Russell on Substitutivity and the Abandonment of Propositions

Ian Proops

University of Texas at Austin

Introduction

In the summer of 1905 Bertrand Russell wrote to his American friend, Lucy Donnelley, with the news that he had just completed "an article on George IV for *Mind*" (Russell 1994, 414). In spite of its mild frivolity, such a description of "On Denoting" contains a large measure of truth. For this article's puzzle about George IV does indeed have a claim to be considered one of its main foci. This is so partly because of the well-known role the puzzle plays in motivating the Theory of Descriptions, but also because of the less well-known role its *full* solution—something that requires resources beyond the Theory of Descriptions—plays in shaping the metaphysical and (especially) epistemological views Russell develops from 1905 onward. Most notably, *in the context of certain of his other commitments*, Russell's solution entails the following (shortly to be explicated) epistemological principle:

> Full Disclosure: Whenever a subject, *S*, is acquainted (in Russell's technical sense of that term) with an object, *x*, *S* is acquainted with every part of *x*.

This substantive principle[1] has a profound relevance for Russell's conception of what is usually (if somewhat inaccurately) called a "logically proper name."[2] A name of this sort, which I shall simply term a "genuine Russellian name"—or "genuine name"—for short, is a symbol that is not "defined in context"—as, for example, in Russell's opinion descriptions are—but rather has "meaning in isolation" (compare Russell and Whitehead 1990, 66). Since Russell supposes that we understand a genuine name only if we are acquainted with its bearer (Marsh 1956, 205), Full Disclosure entails that the bearer of a genuine name must, in a certain sense, reveal itself fully to any subject who understands its name. Tracing out this and other consequences of Russell's solution to the George IV puzzle will be the main goal of this article. We shall ask what his solution entails, and how far Russell is aware of the various commitments he incurs by adopting it.

Perhaps the most surprising implication of Russell's solution concerns his conception of our cognitive relation to propositions. I shall argue that, in the context of his other commitments, his solution entails that we cannot be acquainted with propositions. As we shall see, Russell in all likelihood appreciated this fact, and his appreciation of it would plausibly have motivated his adoption of the so-called Multiple Relation Theory of Judgment. These developments, I shall argue, deprived him of any positive reason to believe in propositions, and so prompted him to devise arguments against them. The most promising of these arguments, I shall argue, rests on the Principle of Sufficient Reason.

My aims will also be critical. I will argue that certain of Russell's epistemological views entail that there exist certain cases of the George IV puzzle that resist his solution. I will further argue that Russell eventually

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1. Acquaintance for Russell is a form of *immediate* awareness; so one cannot be said to be acquainted with an object in its entirety by virtue of being acquainted with one of its parts (as one might, for example, in the ordinary sense be said to be acquainted with Paris by virtue of being acquainted with the Champs-Elysées). Accordingly, Full Disclosure is not in *this* way trivially true. Nor does Russell regard Full Disclosure as true by definition; for, as we shall see, he eventually comes to regard this principle as false but without changing his conception of acquaintance.

2. The label "logically proper name," although widely attributed to Russell, occurs, to my knowledge, nowhere in his writings.

came to appreciate this problem and that his appreciation of it led him eventually to back away from Full Disclosure.

Such a project will require a more sustained examination of Russell's discussion of the George IV puzzle than has yet been attempted in the scholarly literature. I submit that this task is worth undertaking for a number of reasons. First, commentators have yet to achieve a fully satisfactory understanding either of the puzzle itself or of Russell's solution to it. This circumstance is owing, I believe, to a failure correctly to identify the substitutivity principle Russell intends to be defending. Second, partly as a result of this first failing, there is a lacuna in the scholarly literature on the question of what exactly Russell is committed to by his solution to the George IV puzzle and how far those commitments shape his logical atomism. Third, the identification of those commitments reveals Russell's position to be more multiply buttressed than one might otherwise suppose: features of his view that are adopted for apparently remote reasons turn out to be also demanded by his solution to the puzzle, and certain points of detail in his view turn out to be motivated, in part, by that solution.

The article divides into eight sections and a conclusion. The first section discusses the context in which Russell introduces the puzzle. The second defends a nonstandard interpretation of the puzzle and of its solution. The third and fourth sections consider the consequences of Russell's solution for his conception of genuine Russellian names (and for his conception of their bearers). The fifth section raises a problem for Russell's solution to the George IV puzzle, arguing that, even when it is charitably interpreted, there remain recalcitrant instances of the puzzle. The sixth section argues that one of the consequences of Russell's solution is that some *sentences* need to be treated as "incomplete symbols." It argues, further, that in the context of his other views, his solution entails that we cannot be acquainted with propositions. This aspect of his view, I shall argue, motivates Russell's adoption of the Multiple Relation Theory of Judgment. The seventh section asks what role, if any, the paradoxes played in motivating this theory. I argue that although certain paradoxes prompted Russell's first experiments with the theory, they do not by themselves explain his eventual firm endorsement of it. The eighth and final section examines Russell's reasons for eventually coming to hold that there are no propositions.

1. Situating the George IV Puzzle

Before presenting the George IV puzzle, it will be useful to consider the context in which it arises. The puzzle is one of three that Russell supposes must be solved by any adequate theory of the meanings of those expressions he calls "denoting phrases." In the *Principles of Mathematics*, first published in 1903, Russell (1996, sec. 58) identifies the denoting phrases of English with those expressions having one of the following forms: "all *F*s," "any *F*," "some *F*," "every *F*," "an *F*," "the *F*." In "On Denoting" he adds the expressions "everything," "nothing," and "something" to the list. The challenge Russell faces in "On Denoting" is to give an account of the meanings of these phrases that solves all three puzzles without generating any further conundrums or paradoxes. The puzzles all concern the proper treatment of the phrase "the *F*."

The first puzzle is a version of the problem of negative existentials. It challenges us to explain how a statement such as "The round square does not subsist"[3] can be both significant and true.[4] The puzzle arises because, from a naive point of view, it can seem as though this sentence can be meaningful only if it introduces a subject of predication, and yet, if it is true, no such subject subsists. Russell solves the puzzle by rejecting the underlying assumption that this statement is of subject-predicate form. Instead, the Theory of Descriptions treats this statement and its fellows as negated existential generalizations. The statement is taken to mean "There is no unique round square"—that is, " $\sim \exists x \ [\forall y$ (round y & square $y \leftrightarrow y = x)]$ "—and so is treated as unproblematically true.

The second puzzle arises from the fact that sentences containing improper definite descriptions—"The present King of France is bald," for example—can seem to generate counterexamples to the law of excluded middle. It gains purchase, if it does, only because it takes seriously

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3. Here "subsist" means "have being" rather than "have temporal being" or "exist."

4. This version of the puzzle is prominent in the paragraph of "On Denoting" in which Russell presents its solution (see the paragraph numbered "(3)" in Russell 1956, 48). But when the puzzle is *first* presented in "On Denoting" (45), it is formulated in a manner more faithful to the historical position of Russell's opponent in this context, Alexius Meinong. At this earlier point, Russell presents his target as being the view that the likes of the round square and the present King of France, although they do *not* subsist, are nonetheless to be "admitted" as *objects* (45, 47). Russell appears to be picking up on Meinong's view that the round square and the present King of France have absistence (*Aussersein*) (that is, the property of being an object) even if they lack subsistence (*Sein*) (the property of being). (I am indebted to Jon Shaheen for help in understanding Meinong's view.)

a traditional formulation of that law in which negation is taken to attach to a predicate, namely, "*A* is *B* or *A* is not *B*." So formulated, the law can appear to face a counterexample because neither the sentence "The present King of France is bald" nor the sentence "The present King of France is not bald" seems to express a truth. Russell solves the puzzle by maintaining that, because descriptions introduce distinctions of scope, the traditional formulation of the law of excluded middle is incorrect. The problem with the traditional formulation is that it forces the description in "The present King of France is not bald" to have wide scope with respect to negation. The correct formulation would be rather: "Either *P* or it is not the case that *P*," which permits the negation sign to have wide scope with respect to the description.

2. Formulating the George IV Puzzle—and Interpreting Its Solution

These puzzles are familiar and their interpretation relatively uncontroversial. The George IV puzzle, by contrast, is harder to formulate, and the details of its presentation and solution have—in my view—not yet been adequately nailed down. The present section is devoted to arguing for a nonstandard interpretation of the puzzle.

Russell (1956, 47–48) introduces the puzzle as follows:

> If *a* is identical with *b*, whatever is true of the one is true of the other, and either may be substituted for the other in any proposition without altering the truth or falsehood of that proposition. Now George IV wished to know whether Scott was the author of *Waverley*; and in fact Scott *was* the author of *Waverley*. Hence we may substitute *Scott* for *the author of* '*Waverley*', and thereby prove that George IV wished to know whether Scott was Scott. Yet an interest in the law of identity can hardly be attributed to the first gentleman of Europe.

In order to analyze the puzzle, it will be convenient to have reference to the following formal statement of the argument it discusses.

Argument A

P1. Scott is the author of *Waverley*.
P2. George IV wished to know whether Scott was the author of *Waverley*.
 C. George IV wished to know whether Scott was Scott.

The puzzle arises because, in argument A, a patently invalid substitutional inference seems to be licensed by a substitutivity principle that, according to the purveyor of the puzzle, has overwhelming plausibility. Let us call this principle, whose proper formulation will occupy us shortly, "SP." Russell's first task, whatever else he might do in his discussion of George IV's curiosity, is to show that argument A is not in fact a counterexample to SP.

How should SP be formulated? Standardly, it is taken to be a principle governing the substitution of one linguistic expression for another (see, for example, L. Linsky 1966, 673; Soames 2003, 119). While Leonard Linsky ventures no determinate formulation of SP, Scott Soames formulates it as what he calls "the law of substitutivity of identity" ("SI"):

> SI: When α and β are singular referring expressions, and the sentence $\boldsymbol{\alpha = \beta}$ is true, α and β refer to the same thing, and so substitution of one for the other in any true sentence will always yield a true sentence.

(Here and hereafter boldface is used as a device of quasi-quotation.)

Principle SI is expressly concerned with the substitution of certain linguistic items within others. In contrast, I take SP to concern the substitution of propositional constituents, which are not, in general, linguistic in nature, within nonlinguistic Russellian propositions.[5] I would therefore formulate it as the following generalization of a *salva veritate* principle ("SV," for "Saving (truth-)Value"):

> SV: The substitution of identical propositional constituents within a proposition preserves that proposition's truth-value.[6]

By a "propositional constituent" I mean anything that is a "term" in Russell's technical sense of "term" deriving from *The Principles of Mathematics* (hereafter abbreviated as "*Principles*" but cited as "Russell 1996"). A term, in this sense, is any object that is one definite thing, as opposed to a plural or intrinsically indefinite object (Russell 1996, sec. 47; compare sec. 58,

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5. Since some propositions are about linguistic items, "nonlinguistic" propositions may contain some linguistic constituents. The point is that not *all* of their constituents may be linguistic—in other words: propositions are not sentences.

6. The possibility of conceiving of SP in this way was first suggested to me by Michael Potter (in conversation). The arguments I present for this interpretation are, however, my own.

footnote "∗").[7] What matters most for our purposes is that propositional constituents are not *in general* linguistic items—though, because some propositions are about linguistic items, in certain instances they may be.

In the present section I will explain how the Theory of Descriptions solves the puzzle. It does so, I will argue, by showing that SP, when construed as SV, is not—in spite of appearances to the contrary—falsified by the manifest invalidity of argument A. I will then discuss the more standard account of these matters offered by Linsky and Soames. Against this standard reading, I will contend that the textual evidence supports the interpretive thesis that SP is SV rather than SI.

In order to see how the Theory of Descriptions solves the George IV puzzle, it will be helpful to set the puzzle out as an argument for the falsehood of SV. So, to that end, consider the following pair of sentences:

[A] George IV wanted to know whether Scott was the author of *Waverley*.

[B] George IV wanted to know whether Scott was Scott.

The argument would run as follows:

Premise 1 Scott and the author of *Waverley* are identicals.

Premise 2 The proposition expressed by [B] results from the proposition expressed by [A] by the substitution of Scott for the author of *Waverley*.

Premise 3 [A] is true and [B] is false.

Therefore: SV is false.

Russell's solution involves rejecting this argument's second premise on the ground that the phrase "the author of *Waverley*" contributes no propositional constituent to the proposition in whose linguistic expression it occurs. Accordingly, the proposition expressed by [B] cannot, after all, be taken to result from the substitution of the man, Scott, for a propositional constituent designated by the phrase "the author of *Waverley*" in [A]. From this it follows that the proposition expressed by [B] is not obtained from the one expressed by [A] by the substitution of identicals. The invalidity of argument A is thus shown not to constitute a counterexample to SV after all.[8]

7. At this stage Russell viewed the denotation of "a man" as an indefinite object (Russell 1996, sec. 58, footnote "∗").

8. It is worth noting that one view of the semantics of definite descriptions that is rejected in "On Denoting" would also resolve the puzzle. This is Russell's view in the

The Theory of Descriptions explains why the phrase "the author of *Waverley*" contributes no propositional constituent to the proposition expressed by [A]. This theory maintains that all definite descriptions are "incomplete symbols," meaning thereby that they have no meaning in isolation but are merely defined in context (compare Russell and Whitehead 1990, 66). The theory, when fully developed, comprises two contextual definitions, which show us how to eliminate descriptions from the contexts "The *F* is *G*" and "The *F* subsists"—or, strictly speaking, from scope-disambiguated counterparts of these contexts. Glossing over the (in other contexts important) detail of scope, we may state these definitions as follows:

The *F* is $G = \exists x\,[\forall y\,(Fy \leftrightarrow y = x)\ \&\ Gx\,]$ Df.
The *F* subsists $= \exists x\,[\forall y\,(Fy \leftrightarrow y = x)]$ Df.

Russell takes these definitions to show that the meaningfulness of the expression "The *F*" does not consist in its contributing a propositional constituent to the propositions in whose verbal expression it occurs. Rather, its being a meaningful expression consists only in its contributing systematically (in the way shown by these definitions) to the *determination* of the proposition expressed by the sentence in which it occurs.

It is important to note that Russell regarded the provision of a theory according to which the phrase "the author of *Waverley*" has no meaning in isolation as constituting a *full* solution to this instance of the puzzle. His supplementary remarks about the permissibility of substitutions when the definite description to be replaced has "primary occurrence," although they guard against a possible misunderstanding, are not essential to the stated puzzle's solution. (These points will be elaborated upon later.)

By combining the Theory of Descriptions with the description theory of ordinary names (and mass terms), Russell's solution may be extended to cases of apparent substitution failure in which the expression to be replaced is an ordinary proper name (or a mass term), rather than a description. From 1903 onward, Russell comes to treat ordinary proper names of "mythical personages" such as "Apollo" as disguised definite

Principles of Mathematics according to which a definite description expresses a denoting concept. According to this theory, the proposition expressed by [B] does not result from the one expressed by [A] by the substitution of identicals since what Scott replaces is not an author but a denoting concept. Russell, however, rejects the *Principles'* theory for other reasons, among them the notoriously obscure "Gray's Elegy Argument."

descriptions.[9] At this time he takes a similar view of names of "interesting persons," presumably because these names occur in the dictionary where their meaning is given by a definite description (Russell 1994, 285). In 1904, he extends this account to terms for mythological stuffs, for example, "nectar" and "ambrosia" (Russell 1973a, 100). It is less clear exactly when he first comes to view ordinary names of (so to speak) uninteresting persons and nonmythological material objects as truncated definite descriptions; but a *commitment* to doing so is clearly already present in "On Denoting"; for there he denies that we have acquaintance with material things or with other minds (Russell 1956, 56). If we cannot be acquainted with these things, we cannot name them. But if we cannot name them, their apparent names (for example, "Venus," "Balfour") must be disguised definite descriptions for they clearly have meaning of some kind inasmuch as they allow us to say true things by uttering the sentences in which they occur. I take it, therefore, that as early as 1905 Russell is likely to have been aware of the applicability of his solution to the George IV puzzle (in its extended form) to cases of the puzzle generated by nonintersubstitutable but apparently coreferring ordinary proper names.

　　Let us take stock. We have seen that Russell's solution to the initial puzzle about George IV—that is, the puzzle about how SV is to be saved from counterexample—makes no appeal to scope distinctions. His solution's two essential elements are: (a) the idea, secured by the Theory of Descriptions, that definite descriptions have no meaning in isolation, and (b) the description theory of ordinary names. Each of these elements is, of course, open to challenge, and indeed (b) is nowadays almost universally taken to have been refuted by Saul Kripke's arguments in his *Naming and Necessity* (1980). Nonetheless, in view of the special place occupied by "On Denoting" as one of the founding documents of analytic philosophy, it seems worth asking how well Russell's solution fares on its own terms— that is, granting (a) and (b) for the sake of argument—and seeing what it entails for his philosophy. We will turn to these questions shortly, but first it will be necessary to defend our interpretation of SP as SV rather than SI.

　　Perhaps the most obvious consideration in favor of this interpretation is that SV possesses a degree of obviousness that SI lacks. This

　　9. See Russell's unpublished essay, written in 1903, "On the Meaning and Denotation of Phrases" (Russell 1994, 285–96). And for a useful discussion of the development of the description theory of names (from which this article has benefited), see Kaplan 2005, especially 987–89.

matters for two reasons. First, if the puzzle is to have real force, one should not be able to solve it simply by denying SP. Russell, after all, takes the Theory of Descriptions to provide the key to the puzzle's resolution. And yet, on the standard interpretation, it is hard to say why he should not rather just take apparent failures of substitutivity to *refute* SP. (Some commentators who are apt to read SP as SI are, accordingly, inclined not to see a puzzle here at all, simply because they take SI to be obviously false. See, for example, Sainsbury 1979, 107.) Second, and relatedly, Russell takes SP to have a degree of obviousness equal to that of a particular logical principle, namely, the indiscernibility of identicals. That much is evident from the fact that, in the paragraph that serves to introduce the puzzle (Russell 1956, 47–48, quoted above), he runs the two principles together and seems to suggest that the former is merely a reformulation, or perhaps a corollary, of the latter. The principles *are* close cousins— especially so in an early Russellian setting—but they are not identical. Nonetheless, the fact that Russell seems to regard them as closely connected suggests that SP should be read as having the evidence of a law of logic. Principle SI, I contend, lacks such evidence, while SV possesses it.

A more subtle consideration counting in favor of our reading concerns its ability to accommodate an otherwise problematic feature of the passage in which the solution is presented. This passage, which for convenience we shall call "passage A," runs as follows:

> The puzzle about George IV's curiosity is now seen to have a very simple solution. The proposition 'Scott was the author of *Waverley*,' which was written out in its unabbreviated form in the previous paragraph, does not contain any constituent 'the author of *Waverley*' for which we could substitute 'Scott.' (Russell 1956, 51–52)

A prima facie problem for the standard reading is that the sentence "Scott was the author of *Waverley*" plainly *does* contain the *linguistic* constituent: "the author of *Waverley*." On the standard reading, then, Russell is, on the face of it, denying the obvious. This is not a problem for our reading since we take Russell to be saying that the nonlinguistic proposition expressed by the sentence "Scott was the author of *Waverley*"[10] contains no propositional constituent corresponding to the words "the author of *Waverley*."

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10. Leonard Linsky (1966, 674) contends that the passage just quoted contains a slip. The sentence into which the word "Scott" would be substituted in argument A is not "Scott was the author of *Waverley*" but "George IV wished to know whether Scott was the

In order to get around this difficulty, Linsky and Soames are forced to depart from the actual wording of passage A. They read Russell as claiming that the relevant *sentence* does not contain the phrase "the author of *Waverley*" *when it is written out in its unabbreviated form* (see Soames 2003, 120; L. Linsky 1966, 673). On such a reading, Russell's solution involves arguing that principle SI does not in fact apply to argument A since, in the first place, this principle must be applied only to sentences that are written out in their unabbreviated form (Soames 2003, 120), and, in the second, the unabbreviated form of the second premise contains no phrase "the author of *Waverley*" for the word "Scott" to replace (for a similar reading see L. Linsky 1966, 674).

A second (small) mark against such a reading, then, is precisely that it demands such a departure from Russell's actual language in passage A. Taking his words at face value, Russell's meaning is that the proposition, which was just written out in its unabbreviated form, contains no constituent 'the author of *Waverley*.' His words simply do not mean that the proposition contains no such constituent *when so written out*.[11] But even though the standard reading departs from Russell's actual words, one might still try to defend it on more general textual grounds. Soames and Linsky can point to the fact that Russell is (or appears to be) quoting words and phrases when talking about the substitution of propositional constituents. Moreover, he talks about a proposition's being "written out" in its original form, which might seem to suggest that "propositions" in this context are linguistic in nature. Might these points indicate that what is in question is, after all, the substitution of words and phrases?

This seems doubtful, for, first, these textual considerations are not as decisive as they might initially appear, and, second, the standard

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author of Waverley." This may not, however, really be a slip. For the fact that the shorter sentence contains no propositional constituent corresponding to the phrase "the author of *Waverley*" entails that neither does the longer sentence in which it is embedded.

11. What *is* the point of Russell's mentioning that the proposition was just written out in its unabbreviated form? In my view, it is to draw attention to the fact that no constituent corresponding to the phrase "the author of *Waverley*" occurs in such a proposition. This fact is *revealed* through a linguistic analysis, but it is fundamentally a point about the constitution of a proposition rather than the language used to express it. This is also the point of Russell's saying in the paragraph immediately preceding passage A that "The phrase *per se* [that is, the phrase "the author of *Waverley*"] has no meaning, because in any proposition in which it occurs the proposition, fully expressed, does not contain the phrase, which has been broken up" (Marsh 1956, 51).

reading cannot explain an important emphasis Russell supplies in the continuation of the passage in which he presents his solution.

As a preliminary to establishing the first of these points, we should note that Russell's conventions about use and mention cannot carry much weight in the present context. Whether Russell is confused or merely casual about use and mention is controversial, but he evidently cannot be taken to be operating with precisely the conventions governing use and mention that we find natural today. Indeed, we may note that in the context of Russell's notoriously obscure "Gray's Elegy argument" the expression:

'the center of mass of the solar system'

is supposed to *purport* to refer not to an expression but to a denoting concept (which, if there were such things, would be the *meaning* of an expression). In the "Gray's Elegy" discussion, Russell tries to show that this expression cannot do what it purports to do. To explain the reasons why that is so would require another article, but the simple lesson we may draw for present purposes is just that the result of encasing a definite description in quotation marks need not, for Russell, be intended to be a name or description of an expression. Furthermore, the fact that Russell describes a proposition as having been "written out" in its unabbreviated form need not indicate that he is thinking of propositions as linguistic entities. As Richard Cartwright (1987, x) observes, one might be said to have written out a nonlinguistic proposition in virtue of writing out a sentence expressing it.[12] These textual points, then, do not after all provide support for the Linsky-Soames interpretation. Having noted this fact, we may now turn to what I take to be a third point that counts against their interpretation.

The passage in which Russell sets out his solution continues:

This does not interfere with the truth of inferences resulting from making what is *verbally* the substitution of 'Scott' for 'the author of *Waverley*', so long as 'the author of *Waverley*' has what I call a *primary* occurrence in the proposition considered. (Russell 1956, 52)

No adequate account of this afterthought can neglect to explain the significance of Russell's emphasis on the notion of a specifically *ver-*

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12. I am grateful to an anonymous referee for reminding me of this point. Richard Cartwright, for his part, credits Helen Morris Cartwright with having first persuaded him of it.

bal substitution. And yet this is a point about which both Soames and Linsky are silent. I shall shortly argue that their reading in fact cannot account for this qualification. But first let us see how my own reading accounts for it.

On my reading, the "verbal" substitution of 'Scott' for 'the author of *Waverley*'—Russell's single quotes are deliberately retained here[13]— would be the substitution of the *word* "Scott" for the phrase "the author of *Waverley*." A nonverbal substitution of 'Scott' for 'the author of *Waverley*', on the other hand, *if there were such a thing* (and from "On Denoting" onward, Russell supposes there is not) would be the substitution of the propositional constituent designated by the phrase "Scott" for the propositional constituent designated by "the author of *Waverley*." Russell's solution involves arguing that argument A involves no nonverbal substitution of 'Scott' for 'The author of *Waverley*.' In his afterthought, Russell is defending his solution by underlining the fact that it does not imply the invalidity of all substitutional inferences in which a name replaces a description denoting the name's bearer. His point is that when the substitution in question is merely a "verbal" substitution, the corresponding substitutional inference *can* be valid. It will be valid in just those cases in which the identity in question is true and the description has primary occurrence (that is, wide scope with respect to the psychological verb).[14] By emphasizing that in such cases the substitution is merely "verbal" (that is, linguistic), Russell is emphasizing that the fact that the sentence into which the substitution is to be made does not express a proposition containing a constituent corresponding to the phrase "the author of *Waverley*" presents no obstacle to a truth-preserving substitution of the expression "Scott" for that phrase.

The standard reading, on the other hand, is incapable of explaining the contrast Russell is attempting to mark with the word "verbally." According to that reading, Russell's solution to the original puzzle consists in saying that, in the "unabbreviated" version of argument A, the word "Scott" is not substituted for the descriptive phrase "the author of

13. Russell is here treating an expression encased in single quotes as capable of two kinds of substitution (both a verbal and a nonverbal substitution). Incidentally, these quotation marks are systematically changed between the original (where they are double quotation marks) and the Marsh reprint (where they are single).

14. In order to obtain a properly general principle we shall, of course, need to modify Russell's account to say that a description has primary occurrence in a sentence, S, iff it has wide scope with respect to each so-called intensional-context forming operator in S. For present purposes, however, it will be convenient to gloss over this subtlety.

Waverley" simply because the latter phrase is not present to be substituted for in the sentence constituting the relevant "unabbreviated" premise. The difficulty for such a reading, however, is that the phrase "the author of *Waverley*" is no less absent from the "unabbreviated" form of the statement "George IV wished to know whether Scott was the author of *Waverley*" when the description is treated as having primary occurrence. So, on the standard reading, if we take a "verbal" substitution to be the substitution of one expression for another, the substitution will be blocked in this case too. On that reading, therefore, we would have to deem Russell to have blundered when he said that his solution to the puzzle "does not interfere" with the *verbal* substitution of 'Scott' for 'the author of *Waverley*' when the description has primary occurrence. Charitable interpretation would therefore dictate that on the standard reading a "verbal" substitution cannot simply be the substitution of one expression for another. But on that reading it is unclear what else Russell could intend this qualifier to indicate, and, significantly, Linsky and Soames offer no suggestions on this score.

In addition to these problems for the standard reading, there is a problem peculiar to Linsky's account, namely, that it misidentifies *the point* of Russell's solution. Linsky takes the solution to involve arguing that when SP does not license an inference, the corresponding argument is invalid (L. Linsky 1966, 674). He accordingly regards Russell's solution as inadequate on the ground that it entails the invalidity of manifestly valid arguments, such as the following:

Argument B

> Scott was the author of *Waverley*.
> Concerning the man who is in fact the author of *Waverley*, George IV wanted to know whether he was Scott.
> So concerning the man who is in fact Scott, George IV wanted to know whether he was Scott.

Russell, however, is not arguing that when SP fails to license an inference, the corresponding argument is invalid. He is merely arguing for the illusoriness of the appearance that SP (construed, of course, as SV) entails the validity of some argument that is in fact invalid—namely, argument A. His point is that although argument A is invalid, its invalidity does not constitute a counterexample to SP. Moreover, because

Linsky recognizes that Russell wishes to defend the validity of argument B, his reading leads him to draw the uncharitable conclusion that "Russell [abandons] the logical-mirage theory in the very paragraph in which he presents it" (L. Linsky 1966, 674). ("The logical-mirage theory" is Linsky's term for the theory that definite descriptions give only the illusion of being genuine names.)

The purpose of Russell's afterthought is to register the point that even when definite descriptions are recognized as having no meaning in isolation, inferences that involve the substitution of a name for a description denoting that name's bearer will continue to be valid so long as the description does not occur (as we would put it) within the scope of a psychological verb. He is thus indicating that there is a whole class of substitutional inferences we may recognize as valid, even though their validity is not entailed by SV, namely, those captured by the following principle, which governs *linguistic* substitutions:

> SL: For any expressions α and β, if **α = β** is true and β is a definite description with primary occurrence in a true sentence, *S*, we may substitute α for β in *S* without altering *S*'s truth-value.

In conclusion, there are three benefits of construing SP as SV rather than SI. First, doing so enables us to understand why Russell should have seen the principle, SP, as possessing a degree of self-evidence that requires us to resolve the puzzle by some means other than SP's rejection. Second, we can take Russell straightforwardly at his word when he says of "the proposition 'Scott was the author of *Waverley*'" that it contains "no constituent 'the author of *Waverley*'." And, third, we can explain the significance of Russell's qualification "verbally" in his discussion of valid substitutional inferences in which the description to be substituted for has primary occurrence.

Our discussion reveals a point that has not, to my knowledge, been noted before: there is no avoiding the conclusion that Russell is quite self-consciously defending two distinct substitutivity principles. One principle, SV, concerns the substitution of entities in propositions; the other, SL, concerns the substitution of expressions in sentences (where those expressions need not have meaning in isolation). The first is a self-evident principle that needs to be saved from an apparent counterexample; the second is a less obvious principle governing linguistic substitutions that serves to codify certain valid inferences concerning which the first principle is silent.

3. Substitutivity and the Bearers of Genuine Russellian Names

Russell's solution to the George IV puzzle suggests a recipe: whenever one encounters an argument that seems to present a violation of SV in which the replaced expression is an *ordinary* name, one should treat that name as in reality merely an "abbreviation" for a definite description (Marsh 1956, 200). Being merely a disguised—alternatively "telescoped," "truncated" (243)—definite description, this apparent name can then be supposed to lack meaning in isolation. Lacking meaning in isolation, it will not correspond to any propositional constituent—and so what would otherwise *seem* to be a truth-value-altering substitution of a propositional constituent for *itself* in a proposition will in fact be no such thing. More generally, the strategy will be to deploy the description theory of ordinary names in conjunction with the Theory of Descriptions to defuse apparent counterexamples to SV. Because such apparent failures of substitutivity are created by what seem to be informative and true identity statements, we might alternatively formulate the recipe as follows: whenever something seems to be a true, informative identity statement, at least one of the expressions flanking the identity sign must be taken to be a disguised definite description. It will follow that the sentence in question will not be an identity statement at all, but rather an existential quantification.[15]

   Russell's picture of analysis as a process terminating—if it terminates at all[16]—in names that are incapable of further analysis invites an obvious question: what if the unanalyzable names obtained at the end of analysis should themselves give rise to apparent failures of substitutivity? Suppose, for example, that my grasp of two coreferring *genuine* names should happen to be sustained by my acquaintance with two distinct and not simultaneously observed parts of one and the same object. If such a situation could arise, then it seems that a George IV–style puzzle might present itself that resisted Russell's solution; for, obviously, the resources of that solution will be exhausted once we get down to unanalyzable names.

   In order to avoid this difficulty, Russell must make substantive assumptions about either the nature of the referents of genuine Russellian names (hereafter I shall call these referents "Russellian objects") or

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   15. In making this point, I am, of course, prescinding from the fact that Russell himself takes identity to be a defined notion in *Principia*.
   16. Russell *believes* that the analysis of complexes terminates in simples, though he admits that, for all he can *show*, it might go on forever (Marsh 1956, 202).

the nature of our cognitive access to them. That is to say, he must assume either (a) that Russellian objects, by their very nature, lack "facets" or "sides," or (b) that, even if they have sides that would be hidden from a less perspicacious species of cognizers, *our* acquaintance is a searchlight sufficiently penetrating to lay those sides open to view. Either of these assumptions would guarantee the truth of the principle of Full Disclosure (discussed in the introduction), and so would seem to preclude informative identities of the kind just described.

The texts offer little guidance as to which of these alternatives Russell prefers. This circumstance is, I believe, a consequence of the fact that, in the context of his *officially professed*—if in practice not consistently observed[17]—antimodalism, the contrast between (a) and (b) is a distinction without a difference. The problem is that, in order to explain the truth of Full Disclosure by reference to either features of our faculty of acquaintance alone or features of Russellian objects alone, we will need to employ substantive modal concepts for which Russell officially has no time.[18] Suppose, for example, that one wanted to credit acquaintance with the power of laying bare Russellian objects. Such a thought would implicitly be the thought that a less revealing kind of acquaintance— whether our own or that of another being—*would* reveal less of the object in question. Similarly, suppose one wanted to credit Russellian objects with the feature of being intrinsically, maximally self-revealing. Such a thought would implicitly be the thought that a more retiring object *would*

17. Since, as we shall see, Russell sometimes has difficulty practicing what he preaches, it is worth noting that his official adherence to this anti- or nonmodalist stance spans the period that most concerns us. Thus in his paper, "Necessity and Possibility," published in 1905, he says, "The division of judgments into necessary, assertorical, and problematic is, in the main, based upon error and confusion. I do not deny that it is possible to make valid distinctions among propositions, which will have some of the characteristics of the traditional modal distinctions; but the distinctions which are valid seem, so far as I can discover, to be none of them fundamental, and all of them better described in non-modal terms" (Russell 1994, 508). And again in 1914, he says, "It may be laid down generally that *possibility* always marks insufficient analysis: when analysis is completed, only the *actual* can be relevant, for the simple reason that there is only the actual, and that the merely possible is nothing" (Marsh 1956, 153). As we shall see, despite these disavowals, Russell will occasionally appeal to apparently primitive modal notions. One can only suppose that on such occasions, in spite of the appearance of primitiveness, he held out the hope of finding some way of analyzing away the modal notion in question.

18. Substantive modal concepts are opposed to modal idioms that, in Russell's view, may be analyzed in nonmodal terms—for example, epistemic modals.

have parts that fell outside the circle illuminated by the searchlight of our faculty of acquaintance.

Since, officially at least, Russell denies himself all full-blooded modal resources—and among them counterfactuals—these ways of drawing the intended contrast are not available to him. The best he could do would be to formulate the intended contrast in a manner suggesting the existence of no fundamental difference between these two viewpoints. He can say that Russellian objects are such that they reveal every part of themselves to the searchlight of acquaintance, or he can say that the searchlight of acquaintance is such that its beams reveal every part of any Russellian object upon which it alights. But, the mere switch here between favored subjects for the verb "reveal" seems to correspond to no substantive difference in the phenomena described.

Russell, then, would seem to be committed to Full Disclosure but not to any particular explanation of why it holds true. There is, moreover, some textual evidence for such a commitment. In the *Problems of Philosophy*, which was published in 1912 but composed during the summer of 1911,[19] Russell (1959, 46–47) says,

> In the presence of my table I am acquainted with the sense-data that make up the appearance of my table—its colour, shape, hardness, smoothness, etc . . . . The particular shade of colour that I am seeing may have many things said about it—I may say that it is brown, that it is rather dark, and so on. But such statements, though they make me know truths *about* the colour, do not make me know the colour itself any better than I did before: so far as concerns knowledge of the colour itself, as opposed to knowledge of truths about it, I know the colour perfectly and completely when I see it, and no further knowledge of it itself is even theoretically possible.[20] Thus the sense-data which make up the appearance of my table are things with which I have acquaintance, things immediately known to me just as they are.

These remarks suggest that, for Russell, when I am acquainted with a sense-datum, I know it, in some sense, *perfectly* and *completely*. Since Russell (1959, 12) defines sense-data as "the things immediately known in sensation: such things as colours, sounds, smells, hardnesses, roughnesses, and so on," the passage suggests that all our sensitive knowledge

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19. Russell completed this work on August 11, 1911 (Russell 1992, xlii–xliii).

20. This is one place in which Russell seems to use an unanalyzable modal idiom. As we have seen, however, he is committed to regarding it as somehow ultimately analyzable in nonmodal terms (see n. 18 above).

involves perfect and complete "knowledge by acquaintance."[21] Since Russell (1959, 48), moreover, takes sense-data to supply "the most obvious and striking example of knowledge by acquaintance," this passage should carry some weight as a guide to how he is thinking of our cognitive contact with the bearers of genuine Russellian names more generally.

Russell's emphasis on perfect and complete knowledge is apt to call to mind David Hume. "All actions and sensations of the mind," says Hume (1978, 190) in the *Treatise*, "must necessarily appear in every particular what they are, and be what they appear." "Sensations of the mind" are Humean impressions. They are at once the immediate objects of awareness and the originals of our ideas. Hume is telling us here that these items possess two interesting peculiarities: first, they are *self-disclosing* in the sense that no feature of an impression fails to reveal itself to the mind to which it is given; second, they are *incorrigible* in the sense that however an impression strikes the subject as being is how it really is. This second feature is actually entailed by the first since a misperceived feature would remain undisclosed.[22]

Russell's view does sound a lot like Hume's, but there are important differences. First, from 1914 onward, Russell would not have agreed that sense-data are "self-disclosing"; for, having been alerted to examples of the intransitivity of indiscriminability by his reading of Poincaré, he came to believe that in certain cases indistinguishable sense-data may nonetheless be distinct (Russell 1993a, 148). Second, and more important, whereas Hume leaves it unclear whether or not complete

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21. Russell's formulation of the distinction between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge about a thing can be traced back to William James (1918, 588) and, through him, to John Grote (1900, 60). Grote contrasts "knowledge of acquaintance" with "knowledge of judgment," associating the former with such verbs as "*kennen*" and "*connaître*," the latter with such verbs as "*wissen*" and "*savoir*" (60). James reveals his indebtedness to Grote by occasionally speaking of "knowledge *of* acquaintance" (James 1918, 588; emphasis added) and also by using the same list of foreign knowledge-verbs. It seems likely that Russell, who read the first volume of *The Principles of Psychology* in 1894 (Russell 1983, 354), took the distinction most immediately from James. In *The Problems of Philosophy*, he follows James and Grote in taking knowledge by acquaintance to be expressed by "*kennen*" and "*connaître*" (Russell 1959, 29). He is thus squarely participating in a tradition that recognizes a distinct kind of knowledge that is not reducible to knowledge of the truth of propositions. It is worth noting that, its long history notwithstanding, the notion of irreducible knowledge by acquaintance remains no museum piece. It has recently been defended and applied to live problems in the philosophy of mind by Michael Tye (2009).

22. I am grateful to Louis Loeb for alerting me (in another context) to these passages in Hume and for discussion of their interpretation.

knowledge is supposed to consist in a body of *truths*, Russell is clear that it does not. In the "table" passage Russell contrasts knowledge of the color itself simply with knowledge of truths about it (not with relational or extrinsic truths), and later in the *Problems of Philosophy*, he says that we may have knowledge of a thing by acquaintance "even if we know very few propositions about it—*theoretically we need not know any propositions about it*" (Russell 1959, 144; emphasis added).

Russell holds that when I know a certain sense-datum—for example, a certain instance of the color brown—I know it perfectly and completely. What are his grounds for this assertion? As a preliminary to answering this question, it will help to scrutinize more closely the notion of "complete" knowledge of a thing. What does this consist in? One possibility is that this notion should be understood mereologically: one who possesses complete knowledge of some object has acquaintance with *every part* of that object. Another possibility is that we might seek to understand the notion in terms of the *intensity* of the acquaintance involved: one who has complete knowledge of a thing enjoys the most *intense* direct awareness of it.

A remark from his Lowell Lectures in 1914 suggests that this second option is not Russell's view. "It is a mistake," he says,

> to speak as if acquaintance had degrees: there is merely acquaintance and non-acquaintance. When we speak of becoming "better acquainted," as for instance with a person,[23] what we must mean is, becoming acquainted with more parts of a certain whole; but the acquaintance with each part is either complete or non-existent. (Russell 1993a, 151)

For Russell, then, there are not stronger and weaker degrees of acquaintance: the mind is either directly in contact with an object or it is not. In consequence, the only sense to be made of "becoming better acquainted with a thing" must be in terms of becoming acquainted with more parts of it.[24] And, by parity of reasoning, the only sense to be made of "having complete (or perfect) acquaintance with a thing" must be in terms of having acquaintance with every part of it.

Since Russell supposes us to have complete knowledge of sense-data, and since sense-data are paradigms of *particular* objects of ac-

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23. Since at this stage he does not believe that we have acquaintance with persons, Russell must be suspending this aspect of his view here for the sake of illustration.

24. Full Disclosure, of course, entails that as a matter of fact we never do become *better* acquainted with anything. Nonetheless, since Full Disclosure is a substantive thesis, the *idea* of becoming better acquainted with something is not unintelligible.

quaintance, the passage about the table from *The Problems of Philosophy* strongly suggests that Russell does indeed subscribe to Full Disclosure, for particulars at least. But if so, what would motivate this commitment? It is important to note that the need to preclude informative, true, genuine identities of the kind we have been considering does not by itself explain it. After all, our failure to encounter any true, informative, genuine identity concerning some object of which we have only a partial view might be attributable to that view's never happening to afford different "takes" on the object. Suppose, for example, that an object had permanently unobserved parts as well as parts with which we were acquainted. And suppose, further, that these permanently unobserved parts did not appear to be occluded by another object, as certain parts of an object do so appear in, say, John Perry's case of the ship whose bow and stern are visible but whose middle portion is occluded by a building (Perry 1977, 483). Finally, suppose that whenever we observed any part of the object we also observed every part of it that was not permanently unobserved. If things happened to be this way, our failure to encounter true, informative, genuine identities concerning this object would not be a consequence of Full Disclosure.

The explanation of why Russell nonetheless subscribes to this principle is that if the circumstance just described did happen to obtain, this would be an extraordinary fact that called for an explanation. Why, we might ask, are the permanently unobserved parts of the object not apparently occluded by other objects in such a way as to raise Perry-style informative identity questions? If we assume Full Disclosure, on the other hand, nothing with which we have ever had acquaintance would have any permanently hidden parts. So this kind of question would not arise. As I read him, then, Russell endorses Full Disclosure because, in the context of his antimodalism, it is the *simplest* hypothesis that would explain the (supposed) fact that we never encounter true, informative, genuine identities of this sort.

How plausible is it that at this stage of his thinking Russell would have adopted a hypothesis on the ground that it is the simplest one that explains a supposed fact? The answer is: very. For Russell makes full use of this style of reasoning in *The Problems of Philosophy* when he argues for the existence of physical objects as the best explanation for the patterns we discern in our sense-data. Thus, in defense of the hypothesis that physical objects are distinct from sets of sense-data, he says,

> The way in which simplicity comes in from supposing that there really are physical objects is easily seen. If the cat appears at one moment in one part of the room, and at another in another part, it is natural to suppose that it has moved from the one to the other, passing over a series of intermediate positions. But if it is merely a set of sense-data, it cannot have ever been in any place where I did not see it; thus we shall have to suppose that it did not exist at all while I was not looking, but suddenly sprang into being in a new place. If the cat exists whether I see it or not, we can understand from our own experience how it gets hungry between one meal and the next; but if it does not exist when I am not seeing it, it seems odd that appetite should grow during non-existence as fast as during existence. (Russell 1959, 23)

The "simpler" hypothesis that the cat is an enduring physical object is to be preferred to the "odd" hypothesis that it is a set of sense-data because it offers a more satisfactory explanation of the patterns we find in our sense-data.

At this point it would be well to forestall a potential misunderstanding of my position. While I am claiming that sense-data are well suited to the role of Russellian objects and that the need to find a solution to the George IV puzzle was among Russell's motivations for taking genuine names of particulars to refer to them, I am not claiming that this was his only motivation for doing so. On the contrary, a complementary reason for that view would have been the theoretical pressures of his solution to the puzzle about negative existentials. That solution entails that if an expression, t, is such that (a) t occurs in unproblematically meaningful sentences, and (b) for all one knows, the sentence t **does not exist** might be true, then t is not a genuine name. Such thinking is evident in the following remark from *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*:

> The fact that you can discuss the proposition 'God exists' is a proof that 'God', as used in that proposition, is a description and not a name. If 'God' were a name, no question as to existence could arise. (Marsh 1956, 250)

Accordingly, any genuine name would need to refer to an item whose nonexistence could not be doubted—and, more strongly, whose nonexistence could not even be intelligibly countenanced (compare Russell 1986, 23). Sense-data, being items that are thought to be known but not (propositionally) *known to exist*,[25] are ideal candidates for this role.

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25. Recall that Russell regards singular statements of subsistence and existence as ill formed (compare Russell 1986, 23, 211).

4. The Quest for the Genuine Russellian Name

Which expressions in natural language count as genuine Russellian names? As with so much else in Russell's philosophy, the answer depends on which phase of his career one considers. Russell's first pronouncement explicitly bearing on this question occurs in a paper he gave to the Aristotelian Society on March 6, 1911, and which was published as "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description." In this paper, he takes genuine Russellian names *for particulars* to be confined to "I" and "this" (Russell 1992, 157). Such a view would seem to be driven by Russell's views about which kinds of entities we are acquainted with. After all, if something is a genuine Russellian name that we understand, then we must be acquainted with its bearer;[26] and if a subject is acquainted with an entity, there seems to be—at least from the time of "On Denoting" onward[27]—no reason in principle why that subject should not tag this entity with a genuine Russellian name.

In view of this consideration, the fact, noted earlier, that in "On Denoting" Russell (1956, 56) already denies we have acquaintance with other minds and with material objects (or, strictly, with "matter")[28] strongly suggests that even at this early stage he already takes us to have acquaintance with sense-data. He does not express this view explicitly in "On Denoting," but it is hard to see what other particulars he could take

26. Russell maintains that to understand a name of a particular "you must be acquainted with the particular of which it is a name, and you must know that it is the name of that particular" (Marsh 1956, 205).

27. The "denoting concepts" of the *Principles* (1903) provide an exception to this rule. At this earlier stage Russell supposes that if we are to understand the propositions in which denoting concepts figure, we must be acquainted with them. Nonetheless, according to Russell's first theory of denoting, we cannot name them since, were we to do so, the proposition expressed by the sentence in which the name occurs would be "about" the denoting concept occurring in its subject position, which idea contradicts a central tenet of the first theory of denoting.

28. In his paper of 1912, "On Matter," Russell (1992, 82) makes clear that matter includes the things of common sense: "The 'things' which common sense infers from the data and regards as the sources of the correlated sensations of sight, touch, etc.... are already matter." In "On Denoting," he denies we are acquainted with "matter (in the sense in which matter occurs in physics)" (Russell 1956, 56). Lest this give the misleading impression that Russell excludes ordinary physical objects from the extension of the term "matter," we should note that when he later defines matter as "that which is dealt with by physical science" in "On Matter," Russell (1992, 82–83) includes as a "piece of matter" the Moon, which is a commonsense physical object if ever there was one.

us to be acquainted with in sense-perception once he had excluded material objects and other persons from this role.

Are we to suppose, then, that as early as 1905 Russell had already developed a conception of sense-data as the particulars that we are acquainted with in sense-perception?[29] It appears so. Indeed, it appears that some seven years before "On Denoting" he was already using the term "sense-data" for precisely this notion.[30] This is evident from some manuscript notes dating from 1898 (Russell 1990, 162–222). In these notes Russell remarks that "[universals] such as red, sweet, hot, etc."—which at this stage he calls "conceptions"—"describe some aspect of immediate sensuous data" (Russell 1990, 164). These "conceptions," he claims, are "all universals as against a series of possible sense-data to which they are applicable, and can be defined by indicating this, that, and the other sense-datum to which they apply" (Russell 1990, 164). Sense-data, then, are "described" by the universals red, sweet, and hot insofar as these universals apply to them. Since sense-data are said to be "immediate sensuous data," and since Russell plainly supposes we can refer to them by means of demonstratives, he evidently regards them as particulars of which we are immediately aware in sensory experience. Russell's view of sense-data in 1898, then, is close to his view of them in 1911. The only difference is that in 1898 Russell had not yet come to conceive of sense-data as *immaterial* in nature. It seems, however, that he must have taken this further step by the time of "On Denoting" since if we do not have acquaintance with matter but do have acquaintance with sense-data, the latter cannot be material.

It is worth noting, moreover, that Russell's grounds for denying that we are acquainted with material things in "On Denoting" seem unlikely to have included his famous argument in *The Problems of Philosophy* about the table in his study (Russell 1959, 9–10). Fully spelled out, that argument runs as follows. Although we are apt to call the table brown, it in fact has no color. For since the table appears differently from different angles, under different lighting conditions, and to different observers (and so forth), and since it would be sheer favoritism to suppose that

29. Since readers of *The Problems of Philosophy* could easily form the impression that Russell took some sense-data to be universals, it is worth observing that on page 48 of this work he (1959) indicates clearly that universals are "of an essentially different character from sense-data."

30. The term "sense-data" goes back (at least) to Josiah Royce in 1882; but Russell seems likely to have learned it from William James (see Milkov 2001, 224).

any one of these appearances had a better claim than any other to be preeminently *the* color of the table, by the Principle of Sufficient Reason, none of them so qualifies. The same argument purports to show that the table has no texture, shape (in visual space), sound, smell, and so on. It follows that the qualities we know through acquaintance are not qualities belonging to the real table, and, accordingly, the real table itself is not known to us by acquaintance. Russell (1959, 9–10) at this stage concludes that if it is known to us at all, it can be known only by an inference from what is immediately known.

The reason why this argument seems unlikely to have been Russell's ground in "On Denoting" for denying that we have acquaintance with material objects is just that it relies on the Principle of Sufficient Reason. For this is a principle that, until at least 1907, Russell felt reluctant to endorse on the ground that his opponents took it to support his bête noire, the "Axiom of Internal Relations" (see Russell 1906a, 40–42).[31] (Russell seems to have himself come to firmly endorse the Principle of Sufficient Reason only around 1910.) I would therefore suggest that in 1905 his grounds for denying that we have acquaintance with material things must be one or other (or both) of the following. First, by his lights, material things are the kind of entities that might turn out not to exist. Second, material objects clearly have "other sides." If Russell were to allow that we could be acquainted with them and so name them (while also allowing that they have "other sides"), we would be presented with instances of the George IV puzzle.

Although Russell includes the word "I" on his list of genuine names in 1911, he was never certain about its inclusion. In *The Problems of Philosophy*, he maintains only that it is "probable" that the self is a particular object of acquaintance (Russell 1959, 51). And in 1913, he relates

31. He formulates the principle, which he calls "the law of sufficient reason," as saying *at first pass* "nothing can be just a brute fact, but must have some reason for being thus and not otherwise" (Russell 1906a, 40). At this stage, Russell argues that to the extent that the content of the principle can be made clear, it seems to be false. But since he seems uncertain about how to formulate the principle, he shies away from confidently affirming its falsehood. Nonetheless, his conception of propositions during the period 1900–1905 commits him to an unequivocal rejection of the principle. For, during this time, he takes the fact that a proposition has the truth value it has (that is, the fact that it possesses one rather than another of the two simple, indefinable properties *true* and *false*) to be a brute and not further explicable fact about it. As he puts it in the *Principles*, "What is true, is true; what is false, is false; and concerning fundamentals, there is nothing more to be said" (Russell 1996, 454).

that in "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description" he had only "tentatively" maintained that we had acquaintance with the self (Russell 1984, 36). In *The Problems of Philosophy*, the reason he cites for including the word "I" (as well, implicitly, of course, as "me," "my," "mine") on the list is that I am acquainted in introspection with such facts as "my seeing the sun" and because I know such truths as that "I am acquainted with this sense-datum" (Russell 1959, 51). Russell at this point supposes that I can have acquaintance with such facts and understand such propositions only if I am acquainted with a self to be the referent of the word "I" ("me," and so forth.).[32] One wonders why it does not at this point occur to him that "I" might be a disguised definite description, so that these facts are actually general in nature. Had he taken this possibility seriously, his reason for thinking we must be acquainted with our selves would have been undermined. Nonetheless, at this stage he allows these considerations to override his Humean scruples about our apparent inability to meet with the self in introspection.

By 1913, however, those scruples, fortified now by a new argument, had gained the upper hand. In his *Theory of Knowledge* manuscript, in 1913, Russell says, "Even if by great exertion some rare person could catch a glimpse of himself, this would not suffice [to establish that "I" is a genuine Russellian name for the self]; for 'I' is a term which we all know how to use, and which must therefore have some easily accessible meaning" (Russell 1984, 36; compare Marsh 1956, 164). In other words, even if *some* of us can be acquainted with the self, it cannot be the referent of the word "I"; for this word is universally understood (by speakers of English), while the self is not universally "glimpsed" (by them). This new argument forces Russell to treat the word "I" as a disguised definite description: at first pass, "The subject of the present experience" (Russell 1984, 37), and, at second pass, "The subject acquainted with this," where "this" refers to the present object of attention (Russell 1984, 44). Accordingly, the fact one naturally describes as "the fact that I am acquainted with such-and-such a sense-datum" is now seen as the general fact that *something* is acquainted with this sense-datum (compare Russell 1984, 37). Although the *Theory of Knowledge* manuscript was abandoned, we may regard these remarks as expressing Russell's considered view since each of these points

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32. Russell does not at this stage worry that one might be acquainted with only a part of the self. Presumably, this is because he is thinking of the self as having its traditional property of simplicity; so Full Disclosure follows immediately.

is reproduced word-for-word in his published article of 1914, "On the Nature of Acquaintance" (Marsh 1956, 127–74).

Having rejected the self as a candidate Russellian object, Russell seems to claim in 1918 that "this" and "that" are the *only* expressions in everyday use that count as names "in the proper strict logical sense of the word" (Marsh 1956, 201). But it is important to remember that, in the context in which he makes this claim, Russell is explicitly speaking of what he calls "a name in the narrow logical sense of *a word whose meaning is a particular*" (Marsh 1956, 201; emphasis added). His remark is therefore compatible with the possibility that English may contain genuine Russellian names other than "this" and "that." Such a view in fact seems to be Russell's considered position; for in *The Problems of Philosophy*, he maintains that some *universals* are objects of acquaintance (Russell 1959, 101–3). And since it seems perfectly possible that some of the universals with which we are acquainted should bear genuine names, it is overwhelmingly likely that Russell would have taken natural languages to contain genuine names for universals.[33]

Which English expressions are genuine names for universals? Russell does not say explicitly, but we may glean his likely opinion on this matter from his views about which universals are objects of acquaintance. "Among universals," he says,

> there seems to be no principle by which we can decide which can be known by acquaintance, but it is clear that among those that can be so known are sensible qualities, relations of space and time, similarity, and certain abstract logical universals. (Russell 1959, 109)

In the pages leading up to this remark, Russell makes clear that "sensible qualities" include such universals as white, red, black, sweet, sour, loud, and hard (101). He takes these universals to be exemplified in sense-data. By "the relations of space and time," he means the spatial and temporal relations that hold between sense-data (101–2). By "similarity," he means a relation of resemblance between sense-data; and by "certain abstract logical universals," he means not what we might call "logical relations" but rather such things as the relations "greater than"

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33. In *The Problems of Philosophy*, Russell (1959, 93) at one point claims that nearly all the words in the dictionary stand for universals. But his position is actually more nuanced than this suggests; for he also holds that we might treat some apparent words for universals as defined terms. We *might*, for example, treat "whiteness" as meaning "[the property of] resembling this," where "this" refers to a certain white sense-datum (96).

and "less than" that hold between degrees of resemblance. Russell illustrates this last idea with the example: "The resemblance between two shades of green is greater than the resemblance between a shade of red and a shade of green" (103). At one point Russell suggests that knowing such facts requires acquaintance with a *particularized* resemblance relation (a "trope" in contemporary parlance). Thus, in an unpublished manuscript of 1903, he says, "It seems to be the case that we can know immediately the resemblances of colours, and can judge that one resemblance is greater or less than another. In this case, we must know immediately the particularized relation itself" (Russell 1994, 324). At this stage, then, particular Russellian objects include particularized relations as well as sense-data, which are particularized properties. This seems to mark a development in Russell's view; for in the *Principles*, which Russell had completed by 1902, the idea that relations have instances had been rejected (Russell 1996, 52).

A final point that emerges from this discussion is that Russell's inclusion of "sensible qualities" on the list of universals and his inclusion among them of the colors red, black, and white (Russell 1959, 101) strongly suggests that he uses "colour" ambiguously. Sometimes he means by a "colour" a particular sense-datum—for example, "the particular shade of colour that I am seeing [in the presence of my table]" (46–47)—but at other times he means a universal—for example, brownness—that is "exemplified in" this particular sense-datum. As we noted in the preceding section, when I am acquainted with a particular shade of brown—a sense-datum—I need not in principle know *that* it exemplifies any of the universals it does exemplify. Since acquaintance with universals is, for Russell, secured by a process of abstraction that begins with the subject's having acquaintance with certain particulars exemplifying the universal to be abstracted (101), it is clear that he supposes I could be acquainted with a particular shade of brown—a brown sense-datum—and have complete knowledge *of* it, without even possessing the concept of brown.

5. A Problem for Russell's Solution

I turn now to a difficulty for Russell's view. Although the principle of Full Disclosure would explain the nonexistence of certain kinds of true, informative, genuine identities, it would not explain why—as Russell supposes—*none* occur. Full Disclosure explains the nonoccurrence only of identities that would, if they existed, arise because the bearer of the

names involved had "other sides." Russell, however, needs also to exclude cases of true, genuine identities that are informative because one and the same thing appears and reappears to the same subject at different times. (Such cases are analogous, but only analogous, to the famous "Hesperus is Phosphorus" case.)[34] Since the assumption of Full Disclosure will not suffice to exclude such cases, it will be powerless to explain—what Russell takes to be—the fact that there are no true, informative, genuine identities whatsoever.

The problem is particularly urgent because Russell's paradigm objects of acquaintance—sense-data—seem obviously to present cases analogous to the "Hesperus is Phosphorus" case. Suppose, for example, that I were to stare at the (solid) back of a certain blue chair for five seconds, then close my eyes for three seconds, and then stare at it again for another five. Let us suppose that while my eyes are shut I think of something unconnected with the chair so that during that time I am not even acquainted with its color in memory. In such a circumstance I shall—if Russell is right—be acquainted with "two" qualitatively identical, blue sense-data, which, for all we have said so far, may or may not be numerically identical. I claim that such a case threatens to reintroduce the substitutivity problem. For suppose that I use "that" as a name for my first-experienced sense-datum and "this" as a name for my second. Then it seems that I could find myself in a situation in which I was wondering whether this was that without wondering whether this was this. If the "two" blue sense-data were in fact identical, this would mean that there could be a situation in which the proposition expressed by sentence [1] was true while the one expressed by [2] was false, in spite of the fact that the latter results from the former by the substitution of identicals:

[1]   I am now wondering whether this is that.[35]

[2]   I am now wondering whether this is this.

34. Here, of course, I am idealizing slightly since, owing to planetary movement, we may—if our telescope is sufficiently powerful, see different sides of Venus. Obviously, however, *that* is not what actually accounts for the informativeness of the identity statement "Hesperus is Phosphorus." Perhaps a closer analogue to this case (because it involves demonstratives) would be Alvin Plantinga's case in which someone points to Venus and says "This is identical with (twenty-four hour pause) that" (Plantinga 1970, 481).

35. Think of the first demonstrative in "this is that" as referring to the later-presented sense-datum, the second as a memory-demonstrative referring to the earlier one.

In order to avoid such a difficulty, Russell would need to make one of two incompatible assumptions. He would need to assume either that sense-data so-to-speak "separated by a gap" are always distinct or that all qualitatively identical sense-data are numerically identical. The first alternative is clearly preferable since the second would need to be supplemented by the implausible assumption that anyone who could refer to a sense-datum implicitly knew that all qualitatively identical sense-data are numerically identical. (The supplementation would be necessary because, in order to ensure the uninformativeness of the identity statement, we would want the subject to be aware of the identity of his or her sense-data whenever he or she was presented twice over with the same one. And he or she would be in no position to know that the first-presented sense-datum was identical with the second unless he or she knew that qualitatively identical sense-data were numerically identical.) Because the first option is clearly preferable, sense-data will have to be thought of as items with which we cannot become reacquainted. I will consider how such a position might be developed shortly; but first we ought to consider a possible challenge to the reasoning that has led to this conclusion.

The worry is that the present example involves a kind of unwarranted idealization. Up until now we have not considered the fact that the two instances of demonstrative reference engaged in by one who utters the sentence "this is this" will actually be slightly separated in time. This time-separation threatens to create the possibility that the two demonstratives might after all differ in meaning, so that this sentence may not after all express a *true* identity.

On its own merits, this is a fair objection, but in the present context it fails to neutralize the alleged example of the George IV puzzle. For we are currently asking what *Russell* is committed to by his solution to the George IV puzzle. And in this context the puzzle still arises. For in *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, under pressure to defend the cogency of reasoning in which a genuine name occurs with the same meaning in more than one premise, Russell claims that the word "this" retains its meaning for "a minute or two" (Marsh 1956, 203). Since that is so, we need only suppose that the sentence "this is this" is uttered at a normal speed in order to make the problem-case work. Indeed, we need only assume that "this" retains its meaning for about a *second* for the problem-case to work.

In order to rule out such a case of the puzzle, it seems that Russell must be committed to maintaining that sense-data, although they are the

kinds of things that can and do endure, do not reappear to us as objects of acquaintance. Was Russell aware of this commitment at the time of presenting his epistemological views in *The Problems of Philosophy*? That seems unlikely. For in that work he says things that seem to imply that he takes our becoming reacquainted with a sense-datum to be something that happens all the time. Thus, when summing up his views on acquaintance, he says that we have acquaintance in memory "with things which have been data either of the outer senses or of the inner sense" (Russell 1959, 35). We need only assume Russell's familiarity with the obvious fact that we call to mind things about which we have not been thinking continuously since we first perceived them to reach the conclusion that he is committed to the existence of objects of acquaintance with which we can become reacquainted.

It seems likely that Russell either had not realized that his way of solving the George IV puzzle committed him to the nonexistence of recurring objects of acquaintance, or that he had not yet connected his views on memory with his epistemological commitments. At any rate, we have uncovered a clear tension in Russell's view.

The problem-case just sketched (involving the example "this is that"), moreover, requires us to clarify our earlier remarks about Russell's motivations for adopting Full Disclosure. We presented this principle as something Russell would have believed on the grounds that it is the best explanation of (what he would have seen as) the nonexistence of a certain class of true, informative, genuine identities, namely, *synchronic* identities. We now see that Full Disclosure could at best explain *only* the non-existence of identities of this kind. It could not explain—for, without anachronistic assumptions, such as a four-dimensional treatment of objects of acquaintance, it does not even entail—the nonexistence of true, informative, genuine, *diachronic* identities. In consequence, far from being the best explanation for the nonexistence of true, informative, genuine identities in general, Full Disclosure is not even an adequate explanation of this stronger (presumed) fact.[36]

Is there any evidence that Russell became aware of these difficulties? I think there may be, though the evidence is certainly not conclusive. The clue that he may have seen a difficulty is Russell's apparent willingness to abandon Full Disclosure in the fall of 1913, when other theoretical pressures made it convenient for him to do so. Thus in his Lowell

36. That is to say, Russell must presume this to be a fact if his solution to the George IV puzzle is to be adequate.

Lectures,[37] the bulk of which were written in the fall of 1913,[38] but in which alterations were made in January of 1914,[39] Russell says,

> [Because the hypothesis that there is no lower limit to the duration and extension of a single sense-datum] seems untenable, . . . we are apparently forced to conclude that the space of sense-data is not continuous; but *that does not prevent us from admitting that sense-data have parts which are not sense-data*, and that the space of these parts may be continuous. (Russell 1993a, 156; emphasis added)

Had Russell been aware of the problem currently under discussion, this change of position would be fully explicable. For there would have been no reason for him to persevere with an epistemic principle as strong as Full Disclosure once he realized that it could not deliver the hoped-for benefits of a solution to all recalcitrant cases of the George IV puzzle.

What might have drawn the problem of diachronic identities to Russell's attention? A plausible conjecture, I would argue, is that it was Russell's increased attention to the topic of memory during 1913. Between April and June of that year, Russell had been working on his *Theory of Knowledge* manuscript.[40] In this work Russell devotes considerable attention to the topic of memory, and we find him quite consciously reflecting on diachronic cases of identity involving objects of acquaintance. "We will," he says,

> give the name "immediate memory" to the relation which we have to an object which has recently been a sense-datum, but is now felt as past, though still given in acquaintance. It is essential that the object of immediate memory should be, at least in part, identical with the object previously given in sense, since otherwise immediate memory would not give acquaintance with what is past. (Russell 1984, 73)

Although one cannot be sure about this, it seems distinctly possible that such reflections would have made Russell fully aware of the possibility of

37. Delivered in Boston in 1914 and first published that same year. Cited as "Russell 1993a."

38. See the introduction to Russell 1993a.

39. Unfortunately, we do not know which passages were altered. We do know that Russell altered one chapter at the end of January, ten days after he had received the proofs of "The Relation of Sense-data to Physics." (See the introduction to Russell 1993a.)

40. Although he came to abandon the *Theory of Knowledge* manuscript, he did so in the light of Wittgenstein's criticisms of his theory of judgment not because of his views on acquaintance. His conception of "immediate memory," in particular, survives into his article of 1914, "On the Nature of Acquaintance" (Marsh 1956, 133).

diachronic cases of true, informative, genuine identities, and so alerted him to the limitations of his solution to the generalized George IV puzzle. That awareness, of course, *should* already have arisen while he was writing the *Problems of Philosophy*, but his discussion of memory in that work is so brief and sketchy that it is quite plausible that Russell, who was working to a tight deadline (and running behind schedule), should, in his haste to finish this work, have missed the fact that what he says about memory there causes problems for his solution to the George IV puzzle.

6. Failures of Substitutivity with *Propositions* as "Identicals"

Because he draws no distinction between expressing and mentioning, the early Russell regards statements in which two sentences flank an identity sign as well formed. This feature of his view is significant because such statements can give rise to further apparent failures of substitutivity. To illustrate this point, it will be useful to choose as the subject of the relevant propositional attitude not George IV but rather Russell himself. So consider Russell's intellectual outlook in 1903, when he had yet to arrive at a quantificational analysis of generality. At this stage he would have regarded the following identity statement as well formed but false:

[3]   All *F*s are *G*s $=$ $\forall x$ (*Fx* $\supset$ *Gx*)

In 1903 Russell would have seen the falsehood of [3] as arising from the fact that the two sentences flanking the identity sign express propositions containing different constituents. (Only the one on the right, for example, contains the relation of generalized implication, which in the *Principles* Russell calls "formal implication" [Russell 1996, sec. 40ff.].) On the other hand, it is plain that at this stage he would have endorsed the triviality:

[4]   All *F*s are *G*s $=$ All *F*s are *G*s

Now fast-forward to 1905 when Russell had come to regard [3] as true. And observe that [3] would *seem* to license a substitutional inference from the truth, [5], to the falsehood, [6]:

[5]   In 1903 Russell believed that all *F*s are *G*s $=$ all *F*s are *G*s

[6]   In 1903 Russell believed that all *F*s are *G*s $=$ $\forall x$ (*Fx* $\supset$ *Gx*)

We seem to have another case in which the substitution of identical propositional constituents fails to preserve truth. In this case, the apparent

propositional constituents involved in the substitution are themselves propositions. How should this version of the puzzle be solved?

Taking the procedure recommended by Russell for solving other cases of the puzzle as our guide, we would expect his solution to involve treating the relevant occurrence of the sign "all *F*s are *G*s" in [5] as an incomplete symbol. This would ensure that there is no constituent in [5] corresponding to "all *F*s are *G*s" to be replaced by a proposition. It follows that had Russell been aware of this consequence of his solution, he would have had reason to think that some occurrences of sentences lack meaning in isolation. (And this remains so after he adopts the "Substitutional Theory" of 1905–7; for informative identities in which sentences flank identity signs are readily formulable in that theory also.)

It is fairly likely that Russell would have been aware of these points. It must have been obvious to him that his solution will work quite generally only if there are no true, informative, genuine identity statements. He would have also been keenly aware that around 1905 he conceived of sentences of the form "$p = q$ Df." as capable of being read as statements of this kind. Thus Russell would have been vividly aware of all the ingredients needed to arrive at the conclusion that some sentence-tokens are incomplete symbols. We cannot say for sure that he put two and two together—the texts, unfortunately, are silent on this point. But it would be surprising if he had not done so.

What we can say for sure is that Russell's strategy for solving the George IV puzzle *commits* him to denying of a certain class of occurrences of sentences that they are genuine names. This is not yet a commitment to the abandonment of propositions as referents of sentences quite generally since, for all we have shown, sentence-tokens not occurring within the scope of psychological verbs or not flanking identity signs might express them. Moreover, even if *all* sentences were to lack meaning in isolation, that would not imply that there were no propositions in reality—it would just mean that no propositions were ever expressed.

There may be, nonetheless, a natural line of Russellian reasoning for a stronger conclusion than this. Consider the proposition that on Russell's post-1905 view of the matter would be expressed by both "$\forall x$ (*Fx* $\supset$ *Gx*)" and "All *F*s are *G*s." If further cases of the George IV puzzle are not to be created, we must suppose that we are not acquainted with this proposition. For if we were, there would be no obstacle to our attaching names to it that reflect differing degrees of discernment of the proposition's constituent structure. (This is a consequence of Russell's view

that anything with which we are acquainted can be named.)[41] But if we could do that, we would be able to generate further instances of the puzzle. In consequence, our understanding the proposition in question cannot consist in (or even presuppose) our having acquaintance with it. But then, if understanding propositions is to be a unitary phenomenon—as Russell, with his preference for simple theories, would presumably have supposed—it follows that our having acquaintance with a proposition can in no case be a necessary condition of our understanding it. It turns out, then, that had he appreciated these points, Russell would have had an incentive to jettison his former account of understanding—one according to which understanding a proposition requires having acquaintance with it (Russell 1994, 307)—and seek an alternative.

It is noteworthy, therefore, that shortly after "On Denoting" Russell begins to develop just such an alternative. This is the Multiple Relation Theory of Judgment (hereafter "MRTJ"), a rudimentary version of which he first sketches in working notes from September 1906 (Russell 1906b, 4) and which he presents as merely an unendorsed possibility in a talk given in December 1906, entitled "On the Nature of Truth" (Russell 1906a, 46).[42]

According to the MRTJ, belief, understanding, and judgment are not—as Russell formerly supposed—dyadic relations between a person and a proposition. Instead, each of these attitudes (as we might call them) splinters into a set of different relations all of which are of n-adicity greater than two. According to the simplest version of this theory, the relata of these relations are, on the one hand, a subject (or, on some versions of the theory, an act),[43] and, on the other, the several entities that were formerly considered constituents of the proposition believed (judged,

41. "An object of acquaintance is an object to which it is possible to give a proper name, as opposed to a description" (Russell 1984, 48). This is another occasion on which Russell appears to make an irreducible modal claim.

42. This early published version of the theory differs markedly from later versions insofar as it incorporates the idea that belief is not a single state of mind (Russell 1906a, 46). As Russell (1906b, 63) explains in working notes entitled "The Paradox of the Liar," such a view is motivated by concerns about a Cantorian paradox: "If there is a belief for each proposition, then, since beliefs must be individuals, there will be at least as many individuals as propositions, which is impossible. Hence a belief in a complicated proposition is not to be regarded as one state of mind, but as a sequence consisting of several." Although Russell initially tried to resolve the paradox sketched here by denying that beliefs were single entities, his final resolution in this manuscript involved recognizing only actual beliefs as individuals (63).

43. Russell takes this view in his reply to Dawes Hicks (Russell 1992, 184).

understood). Thus when, for example, Othello believes that Desdemona loves Cassio, a four-place belief relation holds between Othello, Desdemona, love, and Cassio. Such a theory, although it does not entail the nonsubsistence of propositions,[44] nonetheless accounts for the relations of belief, judgment, and understanding without incurring a commitment to them.[45]

It is possible, then, that the George IV puzzle is one source of Russell's turn toward the MRTJ.[46] But the point should not be overstated. It is important to keep in mind that our reasoning up to this point has suggested only that Russell's solution to this puzzle gives him a reason to deny we are acquainted with propositions (and so a reason to find a new account of understanding). This does not mean that he has a reason to deny that propositions subsist. It does not even entail the weaker conclusion that he lacks any grounds to believe in the subsistence of propositions. For, prior to firmly endorsing the MRTJ, he might have argued for the subsistence of propositions by a kind of inference to the best explanation. The subsistence of propositions could be posited as the best explanation of the apparent validity of certain inference patterns. If such reasoning were sound, we might be taken to know propositions "by description" rather than "by acquaintance."

Russell does not frame the issue in quite these terms, but he comes very close to doing so when in 1906 he tentatively floats the following argument for false propositions (or false objectives) in his paper "On the Nature of Truth":

> The people who believe that the sun goes round the earth seem to be believing something, and this something cannot be a fact. Thus, if beliefs always have objects, it follows that there are objective non-facts. (Russell 1906a, 46)

It is clear from this remark that Russell is impressed by the apparent validity of inferences of the form: "A believes that the sun orbits the

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44. In taking the MRTJ not to entail the nonsubsistence of propositions I depart from the view of, for example, Peter Hylton (1990, 351).

45. One supposes that propositions that, according to the old theory, occur as constituents of others will not be treated as relata of a belief relation on the new theory—only their constituents will be.

46. Having adopted the MRTJ, obviously, Russell would need to defend a new substitutivity principle—one governing the substitution of entities in true *judgments*. Such a principle would, however, possess the same degree of self-evidence as SV, and so Full Disclosure would be no less motivated than it was before.

earth; so ∃*x* [Believes (A, *x*)]." If one were to consider arguments of this kind valid, one could reason to the subsistence of propositions (both true and false) as the best explanation of their validity. Such a style of argument would be comparable to Russell's arguing in *The Problems of Philosophy* for the existence of ordinary material objects as the best explanation of the patterns we observe in our sense-data (Russell 1959, 22–24).

At this stage, however, Russell does not take the argument to be uncontroversially valid. For he sees paradoxes "analogous to that of the Liar" as casting doubt on the idea that belief can be treated as a relation between a believer and a proposition (Russell 1906a, 46).[47] Since he is well aware at this point of other possible strategies for resolving the Liar, including ramification,[48] and since he sees that false propositions would have some explanatory value, in 1906 Russell elects to withhold judgment on the correctness or otherwise of the MRTJ. By the time he sends the completed manuscript of *Principia Mathematica* (hereafter abbreviated as "*Principia*" but cited as "Russell and Whitehead 1990") to the printers in October of 1909 (Monk 1996, 193), however, he has sided firmly against the idea that judgment (and belief) is a relation between a subject and a proposition and firmly endorsed the MRTJ.

In the introduction to *Principia* he writes:

> Owing to the plurality of the objects of a single judgment, it follows that what we call a 'proposition' (in the sense in which this is distinguished from the phrase expressing it) is not a single entity at all. (Russell and Whitehead 1990, 44)

The claim that a proposition "is not a single entity" is Russell's way of expressing the thought that sentences do not have meaning in isolation—that is, they do not have meaning by expressing propositions. Such a claim is thus at bottom a disguised claim about *language*—a point amply confirmed by the continuation of the passage: "*That is to say*, the

47. The paradox that Russell describes as a paradox "analogous to that of the *liar*" is one we would today simply call a *version* of the Liar. There is no other paradox in question.

48. In his working notes entitled "The Paradox of the Liar" of September 1906, Russell sketches two methods for resolving the Liar, each of which he believes faces the dual problems of appearing ad hoc and of interfering with the development of mathematics (that is, blocking the logicist program). The first is the idea that false propositions do not subsist, and the adoption of a rudimentary version of the MRTJ; the second is a version of ramification. Russell (1906b, 7) says, "A less radical method [for resolving the Liar] would be to allow that there are propositions, but to put them in a hierarchy so that a proposition could be at most about all the propositions of one grade in the hierarchy; and such a proposition would be always of a higher grade than the propositions it was about."

phrase which expresses a proposition is what we call an 'incomplete' symbol"[49] (Russell and Whitehead 1990, 44; emphasis added).

As we have noted, to claim that sentences are "incomplete symbols" is not yet to claim that there are no propositions; for propositions might still subsist even if they are not expressed by sentences. Accordingly, we need to proceed cautiously in assessing the implications for Russell's ontology of *Principia*'s treatment of sentences as incomplete symbols. To fix ideas it will be convenient to distinguish two possible ontological stances:

> Agnosticism concerning *F*s: We divest ourselves of a commitment to *F*s without thereby incurring a commitment to the nonbeing of *F*s.
>
> Eliminativism concerning *F*s: We commit ourselves to the nonbeing of *F*s.

When Russell uses language indicative of a thinning of his ontology, it is sometimes not immediately apparent which of these two positions he intends. Indeed, he can sometimes use language strongly suggestive of eliminativism while nonetheless intending mere agnosticism. Nowhere is this more evident than in a remark from *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, where Russell is discussing his ontological attitude toward the ordinary objects of daily life. By treating such objects as logical fictions, he says,

> they are extruded from the world of what there is, and in their place as what there is you find a number of passing particulars of the kind that one is immediately conscious of in sense. I want to make clear that I am not *denying* the existence of anything; I am only refusing to affirm it. (Marsh 1956, 274)

Surprising as it may seem, then, in Russell's idiolect one way of expressing mere agnosticism about the objects of daily life is to say that they are "extruded from the world of what there is."

Another somewhat surprising way in which Russell expresses mere agnosticism about entities of certain kinds is to say that *they*—and not merely the expressions standing for them—*are* incomplete symbols. So, for example, although he is expressly agnostic about the subsistence

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49. When Russell classifies sentences as "incomplete symbols," he cannot mean by this term quite what he meant when he first introduced it. For to claim that sentences have meaning only in the context of other sentences would generate a vicious regress. He must mean, rather, just that sentences don't have meaning by expressing propositions. For further discussion of this point, see Makin 2000, 69–73.

of classes in *Principia*,[50] he is also prepared to affirm that classes (and relations) are "incomplete symbols" (Russell and Whitehead 1990, 72, 81; Russell 1993b, 182; Marsh 1956, 253). He is also to be found calling them "logical fictions" (Russell 1993b, 14, 182; Russell 1945, 157; Marsh 1956, 191, 265), "symbolic fictions" (Russell 1993b, 184; compare Russell 1984, 129), and "façons de parler" (Russell 1910, 376). In using each of these epithets, Russell merely means that expressions for classes and relations have no meaning in isolation. His casualness about use and mention cannot be ignored, but it does not, I think, reflect confusion about the distinction, so much as a steadfast refusal to write in a way that fastidiously respects it.

In the light of these idiosyncrasies of Russellian idiom, we should exercise caution when interpreting his apparently ontology-thinning remarks about propositions in *Principia*. Granted, he says there not just that *sentences* are incomplete symbols, but also that *propositions* are (Russell and Whitehead 1990, 44, 162). However, as the case of classes shows, this need not mean that Russell embraces eliminativism concerning propositions in this work.

In spite of the lack of compelling textual evidence for eliminativism about propositions in *Principia*, some commentators have found it natural to attribute such a view to Russell (see, for example, Hylton 1996, 212). One factor that might encourage such attributions—beyond the just-noted looseness in Russell's talk—is the fact that in a paper composed close to the time at which Russell sent the manuscript of *Principia* to the publishers (October 1909), he did indeed embrace eliminativism. Thus in his paper "On the Nature of Truth and Falsehood" (Russell 1992, 115–24), which appeared for the first time in *Philosophical Essays* in 1910, Russell devises arguments against the subsistence of propositions. It is not entirely clear when he composed this article, though one imagines he was not likely to have turned to it until he had got *Principia* off his desk. But it is perfectly possible—and given the absence from *Principia* of any clear statement of eliminativism about propositions, rather likely—that this article represents a slightly later position to that of the introduction to *Principia*.

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50. "It is not necessary for our purposes . . . to assert dogmatically that there are no such things as classes. It is only necessary for us to show that the incomplete symbols which we introduce as representatives of classes yield all the propositions for the sake of which classes might be thought essential" (Russell and Whitehead 1990, 72).

What caused Russell to embrace eliminativism concerning propositions? Our reflections suggest one possible story. First, at some time between December 1906 and October 1909, he came to recognize that his solution to the George IV puzzle entailed that we could not be acquainted with propositions. This motivated his *firm* adoption of the MRTJ as an alternative to his earlier view that understanding consists in a relation of acquaintance between a subject and a proposition. (In 1906, by contrast, the Liar paradox had motivated only his openness toward the MRTJ as a possibility.) Once he had come to regard the MRTJ as mandatory, Russell could no longer see his "inference to the best explanation" argument for propositions as cogent. For the argument whose validity it attempts to explain—namely, "*A* believes that the sun orbits the earth; so $\exists x$ [Believes (A, x)]"—could, after the adoption of the MRTJ, no longer be held to be formally valid. At this stage, then—in the absence of any other positive grounds to believe in propositions—Russell would have been forced to conclude that he knew of the subsistence of propositions neither by acquaintance nor by description. Russell was not the kind of philosopher to leave matters there. The fact that he had no positive ground for believing in propositions would have led him to consider whether he could devise positive arguments *against* them. We will shortly examine the arguments Russell gave against the subsistence of propositions in his article "On the Nature of Truth and Falsehood," but first we should pause to examine a rival account of the motivations for Russell's abandonment of propositions.

7. The Role of the Paradoxes

It is sometimes claimed that the paradoxes played a key role in motivating Russell's abandonment of propositions.[51] In this section I argue that this idea lacks compelling textual support. It is true that certain paradoxes—and especially the Liar—were clearly operative in prompting Russell's initial *experiments* with the MRTJ, but something further is required to explain his shift from his earlier (1906) indecisive openness toward this theory to his later (1909) firm endorsement of it. And something further again is required to explain his move from the apparent agnosticism about propositions of the introduction to *Principia* to the eliminativism

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51. This view is endorsed by Landini (1996, 323): "The reason Russell abandoned propositions in 1910 was because of the paradoxes of propositions and his desire to avoid introducing a hierarchy of orders and a calculus for logic with restricted variables."

of "On the Nature of Truth and Falsehood" (1910). To establish these points, it will be worth spending a moment examining Russell's thinking about the paradoxes between 1905 and 1907, and in particular, the various twists and turns of his "on-again, off-again" relationship with his so-called substitutional theory, a theory that committed him to propositions.

From 1905 to 1907, Russell was pursuing his logicist program within the framework of a theory that dispensed with variables ranging over propositional functions in favor of variables ranging over individuals and propositions. Russell's first brief presentation of the main ideas behind this "substitutional theory" occurs in his article "On Some Difficulties in the Theory of Transfinite Numbers and Order Types" (Russell 1973b), which he completed in November 1905 (Russell 1973b, 135). At this time, he referred to this theory as the "no-classes" theory. The label is slightly misleading because the substitutional theory equally eschews any commitment to attributes or relations. Russell was initially optimistic about the substitutional theory's ability to resolve the paradoxes. In a note added to "On Some Difficulties" on February 5, 1906, he wrote, "From further investigation I now feel hardly any doubt that the no-classes theory affords the complete solution of all the difficulties stated in the first section of ['On Some Difficulties']" (Russell 1973b, 164). Russell's optimism was, nonetheless, short-lived, for he soon realized that a version of a paradox about which he had known since 1902 could be formulated (suitably modified) in his new theory. As Gregory Landini (1998, 204) has noted, in a manuscript of April–May 1906, Russell discovered that a close cousin of the "propositional paradox" of the *Principles'* "appendix B" could be formulated within the substitutional theory (Russell 1906c, 7).[52] Russell's immediate reaction to this discovery was one of despair. On April 22, 1906, he wrote to Lucy Donnelly that the substitutional theory "was all rubbish, and had to be scrapped" (Monk 1996, 187).[53] By May of that year, however, Russell's confidence in the theory had recovered sufficiently for him to present a paper expounding its main ideas to the London Mathematical Society.[54] The paper in question was "On the Substitutional Theory of Classes and Relations" (Lackey

52. For a helpful presentation of the paradox in the substitutional theory, which brings out its affinities with the paradox discussed in appendix B of the *Principles* (Russell 1996), see B. Linsky 2002.

53. The date of this letter strongly suggests that the paradox must have already been discovered by April rather than May of 1906.

54. The meeting was held on May 10, 1906 (see Lackey 1973, 165).

1973, 165–89). Here Russell expresses confidence that the substitutional theory "affords what at least seems to be a complete solution of all the hoary difficulties about the one and the many" (189). Russell's recovered confidence in the theory persisted through the period of composition of the article "Les Paradoxes de la Logique," which was published in September 1906 and composed that summer.[55] In the concluding paragraph of this article, Russell says, "There seems reason to hope that the method proposed in this article avoids all the contradictions, and at the same time preserves Cantor's results" (Lackey 1973, 214). Russell's recovered optimism seems to stem from his having at this point taken the paradox to be capable of resolution by treating sentences containing "apparent variables" (that is, bound variables) as incomplete symbols, thus outlawing the paradox-generating substitutions.[56] His optimism persisted into the early fall. He wrote to Jourdain on October 10 that he was "glad you [Jourdain] feel attracted by the no-classes theory. I am engaged at present in purging it of metaphysical elements as far as possible, with a view to getting the bare residuum on which its success depends" (Grattan-Guinness 1977, 93). Michael Potter (2000, 131) has conjectured that these "metaphysical elements" would have been propositions, but given that a theory so purged would have little claim to be a version of the substitutional theory, it seems more likely that Russell was describing the state of play in "Les Paradoxes" and so referring to purging the theory specifically of *quantified* propositions.

A few days later, however, Russell's renewed confidence in the theory was dealt a new blow when he received the comments of a referee for the journal of the London Mathematical Society. In comments forwarded to Russell on October 12 (Grattan-Guinness 1974, 399), this referee—the logician A. B. Kempe—complained about numerous unclarities in "On the Substitutional Theory of Classes and Relations," which Russell had submitted for publication in May. In the light of those criticisms, Russell immediately withdrew that article (399).

Two months later, whatever doubts Kempe had sown seem to have been reinforced by Russell's reflections on the Liar Paradox. For in his

55. The article appeared in English as "On 'Insolubilia' and Their Solution by Symbolic Logic" (Lackey 1973, 190–214). In what follows I cite the English version. Russell's citation of a publication by Poincaré, which had appeared in May of 1906 in the same journal, fixes the date of composition of the article as the summer of that year (190).

56. "I assume that there is such a thing as the proposition even in cases where it is false, but not in cases where it is *general*" (ibid., 207).

paper for the Aristotelian Society, given on December 3, 1906, "On the Nature of Truth," apparently prompted by the need to resolve this paradox, he sketches a theory according to which there are no *false* propositions and where a rudimentary version of the MRTJ replaces a theory of judgment that involves positing propositions (both true and false) as the objects of judgment (Russell 1906a, 46–47). In this paper, however, he is careful to suspend judgment on this eliminative version of the MRTJ— eliminative, that is, with respect to *false* propositions—and contents himself with recommending it as a *possible* alternative to the view that a false belief involves the believer's standing in a relation of belief to a false proposition.

Over the Christmas of 1906–7, Russell's attitude to the substitutional theory seems, at least temporarily, to have hardened. For in his letter to Hawtrey of January 1907, he describes the propositional paradox as having "pilled" the substitutional theory (see the 1907 letter to Hawtrey in B. Linsky 2002, 158). It was not initially clear to scholars what this meant (or even which word Russell had used), but it now transpires that this is probably Edwardian slang meaning "to fail (a candidate) in an examination" (B. Linsky 2002, 157). Yet, in spite of this seemingly damning verdict, Russell still did not abandon the theory but rather set about modifying it in a new way. Thus in his paper "Mathematical Logic as Based on the Theory of Types," which he probably completed in the summer of 1907,[57] he presents a modified version of the theory, according to which propositions are stratified into a hierarchy of orders.

Russell's view at this time, as Landini has made clear, was that even though a theory in which propositional functions are quantified over has certain superficial advantages *as a symbolism* over the substitutional theory, the latter still represents the theory in which, from a foundational point of view, the logicist reduction, if successful, should be considered to have been carried out.

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57. The article was published in the *American Journal of Mathematics* in the summer of 1908. In a letter to Jourdain of July 2, 1908, Russell makes a remark that suggests it was completed the previous summer. "I have an article in this month's American Journal, of which I will send you an offprint when I get one. The American Journal is very slow—they kept the manuscript a year before printing it" (Grattan-Guinness 1977, 111). Since working notes from 1906 bear a marginal note, dated "June 1907," in which Russell registers doubts about an argument he had previously offered as a criticism of the substitutional theory (Russell 1906b, 87), it seems likely that he was engaged in a thorough reappraisal of the substitutional theory over that summer.

> In practice, a hierarchy of *functions* is more convenient than one of propositions. Functions of various orders may be obtained from propositions of various orders by the method of *substitution*. If *p* is a proposition, and *a* a constituent of *p*, let '*p/a*; *x*' denote the proposition which results from substituting *x* for *a* whenever *a* occurs in *p*. Then *p/a*, which we call a *matrix*, may take the place of a function . . . . In this way we can avoid apparent variables other than [those ranging over] individuals and propositions of various orders. (Marsh 1956, 77)

The final sentence of this paragraph suggests that Russell envisages avoiding the propositional paradox by incorporating an order-stratified hierarchy of propositions within the substitutional theory. As Landini has noted, Russell seems at this stage to regard the substitutional theory as alive and well and as capable of providing proxies for symbols in the official notation of the theory of types. Such a reading is strongly suggested, in particular, by the following remark:

> Although it is *possible* to replace functions by matrices, and although this procedure introduces a certain simplicity into the explanation of types, it is technically inconvenient. Technically, it is convenient to replace the prototype *p* by *φa*, and to replace *p/a*; *x* by *φx*; thus where, if matrices were being employed, *p* and *a* would appear as apparent variables, we now have *φ* as our apparent variable. (Marsh 1956, 77)

We may conclude from all this that while Russell's reflections on the Liar paradox in 1906 had clearly prompted him to toy with the possibility of embracing a version of the MRTJ according to which there were no false propositions, there is no reason to think that these considerations were still operative by the summer of 1907. Moreover, while his confidence in the substitutional theory clearly fluctuated during the years 1906 and 1907—a period when he was considering a number of different strategies for responding to the paradoxes, the position he states in a published work, "Mathematical Logic as Based on the Theory of Types," written in the summer of 1907, defends a version of the substitutional theory and involves stratifying propositions into orders rather than treating them as nonentities. So in his last published sketch of his logical system before *Principia*, there is no suggestion that propositions ought in *any* sense to be abandoned.

How Russell would have sought to justify the ramification of the substitutional theory is of course a good question. He would no doubt have puzzled over this, and it is unclear whether or not he would have taken the Vicious Circle Principle to provide a sufficient justification for

the ramified version of the theory, given that ramification involved abandoning what was arguably one of the original rationales for the substitutional theory, namely, the unrestricted variable.[58] What is clear is that existing accounts of this matter become conjectural at this point. The textual record simply fails to supply concrete indications of Russell's reasons for becoming dissatisfied with the ramified version of the substitutional theory.

We are still left wondering about two questions: First, what was it that led Russell firmly to endorse the MRTJ at some point between the summer of 1907 and October 1909? Second, what led him to endorse eliminativism about propositions by 1910?

This is where my account may provide some help. For we can appreciate how reflection on the George IV puzzle and its consequences would have given Russell a new reason—one quite independent of his old, inconclusive reflections on the Liar paradox—to firmly adopt the MRTJ. Having taken this step—and so having embraced the apparent agnosticism of the introduction to *Principia*[59]—Russell could have come to see that his last remaining reason for believing positively in the subsistence of propositions—namely, his "inference to the best explanation" argument—was thereby undermined. To explain Russell's further move in 1910 to full eliminativism about propositions, we need only suppose that, upon finding himself without any positive ground to believe in propositions, Russell asked the natural question whether there were any good reasons to deny their subsistence. His desire to settle the issue definitively no doubt encouraged him to look rather indulgently on some of the weaker arguments he came up with for denying the subsistence of propositions. (I shall say more about those arguments shortly.)

This account, it should be noted, reverses what might at first sight seem to be a natural account of Russell's endorsement of the MRTJ. It might be supposed that Russell adopted the MRTJ because he was compelled to do so by his eliminativism about propositions—motivated perhaps by his intuitive distrust of false propositions.[60] Such an account, however, sits awkwardly with the fact that there is, strictly speaking, no

58. For a statement of the view that Russell would have found the ramification artificial and insufficiently motivated, see Stevens 2005, 61–64.

59. It is, of course, controversial whether Russell is committed to an ontology of propositions in the formal theory of *Principia*, even if he is agnostic about them in the introduction. A discussion of this controversy would, however, be beyond the scope of this article.

60. For a view of this kind, see Tully 2003, 348.

trace of eliminativism (as opposed to agnosticism) concerning propositions in *Principia*.[61] I have suggested, by contrast, that the MRTJ was motivated independently of Russell's eliminativism about propositions and in fact played a role in motivating it.

8. Russell's Move to Eliminativism concerning Propositions

This final section divides into two subsections. The first examines Russell's stated arguments against propositions. The second examines and criticizes a popular account of his deeper, implicit reasons for abandoning them. In opposition to this popular view, I argue that Russell's true reason for embracing eliminativism concerning propositions in 1910 is his thinking through of the consequences of the Principle of Sufficient Reason, which he now firmly endorses.

8.1. Russell's Stated Arguments against Propositions

Russell offers his first unequivocal arguments against propositions in his article, published in 1910, "On the Nature of Truth and Falsehood." In addition to expressing what he would later come to call "a strong natural conviction" (Russell 1984, 153) that there are no false propositions—a point upon which Russell now places considerable weight—he gives three arguments against propositions. First, he contends that "that-clauses" are apt to strike us as incomplete symbols (Russell 1992, 119). Second, he contends that to admit the subsistence of false propositions (or "objective falsehoods," as he also calls them) would be to allow that there could be falsehood in the absence of mistaken minds. And he suggests that such a position would be implausible (119). Third, he contends that to suppose that there are both true and false "Objectives" (that is, propositions) would be to commit oneself to regarding it as "an ultimate and not further explicable fact that Objectives are of two sorts, the true and the false" (119). Such a view, according to Russell, "would leave the difference between truth and falsehood quite inexplicable" (119). He was later to describe the last of these arguments as "the chief objection" to objective falsehoods (Russell 1984, 153).

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61. Recall that, as I argued above, to say that propositions are "incomplete symbols" means for Russell only that sentences do not have meaning by expressing propositions, which is itself quite compatible with the possibility that propositions subsist without ever being expressed by sentences.

Russell concedes that none of these arguments is "logically compelling" (Russell 1984, 153); and, *as they stand*, that is certainly so. Regarding the first, we may note that it is far from obvious that that-clauses are incomplete symbols, and that, even if they were, it would not follow that there are no propositions. Regarding the second, it suffices to note its limited appeal. Even if it should carry some weight with Russell's traditional idealist opponents, one could hardly expect it to move, say, the early G. E. Moore. The third argument seems more promising: if truth and falsehood are indefinable properties of propositions, as Russell had once supposed,[62] then the fact that propositions come in just these two varieties might indeed seem to be an ultimate and not further explicable fact. If one subscribed to the Principle of Sufficient Reason, as Russell certainly does in 1910, one would treat this principle as reason to favor the MRTJ, which maintains that truth is not primitive but consists in the correspondence of a judgment to a fact. For on such a view, first, the fact that judgments come in just two varieties—the true and the false—would be explained by the fact that as a matter of logic either a judgment has a fact corresponding to it or it does not, and, second, the difference between a true judgment and a false one would be explained by the presence or absence of a fact that made the judgment true.

So far, so good. But the question immediately arises: why could not truth be held to consist in a relationship of correspondence between a *proposition* and a fact—where facts now are understood as distinct from true propositions? If it did consist in such a relationship, then the fact that propositions come in just two varieties would be adequately explained by the fact that, as a matter of logic, either a proposition has a fact corresponding to it or it does not. Moreover, the difference between truths and falsehoods would be explained in terms of the presence or absence of a fact corresponding to the proposition in question.

Russell, I believe, does have grounds to rule out such a position; so the third of these arguments may be more promising than it sounds. It will, however, be convenient to defer our discussion of those grounds

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62. In his paper of 1905, "The Nature of Truth," Russell (1905, 504) is explicit that truth is indefinable. In his paper of 1906, "On the Nature of Truth," when describing the view to which the MRTJ is introduced as a rival, Russell (1906a, 48) says, "Truth and falsehood, in this view, are ultimate, and no account can be given of what makes a proposition true or false." It is natural to suppose that here he is describing the view he held in 1905.

until we have examined yet another account of Russell's true reasons for abandoning propositions.

8.2. Russell's Grounds for Abandoning Propositions: A Popular View

The apparent weakness of Russell's stated case against propositions has, reasonably enough, prompted commentators to seek deeper—if somewhat conjectural—explanations of his true reservations. One such explanation, originally offered by Kenneth Olson (1987, 80–81), runs as follows:

> A relation either relates a pair of items or it does not. This made it rather hard for Russell to account for the unity of a false proposition, since it could not consist in the fact that the relation which is asserted to hold actually holds. And this put pressure on him to deny propositions in favor of facts.[63]

Olson is alluding to Russell's idea that what secures the unity of a proposition is its "verb." This is not a linguistic item but rather a nonlinguistic propositional constituent, namely, a relation. For Russell, relations are capable of (at least) two fundamentally different modes of occurrence.[64] They may occur either "as term"—that is, in a substantive role—(as, for example, in the proposition expressed by "Similarity is a relation") or "as relating" (as, for example, in the proposition expressed by "Tweedledum is similar to Tweedledee") (compare Russell 1996, 49; Russell 1994, 267).[65] Russell holds that the unity of the proposition is secured by the relation in its role "as relating."As Olson observes, this can make the unity of a false proposition seem problematic. For how can its parts hang together in such a way as to constitute a false proposition if they are not actually related by the unity-securing relation?

As Bernard Linsky (1999, 48)—who endorses Olson's interpretation—notes, such an account of propositional unity also problematizes *true* propositions (if they are treated as distinct from facts):

63. Quoted (approvingly) in B. Linsky 1999, 47.

64. The reason for the qualification "at least" will be explained later in this section.

65. In the *Principles*, Russell (1996, 140) also speaks of *predicates* as having two modes of occurrence—"as term" and "as qualifying"; so it is not clear that he regards every proposition as fundamentally relational in form, though at places he seems to do so (52). I shall, however, suppress this qualification in what follows.

> With true propositions Russell's difficulty is even clearer. A true prop-
> osition, distinct from the fact it reports, would have to bind the individuals
> together to form a unity, but not a unity that made for a fact.

In short, if we admitted true propositions in addition to facts, we should have to posit two distinct modes of unity, and yet Russell seems to posit only one: what unifies the elements in a proposition and in a fact is the very same thing—the relation in its occurrence "as relating."

The Olson-Linsky reading is undeniably suggestive, but it faces three immediate textual difficulties. First, if it were correct, it would be surprising that Russell should make no mention of the issue of disunity when expressing his reservations about false propositions in his pub-lished works, emphasizing instead only their "shadowiness" (Marsh 1956, 223). Second, and more important, since the unity problem is rather obvious, and since, if genuine, it would have dogged Russell's theory of propositions right from the outset in 1900, it is puzzling that he should have failed to register *any* qualms about propositions until 1906, and no less puzzling that he should have waited until 1910 to reject them. Third and relatedly, because the argument against propositions envisaged by Olson and Linsky admits of a succinct statement, one won-ders why Russell should have failed to state it in his published writings and, in particular, why it fails to appear on his list of arguments against propositions in "On the Nature of Truth and Falsehood."

Having said this, it is true that Russell can be taken to have approximated an argument of the kind Olson and Linsky favor in his unpublished *Theory of Knowledge* manuscript of 1913:

> Our disbelief in [the reality of false propositions] may be reinforced by
> asking ourselves what kind of entity a false proposition could be. Let us
> take some very simple false proposition, say "*A* precedes *B*," when in fact *A*
> comes after *B*. It seems as though nothing were involved here beyond *A*
> and *B* and "preceding" and the general form of dual complexes. But since
> *A* does not precede *B*, these objects are not put together in the way indi-
> cated by the proposition. It seems, therefore, that nothing which actually
> is composed of these objects is the proposition; and it is not credible that
> anything further enters into the proposition. (Russell 1984, 110)

There are, nonetheless, two reasons why it would be unwise to rest too much weight on this passage. One is simply that the argument occurs nowhere outside this abandoned work—even though other passages from the same unpublished manuscript do appear in published works. Another is that, having presented this line of reasoning, Russell adds,

"This argument cannot be regarded as very conclusive" (110). Since Russell makes no mention of this argument when he first cites his reasons for abandoning propositions, it seems likely that it is a tentative after-thought—one possibly suggested to Russell in the course of his conversations with Wittgenstein.

Why would Russell not have seen the argument as very conclusive? The reason, I believe, is that he was well aware that *in its stated form* it could be countered simply by maintaining that although in some complexes the relating relation cements certain objects into a fact, in others it cements the relevant objects only into a false proposition.[66] On such a view, the relation in its role "as relating" will provide two possible modes of combination. This point is easily missed because it is natural to interpret Russell's talk of a relation's occurring "as relating" as expressing the idea of a relation's actually *holding between* certain objects, but since the intended contrast is in fact only with the idea of the relation in its occurrence "as term," it is perfectly possible that a relation in its occurrence "as relating" might merely serve to cement its terms into a false proposition rather than a fact.

Had Russell held such a view, his hesitancy over the argument he states in the *Theory of Knowledge* manuscript would be readily explicable. We need only suppose he recognized that the argument (as he states it there) could be refuted simply by maintaining that in the false proposition "*A* precedes *B*," the objects *A* and *B are* combined by the relation *precedes*, but merely in the false-proposition-constituting way, rather than in the fact-constituting way.

Since such a reply is available, the argument is inadequate as it stands. Why, then, did Russell bother stating it? It seems plausible that he did so simply because he recognized that the argument *would* nonetheless go through if it were to be supplemented by an appeal to the Principle of Sufficient Reason. For with this principle assumed, the supposition that one and the same relation occurs in some complexes in a fact-constituting way but in others merely in a proposition-constituting way would seem implausible. It is, after all, hard to see what the difference between these two modes of unity-conferring occurrence could consist in. Moreover, in addition to explaining why Russell bothered with the argument of the *Theory of Knowledge* manuscript at all, the supposition

66. It is sometimes held that Russell always took the relation's occurrence "as relating" as sufficient to ensure the truth of the proposition, but, like Landini (1996, 323), I find no evidence in Russell's writings that this is so.

that this argument relies on the Principle of Sufficient Reason has the further merit that it enables us to explain why Russell came to see that argument as having some force only after he had come to embrace the Principle of Sufficient Reason in 1910.

Having noted these points, we are finally in a better position to appreciate the force of Russell's third (and best) objection to propositions in his essay of 1910. Recall that, at the end of our discussion of that objection, we were left asking why a proposition's truth could not be defined in terms of its correspondence to a fact. The answer, as we can now appreciate, is that such a picture would involve appealing to an inexplicable or brute difference between true propositions and facts. For, from Russell's point of view, the true *proposition* Othello loves Desdemona could differ from the *fact* that Othello loves Desdemona only in the kind of unity conferred on its elements by the relating relation *loves*. Accordingly, the preferred form of correspondence must be one in which judgments rather than propositions are taken to do the corresponding. Such a position is tenable because judgments (that is, judgmental complexes), since they differ in their constituents from the facts that make them true, do not face the difficulty just discussed.

These reflections suggest that the deepest puzzle about Russell's abandonment of propositions in 1910 is why he should have come to reverse his position on the Principle of Sufficient Reason. Why did brute differences, to which Russell had been favorably disposed during 1902–5, come to seem intolerable to him by 1910? Presumably, he must have somehow worked through his earlier fear that the Principle of Sufficient Reason provided grist for his idealist or Bradleyan opponents (Russell 1906a, 40). But the textual record seems to tell us little about how and why his fears came to be allayed. At any rate, I take it that this question about Russell's change of heart concerning the Principle of Sufficient Reason is the real puzzle about Russell's abandonment of propositions.

Conclusion

We have arrived at the end of a long and rather complicated story. It would probably be best, therefore, simply to close with a summary of the article's chief morals and lines of argument.

The main interpretive moral is that the substitutivity principle Russell defends in "On Denoting"—SP—is not to be construed as the easily-denied linguistic principle, SI, but rather as the apparently unim-

peachable nonlinguistic principle, SV. Since SP has this status, the puzzle cannot be trivially solved by denying SP. Instead, it takes on the aspect of a paradox. Our recognition of this point motivated a reexamination of the details of Russell's solution to the puzzle as well as a corresponding reappraisal of its philosophical consequences.

One important epistemological consequence of Russell's solution—in the context of certain other Russellian assumptions—is Full Disclosure. I have argued that Russell was probably aware of this consequence of his view and that his awareness of it would have been one of the factors motivating his denial—already evident in "On Denoting"—that we are acquainted with material objects.

In view of the shape assumed by Russell's solution, the question arises: are there any cases of the George IV puzzle that resist this solution because they involve true, informative, *genuine* identity statements? The chief philosophical moral of this article is that the answer to this question is yes. Russell's views on memory, which he thinks through seriously in 1913, lumber him with recalcitrant cases of the puzzle. It seems likely that Russell soon became aware of this problem; for he had clearly abandoned Full Disclosure by 1914.

Russell, I have argued, was probably aware that he was committed by his analysis of generality to the existence of true, informative statements in which an identity sign is flanked by two *sentences*. An awareness of such a commitment, I have argued, would have given him reason to view some occurrences of sentences as lacking meaning in isolation. Given his preference for simple theories, it would have also given him reason to deny that we are ever acquainted with propositions. Again, in the context of his preference for simple theories—a preference that would have led him to seek a unitary account of understanding—this view would, in turn, have necessitated the abandonment of his former conception of understanding as requiring the obtaining of a relation of acquaintance between a subject and a proposition. This development would have led Russell firmly to endorse his already-mooted Multiple Relation Theory of Judgment since it provided, among other things, an alternative account of understanding. That theory, in turn, would have undermined Russell's reasons for thinking that, even though we cannot be acquainted with propositions, we might at least have general theoretical grounds—based on certain patterns of valid inference—for taking propositions to subsist. The evidence, I have suggested, does not indicate that the paradoxes were decisive in nudging Russell toward either agnosticism or eliminativism about propositions; for he was well aware that a stratifi-

cation of propositions into orders remained an option for resolving the various versions of the Liar and propositional paradoxes. I have suggested that the extra impetus pushing Russell toward agnosticism about propositions at some point between 1907 and October 1909 would have come from his reflections on the consequences of the George IV puzzle. I have also suggested that, once it had dawned on him that he no longer had any positive ground for affirming the subsistence of propositions, it would have been natural for him to try to devise arguments against them. Those arguments, I have suggested, are of uneven merit. The best of them is his argument from the Principle of Sufficient Reason, though precisely why he should have come to endorse this principle, when he had formerly rejected it, remains a puzzling question.

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