Journal for the History of Analytical Philosophy

Volume 8, Number 3

Russell's Use Theory of Meaning

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Russell is often accused of having a naive 'Fido'–Fido theory of meaning of the sort Wittgenstein attacked at the beginning of the *Philosophical Investigations*. In this paper I argue that he never held such a theory though I concede that, prior to 1918, he said various things that might lead a very careless reader to suppose that he had. However, in *The Analysis of Mind* (1921), a book which (from the work of Garth Hallett) we know Wittgenstein studied closely, Russell put forward an account of understanding an utterance which clearly anticipates the use theory of meaning usually attributed to Wittgenstein. The paper concludes with some problems for understanding the use theory of meaning as presented by both Russell and, derivatively, Wittgenstein.

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1. The Prevailing Wisdom

Around the middle of the last century the view was widespread that Russell held a reference theory of meaning; that is, that he thought that the meaning of an expression (perhaps, all expressions; at least, most) was the object it referred to. This was typically taken to be his default position on meaning; the view to which he returned throughout his career, even though he might acknowledge exceptions. For example, it was generally acknowledged that the theory of descriptions had some impact on Russell's views in this area, but not that it caused him to abandon the reference theory.

Strawson, for example, famously identified '[t]he source of Russell's mistake' in the theory of descriptions as his failure to distinguish the use of an expression from the expression itself, as a result of which he 'confused meaning . . . with referring' and thus came to think that, at least in the case of singular referring expressions, 'their meaning must *be* the particular object which they are used to refer to' (Strawson 1950, 143). Ryle, anticipating complexities to come, breaks the doctrine up into two theses: first, that all words (syncategoremata excepted) are names; and, second, that names mean what they stand for. This 'monstrous howler', he claims, was 'responsible for a large number of radical absurdities in philosophy in general and the philosophy of logic in particular.' It was, he claims, 'a fetter round the ankles' of Meinong, Frege, Moore, Russell, and even the early Wittgenstein. Russell, he acknowledges, made some 'big emendations' to the theory, but was never able fully to free himself from its toils (Ryle 1957, 353–54). The view is to be found also in Russell scholarship

(such as it was) of the same general period. Thus Pears (1967, 180) says: 'Certainly [Russell] always held a denotational theory of meaning', and Jager (1972, 273) maintains that for Russell 'the meanings of words are ontological entities or sensory objects'—a rather curious disjunction.[1]

Not only is it widely held that the reference theory was Russell's theory of meaning, but it is almost universally agreed to be an extremely silly one. Thus, for example, Strawson, while identifying the theory as the source of Russell's confusions in the theory of descriptions, offers the following cunning argument against the theory: I can pull my handkerchief out of my pocket, but it makes no sense to talk of pulling the meaning of the phrase 'my handkerchief' out of my pocket (Strawson 1950, 143). The theory is indeed subject to a host of such absurdities. Ryle (1957, 335), warming to the theme, devotes a paragraph to listing things that it would be meaningless to say about the meaning of 'Sir Edmund Hillary', but not about Sir Edmund himself (and *vice versa*).[2] But he gives other arguments as well: for example, that two expressions may differ in meaning but have the same reference, and that an expression may be meaningful even when it has no reference (354–55). In doing this, Ryle, rather strangely and apparently unwittingly, presents arguments which are very similar to two of the three arguments that Russell gave for postulating denoting concepts in *The Principles of Mathematics* (POM, 64, 73).

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[1]I don't want to suggest that this was an interpretation of Russell that died forty years ago. It can be still be found in much more recent writings: e.g., Martinich (1997, 15) ('[F]or Russell the meaning of a word is what it directly denotes'); Soames (2003, 184) (Russell assumed 'there are simple elements of language—expressions the meanings of which consist simply in the things they stand for'); Hacker (2010, 34) ('Wittgenstein . . . object[s] to . . . the crude error he had inherited from Frege and Russell, of holding that the meaning of a word is *the object it stands for*.')

[2]For example, the meaning of 'Sir Edmund Hillary' does not die when Sir Edmund does. This basic argument, the template for many of the others, is found (and this is perhaps its original source) in PI, §40. Hallett (1977, 116–17, 120) identifies Russell as among the targets of Wittgenstein's argument there.

But this should give us pause. How could a major philosopher like Russell subscribe to so absurd a theory of meaning, especially when some of the arguments that refute it are variations of arguments that Russell himself had put forward? The implied answer is that Russell was a careless philosopher, always more anxious to complete a book or a paper than to ponder carefully the consequences of his position. In this, of course, he is taken to compare badly with his foil, Wittgenstein, who, whatever he might be accused of, could not be accused of that.

And it gets worse. According to Ryle, two theses make up the reference theory and the first is that all words are names. Now it was, and was taken to be by Russell and others, one of the signal virtues of Russell's theory of descriptions that it showed that definite descriptions were not names. So how was it possible to attribute to Russell the reference theory of meaning when one of Russell's main contributions to the philosophy of language directly denied one of the two theses which constituted the theory? Here Ryle is forced by the clarity of his own exposition to give ground. 'Russell', he says, 'found himself forced to say of some expressions which had previously been supposed to name or denote, that they had to be given exceptional treatment...Here Russell was on the brink of allowing that the meanings or significations of many kinds of expressions are matters not of *naming* things but of *saying* things. But he was...still held up by the idea that saying is itself just another kind of naming, i.e., naming a complex or an "objective" or a proposition...' (Ryle 1957, 362).[3]

Ryle's contrast between naming and saying is significant, for it points us towards Wittgenstein, who is hailed as providing the solution to the problem by recognizing that the meaning of an expression is to be found in its use. On Ryle's account, Russell was able partly to detach the notion of meaning from that of

naming and, through the theory of types, partly re-attach it to the concept of saying, since the theory of types helped demarcate what could or could not be said by means of an expression and this demarcation specified its meaning. 'To know what an expression means...is to know the rules of the employment of that expression' (Ryle 1957, 363). This insight, so Ryle and many others claim, was achieved only in Wittgenstein's later work, where it is encapsulated in the slogan: 'the meaning of a word is its use in the language' (PI, §43). But Ryle held that, even in the *Tractatus* (TLP), though 'Wittgenstein still had one foot in the denotationist camp,...his other foot was already free' (Ryle 1957, 363).

Now I'm not sure which foot Ryle thought was free, for in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein says this:

3.202 The simple signs employed in propositions are called names.

3.203 The name means the object. The object is its meaning [*Bedeutung*].

The two theses which, according to Ryle, constitute the denotationist's 'monstrous howler' would seem to be close paraphrases of Wittgenstein's two propositions.[4] Indeed, we may wonder whether Wittgenstein had so much as a toe free. TLP 3.326 ('In order to recognize the symbol in the sign we must consider the significant use') is sometimes cited to suggest that he did. But when we consult his distinction between signs and symbols (TLP, 3.323), we find it concerns homonyms for different parts of speech. It is exemplified in the sentence 'Green is green', where

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[3]This, however, can hardly be said to cover the case of definite descriptions which, for Russell, name neither objects, nor objectives, complexes or propositions, they simply do not name at all.

[4]It is worth noting that Russell *never* held that all symbols (simple or otherwise) were names, though this view has often been attributed to him (perhaps by confusing his version of logical atomism with Wittgenstein's). See, e.g., Black (1944, 252) and Russell's reply: 'Ever since my chapter [in POM], on "Proper Names, Adjectives and Verbs", I have emphasized the impossibility of a language consisting only of proper names' (RTC, 693).

the first word is a proper name and the third an adjective. Here a single sign (the word 'green') 'signifies in two different ways' and thus is used as two different symbols. As an anticipation of the use theory of meaning, this is an exceedingly modest beginning. But whether Wittgenstein had a foot or merely a toe free of the reference theory in the *Tractatus* is less important than the fundamental insight, that purportedly came to him later, namely that meaning is something fundamentally different, that it is the *use* that expressions have in the language.

So here we have the full philosophical story in outline. Russell early in his career committed a monstrous howler in identifying the meaning of an expression with its reference. For the rest of his career he failed to see the absurdity of the theory he had embraced, and was led as a result into numerous errors. It was only when Wittgenstein revealed the use theory of meaning that we learnt how to correct Russell's blunder and properly diagnose the errors into which he had been led. To mix a variety of Wittgensteinian metaphors: Russell was held fast by a misleading picture until Wittgenstein, with the use theory of meaning, showed the way out of the fly-bottle. It's a perfect piece of philosophical mythology masquerading as history. And it was, and perhaps still is, remarkably widely held.

2. Russell on Meaning: 1903–1918

The widespread attribution of the reference theory to Russell does not, of course, come out of thin air. In the period from 1903 to 1918 Russell held something akin to a reference theory of meaning, though not the ludicrous one that Ryle and Strawson suppose. It should be noted at the outset, however, that throughout the period to 1918, Russell thought that language was largely irrelevant to his concerns in logic and the philosophy of mathematics, so he had comparatively little to say about the philosophy of language. In particular, he did not offer any carefully

articulated and fully worked out account of linguistic meaning. Instead, we have to work from a number of scattered remarks, the most elaborate and substantial of which are to be found in *The Principles of Mathematics* (POM) at the very beginning of the period. Another thing to be noted is that philosophers use their technical vocabulary in different ways to mean different things, and thus it behoves us to play close attention to the vocabulary Russell uses and the way he uses it. One might have thought that ordinary language philosophers would not need to be reminded of this.

Russell's two terms of art in the area we are concerned with during this period are 'meaning' and 'denotation'. 'Denotation' in the period to 1905 was a special logical term which had essentially nothing to do with language: it was not words or expressions that denoted, but concepts. Moreover, the treatment of denotation was of vital importance for Russell's analysis of mathematics, resulting ultimately in his account of descriptive functions (PM, *30). 'Meaning', on the other hand, was of much less significance to him. It was a linguistic term—words and expressions meant something—but not exclusively so: items other than words and expressions might mean. It was also a term that Russell thought had already been philosophically compromised, in particular by F. H. Bradley, and Russell did not think that it was part of his task to rehabilitate it. I think it is possible to discern a sketch for a theory of meaning in Russell's writings up to 1918, but it is impossible to say how fully the sketch was developed. Most of our evidence for it comes from *The Principles of Mathematics*.

A key statement is the following, often cited in attributing a reference theory of meaning to Russell:

> [I]t must be admitted, I think, that every word occurring in a sentence must have *some* meaning: a perfectly meaningless sound could not be employed in the more or less fixed way in which language employs words. The correctness of our philosophical analysis of a proposition may therefore be usefully checked by

the exercise of assigning the meaning of each word in the sentence expressing the proposition. (POM, 42)[5]

This is certainly a very object-heavy account of meaning, but it is not strictly the reference theory. It is important to distinguish objectual theories of meaning—theories (like Frege's theory of *Sinne*) that hold that the meaning of an expression is an object—from the proper subset of such theories which are reference theories—that is, theories which hold that the object an expression means is the object it refers to. Theories of both types face some difficult problems, but it is only the reference theories proper that face the sort of laughable absurdities that Ryle and Strawson complain of.

I'm going to call the position Russell held in *The Principles* a 'naive' theory of meaning, in contrast with the 'sophisticated' theory that followed the theory of descriptions. The label of course derives from naive set theory, where, for every predicate, there is a set; and from naive property theory (see Field 2004), where, for every predicate, there is a property. In the naive theory of meaning, for every expression there is an entity which it means. It seems unlikely that anyone has held the theory in exactly that form.[6] Even Russell's naive theory only approximates it. As Russell acknowledges (POM, 42 n), the same proposition

may be expressed in different languages by sentences with different numbers of words, so propositions cannot be identified simply by correlating their constituents 1–1 with the words in the sentences which express them. Russell's view is that grammar brings us 'nearer to a correct logic than the current opinions of philosophers' (*ibid.*), not that it actually provides us with one. Moreover, the objects which the expressions mean are not always the objects the expressions refer to, for many expressions do not refer at all, though they all mean something. In the case of what Russell calls 'denoting phrases', the phrase contributes a denoting concept to the proposition expressed. We may (with some hesitation) regard the denoting concept as the meaning of the denoting phrase, but we cannot under any circumstances identify it with the term it denotes, for there may be no such term and, even if there is, the term is not a denoting concept.[7] This one qualification is sufficient to protect even Russell's naive theory from almost all of the absurdities that Ryle and Strawson allege against it.

Russell has a little more to say about meaning a bit later in the *Principles*. There, he rather carefully employs a distinction between 'meaning' and 'sense', using 'sense', which he never directly discusses, metatheoretically to explain 'meaning'. It is clear that he takes 'meaning' to be a technical philosophical term in need of theoretical explication, and 'sense' to be an ordinary non-technical term which could be used in the explication. The passage is worth quoting at length. In doing so I have underlined occurrences of the two words with which we are concerned. Russell starts with a reference to Bradley's theory

that all words stand for ideas having what [Bradley] calls <u>meaning</u>, and that in every judgment there is a something, the true subject of the judgment, which is not an idea and does not have <u>meaning</u>. To have <u>meaning</u>, it seems to me, is a notion confusedly compounded of logical and psychological elements. *Words* all have <u>meaning</u>, in

[5]This passage occurs in the first paragraph of the chapter on 'Proper Names, Adjectives, and Verbs' that Russell cited in his reply to Black.

[6]It is, of course, the doctrine Wittgenstein imputes to St Augustine, and characterized thus: 'Every word has a meaning. The meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands.' (PI, §1). Though Wittgenstein scholars tend to refer to this as 'the Augustinian picture of meaning', it was not held by Augustine (cf. Burnyeat 1987, for example). It is worth remarking more generally on the extent to which Wittgenstein's exposition of his later philosophy depends upon imaginary foils. His express purpose is to free us from 'pictures' which supposedly lead us into confusion. But the particular pictures he invokes as his foils are often of his own devising and have never actually led anyone into confusion. The more subtle views held by actual philosophers not infrequently evade the confusions with which he charges them—as even Russell's naive theory of meaning in the *Principles* evades the confusions imagined by Strawson and Ryle.

[7]This interpretation of Russell's 1903 theory of denoting is not uncontroversial. It is defended in detail in Griffin (1996) and Makin (2000).

the simple <u>sense</u> that they are symbols which stand for something other than themselves. But a proposition . . . does not itself contain words: it contains the entities indicated by words. Thus <u>meaning</u>, in the <u>sense</u> in which words have <u>meaning</u>, is irrelevant to logic. But such concepts as *a man* have <u>meaning</u> in another <u>sense</u>: they are, so to speak, symbolic in their own logical nature, because they have the property which I call *denoting*. That is to say, when *a man* occurs in a proposition . . . the proposition is not about the concept *a man*, but about something quite different, some actual biped denoted by the concept. Thus concepts of this kind have <u>meaning</u> in a non-psychological <u>sense</u>. And in this <u>sense</u>, when we say 'this is a man,' we are making[8] a proposition in which a concept is in some <u>sense</u> attached to what is not a concept. But when <u>meaning</u> is thus understood, the entity indicated by *John* does not have <u>meaning</u>, as Mr Bradley contends; and even among concepts it is only those that denote that have <u>meaning</u>. (POM, 47)

Russell weaves between 'meaning' and 'sense' so deftly in this passage that one might not notice (especially if one thinks that he is a fast and careless writer) that 'meaning' is always used for the concept under discussion and 'sense' is always used metatheoretically to describe it. But Russell was indeed self-conscious about the distinction, as he explained in a letter to Victoria Welby:

On p. 47, *sense* is used linguistically, as that which should be expounded in a dictionary, or that which should be as far as possible unaltered in translating into another language. This is the sense of a *word*, or the meaning of a word in the sense which I dismiss as irrelevant to logic, on the ground that logic is not concerned with words but with what they stand for.

As for *meaning* on p. 47, it begins by being whatever Mr Bradley intends to signify by *meaning*. This is what I contend to be a confused notion: my position is that (1) *all words* have a sense, but this is logically irrelevant, though it has influenced Bradley, (2) *some concepts* denote, as 'the present Prime Minister of England' denotes the

actual man Mr. Arthur Balfour. The concept which denotes is not mental: it is the object of an idea, not the idea itself. Thus denoting in this sense has nothing psychological about it.[9]

'Sense' as Russell uses it on page 47—what is given in dictionaries and preserved in translations—is, I think, the closest Russell comes in the *Principles* to a synonym for what Ryle and Strawson call 'meaning'. 'Meaning', as Russell uses it on page 42 and in one of the senses he describes on page 47—the sense in which all words have meaning because they 'stand for something other than themselves'—is a fundamentally different notion, not only from Strawson's notion of meaning but from his notion of reference as well. I think it is quite clear that in the *Principles* Russell takes the meaning of a word in this sense to be a term[10] of some kind, both because everything that can be made the subject of a proposition is a term (and there are propositions about the meanings of words) and because propositions are made up of terms and, according to page 42, we can check 'the correctness of our philosophical analysis of a proposition' by 'assigning the meaning of each word in the sentence expressing the proposition'.

It is this point which I think is crucial for Russell's early theory of meaning. In the *Principles*, propositions were objective, mind- and language-independent, complex objects, which actually contained the term(s) they were about. The elements that made them up were objective, mind- and language-independent terms, indicated (to use Russell's favourite word for this relation) by the expressions occurring in a sentence which expresses the proposition. The sentences mean the propositions they express and I think it was Russell's view that an expression which occurs

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[8]'Making' is a careless error: it would be rank psychologism at this stage in Russell's philosophical development to suppose that we make propositions, we rather express or assert them.

[9]Russell to Victoria Welby, 3 February, 1904 (Welby Papers, York University, Toronto). The letter is printed in full in Griffin (1996, 58–60). Under (2) Russell originally wrote '*some ideas*' then crossed out '*ideas*' and wrote '*concepts*' above it. The phrase is mistranscribed at Griffin (1996, 59). I am grateful to H. Walter Schmitz for pointing this out to me (cf. Schmitz 2013, 217 n).

[10]'Term' is used here in Russell's technical sense (POM, 43–44).

in a sentence means the term that it contributes to the proposition that the sentence expresses.[11] Different kinds of expressions mean different kinds of terms. Thus, roughly speaking, proper names mean things, definite descriptions (and quantificational expressions) mean denoting concepts, adjectives mean universals, and verbs mean relations. On this view, the meaning of an expression (denoting phrases excluded) is the term that it indicates; in the case of denoting phrases it is the denoting concept.[12] This of course is the relation which Russell thought was irrelevant to logic, since logic, in his view, is not concerned with the expressions but with what they indicate.

None the less the attribution of this view to Russell gets some confirmation, not so much from what he says about 'meaning' but from how he uses the word. For example, in 'William James's Conception of Truth' (1908) he disputes the pragmatist claim that 'it is true that *p' means the same as* 'it is useful to believe that *p'*. Were this the case, he argues, these sentences would be 'merely different words for the same proposition', so that there 'would be no transition' from believing the one to believing the other. But there plainly is a transition and this shows, he says, that 'the word "true" represents for us a different idea from that represented by the phrase "useful to believe"' (WJCT, 477–78). For our purposes, Russell's use of a psychological example,

believing, is unfortunate, since it complicates matters by bringing in the fourth element of Russell's semantics, ideas, the objects of which are what the expressions mean. For our purposes, ideas are an avoidable diversion intended to link propositions with thought (and other psychological processes), they play a role in a broader philosophical project, but can be neglected in dealing with semantics.

Russell's position is a complex one and not at all easy to make out, but I think the basic idea can be discerned, namely, that the meaning of an expression is the term it contributes to the proposition which is expressed by the sentence in which it occurs. It seems to me that, with two important adjustments, this was Russell's position throughout the period 1903–18, and that it profoundly influenced the way he used the word 'meaning' in the period afterwards.

The first adjustment came with the theory of descriptions in 1905. That theory abolished denoting concepts, raised important difficulties for two-dimensional meaning theories generally, and eliminated the old notion of denotation as it had appeared in *The Principles of Mathematics*. Though Russell now abandoned the term 'indicates', he kept the view of meaning explicated above: sentences consist of expressions whose meanings compose the propositions expressed by the sentences. The difference now was that the sentence in question has to be fully analyzed before meanings can be assigned. The proposition can only be identified after the sentential analysis has taken place.[13] It was for this reason that Russell held that definite descriptions, which were eliminated in the analysis, were 'incomplete symbols' which had no meaning on their own. This way of putting it has been the source of some perplexity, but it seems to me a fairly natural way for Russell to express what he saw as a key difference between the new theory and the 1903 theory in which a definite descrip-

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[11]'Contributes', though much favoured in recent semantic theory, is not an entirely happy choice of word here: the proposition is not built up and created as the sentence is uttered! The basic idea, which needs a good deal of elaboration, is rather that, if '*S*' is a sentence which expresses the proposition P, and if '$S(a/b)$' is a sentence exactly like '*S*' except that it contains expression '*a*' where '*S*' contained '*b*' and '$S(a/b)$' expresses the proposition $P(|a|/|b|)$, which is exactly like P except that it contains $|a|$ where P contains $|b|$, then '*a*' means $|a|$ and '*b*' means $|b|$. Of course, even this is much more elaboration than Russell gives the matter.

[12]In the *Principles*, denoting concepts denote peculiar kinds of what might be called quantificational objects (cf. POM, 55). The denoting concept is a term and is a constituent of the proposition, the quantificational object which it denotes is neither.

[13]Of course, natural language grammar could no longer be considered a guide to a correct logic, as Russell had supposed in POM—it was rather the other way around.

tion did contribute a meaning (namely, a denoting concept) to the proposition expressed by the sentence in which it occurred.[14] With the theory of descriptions, only expressions which occur in the fully analyzed sentence have meanings which form part of the proposition expressed by the sentence.

This understanding of meaning also removes another common source of perplexity about the theory of descriptions, namely the following notorious argument about 'Scott':

> '[T]he author of *Waverley*' cannot mean the same as 'Scott,' or 'Scott is the author of *Waverley*' would mean the same as 'Scott is Scott' . . . ; nor can 'the author of *Waverley*' mean anything other than 'Scott,' or 'Scott is the author of *Waverley*' would be false. Hence 'the author of *Waverley*' means nothing. (PM, I, 67)[15]

This argument is often cited as evidence that Russell confused meaning with reference, for it is normally taken to rest upon an equivocation on 'meaning' as reference and 'meaning' as sense, to put the distinction in Fregean terms (e.g. Jager 1972, 245). Thus, it is claimed, 'Scott is the author of *Waverley*' is false if 'the author of *Waverley*' *refers* to someone other than Scott, but 'Scott is the author of *Waverley*' means the same as 'Scott is Scott' only if 'Scott' *has the same sense* as 'the author of *Waverley*'. Russell's argument, it is claimed, therefore rests on a simple ambiguity. It would be odd if Russell made so simple a mistake, let alone repeated it several times over a period of decades, but even odder that he would make that mistake when the crucial step which led him to the theory of descriptions was the rejection of anything akin to the Fregean concept of sense. For Russell, what made it false that 'The author of *Waverley* is Scott' means

the same as 'Scott is Scott' was that these expressed two different propositions, not that 'the author of *Waverley*' and 'Scott' had different senses. A Fregean would find that the argument traded on an ambiguity, but Russell was no Fregean. If we take the argument in his own terms, and read 'means x' as 'contributes x to a proposition' then the argument holds up: if 'the author of *Waverley*' contributed Scott to the proposition expressed by 'Scott is the author of *Waverley*' then that would be the same proposition as is expressed by 'Scott is Scott'; if it contributed any other object then the proposition would be false. Hence, it contributes nothing.[16]

The second adjustment came when Russell abandoned the substitutional theory and, by means of the multiple-relation theory, came to treat propositions themselves (or, more accurately, the expressions which express them) as incomplete symbols. Without propositions, the meaning of an expression can no longer be identified with the object it contributes to a proposition. Yet the change this requires in the theory of meaning is comparatively slight. In multiple relations (intentional relations, such as belief, hope, fear, understanding), a mind is related to the actual objects that the belief, hope, fear, etc. is concerned with; that is, to what were formerly the constituents of the erstwhile proposition. When the belief is expressed, the sentences used, when fully analyzed, identify the items which are the object terms of the multiple relation. The expressions themselves, in Russell's idiolect, still mean these objects. The loss of propositions themselves does not make a huge difference to the theory of meaning: the objects which were formerly constituents of propositions are now constituents of a belief-complex, or some other complex produced by what Claudio de Almeida (1998, 136) usefully called 'propositional activity'.[17] For the sake of simplicity I

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[14]Russell's way of putting the distinction has good historical roots in the way the distinction between categorematic and syncategorematic expressions was sometimes drawn semantically by medieval logicians: the former have independent meaning, while the latter are semantically incomplete and have to be combined with categoremata to be meaningful.

[15]The argument is repeated in PLA, 221, using 'stands for' instead of 'means', and again in MPD, 85, once more using 'means' (and no doubt elsewhere).

[16]The conclusion is a bit sweeping: it does of course contribute *Waverley* and the concept of authorship, but it does not contribute an object which is the value of the descriptive function 'the author of *Waverley*'.

[17]For a brief survey of Russell's treatment of propositions throughout the

will continue to talk of propositions as if there were such things. No confusion will result, so long as it is remembered that, between 1910 and 1913 at least, 'the constituents of a proposition' means the objects of a 'propositional' mental act.

Russell's theory of meaning is obviously a long way from the the farcical reference theory that Strawson and Ryle attack, but it is still an objectual theory of meaning and this, in itself, is problematic. One obvious, fundamental requirement on any concept of meaning worth the name is that it be tightly linked with understanding: the meaning of an expression is what you grasp when you understand it.[18] But this invites a new round of Strawson and Ryle jokes, if meaning is construed objectually. For what object must one grasp if one is to understand the name 'Sir Edmund Hillary', surely not Sir Edmund himself? Russell's objectual theory of meaning certainly faces problems of this type. As a theory of how propositions are constituted there is, perhaps, nothing to object to, but unless it can be connected to an account of how sentences are understood it will have failed the most basic requirement of an account of meaning. In fact, Russell does have a well-known answer to this problem: his principle of acquaintance. The principle is typically formulated in terms of the understanding of propositions, but the connection with the understanding of expressions is made explicit in *The Problems of Philosophy* : 'We must attach some meaning to the words we use, if we are to speak significantly and not utter mere noise; and the meaning we attach to our words must be something with which we are acquainted' (POP, 91). On the same page, he states the principle of acquaintance: 'Every proposition which we can understand must be composed wholly of constituents with which we are acquainted.'[19] Now I don't want to say that this is a very good account of what it is to understand an expression, but it

does indicate that Russell recognized that even an objectual theory of meaning must give an account of what it is to understand an expression.

So here we have the rather tenuous basis for attributing the reference theory of meaning to Russell. In Russell's philosophy, at the time he held what I called the 'naive theory of meaning', there was simply no such concept as Strawson's concept of reference. Denotation is not even a relation between words and terms; and indication (such as it is) has much wider application than Strawson would allow for reference. True, Russell does, I believe, identify meaning with indication and this produces an objectual theory of meaning and this might be thought to be a serious error in itself. Meaning, it might be claimed, is what Russell in the letter to Welby called 'sense'—what is expounded in dictionaries and preserved in translation—and to use the word in any other way is to risk confusing oneself and others. Well, it certainly confused others—we have the evidence of Ryle and Strawson—but I doubt very much that it confused Russell. To insist too strongly on this objection is to confuse the contingent vagaries of usage with a priori necessities. In identifying meaning with indication, Russell was not, I think, straying too far from either ordinary or philosophical uses of 'meaning' at that time. Ryle and Strawson used 'meaning' exclusively to cover what was expounded in dictionaries and preserved in translation. In their terminology, only linguistic expressions could have meaning, and to know the meaning of an expression was to understand it, specifically to know how to use it. This, I think, was not just ordinary usage being incorporated into philosophy, but was actually a construction of a technical term in mid-twentieth century philosophy of language. Earlier in the century, 'meaning' was used much more widely by philosophers—and, in ordinary language, I think it still is. It was not restricted to language, but was used in philosophy, almost generically, to indicate pretty much any kind of symbolization, association, or aboutness. It was not exclusively semantic, nor even exclusively intentional. It could

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whole period covered by this paper, see Godden and Griffin (2009).

[18]This is (approximately) Dummett's formulation (1975, 2).

[19]It is often thought that he held this principle only after the theory of descriptions, but it dates back at least to 1903 (cf. PAD, 307).

include physical, causal relations ('clouds mean rain') and was used in still wider ways which are harder to characterize ('the meaning of life' or 'the meaning of relativity', to quote one of Einstein's titles). For most of the first half of the twentieth century 'meaning', even in careful, correct philosophical prose, was used as a sort of omnibus expression, useful precisely because of its extreme flexibility. I think Russell was well within his rights to use the word as he did.

All this is by way of background to my main concern. There are two points that I want to emphasize from the background: (1) That the heart of Russell's concept of meaning from 1903 to 1918 was the idea that the meaning of an expression was the item it contributed to a proposition or to some propositional activity. These meanings were constituent parts of the proposition (or objects of the propositional activity). While the background theories of propositions and multiple relations were obviously parts of the technical philosophical apparatus, the account Russell gave of the nature of an expression's meaning, though widely different from what Ryle and Strawson would admit in the 1950s, did not stretch the word 'meaning' beyond its normal use at the time he wrote (nor, I believe, later). This view of meaning, I think, influenced the way Russell used the word even after 1918, when, to anticipate slightly, he applied the word to essentially the same things, even though the word 'proposition' was now applied to a fundamentally different type of entity. (2) That questions about language were not very high on Russell's agenda during this period. Accordingly, he gave us no very well worked out theory of meaning. We have rather a number of scattered remarks which I have attempted to assemble into a consistent account: there may well be others which do not fit.

3. Russell on Meaning After 1918

Russell's interest in language developed around 1918,[20] and owed a great deal to the influence of Wittgenstein. Some of the influence was, I think, direct: Wittgenstein's own interest in language was profound and some of it rubbed off onto Russell. But more important than that was the effect of Wittgenstein's criticism in 1913 of the multiple-relation theory of judgment, the theory which enabled Russell to eliminate propositions by treating sentences as incomplete symbols. The failure of the multiple-relation theory put Russell in need of a new theory of propositions which avoided resurrecting them as the sort of objective, non-linguistic, non-psychological, complex object they had been in *The Principles of Mathematics*.[21] Russell turned his attention to the problem when he was in prison in 1918. The first statement of the new theory came the following year in 'On Propositions: What They Are and How They Mean' (OP), in which for the first time Russell treated propositions as representational. Once again, they are genuine complex objects, but this time they are objects which are composed, not of the objects they are about, but of words (or other symbols) or images which represent those objects. In OP, for the first time, barring some preliminary prison notes (MN, 270–71), we find him attempting a full-fledged theory about how words work.

The theory that Russell puts forward in 'On Propositions' (OP, 281–93) is repeated at greater length in *The Analysis of Mind* which was published two years later, having been delivered as

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[20]In PLA he says: 'There is a good deal of importance to philosophy in the theory of symbolism, a good deal more than at one time I thought' (PLA, 166). Cf. also MPD, 145.

[21]Wittgenstein had told Russell on 22 July 1913 that he thought his objection to his theory of judgment 'can only be removed by a correct theory of propositions' (CL, 33). I think that much of Russell's most fundamental philosophical work over the next eight years arose from taking this diagnosis to heart. The fullest statement of the results is to be found in Appendix C of the second edition of PM.

lectures in Beijing and London. And it is on the later book that I want to focus my attention. Lecture 10 of the book is entitled 'Words and Meaning' and sets out, as Russell explains in the first sentence, to determine 'what is the relation called "meaning"': 'The word "Napoleon," we say, "means" a certain person... It is this relation we must now investigate.' (AMi, 188). This looks like an unabashed reassertion of the reference theory, and moreover in, apparently, a cruder form than it had previously appeared, for, Russell no longer offers exemptions for particular classes of words, nor caveats about the need for prior logical analysis which had mitigated his previous account.

But all this needs to be read as if it were written by a philosopher writing circa 1920, not as if it were written by an ordinary language philosopher writing in 1950. It is clear, first of all, that what Russell is primarily interested in in Lecture 10 of *The Analysis of Mind* is the way language relates to the non-linguistic world: he is concerned with the relation between words and what they designate.[22] He announces this clearly enough at the very beginning of the lecture, and might have been easily understood had he not used the word 'meaning' for the relationship. In the first half of the lecture he runs through the different traditional parts of speech and relates each to a category of non-linguistic item: thus proper names relate to things, general nouns to classes of things, gerunds to occurrences, adjectives to universals, and prepositions to relations. These are the relations that Russell is concerned with, and he calls them 'meaning'. He evidently needs some word to cover all these cases and, as I noted before, there are not many options available. Certainly not 'refers', which is far too specialized. In fact, he needs an even broader word now than he did before 1918, since he needs it to cover also the analogous relation for non-linguistic symbols and also the relation between images and what they are images of. Some technical

vocabulary may have helped, but most of what is available in the area comes already freighted with baggage from previous usages. At all events, for better or worse, Russell chose 'means'; and not, I think, inappropriately.[23] It is surely within the range of common usage to say that a preposition means a relation, even if linguistic philosophers might find it unsophisticated. Russell's use of 'meaning' in this respect is entirely of a piece with his use of it before 1918. In fact, the relation of a word to its Russellian-meaning remains, in 1919, exactly what it had previously been. Russell's survey of parts of speech and the kind of items they 'mean' in *The Analysis of Mind* bears comparison to the somewhat different list of parts of speech and what they 'indicate' in *The Principles of Mathematics*. But after 1918 we can't talk of the meaning of an expression as what it contributes to a proposition, because propositions are now linguistic (or mental) entities. They contain the things that mean, not the things meant.

At all events, we have to acknowledge that Russellian-meaning is not Wittgensteinian meaning, nor Rylean or Strawsonian meaning, and that what Russell says in Lecture 10 concerns primarily Russellian-meaning. In the first half of the lecture he goes, case by case, through the traditional parts of speech considering (in varying detail) how they are related to their Russellian-meanings. In the second half of the lecture he considers the relation between words and images. According to Russell, images, like words, can be used to make propositions and images sometimes intervene between words and their Russellian-meanings. But the image is never the Russellian-meaning of the word. Words (or other symbols for that matter) may be used to call up images of the items which are the Russellian-meanings of the words. Russell does not give a systematic account of Russellian-meaning. Rather, he gives informally a number of illustrations

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[22]This was, indeed, his enduring concern, as he makes clear throughout IMT and in MPD, chap. XIII.

[23]Russell's relative indifference to the terminology he is using here is illustrated by the fact that, six years later, in *The Analysis of Matter* he goes (more briefly) through a similar list and once again uses 'indicates' for the relation—though he slips back to 'means' in the next paragraph (AMa, 242–43).

of the type of relation he has in mind. Not surprisingly, given the generally naturalistic turn in his philosophy in 1919,[24] his overall approach is causal, utilizing (where he is most explicit) the stimulus-response mechanisms of Watsonian behaviourism. Unfortunately, he says very little about how the process works when the Russellian-meaning is an abstract object (i.e., a universal or a relation). Indeed, as he points out, the behaviourist account works satisfactorily only when words are used in the presence of their Russellian-meanings, and this is what leads him to introduce images into his account. Images, of course, may be fitted into a causal account of mental activity, but hardly into a behaviourist one.[25]

So the lecture on words and meaning in *The Analysis of Mind* is very largely concerned with the way words relate to elements of the real world. But how does this relate to how words are understood? Russell's earlier account, that expressions are understood when we are acquainted with their Russellian-meanings, is now not available to him (and in my view, a good thing too): the old relation of acquaintance, which played such a fundamental part in his earlier philosophy, has been abandoned. But the gap it was intended to fill remains. Russell does not say much about understanding in *The Analysis of Mind*, but what he does say is surprising and important. Not surprising, however, is the fact that Russell offers a broadly behaviourist account of understanding an expression: 'We may say', he writes, 'that a person understands a word when (a) suitable circumstances make him

use it, (b) the hearing of it causes suitable behaviour in him.' (AMi, 197). He calls these active and passive understanding, respectively. But what follows next is surprising.
Russell writes:

It is not necessary, in order that a man should 'understand' a word, that he should 'know what it means,' in the sense of being able to say 'this word means so-and-so.' Understanding words does not consist in knowing their dictionary definition, or in being able to specify the objects to which they are appropriate. Such understanding as this may belong to lexicographers and students, but not to ordinary mortals in ordinary life. Understanding language is more like understanding cricket: it is a matter of habits, acquired in oneself and rightly presumed in others. To say that a word has a meaning is not to say that those who use the word correctly have ever thought out what that meaning is: the use of the word comes first, and the meaning is to be distilled out of it by observation and analysis. (AMi, 197)[26]

This passage is surely a very striking anticipation of the use theory of meaning which Wittgenstein embraced over a decade later.[27] We could well wish that Russell had said more and been more explicit. Indeed, it is not much of a theory; but then Russell wasn't theorizing about the psycho-socio-behavioural business of understanding a word, he was concerned about the relation of words to the world and mentioned understanding mainly to

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[24] On this see Stevens (2006).

[25] A lot is made of Russell's alleged behaviourism, but Russell was never a full-fledged behaviourist, as his admission of images demonstrates. *The Analysis of Mind* is, I think, the most behaviourist of his works, and in MPD, 146, he acknowledges that there he proceeded 'as far as possible on behaviourist principles while expecting these principles to prove ultimately inadequate'. In *An Outline of Philosophy* (OOP) he repeats the difficulty behaviourists face in trying to explain the use of words in the absence of the relevant objects without the use of images (77–79) but also presciently adds a new problem, namely that of explaining the creativity of language (57–58). This is not the place to explore the limits of Russell's adherence to behaviourism.

[26] This view, and even the same wording, is present already in OP: 'A word has meaning, more or less vague; but the meaning is only to be discovered by observing its use: the use comes first, and the meaning is distilled out of it' (OP, 290). Twenty years later the same line of thought appears in *Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*: 'It is obvious that knowing a language consists in using words appropriately, and acting appropriately when they are heard. It is no more necessary to be able to say what a word means than it is for a cricketer to know the mathematical theory of impact and of projectiles' (IMT, 26). There, however, it is set in a much more elaborate account of the nature of (natural) language than any Russell had previously offered, and one which deserves much closer study than it has received.

[27] Wittgenstein's first serious statement of the position occurs in *The Blue Book* which dates from 1933–34.

set it aside as *not* requiring the sort of knowledge of Russellian-meanings that a purely referential theory of meaning might seem to suppose.

The passage I've just quoted seems to me remarkably prescient in at least three ways: (1) in insisting on the primacy of use for understanding language; (2) in comparing understanding language to understanding a game; and (3) most importantly, in holding that the sort of knowledge involved in understanding an expression is not knowledge *that* a certain definition is correct, nor knowledge *of* (i.e., acquaintance with) a particular object (its meaning), but knowing *how* to use it correctly. The latter, in particular, points to a concept of meaning which entirely avoids reifying meanings. In stating his position Russell very carefully uses only the verbs 'use' and 'understand' and avoids any nominalization.[28] The definite description, 'the meaning of "*w*"', is reserved for whatever '*w*' designates, what we are calling its Russellian-meaning.[29] The meaning of a word for Russell, the Russellian-meaning of a word, was always some objective entity. But, after 1918, understanding the word did not involve any kind of object at all, it consisted entirely in knowing how to use it properly.[30]

There is another respect in which Russell's treatment of language in *The Analysis of Mind* anticipates Wittgenstein's—this time in methodology rather than doctrine. Wittgenstein is quite

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[28]In OOP, 77, he does use 'meaning' in this sense as a noun, but he puts it in sneer quotes.

[29]Though he does use 'meaning' to cover also the dictionary definition of the word, i.e., what he had called the 'sense' of the word in his letter to Welby.

[30]Looking back, one can find hints of this as early as *The Principles of Mathematics*, where, when he first talks of meaning, he notes that a meaningless sound 'could not be employed in the . . . way in which language employs words' (POM, 42). If this remark points to any theory of meaning at all, it is surely to the use theory. But then, rather than develop this suggestion, he turns his attention to the objects that the expressions indicate (and subsequently connects this to an account of the understanding of words by means of the concept of acquaintance).

naturally regarded as one of the originators of speech act semantics, and his discussion of language is conducted very largely through the discussion of particular examples of speech acts or series of them, which he called language-games. This is true in the *Philosophical Investigations*, but most tediously in *The Brown Book*. I'm not here concerned with the concept of a language-game itself, nor with the theory of its deployment in the philosophy of language, but with the actual use of language-games in philosophical discussion about language. I noted earlier that in *The Analysis of Mind* Russell does not proceed by means of definitions and general principles, but by using illustrative examples. For example, he illustrates how one might use the word 'motor' to cause someone to jump out of the way, and how this would be different if the person to whom we were speaking was a Frenchman with a limited knowledge of English, or if one were teaching the word to a child (AMi, 199). A few pages later he considers (following an example of Watson's) how a child might, like one of Wittgenstein's builders, call out 'box' when they need a box to put their toys in (AMi, 204). The use of such examples fits very well with an account of language in which meaning is 'distilled' from use, for the examples give us illustrations of the way words are used. The similarities between Russell's examples and Wittgenstein's language-games are much less striking than those between Russell's and Wittgenstein's accounts of the importance of use in understanding an expression. Nonetheless, if any of Russell's examples had been used by Wittgenstein, they would surely have been treated as language-games, so it is worth noting that using such simple examples as ways of explaining the operation of language is something that occurs first in Russell, and then, with much greater emphasis, in Wittgenstein.

All this, in itself, might not have had great historical significance. Russell was constantly putting out original ideas which proved fruitful in other hands. And we don't always know whether Russell's suggestion affected subsequent developments or not: for example, his proposal, in his Introduction to the *Trac-*

tatus, of a hierarchy of languages for semantic purposes, a decade before Tarski cashed the idea in to good effect in the semantic conception of truth. We have no idea whether Tarski was influenced by Russell or not. We do know that he went far beyond Russell's suggestion.

The present case is different, however, for we have very convincing evidence that Wittgenstein read *The Analysis of Mind* with great care, from Garth Hallett's wonderfully well-informed *Companion to Wittgenstein's "Philosophical Investigations"* (Hallett 1977). One of Hallett's undertakings in the book is to identify the views against which Wittgenstein's remarks in the *Philosophical Investigations* are directed. It will come as no surprise that Russell's views are high on the list, but it did surprise me how many allusions Hallett found to *The Analysis of Mind*, for I did not suppose that that was one of Russell's books that Wittgenstein thought should be bound in red. There are far too many allusions for me to list here: nearly forty in the first three hundred numbered paragraphs alone. They come from all parts of Russell's book, including many from the lecture on words and meaning, and almost all of them are points on which Wittgenstein disagrees with Russell. Hallett treats *The Analysis of Mind* as a foil to the *Investigations*. He holds that Russell's book 'is vitiated from start to finish by Russell's disregard of the truth "Essence is expressed by grammar" (PI, §371). He forgets that things are what we call them.' He says that Russell's book would be an 'impossibility' for 'anyone aware of the linguistic problems that Russell ignores' (Hallett 1977, 35). And for that very reason, he thinks that a comparison of the *Philosophical Investigations* with *The Analysis of Mind* 'is almost as revealing as a comparison with the *Tractatus*' (*ibid.*).

Hallett is concerned throughout to emphasize the singularity of Wittgenstein's philosophy. He is much less thorough in identifying respects in which Wittgenstein's ideas were anticipated by others. So, despite the care with which he searched *The Analysis of Mind* for doctrines Wittgenstein was taking aim at, he managed to miss the passage about understanding an expression

which I quoted above, despite its clear anticipation of several important Wittgensteinian themes (including the comparison of languages and games). Indeed, Russell's remark that meaning is distilled from use might seem to constitute some degree of recognition that things are what we call them, the fundamental insight whose absence, Hallett thinks, vitiates the entire book. These oversights notwithstanding, the evidence Hallett presents makes it clear that Wittgenstein read *The Analysis of Mind* very carefully indeed, and I don't think *he* missed the passage. I think he made very good use of it.

4. The Use Theory of Meaning

Now it might be said in Wittgenstein's defence that it was he who emphasized the importance of the use account of meaning, and put it at the centre of his philosophy of language. This is certainly true. Russell, as we have already acknowledged, did not pay it a great deal of attention. Essentially all that he said about meaning (in the relevant, non-Russellian, sense) was that it was 'distilled out of [use] by observation and analysis'. But Wittgenstein can hardly be credited with having made an honest theory out of this remark—though, in fairness, he cannot be accused of trying to either. He aimed, he said, for a picture rather than a theory— a useful conceit, for pictures have no logical consequences— but what he offered by way of a picture was, essentially, the following remark: 'For a *large* class of cases—though not for all—in which we employ the word "meaning" it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language' (PI, §43). For Russell meaning was derived from use by observation an analysis. For Wittgenstein it is identified with use—though only in 'a *large* class of cases' and only with use 'in the language'. Much ink has been spilled trying to work out what Wittgenstein meant.[31]

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[31]Including an earlier book by Hallett essentially devoted to this one remark (Hallett 1967). Though, again, exceedingly well-informed (including, so far

As Fogelin (1976, 121–22) points out, words can be used in all sorts of ways, not all of which are relevant to their meaning. Thus words can be used as passwords, to frighten people (when they are shouted in their ear), to practice typing, as part of a code, to test a sound system, to drown out a speaker, etc. (The first two examples are Fogelin's.) We need, therefore, some way of excluding these sorts of uses. To this end we could, as Fogelin notes, construct a 'careful taxonomy of the uses of language', but Fogelin rejects this because it is 'difficult' and 'saddle[s] Wittgenstein with paraphernalia he chose not to develop'. Instead, he proposes to 'rely upon context to settle what uses are relevant to a discussion' (*ibid.*, 122). But this really will not do. We have (with two qualifications) a general account of the meaning of a word in terms of [some of] its uses and we have a promissory note (without any substantive backing) that context will reveal which uses those are. This is feeble, even for a picture, because we don't know what's in the picture and what's not—a picture may not have logical consequences, but it does at least have a boundary. Moreover, it seems to me that it is more feeble than what Wittgenstein actually offers; for Wittgenstein says that the meaning of a word is its use *in the language* and a case could, I suppose, be made that the sort of uses I listed above are not uses *in the language*. This, too, is a promissory note, but it does at least suggest where the relevant division in the taxonomy may be found and (albeit very vaguely) on what sort of principle it might be based. Obviously, an adequate theory (or even an adequate picture) would require a good deal more detail.

There are, however, even more basic difficulties with understanding what Wittgenstein means at PI, §43. It is hard to take the remark quite literally, for then every time a word was used its meaning would change. But if Wittgenstein does not mean actual, particular uses of the word, at specific times, on specific

occasions, then he seems to be invoking a some kind of abstract idealization—the very kind of 'thing' for which, as he frequently complains, we are led to search fruitlessly by the appearance of a substantive.[32] By far the best account of Wittgenstein's definition that I know of is that given by J. F. M. Hunter, who treats it as a definition by abstraction. His basic statement of Wittgenstein's position is that in sentences where the noun 'meaning' is used we can substitute 'use' and where the verb 'means' occurs we can substitute 'has the same use as' (Hunter 1971, 382). The second clause is the heart of the proposal: it allows us to move from '"*w*" means "*w*'"' to '"*w*" has the same use as "*w*'"'. Generalizing and nominalizing, gives us 'two expressions have the same meaning iff they have the same use' and then, as in a standard definition by abstraction, 'the meaning of an expression is what it has in common with all expressions that have the same use'. Hunter, however, baulks at the nominalization. He takes very seriously to heart Wittgenstein's warning that the presence of a substantive makes us look for an object correlated to it and in this case he is emphatic that there is no such object as the meaning of '*w*'. Hunter would have us shun 'meaning' as a substantive altogether, as Russell did in *The Analysis of Mind*. He is even so bold as to suggest that Wittgenstein's use of the phrase 'the meaning of a word' in PI, §43, is 'misleading' (Hunter 1971, 384, 387). But there is really no cause for embarrassment here: language is full of substantives which lack correlated objects; the desire to look for an object when we see a substantive can be resisted! But the usual way of dealing with such cases, Russell's theory of definite descriptions, will not help in this case, because we will need some sentences of the form 'φ (the meaning of "*w*")', where the description has a primary occurrence, to be true. In the case of definitions by abstraction, however, there is a perfectly good trick

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as I can tell, discussions of all relevant secondary literature up to the date of publication), it does little to clarify Wittgenstein's position.

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[32]'We are looking for the use of a sign, but we look for it as though it were an object *co-existing* with the sign. (One of the reasons for this mistake is again that we are looking for a "thing corresponding to a substantive.")' (BBB, 5; cf. also 1).

for achieving this and one which, moreover, Wittgenstein would have been very familiar with, having seen it used elsewhere by Russell. We don't have to postulate an object for 'the meaning of "*w*"' to refer to, we can simply define 'the meaning of "*w*"' as 'the set of all expressions having the same uses as "*w*"'. Here we have no ontology beyond the expressions and their uses, the set is taken entirely extensionally, and in this particular case (so far as I can see) we don't even have to suppose that the set is iterative.

So here we have a plausible-looking definition of the meaning of an expression in terms of its use, which respects Wittgenstein's requirement that the meaning of an expression is not an object. It goes beyond anything suggested by Russell in *The Analysis of Mind*, but it does not require any paraphernalia which he has not already countenanced. How much of it is Wittgenstein and how much Hunter is a difficult question. Hunter takes some trouble to show that nothing in it is inconsistent with anything Wittgenstein says in the *Philosophical Investigations*.

But, alas, it will not quite do. Fogelin's problems come back to haunt us, though not quite in the same form as those already presented. We do still have to cash in our promissory note about 'use in the language' and 'in the language' ought to be added as a rider to 'use' throughout the discussion in the previous paragraph.[33] I have no proposals to make on how to make good on the promissory note, but let's suppose the idea is on the right lines and that it can be done. There are other types of use, ones which it is hard to think of as 'outside the language', where our definition fails. If any two words have the same meaning, then 'tv' and 'television' do, yet there are occasions where one can be used and the other *cannot*: e.g., in the post-synchronization of dialogue in a film, or if you need a rhyme for 'me'. It is very hard to suppose that writing poetry or dubbing a sound-

track uses words 'outside of the language'. So we need to make an exception for some additional class (or classes) of cases, not acknowledged by Wittgenstein. What one wants to exclude are those cases in which other factors than meaning are relevant to the use, but this renders our explanation of meaning circular. How else to do it, I have no idea.

Nor do I know how to exclude the converse type of case, where words with different meanings are given the same use. In language as it is actually spoken (or written) error is ubiquitous and on many occasions it involves mistaking the meanings of words. Different cases need to be taken into account, ranging from isolated slips of the tongue and pen, through individual speech pathologies (such as those of Mrs Malaprop), to errors which occur relatively frequently across a wide range of speakers (e.g., 'disinterested' instead of 'uninterested') or writers (e.g., 'principle' instead of 'principal'), and to cases where the misuse becomes so pervasive that the word changes its meaning (e.g., 'fulsome'[34]). That cases of this last type occur is undeniable (and acknowledged by the practice of even conservative lexicographers) and gives support to the thesis that meaning is a function of use. That cases of the first type occur but should not be taken to have any effect on the meaning of the words involved seems equally undeniable. It would be idiotic to suppose that there are sharp boundaries between these different cases, but if our definition of the meaning of a word is to work we have to find some reason for excluding all these cases except the last one from those uses which determine the word's meaning. The obvious reason is that they are all clearly *misuses* of a word, only uses in the last group may be considered correct uses. This suggests that we should limit the definition of 'the meaning of "*w*"' to those expressions which may *correctly* be used in the same way as '*w*'—but here 'correctly' *must* be understood to include 'cor-

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[33]Making the addition does cause at least one new problem. We would want to say that 'five' and 'fünf' have the same meaning, but in what language do they have the same use?

[34]This used to mean something like 'excessively obsequious' but (at least in North-American English) is now more commonly used to mean just 'full' (or perhaps 'fuller').

rectly insofar as meaning is concerned'; for, otherwise, we will not have drawn the distinction where we need it. But, if that's what 'correctly' means, our definition of 'meaning' is circular.

That the meaning of an expression, in the sense in which we have been using the word in this section, depends, as Russell said, upon its use seems very plausible. It would surely be impossible for *all* the speakers of a language to be mistaken about the meaning of an expression with an established use in their language. Likewise, an outsider would look to the way the expression was used, when seeking an appropriate translation, for example. Neither Russell nor Wittgenstein, however, provide us with anything like an adequate theory of meaning as use or even an adequate definition of 'meaning' in terms of 'use' (though I think Hunter comes much closer to doing the latter than either of them). Nonetheless, it is unfortunate that deference to Wittgenstein and disdain for Russell have obscured (1) the true order of priority and (2) the very large amount of work that still needs to be done on a use theory of meaning.

Acknowledgements

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