic items, with one class of notable exceptions, have concepts as meaning-relata. So in particular, adjectives have properties as meaning-relata, and verbs have relations as meaning-relata.

The class of notable exceptions are, unsurprisingly, so-called denoting phrases. At the time of *The Principles of Mathematics* Russell thought that the meaning-relatum of a denoting phrase is "a definite something . . . which must, in a sense, be an object, but is characterized as a set of terms combined in a certain way, which something is denoted by all men, every man, any man, a man or some man; and it is with this very paradoxical object that propositions are concerned in which the corresponding concept is used as denoting." (Russell, 1903, pg. 62) As is well known, however, Russell came to have doubts about this account of the meaning of denoting phrases, and the 'paradoxical objects' that Russell mentions in connection with such expressions were eventually rejected in favor of an alternative account of the meaning of denoting phrases.

It should be clear, then, that when Russell claims that denoting phrases never have meaning in themselves, he does not mean that when considered by themselves they are meaningless. For denoting phrases are obviously meaningful in a way in which the expression 'mimsy', say, is not. That is, they are not gibberish. Does it therefore follow that such phrases must have some meaning, that is, that there must be some meaning-relatum with which they are paired? It does not. For example, 'and Mary met on' is a string which has a *semantic impact* on the meaning of 'Jane and Mary met on Friday'. But we cannot say what thing this string stands for. So it is arguable that an expression could fail to be gibberish and yet also fail to have meaning. Again, what Russell was denying when he denied that denoting phrases have meaning in isolation was that denoting phrases have meaning-relata. That is, Russell's claim was that unlike a proper name such as 'Smith' that refers to, or picks out, an individual, or a predicate such as 'is red' that refers to, or picks out, a property, descriptions do not refer to or pick out anything.[4] In his terminology, they denote, but do not refer.

In support of this position, Russell offers the following argument. Consider the proposition 'Smith is tall'. Russell takes this proposition to be composed of the meaning of 'Smith' and the meaning of 'is tall'. That is, the proper name 'Smith' contributes its meaning, namely the individual Smith, to the proposition; and the predicate 'is tall' contributes its meaning, namely the property of being tall, to that same proposition. But what about the proposition 'The second man from the right is tall'? What are the meaning constituents of this proposition? It seems likely that one of the meaning constituents of this proposition is going to be the meaning of 'is tall'. But what entity might be contributed by the expression 'the second man from the right'? Perhaps the meaning of 'the second man from the right' is whoever *is* the second man from the right. Thus, suppose that Smith is the second man from the right; then it might be thought that the meaning of 'the second man from the right' is Smith.

But Russell thinks that this will not do. He reasons as follows: suppose that Smith is the meaning of 'the second man from the right'. Then 'the second man from the right' and 'Smith' would have the same meaning. However, suppose that I am out for a walk and I happen to meet Smith. Then while it might be false to say 'I met the second man from the right, but I did not meet Smith' it is not contradictory, which it surely would be if 'the second man from the right' meant the same as 'Smith'. So the 'second man from the right' cannot mean the same as 'Smith'. And since 'Smith' means Smith, it follows that 'the second man from the right' cannot mean Smith. But, furthermore, there is no reason to suppose that any other man could be the meaning of 'the second man from the right'. Thus, we are forced to conclude that 'the second man from the right' does not mean or refer to any particular individual. Russell was thus

led to conclude that descriptions did not stand for entities, and hence, that descriptions lacked meaning-relata.

So much for Russell's reasons for thinking that denoting phrases lack meaning-relata, and hence, are not meaningful in isolation. How does the truth of the Non-Sentential Assertion Thesis bear on this thesis of Russell's? As follows. If, as I will argue, speakers can indeed assert propositions using unembedded definite descriptions, this can only be because such expressions are meaningful by themselves, i.e., because such expressions are meaningful in isolation. I take the truth of this claim to be an instance of a more general claim linking language use with meaning. For I take it that if anyone can *grasp* and *deploy* a thing, then that thing must exist. But if a speaker can assert a proposition using a non-sentential expression E, then in doing so that speaker must be capable of grasping and deploying the meaning of E, from which it follows that there is something that *is* the meaning of E. In Russell's terminology, this can only be because E has a meaning-relatum. This suggests very strongly that the conditional (C) is true: if speakers are capable of asserting propositions using isolated definite descriptions, then descriptions have meaning in isolation, contrary to what Russell supposes. With this is mind, let me turn to consideration of the antecedent of (C), the Non-Sentential Assertion Thesis.[5]

<div align="center">3.</div>

It can hardly be denied that people sometimes appear to utter non-sentences.[6] Take (1) again:

(1)   The second man from the right.

I take it that there are strong *prima facie* reasons for thinking that (1) really is a non-sentence. For one thing, (1) doesn't look like a sentence; rather, it looks like a definite description. I also take it that there are strong *prima facie* reasons for thinking that a speaker can use (1) to assert a proposition. For example, it seems to me that Smith is able to use (1) in the situation described to get his audience to understand that the second man from the right is the man who robbed him. And this, I think, counts as a genuine case of assertion. Granted, these reasons are only *prima facie*, and as such are surely defeasible. Still, in the absence of some compelling reason for thinking otherwise, it seems to me that the conclusion that ought to be drawn from these observations is that (1) is a non-sentence, and that Smith has succeeded in asserting some proposition in uttering (1).

It might be thought that we have here a straightforward case of non-sentential assertion and hence, that the Non-Sentential Assertion Thesis is true. But in fact the existence of utterances like (1) is not sufficient to establish the truth of the Non-Sentential Assertion Thesis. I say this for two reasons. First, because (1) may not *be* a non-sentence. Rather, (1) may be merely an *elliptical* sentence. And second, because even if (1) *is* a non-sentence it may nonetheless be false that Smith is able to use (1) to assert a proposition. For example, perhaps in uttering (1) Smith has merely succeeded in *communicating* or *implicating* some proposition, but has failed to *assert* that proposition. With this in mind, let me briefly discuss some reasons for thinking, first, that (1) really is a non-sentence; and second, that it is possible for speakers to assert propositions by uttering non-sentences like (1).

When confronted with the apparent fact that speakers use non-sentences like (1) to assert propositions, many are inclined to respond as follows: look, if Smith really does succeed in making an assertion by uttering (1) then, since only sentences can be used to make assertions, it must be the case that (1) really is a sentence. By way of illustration, consider Michael Dummett's remark that "[t]he primary case is . . . the utterances of *sentences*; the utterance of a singular term in response to a question can be considered an abbreviated form of utterance of a sentence[.]" (Dummett, 1981, pg. 298) Setting to one side Dummett's remark about questions the view suggested by this passage is that Smith utters 'The second man from the right', what Smith has done is utter something that is an abbreviated form of, or is elliptical for, a sentence like 'The second man from the right is the man who robbed me'. On this view, in other words, all apparent cases of non-sentential assertion are merely apparent: whenever we come across a putative case of non-sentential assertion, what we have really come across is a case of an elliptical sentential assertion.

If this view can be made to work, then we will have a reason for rejecting the claim that (1) is a non-sentence. In order to adequately assess this view, however, we first need to ask: What is a sentence? Although this question appears to be straightforward, it is not.[7] This is because there are a number of different things that could be meant by 'sentence'. Perhaps the most natural view is that a sentence is something that has a certain sort of form.[8] This might be called the *syntactic* sense of 'sentence'. For example, according to recent linguistic orthodoxy a sentence is an inflectional phrase that is derived from the so-called *X-bar schema*. The details don't matter much for present purposes, but the basic idea is simple enough. According to X-bar theory, phrases are hierarchically structured projections of their heads. Simplifying somewhat, the general form of a phrase is:

$$XP \rightarrow Spec;\ X'$$
$$X' \rightarrow X;\ YP$$

By substituting in appropriate category variables for the categories in the X-bar schema particular expression types are obtained. So, for example, the X-bar schema for an inflectional phrase (IP), i.e., a sentence, is as follows:

$$IP \rightarrow NP;\ I'$$
$$I' \rightarrow I;\ CP/VP$$

of the meaning of 'sentence'. By then filling in appropriate formatives under the category variables, we obtain a particular sentence.[9]

I earlier suggested that (1) is not a sentence. We are now in a position to see why I said this. If (1) were a sentence in the syntactic sense, then it would have to fit into the X-bar schema for an IP. How might (1) be made to fit in the X-bar schema for an IP? We would replace each of NP, I, and VP with various different lexical items to yield an inflectional phrase. But notice: since (1) lacks an inflectional element, and since it lacks a verb, it cannot receive either an I or a CP/VP completion. Thus, since (1) cannot be made to fit in the general form of a sentence it is not a sentence in the syntactic sense.

Despite its intuitive appeal, however, this argument is merely an opening for discussion; it does not end it. This is because a proponent of the ellipsis hypothesis has a response available to her. For she can argue that at some appropriate level of syntactic analysis the relevant syntactic material *is* present and hence, that at some appropriate level of syntactic analysis (1) really does have the form of a sentence. Call this the

syntactic ellipsis hypothesis. I won't go into the reasons in detail, but let me briefly consider the syntactic ellipsis hypothesis and suggest some reasons for thinking that we would do well to reject it.

How might a proponent of the syntactic ellipsis hypothesis show that (1) is syntactically a sentence? By arguing that there is some syntactic material that, although phonetically unrealized, is nonetheless present at some suitable syntactic level. But what syntactic material? Here are some possibilities: (i) [pres/sing] be the one who robbed me (ii) [past/sing] rob me (iii) [pres/sing] be the robber (iv) [pres/sing] be the man I believe to be the robber. But which one of (i)–(iv) is the *unique* syntactic material that is phonetically unrealized? It is impossible to say. Thus, in the absence of some reason for thinking that (ii), say, as opposed to (i) or (iii) is the phonetically unrealized syntactic completion for (1), it seems that we must conclude that *none* of (i)–(iv) is the syntactic completion for (1), and hence, that the syntactic ellipsis hypothesis is false.[10]

Although this discussion has been extremely brief, it seems to me that there are good reasons for rejecting the idea that whenever a speaker utters an isolated definite description like (1), what she has done is utter something that is elliptical for some other sentence. At any rate, I'll assume that this is the case for the remainder of the paper.

4.

In the previous section I argued that (1) is not a sentence. I now want to argue that speakers can assert propositions by uttering expressions like (1). This will suffice to establish the Non-Sentential Assertion Thesis.[11]

In the normal case, it seems clear that if a speaker *S* were to utter (2):

(2)   The apple is red.

with appropriate force and in appropriate circumstances, *S* would have asserted that there exists a unique apple and that that apple has the property of being red. The present suggestion is thus that if a speaker *S* were to utter (1):

(1)   The second man from the right.

with appropriate force and in appropriate circumstances, *S* would have asserted that there exists a unique second man from the right and that that man is the man who robbed him.[12] It seems to me that this claim is both true and defensible. However, it is also controversial, and its truth is clearly going to depend on how assertion works. This is by no means a settled issue. For example, one account of assertion maintains that assertion is a matter of convention. Very roughly, this view holds that a speaker *S* asserts the proposition that *P* iff *S* utters a sentence s that is recognized as being used according to some convention to mean that *P*. However, since (1) is not a sentence, (1) clearly cannot be used to make an assertion. Michael Dummett is perhaps the most influential proponent of this sort of view. Says Dummett,

> the fact that a sentence expresses an act of assertion is as much a matter of linguistic convention as is its having the sense it has (in Frege's use of 'sense'). This is not to deny that there are sentences which can be used to perform any one of a number of linguistic acts: I may say, 'You will learn a sonnet', as a prediction, as an expression of my intention,

> or as a command. What constitutes my *meaning* the sentence in any one of these ways
> is my intention to be understood as performing that one of these linguistic acts. What
> makes it possible for me to have such an intention is the existence of general convention
> endowing the utterance of certain sentences — and this one in particular — with a certain
> significance. (Dummett, 1981, pg. 300)

Nonetheless, despite what Dummett says there seem to me to be decisive reasons for rejecting this view about assertion, reasons which I won't go into in detail here.[13] For the purposes of this discussion, therefore, I will adopt an alternative picture of how assertion works. In order to adequately explain how I mean to understand the notion of assertion, I will first appeal to the notion of communicating a proposition. Having explained that notion, I will then cash out the notion of assertion in terms of the notion of communication. What will emerge is an account of assertion that owes much to the relevance theory of Sperber and Wilson (1986).

Following Stalnaker (1978) I will take it as given, first, that asserting is something that people do; second, that assertions take place within a context; and third, that what context an assertion takes place within can affect the content of the assertion. I will also assume that the notion of a context can be made sense of in terms of propositions.[14] Thus, let us define a conversational context C as the set of propositions that individuals in the context assume or presuppose to be true for the purposes of that conversation.

What does it mean for a proposition to be *communicated* by an utterance? Following Sperber and Wilson (1986) let us say that a speaker S communicates a proposition P by uttering U in a context C — or more simply, that an utterance U communicates a proposition P — if:

(a) P is relevant enough to make it worth the addressee's while to process the utterance U; and

(b) U is among the most relevant utterances the speaker could have used to communicate P.

Propositions are relevant relative to contexts. So to say that a proposition P is relevant to a context C is to say that P makes a difference to C. The greater the difference made by P to C, the more relevant P is to C. Recall that I am assuming that a conversational context is the set of propositions presupposed to be true by the participants in the conversation. A proposition is then said to be relevant to that context if it changes the context in some way, either by reducing the number of propositions assumed to be true in the context, or by augmenting that number. Thus, consider again our speaker Smith who utters (1) in a context where all parties to the conversation know that Smith was recently robbed, know what a line-up is, and know that Smith is trying to pick an individual out of a line up. Is it reasonable to assume that in such a context both (a) and (b) are satisfied by Smith's utterance of (1)? It seems to me that it is. For what does an utterance of (1) do in such a context? It indicates to the participants in the conversation that Smith believes that the second man from the right is the man who robbed him, and so changes the context. For it eliminates some possibilities that were previously left open, for example, that Smith believes that the third man from the right is the man who robbed him, that Smith believes that the butler was the man who robbed him, and so on. Thus, in such a context the proposition that the second man from the right is the man who robbed Smith is relevant enough to the context to make it worth the addressee's while to attend to and process the utterance of 'The second man from the right'; and

second, because there is no utterance more relevant than (1) that could have been used to communicate that proposition, it follows (1) is among the most relevant utterances Smith could have used to communicate that proposition.[15] Thus, Smith succeeded in *communicating* the proposition that the second man from the right was the man who robbed him.

So far, so good. But how do we go from a claim that many would accept, namely that in uttering (1) Smith *communicates* the proposition that the second man from the right is the who robbed him, to a claim that many would deny, namely that by uttering (1) Smith also *asserts* the proposition that the second man from the right is the man who robbed him? There is clearly a gap between these two claims. Thankfully, however, it is not an insurmountable one. According to Sperber and Wilson (1986), and simplifying somewhat, assertion works as follows:

Assertion-? An utterance U is an assertion that P iff
(a) U communicates the proposition that P; and
(b) P is the propositional form of the utterance U.[16]

I have already explained what (a) amounts to, and I attempted to establish that (1) does in fact communicate the proposition that the second man from the right is the man who robbed Smith. But what about (b)? What is the propositional form of an utterance U? According to Stainton "[a]n utterance U has a propositional form [PF] just in case [PF] is a completion of U's Logical Form L — i.e., [PF] results from assigning reference to all indexicals in L, disambiguating L and enriching L." (Stainton, 1994, pg. 279) By way of illustration, consider the following sentence:

(3)   He is the man who robbed the bank.

The propositional form [Jones is the man who robbed the financial institution] is a possible propositional form for (3), because it could result from assigning Jones to be the reference of the pronoun 'he' and disambiguating the word 'bank' to mean financial institution rather than river bank. But of course, other propositional forms are also possible. For example, Bloggs could have been assigned to be the reference of the pronoun 'he' and the word 'bank' could have been disambiguated to mean river bank, in which case we would have ended up with the propositional form [Bloggs robbed the river bank].[17]

How does this account of assertion support the claim that speakers can assert propositions using *non*-sentences? Take (1) again. What propositional form might be assigned to (1)? Here there is trouble. For since (1) is not a sentence it cannot be assigned a propositional form as its logical form. Does this mean that no proposition can be asserted by an utterance of (1)? It does not. What it does suggest, however, is that we need to look more closely at Sperber and Wilson's definition of assertion. The problem with the current account of assertion is that it does not make room for utterances like (1). But this is easily remedied if we replace (b) in our definition of assertion with (b*):

(b*) P is the propositional form of U; *or* P could result by completing the logical form of U and merely conjoining it with another salient logical form of the appropriate semantic type.

This yields the following account of assertion.

> *Assertion-Revised* An utterance U is an assertion that P iff
>
> (a) U communicates the proposition that P; and
> (b*) P is the propositional form of U; or P could result by completing the logical form of U and merely conjoining it with another salient logical form of the appropriate semantic type.

Let us apply this revised definition of assertion to (1). We have a conversational context in which all parties to the conversation presuppose that Smith was robbed, that he is looking at a line-up, that he is trying to identify the man who robbed him, and so on. Smith utters (1), and a logical form is assigned to it by participants in the conversation, viz., the logical form [The second man from the right]. Other logical forms are also salient, however. In particular, given the context there is another logical form that is salient to the participants in the conversation, namely the logical form [x is the man who robbed Smith]. When this logical form is conjoined with the logical form assigned to (1), what results is the following *propositional* form:

> (4)   [The second man from the right is the man who robbed Smith]

But as we have already established, this is the proposition *communicated* by (1). So we have met both conditions on our revised definition of assertion. For since in uttering (1) Smith communicates the proposition that the second man from the right is the man who robbed Smith, and since that proposition could result by completing the logical form of (1) and merely conjoining it with another logical form of some appropriate semantic type, it follows that in uttering (1) Smith asserts the proposition that the second man from the right is the man who robbed him. But since (1) is a non-sentence it therefore follows that speakers can use non-sentences to assert propositions, and hence, that the Non-Sentential Assertion Thesis is true.

<div align="center">5.</div>

Where are we? I have been arguing that we ought to accept the conditional (C). I have also been arguing that the antecedent of (C) — the Non-Sentential Assertion Thesis — is true. It therefore follows that the consequent of (C) is also true. But the consequent of (C) just is the claim that the Meaning in Isolation Thesis is false. So we have here an argument for rejecting Russell's claim that definite descriptions — phrases of the form 'the so-and-so' — lack meaning in isolation.

   It might be thought that this ends the discussion: Russell was simply mistaken in thinking that definite descriptions lack meaning in isolation. To be sure, I do think that this is the conclusion we ought to draw. But I also think that this conclusion, and the argument employed to reach it, raises a number of interesting and important issues. One issue is the following. A popular view that assigns meanings to definite descriptions is the so-called *Generalized Quantifier view*. Interestingly, however, given Russell's notion of a propositional function, it turns out that Russell had the logical and semantic resources to formulate something very close to the generalized quantifier view. This naturally leads to the following question: why *didn't* Russell assign meanings to phrases of the form 'the so-and-so', even when they occur in isolation, given that he had the

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resources to do so? The answer to this question turns, I think, on issues having to do with Russell's views on epistemology, and in particular, on his Principle of Acquaintance. Consequently, what I would like to do in the next sections is describe the Generalized Quantifier view in a bit more detail, and compare it to Russell's view in "On Denoting". Using Stephen Neale as a representative example, I will argue that the relation between the GQ view and Russell's theory of descriptions is more subtle and more complex than it might initially appear.

In tracing the development of Russell's views on the meaning of definite descriptions and other denoting phrases, the impression that one gets is that Russell abandoned the view he espoused in *The Principles of Mathematics* not because he had any strong objections to the idea that denoting phrases could have meaning-relata, but rather because he couldn't figure out what such meaning-relata could be.[18] The idea that there could be an indefinite man, say, that was the meaning-relatum of the denoting phrase 'a man' struck him, as it must surely strike us, as being implausible. However, one can't help but feel that, had Russell been shown a way to assign meanings to denoting phrases, he would quite happily have done so. And it seems to me that this is something that, first, can be done; and second, that Russell *himself* could have done.

Let us therefore suppose that the Meaning in Isolation Thesis is false, and that definite descriptions do have meaning in isolation. This raises an obvious question, namely: what might the meaning of a definite description be? One proposal is that the meaning of a definite description 'the F' is whatever object happens to be the unique F. Thus, if Jones is the unique second man from the right, then on this view Jones is the meaning of 'the second man from the right.' Like Russell, however, this position does not seem to me to be an attractive one, and I will set it aside.

Another, more plausible, suggestion is that the meaning of a definite description is not an individual, but is rather a function of some kind. The *Generalized Quantifier view* (hereafter the *GQ view*) is a particular instance of this more general idea.[19] According to the GQ view, the meaning of a definite description is a generalized quantifier. What are generalized quantifiers? It is easiest to think of generalized quantifiers as properties of sets, or more simply, as functions from sets to propositions.[20] Thus, the generalized quantifier corresponding to 'some Fs' is that function f from sets Σ to propositions such that the proposition $f(\Sigma)$ is true iff the intersection of the set of things that are F with Σ is non-empty.[21] Similarly, the generalized quantifier corresponding to 'all F's' is that function f from sets Σ to propositions such that the proposition $f(\Sigma)$ is true iff the set of things that are F is contained within Σ. Finally, and most importantly for our purposes, the generalized quantifier corresponding to 'the F' is that function F from sets Σ to propositions such that the proposition $F(\Sigma)$ is true iff there exists a unique thing that is F and everything that is F is contained within Σ.

The GQ view is quite attractive. For one thing, it gives us a uniform way of assigning meanings to definite descriptions and other so-called denoting phrases. On this view a definite description is treated like any other quantificational phrase, and receives the same sort of meaning. Thus, we can treat the definite article 'the' as being semantically similar to more obvious quantifiers like 'all' and 'some', and we can treat descriptions of the form 'the F' as beings semantically similar to quantificational phrases of the form 'some F's' and 'all F's'. For another thing, this view allows us to assign meanings to descriptions that occur in isolation.[22] And finally, this view comports nicely with the account of assertion described above.

It is important to realize, however, that the adoption of the GQ view is by no means an innocent addendum to Russell's theory of descriptions. To the contrary, it raises a number of important questions. Perhaps the most salient question for our purposes is the following: What is the relation between the GQ view and Russell's own theory of descriptions? One position — which I will call the *equivalence thesis* — maintains that the two views are in fact identical. For example, Stephen Neale suggests that there is a deep affinity between his *Restricted Quantifier* (RQ) interpretation of Russell's theory of descriptions and the theory of descriptions proposed by Russell in "On Denoting".[23] In his book *Descriptions* and in his article "Grammatical Form, Logical Form, and Incomplete Symbols" Neale argues that his RQ interpretation of the theory of descriptions isn't even in competition with Russell's own formulation. Says Neale,

> it seems to me that the RQ account of descriptions is just Russell's theory stated in a way that allows us to see the relationship between surface syntax and logical form more clearly. By virtue of being Russellians about descriptions, we are not committed to the view that the only way to represent the logical form of a sentence *S* containing a description is to translate *S* into a formula of the language of *Principia Mathematica* (or a similar language). As far as explicating the logical structure of sentences containing descriptions, treating them as restricted quantifiers results not in a falling out with Russell but in an explanation of where the Theory of Descriptions its into a more general theory of natural language quantification, a theory in which determiners like 'every', 'some', 'all', 'most', 'a', 'the', and so on, are treated as members of a unied syntactical and semantical category. (Neale, 1993, pg. 91)

According to Neale, "[t]he purpose of the theory [of descriptions] is to make available a class of propositions to serve as the meanings of (utterances of) sentences of the form 'the *F* is *G*', whether or not anything answers to 'the *F*'." (Neale, 1990, pg. 20) However, while this certainly captures part of the content of the theory of descriptions, it by no means exhausts it. For if Russell had merely wanted to make available a class of propositions to serve as the meanings of sentences of the form 'the *F* is *G*' whether or not such a thing as the *F* exists, then his proposal in *The Principles of Mathematics* would have been sufficient. There Russell remarked that "words all have meaning, in the simple sense that they are symbols which stand for things other than themselves." (Russell, 1903, pg. 47) So in particular, according to Russell "such proper names as are derived from concepts by means of [the word] *the* can be said to have meaning[.]" (Russell, 1903, pg. 502) Thus, on this view the (so-called) proper name 'The King of France' has meaning, in the sense that it is a symbol that stands for something other than itself. While it is exceedingly difficult to determine what exactly Russell meant by 'meaning', he apparently thought that the meanings of descriptions were similar to Fregean senses. As he says, Frege's "distinction between meaning (Sinn) and indication (Bedeutung) is roughly, though not exactly, equivalent to my distinction between a concept as such and what the concept denotes." (Russell, 1903, pg. 502) At the time of *The Principles of Mathematics*, then, Russell seemed to think that descriptions had meaning in the technical sense explained above — they stood for things other than themselves — that they contributed their meaning to propositions in whose verbal expression they occurred, and that this was the case whether or not any particular thing satisfied, or fell under, the relevant concept as such. Evidently, this proposal differs from Russell's mature theory of descriptions.

Neale seems to think that because his theory and Russell's mature theory make the same truth conditional predictions for sentences containing definite descriptions, the two theories are equivalent. However, given that Russell *rejected* the proposal of *The Principles of Mathematics*, a proposal that made the same truth conditional predictions about sentences containing descriptions as his mature theory of descriptions, but which assigned meaning-relata to descriptions, it's hard to see how Neale's proposal can be viewed as a mere notational variant of Russell's.

A second position — which I will call the *compatibility thesis* — maintains that, while not equivalent, the GQ view and Russell's view are nonetheless compatible. According to the compatibility thesis, in other words, we can graft the generalized quantifier view onto Russell's mature theory of descriptions without altering the overall shape of Russell's semantic theory. Indeed, it may be that this is what Neale has in mind when he says that the RQ view just is Russell's view 'stated in a way that allows us to see the relationship between surface syntax and logical form more clearly.' The main problem with this proposal is a simple one: according to the GQ view definite descriptions have meaning in isolation. But it is central to Russell's mature theory of descriptions that definite descriptions *lack* meaning in isolation. Consequently, it might be hard to see how it could turn out that the GQ view is compatible with Russell's views on descriptions. For although Russell was interested in the truth-conditions of sentences, Russell was also interested in the meanings of individuals words and phrases. The fact that two semantic theories make the same truth-conditional predictions about a given class of sentences does not mean that the two theories are equivalent. For there might be other respects in which they differ.

On the other hand, having considered Russell's views on definite descriptions, and the differences between the theory of *The Principles of Mathematics* and that of "On Denoting", somebody might be tempted to reason as follows: while it's true that Russell abandoned the theory of descriptions in *The Principles of Mathematics*, Russell's formulation of the theory of descriptions in "On Denoting" is not based on any principled objection to the assignment of meanings to descriptions. Rather, Russell's reasons for rejecting the treatment of descriptions proposed in *The Principles of Mathematics* are traceable to the fact that he was unable to see what the meanings of descriptions could be. Had he been presented with a reasonable proposal about the meanings of descriptions, he would not have needed to formulate his theory of descriptions in the manner in which he did formulate it. But, so the present thought goes, such a proposal was available to Russell given that he already had a theory of propositional functions. According to this line of reasoning, in other words, not only is it the case that Russell *should* have taken generalized quantifiers to correspond to descriptions, it is also the case that he *could* have done so.

Let me elaborate. Central to Russell's theory of quantification is the notion of a propositional function. A propositional function is a function from entities to propositions. According to Russell, if we replace the expression 'John' in the phrase 'John is bald' with a variable ranging over individuals, and then apply a circumflex accent to the variable, what results is a phrase that denotes a propositional function. Call such a phrase a *function abstract*.[24] According to Russell the function abstract '$\hat{x}$ is bald' denotes a function that takes an individual as argument and yields the proposition with respect to that individual that that individual is bald.[25] If functions are properties, then function abstracts will denote properties. So far, so good.

Suppose, however, that we allow second-order quantification. Then there seems to be no reason why 'John is bald' could not yield another propositional function. For suppose we replace the expression 'bald' in 'John is bald' by a variable ranging over properties and apply a circumflex accent to that variable. Then the function abstract 'John is $\hat{F}$' will denote a function that takes a property F as argument and yields the proposition whose first constituent is John and whose second constituent is the property F.[26] Again, on the assumption that functions are properties, the function abstract 'John is $\hat{F}$' will denote a property. In this case the property denoted will be a property of properties. But this is precisely what the generalized quantifier proposal amounts to. For according to the generalized quantifier proposal, a generalized quantifier just is a property of properties, or a property of sets.

<div align="center">6.</div>

Somewhat surprisingly, then, it turns out that there is a sense in which Russell's theory of descriptions *is* compatible with the GQ view. This is because Russell had at his disposal the resources to define a class of entities to serve as the meaning-relata of definite descriptions. So why, given that Russell had the resources for formulating a version of the GQ view, didn't he do so? One possibility is that Russell's view that descriptions disappear on analysis led him to believe that a description cannot contribute anything to propositions in which it occurs. But this seems open to dispute. For example, while it may be true that the sugar I put in my cake disappears upon further mixing, it would be a mistake to say that the sugar contributes nothing to the cake.

It might be objected that this analogy is strained, which, no doubt, it is. Another more plausible possibility is that Russell's principle of acquaintance prevented him from formulating a version of the generalized quantifier view.[27] The principle of acquaintance, Russell's "fundamental epistemological principle in the analysis of propositions containing descriptions" is this: "*Every proposition which we can understand must be composed wholly of constituents with which we are acquainted.*" (Russell, 1911, pg. 23, emphasis in original) He further remarks that "a constituent with which we are not acquainted is unintelligible to us." (Russell, 1911, pg. 31) Thus, according to the principle of acquaintance, if an entity is a constituent of a proposition then it must be the kind of thing with which we can be acquainted.[28]

According to Russell, "we have *acquaintance* with anything of which we are directly aware, without the intermediary of any process of inference or any knowledge of truths." (Russell, 1912, pg. 46) Russell had fairly definite ideas about the sorts of things with which we are acquainted. The most fundamental sorts of objects with which we are acquainted are what Russell called *sense-data*. Russell does not provide an explicit definition of 'sense-data', but he does provide examples of them, saying that "[w]hen I see a colour or hear a noise, I have direct acquaintance with the colour or the noise." (Russell, 1911, pg. 17) The color and the noise are thus sense-data, objects that are given to us in perception. In addition to direct awareness of objects, Russell also allows that we can be acquainted with objects via memory and introspection, and he also allows — somewhat tentatively — that we can be acquainted with ourselves.[29]

Now, according to the GQ view propositions of the form 'the F is G' contain as constituents a generalized quantifier corresponding to 'the F' and a property denoted by 'is G'. Let us assume that we can understand such propositions. Then according to Russell we must be capable of being acquainted with their constituents. But among

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the constituents of such propositions are generalized quantifiers. So the question to be asked is: can we be acquainted with generalized quantifiers? On the face of it, yes. For Russell grants that we can have awareness of, and so be acquainted with, universals as well as particulars. For example, Russell says that "[n]ot only are we aware of particular yellows, but if we have seen a sufficient number of yellows and have sufficient intelligence, we are aware of the universal yellow." (Russell, 1919, pg. 18) Since properties are universals — if we are realists about properties — and since generalized quantifiers are properties, albeit of a highly complex sort, there would appear to be no reason why we couldn't be acquainted with generalized quantifiers and hence, no reason why they couldn't be constituents of propositions. Indeed, it appears that Russell explicitly allowed this latter possibility in some cases, since he held that the proposition that everything is a man is equivalent to the proposition that the propositional function denoted by '$\hat{x}$ is a man' is always true. And the latter proposition clearly contains the propositional function '$\hat{x}$ is a man'. So Russell's acknowledgement that propositional functions could be constituents of propositions lends some support to the view that the GQ view is compatible with Russell's views on definite descriptions.

On the other hand, the principle of acquaintance would seem to count against this view. For when Russell talks about awareness of universals he suggests that we become aware of universals only after having been acquainted with particular instances of them. But then it becomes mysterious how we could be acquainted with a generalized quantifier: for what could count as being acquainted with a particular instance of a generalized quantifier? Perhaps it could be said that we are acquainted with particular instances of generalized quantifiers by being acquainted with particular utterances of definite descriptions and other denoting or quantificational expressions. But again, it is hard to know what it would mean to be acquainted with a generalized quantifier. Moreover, the sorts of things with which we can be acquainted are, for Russell, epistemological primitives. For example, we can be acquainted with redness because such an item can be a foundational piece of knowledge. But can it seriously be suggested that the generalized quantifier corresponding to 'all cyclists' is a foundational item of knowledge? That it is indubitable and certain in the way in which 'red here now' is indubitable and certain? It seems to me that it cannot.

Another reason to be skeptical about the idea that we can be acquainted with generalized quantifiers is that it is arguable that somebody cannot understand a generalized quantifier without having some knowledge of truths. For example, consider again the generalized quantifier corresponding to 'all cyclists'. In order for somebody to understand this function it would be necessary for that person to know that the generalized quantifier corresponding to 'all cyclists' is that function f from sets Σ to propositions such that the proposition $f(\Sigma)$ is *true* iff the set of cyclists is contained within Σ. That is, in order to understand the generalized quantifier corresponding to 'all cyclists' it is necessary to know how it combines with sets or with properties to yield truths. But if we cannot have direct awareness of generalized quantifiers without having knowledge of truths, then on Russell's view we cannot be acquainted with generalized quantifiers. To this extent generalized quantifiers seem to be different from other properties. For it seems that I can have direct awareness of redness without knowing any truths whereas this does not seem to be the case with generalized quantifiers.[30]

A third possibility for why Russell did not formulate a version of the GQ view — and one which is related to the Principle of Acquaintance — has to do with Russell's

distinction between *complete* and *incomplete* symbols. On Russell's view descriptions are incomplete symbols, symbols that 'disappear on analysis'. Interestingly, however, what makes an expression a complete or an incomplete symbol is not a matter of the expression's form, but is instead a matter of the expression's semantic characteristics. Thus, what Russell means by the claim that definite descriptions are incomplete symbols is that they do not stand for objects and do not contribute objects to propositions in whose verbal expression they occur. Notice that on this view even proper names count as incomplete symbols for Russell, since according to him proper names do not contribute objects to propositions in whose verbal expression they occur.

Why is this important? Because according to the GQ view, descriptions *do* contribute objects to propositions in whose verbal expression they occur, although the objects contributed are properties — in particular, generalized quantifiers — rather than individuals. It is clear, however, that Russell's distinction between complete and incomplete symbols is intimately related to his principle of acquaintance. For if an expression is complete only if it contributes an object to propositions in whose verbal expression it occurs, and if objects contributed to propositions must be objects with which we can be immediately acquainted, then an expression is complete only if it contributes an object with which we can be immediately acquainted to propositions in whose verbal expression it occurs. Thus, another reason why Russell might not have formulated something like the GQ view is that it entails that definite descriptions are complete symbols.

I admit, however, that the issue is a complicated one. I have been arguing that the GQ view carries with it a commitment to the idea that definite descriptions have meaning-relata, and contribute those meaning-relata to propositions in whose verbal expression they occur. This amounts to the claim that descriptions ought to be viewed as complete, rather than incomplete, symbols. But this is open to dispute. For instance, Neale (1993) argues to the contrary that the GQ view does *not* entail that descriptions stand for objects or have meaning-relata, and so does not entail that descriptions are complete symbols. Says Neale, "for Russell a *complete* symbol stands for some entity and contributes that entity to the propositions expressed by utterances of sentences containing that symbol." (Neale, 1993, pg. 91) But Neale goes on to say that in an expression of the form '[the$_1$ king x_1]$_1$(x_1 likes Russell)' "the quantifier '[the$_1$ king x_1]$_1$' that binds the variable is an incomplete symbol. It doesn't even purport to stand for an object . . . There is no sense, then, in which the RQ account of descriptions conflicts with Russell's conception of descriptions as incomplete symbols." (Neale, 1993, pg. 92)

Whether Neale is right to say that there is no conflict between the RQ account — or the GQ view; I am not here distinguishing between the two — and Russell's theory of descriptions is going to depend, among other things, on what is meant by 'entity', 'object', 'stands for', and 'contribute'. It is tempting to say that an expression is a complete symbol if it is a referring expression, incomplete if not. But this cannot be right. For Russell allows that predicates are complete symbols even though they do not contribute individuals to propositions in whose verbal expression they occur. Consequently, the fact that an expression is not a referring expression is no bar to that expression's being a complete symbol. Neale slides from talk of expressions contributing *entities* to propositions in whose verbal expression they occur to talk of expressions contributing *objects* to propositions in whose verbal expression they occur. It is true that on the GQ view descriptions do not contribute objects, i.e., individuals, to propositions; but they

do contribute entities to propositions in the form of generalized quantifiers. It therefore seems to me that, *pace* Neale, there is a sense in which the GQ account *does* conflict with Russell's conception of descriptions as incomplete symbols. At any rate, the fact that there is room for disagreement on this issue again indicates that the adoption of the GQ view is not a problem of terminology alone.[31]

<div align="center">7.</div>

To recapitulate, I have been speculating about the relation between the GQ view of the meaning of definite descriptions, Russell's theory of descriptions, and Russell's Principle of Acquaintance. I have been arguing that there are good reasons to think that definite descriptions stand for generalized quantifiers. I have also been arguing that adopting this position results in a view which, although not incompatible with the semantic and logical resources available to Russell, violates certain of his epistemological principles. The upshot of this discussion is that adoption of the GQ view threatens Russell's theory of descriptions. This is because on the GQ view descriptions are complete symbols that stand for entities other than themselves, and contribute those entities to propositions in whose verbal expression they occur.

Let me conclude with some very brief, and very speculative, methodological remarks. To this point I have been concerned with a fairly narrow question: given that Russell had the resources to formulate something like the generalized quantifier view, why didn't he do so? My diagnosis was that Russell's foundationalist epistemology, and in particular, his Principle of Acquaintance, barred him from taking seriously the idea that definite descriptions might have generalized quantifiers — or entities similar to generalized quantifiers — as meaning-relata. But this narrow question leads naturally to a much broader question, namely: Is it plausible to suppose that results about everyday speech and language processing could end up threatening Russell's foundationalist epistemology?

Russell's views on linguistic understanding are intimately linked to his views on epistemology. On Russell's view, as we have seen, if an expression has meaning — in the technical sense of having a meaning-relatum — then that meaning must have certain epistemological characteristics. In brief, it must be something with which we are capable of being acquainted. As we have also seen, this places severe constraints on the sorts of meanings that expressions can have. But suppose that the arguments of the present paper are correct: that speakers can use unembedded definite descriptions to assert propositions; that this requires that definite descriptions have meaning-relata; and that the natural candidates for such meaning-relata are generalized quantifiers. Then it does appear that Russell is faced with a difficult choice: either reject the Principle of Acquaintance; or retain the Principle of Acquaintance and endorse the idea that we can be acquainted with generalized quantifiers and other complex linguistic meanings.

Now, it might be thought that abandoning the Principle of Acquaintance and the foundationalist epistemology that supports it might not be such a bad thing for Russell given the problems that infect sense-data theories quite generally. But what is surprising is that an argument against foundationalism in epistemology might come from reflections on what speakers do with words. After all, one would have thought that if foundationalism is mistaken it would be shown to be mistaken for other reasons.

Could Russell retain the Principle of Acquaintance by making appropriate adjustments elsewhere in his theory? He could. But that would require accepting the idea that

we can be acquainted with generalized quantifiers. And as we have seen, this is not an altogether plausible idea. For one thing, generalized quantifiers do not seem to have the right epistemological characteristics to be the sort of things with which we can be acquainted: they are not indubitable in the required sense, nor can we be directly aware of them. For another thing, it appears that to understand a generalized quantifier we require knowledge of truths, which again suggests that we cannot be acquainted with them. What is clear is that if Russell were to allow that we can be acquainted with generalized quantifiers and other complex meanings the overall shape of his epistemology would be greatly altered.

That reflections on what speakers do with words might lead us to reconsider foundational issues in epistemology might seem initially implausible, but on reflection it should come as no surprise. Recent developments in Chomskyan linguistics have forced philosophers to rethink what it means for something to be an item of knowledge, or what it means for an item of knowledge to be innate, or what it means for attributions of linguistic knowledge to be correct. If linguistic understanding is but one of the many ways in which we find out about the world, it should not surprise us to learn that reflections on how language is used threaten to spill over into other areas of philosophical inquiry, including epistemology as it has been traditionally conceived.

8.

To conclude. My primary aim in this paper has been to argue that the conditional (C) is true. My reasons for focusing on this conditional were threefold. First, because there are good reasons for accepting the antecedent of (C), and hence, good reasons for accepting its consequent. Second, because the truth of (C) has consequences for Russell's theory of descriptions. And third, because the truth of (C) indicates that the relation between empirical facts about how language is used and philosophical theses concerning language and epistemology are more intimate than they might otherwise appear to be. Along the way I argued that there are good reasons for thinking that the meaning of a definite description is a generalized quantifier. I also argued that the adoption of what I called the GQ view about the meaning of definite descriptions is not obviously compatible with Russell's theory of descriptions and should not be viewed as a mere notational variant of Russell's theory. Investigation of Russell's theory of descriptions continues to be fruitful in part because it is one of those genial areas of philosophical inquiry where issues having to do with semantics, syntax, epistemology, and natural language processing collide, with interesting and sometimes surprising results.

NOTES

1 It should be emphasized that Russell does not restrict himself in his writings to consideration of definite descriptions alone. Rather, Russell is concerned with so-called 'denoting phrases' in general. For simplicity, however, I will confine myself to discussion of definite descriptions. I believe that the conclusions I draw about definite descriptions can be extended to other so-called denoting phrases.

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[2] I realize that this claim is controversial and requires further spelling out. I will return to discussion of it below.

[3] Readers who are already convinced that the conditional (C) is plausible and that the Non-Sentential Assertion Thesis is true should feel free to skip these first sections.

[4] Of course, Russell did not think that proper names in natural language refer to individuals. Rather, Russell would view a proper name like 'Smith' as being short for a definite description of the form the 'x such that ϕx, where ϕ stands for some set of properties had by Smith. However, it will simplify matters somewhat if we assume here and throughout that proper names in natural language *do* refer to individuals. I will return to this issue below in connection with Russell's Principle of Acquaintance.

[5] Just so there's no confusion: what's important here isn't so much that speakers are capable of *asserting* propositions using non-sentences, but rather that in so doing they are *grasping* and *deploying* the meanings of non-sentences. Thus, the reason that the ability of speakers to assert propositions using non-sentences is of interest is that it is a particular instance of a more general claim linking meaning and understanding. So if the particular claim can be established — if, that is, the Non-Sentential Assertion Thesis can be established — then we will have succeeded in establishing the more general claim that speakers can grasp and deploy the meanings of non-sentences and hence, that such expressions *have* meaning in isolation.

[6] What follows is by no means original. The arguments I give below borrow heavily from Barton (1991), Stainton (1994, 1995, 1998), and Yanofsky (1978).

[7] For a nice discussion of the complexities that accompany this question, see Stainton (2000).

[8] For the purposes of this discussion, I will restrict myself to discussion of this interpretation.

[9] For a more thorough overview of X-bar theory, see Haegeman (1994).

[10] For a more thorough discussion of this style of objection, see Clapp (2001).

[11] What follows owes much to Stainton (1994) and Sperber and Wilson (1986). It should be emphasized, moreover, that the claim that speakers are capable of asserting propositions using non-sentences is a controversial one, and is not universally accepted. For arguments against the sort of view presented here, see Stanley (2000).

[12] There is nothing special about (1). If the Non-Sentential Assertion Thesis is true many other non-sentences can be used to make assertions.

[13] For arguments to this effect, see Stainton (1997).

[14] This assumption is controversial. For defense of this idea see Stalnaker (1978, 1998).

[15] For it is surely true that an utterance of the sentence 'The second man from the right is the man who robbed me' is no more relevant than an utterance of (1). Indeed, it might even be thought to be *less* relevant than an utterance of (1) since it repeats information that is already present in the context.

[16] The '?' indicates that this account of assertion is subject to revision.

[17] Although there are many possible propositional forms that sentence (3) could have, it is important to note that there are also many propositional forms that (3) could *not* have. For example, [Bloggs is the man who robbed the 4th of July parade] is not a possible propositional form for (3) because there is no way that 'bank' could be disambiguated to mean 'the 4th of July parade'. So we know that in assigning propositional forms to sentences, not anything goes.

[18] For a fascinating discussion of the origin and development of Russell's theory of descriptions, see Cartwright (1987).

[19] See Barwise and Cooper (1981) for a more thorough discussion of the nature of generalized quantifiers and their relationship to natural language expressions. Stainton (1998) contains more detailed arguments in favor of the GQ view.

[20] Why functions from sets to *propositions* rather than functions from sets to *truth values*? Because treating generalized quantifiers in this way leaves open the possibility that the generalized quantifier corresponding to 'some unicorns' is distinct from the generalized quantifier corresponding to 'all round squares.' If generalized quantifiers were merely functions from sets to truth values, then these two generalized quantifiers would be semantically equivalent.

[21] Note that it is the entire quantificational phrase 'some F's' that is assigned a generalized quantifier as meaning, not the determiner 'some'.

[22] Why prefer a view that assigns to a definite description of the form 'the F' a generalized quantifier to a view that gives the meaning of *sentences* in which definite descriptions occur according to a recursive rule, a view, that is, according to which, although 'the F' is not assigned a meaning, all sentences of the form 'the F is G' are assigned the value true iff there exists a unique F and that F is G? The reason should be familiar by now: since it is plausible to suppose that definite descriptions do have meaning in isolation — since they can be used by speakers to assert propositions — *some* meaning must be assigned to them when they occur unembedded.

[23] So far as I can tell, Neale's RQ account and the GQ view are notational variants of each other, or at least can be treated as such for our purposes. By a restricted quantifier, Neale has in mind an expression of the form [Qx: Fx], where the domain of the quantifier Q is restricted to the class of things that are F. On this view, 'the' can be viewed as a device that operates on two predicates, F and G, to yield an expression of the form [the x: Fx](Gx) which is true just in case the unique thing which is F is also G, in much the same way that 'most' can be viewed as a device that operates on two predicates, F and G, to yield an expression of the form [most x: Fx](Gx) which is true just in case there are more F things which are G than there are F things which are not G. If we make the assumption that restricted quantifiers express properties, then Neale's RQ account would appear to be equivalent to the GQ view.

   My primary worry with this interpretation of Neale's RQ account is that Neale always provides truth conditions for complete sentences containing definite descriptions, and never explicitly says what the meaning of a restricted quantifier is. Moreover, in arguing (in Neale (1993)) that restricted quantifiers are *incomplete symbols* — in Russell's sense of the term — Neale seems to commit himself to the view that restricted quantifiers do not stand for any object, and do not contribute any object to propositions in whose verbal expression they occur. I will return to discussion of the distinction between complete and incomplete symbols below. For the time being, it suffices to note that if Neale's RQ account is equivalent to the GQ view, then what goes for the one goes for the other. And if Neale's RQ account differs from the GQ view, then my remarks below concerning its relation to Russell's proposal in *The Principles of Mathematics* would still seem to apply.

[24] This terminology is due to Mark Sainsbury. See (Sainsbury, 1979, pg. 280).

[25] Russell is not entirely consistent on this issue. Sometimes Russell talks as if propositional functions are extra- or non-linguistic entities; at other times he talks as if propositional functions are linguistic entities. Hence it is not clear whether Russell thinks that the function abstract '$\hat{x}$ is bald' is a propositional function, or whether he thinks that what the function abstract '$\hat{x}$ is bald' denotes is a propositional function. Despite this inconsistency, I will adopt the latter interpretation in what follows. For an interesting discussion of this issue, see (Sainsbury, 1979, pg. 278).

[26] It is worth noting that this proposal corresponds almost exactly to Richard Montague's proposal for the semantics of proper names in a natural language like English. According to Montague (1974), the English expression 'John' translates to the expression $\lambda P[P\{\mathbf{j}\}]$ (where P is a variable ranging over properties). This expression denotes the set of properties of John, i.e., a function from properties to truth values (or propositions). Hence, according to Montague 'John is bald' is true just in case the property of being bald is a member of the set of properties of — i.e., possessed by — John. For a more detailed exposition, see Dowty et al. (1981).

[27] For similar speculations, see Sainsbury (1979).

[28] Although the principle of acquaintance receives its most extended treatment in Russell (1911, 1912, 1919), it surfaces in Russell (1905) as well. Thus in "On Denoting" Russell says that "in every proposition that we can apprehend (i.e. not only in those whose truth or falsehood we can judge of, but in all that we can think about), all the constituents are really entities with which we have immediate acquaintance." (Russell, 1905, pg. 56)

[29] Cautions Russell: "although acquaintance with ourselves seems *probably* to occur, it is not wise to assert that it undoubtedly occurs." (Russell, 1912, pg. 51)

[30] Of course, somebody might object that in order to understand the property corresponding to the predicate 'is red' one must know that redness is that function F from individuals e to propositions such that the proposition $F(e)$ is true iff e is red. But seems rather dubious as an account of what is required to understand the property of being red.

[31] For a more thorough discussion of this issue, see Linsky (1992) and Neale (1993).

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