Journal for the History of Analytical Philosophy

Volume 6, Number 2

A Reconstruction of Russell's Gray's Elegy Argument

Max Rosenkrantz

This paper presents a detailed exegesis of Russell's "Gray's Elegy Argument" (GEA). It holds that the GEA mounts a successful attack on Frege—a thesis that has been widely controverted in the literature. The point of departure for my interpretation is Russell's charge that it is impossible to speak about *Sinne*, or "meanings" as Russell calls them. I argue that the charge concerns the construction of an "ideal language." For Russell, an ideal language is an artificial schema designed to represent the truth-makers for sentences occurring in natural language. Its signs stand for the entities that are constituents of those truth-makers. Russell's charge can thus be expressed more clearly and completely as follows: an ideal language designed to express Frege's ontology requires signs for meanings (*Sinne*); however, the signs introduced for that purpose cannot be correlated with the entities they are supposed to represent. Thus, the requirement cannot be met.

A Reconstruction of Russell's Gray's Elegy Argument

Max Rosenkrantz

1. Introduction

In 1960, in reply to a query from one of the earliest commentators on the Gray's Elegy Argument (GEA), Russell was led to offer his own interpretation of that difficult text: "It seems to me from my recent reading of my article that I was concerned to establish the position that a denoting complex is only a phrase and not a meaning."[1] 'Meaning' is the word Russell uses to translate Frege's '*Sinn*', and the phrases at issue in the GEA are definite descriptions.[2] Russell's remark may thus be glossed as follows: the GEA attempts to show that the distinction Frege makes between definite descriptions and meanings cannot be sustained. Put more pointedly, the aim of the GEA is to collapse the distinction between definite descriptions and meanings to the side of definite descriptions. In this paper I argue for two claims. First, Russell's retrospective interpretation is correct. Second, the GEA achieves its purpose.

My argument has three parts. The first focuses on an issue that has remained central from the earliest discussions of the GEA to the most recent: Russell's charge that one cannot "speak about" meanings. I argue that previous commentators have failed to grasp its force because they have not probed with sufficient care the problem that leads one to posit the existence of meanings, and hence the need to speak about them, in the first place.

The second part attempts to place the GEA in its proper dialectical context. Russell, I contend, takes meanings to be responsive to an *ontological* problem. Specifically, he takes them to be entities that are introduced to provide an analysis of the truth-makers for sentences containing definite descriptions. Russell's approach to that problem has a methodological dimension. He proceeds on the implicit assumption that the appropriate way to address ontological problems is via the construction of an "ideal language." An ideal language is an artificial schema designed to represent the truth-makers for sentences occurring in natural language. Its signs represent the entities that are constituents of those truth-makers. On the interpretation I defend, Russell's claim that one cannot speak about meanings can be stated more clearly and completely as follows: an ideal language designed to express Frege's ontology requires signs that stand for meanings; however, the signs introduced for that purpose cannot be correlated with the entities they are supposed to represent. To put matters more technically, the signs cannot be interpreted. Thus, the requirement cannot be met.

The third part brings the interpretive framework developed in the first two parts to bear on the text of the GEA. Following the lead of a number of scholars, I proceed by way of a commentary on it. Given the tangled nature of the text and the richness of the interpretive literature it has generated, this part defies easy summary. Nevertheless, three points about the reading I develop may prove helpful here. First, the GEA can be put out in terms that are more clear and simple than Russell's own. In short, the reading I put forward is a *simplifying* one. Second, I find much of the text to be fundamentally confused or irrelevant to Russell's main line of argument. My commentary is thus selective, dealing only with those parts of the GEA that are essential to it. Third, since the goal of this paper is to establish

---

[1]The query (by Ronald Jager) and Russell's reply are reproduced in Urquhart (2005, 117–19). The piece that prompted the exchange is Jager (1960).

[2]Throughout this paper I follow Russell's translation. This extends to reporting the views of writers who render Frege's terms differently. Obviously, when quoting them directly I do so without emendation.

that the GEA presents a cogent argument against Frege, clearly I am committed to defending the claim that Russell represents his opponent's position accurately and fairly. That claim has been frequently disputed in the literature, and though there are several capable defenses of Russell on this score, it remains a minority view.

2. Speaking About Meanings

It is generally agreed that the crux of the GEA is to raise a difficulty for the attempt to "speak about" meanings.[3] ('Speak about' is Russell's expression.) The nature of the difficulty varies from

---

[3]In chronological order, the view is found in: Church (1943, 302), Butler (1954, 362–63) (endorsing Church's argument), Searle (1958), Jager (1960, 54), Cassin (1971, 270), Hochberg (1976) (Hochberg is not as explicit as most that the issue is central, but his interpretive practice—see 63–67—makes clear that it is), Blackburn and Code (1978a, 70), Manser (1985, 269–71), Hylton (1990, 249–52), Turnau (1991, 59–60), Rodríguez-Consuegra (1992–93, 203), Wahl (1993, 89–91), Pakaluk (1993, 37–41), Kremer (1994, 288), Noonan (1996, 70–71, 92–93), Landini (1998, 52–53, 59, 66–67), Demopolous (1999, 446–48), Makin (2000, 22–23), Levine (2004, 265–67), Levine (2005, 61) (a restatement with some amplification of his 2004), Urquhart (2005, 99–100), Simons (2005, 128–30) (despite the apparent suggestion to the contrary at 125), Salmon (2005, 1071), Brogaard (2006, 48, 54, 60), Salmon (2009, 343–52) (which summarizes his 2005) and Stevens (2011, 77–92). This survey passes over a number of important differences between these writers, and in my commentary on the GEA I attempt to provide a more precise mapping of the scholarly terrain. However, two simplifications I have made should be attended to immediately. First, the difficulty the GEA raises is sometimes put out in terms that deemphasize or deny outright its linguistic dimension. (Makin 2000, 23–24, 221, is a good example of the former, Levine 2004, 267, of the latter.) For interpreters of that stripe the problem is not speaking about meanings but finding non-linguistic propositions about them. Put differently, the difficulty is not in speaking about meanings but thinking about them or giving an analysis of the truth-conditions for statements about them. As will become clear, given the concerns of the present section, that difference makes no difference. Second, it is quite common to describe the difficulty as one concerning "denoting concepts." Here I assume what I shall justify later: that Russell's denoting concepts are the same as Frege's meanings.

commentator to commentator, but however it is construed the attempt cannot be understood, much less appraised, apart from some explanation of the context within which it is made. Pressing though that issue is, it has not been addressed explicitly in the literature. This neglect results, no doubt, from the seeming naturalness of the effort in question. After all, if meanings exist then surely there is nothing problematic in trying to speak about them. In what follows I shall argue that such a position, despite its apparent reasonableness, greatly oversimplifies matters. To do so I shall consider three well-known and well-argued interpretations of the GEA: Searle (1958), Blackburn and Code (1978a) and Makin (2000).[4] Each implicitly situates the attempt to speak about meanings in a different context—contexts I dub "ordinary," "scientific," and "philosophical." Taken jointly they represent the range of contexts within which the attempt could be made. In discussing them, I shall tread as lightly as possible on the details of the interpretations in which they are found as well as the details of the GEA itself. My goal is simply to bring out the peculiarity inherent in trying to speak about meanings, an issue which, as I have indicated, those writers do not confront.

Searle holds that in the GEA Russell tries to show that it is impossible to speak about meanings or, to put the point in Searle's terms (1958, 138ff.), that it is impossible to "refer" to them.[5] Re-

---

[4]A brief note on my principles of selection: in many ways Searle's article has set the terms for the debate over the GEA down to the present day. (I elaborate further on his article's historical importance in Section 4, page 12 and in note 65.) Blackburn and Code's is the first widely noted defense of the view that the GEA contains a cogent criticism of Frege. (Hochberg 1976 appeared earlier and pursued the same goal but unfortunately has been relatively neglected by later commentators.) Makin's book is the most impressive recent contribution to the literature, offering a carefully reasoned interpretation of the GEA and a judicious assessment of the major earlier interpretations. It also serves as the point of departure for Levine's (2004) weighty paper.

[5]In fact, Searle's stated position is more complicated. He sees the GEA as attempting to pose a dilemma for Frege: either it is impossible to refer to meanings or one does so in a way that robs Frege's theory of any "explanatory

ferring is done by ordinary speakers in everyday contexts. In the typical case the items referred to are equally ordinary: people, books, chairs, and the like. Meanings are obviously not items of this ordinary sort. Yet Searle treats them as if they were. He sees Russell as arguing that though one can refer to the pen on one's desk, one cannot refer to a meaning. Crucially, for Searle the two attempts are not different in kind.

To see how questionable Searle's assimilation of the two cases is we must step back from the polemical context of the GEA. That is, we must provide a philosophically neutral context within which the attempt to refer to a meaning is made. The challenge is to describe a situation in which such an undertaking makes sense. Once the challenge is raised, it becomes clear that it cannot be met. To be sure, there is no difficulty in forming sentences of the appropriate sort; for example, 'The meaning I grasped yesterday is different from the one I grasped today'. Grammatically the sentence is unimpeachable, but its content is obscure. Who would give voice to it, and for what purpose? No answers to those questions suggest themselves. Yet in their absence, the implicit premise Searle imputes to the GEA—that it must be possible to refer to meanings—is empty.[6]

The flaws in Searle's analysis may seem to show merely that the attempt to speak about meanings occurs in a theoretical context, not an ordinary one. The question is which theoretical context is appropriate. In a number of writings one can discern an implicit belief that the GEA is directed against a scientific thesis. For example, Blackburn and Code (1978a) take meanings

to be introduced as part of a theory of linguistic competence.[7] Meanings are thus on a par, not with the ordinary items mentioned in connection with Searle, but with theoretical entities such as neutrinos, gravitational fields and the like.

According to Blackburn and Code (1978a, 70, 75), the GEA is not designed to show that it is impossible to speak about meanings, but that it is impossible to do so in the right way. The criterion for correctness is supplied by answering the questions to which Searle had no response. Who is doing the speaking? For what purpose? In this instance the speaker is the scientific theorist. Importantly, her attempt to speak about meanings in-

---

value" (1958, 138). However, since only the first horn of the dilemma figures in Searle's argument I have ignored the second.

[6]One must not be misled here by obviously unproblematic sentences such as 'The meaning of 'the morning star' is different from the meaning of 'the evening star'.' Even though Searle places the attempt to speak about meanings in an ordinary context, he is under no illusion that in the GEA 'meaning' has its ordinary meaning.

[7]That formulation is admittedly imprecise but it stems from Blackburn and Code's failure to explain thoroughly the problem context within which they locate the GEA. My primary basis for characterizing their position as I do is that their argument is centrally concerned with our ability to understand definite descriptions (Blackburn and Code 1978a, 74). Also telling is their assertion (1978b, 207) that "it is quite clear that the sense of a sentence is . . . the thought contained." The assertion is not intended to repeat a well-known piece of Fregean doctrine but to indicate that the theoretical home for discussions of meaning is in psychology. It occurs as part of their protracted and acrimonious dispute with Geach, the entirety of which (Blackburn and Code 1978a,b, 1979; Geach 1978, 1979) is instructive in this regard; see in particular Geach's remark (1978, 204) that Frege's theory of meaning accounts for our ability "to understand when our fellows are using a proper name . . . with a common intended reference" as well as his judgment (205) that the question Blackburn and Code raise concerning our ability to recognize (and thus speak about) meanings is "a matter of psychology, like the question how we recognize faces or voices." Blackburn and Code do not accept the particulars of Geach's argument, but they raise no objection to the context within which he places it.

Blackburn and Code (1978a, 71–72, 73; 1978b, 207; 1979, 160) also see a logical dimension to the GEA. The two dimensions—which they tie together under the heading of "semantics" (1979, 160)—are not satisfactorily integrated with one another and thus can be treated independently. I focus on the psychological because it is the broader and more fundamental. The GEA, on Blackburn and Code's reading (1978a, 72), grapples with a psychological thesis that must be responsive to certain logical constraints. Below (note 19) I shall return in passing to the logical issues with which they are concerned and show that they fit easily with the ontological reading of the GEA that I develop.

volves nothing more than finding expressions that refer to them. Her purpose in constructing those expressions is to discover the nature of the theoretical entities she has posited. Blackburn and Code argue that though it is possible to arrive at expressions that succeed in referring to meanings, the GEA shows that they leave those entities in "uninviting obscurity" and leave the theorist in a situation where she does not "know what [she is] talking about" (1978a, 74, 75). In short, the GEA does not show that meanings are ineffable but that they are inscrutable.

Blackburn and Code's interpretation suffers from a glaring mismatch between the theory that calls for meanings and the method for investigating them. Meanings are part of a psychological theory. They are examined by means of constructing expressions that refer to them. Yet, it is inexplicable why this should be *a* method, let alone the *only* method for determining their nature. Indeed, if meanings are responsive to a scientific problem, then surely the way to establish that they exist and what they are like is through observation, experimentation and theory construction. Yet such possibilities are absent in Blackburn and Code's interpretation and are quite clearly irrelevant to the GEA.[8]

One way to surmount the discrepancy between theory and method is to reject one and retain the other. Even a cursory reading of the GEA reveals that designing expressions to refer to meanings is central to it. Moreover, as I shall try to bring

out in Section 4, Blackburn and Code are correct in arguing that Russell takes those expressions to determine the nature of meanings. Thus, the discrepancy can be resolved only by jettisoning the theory and retaining the method.

Makin vigorously, and in my judgment rightly, rejects the view that the GEA is concerned with the workings of language and the mind.[9] Rather, it is directed against a philosophical thesis. Precisely what marks a thesis as philosophical and what distinguishes it from a scientific thesis are difficult and important issues for Makin's view, but not ones he is keen to explore. For the moment then I shall keep them at arm's length and dwell instead on his handling of a specific philosophical problem in order to see how it gives rise to the attempt to speak about meanings. In discussing it, I confine myself to the bare minimum required for that purpose.

The problem arises in this way.[10] Consider the following sentences:

(1)   Scott is the author of *Waverley*.

(2)   Scott is the author of *Ivanhoe*.[11]

It is possible for someone to believe (1) and not (2). Therefore the sentences express different propositions. The question is how to account for that difference. Meanings provide the answer. The definite descriptions 'the author of *Waverley*' and 'the author of *Ivanhoe*' express different meanings, and those meanings are constituents of the propositions expressed by (1) and (2). For the sake of argument, let us agree to label those meanings 'm_1'

---

[8]David Kaplan (1969) interprets the problematic that gives rise to the quest for meanings in much the same way as do Blackburn and Code, and they in turn indicate (1978a, 76–77) a broad sympathy for his view. Thus, his plaintive remarks bring out in a stark fashion the murkiness of Blackburn and Code's understanding of the attempt to "capture" meanings: "My own view is that [Frege's doctrine of meaning] . . . is so theoretically satisfying that if we have not yet discovered or satisfactorily grasped the peculiar . . . objects in question, then we should simply continue looking" (Kaplan 1969, 119). What this search would look like Kaplan does not and cannot say. Kremer's (1994) interpretation of the search for meanings ends up in the same dead-end; see note 14.

---

[9]This is a theme that runs throughout the book. For a concise, forceful statement see Makin (2000, 179).

[10]Makin (2000, 16–17) thinks that the problem I describe plays only a minor role in motivating Russell to posit meanings; but that does not detract from its illustrative value here.

[11]Makin, following Russell, contrasts (1) with 'Scott is Scott'. My alteration allows, I believe, for a clearer presentation of the problem.

and 'm_2' respectively. According to Makin, one of the results of the proposed analysis is that the following sentence is true:

(3) m_1 differs from m_2.

(3) expresses—or at least appears to express—a proposition about m_1 and m_2. Makin interprets the GEA as calling into question the possibility of such propositions. As he puts it:

> If two denoting complexes [meanings] are distinct then there must be a true proposition to that effect . . . unless such propositions are possible, the very contention they are distinct becomes incoherent. Surely to posit a kind of entity of which nothing is true must be incoherent. (Makin 2000, 23)[12]

My concern here is not to probe the nature of the difficulties Makin discerns or his arguments for them; rather, it is to question whether his demand is a reasonable one. Put differently, is it correct to hold that there must be propositions about meanings just as there are propositions about authors and books and about neutrinos and gravitational fields?

The crucial assumption is that (1), (2) and (3) are truths that do not differ in kind. This is not, of course, to imply that Makin's interpretation denies that there are obvious and significant differences between them. For example, he can certainly hold that (1) and (2) state truths of literary history while (3) states a truth of philosophy. However, those differences are irrelevant here. What is important is that (1), (2) and (3) are each taken to describe a different facet of reality. In that respect (1) and (2) are as different from one another as either is from (3). If that assumption is correct, then it follows that attempting to speak about meanings is as unproblematic as Makin takes it to be. However,

if it is not, then Makin has failed to provide a context within which the attempt to speak about meanings is intelligible.

The first step in questioning Makin's assumption is to take seriously the obvious peculiarity of (3). Here Russell's sensibilities are at times more acute than his commentators'. For example he takes up a sentence much like (3) in the *Principles of Mathematics*:

> It is possible to consider and make propositions about . . . [denoting] concepts [meanings] themselves, but these are not the natural propositions to make in employing the [denoting] concepts. "Any number is odd or even" is a perfectly natural proposition, whereas "*Any number* is a variable conjunction" is a proposition to be made only in a logical discussion. (Russell 1903, §65)[13]

What is notable about the passage is not that Russell locates the two sentences in different contexts—mathematical and philosophical ("logical," as Russell calls it)—but that he recognizes that there is something wayward about the second. In this respect he sees clearly what his commentators fail to see. Yet, in another respect the passage demonstrates that they remain faithful to him. For Russell, like them, does not allow the peculiarity of sentences such as (3) to dissuade him from treating the attempt to speak about meanings as unproblematic. Despite acknowledging that sentences about meanings are not "perfectly natural," he treats them as if they were. That is, he allows that one can form sentences about meanings just as one would about pens and gravitational fields.

An indication that Russell should have allowed the peculiarity of (3) to give him pause emerges if one asks what reasons there are for thinking it to be true. The answer suggested by Makin's

---

[12]Hylton (1990, 248–52) has essentially the same view. Makin's eventual argument (2000, 28–31, 40, 218) is not that there are no such propositions but that there are no systematic means for arriving at them and that this leaves meanings in theoretical obscurity.

[13]All further references to Russell (1903) will be abbreviated '*PoM*' and incorporated parenthetically within the text. Russell's use of italics in the second mentioned sentence is intended to signal that the expression represents a meaning. In this passage a proposition is a non-linguistic item. In what follows I shall proceed as if Russell were concerned with the sentences that express them. No distortion results from this and it allows for continuity with the discussion so far.

presentation—and one that I think squares with Russell's practice in *Principles* and "On Denoting"—is that it is required to solve a problem. (In what follows I shall refer to such considerations as "dialectical" ones.) Not only is this the only reason that is offered, it is difficult to see what other reason *could be* offered. Surely the methods for establishing analogous claims in ordinary or scientific contexts ("The man in the photograph differs from the man on the witness stand," "The structure of this molecule differs from the structure of that molecule") have no applicability here.

Yet, that understanding of how (3) is established fits poorly with the decision to place it on a par with (1) and (2). A passage from the "Preface" to the *Principles of Mathematics* helps to show just how poorly. Writing of the entities (which would include meanings) discussed in the work Russell says:

> Where, as in the present case, the indefinables [entities] are obtained primarily as the necessary residue in a process of analysis, it is often easier to know that there must be such entities than actually to perceive them; there is a process analogous to that which resulted in the discovery of Neptune, with the difference that the final stage—the search with a mental telescope for the entity which has been inferred—is often the most difficult part of the undertaking. (*PoM*, xv)

The passage exhibits the same tensions as the previous one. Russell recognizes the "dialectical" character of philosophical claims: the philosopher knows that meanings exist because they are required to solve a problem. (There is no other plausible construal of the "process of analysis" to which Russell refers.) Having acknowledged the unique character of philosophical discourse, Russell immediately reverses himself by drawing an analogy between the philosopher's discovery of meanings and the astronomer's discovery of Neptune. In both cases Russell thinks that what is initially known on the basis of an inference— on what I have called "dialectical" grounds—might ultimately

be known on the basis of experience. The analogy, far from showing the sameness of the two cases, shows how unlike they are. For while it makes sense for an astronomer in the 19th century to anticipate the development of a more powerful telescope with which to view distant planets, Russell's talk of "mental telescopes" is obviously mythical, and his hope of finding meanings via their use is plainly idle.

The point can be sharpened by considering Russell's attempt to illustrate what he means by "perceiving" philosophical entities:

> The discussion of indefinables—which forms the chief part of philosophical logic—is the endeavor to see clearly, and to make others see clearly, the entities concerned, in order that ultimately the mind will have that kind of acquaintance with them which it has with redness or the taste of a pineapple. (*PoM*, xv)

To see how chimerical Russell's hope is, consider the case of a person presented with a red disc. Realists, trope theorists and Quinean nominalists all agree that she is acquainted with red. They disagree about whether she is acquainted with a universal, a trope or a red object. To urge the disputants to engage in further mental squinting to resolve the issue is to enjoin them to embark on a project that is secured from futility only by its unintelligibility.[14]

These considerations are adequate, I think, to raise a suspicion that something is amiss with treating sentences about meanings

---

[14]Kremer (1994, 289) regards Russell's talk of "mental telescopes" quite differently: "Has Russell simply shirked this 'most difficult part of the undertaking'? If to explain certain facts we must infer the existence of denoting concepts...must we not simply polish up our mental telescopes and strive to attain acquaintance with that which we have not yet perceived"? Since Kremer thinks the GEA establishes that acquaintance with meanings is impossible, he does not feel obligated to explain what a mental telescope is or how to polish it. His earlier suggestion (1994, 288) that one might attempt to become acquainted with meanings by acquiring greater "logical sophistication" is surely not helpful. Kremer thus finds himself in the same difficulty as Kaplan; see note 8.

as one would treat sentences about planets. Suspicion, however, is not conviction, and the refusal to allow the former to give way to the latter is supported by a powerful argument: Of course sentences of the first type should be understood in the same way as sentences of the second type. After all, how else are they to be understood? The only way to respond to the objection is to provide an answer to the question that expresses it.

3. Ontology and the Ideal-Language Method

In this section I develop two claims. First, the fundamental problems that inform "On Denoting" are ontological ones. Second, the argument of "On Denoting" is governed by the implicit assumption that the appropriate method of ontological analysis is the construction of an "ideal language." A textually grounded defense of either of those claims is outside the scope of this paper.[15] Here I shall support the first by showing how an argument for the existence of meanings emerges quite naturally from an ontological construal of one of the puzzles of "On Denoting." I shall support the second by showing how it allows one to make sense of the attempt to speak about meanings while doing justice to the difference between philosophical and ordinary/scientific discourse.[16] (In what follows the distinction between ordinary

and scientific claims are of no moment. Therefore I shall allow the latter to be absorbed by the former and speak solely of "ordinary discourse," "ordinary claims," and so on.)

Let me begin by stepping back from the GEA to look at the broader context of "On Denoting" as a whole. Russell's purpose there—a purpose which the GEA serves, of course—is to argue for the theory of descriptions. The most salient feature of that theory is the definite description notation. That notation is part of an artificial language into which sentences of ordinary language containing definite descriptions can be transcribed. In carrying out this transcription Russell purports to solve the philosophical puzzles posed by those ordinary language sentences. My contention is that the definite description notation is a fragment of a putative ideal language.

Russell provides his fullest elaboration of the concept of an ideal language in the "Philosophy of Logical Atomism" lectures where he refers to it as a "logically perfect language":

> In a logically perfect language the words in a proposition would correspond one by one with the components of the corresponding fact...In a logically perfect language there will be one word and no more for every simple object and everything that is not simple will be expressed by a combination of words, by a combination derived, of course, from the words for the simple things that enter in, one word for each simple component. A language of that sort will...show at a glance the logical structure of the facts asserted or denied. (Russell 1918, 197–98)[17]

Russell explains the notion of a fact as follows:

> When I speak of a fact...I mean the kind of thing that makes a proposition true or false. If I say 'It is raining', what I say is true in a certain condition of weather and false in other conditions of weather. The condition of weather that makes my statement true

[15]I have provided just such a defense of the first claim in Rosenkrantz (2005) and of the second in Rosenkrantz (2007). The texts that provide the foundation for my explication of the ideal-language method here are used for the same end in Rosenkrantz (2009).

[16]The argument of this section is inspired by, though not taken directly from, the work of Gustav Bergmann. In a series of papers published in the 1950s and 1960s Bergmann sought to respond to the Logical Positivists' contention that philosophical claims were not empirically verifiable and therefore meaningless. He accepted the premise but denied the conclusion, holding, roughly along the lines I present below, that philosophical claims are different in kind from ordinary and scientific ones. This theme runs throughout his writings from this period (collected in Bergmann 1954, 1959, 1964); a good place to begin is with his (1953).

[17]All further references to Russell (1918) will be abbreviated "*PLA*" and incorporated parenthetically within the text. The "simple objects" of this passage are the heirs of the "indefinables" of the "Preface" to the *Principles*.

(or false as the case may be), is what I should call a 'fact'. (*PLA*, 182)

Russell's explanation makes clear that propositions here are linguistic items. Thus, an ideal language is a tool constructed by the ontologist for the purpose of giving an analysis of the truth-makers for sentences of ordinary language. However, Russell's far too casual description of those truth-makers is apt to mislead in suggesting that the truth-maker for 'It is raining' is *the-fact-that-it-is-raining*. That view, far from being an inadequate analysis, is not an analysis at all. Elsewhere Russell does better:

> One purpose that has run through all that I have said, has been the justification of analysis, i.e. the justification of logical atomism, of the view that you can get down in theory, if not in practice, to ultimate simples, out of which the world is built, and those simples have a kind of reality not belonging to anything else. Simples as I have tried to explain, are of an infinite number of sorts. There are particulars and qualities and relations of various orders, a whole hierarchy of different sorts of simples. (*PLA*, 270)

In pursuing the project of analysis, one arrives not at weather conditions but at the sorts of things familiar to us from the philosophical tradition: particulars, qualities, relations and the like. For example, a possible analysis of the truth-maker for 'Socrates is wise' is not *the-fact-that-Socrates-is wise* but a fact consisting of a particular exemplifying a universal. In a work that is roughly contemporaneous with the logical atomism lectures, Russell neatly connects analysis with the construction of an ideal language:

> If we had a complete symbolic language, with a definition for everything definable, and an undefined symbol for everything indefinable, the undefined symbols in this language would represent symbolically what I mean by 'the ultimate furniture of the world'. (Russell 1919, 182)

One question these passages leave unanswered is how the process of analysis is supposed to proceed. To be told only that we are to give an analysis of the truth-makers for the sentences of ordinary language gives no insight into how to begin or when to conclude. The previous section provides the sketch of an answer. The project of analysis is governed by reflection on puzzles concerning the truth-makers for sentences of ordinary language. That sketch fits well with Russell's practice in "On Denoting", which is driven by just such reflection.[18] To fill in the sketch consider a simplified version of the first of the puzzles Russell takes up. It arises in connection with the following sentences:

(4)   King George IV is thinking about the author of *Waverley*.

(5)   King George IV is thinking about the author of *Ivanhoe*.

Assume for the sake of argument that (4) is true and (5) is false. Assume further—as both Frege and Russell do—that thinking, doubting, affirming, and so forth are to be construed relationally. A candidate ideal language that suggests itself for analyzing the truth-makers of (4) and (5) is one containing the following types of signs: s-signs ('s_1', 's_2', 's_3', ...) for selves, R-signs for relations ('R_1', 'R_2', 'R_3', ...) and o-signs for objects ('o_1', 'o_2', 'o_3', ...). Given the resources of such a language here is how the truth-maker for (4) is represented:

(4*) $s_1 R_1 o_1$

The analysis of (5) must reflect that the definite descriptions 'the author of *Waverley*' and 'the author of *Ivanhoe*' apply to the same object. Or, to put the point in the material rather than formal mode, that the author of *Waverley* is the author of *Ivanhoe*. Only the following does so:

---

[18]As Russell (1905, 420) puts it, the theory of descriptions is "tested by its capacity for dealing with puzzles, and it is a wholesome plan, in thinking about logic, to stock the mind with as many puzzles as possible, since these serve much the same purpose as is served by experiments in physical science." All further references to this work will be abbreviated '*OD*' and incorporated parenthetically within the text.

(5*) $s_1 R_1 o_1$

The analysis obviously fails, for it cannot account for the truth of (4) and the falsity of (5).[19]

   Frege's response to this difficulty is to hold that in addition to objects there is another class of entities—entities he dubs '*Sinne*', or 'meanings' in Russell's translation. Meanings serve as the intentions of acts of thinking, wondering, asserting, and so forth.[20] They are represented in a Fregean ideal language by m-signs ('m_1', 'm_2', 'm_3', ...). With the vocabulary of the ideal language thus broadened we can now offer the following analyses of (4) and (5):

(4**) $s_1 R_1 m_1$

(5**) $s_1 R_1 m_2$

Russell acknowledges that introducing meanings into one's ontology provides a solution to the puzzle.[21] More precisely, he acknowledges that *if* it were possible to introduce meanings into one's ontology they would solve the puzzle. In Section 4,

_____

[19]The problem is a more developed version of the one considered in connection with Makin above. The logical issues that Blackburn and Code see as underwriting the positing of meanings (see note 7) fit comfortably within this problem context.

[20]The problem that leads Frege to posit meanings is often described differently: How is it that identity statements of the form '$a = b$' are informative when those of the form '$a = a$' are not? In one sense, this difference is unimportant. On both characterizations Frege's problem is to explain how one can know (wonder, believe...) that $a = b$ and not know (wonder, believe...) that $a = a$. In another sense, the difference is great. Worries about a pedestrian issue such as the information content of a sentence provide a feeble basis for the belief in exotic entities such as meanings. In Rosenkrantz (2016), I try to show that the ontological argument for meanings I have just presented is, in fact, Frege's.

[21]In Russell's more casual phrasing (*OD*, 419): "One advantage of this distinction [between meaning and object] is that it explains why it is often worthwhile to assert identity." He has in mind here the contrast between '$a = a$' statements and '$a = b$' statements; see note 20.

I try to show that the GEA establishes that this condition cannot be satisfied. Before proceeding to that task let me address three issues arising from my use of the ideal-language method to explain Frege's argument for the existence of meanings.

   First, it helps to bring out why the construction of an artificial language is needed for ontological analysis. Many, including Frege himself, argue that puzzles such as the one we have been considering show that outside of intensional contexts definite descriptions stand for objects whereas inside of intensional contexts they stand for meanings. One implication of this is that natural language sentences do not perspicuously represent their truth-makers. For example, compare (4) with:

(6)   King George is to the left of the author of *Waverley*.

The presence of the same definite description in (4) and (6) misleadingly suggests that King George is related to the same entity in both cases. The ideal language has no such tendency. In that sense it allows for a perspicuous representation of the truth-makers for (4) and (6). Therefore, for the purposes of ontological analysis, it is to be preferred to natural language.

   Second, so understood, the ideal language is merely a device for expressing a philosopher's ontological commitments. As such, it is philosophically neutral. That is to say, use of the ideal-language method does not favor one philosophical position over another. This is particularly clear in the case at hand. All one need allow to accept the propriety of interpreting Frege's view through the frame of the ideal-language method is that he must be able to express the results of his proposed analysis and that doing so requires signs for meanings. As the next section makes evident, allowing for those two points is tantamount to embracing the ideal-language method.

   Third, as I promised above, the ideal-language method of ontological analysis allows one to make sense of the attempt to speak about meanings while doing justice to the difference

between ordinary and philosophical discourse. The appropriate entry point into that issue is the relationship between the sentences that are analyzed and the sentences that provide the analysis. In the previous section I argued that interpreters of the GEA have erred in not acknowledging a fundamental difference between the two types of sentences. On their readings the types express different truths about the world. For example, they would read (4) as expressing a truth about the author of *Waverley*—namely that he is being thought of by King George—and (4**) as expressing a truth about the meaning m_1—namely that it stands in the relation R_1 to s_1. Yet, phrasing matters that way helps to bring out that (4) and (4**) do not express two truths, but one. For what fact is described by (4**) other than the fact described by (4)? (4**) is required because it describes that fact perspicuously and in so doing provides a solution to the philosophical problem posed by (4) and (5). That solution does not require the adducing of new facts but the redescription of old ones.

This conception of ontological analysis may seem singularly unpromising as an approach to the GEA. As I have stressed, the ontologist's discovery of meanings is not on a par with the astronomer's discovery of Neptune. In reporting the latter, the astronomer obviously speaks about Neptune. Having discovered the planet, he goes on to arrive at additional facts about it. In expressing these facts the astronomer once again speaks about Neptune. By contrast, on the view I defend, the ontologist's discovery of meanings is merely a more perspicuous description of facts already known. If that is so, then it makes no sense to describe her as uncovering facts about meanings which she then reports by means of statements about them. To see this it is helpful to consider once again Makin's putative statement about a meaning:

(3) m_1 differs from m_2.

The question that must be faced is what purpose is served by expressing it. More pointedly, the question is whether it says anything more than that the facts described by (4) and (5) differ in terms of a constituent. The answer, I believe, is no. Thus, (3) is at best an elliptical way of stating what it stated by (4**) and (5**); and, as I have endeavored to show, those statements are not about meanings. Yet, as I have also claimed, any interpretation of the GEA must allow for such statements.

The ideal-language method provides a ready response to this dilemma. It is best to begin by showing how the method treats claims about meanings as a category rather than claims about specific meanings. Thus, consider the ontologist's claim that meanings exist. It can be recast as one concerning the construction of an ideal language. In this case, that the language must contain signs of a certain type; for example, the *m*-signs introduced above.

The GEA is concerned with the attempt to speak about specific meanings. The ideal-language method can accommodate that concern as well. The ideal language *is* a language. But the solutions offered by means of it are not *merely* linguistic, for the signs of its vocabulary represent entities.[22] Since the signs are

---

[22]Thus the ideal-language method carries with it a doctrine of ontological commitment: to exist is to be the referent of a sign of the ideal-language. Other commentators (Pakaluk 1993, 37–38; Noonan 1996, 70) impute a different conception of ontological commitment to the GEA: to exist is to be the referent of the subject term of a sentence. For example, asserting the sentence 'The teacher of Plato is wise' commits one to the existence of Socrates, but not to the existence of wisdom. Though this interpretation has a basis in Russell's texts, it has little to recommend it philosophically. The existence of Socrates is not sufficient to ground the truth of 'Socrates is wise'. There must be something else—something corresponding to the word 'wise'—and that "something else" must be given ontological status.

Landini (1998, 61–63) does not accept that the doctrine of ontological commitment at work in the GEA contains a linguistic element. Instead he (52–53) attributes to Russell the view that to exist is to occur as the "logical subject" of a proposition or in "entity position" in a proposition (the expressions are Russell's). Landini's interpretation suffers from the same defect as Pakaluk's

part of an artificial language, they must be interpreted; the interpretations being provided by statements such as, ''m_1' stands for . . .'. Those statements may be thought of as statements about specific meanings. In the next section I argue that the GEA is concerned with precisely such statements, and that it demonstrates that none can achieve their purpose. To put matters in Russell's terms, the GEA shows that it is impossible to "speak about" meanings.

4. The Gray's Elegy Argument Reconstructed

In this part I put forward a simplifying reading of the GEA.[23] Though simplifying, it is not simple. It is not simple in that it attempts to engage with the essential textual details of the GEA as well as the large body of literature they have prompted.[24] The sense in which it is simplifying is best explained by briefly summarizing the commentary to follow.

The GEA consists of eight paragraphs (*OD*, 421–23). Adopting the convention introduced by Blackburn and Code (1978a), I label them with the letters 'A' through 'H'. (A)–(C) are introductory. In them Russell presents Frege's view, states what he

will criticize about it, describes his strategy and introduces some notation for pursuing it. The argument proper is confined almost solely to the first half of (D). I say "almost solely" because there is one remark at the end of (F) that is also essential. Apart from those passages, the rest of the GEA—the second half of (D), most of (F) and all of (E), (G) and (H)—is either unnecessary or fundamentally misconceived. My commentary is limited to its philosophically compelling parts.[25]

The core of Russell's argument is contained in the following claims (the commentary will show their connection to the ideal-language method described in Section 3):

(1) Frege holds that a fulfilled definite description is connected to two entities: a meaning and an object.
(2) Meanings cannot be referred to except by definite descriptions.
(3) The only definite descriptions that *appear* to succeed in referring to meanings are those that mention other definite descriptions; specifically, the definite descriptions that are connected to the meaning to which we are attempting to refer.

The central issue in interpreting and assessing the GEA is to show why (2) and (3) pose a problem for Frege.

(A) The relation of the meaning to the denotation involves certain rather curious difficulties, which seem in themselves sufficient

---

and Noonan's; indeed it helps to bring out that defect more sharply. He (52) writes, "the concept 'humanity' . . . does not occur 'as logical subject' in the proposition 'Socrates is human'." That is irrelevant. As Landini tacitly concedes, the concept occurs in the proposition, and thus has ontological status. Russell (*PLA*, 242) makes the point forcefully, "You cannot have a constituent of a proposition which is nothing at all."

[23]It thus contrasts sharply with the recent contributions by Levine (2004) and Salmon (2005).

[24]Simons (2005) offers a reading that is both simplifying and simple, presenting a crisp, clear interpretation of the GEA with a minimum of textual wrangling and an absence of scholarly sparring. As an attempt to rise above the complications I have noted, his approach has much to recommend it. Unfortunately, the very conditions that make a simple reading so inviting also argue against it. One must show that the argument one sees in the text is the argument that is in the text; and this cannot be done without engaging with the interpretive difficulties posed by the GEA and the rival solutions to them.

[25]Those who have offered interpretations of the entirety of the text (Hochberg 1976; Blackburn and Code 1978a; Pakaluk 1993; Kremer 1994; Makin 2000; Levine 2004; Salmon 2005; Urquhart 2005; Stevens 2011) are unanimous in finding all of it to be important to Russell's argument. My departure from their practice thus stands in need of justification. One way to provide it is directly, proceeding line by line, exhibiting the confusions and irrelevancies as they crop up. The gains of such an approach are out of proportion to the labor involved. Thus, here I provide an indirect justification: the sections of the GEA that I take up provide a complete and cogent argument against Frege. It follows that the rest of the GEA is, at best, unnecessary.

to prove that the theory which leads to such difficulties must be wrong.

In (A) Russell identifies the target of the GEA as a theory that distinguishes between a definite description's "meaning" and its "denotation." He also states that the focus of his criticism will be the relation between those two entities. 'Meaning' and 'denotation' are the words Russell uses to translate Frege's '*Sinn*' and '*Bedeutung*'. It follows that the GEA is directed against Frege.

As straightforward as (A) seems to be, it introduces the most fundamental of the contested issues in the interpretation of the GEA. Is it, in fact, an argument against Frege? Geach (1959) is the first to defend a negative answer to that question.[26] He does so in response to Searle's critique of the GEA, the conclusion of which is that "Russell does not succeed in performing a *reductio ad absurdum* of Frege's distinction but only of the conjunction of the distinction and its negation" (Searle 1958, 143). Geach's article is an attempt to explain how Russell could have erred so. His diagnosis is that Russell mistakenly conflates the view he held in *The Principles of Mathematics* with Frege's view in "*Über Sinn und Bedeutung*." Thus, the real target of the GEA is not Frege, but the author of the *Principles*.[27]

Geach's diagnosis has a point, of course, only if there is an error to diagnose. But clearly there is not. Russell's "interpretation" of Frege amounts to nothing more than what he says in (A). To repeat, he ascribes two claims to Frege. First, definite descriptions are connected to two entities. Second, there is a relation between those entities. That Frege makes both claims needs no argument. Further, one does well to remember that there is not much more to Frege's theory than that.[28] Thus, in (A) Russell has discharged the first responsibility of the critic—the accurate portrayal of the view criticized.[29]

If Russell's account of Frege is to be faulted it is not on the grounds of distortion but of excessive fidelity. The terminology from which "*Über Sinn und Bedeutung*" takes its title is misleading as concerns the distinction Frege wishes to make, for a *Sinn* can also be a *Bedeutung*. Or, as the Russell of "On Denoting" would put it, a meaning can be a denotation. A much better way to express Frege's position is to say that he distinguishes

---

[26]Previous interpreters—Jones (1910), Church (1943), Butler (1954) and Searle (1958)—had taken Russell at his word and assumed that the GEA was a criticism of Frege, albeit an unconvincing one.

[27]Geach's interpretation has won widespread adherence. It is embraced by Turnau (1991, 57–58), Kremer (1994, 273, 249), Landini (1998, 43) and Demopolous (1999, 450). Cassin (1971, 271) defends a stronger version of it, denying that Russell even *intends* to argue against Frege. Her view is seconded and elaborated by Pakaluk (1993, 39–40). Hylton (1990, 248–52) does not mention Geach but simply presupposes that the GEA is directed solely against Russell's earlier view and proceeds accordingly. Additional variations are not hard to come by; for example, Jager (1960, 61) finds the target of the GEA to be a "synthesis" of Frege and the *Principles*, while Wahl (1993, 72) thinks that neither Frege nor the *Principles* is at issue but rather a view that "evolved" from the latter. Levine (2004, 283) holds that only paragraphs (G) and (H) of the GEA make contact with Frege.

One additional complication in the literature should be noted. Geach (1959, 72) concludes his paper by urging his readers to "ignore [Russell's] use of Frege's name". In practice, his followers often depart from that injunction. Kremer (274) allows that one who accepts the GEA will reject Frege's theory, but holds that the GEA depends upon a philosophical framework Frege would reject. Demopolous (455–57) develops an extended Fregean reply to the GEA as interpreted by Blackburn and Code. Landini (67–72) also argues that Frege is not vulnerable to the GEA.

[28]Compare Levine (2004) who identifies no fewer than 12 theses relevant to determining the degree to which Russell meets Frege on his own ground.

[29]In light of its importance to subsequent scholarship, it is appropriate to say a few words concerning Geach's charge that Russell wrongly identifies Frege's view with that of the *Principles*. As to whether Russell makes the identification, there is no doubt. In "On Denoting"(415 n 1) he states that the theory defended in the *Principles* is "very nearly the same as Frege's." Turning to the relevant sections of the earlier work (*PoM* §§56, 63–64) we find the theory to consist of two claims. First, definite descriptions are connected to two entities. Second, there is a relation between those entities. Such differences as there are between Russell and Frege have to do with their analyses of expressions *other than* definite descriptions (compare *PoM* §476 with *OD*, 419 n 9) and are thus are irrelevant to the GEA.

between meanings and objects. Had Russell done this I believe he could have made his argument much more clearly; and in developing my interpretation of the GEA I shall often use 'object' where he would use 'denotation'.

There is a another, more significant, terminological failing in "On Denoting." It occurs in Russell's discussion of the "relation" between meaning and object. In describing Frege's view he writes, "In this theory, we shall say of both the phrase and the meaning that they *denote* a denotation" (*OD*, 419 n 10). Russell's choice is objectionable for two reasons. First, using the same word for different relations cannot help but sow confusion. Second, as I have indicated, on the interpretation of the GEA I put forward, Russell aims to collapse the distinction between definite descriptions and meanings to the side of definite descriptions. If that interpretation is persuasive then Russell's use of 'denote' for both the definite description-object relation and the meaning-object relation builds his conclusion into the terminology he uses in arguing for it. In what follows, I shall reserve 'denote' for the relation between meaning and object.

(B) When we wish to speak about the *meaning* of a denoting phrase as opposed to its *denotation*, the natural mode of doing so is by inverted commas. Thus we say:

The centre of mass of the solar system is a point, not a denoting complex;
"The centre of mass of the solar system" is a denoting complex, not a point.

Or again,

The first line of Gray's Elegy states a proposition.
"The first line of Gray's Elegy" does not state a proposition.

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 two instances. (Original emphasis.)[30]

_____

[30]There is a salient difference between the version of "On Denoting" as

In (B) Russell does two things. First he indicates that the GEA will proceed as an attempt to "speak about" meanings. It remains to be seen how he understands that project. Second, he introduces the notational devices he will use in the attempt. Those devices can be discussed straightaway. The best way to do so is by considering a once fashionable piece of fancy according to which Russell overlooks a simple way to speak about meanings, namely by mentioning the definite descriptions that express them. How could Russell have missed such an obvious move? His downfall issues from his decision to use signs surrounded by quotation marks ("inverted commas," as Russell calls them) to stand for meanings. Having done so, he lacks a device to stand for expressions.[31]

_____

published in *Mind* and reprinted in Russell's *Collected Papers* and the one found in the widely used volume of essays, *Logic and Knowledge*. In the latter Russell's double-quotation marks have become single and his single-quotation marks have become double. Fortunately, since the transformation is made consistently, the difference has no interpretive significance either as regards Russell or his commentators, many of whom discuss the version in *Logic and Knowledge*.

[31]The charge originates with Church (1943, 302): "Russell applies quotation-marks to distinguish the sense of an expression from its denotation, but leaves himself without any notation for the expression itself; upon introduction of (say) a second kind of quotation-marks to signalize names of expressions, Russell's objections to Frege completely vanish." Butler (1954, 362) endorses it. Searle (1958, 142) ultimately arrives at the same judgment: "Once Frege's intentions are kept clearly in mind, the puzzles about referring to the sense of an expression dissolve. The sense of any expression can be referred to by such a phrase as 'the sense of the expression 'E'".

Church's criticism of Russell's notation has long since passed out of favor. However, a corollary of it—that the GEA is marred by use/mention confusions—lives on. Though no recent commentators (with the exception of Urquhart 2005, 99, and, to a much lesser degree, Salmon 2005, 1069–70, 1084–85, 1089–92 and Stevens 2011, 82–83) endorse the criticism, it remains an issue many address, usually with an eye towards exonerating Russell. My interpretation of the GEA is, by implication, another contribution to the defense's case. To forestall any confusion, let me make explicit that throughout this paper I mention expressions either by means of single quotes or by displaying them, never by means of double quotes.

The criticism is directly refuted by the text.[32] In the first clause of the final sentence Russell employs the following device to represent expressions:

the denoting phrase C[33]

In the first sentence Russell states that he will uses signs surrounded by quotation marks to represent meanings and signs not surrounded by quotation marks to represent objects. His notational stipulations are summarized in the following table:

Sign	Represents
the denoting phrase C	A denoting phrase (a definite description)
C	An object
"C"	A meaning

The signs Russell has introduced are in fact variable expressions.[34] The following table illustrates how one would replace the variables given the denoting phrase 'the author of *Waverley*':

Sign	Represents
the denoting phrase the author of *Waverley*	A denoting phrase (a definite description)
the author of *Waverley*	An object
"the author of *Waverley*"	A meaning

In fashioning these notational devices Russell proceeds precisely as one would expect of someone who had adopted the ideal-language method, which requires both a means for mentioning the expressions of ordinary language to be analyzed and signs to represent the entities providing the analysis.

As stipulations, Russell's notational devices can be neither argued for nor against.[35] This is not to say, however, that they are beyond criticism. Indeed there is no shortage of commentators who have found the notation less than transparent.[36] Their com-

---

[32]The first commentator to set matters aright as regards Russell's notation is Hochberg (1976) and my discussion follows his.

[33]Levine (2004, 251 n 1, 269), following Turnau (1991, 53, 66), argues that here Russell is adopting his common practice of using words that customarily designate linguistic items ('term', 'verb', etc.) for their non-linguistic correlates. Thus, the sign 'the denoting phrase C' does not represent a sign but a meaning. This requires reading the first line of (B) as follows, "When we wish to speak about the meaning of a meaning as opposed to its denotation, ..." According to Levine (268ff.), then, Russell asks us to consider a meaning (indicated by the second occurrence of 'meaning') that denotes an object and is itself denoted by another meaning (indicated by the first occurrence of 'meaning'). The interpretation is needlessly elaborate. Russell plainly needs a method for referring to definite descriptions and, given that he has other purposes in mind for quotation marks, using 'denoting phrase' serves rather well. Further, the interpretation does not fit with the example in (B) which shows that Russell's concern is with the relation between a meaning and an object, not between two meanings. Levine (268; quoting Russell 1904, 59) is lead to this forced reading by his unduly stringent understanding of Russell's remark that "Logic is not concerned with words but what they stand for." One can accept, as I do, the thrust of that statement without taking it to entail a blanket prohibition on talking about language. Levine (269–70) tacitly concedes this point when he notes that Russell, in presenting his positive view in "On Denoting", uses 'denoting phrase' to talk about linguistic items.

[34]In interpreting the GEA it is sometimes advisable to treat the variables as if they were signs. At other points it is necessary to acknowledge their status as variables. In context, no confusion should result from this practice.

[35]Salmon (2005, 1086) thinks differently: "Russell introduces a use of inverted commas as indirect-quotation marks, a use he thinks is natural on the [view he opposes]. Not being a subscriber himself Russell is not abandoning the alternative use of inverted commas as direct quotation. (Indeed just three paragraphs after the 'Gray's Elegy' argument he affirms his allegiance to the direct quotation use)." Searle (1958, 138) considers objecting to Russell's use of inverted commas on the grounds that it does not comport with their use in ordinary speech before recognizing Russell's conventions for what they are—stipulations. Pakaluk's (1993, 42–43) interpretation is the converse of Searle's. He begins by noting that Russell's notation is purely conventional and then proceeds to impute to Russell an argument that C-signs and "C"-signs stand for different types of entities.

[36]As is shown by the frequency with they propose a notation different from Russell's. Examples include Searle (1958), Hochberg (1976), Pakaluk (1993), Kremer (1994), Makin (2000), Levine (2004, 265), who adopts Makin's notation, Salmon (2005) and Stevens (2011, 75–92).

plaint is certainly warranted; however, I locate the source of the obscurity differently than do most of them. Russell's mistake is to allow the same ink-mark to figure in each sign: once preceded by the expression 'the denoting phrase', once surrounded by quotation marks and once on its own.[37] Though Russell's choice does not create an outright ambiguity, in practice it makes it more difficult than it need be to determine whether the sign he uses is intended to stand for an expression, a meaning or an object.

There is a more important difficulty with Russell's notation. As I shall attempt to show, the central charge of the GEA is that it is impossible to speak about a meaning without mentioning the definite description that expresses it. This conclusion is foreshadowed in Russell's assertion that . . .

> . . . when we wish to speak about the meaning of a denoting phrase as opposed to its denotation, the natural mode of doing so is by inverted commas.

Russell's quotation marks are merely notational conventions indicating that the signs of which they are a part stand for meanings. Therefore they are neither more nor less natural than any other notational conventions one might devise. What is natural (and, as Russell will argue, philosophically problematic) is to speak about meanings by mentioning expressions, the latter being held to express the former.[38] A "C"-sign of Russell's notation conforms to this natural practice, not by using quotation marks, but by tacitly mentioning an expression of ordinary language

and implicitly stating that it expresses the meaning in question. Russell's practice is undesirable because it obscures both the power and significance of his argument by incorporating its conclusion in the notation designed for presenting it.[39]

One might object that my discussion of Russell's notation ignores an important feature of it, one that calls into question whether he is, in fact, adopting the ideal-language method. As the tables above show, the signs Russell uses to represent objects are ordinary definite descriptions. Those signs cannot then be part of the vocabulary of an ideal language, which, as I have pointed out, is an *artificial* language.

The objection gives an incomplete description of Russell's practice. Though it is obvious that Russell uses ordinary definite descriptions to represent objects, it is just as obvious that he constructs signs which he then stipulates are intended to represent meanings. In other words, he adopts a central feature of the ideal-language method. The question is which aspect of Russell's practice should determine how we read the GEA as a whole. Given that the GEA is concerned with meanings, Russell's handling of the signs designed to represent them deserves precedence. Moreover, given that Russell takes for granted that there is no difficulty in "speaking about" objects, it is not surprising that he does not bother to introduce a type of sign to represent them but instead grafts a fragment of natural language onto the ideal language he is in the process of constructing. Russell's procedure is not advisable—and in a moment I shall show how one can improve upon it—but it is understandable given that in "On Denoting" he is not simply using the ideal-language method but creating it.[40] In this instance Russell the inventor has gotten the better of Russell the craftsman.

---

[37]With the exception of Hochberg (1976), none of the commentators cited in note 36 correct this mistake, presumably because they do not find it to be a mistake.

[38]Church's and Searle's confidence (see note 31) that doing so provides an easy and obvious way around the GEA is eloquent testimony to this feeling of "naturalness." A more important confirming instance is Frege (1892, 59): "In order to speak of the *Sinn* of an expression '*A*' one may simply use the phrase 'the *Sinn* of the expression '*A*'." Russell avails himself of the same technique in *PoM* §56.

[39]Kremer (1994, 278) is aware of this difficulty, but the notation he introduces in place of Russell's suffers from the very same defect (see 279ff.).

[40]Bergmann (1953, 33, 48) credits Russell and Wittgenstein with originating the ideal-language method.

In order to remove the difficulties I have described, in interpreting the GEA I shall replace Russell's notation with what I think is a more perspicuous one: the language of *m*-signs and *o*-signs introduced earlier. In what follows I shall call this the "perspicuous notation," as contrasted with "Russell's notation." It bears emphasizing that both are fragments of an ideal language; the sole difference is the relative clarity of the former. Using the perspicuous notation to express the results of the interpretation of the GEA so far, (A) and (B) can be rewritten as follows:

Frege's ontology includes meanings and objects. He also holds—at least in the cases that shall concern us here—that a meaning denotes an object. The denoting relation involves certain rather curious difficulties, which seem in themselves sufficient to prove that Frege's theory must be wrong. To show this, I shall consider a putative case of a meaning and the object it denotes, say, m_7 and o_5.

There is one remaining textual detail to attend to in (B). I quote the passage, italicizing the crucial phrases (original emphasis omitted):

When we wish to speak about the meaning of a denoting phrase as opposed to its denotation, the natural mode of doing so is by inverted commas. Thus we say:

The centre of mass of the solar system is a point, not a *denoting complex*;
"The centre of mass of the solar system" is a *denoting complex*, not a point.

Russell's use of the phrase 'denoting complex' prompts two questions. The most obvious is what he means by it.[41] The example in which it occurs—one where Russell distinguishes between

an object (in this instance a region in space) and "something else"—allows for only one answer: 'denoting complex' is a synonym for 'meaning'.[42] This answer leads to another question—what reason is there for the shift in terminology? My short answer is that there is no *good* reason for what Russell does. 'Meaning' is a technical term. To introduce a synonym for it—and still worse, to do so without acknowledgment—breeds confusion, and nothing else. Though Russell's use of 'denoting complex' cannot be justified, it can be explained. Elsewhere in "On Denoting" he uses 'denoting complex' to designate a linguistic item:

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*. (*OD*, 484 n 9; original emphasis)

Thus, in (B) 'denoting complex' is compromised by Russell's (bad) habit of using the same word to designate both linguistic and non-linguistic items.

(C1) We say, to begin with, that when C occurs it is the *denotation* that we are speaking about; but when "C" occurs, it is the *meaning*. Now the relation of meaning and denotation is not merely linguistic through the phrase: there must be a logical relation which

---

[41]There is a small but significant body of literature that concerns itself exclusively with this issue. Jager (1960) argues that a denoting complex is an entity that is neither a meaning nor a denotation, but rather a "something" that denotes a meaning. He (61–62) uses this interpretation to support the

view that Frege is not the target of the GEA; see note 27. Basu (1983, 67) takes a denoting complex to be "an expression with a putative meaning and a denotation", a position he (68) explains as follows: "A denoting phrase can be a denoting complex, but not all denoting phrases are denoting complexes. 'The president of India in 1981' is a denoting complex but not 'The Maharaja of India in 1981'." He says nothing about the philosophical importance of denoting complexes so understood. Dau (1985, 196) holds that a denoting complex is a complex meaning but does not explain how the complexity of meanings figures in the GEA, thus depriving his reading of any interpretive significance.

[42]None of the interpretations referred to in note 41 fit with this obvious textual point.

we express by saying that the meaning denotes the denotation. (Original emphasis)

The meaning of 'occurs' in the first sentence is obscure. Placing (C1) in the context of the GEA as a whole makes clear that it is short hand for "occurs in a proposition." Whether that proposition is a linguistic or non-linguistic item is of no importance. In either case it suggests Russell is pursuing the misconceived task of speaking about meanings as one would speak about authors and planets. I do not deny that Russell has such a task in mind. However, as I hope to bring out in the interpretation to follow, it has nothing to do with the argument he develops. No matter how Russell understands his task, he proceeds on the assumption that a necessary condition for accomplishing it is to find a sign that succeeds in representing a meaning. Working through the details of the GEA shows that the only point Russell attempts to establish is that this necessary condition cannot be satisfied. In other words, the occurrence of signs for meanings in linguistic propositions (or the occurrence of the entities they represent in non-linguistic propositions) simply drops out of consideration. Thus, the first sentence of (C1) may simply be read as a restatement of the notation introduced in (B).

The second sentence picks up on what Russell says in (A):

The relation between meaning and denotation involves certain rather peculiar difficulties, which seem in themselves sufficient to prove that the theory which leads to such difficulties is wrong.

Russell now specifies what he takes one of those "peculiar difficulties" to be: on Frege's view the relation between meaning and object threatens to be "merely linguistic through the phrase." It is by now well understood that Russell's remark is an injunction against mentioning a definite description in order to speak about the meaning it expresses. Doing so, Russell claims, makes the relationship between meaning and object "linguistic through the phrase."[43] What has been less well explained, I think, is why mentioning an expression has such a consequence. To see the difficulty more clearly let us suppose—what Russell will shortly deny—that we have a label for a meaning—'m_7', say. Suppose we now ask what meaning it is. Suppose further that the answer is that it is the meaning expressed by 'the author of *Waverley*'. Does it follow thereby that the denoting relation between m_7 and Sir Walter Scott is "merely linguistic through the phrase"?

In the absence of an argument that the way we are forced to talk about entities has any bearing on their nature, the answer is no.[44] In my commentary on (D3), I shall try to supply Russell

---

[43]Early commentators on the GEA were blind to this issue; thus the unwarranted confidence of Church and Searle that the difficulties Russell raises for speaking about meanings are easily met; see note 31. The first to bring out the force of (C1) was Hochberg (1976, 63–64). Many others have arrived at similar interpretations: Blackburn and Code (1978a, 71–72), Pakaluk (1993, 44–45), Kremer (1994, 280–83), Noonan (1996, 93, 95), and Demopolous (1999, 449).
  Dissenters remain, of course. As mentioned (note 33) Levine and Turnau take Russell's conviction that "logic" has nothing to do with words to preclude him from even considering the possibility of referring to senses by mentioning definite descriptions. Makin (2000, 37) sees the same absence in the GEA, but locates its philosophical motivations elsewhere: "when an expression containing mention quotes is being used . . . what is spoken of are shapes or sounds. Semantic properties do not enter into it. Bearing this in mind we no longer have—in any relevant sense an occurrence of [the sign to which we intend to refer via the use of mention quotes]." Put more tersely, Makin's point is that we need to refer to a *sign* (i.e., an ink-mark with a meaning), but mention yields a mere ink-mark. Unfortunately, he does not explain why anything more than an ink-mark is required in this instance; that Russell and his commentators speak of signs (or phrases) rather than ink-marks is merely terminological. Makin's (128) later discussion seems to indicate that he construes the difficulty as others do: referring to a meaning by mentioning a sign makes the relationship between meaning and object "linguistic through the phrase."
[44]For example, Noonan (1996, 95) construes Russell as simply asserting that because meanings are non-linguistic entities, they must be identifiable independently of language. Levine (2004, 290 n 90), reasonably enough, thinks it a sufficient reply to point out that Frege's practice (see note 38) violates Russell's stricture.

with just such an argument, albeit one that applies only in the context of interpreting signs of an ideal language.

> (C2) 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 . . .

The difficulty Russell points to is a continuation of his concern in (C1) with the denoting relation ("the connexion of meaning and denotation"). Whereas (C1) suggests that the relation is linguistic, (C2) holds out the possibility that there is, in fact, a "logical" relation between meaning and object. That possibility provides no comfort to Frege, however. The logical relation that Russell allows might hold between meaning and object is that of identity. To make such a concession, however, is not to support Frege but to deny the distinction he seeks to draw. Thus, in (C1) and (C2) Russell indicates that the point of the GEA is to confront Frege with two possibilities concerning the denoting relation: either it is "linguistic through the phrase" or it is the identity relation. The first leaves Frege with a fundamentally flawed theory, the second with no theory at all.

(C1) and (C2) issue a promissory note, one that is to be fulfilled by the remainder of the GEA. Therefore it may seem premature to attempt an assessment of either at this point. Reasonable though such circumspection appears to be, in fact in (C2) Russell makes an error that is sufficiently egregious and obvious that it must be corrected immediately. The GEA is developed from within the framework of Frege's theory. Within that theory, *by definition* a meaning cannot be identical to an object. The objection holds even if one insists on sticking with Russell's terminology of meaning and denotation. Though a meaning can be a denotation, it cannot denote itself. Thus it is impossible for meaning and denotation to be "one and the same." In (C2), then, Russell states that he will establish something that we know in advance cannot be established.

The difficulty, though real, does not undermine the GEA. As I shall bring out in what follows, its force does not depend upon the possibility that meaning and object might turn out to be "one and the same." Indeed, in the part of the GEA under consideration in this paper, Russell does not even attempt to show such a thing. (C2), then, may be safely ignored.[45]

> (C3) . . . also that the meaning cannot be got at except by means of denoting phrases. This happens as follows.

Excising (C2) from the GEA, we move directly from Russell's charge that the relation of meaning and object is "merely linguistic through the phrase" to his claim that meanings can be spoken about ("got at") only by means of denoting phrases. The interpretive challenge is to make clear how the claim supports the charge. The first step in addressing that challenge is to bring to the fore the issue of "acquaintance." I begin by presenting my interpretation of its role in the GEA. Having done so, I criticize the rather different account that has figured prominently in the recent literature.[46]

Keeping in mind that the GEA is concerned with the attempt to speak about *specific* meanings, the denoting phrases Russell has in mind in (C3) must be definite descriptions. The operative contrast then is with names. Russell's claim is that meanings cannot be named, but can be referred to only by definite descriptions.[47] His claim, however, should not be misconstrued. Two

---

[45]Or rather, it may be provided it is taken literally. Below (note 71) I propose that in (C2) Russell is merely referring in a loose and clumsy way to the difficulty the GEA poses for Frege.

[46]The most significant contributions are Kremer (1994), Demopolous (1999) and Levine (2004). Acquaintance is an important theme in Hylton (1990), and though he does not think it plays a role in the GEA (245–48), his work is foundational for those who do. Noonan (1996, 79–82) also addresses the issue of acquaintance, but ultimately it is not central to his interpretation of the GEA. Wahl (2007, 17–23) offers a critique of Kremer and Noonan.

[47]Pakaluk (1993, 48), Kremer (1994, 289) and Noonan (1996, 79) read (C3) in this way. Blackburn and Code (1978a, 72) take it to prohibit mentioning denoting phrases. Though Russell does issue such a prohibition, he does not do so in (C3), which states that it is only by *using* denoting phrases that it is possible to refer to meanings. Later Blackburn and Code (76) acknowledge

points in particular will be important in what follows. First, the distinction between names and definite descriptions includes, but is not limited to, the distinction between *proper names* and definite descriptions. To be sure, 'Socrates' and 'the teacher of Plato' are an instance of the distinction. So too, however, are 'red' and 'the color with the greatest wavelength'.[48] The common feature all names share is that the connection between them and their extra-linguistic correlates is solely a matter of convention.[49] This means that they are mere labels for what they name. It is the labeling function of names that is crucial to understanding (C3).

Second, Russell is not making the bare assertion that meanings cannot be named. Obviously not, for the "C"-signs introduced in (B) are names for meanings. More precisely, they are *intended* to be names for meanings. They are introduced first as ink-marks. They become names upon being coordinated with meanings. (C3), I shall argue, is concerned with the way in which "C"-signs are interpreted. Russell's position is that they cannot be attached as mere labels to meanings, rather they require the mediation of definite descriptions.

The distinction between names and definite descriptions pairs off with the distinction between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description. "On Denoting" begins and ends with an invocation of both distinctions. In the second paragraph Russell writes:

> We know that the centre of mass of the solar system at a definite instant is some definite point, and we can affirm a number or propositions about it; but we have no immediate acquaintance with

this point, which is known only by description. The distinction between *acquaintance* and *knowledge about* [knowledge by description] is the distinction between the things we have presentations of, and the things we reach only by denoting phrases . . . to take a very important instance: there seems no reason to believe that we are ever acquainted with other people's minds, seeing that these are not directly perceived. (*OD*, 415; original emphasis)[50]

The passage makes the linguistic aspect of knowledge by description explicit. In words that echo (C3), Russell says that we have knowledge by description of those things "we reach only by denoting phrases." As with (C3), Russell's use of the word 'only' immediately raises the question of what other signs might be used. Again, the answer is names. Thus, Russell's point is that we cannot name that with which we are not acquainted. To put the same point positively, we can name only that with which we are acquainted. At the end of "On Denoting" Russell comes close to expressing the negative version explicitly. Speaking again of our knowledge of other minds, he writes:

> What we know is "So-and-so has a mind which has such and such properties" but we do not know "A has such and such properties," where A *is* the mind in question. (*OD*, 427; original emphasis)

Russell's refusal to use genuine English sentences makes his point more difficult to grasp than it need be. The contrast is between, say, (i) 'The first Chancellor of the German empire has a toothache' and (ii) 'Bismarck has a toothache'. Russell holds that Disraeli can know (i) but, strictly speaking, cannot know (ii). He cannot know (ii) because he is not acquainted with the "mind" or "self" putatively designated by 'Bismarck'. There is, of course, nothing problematic in Disraeli's giving voice to (ii), but when he does so, 'Bismarck' does not function as a name but as an abbreviation for a definite description. Matters are rather

---

that Russell holds this view. Makin (2000, 221–22) denies that the passage invokes the distinction between names and descriptions on the grounds that the distinction is irrelevant to the GEA. He does not propose an alternative way of reading (C3), and thus his objection is best met by showing the relevance he deems to be absent.

[48]The example is Russell's (*PLA*, 194–95).

[49]As Russell points out (*PLA*, 244–45).

[50]I have elided a significant portion of the passage. I turn to it below, after the groundwork required for understanding it has been properly laid.

different, however, in the case where (ii) is uttered by Bismarck himself:

> Suppose some statement made about Bismarck. Assuming that there is such a thing as direct acquaintance with oneself, Bismarck himself might have used his name directly to designate the particular person with whom he was acquainted . . . Here the proper name has the direct use which it always wishes to have, as simply standing for an object, and not for a description of the object. (Russell 1910–11, 206–07; see also *PLA*, 200–01)

The passage brings out that for Russell one can name (label) only that with which one is acquainted. (When a name functions as a label it "has the direct use which it always wishes to have.") In cases where there is no acquaintance, names can still be used, provided they are coordinated to what they name by means of definite descriptions.

Though Russell's examples are drawn from ordinary language, his point applies to an ideal language as well. The signs of an ideal language can be directly coordinated only with entities with which one is acquainted. For example, consider a class of signs ('V_1', 'V_2', 'V_3', . . .) introduced to stand for visual properties (red, blue, green, . . .). The signs can be interpreted by means, say, of an act of ostension. Now consider the "C"-signs of Russell's notation. They must be coordinated with meanings. Meanings, however, are Platonic entities, not located in space or time. As such, they are plainly not entities with which one is acquainted. Thus, they cannot be named as visual properties can. The only alternative is to employ definite descriptions to tie the "C"-signs to meanings. In short, meanings can "be got at only by means of denoting phrases."

The argument of the foregoing depends upon taking 'acquaintance' to be synonymous with 'experience' (seeing, hearing, and the like). However, many commentators on the GEA do not take it that way. For example, Demopolous, in a remark that is both representative and striking, asserts that "a denoting con-

cept [meaning] is an object of acquaintance *par excellence*" (1999, 445).[51] Yet, as Russell states, denoting concepts [meanings], "[do] not walk the streets, but liv[e] in the shadowy limbo of the logic books" (*PoM*, §56).[52] Clearly they are not entities one experiences. Nor do Demopolous and others contend that they are. Rather, they use 'acquaintance' with a different meaning. Hylton's explanation of that meaning is also both representative and striking: "There is little more to be said about acquaintance than that it is an immediate relation between a mind and an object" (1990, 111).[53] What is most striking about Hylton's explanation is its opacity. An attempt at clarification would require detailed consideration of what he and others have said about acquaintance as well as an engagement with a diverse array of Russellian texts. Such a project obviously cannot be undertaken here. Fortunately there is no need to do so, as the text of "On Denoting" provides resources that are sufficient to adjudicate between the rival conceptions of acquaintance.

Let me begin by taking stock of the "things" with which Russell says we are not acquainted. We have already encountered two: the center of mass of the solar system and "other minds." To that list must be added a third item: "matter (in the sense in

---

[51] Hylton (1990, 246–48), Kremer (1994, 288–90), Noonan (1996, 77–78) and Levine (2004, 254–58) also take it to be obvious that the Russell of the *Principles* regards meanings as objects of acquaintance. Kremer (1994, 288–90) thinks the GEA shows that meanings are not objects of acquaintance. Noonan (1996, 79–82) holds that an argument much like the one Kremer presents is available to Russell but that Russell never states it. So far as the interpretive issues here are concerned those complications are unimportant, for Noonan and Kremer impute to Russell the view that denoting concepts ought to be objects of acquaintance and that whether they are is a matter to be settled by argument rather than by inspection of what is given in experience; I criticize their interpretation below; see notes 55 and 60.

[52] The full passage (*PoM*, §56), with Russell's pointed contrast between denoting concepts and the man in the street "with a tailor and a bank-account or a public house and a drunken wife," is worth considering in this context.

[53] Hylton's view is seconded by Kremer (1994, 250), Noonan (1996, 97) and Levine (2004, 254 n 6). Demopolous uses 'acquaintance' without explanation.

which matter occurs in physics)" (*OD*, 427). What yokes these examples together is clear: They are not "things" that one sees, hears, smells, tastes or touches. In short, they are not "things" one experiences.[54] This inventory fits ill with the notion of acquaintance according to which it is simply a relation between a mind and an object. Most importantly, there is nothing in that notion that places any constraints on what the object might be. Thus, Russell's reasons for holding that we are not acquainted with the center of mass of the solar system, "other minds" and the matter of physics are mysterious.[55]

There is, however, a sentence in the second paragraph of "On Denoting"—one which I elided in quoting the paragraph earlier—that appears to provide support for the rival interpretation of acquaintance. Russell states:

> In perception we have acquaintance with the objects of perception, and *in thought we have acquaintance with objects of a more abstract logical character*; but we do not necessarily have acquaintance with the objects denoted by phrases composed of words with whose meanings we are acquainted. (*OD*, 415; emphasis added)[56]

The italicized remark indicates that Russell means by 'acquaintance' something more than ordinary sense experience. How-ever, it does not follow that acquaintance is simply an "immediate relation between a mind and an object" about which "nothing more can be said." First, there remains the problem of explaining why, for example, the mind cannot enter into an "immediate relation" with the center of mass of the solar system. If anything, Russell's talk of "acquaintance in thought" makes the problem even more pressing, for surely we have thoughts about that region of space. Second, the passage makes evident that 'acquaintance' does not—contrary to what Hylton and others believe—designate a *specific* relation, but rather a class of relations. The class includes under the heading of 'perception' relations such as "seeing" and "hearing." Apparently it also includes another group of relations as well. Let us call them "thought-relations." Russell's phrasing suggests a parallel with perception. Just as there are perception-relations such as "seeing" and "hearing", there are thought-relations such as "doubting" and "believing." That suggestion, however must be resisted. The reason is by now familiar. There is simply no reason to deny that we have, say, beliefs about the center of mass of solar system and thus are acquainted with it. Some other understanding of what Russell means by "acquaintance-in-thought" is necessary.

Russell's assertion that though we need not be acquainted with the entities denoted by definite descriptions, we must be acquainted with the denotations of the signs that compose those descriptions provides the basis for such an understanding. The assertion obviously extends more widely than definite descriptions. Russell's point is that all the "simple signs" of a language refer to entities of acquaintance.[57] Assume now that Russell is thinking not of a natural language, but a language containing his definite description notation.[58] That notation includes quan-

---

[54]It is arguably the case that the center of mass of the solar system differs from the others in being a possible object of experience. That is unimportant; Russell is simply interested in distinguishing cases where we have experience of something and cases where we do not.

[55]As Kremer and Noonan read him (see note 51) Russell does have reasons in the case of meanings: He begins with the assumption that if one is acquainted with something, then she can name it. He then argues that meanings cannot be named, and thus infers that they are not objects of acquaintance. The interpretation runs aground if it is applied to the items just mentioned. Consider, for example, the center of mass of the solar system. The only reason for holding that it cannot be named is that we do not experience it. Thus, experience determines the limits of acquaintance. Since marking out those limits is what is crucial to determining the proper interpretation of the role of acquaintance in the GEA, this is just to say that acquaintance is identical to experience.

[56]I hasten to add that in this passage Russell is *not* using 'meaning' to translate Frege's '*Sinn*'. A positive characterization follows shortly; see note 57.

[57]Thus, in the passage quoted above 'meaning' means the referent of a "simple sign."

[58]On my view that language is an ideal language. The argument I develop here does not depend on accepting that claim.

tifiers, variables and the identity sign. Plainly one does not sense the correlates of those signs. Faced with this dilemma, Russell countenances a broader notion of experience, one that includes sense-experience and experience of another sort.[59]

This explanation of "acquaintance" appears, however, to lead directly to an objection to the GEA as I have interpreted it. If Russell is prepared to allow for acquaintance with, if I may speak loosely, quantifiers, variables and identity, then he has no principled basis for denying that there is acquaintance with meanings. On its own terms, the objection is cogent. It is not, however, sufficient to undermine my interpretation of the GEA. That would follow only if it could be shown that the GEA makes use of this broad notion of acquaintance. There is no reason to think that it does. Moreover, there is one very important reason to think that it does not: there is simply no way to make sense of Russell's claim that meanings "cannot be got at except by denoting phrases" except as asserting that they are not objects of sense-experience. Unless acquaintance is construed as sense-

experience, Russell's claim is arbitrary.[60] Thus the objection can be turned against itself: it is *because* Russell denies that we are acquainted with meanings that the notion of acquaintance in play in the GEA must be the one that limits it to sense-experience.

It is important to stress that in (C3) Russell is not adopting the view that the only existents are those with which one is or could be acquainted. In short, he is not presupposing empiricism. He thus cannot be charged with begging the question against Frege, who would reject such a presupposition. (C3) allows for the possibility that there exist entities with which we are not acquainted. It implies that the only way to coordinate signs with them is by means of definite descriptions. That implication is born out in (D).

> (D1) The one phrase C was to have both a meaning and a denotation. But if we speak of "the meaning of C", that gives us the meaning (if any) of the denotation.

Properly glossed, (D1) is the heart of the GEA. Russell begins by restating Frege's position: "The one phrase C was to have both meaning and denotation." In doing so he uses the notation introduced in (B) for mentioning expressions. He does not,

---

[59]This interpretation finds support in the correspondence between Russell and Moore following the publication of "On Denoting" (quoted in the introduction to Russell 1994, xxxv). Moore writes:

> I was very interested in your article in 'Mind', and ended by accepting your main conclusions (if I understand them) though at first I was strongly opposed to one of them. What I should chiefly like explained is this. You say 'all the constituents of a proposition we apprehend are entities with which we have immediate acquaintance'. Have we, then, immediate acquaintance with the variable? and what sort of entity is it?

Russell replies:

> I am glad you agreed to my main contention in the article on Denoting. I admit that that the question you raise about the variable is puzzling, as are all questions about it. The view I usually incline to is that we have immediate acquaintance with the variable, but it is not an entity. Then at other times I think it is an entity, but an indeterminate one.

Russell's reply is cryptic, but there is every reason to think he is claiming to be acquainted with the variable and no reason to think he is claiming to sense it.

[60]Consider the argument Kremer finds for it: He begins with a view that is ubiquitous in the literature, but which I have not mentioned to this point: a proposition containing a meaning as a constituent is about the denotation of the meaning, not the meaning itself. Thus, if we are to have a proposition about meaning—as Kremer takes the GEA to assume—it must contain a meaning that denotes a meaning. He then (1994, 284) unpacks the significance of the point as follows:

> *{the teacher of Plato} is a concept* is [a proposition] about [the meaning] {the teacher of Plato} without containing it as a constituent. This can happen only if '{the teacher of Plato}' is a denoting phrase, which denotes, but does not mean, {the teacher of Plato}. As Russell had promised in (C), the meaning cannot be got at except by using denoting phrases.

However, Russell's conclusion does not follow unless it has been shown that we are unable to name meanings that denote meanings. Kremer provides no argument for that view, and thus his considerations restate but do not support what Russell says in (C3).

however, avail himself of the other notational stipulations intro-duced there. Had he done so he would have written:

> The one phrase C was to have both meaning and denotation: "C" and C.

Understanding how Russell would have continued makes clear why he did not. As I stated in discussing (C3), the "C"-sign is not yet a sign at all; it is a mere ink-mark. For it to become a sign it must be interpreted. That is, it must be correlated with a specific meaning. In the second sentence of (D1) Russell considers an attempt to do just that. He introduces the following expression:

<p align="center">"the meaning of C"</p>

The expression is a hybrid. The quotation marks indicate that it is a sign for a meaning. In this respect it is simply another sign formed according to the notational conventions introduced in (B). However, it is different in that the quotation marks surround a definite description; crucially, a definite description that is not the one with which we began (the difference is created by the use of the expression 'the meaning of'). The purpose of this new definite description is to indicate the specific meaning we are talking about. In other words, it is designed to give an interpretation of the "C"-sign that Russell implicitly has in mind. In what follows I shall call definite descriptions of this sort "interpretive descriptions."

Russell's point can be made more clearly if we rewrite (D1) in two respects. First, by beginning with a genuine definite description. Second, by using the perspicuous notation rather than Russell's. Revised in that way (D1) reads as follows:

> The definite description 'the centre of mass of the solar system' has both a meaning and a denotation: m_8 and o_6. The sign 'm_8' must now be interpreted. Suppose we use the following definite description for that purpose: 'the meaning of the centre of mass of the solar system'. That gives us the meaning (if any) of the

denotation of the definite description 'the centre of mass of the solar system'. In other words it gives us the meaning of o_6. Of course, in this case there is no such meaning. The proposed interpretive description has failed.

Liberated from Russell's cumbersome mode of presentation, the point of (D1) is easy enough to grasp. What is rather more diffi-cult to understand is what Russell thinks is achieved by making it. The difficulty stems from the obvious futility of the sort of interpretive description he considers. Objects are not the sort of things that can "have" meanings, and it thus seems perverse to consider interpretive descriptions suggesting that they do.

A first step in resolving the puzzle is to take note of a minor blemish on the hybrid sign Russell introduces:

<p align="center">"the meaning of C"</p>

Recall that the quotation marks signal that the sign represents a meaning. Strictly speaking, then, the word 'meaning' is re-dundant. Nevertheless I believe it can be shown to serve a purpose. That there is a purpose to be served is hard to discern because Russell does not explain why he considers the inter-pretive description that he does. We are thus led to focus on its failure while neglecting the principles that govern its construc-tion. Nevertheless, once those principles are made explicit we are in a position to supply the GEA with the systematic approach to the task of speaking about meanings that some have held to be absent.[61] The details of that approach are best presented after an examination of the "Gray's Elegy" example Russell uses to illustrate it. Here I attempt to lay out only the basic strategy informing Russell's argument.

Russell's hybrid sign contains an interpretive description con-sisting of two parts: the expression 'the meaning of' and a variable (what I shall call the "C-variable"). It is thus more

---

[61]Noonan (1996, 96) faults the GEA for not showing that all the possible ways of speaking about meanings have been considered.

properly described as an "interpretive description frame," one which yields an interpretive description when the C-variable is replaced. Much of the obscurity of (D1) derives from the clash between the two parts of the frame. On its most natural reading, the expression 'meaning of' ought to be conjoined with a sign that represents a sign. Thus, the interpretive description frame it seems Russell ought to have used is:

> "the meaning of the one phrase C"

Completing the frame yields an interpretive description such as the following:

> the meaning of the one phrase the centre of mass of the solar system

As we shall see, Russell considers precisely such interpretive descriptions in (D3). His failure to do so here is therefore neither an oversight nor an expression of philosophical principle.[62] It follows that Russell is considering with all seriousness an interpretive description whose failure is built into its very design.

There is a defensible core to Russell's line of thought, but extracting it requires acknowledging and correcting a flaw in his presentation: in (D1) the expression 'the meaning of' simply does not fit with the C-variable.[63] To correct the flaw we must identify the strategy that would lead Russell to introduce such an interpretive description frame. The crucial word in the first part of the frame is 'of'. As my revised frame shows, a better word for that relation is 'express'.[64] But whatever term one uses, the revision makes clear that Russell's strategy in (D1) is to refer to meanings by recourse to the relations they stand in to other entities ('entities' is used broadly here to include expressions). His use of the word 'meaning' has a point in that it allows him to introduce a relational term into the interpretive description frame.

Russell's strategy fits neatly with his claim that "the meaning cannot be got at except by denoting phrases." Though definite descriptions need not contain relational terms, in the paradigmatic cases they do. Moreover, in the present context it is hard to see how one could come to consider an interpretive description that did not conform to the paradigm. Thus the general question raised in (D1) is whether it is possible to construct an interpretive description that refers to a meaning by using—if I may mix formal and material modes—the relations it stands in to other entities. The balance of this commentary shows that Russell has a powerful argument in support of a negative answer to that question.

> (D2) "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'".

Whereas I see (D1) as containing the "heart" of the GEA, most other commentators locate it in the example in (D2). The reason is not hard to see. The example brings with it the compelling aura of paradox. Russell asks us to consider a definite description occurring in ordinary language: 'the first line of Gray's Elegy'. The definite description expresses a meaning. (D2) considers an attempt to speak about that meaning. The paradox is that the meaning we appear to speak about turns out to be

---

[62]For the philosophical principle at issue see note 33.

[63]To be sure, as Russell develops the GEA this is not always the case. Recall that for him the C-signs represent denotations and that the category of "denotation" is broader than that of "object." In particular, words are among the things that can be denoted. In those cases it will not be nonsense to speak of the "meaning of the denotation." Indeed, the example from which the GEA takes its name is of just this sort. But, as I explain in my commentary on (D2), Russell's use of such an example is not essential to his argument, which is better set out by means of the "meaning/object" distinction than the "meaning/denotation" distinction.

[64]In my commentary on (D3) I argue that 'of' must also be read differently— as indicating the denoting relation holding between meanings and objects. In short, Russell's use of 'of' harbors a hidden ambiguity.

the wrong one.[65] Again, the clearest way to bring this out is to rewrite (D2) using the perspicuous notation to disentangle the two components of Russell's interpretive description. Before doing so a textual complication and a philosophical awkwardness must be confronted.

The textual complication arises from the appearance of single quotes, notational devices that do not occur outside of the GEA and which Russell does not explain. Russell provides no explanation because the innovation is merely orthographical. His use of single-quotation marks is dictated by their occurrence within double-quotation marks. Thus, though they appear as the former, they function as the latter. The question, however, is what that function is. Here it cannot be the one stated in (B) but rather one found outside of the GEA, namely to mention expressions. This follows from the paradox presented in (D2) which cannot be expressed without some way of identifying meanings; and the most obvious candidate for doing so is by mentioning the definite descriptions that express them.[66]

This brings me to the awkwardness of the paradox. Russell's argument is that in attempting to speak about one meaning, we end up speaking about another. Yet, as noted above, to argue that way presupposes that we are already able to identify both

meanings; in other words, it presupposes that we are able to speak about them. Thus, the argument seems to presuppose the negation of the thesis it defends. I shall shortly try to bring out that this awkwardness is an unnecessary artifact of Russell's poor choice of example combined with his failure to present the argument for the prohibition against speaking about meanings by mentioning expressions. For the moment, however, I must ask the reader's forbearance in allowing me to present the argument of (D2) while ignoring the awkwardness I have described.

With the preceding clarifications in place (D2) can be rewritten as follows:

> Consider the definite description 'the first line of Gray's Elegy'. It expresses a meaning, which we propose to represent with the following ink-mark: 'm_9'. Suppose now that we attempt to correlate 'm_9' with the intended meaning but without mentioning definite descriptions; in particular, without mentioning the definite description that is said to express the meaning in question. One possibility is by employing the interpretive description 'the meaning of the first line of Gray's Elegy'. That description fails because it gives us the meaning of [expressed by] the denotation of the definite description 'the first line of Gray's Elegy'. In other words it gives us the meaning of [expressed by] the sentence 'the curfew tolls the knell of parting day', and that is not the meaning we want. For the meaning we want is the meaning of [expressed by] the definite description 'the first line of Gray's Elegy'.

As noted, the salient feature of the example is that the interpretive description for 'm_9' succeeds in referring to a meaning, but not to the correct one. The example has that feature only because Russell crafts it so that the definite description with which he begins refers to an expression. There is, however, no reason why he had to do so.[67] Certainly there is nothing in the GEA to suggest that Russell thinks his critique of Frege depends upon consid-

_____

[65]Searle (1958) is the first to make this facet of the GEA central. He finds Russell to make heavy weather of the doctrine—encountered above; see note 60—that when a meaning occurs in a proposition the proposition is about the denotation of the meaning. Thus, our attempts to speak about meanings invariably yield something other than what was intended. Concerns of this sort have figured prominently in every major interpretation of the GEA.

[66]A possible explanation for Russell's failure to use the notation of (B) is that the first mentioned expression in (D2) is a sentence, which does not fit naturally with his locution "the one phrase," designed, as it is, to be followed by a denoting phrase. Having employed mention-quotes in the first case, Russell has little choice but to use them again in the second. To this must be added the obvious fact that Russell is cavalier in his approach to mentioning expressions. For example, in the first paragraph of "On Denoting" Russell uses both the (B) notation and double-quotes to mention expressions.

[67]Simons (2005, 125) makes the shrewd hypothesis that "choosing a linguistic example [allows Russell] to display the very object he was talking about on the page." Simons achieves the same purpose by the use of a black spot.

ering definite descriptions that refer to linguistic items. To the contrary, when Russell announces in (A) that it is the relation of the meaning to the denotation that will be the focus of his critique, he plainly has in mind the relation between meanings and objects. Thus the natural definite description with which to pursue the argument is not 'the first line of Gray's Elegy' but one like that which I used in my interpretation of (D1): 'the centre of mass of the solar system' and with it the interpretive description 'the meaning of the centre of mass of the solar system'. Doing so, as the commentary on (D1) points out, yields not paradox, but nonsense. In this instance, giving voice to nonsense has a salutary effect, for it forcefully raises the issue I introduced above: Why would it occur to anyone to use such a definite description to refer to a meaning? The only answer that suggests itself is the one I have given. Russell is attempting to construct interpretive descriptions for meanings by using the relations those meanings stand in to other entities. Once it is clear that this is his strategy, it is a straightforward matter to show that the GEA considers all of the possible means for interpreting m-signs. Additionally, but no less importantly, the GEA can be presented without even the hint of paradox. Though this may rob the GEA of some of its charm, that is more than compensated for by an increase in clarity.

Proceeding systematically we see that there are two entities to which meanings are related: definite descriptions and objects. Each enters into a different relation with a meaning: "expressing" (which holds between definite descriptions and meanings) and "denoting" (which holds between meanings and objects). Thus the candidate interpretive descriptions for, say, 'm_8' are the following.

the meaning expressed by the definite description 'the centre of mass of the solar system'

the meaning that denotes o_6

The upshot of the GEA is that neither interpretive description will work.

(D3) Thus 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.[68]

In stating,

"the meaning of 'C'" . . . is the same as "C" by itself

Russell confirms that the signs he uses are, in fact, hybrid signs. Providing values for the variables helps to bring this out. In doing so I return to the Russell-notation introduced in (B). Russell's point is that the following expressions stand for the same entity:

(1) "the meaning of [expressed by] the one phrase the center of mass of the solar system"

(2) "the center of mass of the solar system"

The quotation marks used in (1) and (2) indicate that the signs are intended to represent meanings. The words inside the quotation marks indicate which meanings the signs stand for. In this context Russell's remark that (1) and (2) stand for the same entity can mean nothing other than that (1) is an expanded version of (2). In effect then, in (D3) Russell considers the first of the candidate interpretive descriptions identified in the previous section. Not only does he consider it, he appears to endorse its use. Indeed, as I have already noted, the argument of (D) seems to depend on the ability of such interpretive descriptions to refer to meanings. Russell's conclusion in (D2) that we have not managed to "get the meaning we want" requires that he specify what that meaning is, and that specification proceeds by mentioning the definite description that expresses it. Moreover, the suggestion that mentioning expressions allows one to refer to meanings receives further support from the fact that though

---

[68]For the reasons given earlier (see page 25) the single quotes here indicate mention.

in (D2) we do not get "the meaning we want," we do get a meaning—one that is itself specified in terms of its relation to a definite description. Nevertheless, in what follows I shall try to show that the appearance of successful reference to meanings is an illusion.

The first point to be made is that Russell gives two examples of expressions that seem to refer to meanings. The first, presented in (D2), refers to a meaning "other than the one we want." The second, presented in (D3), refers to the intended meaning. In both cases reference is achieved by mentioning a definite description. Thus, showing that the procedure fails in the second case shows that it fails in the first as well. Further, as I have pointed out, (D2) yields a case of "mis-reference" only because of Russell's peculiar choice of example—a choice that he need not have made. Thus, the essential example is the one found in (D3). If my argument that the appearance of reference in (D3) is illusory is persuasive, then this provides another reason for dispensing with the "Gray's Elegy" example: its use gives us two cases of apparent reference rather than one, and the proliferation of illusions makes it all the more difficult to see through them.

The best way to bring out why interpretive descriptions that mention definite descriptions are philosophically objectionable, and hence that their use yields the mere appearance of reference, is to correct an inadequacy in the m-signs of the perspicuous notation. Meanings, I have said, stand in a relation to objects. More precisely they *represent* objects. In Russell's terms, they "denote." This feature is intrinsic to their nature.[69] But as yet the intrinsic connection between meanings and objects is not captured in the perspicuous notation. One way to remedy this defect is to add a second subscript to the m-signs, giving them the following form: '$_xm_x$'. The right subscript differentiates m-

signs (and thus the meanings they represent) from one another. The left subscript is identical to the subscript of the o-sign that represents the object denoted. Thus, no m-sign will share a right-subscript with another m-sign, but—at least in the typical case—an m-sign will share a left-subscript with other m-signs. For example, '$_3m_1$', '$_3m_2$', and '$_3m_3$' represent different meanings denoting the same object. As I shall now try to show, the modified m-signs cannot be interpreted by mentioning definite descriptions.

Consider the attempt to introduce the ink-mark '$_6m_8$' into the vocabulary of the perspicuous notation by means of the following interpretive description:

the meaning expressed by the definite description 'the center of mass of the solar system'

The description says nothing about the object that the meaning denotes. In other words, it leaves the left-subscript as an uninterpreted appendage to the m-sign. But this is simply to say that it has failed to interpret the m-sign at all; for a meaning that does not denote is a meaning in name only.

The argument that the proposed interpretation has failed is likely to strike many as artificial and forced. Surely, the objection goes, we *do* know which object the meaning denotes. Indeed we do, but let us ask how. Plainly it is because we know the object to which the definite description 'the center of mass of the universe' applies. As long as this piece of knowledge is rigorously excluded from the content of the interpretive description then that description cannot provide an adequate interpretation of '$_6m_8$'. If, however, we allow our knowledge to be included in the content of the interpretive description then its verbal formulation ought to be modified accordingly:

the meaning expressed by the definite description 'the center of mass of the solar system' and denoting the object to which the definite description 'the center of mass of the solar system' applies

---

[69]As Russell (*PoM*, §56) states in the *Principles*, "[denoting] concepts inherently and logically *denote* . . . terms" (original emphasis).

The expanded interpretive description makes clear that the link between meaning and object is mediated by a definite description of ordinary language. In other words, the relation between meaning and object is merely "linguistic through the phrase."

This argument raises two related questions. The first is whether the charge that the denoting relation is "merely linguistic" should trouble Frege. The second, touched on earlier, is what reasons there are for thinking that the way meanings are spoken about has any bearing on their nature.

The answer to the first question is clearly yes. The denoting relation obtains between a meaning and an object. Those entities exist independently of language, and thus so too must the denoting relation. This brings me to the second question. Does speaking about meanings by mentioning definite descriptions entail that the denoting relation is merely linguistic? The ideal-language method shows that the answer to that question is also yes. An ideal language is a tool for expressing ontological views. It is also, as I have stressed, an artificial schema. As such it has no meaning other than what the ontologist gives to it. If the signs of the ideal language function as mere labels, their meaning is exhausted by their labeling function. However, if the signs of the ideal language are interpreted by means of definite descriptions, then those definite descriptions provide their meaning. Consider again the sign '$_6m_8$'. As the preceding argument has shown, it says merely that a particular definite description applies to a particular object. If one interprets the m-signs by mentioning definite descriptions, then Frege's view amounts to nothing more than this trivial linguistic point.[70]

Had Russell explicitly articulated the strategy that lies behind the GEA he could have avoided the paradox—and consequent obscurity—found in (D2). Instead he could have specified the two types of interpretive descriptions available to Frege and

then presented his argument against those mentioning definite descriptions. Having done so he could then have turned to the other type of interpretive description: those that make use of the denoting relation holding between meaning and object.

Let me begin by showing that a concern with interpretive descriptions of the second sort is latent in the text of the GEA. In my commentary on (D1) I pointed out that if one reads the interpretive description frame "the meaning of C" literally, it yields nonsense when the C-variable is replaced by a sign that represents an object. There is no good reason for Russell to consider nonsense, and yet it is clear that he does allow for the replacements that give rise to it. There are two ways out of this impasse. One has already been considered: revising the frame by replacing the C-variable with a variable that takes mentioned expressions as replacements. The other is to recognize that the word 'of' is subject to an ambiguity which makes it possible for the frame to be read so as to make it coherent when the C-variable is replaced by a sign for an object. Meanings, I have stressed, are intentional entities; that is, they "represent" or "denote" objects. Another, more casual way of putting the point is to say that meanings are *of* objects. Thus the interpretive description frame of (D1) may also be read as follows:

"the meaning that is of [the object] C"

Or, to use Russell's preferred terminology

"the meaning that denotes [the object] C"

Interpretive descriptions of this type fail in a much more straightforward way than those that mention definite descriptions. Unfortunately Russell does not explain why until the end of paragraph (F):

(F*) There is no backward road from denotations to meanings, because every object can be denoted by an infinite number of different denoting phrases.

The point is simple. The relationship of definite descriptions to objects is many-one. Thus, so too is the relationship between meanings and objects. From this it follows that, for example, the interpretive description 'the meaning that denotes o_6' is unfulfilled in the same way as the definite description 'the senator from California'.

The GEA is complete and cogent at this point, exposing as it does a fundamental flaw in Frege's system. It remains to explain one further point: the sense in which the GEA succeeds in collapsing the distinction between definite descriptions and meanings to the side of definite descriptions. The $_xm_x$-signs allow for a succinct answer to that question. Let us divide one such sign in half—'$_6m$' and 'm_8'—and consider the meaning of each. 'm_8' says merely that there is an entity expressed by a definite description. But, as I have pointed out, meanings are intrinsically "of" objects. Until the object it denotes has been specified we do not have a meaning at all; and thus, by itself 'm_8' says nothing more than that there is a definite description. '$_6m$' is supposed to state which object the meaning denotes. But, as I have also pointed out, it manages only to specify the object to which the definite description applies. Thus, conjoining the two halves yields a sign that says "there is a definite description that applies to the following object." It is difficult then to avoid the conclusion that meanings are simply reified definite descriptions—definite descriptions projected into Platonic heaven.[71] That this is Russell's conclusion should not surprise us. After all, one of the lessons of the theory of descriptions is that grammatical form is often a poor guide to "logical form." It is a poor guide in that it leads us to posit an entity where in fact there is only an expression. The upshot of the GEA is that Frege was misled in just that way.

---

[71]Russell's objection that meaning and object threaten to be "one and the same" is the mirror image of this point. Frege's m-signs *should* represent meanings, yet they succeed only in representing objects. That is, his ontology requires both meanings and objects but manages to incorporate only objects. In that (admittedly loose) sense the two entities are "one and the same."

Max Rosenkrantz
California State University Long Beach
max.rosenkrantz@csulb.edu

References

Basu, Dilip K., 1983. "Russell on Denoting." *Analysis* 43: 65–70.

Bergmann, Gustav, 1953. "Logical Positivism, Language and the Reconstruction of Metaphysics." Reprinted in Bergmann (1954), pp. 30–77.

———, 1954. *The Metaphysics of Logical Positivism*. New York: Longmans, Green and Company.

———, 1959. *Meaning and Existence*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

———, 1964. *Logic and Reality*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Blackburn, Simon and Alan Code, 1978a. "The Power of Russell's Criticism of Frege." *Analysis* 38: 65–77.

———, 1978b. "Reply to Geach." *Analysis* 38: 206–07.

———, 1979. "Geach Again." *Analysis* 39: 160.

Brogaard, Berit, 2006. "The Gray's Elegy Argument and the Prospects for the Theory of Denoting Concepts." *Synthese* 152: 47–79.

Butler, R. J., 1954. "The Scaffolding of Russell's Theory of Descriptions." *Philosophical Review* 64: 350–66.

Cassin, Chrystine, 1971. "Russell's Discussion of Meaning and Denoting: A Reexamination." In *Essays on Frege*, edited by E. D. Klemke, pp. 256–72. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Church, Alonzo, 1943. Review of *Introduction to Semantics* by R. Carnap. *Philosophical Review* 52: 298–304.

Dau, Paolo, 1985. "The Complex Matter of Denoting." *Analysis* 45: 190–98.

Demopolous, William, 1999. "The Theory of Meaning of 'On Denoting'." *Noûs* 33: 439–58.

Frege, Gottlob, 1892. "On Sense and Meaning." In *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*, 3rd ed., edited by P. Geach and M. Black, pp. 56–78. London: Basil Blackwell, 1980. First published 1892.

———, 1980. *Philosophical and Mathematical Correspondence*, edited by G. Gabriel, H. Hermes, F. Kambartel, C. Thiel and A. Veraart, translated by H. Kaal. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Geach, Peter, 1959. "Russell on Meaning and Denoting." *Analysis* 19: 69–72.

———, 1978. "Russell on Denoting." *Analysis* 38: 204–05.

———, 1979. "Russell and Frege Again." *Analysis* 39: 159–60.

Hochberg, Herbert, 1976. "Russell's Attack on Frege's Theory of Meaning." *Philosophia* 18: 9–34. Reprinted in *Logic, Ontology and Language: Essays on Truth and Reality*, pp. 60–85. Munich: Philosophia Verlag, 1984.

Hylton, Peter, 1990. *Russell, Idealism and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jager, Ronald, 1960. "Russell's Denoting Complex." *Analysis* 20: 53–62.

Jones, E. E. C., 1910. "Mr. Russell's Objections to Frege's Analysis of Propositions." *Mind* 19: 379–86.

Kaplan, David, 1969. "Quantifying In." Reprinted in *Reference and Modality*, edited by L. Linsky, pp. 112–44. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Kremer, Michael, 1994. "The Argument of 'On Denoting'." *Philosophical Review* 103: 249–97.

Landini, Gregory, 1998. "'On Denoting' Against Denoting." *Russell* 18: 43–80.

Levine, James, 2004. "On the 'Gray's Elegy' Argument and Its Bearing on Frege's Theory of Sense." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 49: 251–95.

———, 2005. "Aboutness and the Argument of 'On Denoting'." In Linsky and Imaguire (2005), pp. 29–97.

Linsky, Bernard and Guido Imaguire, eds., 2005. *On Denoting 1905–2005*. Munich: Philosophia Verlag.

Makin, Gideon, 2000. *The Metaphysicians of Meaning: Russell and Frege on Sense and Denotation*. London: Routledge.

Manser, Anthony, 1985. "Russell's Criticism of Frege." *Philosophical Investigations* 8: 269–86.

Monk, Ray and Anthony Palmer, eds., 1996. *Bertrand Russell and the Origins of Analytical Philosophy*. Bristol: Thoemmes Press.

Noonan, Harold, 1996. "The Gray's Elegy Argument—and Others." In Monk and Palmer (1996), pp. 65–102.

Pakaluk, Michael, 1993. "The Interpretation of Russell's 'Gray's Elegy' Argument." In *Russell and Analytic Philosophy*, edited by A. D. Irvine and G. A. Wedeking, pp. 37–65. Toronto: Toronto University Press.

Rodríguez-Consuegra, Francisco, 1992–1993. "A New Angle on Russell's 'Inextricable Tangle' Over Meaning and Denotation." *Russell* 12: 197–207.

Rosenkrantz, Max, 2005. "The Ontological Motivations for the Theory of Descriptions." *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 86: 114–34.

———, 2007. "The King of France Restored." *Metaphysica* 8: 149–63.

———, 2009. "The *Tractatus* Theory of Descriptions." *Theoria* 75: 252–71.

———, 2016. "From the *Begriffsschrift* to 'Über Sinn und Bedeutung': Frege as Epistemologist and Ontologist." *Manuscrito* 39: 29–90.

Russell, Bertrand, 1903. *The Principles of Mathematics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———, 1904. Letter to Victoria Welby, 3 February 1904. Reprinted in "Denoting Concepts in *The Principles of Mathematics*," by N. Griffin, in Monk and Palmer (1996), pp. 58–60.

———, 1905. "On Denoting." Reprinted in Russell (1994), pp. 414–27.

———, 1910–1911. "Knowledge by Acquintance and Knowledge by Description." Reprinted in *Mysticism and Logic*, pp. 200–21. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1917.

———, 1918. "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism." Reprinted in Russell (1956), pp. 117–281.

———, 1919. *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*. London: George Allen and Unwin.

———, 1956. *Logic and Knowledge*, edited by R. C. Marsh. London: Unwin Hyman.

———, 1994. *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, vol. 4, *Foundations of Logic 1903–05*, edited by A. Urquhart and A. C. Lewis. London: Routledge.

Salmon, Nathan, 2005. "On Designating." *Mind* 114: 1069–133.

———, 2009. "Points, Complexes, Complex Points, and a Yacht." In *Russell vs. Meinong: The Legacy of "On Denoting"*, edited by N. Griffin and D. Jacquette, pp. 343–63. London: Routledge.

Searle, John, 1958. "Russell's Objections to Frege's Theory of Sense and Reference." *Analysis* 18: 137–43.

Simons, Peter, 2005. "Gray's *Elegy* Without Tears: Russell Simplified." In Linsky and Imaguire (2005), pp. 121–35.

Stevens, Graham, 2011. *The Theory of Descriptions: Russell and the Philosophy of Language*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Turnau, Pawel, 1991. "Russell's Argument Against Frege's Sense-Reference Distinction." *Russell* 11: 52–66.

Urquhart, Alasdair, 2005. "Russell on Meaning and Denotation." In Linsky and Imaguire (2005), pp. 99–120.

Wahl, Russell, 1993. "Russell's Theory of Meaning and Denotation and 'On Denoting'." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 31: 71–94.

———, 2007. "On Denoting and the Principle of Acquaintance." *Russell* 27: 7–23.