On Designating

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A detailed interpretation is provided of the 'Gray's *Elegy*' passage in Russell's 'On Denoting'. The passage is sufficiently obscure that its principal lessons have been independently rediscovered. Russell attempts to demonstrate that the thesis that definite descriptions are singular terms is untenable. The thesis demands a distinction be drawn between content and designation, but the attempt to form a proposition directly about the content (as by using an appropriate form of quotation) inevitably results in a proposition about the thing designated instead of the content expressed. In light of this collapse, argues Russell, the thesis that definite descriptions are singular terms must accept that all propositions about a description's content represent it by means of a higher-level descriptive content, so that knowledge of a description's content is always 'by description', not 'by acquaintance'. This, according to Russell, renders our cognitive grip on definite descriptions inexplicable. Separate responses on behalf of Fregeans and Millians are offered.

1.

One of the most important contributions to philosophy of the previous century was made when the century had barely begun. Few articles in philosophy have been studied as carefully as Russell's 'On Denoting',[1] even if its insights have not always been sufficiently appreciated. And few passages have received as careful scrutiny as the famous sequence, eight paragraphs in all, in which Russell presents his argument involving 'the first line of Gray's *Elegy*' and 'the centre of mass of the Solar System'. The argument presents objections to the semantic theory that ascribes to expressions a distinction between 'meaning', that is, semantic content (sense, John Stuart Mill's 'connotation', Frege's *Sinn*), and 'denotation', that is, designation (semantic reference, Frege's *Bedeutung*). Russell's own emphasis demonstrates that the argument plays an important role in the article. Yet the presentation is garbled and confused, almost to the point of being altogether inscrutable and incomprehensible. Alonzo Church commented that Russell's objections in the passage in question 'are traceable merely to confusion between use and mention of expressions, of a sort that Frege was careful to avoid by the

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[1] Russell (1905).

employment of quotation-marks. Russell applies quotation-marks to distinguish the sense of an expression from its denotation, but leaves himself without any notation for the expression itself; upon introduction of (say) a second kind of quotation-marks to signalize names of expressions, Russell's objections to Frege completely vanish.'[2] This has proved to be a challenge few can resist.

I present here a new, detailed interpretation of that paradigm of obscure philosophy and discuss specific issues raised by the argument. I believe that previous attempts to decipher the difficult passage fail to capture important aspects of the principal thrust of the argument as Russell intended it.[3] Commenting on one previous interpretation, David Kaplan (op. cit., p. 143) said, 'the complete justification of any analysis of Russell's argument clearly awaits a fully annotated version of the two pages.' Yet after listing various interpretations for Russell's use of the phrase 'denoting complex', he added, 'all these (indeed all possible) views regarding the meaning of "denoting complex" are supported by the text' (*op. cit.*, p. 144). I do not claim that my interpretation is the correct one. The textual evidence is insufficient to warrant such a conclusion about any possible interpretation. Although I do not claim that my interpretation is correct, I believe it comes significantly closer to Russell's intentions than previous interpretations have. The interpretation I provide is not merely supported by the text in Kaplan's weak sense; it is strongly suggested by the text. As is to be expected, there are areas of overlap between my interpretation and some previous efforts, but there remain significant differences, while other interpretations have little in common with mine. I will argue that Church's dismissive remarks have greater merit than subsequent interpreters have recognized, but I also hope to show that Church's assessment is fundamentally mistaken.

My objective is by no means purely, or even mostly, historical. My primary purpose, rather, is almost entirely philosophical and ahistorical. It is unimportant philosophically whether my interpretation is faithful to Russell's intent (though I aspire to make it largely so); what is important is whether the main elements of the argument I attribute to

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[2] Church (1943) p. 302.

[3] Discussions subsequent to Church include the following, chronologically: Butler (1954); Searle (1958); Geach (1959); Jager (1960); Kaplan (1969); Ayer (1971) at pp. 30–2; Cassin (1971); Dummett *(*1973) at pp. 267–8; Hochberg (1976); Blackburn and Code (1978a); Geach (1978); Blackburn and Code (1978b); Manser (1985); Hylton (1990) at pp. 249–64; Turnau (1991); Pakaluk (1993); Wahl (1993); Kremer (1994); Noonan (1996); Landini (1998); Demopoulos (1999); Makin (2000); Levine (2004). (I make no attempt to address these discussions, though some comparisons will be made, especially in n. 34 below.)

Russell succeed or fail, and why they do. I believe the intended argument is significantly more germane and forceful—and therefore more pressing—to very contemporary philosophical concerns than has been appreciated. I shall present a sketch of what I believe to be the correct reply to the argument as here interpreted.

Here is the chestnut in a nutshell: The seemingly innocuous thesis that definite descriptions are singular terms is untenable. For the attempt to form a proposition directly about the content of a definite description (as by using an appropriate form of quotation) inevitably results in a proposition about the thing designated instead of the content expressed. I call this phenomenon the *Collapse*. In light of the Collapse, Russell argues, the thesis that definite descriptions are singular terms must accept that all propositions about a description's content are about that content indirectly, representing it by means of a higher-level descriptive content. And this, according to Russell, renders our cognitive grip on definite descriptions mysterious and inexplicable.

'On Denoting' is concerned with the semantics—specifically with the designation, the semantic content, and the logical classification—of expressions of a certain grammatical category, what Russell calls the *denoting phrase*. This is a noun phrase beginning with what linguists call a *determiner*, like 'every', 'some', 'no', or 'the'. A *definite description* is a determiner phrase whose determiner is the definite article 'the', or alternatively a possessive adjective, like 'the author of *Waverley*' or 'my favourite son'. A definite description is said to be *proper* if there is something that uniquely answers to it, and is otherwise *improper*. (To say that something is *uniquely* such-and-such is to say that it and nothing else is such-and-such.) An *indefinite description* is a determiner phrase whose determiner is the indefinite article 'a' or 'an', or alternatively 'some'. Russell calls semantic content *meaning*. This has misled some readers, notably P. F. Strawson, who argues in opposition to Russell that an expression like 'the present queen of England' has the same "meaning" in every context ("occasion") of use, and this meaning fixes whom or what the speaker "refers to" in using the description, so that the designation may vary with the context.[4] In response, Russell correctly notes that this is utterly irrelevant.[5] It is perfectly consistent with Russell's views to posit a separate semantic value of a designating expres-

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[4] Strawson (1950), sect. 2.

[5] 'Mr. Strawson on Referring', in Russell (1959) at pp. 238–40. In this article and also in 'On Denoting' Russell scores additional points against the Fregean theory that Strawson advocates, though I believe Russell does not gain a decisive victory over Frege–Strawson. Cf. my 'Nonexistence' (Salmon 1998).

sion that determines for any given context whether the expression has a content, and if so what that content is.[6] In order to guard against confusing this semantic value with Russell's notion of "meaning", I shall consistently use the word 'content' for the latter.[7]

Russell's principal topic is the question: How do determiner phrases get at the objects of which we think and speak when we use those phrases? A *singular term* is an expression with the semantic function of designating a single individual or thing.[8] The very terminology that Russell uses for determiner phrases raises an intriguing possibility: Are determiner phrases perhaps singular terms? In *The Principles of Mathematics*, Russell answered this question affirmatively. In 'On Denoting', he is dissatisfied with his previous effort. Indeed, some determiner phrases are clearly not singular terms. Which single individual or thing would the 'no minor' in 'No minor will be admitted unless accompanied by an adult' designate?[9] Another class of determiner phrases, the indefinite descriptions, sometimes seem to function as singular terms, sometimes not (*'A colleague* has invited me to dinner' versus 'No minor will be admitted unless accompanied by *an adult'*). Still other determiner phrases—the definite descriptions—appear always, or nearly always, to be singular terms.[10] So many theorists, including Frege and the author of *The Principles of Mathematics*, have taken them to be.

One of the central tenets of 'On Denoting' is that determiner phrases are never singular terms. According to the general Theory of Descriptions presented in 'On Denoting', a universal sentence like

Every author is a genius

is properly analysed as:

$\forall x (x$ writes $\supset x$ is ingenious)

[6] Cf. Kaplan's notion of *character* as distinct from content, in Kaplan (1989) at pp. 505–7.

[7] Fregeans may insert the word 'sense' wherever I use 'content'.

[8] The context-sensitivity of such terms as 'I' and 'you' does not disqualify them as singular terms. An expression may have the semantic function of designating a single individual even though the matter of which single individual it designates varies with context. Also, an expression may have the semantic function of designating a single individual without necessarily fulfilling its function. Hence, 'the present king of France' is not disqualified simply because France is no longer a monarchy (and would not have been disqualified even if France had never been a monarchy).

[9] Russell's theory of determiner phrases in *The Principles of Mathematics* omits the determiner 'no'. The omission is rectified in 'On Denoting'. This suggests that its earlier omission was an oversight.

[10] One possible exception would be such definite descriptions as 'the typical woman', which may be a paraphrase for something like 'most women', which is a determiner phrase that, like 'no minor', is clearly not a singular term. There are other exceptions.

or in plain English, *Everything is such that if it writes, then it is ingenious*. The analysans expresses about the conditional property (or 'propositional function') of *being ingenious if a writer* that it is universal. By Russell's lights, the original sentence therefore expresses a proposition that may be seen as consisting of two things: this conditional property and the second-order property of universality. The proposition predicates its second component of its first. There is nothing here—no unified entity—that can be identified as the distinct object contributed to the proposition by the phrase 'every author'. The first half of the phrase contributes one of the proposition components, and the other half only contributes toward part of the other proposition component. In Russell's words, the phrase itself "has no meaning in isolation" though the sentences in which it figures do have content. Nor therefore does the phrase 'every author' have the semantic function of designating. At best, it corresponds to an "incomplete" quantificational construction: 'Everything is such that if it writes, then … it …'. Similarly, a sentence like

Some author is a genius

is properly analysed as:

$\exists x(x \text{ writes } \wedge \ x \text{ is ingenious})$

or *Something both writes and is ingenious*. The indefinite description 'some author' is also relegated to the status of an incomplete symbol for which there is no corresponding proposition component—no "meaning in isolation"—and consequently, no designation. That it does not designate any particular author said to be a genius is confirmed by the fact that, semantically, the English sentence is true as long as some author or other is a genius—any one will do (even if the particular author that the speaker means is not one). A sentence like 'No author is a genius' may be analysed either as the denial of the proposition just analysed, or equivalently as a universal proposition, *Everything is such that if it writes, then it is not ingenious*. Either way, the determiner phrase 'no author' is seen to lack the status of a singular term.

The special Theory of Descriptions concerns definite descriptions. On this theory, a sentence like

(1) The author of *Waverley* is a genius

is properly analysed as follows:

(2) $\exists x[(\forall y)(y \text{ wrote } Waverley \equiv x = y) \ \wedge \ x \text{ is ingenious}]$

or *Something both uniquely wrote* Waverley *and is ingenious*. By Russell's lights, sentence (1) expresses a proposition consisting of the conjunctive property of *both uniquely having written* Waverley *and being ingenious* and the second-order property of *being instantiated*, that is, *being a property of something or other*. There is nothing in this proposition that can be identified as the object contributed by the phrase 'the author of *Waverley*', any more than there is a component contributed by the phrase 'every author' to the proposition that everything is ingenious-if-a-writer. Even a definite description, therefore, does not have the semantic function of designating a single individual. In fact, on Russell's analysis the definite description 'the author of *Waverley*' is completely replaceable, with no change in the proposition expressed, by an indefinite description: 'a unique author of *Waverley*'.

Although the description 'the author of *Waverley*' is analysed in such a way that it is not a singular term, the proposition that some unique author of *Waverley* is a genius might still be said to be *about* the author of *Waverley*—to wit, Sir Walter Scott. Since Scott is not actually designated, the proposition is 'about' him only in an extremely attenuated sense. The proposition is straightforwardly about the conjunctive property of *both uniquely having written* Waverley *and being ingenious*, and it is only through the sub-property of *uniquely having written* Waverley that the proposition 'gets at' the author himself, *qua* unspecified property instantiator. Though the definite description is not a singular term, there is an obvious sense in which it *simulates* designating Scott. Like a name for Scott, it is completely interchangeable with any genuine singular term designating Scott, with no effect on grammar and for the most part with no effect on truth-value—but for contexts like those of propositional attitude in which not mere designation, but the content itself, is at issue. For that matter, the indefinite paraphrase 'a unique author of *Waverley*' also simulates designating Scott. In presenting the Theory of Descriptions, Russell coins (or usurps) a cover term for the disjunction of designation with its simulation. He calls either *denoting*. He should have called the latter *pseudo-denoting*. I believe Russell saw this kind of simulated designation as the chief virtue of his Theory of Descriptions. For him, the simulation of designation of individuals through the genuine designation of properties, and the resulting attenuated *aboutness* of propositions, is the epistemological conduit by which we gain cognitive access to the world beyond the narrow confines of our "direct acquaintance". Though we cannot actually designate those things with which we are not immediately acquainted, sometimes, often in fact, we can "get at" them by describing them as *a such-*

and-such or as *the so-and-so*, pseudo-designating them by these descriptions, knowing them the only way we can: "by description". The propositions we know are more straightforwardly about properties that we know to be instantiated, not the instantiators themselves.

2.

The 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument must be viewed against this background to be properly grasped. My interpretation of the argument differs from previous attempts in the fundamental issue of exactly what theory is Russell's primary target. Previous commentators have disagreed about whether Russell is arguing against Frege's theory of *Sinn* and *Bedeutung* (as Church, Searle, and Blackburn and Code contend), or instead against the particular theory of designating developed in Russell's own *Principles* of a short time before 'On Denoting' (Geach, Cassin, Hylton, Pakaluk, Kremer, Noonan, Landini, Levine, Makin). Some interpreters have maintained that Russell criticizes an arcane and baroque theory that few have held (Jager, Pakaluk). Some reconstruct Russell's argument in such a way that he primarily attacks a straw-man theory that no one actually held (Butler, Searle). I believe Russell's target is not exactly any of these.

In one sense, each of the hypotheses, that Russell's intended target was Frege's theory, or instead that of Russell's earlier self, is too broad. The main issue over which these theories differ concerns propositions of a certain stripe. If a proposition p is genuinely *about* an object x in the sense that x is actually designated (and not merely in the way that (2) gets at Scott), then the proposition is about x (roughly speaking) in virtue of some proposition component. A *singular proposition* is a proposition that is about one of its own components by virtue of containing it. If p is a singular proposition about an object or individual x, then the component in virtue of which p is about x is simply x itself and the proposition is about x by containing x directly as a constituent. By contrast, if p is a general proposition about x, then the component in virtue of which p is about x is some sort of conceptual representation of x, like the content of a definite description to which x uniquely answers, and the proposition is thereby about x only indirectly. I shall say of the component of a proposition p in virtue of which the proposition is about x (whether directly or indirectly) that it *represents* x in p. A singular proposition about x, then, is a proposition in which x occurs as a self-representing component. The 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument proceeds by considering the prospect of certain singular propositions. The theory of

the earlier Russell accepted singular propositions. Frege did not. Yet the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument is not applied specifically against the earlier Russell's acceptance of singular propositions. Russell still accepts them in 'On Denoting', and thereafter. Nor is it applied specifically against Frege's broad prohibition on singular propositions. (Whereas the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument assumes the existence of singular propositions, it does not require the reader to accept them.) When explicitly criticizing Frege (and also when criticizing Alexius Meinong), Russell focuses on the truth conditions of sentences containing improper definite descriptions, arguing that Frege gets the actual truth-values wrong. The 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument is not concerned with such matters.

In a more significant sense, the hypothesis that the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument targets Frege's theory, and the rival hypothesis that it targets Russell's earlier theory, and even the conjunction of the two hypotheses, are too narrow in scope. Russell's target is instead a much broader and more basic account of one kind of expression: the definite description. The 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument explicitly targets the theory that a definite description has a semantic content, a "meaning", and that this content determines the description's designatum. The argument is not concerned more generally with theories that ascribe a content/designation distinction to other types of expressions, for example, proper names or sentences. But even the tightly restricted theory that definite descriptions in particular have a content/designation distinction (whether or not proper names, pronouns, demonstratives, etc., do as well) is only the tip of an iceberg. It is a virtual corollary of a more basic theory that Russell wants to displace.

Russell's ultimate aim in 'On Denoting' is to supplant the view that a definite description is a singular term. This view is by no means peculiar to Frege or the earlier Russell. It was also held, for example, by John Stuart Mill and Meinong. And it remains commonplace among language scholars today. It seems obvious that the phrase 'the author of *Waverley*' designates a single individual, namely, whoever it is who wrote *Waverley*. The burden of 'On Denoting' is to depose this very basic, and seemingly innocuous, account of definite descriptions. (Since 'On Denoting', this account is no longer uncontroversial. Still, I myself am strongly inclined to accept the view—with respect to English at any rate.)

It is one thing to persuade an audience that the determiner phrases 'every author' and 'no author' are not singular terms, and quite another to argue convincingly that even the indefinite description 'an author' is not a singular term. Assuming one can overcome that hurdle, there is a

still higher order of difficulty involved in arguing that even the definite description 'the author of *Waverley*' is not a singular term. Russell is aware of the almost irresistible force of the view he opposes, and of the magnitude of the daunting task before him. His logistical strategy is typically bold, and intimidating. He first presents his alternative account, the Theory of Descriptions, admitting that 'This may seem a somewhat incredible interpretation; but I am not at present giving reasons, I am merely *stating* the theory.' Only then does he present objections to the rival accounts of Meinong and Frege (as he interprets them). Russell explicitly labels these objections as evidence favouring his own theory. (In fact, he labels them as *the* evidence favouring his theory, although in the third paragraph of the article he says that the material following his discussion of Meinong and Frege—which includes the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument—gives the grounds in favour of his theory.) Russell also explicitly characterizes both Frege's theory and his own earlier theory as versions of precisely the sort of theory that, before long, he will attack in the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument. Thereupon follows a list of puzzles against which he proposes to test any theory of designating that might be proposed, including the Theory of Descriptions. Before showing how his theory solves the puzzles, however, he pauses to present the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument. Afterward, he shows how the Theory of Descriptions solves the puzzles. He closes by challenging the reader to come up with a simpler theory of designating before daring to reject this one of Russell's invention.

If the best defence is a good offence, then the optimality of Russell's defence is questionable. Not the audacity. The very placement of the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument, however, raises a question about Russell's overall strategy. If the argument were targeting the theory of Frege, or that of his earlier self, or even both of these, its coming after the presentation of the test puzzles rather than before would constitute a careless lapse in an otherwise impressively brave and aggressive campaign. I submit that Russell places the argument where he does because the puzzles he has just listed presuppose a much broader theory—the theory that definite descriptions are singular terms—and the same puzzles appear to be (indeed, in some sense, they *are*) solvable on that theory, simply by drawing the distinction between content and designation as a corollary.

It is exactly this basic, and seemingly innocuous, account—nothing less—that I believe Russell is ultimately attempting to refute in his 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument. Rather than apply the puzzle test to the theory (which if fairly applied, would result in a clear pass), Russell aims to

refute the theory once and for all. This pre-empts any solution to the puzzles that is predicated on the puzzles' own assumption that definite descriptions are singular terms. With that assumption out of the way, he proceeds to show how the Theory of Descriptions—itself immune from the kinds of problems developed in the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument—fares under the proposed test. He thus intends to overthrow by his argument *both* Frege and his former self. But not only these two. Far from attacking a straw man, the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument effectively aims to debunk Mill, Frege, Meinong, and every other philosopher of language to have come down the pike—including the author of *The Principles of Mathematics*. The 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument is both crucial and central to Russell's overall project and strategy in 'On Denoting'. This is reason enough to attempt to unravel its mysteries.

Russell characterizes his target in the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument as the theory that attributes content, as distinct from designation, to determiner phrases. This characterization is misleading on two counts. First, the argument concerns only definite descriptions (although a similar objection may be made with at least equal force with respect to indefinite descriptions). Second, the argument does not really target the proposition that definite descriptions have a content/designation distinction. To illustrate: it has been suggested that, contrary to Russell's pronouncement, his proposed analysis together with his higher-order logic provide a "meaning in isolation", overlooked by Russell, for definite descriptions.[11] For the proposition Russell offers in analysing (1) may be recast as the proposition that *being ingenious* is a property of someone or other who uniquely wrote *Waverley*. The description 'the author of *Waverley*' contributes to this proposition the second-order property of *being a property of a unique author of Waverley*, making the proposition indirectly about Scott. Thus, it is argued, on Russell's analysis, even though the description does not designate Scott, it has a content after all, since it designates the second-order property of *being a property of a unique author of Waverley*, which is predicated of *being ingenious*.

The suggestion is, in effect, that Russell analyses definite descriptions as restricted existential quantifiers. There are differences between this view and the Theory of Descriptions. The propositions attached to the sentence by the two theories, though equivalent, are not the same. Arguably, the recast proposition is directly about the property of *being ingenious*, not the property of *uniquely having written Waverley*, and hence the proposition is not about Scott in exactly the same way that

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[11] Kaplan (1986) p. 268

(2) is. For these reasons, it is possible that Russell would have none of it. Although the theory that definite descriptions are restricted existential quantifiers is not exactly the theory Russell proffers, it *is* a very close approximation to it. Close enough, in fact, that it is clearly *not* the sort of theory under attack in the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument. As far as that argument is concerned, determiner phrases might as well be restricted existential quantifiers. Yet the theory that they are is a theory according to which definite descriptions have both a content and a designation. What saves the theory from the fangs of the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument is the denial that the description 'the author of *Waverley*' designates the author of *Waverley*. On the theory, the description may be reinterpreted as what Russell would later call a *logically proper name* (or a *genuine name in the strict, logical sense*) for the second-order property of *being a property of a unique author of Waverley*. That is, its content is simply what it designates. Alternatively, it may be interpreted as (non-rigidly) designating the corresponding class of Scott's properties—with the added feature that the description then has a full-fledged content/designation distinction. Still it is not breakfast for the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument.[12]

Why, then, does Russell characterize his target in the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument as the theory that ascribes a content/designation distinction to definite descriptions? Because he takes it for granted (as against the theory that definite descriptions are restricted existential quantifiers) that if a definite description designates at all, it designates the individual or thing that uniquely answers to it. He also takes it for granted that a definite description, even when proper, is not a logically proper name, that is, it does not merely contribute the thing that uniquely answers to it to the propositions expressed with its help. Even one as Millian about singular terms as Mill recognized that though there may be a single thing uniquely answering to both of a pair of descriptions—for example, 'the inventor of bifocals' and 'the author of *Poor Richard's Almanac*'—the descriptions themselves need not be synonymous. For though it is true, it is no *analytic* truth that if exactly one person invented bifocals, and exactly one person wrote *Poor Richard's Almanac*, then the inventor in question and the author in question are one and the same. Given these assumptions, the theory that there is a content/designation distinction for definite descriptions in particular (whether

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[12] By contrast, suppose it were judged—perversely—that the description designates Scott, by virtue of expressing the second-order property of *being a property of a unique author of Waverley* and by virtue of Scott's literary activities. This theory (which is not the theory that definite descriptions are restricted existential quantifiers) *does* fall under the jurisdiction of the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument.

or not other there is such a distinction also for proper names, pronouns, demonstratives, etc.) is tantamount simply to the theory that definite descriptions are singular terms. Not only Frege, his followers (like Church and Searle), Meinong, and the earlier Russell, but even Mill, and many of us who are numbered among Mill's heirs, embrace this general account of definite descriptions, which Russell now sets out to refute.

There is a more graphic way to get at the particular theory that the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument aims to disprove. There is an alternative kind of theory that may be seen as denying the equivalence between the theory that definite descriptions are singular terms and the theory that they have a content/designation distinction. Keith Donnellan argues that what he calls the *referential* use demonstrates how a definite description might be a logically proper name, and might even designate something other than the thing that uniquely answers to it.[13] It is safe to say that Russell would not have accepted this as a plausible contender regarding the semantics of definite descriptions. Indeed, Donnellan's original objection to Russell was precisely that he failed to acknowledge the possibility of a definite description as a singular term with no content/designation distinction. Saul Kripke has defended Russell against Donnellan's arguments by considering a variety of hypothetical languages that are exactly like English except that Russell's theory, and certain variations of it, are stipulated to be true of them.[14] Though Kripke does not explicitly address the issue, ironically two of his hypothetical languages pave the way for a strikingly similar argument *against* the Theory of Descriptions. Kripke writes:

> By 'the weak Russell language', I will mean a language similar to English except that the truth conditions of sentences with definite descriptions are *stipulated* to coincide with Russell's: for example, 'The present king of France is bald' is to be true iff exactly one person is king of France, and that person is bald. On the weak Russell language, this effect can be achieved by assigning semantic reference to definite descriptions: the semantic referent of a definite description is the unique object that satisfies the description, if any; otherwise there is no semantic referent. A sentence of the simple subject-predicate form will be true if the predicate is true of the (semantic) referent of the subject; false, if either the subject has no semantic referent or the predicate is not true of the semantic referent of the subject.
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> Since the weak Russell language takes definite descriptions to be primitive designators, it is not fully Russellian. By 'the intermediate Russell language',

[13] Donnellan (1966).

[14] Kripke (1979).

> I mean a language in which sentences containing definite descriptions are taken to be abbreviations or paraphrases of their Russellian analyses: for example, 'The present king of France is bald' *means* (or has a 'deep structure' like) 'Exactly one person is at present king of France, and he is bald', or the like. Descriptions are not terms, and are not assigned reference or meaning in isolation. (p. 16).

This yields two competing hypotheses concerning English, as it is actually spoken: that it *is* Kripke's weak Russell language—or WRL, as I shall call it—and that it is Kripke's intermediate Russell language, IRL. As Kripke notes, the phrase 'weak Russell language' is technically a misnomer for WRL. In proffering the Theory of Descriptions, Russell maintains that WRL ≠ IRL, that English is IRL rather than WRL, and that English merely duplicates the truth conditions of WRL without duplicating its entire semantics. Yet WRL itself seems, at least at first blush, to be a perfectly possible language. The mere possibility of WRL forcefully raises a particular difficulty for Russell's IRL hypothesis. How is one to decide between the two hypotheses? More specifically, what evidence can Russell provide to support the hypothesis that English is IRL rather than WRL? Other things being equal, that English = WRL is probably the more intuitively natural hypothesis. Russell needs to produce some data or other evidence favouring the IRL hypothesis. Yet he can find no difference in truth conditions between English sentences and sentences of WRL. The problem he faces does not concern truth conditions; it concerns *propositional structure*. Moreover, it is difficult to imagine any pragmatic phenomenon that Russell might cite about English that would not also arise, and in exactly the same way, in a hypothetical community of WRL speakers. Lacking such support, the hypothesis that English = IRL is no more compelling than the rival hypothesis that English = WRL. On the contrary, the widespread linguistic intuition that definite descriptions are contentful singular terms provides some measure of support for the latter. *Ceteris paribus*, that English = WRL is probably the preferred hypothesis.

As I interpret it, the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument is meant to provide exactly what Russell needs to solve this problem. Faced with the challenge posed here, I believe Russell would point to the very phenomena that he cites in the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument to show that English cannot be WRL, perhaps even that WRL is not a possible language that might be spoken and understood by human beings (or relevantly similar creatures).

In short, for Russell it is clear from the outset, and not subject to dispute (at least as far as 'On Denoting' is concerned), that if a definite

description designates anything, it designates the thing that uniquely answers to it. It is equally clear for Russell that a definite description is not a logically proper name. Given this, the theory that definite descriptions are singular terms (as nearly all language theorists have taken them to be) is tantamount to the following:

> *ST*: A definite description designates by virtue of the description's semantic content, which fixes the designatum of the description to be (if anything) the individual or thing that uniquely answers to the description; further, when the definite description occurs in a sentence, the description's content represents the description's designatum in the proposition expressed.

The hypothesis that English = WRL is a version of *ST*. The 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument, as I interpret it, is meant to refute this theory, and with it the WRL hypothesis.

3.

What is the alleged fatal flaw in the theory *ST*? On my interpretation, Russell may be seen as arguing in eight separate stages (at least), as follows: At stage (I) he argues that there is some awkwardness in so much as stating the very theory *ST* in question. At stage (II) he argues that once a way of stating *ST* is found, the theory, so stated, gives rise to a peculiar phenomenon: the attempt to form a singular proposition about the content of a definite description inevitably results instead in a general proposition about the individual designated by the description. This is the Collapse. At stage (III) the Collapse leads to a preferable formulation of *ST*. At stage (IV) Russell shows that the Collapse remains a feature of the reformulated theory. At stage (V) Russell argues that the Collapse commits *ST* to a very sweeping conclusion: that no singular term designating the content of a definite description can be what Russell will later call a *logically proper name*; instead any such term must be itself a definite description, or function as one. As Russell puts it, on our theory *ST*, 'the meaning cannot be got at except by means of denoting phrases'. At stage (VI) he argues furthermore that the content of a definite description cannot be a constituent of the content of any definite description of it. Russell proceeds to complain at stage (VII) that the results of the preceding two stages are philosophically intolerable. At stage (VIII) he provides a complementary argument for the conclusion that *ST* ignores that which, by its own lights, is philosophically most significant about propositions.

The stages of the argument do not parallel the paragraph breaks. Following Blackburn and Code, the eight paragraphs of 'On Denoting' beginning with the words 'The relation of meaning to denotation involves certain rather curious difficulties' will be labelled '(A)' to '(H)', respectively, ending with 'Thus the point of view in question must be abandoned'. Paragraph (A) is entirely preliminary. The eight stages then occur in sequence. Stage (I) by itself takes up all of paragraphs (B)–(D), ending with the words 'Thus we have failed to get what we wanted'. Stage (II) occurs in an initial fragment of paragraph (E), beginning with the words 'The difficulty in speaking of the meaning of a denoting complex may be stated thus'. These infamous words are following by a brief presentation of the Collapse. Stage (III) occupies the rest of (E). The development of the Collapse for stage (IV) occurs in (F), which progresses through stage (VI). Stage (VII) takes up only an initial fragment of (G). The rest of (G) and all of (H) are devoted to stage (VIII). (See the appendix to this essay for an annotated translation of the full eight paragraphs with the eight stages indicated.)

Given the space that Russell devoted to both the initial stage (I) and the final stage (VIII), one must assume that he placed great weight on them. This is unfortunate, since both of these stages are completely unpersuasive. They are also completely unnecessary, given the reasoning in the intervening stages. Although the reasoning through stages (IV)–(VII) takes up only (F) and part of (G), it forms the heart of the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument. The alleged flaw in *ST* is exposed early on at stage (II), but even by stage (VI) at the end of (F) it is presented only as a feature that the theory cannot avoid, and not yet as a defect. And indeed, the feature in question is one to which some theorists in Russell's cross-hairs—Frege and many of his followers—explicitly subscribe, though others, like Mill, the earlier Russell, myself, and even some Fregeans like Rudolf Carnap and Michael Dummett, do not. Previous commentators have tended to see the reasoning within (E) and (F), by itself, as already presenting an objection. By contrast, on my interpretation, the alleged philosophical problem with the feature derived in (F)—the claim that it is a defect—is not argued until the first part of (G). I believe Russell makes his case in the latter part of (F) and the first part of (G) more persuasively than has been recognized, though less persuasively than he might have.

Unlike previous interpreters of the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument, I shall rewrite the entire passage, annotating as I go and using an alternative terminology less liable to ambiguity and other difficulties. I do this in the belief that any interpretation that might be proposed, if it is to carry

conviction, must be accompanied by plausible interpretations for each individual sentence, which, taken collectively, support the proposed interpretation of the entire passage. Moreover, if these interpretations, taken individually, do not make sense of the transition between successive sentences, some plausible explanation (e.g., confusion of use and mention) must be provided. Russell introduces a special terminology for the theory that definite descriptions are singular terms as depicted by *ST*. A definite description of a given language is said to *mean*—in a more standard terminology, it expresses—a *denoting complex c* as its *meaning*, that is, its sense or semantic content. The denoting complex *c*, in turn, *denotes*—in Church's terminology, it is a concept of—an object as its *denotation*. Russell does not use any special term for the binary relation between a definite description and the object of which the expression's content in the language is a concept. Instead Russell speaks of 'the denotation of the meaning', saying that a definite description α 'has a meaning which denotes' an object *x*. Sometimes he says that α itself (as opposed to its content) denotes *x*. In deconstructing and reconstructing Russell's argument, I shall translate 'meaning' as 'content'. I shall also avoid Russell's term 'denote'. Instead I shall use 'determine' for the relation between a complex *c* and the object *x* of which *c* is a concept, and I shall call *x* the 'determinatum' of *c*. I shall use 'designate' for the relation between the expression α and *x* (i.e., for Kripke's semantic reference, or Frege's *Bedeutung*, the relative product of expressing and determining), and I shall call *x* the 'designatum' of α.

Before presenting my analytical translation of the passage, a word about variables and quotation: *Caution*. Russell uses the upper case letter '*C*' as a variable ranging over determining complexes, though he sometimes uses '*C*' instead as a metalinguistic variable ranging over determiner phrases. Though it is seldom recognized, Russell sometimes (frequently, one fears) uses '*C*' instead—more accurately, he uses it *as well*—as a schematic letter (equivalently, as a substitutional variable). Any sentence, or string of sentences, in which '*C*' occurs in this manner is strictly speaking a *schema*, of which Russell means to assert every instance. Worse, the schematic letter sometimes apparently stands in for an arbitrary definite description, sometimes apparently for a term designating an arbitrary determining complex. This multiply ambiguous usage of technical notation makes some use–mention confusion virtually inevitable. Interpretations that do not depict Russell as confused (some do not) fail to acknowledge an essential feature of the situation—or else themselves commit the same confusion. On the other hand, it would be to the serious detriment of philosophy that we dis-

count the argument as therefore utterly hopeless—witness certain points made in Russell's argument that have had to be rediscovered independently in more recent years. Fortunately, with a little finesse, Russell's purely philosophical import can be conveyed while minimizing use-mention confusion by replacing some occurrences of '*C*' with a variable (objectual) ranging over definite descriptions, other occurrences with a variable ranging over determining complexes, and still other occurrences with a schematic letter standing in for an arbitrary definite description—though doing so may not preserve the textual *gestalt*, in its full historical context. I shall use 'α' as a metalinguistic variable, and upper case '*D*' as a schematic letter standing in for an arbitrary definite description. I shall use lower-case '*c*' as a determining-complex variable. I shall use Quine's quasi-quotation marks, '⌜' and '⌝' in combination with 'α'. In quasi-quotation, all internal expressions are quoted, that is, mentioned, except for metalinguistic variables, whose values are mentioned. Russell suggests using standard quotation marks ("inverted commas") as indirect-quotation marks, but does not himself consistently use them that way. I shall use single quotation marks for direct (expression) quotation. Following Kaplan, I shall use superscripted occurrences of '*m*' as indirect-quotation marks, and superscripted occurrences of '*M*' as indirect-quasi-quotation marks.[15] In indirect-quasi-quotation, the contents of all internal expressions are mentioned, except for determining-complex variables, whose values are mentioned. Here I avoid double quotation marks, except when quoting Russell's use of them.

Paragraph (A) is straightforward, announcing that the relation of content to designatum involves "rather curious difficulties", which we will now examine. Paragraph (B) initiates stage (I) of Russell's attack. It reads:

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

> The centre of mass of the Solar System is a point, not a denoting complex;

> "The centre of mass of the Solar System" is a denoting complex, not a point.

Or again,

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[15] Kaplan (1971), at pp. 120–1. (Kaplan there calls indirect-quotation marks *meaning-quotation marks*.) The reader who is unfamiliar with these devices is advised to look them up.

> The first line of Gray's *Elegy* states a proposition.
>
> "The first line of Gray's *Elegy*" does not state a proposition.
>
> Thus taking any denoting phrase, say *C*, we wish to consider the relation between *C* and "*C*", where the difference of the two is of the kind exemplified in the above two instances.

The importance of this paragraph is frequently overlooked. In it Russell introduces a use of inverted commas as indirect-quotation marks, a use he thinks is natural on the theory *ST*. Not being a subscriber himself, Russell is not abandoning the alternative use of inverted commas as direct quotation. (Indeed, just three paragraphs after the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument he affirms his allegiance to the direct-quotation use.) From this point to the end of the argument, standard quotation marks might be used either way—or indeed as quasi-quotation marks, or even indirect-quasi-quotation marks. Worse yet, Russell may omit quotation marks where they are needed, especially where both types of quotation ought to occur together. And in one instance, he seems to include quotation marks where they do not belong. Using my safer notation, we distinguish three things: the centre of mass of the Solar System, which is a point; 'the centre of mass of the Solar System', which is a determiner phrase; and ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m, which is a determining complex, the content expressed in English by 'the centre of mass of the Solar System'.

The proper interpretation of the last sentence of (B) is unclear. Do we wish to consider the relation between a determining complex and its determinatum, that is, the relation of ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m to the centre of mass of the Solar System, of ^{m}the first line of Gray's *Elegy*^{m} to the first line of Gray's *Elegy*, and so on? Or do we wish to consider the relation between ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m and the definite description 'the centre of mass of the Solar System'? Or perhaps that between the indirect quotation ' ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m ' and the definite description 'the centre of mass of the Solar System'? The first is the relation of *determining*, the second that of *being the content*, the third that of *designating the content*.

The fact is that Russell wishes to consider all three relations. In general, taking any definite description α, we wish to consider the relation of *being determined* between the designata of α and of $\ulcorner{}^m\alpha^m\urcorner$, the relation of *expressing* between α and the designatum of $\ulcorner{}^m\alpha^m\urcorner$, and the relation of *expressing the designatum of* between the expressions α and $\ulcorner{}^m\alpha^m\urcorner$ themselves. In each case the difference between the two relata is, in some sense, 'exemplified' in Russell's two examples. The displayed

instances directly concern the contrast between a definite description and its indirect quotation. The remaining paragraphs, (C)–(H), support the answer that Russell is primarily concerned with the relation between these expressions, that is, the relation: *the content of* x *is designated by* y. And this is indeed the most important of the three relations for stages (I)–(VII).

Paragraph (C) begins in such a way as to support an interpretation on which Russell wishes primarily to consider a relation between expressions.[16] I translate the paragraph as follows:

(C′) We say, to begin with, that when α occurs it is the *designatum* [of α] that we are speaking about; but when $\ulcorner {}^{m}\alpha^{m} \urcorner$ occurs, it is the *content*. Now the relation of content [to] designatum is not merely linguistic through the phrase [i.e., it is not merely the indirect relative product of the semantic relations of *being the content of* a phrase and *designating*]:[17] there must be a [direct, non-semantic, logico-metaphysical][18] relation involved, which we express by saying that the content *determines* the designatum. But the difficulty which confronts us is that we cannot succeed in *both* preserving the connexion of content [to] designatum *and* preventing them [the content and the designatum]

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[16] No previous interpretation to my knowledge interprets the final sentence of (B) this way. Typically, interpreters take the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument to be primarily concerned with the relation of *determining* between the designata of $\ulcorner {}^{m}\alpha^{m} \urcorner$ and α. To repeat: I do not claim that this interpretation is incorrect while mine is correct. Rather, the text itself, and the available evidence, is inconclusive. In the present instance, since Russell is concerned with each of the three relations I mentioned, I do not find the orthodox interpretation at all counter-intuitive. I am here exploring the consequences of an unorthodox interpretation on which Russell's announced principal concern is instead the relation between a definite description and a term for its content.

[17] See n. 34 below. An alternative interpretation of Russell's phrase 'not merely linguistic through the phrase' that fits with my overall interpretation of the entire passage was suggested by David Kaplan. One might hold that the relation between a determining complex and its determinatum is a ternary relation that obtains through an expression, in such a way that a complex may determine one object relative to one expression and another object relative to another expression. This theory diverges sharply from *ST*, which sees the designation of an expression as the relative product of the semantic relation between the expression and its content and the non-semantic, logico-metaphysical relation between the content and its (absolute) determinatum. In particular, the former theory is not vulnerable in the same way as *ST* to the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument. When Russell says that on the theory he is criticizing, "the relation of meaning and denotation is not merely linguistic through the phrase: there must be a logical relation involved", he may mean that the determining relation is not relative to a phrase but absolute. (This alternative interpretation is closely related to one proposed by Demopoulos, op. cit., though if I am correct, Demopoulos misses the central point of the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument: it is not merely that a singular proposition about a determining complex cannot be the semantic content of a understandable sentence, though it can be a supplementary semantic value of the sentence; rather, it is incoherent to suppose that such a proposition can even exist.)

[18] Russell says simply 'logical'. This has probably also led some interpreters astray.

> from being one and the same; also that the content cannot be got at except by means of determiner phrases. This happens as follows.

The penultimate sentence of (*C*), beginning with 'But the difficulty which confronts us is that …', is undoubtedly crucial to a proper understanding of the remaining paragraphs. Using his later terminology, it might have been more perspicuous for Russell to formulate his objection this way:

> We cannot succeed in both preserving the connection of content to designatum and *allowing* the content and the designatum to be one and the same. Moreover we cannot even succeed in both preserving the connection of content to designatum and *disallowing* the content and the designatum from being one and the same *unless* the content cannot be got at except by means of determiner phrases.

That is, if we preserve the connection whereby the designatum of a definite description is determined by the description's content which is distinct from the designatum itself, then the content cannot be designated by means of a logically proper name, that is, by a genuine name in the strict, logical sense. This reformulation more or less captures, with a minimum of violence to Russell's actual wording, the thrust of the Collapse which will figure in (E) and (F). The 'unless', which is a term for a form of disjunction, strongly suggests a classical dilemma form of argument. Instead of 'unless', Russell uses 'also', a term for a form of conjunction. This may be explained by supposing that Russell initially *assumes* that anything can in principle be designated by means of a logically proper name, including a determining complex. Thus we cannot prevent the named complex and the object it represents from being one and the same, thereby violating the connection between content and designatum. This assumption yields the first disjunct: since we cannot prevent the complex from representing itself, we also cannot do this while preserving the complex's representational role posited by *ST*. This is followed (with Russell's usual stylistic flair) by a semicolon. Anticipating that the believer in *ST* will not accept the conclusion just stated, Russell writes the words 'also that', and then draws the *modus tollendo ponens* inference on the theorist's behalf to the second disjunct: we *can* after all prevent the complex from representing itself, thus preserving the posited representational role, but only by insisting that the complex can be designated only by description.

Paragraph (*D*) divides into two parts. We attempt here to designate the content of a determiner phrase α. Russell adeptly demonstrates that we cannot use a simple phrase like ⌜the content of α⌝ without resorting to quotation, or something like quotation. In most cases, this would make no sense; we cannot, for example, use 'the content of the author of *Waverley*' to designate a determining complex, since whatever virtues (or vices) Sir Walter Scott may have had, semantically expressing a determining complex was not among them. Russell deliberately uses a different example—one designating a sentence instead of a person—for which the incorrect phrase formed by simply prefixing 'the content of' without the assistance of quotation makes perfect sense. The problem in this case is that we then get at the wrong content. Sub-paragraph (D$_i$) concludes with the words:

> Thus in order to get the meaning we want, we must speak not of "the meaning of C", but of "the meaning of '*C*' ", which is the same as "C" by itself.

Russell is arguing here for the conclusion that enclosing a determiner phrase within inverted commas renders the words 'the meaning of' (or 'the content of') completely superfluous. But where before we hungered for quotation marks, we now have quotation marks coming out of our ears.[19] Russell observes that in order to designate the content of our determiner phrase α, besides prefixing the functor 'the content of' we must also enclose α itself within inverted commas. He is correct; we should do this, provided that the inverted commas are understood as ordinary, direct-quotation marks, in outright defiance of Russell's explicit explanation of their natural use as indirect-quotation marks on the theory he is attacking. Very well, but how can this be tantamount, as Russell says, to enclosing α itself within inverted commas without the prefix? It can, at least to the extent of forming a co-designating term, but only if the inverted commas are functioning as indirect-quotation marks, *in conformity with* Russell's explanation for them. Russell is in fact giving them this use in both attempts. The use as ordinary, direct quotation marks has been pre-empted by the indirect-quotation use, which Russell thinks is the 'natural' use on the theory in question. This leads to the following translation of sub-paragraph (D$_i$). (Recall that, unlike Russell, I consistently use single quotes for direct quotation.)

(D′$_i$) The one phrase α was to have both content and designation. But if [in an effort to designate the content] we speak of ⌜the

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[19] More terrifying still, different reprintings interchange single and double quotation marks (and vary the placement of unquoted punctuation marks inside and outside quotation marks).

content of α⌉, that gives us the content (if any) of the designatum [of α]. 'The content of the first line of Gray's *Elegy*' [designates] the same complex as 'The content of *ᵐ*The curfew tolls the knell of parting day*ᵐ*', and … not the same as 'The content of *ᵐ*the first line of Gray's *Elegy*ᵐ*'. Thus in order to get the content we want, we must speak not of ⌈the content of α⌉, but of ⌈the content of *ᵐ*α*ᵐ*⌉, which [designates] the same as ⌈*ᵐ*α*ᵐ*⌉ by itself.

I am here attributing to Russell a serious equivocation, resulting from his dual use of inverted commas both as direct-quotation marks and as indirect-quotation marks. He appears to believe that he has derived from the theory he is attacking the consequence that in order to designate *ᵐ*the centre of mass of the Solar System*ᵐ*, rather than using the phrase 'the content of the centre of mass of the Solar System' (which Russell has shown is inappropriate) we must use 'the content of *ᵐ*the centre of mass of the Solar System*ᵐ*'—a phrase Russell fails to distinguish sharply from the perfectly appropriate 'the content of 'the centre of mass of the Solar System''. This alleged consequence yields the awkward (to say the least) result that ' *ᵐ*The centre of mass of the Solar System*ᵐ* = the content of *ᵐ*the centre of mass of the Solar System*ᵐ*' is true. We thus ascribe a content to a determining complex itself, which is identified with its content. This interpretation casts the final clause of (D*ᵢ*), as well as some of the more puzzling phrases yet to come in (E) and (F), in a new and very different light.[20]

This admittedly remarkable interpretation of (D*ᵢ*) is corroborated by both (D*ᵢᵢ*) and (E). In (D*ᵢᵢ*), Russell attempts to support his derivation of the awkward alleged consequence by deriving an analogous consequence in connection with the functor 'the denotation of' in place of 'the content of', again carefully selecting a phrase (this time 'the denoting complex occurring in the second of the above instances') for which

[20] There is a strong temptation to interpret (D*ᵢ*) as using only direct quotation:

'The content of the first line of Gray's *Elegy*' [designates] the same complex as 'The content of 'The curfew tolls the knell of parting day' ', and … not the same as 'The content of 'the first line of Gray's Elegy' '. Thus in order to get the content we want, we must speak not of ⌈the content of α ⌉, but of ⌈the content of 'α'⌉ …

Russell's remarks then become unequivocally correct. This interpretation completely misses the point, however, of the final clause of (D*ᵢ*), 'which is the same as "*C*" by itself': that on *ST* the words 'the content of' when followed by a quotation are superfluous. The phrase 'The content of 'the first line of Gray's *Elegy*' ' is equivalent not to its truncated form ' 'the first line of Gray's *Elegy*' ', which is a direct quotation, but to the indirect quotation ' *ᵐ*the first line of Gray's *Elegy*ᵐ*'. More important, the interpretation I suggest provides a key to unlock the otherwise impenetrable wording of (E)–(F).

the prefix yields something that makes perfect sense but designates the wrong object. (D$_{ii}$) may be rewritten as follows:

(D′$_{ii}$) Similarly ⌜the determinatum of α⌝ does not [designate] the determinatum we want [the determinatum of α's content], but means something [i.e., expresses a determining complex] which, if it determines [anything] at all, determines what is determined by the determinatum we want. For example, let be 'the determining complex occurring in the second of the above instances'. Then ⌜α = ^{m}the first line of Gray's *Elegy*^{m}⌝ and ⌜The determinatum of α = 'The curfew tolls the knell of parting day'⌝ [are both true].[21] But what we *meant* to have as the determinatum was ^{m}the first line of Gray's *Elegy*^{m}. Thus we have failed to get what we wanted [from ⌜the determinatum of α⌝].

As a criticism of *ST*, and even as a neutral description, the entire paragraph (D) is a crimson red herring. The theory entails that one may designate ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m using the functor 'the content of' in combination with 'the centre of mass of the Solar System' and direct quotation, not indirect. *Pace* Russell, his implicit observation that in order to designate the designatum of α we should use ⌜the determinatum of ^{m}α^m⌝ rather than ⌜the determinatum of α⌝, though correct, provides no support whatever to his apparent conclusion that, analogously, in order to designate the content of α, rather than using ⌜the content of α⌝ we must use ⌜the content of ^{m}α^m⌝, which is in fact equally inappropriate. Instead we can designate α's content using ⌜the content of 'α'⌝ or ⌜^{m}α^m⌝. Analogously, we can equally designate α's designatum by using ⌜the designatum of 'α'⌝ or α itself.[22]

Perhaps Russell believes that *ST* inevitably interprets all quotation as indirect quotation, and that there is no appropriate place for direct-quotation marks on the theory. If so, he no longer has any legitimate ground for supposing that the theory under attack would attempt to designate contents using the functor 'the content of' in conjunction

[21] In the original text, Russell here uses '*C*' as a schematic letter standing in for a term designating a determining complex. The preceding two sentences should read:

> For example, let '*C*' [stand in for] 'the determining complex occurring in the second of the above instances'. Then *C* = ^{m}the first line of Gray's *Elegy*^{m}, and the determinatum of *C* = 'The curfew tolls the knell of parting day'.

I have reformulated this in the metalinguistic mode using 'α', quasi-quotation, and the predicate 'is true'.

[22] Following Quine's explanation of quasi-quotation, the quasi-quotation '⌜the content of 'α'⌝' designates, under the assignment of the expression 'the centre of mass of the Solar System' as value for the syntactic variable 'α', the phrase 'the content of 'the centre of mass of the Solar System'' (and not the infelicitous 'the content of 'α'', which mentions the variable 'α' instead of its value).

with quotation marks. Church's dismissive remarks concerning the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument are in fact nearly completely correct when restricted to stage (I) (raising the suspicion that Church interpreted this stage similarly, and thought it best not to attempt to decipher the rest of the argument). Church's assessment requires slight emendation. For many purposes, the indirect-quotation marks themselves render the 'content of' functor superfluous, but they do not rob *ST* of the resources to designate expressions. And where it is necessary to designate an expression and attribute content to it—when doing genuine semantics, for example, or when giving the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument— in principle the theory can get by with such locutions as 'the expression displayed below', followed by a suitable display of the expression in question, or if worse comes to worst, with cumbersome constructions like 'the determiner phrase that results by writing the twentieth letter of the alphabet, followed by the eighth letter, followed by the fifth letter, followed by a space, followed by …', or even by exploiting an empirical property of the expression, as with 'the sentence written on the blackboard in Salmon's office' or 'the first line of Gray's *Elegy*'. More to the point, if there is any difficulty about using direct-quotation marks on the theory, it derives from a tenet entirely of Russell's own devising, which he imposes on a theory that did not ask for it.[23] Contrary to Church, however, Russell has a much stronger criticism to make in stages (II)–(VII), though his presentation in stages (II) and (IV) (at least) is coloured in varying degrees by the red herring.

4.

Many a lance has been broken on paragraph (E). The paragraph should also be broken into parts corresponding to argument stages (II) and (III). In (C) and (D) we have been attempting to designate the determining complex that is the content of a determiner phrase. In (E) Russell speaks about the content not of a phrase but of a complex. He sometimes spoke in the *Principles* (and in intervening writings) of 'the meaning of a concept'. But not in 'On Denoting'—not until now (aside from a single footnote about Frege). Did Russell commit a slip of the

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[23] It is possible that Russell construed the theory as identifying an expression with what might be called an *interpreted expression*, that is, an expression-*cum*-content, in effect, the ordered couple of the expression paired with its content. Inverted commas would then emerge as a natural mode of designating interpreted expressions, leaving us with no similar device for designating the syntactic component by itself. One could designate the content component using the functor 'the content of' together with quotation marks. But this would designate a component of the designatum of the quotation itself; it would not designate the *same* entity as the quotation.

pen, writing 'denoting complex' where he means 'denoting phrase'? Or
has the determining complex expressed by a definite description given
rise without notice to a new entity: a content of its own? If the latter,
there are four entities in all: the phrase; its designatum; the complex
expressed by the phrase; and the complex's content. Commentators
have tended to divide themselves between these two theories. I accept
neither.

On my interpretation, Russell believes he has just shown in the pre-
ceding paragraphs that on the theory under attack the content of the
phrase is designated by speaking of the content ('meaning') of a com-
plex. The opening sentence of (E) is explained by supposing that Rus-
sell is relentlessly flogging a dead horse. Mercifully, his intent in sub-
paragraph (E_{ii}) is to provide a preferable phraseology, a mode of speak-
ing that allows one to designate a determining complex without speak-
ing of it as itself the content of a complex. But first he shows at stage (II)
that the former mode of speaking already leads to the Collapse:

(E'_i)   The difficulty in speaking of the content of a complex [i.e., in
using a phrase of the form ⌜the content of $^m\alpha^m$⌝] may be stated
thus: the moment we put the complex in a proposition, the
proposition is about the determinatum; and [hence] if we make
a proposition in which the subject [component] is ^{M}the content
of c^M [for some determining complex c], then the subject [rep-
resents] the content (if any) of the determinatum [of c], which
was not intended.

(E'_{ii}) This leads us to say that, when we distinguish content and de-
terminatum [of a determining complex, as we did in the pre-
ceding paragraph], we must be dealing [in both cases] with the
content: the content has a determinatum and is a determining
complex, and there is not something other than the content,
which can be called [⌜the complex $^m\alpha^m$⌝], and be said to *have*
both content and a determinatum. The right phrase[ology], on
the view in question, is that some contents have determinata.

There is, in addition to the Collapse set out in (E_i), a more immediate
problem with the phrase ⌜the content of $^m\alpha^m$⌝ and its accompanying ter-
minology. We are attempting to express a proposition about a particu-
lar determining complex, say ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m,
using a sentence of the form 'The content of "the centre of mass of the
Solar System" is …'. But if the inverted commas are given their natural
construal (according to Russell) as indirect quotation marks, this gives

a proposition about the content of the target complex—the putative fourth entity—rather than the complex itself. Sub-paragraph (E_{ii}) sets out stage (III) of the argument, explicitly rejecting the four-entity theory in favour of a three-entity theory, while supplying the preferred phraseology: when we express a proposition using a sentence containing a definite description, the determining complex in the proposition does not have a separate content; rather, it is itself the content of the description. The content of the complex is not a fourth entity but (if anything) simply the complex itself, whereas the determinatum is what the proposition is about. We can designate the content of a definite description α simply by its content quotation $\ulcorner{}^{m}\alpha^{m}\urcorner$, dropping the useless prefix 'the content of '. Determining complexes *are* the contents of definite descriptions, and it is these very contents—some of them, at any rate—that represent their determinata in propositions.

By the end of stage (III) Russell has, with a helping of notational errors and use–mention confusions, drawn some trivial consequences of our theory *ST*, highlighting the feature (which theorists like Frege and Church readily accept) that propositions are not about the determining complexes that occur in them, but instead about the determinata of those complexes. This, presumably, is the "connexion of meaning and determinatum" that we are attempting to "preserve" while "preventing the meaning and determinatum from being one and the same". What is more important is the stage (II) argument laid out in (E_i). This marks the first appearance, as I interpret the entire passage, of the Collapse and also the first appearance of Russell's variable '*C*' as ranging over determining complexes rather than determiner phrases. Moreover, the quotation marks here are indirect-quasi-quotation marks. The quotation ' ^{M}the content of c^{M} ' designates the determining complex that results from joining the content of the functor 'the content of' with the complex *c*. Russell cites a particular phenomenon that arises, as a consequence of the connection just noted between content and determinatum, when one attempts to form a singular proposition about a determining complex: inevitably the result is a general proposition about the complex's determinatum rather than a singular proposition about the complex itself. The reason is that, on *ST*, as soon as we put a determining complex in a proposition, by using a sentence involving a singular term whose content is the complex, the proposition is about the complex's determinatum. This generates the Collapse. Let *c* be a particular determining complex, say ^{m}the first line of Gray's *Elegy*^{m}. When we attempt to form a proposition about it—say, that it is intriguing—by using a sentence containing the indirect quotation

' ^{m}the first line of Gray's *Elegy*^{m} ' (Russell supposes, for a *reductio*, that one way to do this on *ST* is by means of the sentence 'The meaning of "the first line of Gray's *Elegy*" is intriguing'), if the quotation functions as a logically proper name of the determining complex, in that its own content simply is the designated complex, then the resulting proposition is that (the content of) the first line of Gray's *Elegy* is intriguing, rather than a proposition about the intended determining complex itself. This is one particular form of the Collapse: in attempting to form a proposition about a determining complex *c* by using a sentence containing a content quotation $\lceil {}^m\alpha^m \rceil$, where α is a definite description that expresses *c*, we generate a proposition not about *c* but about its determinatum.

Some previous interpreters do not so much as mention what I am calling *the Collapse*. Others have extracted the alleged phenomenon from (E_i), but place little or no importance on it. Some have depicted its occurrence in the 'Gray's *Elegy*' passage as little more than a clever observation, characteristic of Russell but one that he makes only in passing and which is of limited significance in the grand sweep of the overall argument. In sharp contrast, on my interpretation the Collapse is the very linchpin of the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument, and will play a pivotal role in later stages that constitute the heart of the argument.[24]

By the end of (E), Russell acknowledges that to express a proposition about *c* itself we may use the simple content quotation $\lceil {}^m\alpha^m \rceil$, or something like it, in lieu of the more cumbersome (to say the least!) deter-

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[24] Blackburn and Code mention the Collapse only after presenting their rival interpretation, which does not rely on the Collapse (*op. cit.*, p. 76, crediting Kaplan for showing them that the Collapse refutes the earlier theory of designating in Russell's *Principles*). In sharp contrast to my interpretation, they express uncertainty whether Russell is even aware of the Collapse by the time he writes 'On Denoting'. As against the hypothesis that he was, they say that "although this *is* a problem as to how one refers to senses [contents], the obvious solution is not to attack Frege, but rather to insist that his three-entity view [distinguishing among an expression, its content, and its designatum] applies to *all* referring [designating] expressions".

There are at least five problems with this. First, Russell was explicitly aware of the Collapse already in the lengthy and rambling 'On Fundamentals', begun not two months prior to 'On Denoting' and posthumously published in Urquhart (1994), pp. 359–413, at 363, 382, and *passim*. Indeed, some passages of 'On Fundamentals' appear virtually *verbatim* in the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument, which is in certain respects a streamlined version of the convoluted reasonings of the former. Second, whereas one might hope to solve the problem by insisting that any singular term that designates a content always has its own content distinct from its designatum, the same distinction does not have to be extended to all terms (including names for concrete objects) in order for the solution to work. Third, though Russell was aware of the possibility of a theory like the one Blackburn and Code call 'the obvious solution' (as is shown by a passage they quote from *Principles*), he did not unequivocally endorse it. Fourth, on the contrary, a central purpose of 'On Denoting' is precisely to reject Frege's "three-entity view" in regard to all singular terms, and replace it with a two-entity view. Finally, and most importantly, the very point of (F) and (G) (to be interpreted more fully below) appears to be precisely that the very proposal in question utterly fails to solve the problem.

miner phrase ⌜the content of $^m\alpha^m$⌝. Alternatively, we may use ⌜the content of 'α'⌝. But having assimilated this to ⌜the content of $^m\alpha^m$⌝, or failing to distinguish the two, Russell believes he has just shown that use of such a phrase inevitably comes to grief, via the Collapse. In any event, the objective in (D) was to form a singular proposition about a determining complex, not a proposition in which the target complex is represented as the content of this or that phrase. Not surprisingly, the move to simple, unadorned direct quotation is of no help whatsoever: the very same phenomenon arises. Stage (IV) presses this point. Paragraph (F) divides into three parts. In (F$_i$) Russell shows how the Collapse arises even when designating the complex *c* by using the simple content quotation ⌜$^m\alpha^m$⌝. This uncovers a significant difference between *ST* and the Theory of Descriptions (and thus between the WRL and IRL hypotheses), since the latter does not assign content "in isolation" to determiner phrases, and hence does not generate the Collapse. This is an extremely important point. Regrettably, the presentation is not altogether free of the red herring, though thankfully, its former lustre is now mostly subdued. I rewrite sub-paragraph (F$_i$) as follows:

(F′$_i$) But this only makes our difficulty in speaking of contents more evident. For suppose *c* is our [target] complex [and let '*D*' represent in what follows a determiner phrase that expresses *c*]; then we are to say that [$^mD^m$, i.e.,] *c is* the content of the [phrase '*D*', instead of saying that $^mD^m$ itself has a content]. Nevertheless, whenever '*D*' occurs without [indirect-quotation marks], what is said is not [about $^mD^m$,] the content [of '*D*'], but only [about *D*,] the designatum [of '*D*'], as when we say: The centre of mass of the Solar System is a point.

Russell argues as follows. Consider a determiner phrase like 'the centre of mass of the Solar System', and let us attempt to form a singular proposition about its content, ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m, for example, the true proposition that this is a determining complex. Clearly, we do not succeed by writing 'The centre of mass of the Solar System is a determining complex', for this expresses a necessarily false, general proposition about a particular point. In order to express the singular proposition we want, we should use a *genuine name* "in the strict, logical sense" for the complex, perhaps the indirect-quotation '^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m'. But supposing the indirect-quotation is a genuine name, to the extent that its sole semantic value—its content—is simply the designated complex, if we write '^{m}The centre of mass of the Solar System^m is a determining complex',

our new attempt also fails. Instead we thereby obtain precisely the same proposition as before, since the subject and predicate terms of the new sentence have precisely the same contents, respectively, as those of the old sentence. The attempted true, singular proposition has collapsed into a false, general proposition. In fact, the proposition expressed by the new sentence is necessarily false, its negation necessarily true.

Russell continues at stage (V), converting the Collapse into a *reductio ad absurdum* argument for the conclusion that our theory *ST* (and thus the WRL hypothesis) entails that determining complexes cannot be genuinely *named*. Sub-paragraph (F_{ii}) is rewritten as follows:

(F$'_{ii}$) Thus to speak of $^mD^m$ itself, i.e., to [express] a proposition about the content [of '*D*'], our subject [component] must not be $^mD^m$ [*itself*], but something [else, a new determining complex,] which determines $^mD^m$. Thus $^{m\,m}D^{m\,m}$—which [iterated indirect quotation] is what we use when we want to speak of the content [of '$^mD^m$']—must be not the content [of '*D*', that is, not $^mD^m$ itself], but something which determines the content.

Russell is arguing here by means of the Collapse that, on *ST*, $^{m\,m}D^{m\,m}$ ≠ $^mD^m$, where '*D*' stands in for any definite description.[25] We may designate a particular complex, say ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m, in order to express a proposition about it. However, any proposition in which the complex itself occurs is about the centre of mass of the Solar System, that is, the determinatum of the target complex rather than the complex itself. A singular proposition about a determining complex is an evident impossibility; hence, any proposition that is about a complex must involve a second-level determining complex that determines the target complex. Hence, any term for a complex must function in the manner of a definite description. Even our indirect quotation, ' ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m ' (the closest thing there is to a *standard name* of the complex), must be a disguised definite description, expressing a second-level determining complex, $^{m\,m}$the centre of mass of the Solar System$^{m\,m}$, as its content. Furthermore, $^{m\,m}$the centre of mass of the Solar System$^{m\,m}$ is distinct from, and in fact determines, ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m. It is in this very concrete sense that on *ST* "the meaning cannot be got at except by means of determiner phrases". The only way to designate a

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25 The expression ' $^{m\,m}D^{m\,m}$ ' stands in for the iterated indirect quotation ' $^{m\,m}$the centre of mass of the Solar System$^{m\,m}$ ', which designates the content of the indirect quotation, ' ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m'.

determining complex is by expressing a higher-level determining complex.[26]

Russell has thus far argued that the theory *ST* is committed, by the Collapse, to denying the very possibility of singular propositions about contents. Some commentators have construed this argument as an objection to Frege's theory, which rejects singular propositions.[27] Such an argument would be a howler. On the contrary, Fregeans should welcome the conclusion derived at stage (V), which provides a *reductio* argument against *ST in conjunction with singular propositions of unrestricted subject matter*—a theory like Mill's or that of Russell's *Principles*. The incoherence of these non-Fregean versions of *ST* may even be given a kind of proof, using the principle of *Compositionality* (which Russell relied on at least implicitly and Frege explicitly endorsed), according to which the content of a compound expression is an effectively computable function of the contents of the contentful components. Compositionality is subject to certain restrictions. For example, the content of a compound expression containing a standard (direct) quotation is a function of the content of the quotation itself, together with the contents of the surrounding sub-expressions, but not of the content of the quoted expression. Subject to such restrictions as this, Compositionality evidently entails a similarly restricted principle of *Synonymous Interchange*, according to which substitution of a synonym within a larger expression preserves content. (I here call a pair of expressions *synonymous* if there is something that is the content of both.) To give the argument its sharpest focus, we consider Russell's example:

(3)   The centre of mass of the Solar System is a point.

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[26] This does not rule out that the content can also be "got at" by means of an indefinite description, even if it is deemed not a singular term. Since *ST* is neutral regarding indefinite descriptions, it is equally consistent with the view that definite and indefinite descriptions alike are singular terms. The latter view makes indefinite descriptions subject to the argument from the Collapse. On the Theory of Descriptions, by contrast, a definite description is analysed as a special kind of indefinite description, neither being a singular term.

The interpretation of this stage of Russell's argument is strongly supported by the fact that he also gives this argument in writings just prior to 'On Denoting' (posthumously published). Cf. his 'On Fundamentals' in Urquhart (1994) pp. 359–413; and 'On Meaning and Denotation', also in Urquhart (1994), at p. 322.

[27] Searle (op. cit., p. 139–40) depicts Russell as arguing that in order for a term to designate, the designated object must, if we are not to "succumb to mysticism", occur in the propositions expressed with the help of the designating term; but then the Collapse excludes the possibility of designating determining complexes. Searle complains that the whole point of Frege's theory, which Russell is attacking, is to deny Russell's premiss. It is possible that Church construes the argument similarly.

According to *ST*, the grammatical subject of (3), 'the centre of mass of the Solar System', expresses the determining complex ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m as its English content. According to the non-Fregean version of *ST*, the content of the indirect quotation ' ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m ' itself is this same determining complex, and sentences containing the indirect quotation express singular propositions about the complex. Hence, the description and the indirect quotation are synonymous according to the non-Fregean version of *ST*. Therefore, by Synonymous Interchange, so also are (3) and

> (4) ^{m}The centre of mass of the Solar System^m is a point.

But (3) is true while (4) is necessarily false, indicating that they do not express the same thing. The content of (4) must invoke the second-level complex $^{m\ m}$the centre of mass of the Solar System$^{m\ m}$ to represent the first-level complex. (The same argument may be given using the free variable '*c*' in place of the indirect quotation. On the supposition that the content of the variable under the established assignment is its value, the variable has the very same content as the definite description 'the first line of Gray's *Elegy*'. The Collapse then follows directly by Synonymous Interchange. This refutes the assumption that the variable under its assignment is a logically proper name for the complex in question.) The theory *ST* is thus committed to extending its content/designation distinction for definite descriptions to *all* terms that designate determining complexes.

The argument can be repeated in connection with the content of the indirect quotation itself. The argument is thus converted into an argument by mathematical induction for an infinite hierarchy of contents associated with 'the first line of Gray's *Elegy*'. Indeed, the postulated second-level complex $^{m\ m}$the first line of Gray's *Elegy*$^{m\ m}$ is, for Frege, the content that the description expresses when occurring in *ungerade* ("oblique") contexts, like the contexts created by 'believes that' and by indirect quotation marks.[28] He called this the *indirect sense* of 'the first line of Gray's *Elegy*'. The series beginning with 'The curfew tolls the knell of parting day', followed by ^{m}the first line of Gray's *Elegy*^{m}, $^{m\ m}$the first line of Gray's *Elegy*$^{m\ m}$, $^{m\ m\ m}$the first line of Gray's *Elegy*$^{m\ m\ m}$, and so on, is precisely Frege's infinite hierarchy of senses for the definite description (treating designation as the bottom level in the hierarchy). Not all of Frege's disciples have followed the master down the garden

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[28] In 'Über Sinn und Bedeutung' (translated as 'On Sense and Reference', in Harnish at p. 149), Frege identified the indirect sense of a sentence ϕ with the customary sense of ⌜the thought that ϕ⌝, which phrase may be presumed synonymous with ⌜^{m}ϕ^m⌝.

path to Frege's jungle. Two noteworthy deserters are Carnap and Dummett.[29] But Church has followed Frege even here.[30] In fact, at least one of the loyal opposition has as well. Russell's argument via the Collapse for *ST*'s commitment to the hierarchy was independently reinvented closer to the end of the previous century by Tyler Burge.[31]

[29] Carnap (1947, 1970), at pp. 118–37, especially 129–33. Carnap may be profitably interpreted as rejecting singular propositions about individuals, while accepting that *ungerade* constructions (as occur in belief attributions, modal claims, etc.) express singular propositions about the contents of their complement clauses. Cf. Dummett, op. cit.; and Parsons (1981), pp. 37–58.

[30] Church disagrees with Frege on some details, and may have been inconsistent regarding the issue of the hierarchy. See n. 37 below.

[31] Burge (1979). Burge argues (pp. 271–2), as follows, specifically that Frege's theory of *Sinn* and *Bedeutung* is committed to hierarchies of sense, when coupled with Church's methodology of eliminating ambiguity-producing devices (like 'believes that') that shift expressions in their scope into *ungerade* mode in favour of fully extensional operators applied to univocal names of senses: Suppose for a *reductio* that the true proposition that Bela believes that Opus 132 is a masterpiece does not contain a second-level complex that determines the proposition that Opus 132 is a masterpiece, and that instead the latter proposition represents itself in the former proposition. In accordance with Church's methodology, we introduce an artificial extensional two-place operator '**Believes**' for the binary relation of belief (between a believer and the object believed), so that 'Bela **Believes** (*'''*Opus 132 is a masterpiece*'''*)' expresses that Bela believes that Opus 132 is a masterpiece. Then according to Frege's theory, the quasi-artificial expression *E*, 'Bela **Believes** (Opus 132 is a masterpiece)', expresses the bizarre proposition that Bela believes a particular *truth-value*, rather than a proposition—to wit, the truth-value that is truth if Opus 132 is a masterpiece, and is falsity otherwise. But by our *reductio* hypothesis, *E* expresses a content consisting of the very components of the proposition that Bela believes that Opus 132 is a masterpiece, composed the very same way. By Compositionality, *E* therefore expresses our target proposition. (This collapse is obtained, in effect, from the *reductio* hypothesis by Synonymous Interchange.) On Frege's extensional semantics, substitution in *E* of any sentence materially equivalent with 'Opus 132 is a masterpiece' preserves truth-value. Since *E* expresses that Bela believes that Opus 132 is a masterpiece, it follows on Frege's theory that if Bela believes that Opus 132 is a masterpiece, he believes every materially equivalent proposition, which is absurd.

Striking evidence that the central thrust of the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument has been lost on Russell's readers is provided by Burge's remark (at p. 280, n.8) that to his knowledge, the argument presented above was nowhere explicitly stated before. Burge's argument employs a sentence in place of a definite description, but this difference from Russell's examples is completely inessential to the general argument. Burge also frames his argument in terms of a Fregean conception whereby an artificial notation should be used to avoid natural-language ambiguities produced by *ungerade* devices (e.g., '**Believes**' in place of 'believes that'). This introduces additional complexity, also inessential to the general point and leading to an unnecessarily restricted conclusion. Burge's argument may be strengthened as follows.

Suppose for a *reductio* that the proposition that *'''*the centre of mass of the Solar System*'''* is a sense does not contain a second-level complex that determines *'''*the centre of mass of the Solar System*'''*, and that instead the complex *'''*the centre of mass of the Solar System*'''* represents itself in the proposition. The English sentence *S*, 'The centre of mass of the Solar System is a sense'—which contains no artificial notation—expresses a proposition consisting of the very components of the proposition that *'''*the centre of mass of the Solar System*'''* is a sense, and composed the very same way. By Compositionality, *S* therefore expresses our target proposition. But this conflicts with the fact that *S* is false.

Russell clarifies the nature of the hierarchy at stage (VI), which makes up the final third of (F). Sub-paragraph (F$_{iii}$) is translated as follows:

(F$'_{iii}$)   And [$^mD^m$, i.e.,] c must not be a constituent of this [higher-level] complex $^{m\,m}D^{m\,m}$ (as it is of ^{M}the content of c^M); for if c occurs in the complex, it will be its determinatum, not [the] content [of 'D', i.e., not c itself], that will [be represented] and there is no backward road from determinata to contents, because every object can be designated by an infinite number of different determiner phrases.

A feature of (F$_{iii}$) that is typically overlooked is that it again invokes the Collapse.[32] Russell observes that the target complex is not only distinct from the postulated second-level complex we seek; it is not even a constituent of the latter complex (as it is of ^{m}Russell has memorized the first line of Gray's *Elegy*^{m}, and of ^{m}the content of the first line of Gray's *Elegy*^{m}). Here Russell pursues the obvious question: Given that the indirect quotation '^{m}the first line of Gray's *Elegy*^{m}' must express a second-level complex that determines our target complex, which second-level complex does it express? The best way to identify the sought after second-level complex would be to provide a definite description of the form 'the determining complex that is such-and-such' which is fully understood (independently of indirect quotation), and which is synonymous with '^{m}the first line of Gray's *Elegy*^{m}'. Given Compositionality, it might be hoped that the suitable definite description will incorporate something expressing the designated target complex itself. We would thus construct the postulated second-level complex using the target complex. However, the desired description cannot be 'the complex that determines the first line of Gray's *Elegy*', for there are infinitely many and varied complexes each of which determines the words 'The curfew tolls …'. Let us try a different tack. Let 'c' name the target complex, and consider: *the determining complex that is c*. Russell observes that this will not do either. Indeed, no description of the form 'the determining complex that bears relation R to c' will succeed. Or to put the same point somewhat differently, our postulated second-level complex cannot be ^{M}the determining complex that bears R to c^M, for some binary relation R. (Note the indirect-quasi-quotation marks.) For the Collapse occurs with determining complexes just as it does with propositions. The content of the description collapses into: ^{m}the determining com-

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[32] A notable exception is Kremer, op. cit., at pp. 287–8. Though my analysis of the argument differs from his, I have benefitted from his meticulous probing and careful analysis of the passage.

plex that bears R to the first line of Gray's *Elegy*^{m}. The problem here is that there is no "backward road" from the words 'The curfew tolls …' to their particular representation by ^{m}the first line of Gray's *Elegy*^{m}, and likewise no backward road from the Solar System's centre of mass to its particular representation as such. That is, there is no relevantly identifiable binary relation R whose converse is a "choice" function that selects exactly our target complex, to the exclusion of all others, and assigns it, and only it, to its determinatum. If R is taken to be the relation of *determining*, then the collapsed second-level complex fails to determine a unique complex because there are too many complexes (infinitely many, in fact) that bear this relation to the first line of Gray's *Elegy*. And if R is taken to be the relation of identity, then the resulting second-level complex fails to determine a unique complex because there are too few complexes that bear this relation to the first line of Gray's *Elegy*. More generally, if c is our target complex, the postulated second-level complex cannot be of the form $^M f(c)^M$, where 'f' designates a choice function that selects a distinguished or privileged determining complex from the class of all complexes that determine a given object. It is important to notice that the missing choice function f goes not at the level from the target complex to the second-level complex, but at the bottom level from the determinatum to the complex itself. A "low" backward road might enable us to construct the postulated second-level complex from the target complex. But high or low, no backward road is forthcoming.

So ends stage (VI). Because there is no backward road from 'The curfew tolls …' to ^{m}the first line of Gray's *Elegy*^{m}, it follows via the Collapse that the second-level complex $^m{}^m$the first line of Gray's *Elegy*$^m{}^m$ is not constructed from the target complex ^{m}the first line of Gray's *Elegy*^{m}. Indirect quotations thus constitute a restriction on a principle of *Strong Compositionality* (also endorsed by both Frege and Russell), according to which the content of a compound expression is not only a function of, but is in fact a complex composed of, the contents of the contentful components.

Russell might have taken the argument a step further. Continuing and embellishing the argument on Russell's behalf, although the indirect quotation ' ^{m}the first line of Gray's *Elegy*^{m} ' expresses, and thereby uniquely fixes, the postulated second-level complex, the target complex designated by the indirect quotation does not itself uniquely single out the second-level complex. It is a serious mistake, for example, to suppose that $^m{}^m$the first line of Gray's *Elegy*$^m{}^m$ can be described as the content of ^{m}the first line of Gray's *Elegy*^{m}. (Russell believes he has shown that on *ST*, this

description designates the target complex itself, whereas the description actually designates nothing. The alternative phrase, 'the content of 'the first line of Gray's *Elegy*'' *does* designate the target complex itself. Still, we do not get at the postulated second-level complex.) But neither can ᵐ ᵐthe first line of Gray's *Elegy*ᵐ ᵐ be described as *the* complex that determines ᵐthe first line of Gray's *Elegy*ᵐ. For any given object there are infinitely many complexes that determine it. Our target complex is also determined by such second-level complexes as ᵐthe determining complex occurring in the second of Russell's instancesᵐ and ᵐthe determining complex that has given Russell's readers more headaches than any otherᵐ—neither of which is suited to be the content expressed by ' ᵐthe first line of Gray's *Elegy*ᵐ '. Thus not only is it the case, as Russell explicitly argues, that the target complex is altogether different from the postulated second-level complex. The target complex does not even uniquely fix the second-level complex. Never mind the Collapse. If there is no backward road from determinata to determining complexes, then not only is there no low road from the first line of Gray's *Elegy* to ᵐthe first line of Gray's *Elegy*ᵐ; there is likewise no high road from ᵐthe first line of Gray's *Elegy*ᵐ to ᵐ ᵐthe first line of Gray's *Elegy*ᵐ ᵐ. We have no way to go from the content of a definite description to the content of its indirect quotation. Our indirect quotation marks thus yield a restriction also on the weaker principle of Compositionality: the content of an indirect quotation is not even a computable function of (let alone a complex composed partly of) the content of the expression within the quotes. This result is stronger than the conclusion that Russell explicitly draws. If the target complex were a constituent of the postulated second-level complex, presumably it would single out the latter complex. But the mere fact that the target complex is not a constituent of the second-level complex does not yet rule out the possibility that the target complex uniquely fixes the second-level complex in some other manner. The fact that there is a multiplicity of complexes determining any given object seems to do just that. (By contrast, the indirect quotation ' ᵐthe first line of Gray's *Elegy*ᵐ ' singles out the second-level complex as its English content.)[33]

[33] The argument just given on Russell's behalf purports to prove that, in Frege's terminology, the sense of an indirect quotation is not an effectively computable function of the customary senses of the expressions within the indirect quotes. Frege concedes that the sense of a compound expression is not always composed of the customary senses of the component expressions. Frege would insist, however, that indirect quotation marks do not violate Compositionality, or even Strong Compositionality as he intends these principles, since an expression does not have its customary sense when occurring within indirect-quotation marks and instead expresses its indirect sense, which does uniquely fix the sense of the indirect quotation. He says something analogous in connection with direct quotation. Direct quotations of customary synonyms are not themselves synonyms.

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Although Russell does not explicitly argue for the stronger conclusion, he seems to have it very much in mind. Stage (VII) proceeds as if the stronger conclusion has just been established. Sub-paragraph (G_i) requires little rewriting:

(G'_i) Thus it would seem that $^{m\,m}D^{m\,m}$ and c are [altogether] different entities, such that $^{m\,m}D^{m\,m}$ determines c; but this cannot be an explanation [of $^{m\,m}D^{m\,m}$], because the relation of $^{m\,m}D^{m\,m}$ to c remains wholly mysterious; and where are we to find the determining complex $^{m\,m}D^{m\,m}$ which is to determine c?

Here—at last, and with breathtaking brevity—Russell points to a *defect*, the fatal flaw, in the theory that definite descriptions are singular terms. So brief is the presentation that several distinct interpretations, some largely unrelated to each other, have been offered. Some of Russell's defenders, as well as his critics, reconstruct the argument in (F) and (G_i) with the result that it is remarkably weak.[34] This is none too surprising. The actual wording seems more rhetorical than profound, more of a complaint than an argument. This is unfortunate. I believe Russell may have had in mind a strikingly forceful argument, which builds upon the considerations expressed in the foregoing paragraphs in a way that proves their importance (especially that of the Collapse) to the debate concerning the logico-semantic status of determiner phrases.

We seek an explanation of how to express a proposition about a determining complex c using an indirect quotation or other name for c—an explanation, for example, of the content of a sentence like (4). What we are able to determine from *ST* is that, because of the Collapse, the indirect quotation is not a logically proper name and instead expresses a second-level complex $^{m\,m}$the centre of mass of the Solar System$^{m\,m}$ which represents ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m in the proposition. But we have as yet no idea which determining complex $^{m\,m}$the centre of mass of the Solar System$^{m\,m}$ is of the infinitely many second-level complexes that determine ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m. We know what determining complex the indirect quotation ' ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m ' designates, but we do not

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[34] Blackburn and Code (op. cit.) interpret the 'Gray's *Elegy*' passage as arguing primarily that in order to introduce and justify his notion of sense, Frege must find a way to "specify" the sense of an expression recognizably—for example, by constructing a definite description for the sense or explicitly defining an indirect quotation—using, but not mentioning, the very expression whose sense is to be specified, while also guaranteeing a logical connection between the expression and the term for its sense; and this he cannot do, because any such term for the sense will have its own

know *how* the indirect quotation presents it. We know the indirect quotation's designatum but not its content. It turns out that we are at a loss even to *understand* (4). At best, we know that the sentence somehow expresses something *about* that complex—some proposition or other to the effect that it is a point—but we know not which of the infinitely many propositions that do this is actually expressed. What is worse,

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sense which must also be designated recognizably while guaranteeing its logical connections, and so on *ad infinitum*, generating an infinite regress. This interpretation bears at most a superficial resemblance to mine. Blackburn and Code interpret Russell's assertion that "the meaning cannot be got at except by means of denoting phrases" as meaning that the theory cannot meet the demand that the required sense specification not mention any expression whose sense is in question (p. 72)—rather than that the sense cannot be designated by a logically proper name. They do not make clear why Russell (or anyone) should insist that it is illegitimate for Frege to introduce his notion of sense by pointing out that, for example, 'the centre of mass of the Solar System' and 'the point of intersection of lines *a* and *b*' share a common designatum yet differ in sense. (I believe Blackburn's and Code's interpretation stems from a serious misreading of Russell's assertion that "the relation of meaning and denotation is not merely linguistic through the phrase". See n. 17 and n. 24 above.) Other commentators (e.g., Pakaluk) have followed Blackburn and Code in interpreting Russell as objecting to the content/designation distinction on the ground of an infinite regress, though there is no clear evidence of such an objection in the passage. Only later, in 'Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description' (Russell 1910–11 in Salmon and Soames (1988) at pp. 28–9), does Russell give a similar objection based on an infinite regress. Like Blackburn and Code, Noonan (op. cit., pp. 92–7) sees Russell as insisting that determining complexes, were there to be any, would have to be specifiable without mentioning expressions that express those complexes. Noonan interprets Russell as arguing that nevertheless, no complex is specifiable except by mentioning an expression whose content it is, since the Collapse precludes naming complexes, and a complex cannot be specified as a function of its determinatum; since there are no other possibilities, it follows that no determining complexes exist. Noonan admits that this argument is strikingly weak. Worse, there is no clear evidence in the passage that Russell believes these are the only possibilities for designating a complex. On the contrary, he clearly believes they are not; witness Russell's example: 'the determining complex occurring in the second of the above instances'. Makin's interpretation (which appeared some years after I wrote the present essay) depicts Russell as objecting to the theory of determining complexes on the grounds that when we wish to form a proposition about a given determining complex, the theory requires us to obtain an appropriate determining second-level complex from the target complex itself, whereas the same theory fails to provide any systematic way of doing this (op. cit., pp. 31–2, and *passim*); hence "by the theory's own strictures", determining complexes cannot be thought or spoken of even in principle, nor can anything be true or false of them (pp. 22–3). Aside from the scant evidence that Russell believes the theory of determining complexes requires us to obtain the needed second-level complex from the target complex, the argument attributed to Russell is clearly invalid. The theory in question in fact provides for a multitude of general propositions about any given determining complex.

Hylton (op. cit., pp. 250–2) interprets (G$_i$) as an expression of incredulity regarding the Fregean hierarchy, while echoing Searle's reading (albeit more sympathetically than Searle—see n. 27 above), on which Russell insists that if there are determining complexes, then there must also be singular propositions about them. Hylton also says that Russell rejects the Fregean hierarchy as a vicious infinite regress. Kremer (*op.cit.*, pp. 284–7) sharply criticizes Hylton's interpretation, showing that on Russell's view at the time, the infinite "regress" (if one is to call it that) is not vicious. Kremer's interpretation of (F$_{iii}$) and (G$_i$) (pp. 287–90) is similar in important respects to my own (as is Makin's). It is not exactly the same, though, and I shall endeavour to strengthen and sharpen Russell's argument significantly.

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because of the non-existence of a high backward road, our prior knowledge, arrived at through a commonplace human process of semantic computation, that the definite description 'the centre of mass of the Solar System' expresses the particular content ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m, together with our knowledge of exactly which determining complex this is—that is, our "understanding" of the phrase, in this sense—is not sufficient to enable us to compute the content of the sentence. The problem is not so much to *locate* the postulated second-level complex. (Russell: 'Where are we to find the denoting complex "*C*" which is to denote *C*?') It resides in the class of second-level complexes that each determine ^{m}the first line of Gray's *Elegy*^{m}, alongside its neighbours ^{m}the determining complex occurring in the second of Russell's instances^m and ^{m}the determining complex that has given Russell's readers more headaches than any other^m. The problem is one of *identification*: Which of the infinitely many complexes in this equivalence class is it?

This identification problem is no mere pebble in *ST*'s shoe. It is a theoretical crisis. The problem looms larger when examining everyday contexts in which we actually designate contents by means of indirect quotations: contexts attributing modality or propositional attitudes. Ordinary English has the functional equivalent of indirect-quotation marks, at least when they flank an English sentence: the word 'that'.[35] The attribution 'Albert believes ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System is a point^m' translates into ordinary English as

(5) Albert believes that the centre of mass of the Solar System is a point.

Russell may be interpreted as objecting to Frege's hierarchy of indirect senses on the grounds that the customary sense of an expression does not determine the indirect sense (let alone higher-level indirect senses), so that one's ability to understand a sentence φ does not automatically enable one to understand $^\ulcorner$α believes that φ$^\urcorner$, in which φ expresses its indirect sense. Suppose we utter (5) in conversation with Smith. When Smith apologizes that he does not understand the phrase 'centre of mass', we accommodate him by defining the term. But on the doctrine of indirect senses (and hence on the theory that definite descriptions are singular terms), this is not sufficient for Smith now to understand (5). For though he now knows the customary sense of 'centre of mass', he does not know the indirect sense. His knowing the customary sense of (3) without also knowing its indirect sense gives him the information

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[35] See Salmon (1986, 1991), at pp. 5–6.

that (5) in some way expresses *about* the proposition ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System is a point^m that Albert believes it. But for want of a backward road, Smith does not thereby know, and has insufficient information to be able to determine, by what sense the proposition said to be believed by Albert is designated. Consequently, without further, independent information specifying the sense of the 'that'-clause, ⌜that (3)⌝, Smith does not, and cannot, actually understand (5) itself. So ends stage (VII), and with it the heart of the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument.

This is a genuine, and difficult, philosophical problem, rediscovered more recently by Donald Davidson.[36] One may be tempted to suppose that the English indirect sense of an expression invokes the expression itself, for example that the English indirect sense of 'centre of mass' (the English customary sense of the indirect quotation ' ^{m}centre of mass^m ') is the customary sense of the definite description 'the English customary sense of 'centre of mass' '. This would yield the result that no two distinct synonyms could be *thoroughly synonymous*, that is, sharing the same entire hierarchy of indirect senses. Customary synonyms—expressions with the same customary sense—will automatically differ in indirect sense (and therefore also in doubly indirect sense and every higher-level indirect sense). It would also provide a shortcut backward road, not from designatum to sense nor from sense to indirect sense, but directly from expression to indirect sense. Reflection reveals, however, that this cannot be correct. If it were, Smith would understand (5)

[36] Davidson (1965), pp. 393–4. Even before Davidson, Carnap had complained, in *Meaning and Necessity* (1947, 1970, sect. 30, pp. 129–33), that "Frege nowhere explains in more ordinary terms what this third entity is". Neither Carnap nor Davidson credit Russell.

Dummett dismisses the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument as "extremely confused", in *Frege: Philosophy of Language*, (Dummett 1973), at p. 267. Dummett nevertheless extracts this same extension of the stage (VII) objection to indirect senses—or an objection very close to this one—saying that it constitutes a *reductio ad absurdum* of Frege's entire theory. Dummett adds, "There is, however, a simple emendation which can be made to the doctrine [of indirect sense], which, with only a small perturbation in the system, dispels the objection". His proposed emendation consists in two claims: It is not the sense alone, but the sense together with a position within a sentence—what Dummett calls a *context*—that determines designation; and expressions have the same sense (though not the same designatum) when occurring in an *ungerade* linguistic context as they do when occurring in an ordinary ('transparent') context. See n. 29 above. Ironically, the second part of this proposed emendation is precisely what was ruled out at stage (V) via the Collapse. Dummett does not address this earlier stage of the argument, though (as I interpret Russell) it is the central argument of the passage. In particular, Dummett's emendation seems to have the peculiar consequence that the proposition that ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m is a point = the proposition that the centre of mass of the Solar System is a point. (This is the Collapse.) It would also have the consequence that this single proposition has no truth value apart from an English context for the particular words 'the centre of mass of the Solar System' (or a German context for the description's German translation, or etc.).

Dummett's acknowledgement of the problem noted by Russell at stage (VII) does not extend to the further problem to be noted two paragraphs below in the text. I criticize Dummett on this issue in Salmon (2001).

even *without* being told the English customary sense of 'centre of mass'. For he already knows the customary sense of 'the customary English sense of 'centre of mass' '; it is its designatum he does not know. Moreover, as Church famously argued, if (5) mentioned the particular English phrase 'centre of mass' (perhaps by mentioning the entire English sentence (3)), then its translation into another language, say German, would be not what it is normally taken to be, but instead a German sentence that quotes the English phrase 'centre of mass', and that therefore fails to identify in German exactly what Albert is said to believe (specifying it instead perhaps as *whatever proposition is expressed in English by the particular words 'The centre of mass of the Solar System is a point'*).[37]

As serious as this difficulty is, the problems with the theory that definite descriptions are singular terms do not end there. Russell argues, in effect, that *ST* is forced to claim, on pain of incoherence, that the contents of definite descriptions are (to use a notion that figures in 'On Denoting' and that Russell will develop in later work) knowable only *by description*, never *by acquaintance*. As noted, this corner is the very place where one prominent sub-group of *ST* theorists—namely, Frege and some of his followers—have willingly chosen to call home. For Frege, *all* knowledge of things is of a sort that Russell will classify as knowledge by description, including our knowledge of senses. By Russell's lights, this renders the very phenomenon of our understanding language altogether impossible. For understanding an expression entails knowing what the content (for Frege, the *Sinn*) of the expression is. Understanding 'the first line of Gray's *Elegy*' evidently requires (indeed consists largely in) knowing of the determining complex ^m^the first line of Gray's *Elegy*^m^ (*de re*) that the phrase expresses it. By virtue of

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[37] In this sense it may be said that the relation of sense to indirect sense is not merely "linguistic through the phrase", though I believe this departs from Russell's meaning for those words; see n. 17 above. That the indirect sense of an expression involves designation of the expression itself is suggested by Church's remarks concerning the paradox of analysis, in his famous review of the Black–White exchange, in Church (1946), pp. 132–3. Church's remarks there seem inconsistent, however, with his later writings concerning what has come to be called *the Church translation argument*, for example, Church (1950), pp. 97–9. This was noted by C. Anthony Anderson in Anderson (1987), at p. 162, n. 27, and independently in Salmon (1993), pp. 158–66. Dummett has defended the exegetical thesis that Frege identified the indirect sense of α with the customary sense of ⌜the customary sense of 'α'⌝, in Dummett (1981) at pp. 89–100. (This represents a turnabout for Dummett, who had earlier dismissed the idea as "rather implausible" in Dummett 1981—see the previous note above.) Both the thesis concerning the indirect sense of α and the exegetical thesis that Frege held the former thesis are defended in Kemp (1995), pp. 153–62. I criticize this interpretation in 'The Very Possibility of Language', (Salmon 2001 sect. 2; see also sect. 3, n. 30.) The general idea that the indirect sense of an expression invokes the expression itself is also found (in various forms) in Heidelberger (1975), at p. 37; Owens (1986), at pp. 376–79; and Anderson, op. cit. at pp. 141–3, and recently in 'Alonzo Church's Contributions to Philosophy and Intensional Logic', sect. 2.2, in Anderson and Zeleny (2001).

the Collapse (and the stage (V) argument), the linguistic proposition that the phrase expresses ^{m}the first line of Gray's *Elegy*^{m} cannot be a singular proposition about the complex, and instead incorporates the postulated second-level complex $^{m\,m}$the first line of Gray's *Elegy*$^{m\,m}$. The required *de re* knowledge is of the form: '*The first line of Gray's* Elegy' *expresses the determining complex that is such-and-such.* (More exactly, it is knowledge of the proposition ^{M}'the first line of Gray's *Elegy*' expresses $c_1{}^M$, where c_1 is the postulated second-level complex.) But on Russell's epistemology, knowing merely that 'the first line of Gray's *Elegy*' expresses the complex that is such-and-such—even if this knowledge is properly arrived at by an appropriate semantic computation—cannot qualify as genuine *understanding* of the definite description. For it is *de dicto* knowledge and not *de re*; it is only knowledge by description. The fact that 'the first line of Gray's Elegy' expresses the determining complex that is such-and-such begs the question: Which complex is *that*? Only by *identifying* the complex in question—that is, by providing direct acquaintance with it—do we achieve the special sort of *de re* knowledge that constitutes genuine understanding of the description in question. Thus not only are we in no position to gain an understanding of a belief attribution like 'Albert believes that the first line of Gray's *Elegy* is beautiful'; a slight extension of the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument appears to show that on *ST*, we cannot understand any definite description. And since the Collapse applies to any expression for which there is a content/designation distinction of the sort *ST* ascribes to definite descriptions, on Russell's epistemology the theory that there are any expressions with contents that determine their designata—whether they be definite descriptions, sentences, or something else—inadvertently renders these expressions in principle unintelligible. This situation is indeed philosophically intolerable, in many respects analogous to the derivation of Russell's Paradox about sets.[38]

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[38] Previous interpreters (e.g., Kremer, Noonan) have noted that, if it assumed that we can designate anything with which we are acquainted by a "genuine name in the strict, logical sense" (and that we apprehend propositions expressed with the help of definite descriptions), then the explicit conclusion of this stage of Russell's argument—that "the meaning cannot be got at except by means of denoting phrases"—flatly contradicts a principle, usually called *the Principle of Acquaintance*, which is fundamental to Russell's epistemology and which is in fact explicitly enunciated in the closing paragraph of 'On Denoting' (and hinted at in the second paragraph): 'Thus in every proposition that we can apprehend (i.e. not only in those whose truth or falsehood we can judge of, but in all that we can think about), all the constituents are really entities with which we have immediate acquaintance.' The principle is restated more succinctly in Russell's 'Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description' (*loc. cit*. n. 34 above, at p. 23 of Salmon and Soames):

Curiously, Russell does not take the argument to this further stage, deriving a truly untenable consequence from *ST*. He seems determined, nevertheless, that the argument shall end not with a whine but with a solar flare. Still discussing the connection between the target complex c and the postulated second-level complex $^{m\,m}D^{m\,m}$, the remainder of (G) reads as if to compensate for the relative weakness of (G_i):

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

Here an additional complication in translation arises. In previous paragraphs, I have replaced Russell's variable 'C' either with our metalinguistic variable 'α' or with our determining-complex variable 'c'. Where 'C' functions as a schematic letter standing in for a definite description (as suggested, for example, by the particular phraseology 'C is only the denotation'), I have replaced it with our schematic letter 'D'. A new complication concerns Russell's use of the phrase 'occur in a proposition'. Using my notion of *representation* (section 2 above), and using specific instances instead of a schema, Russell evidently means to argue as follows, repeating the very circumstances that lead to the Collapse:

When the determining complex ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m occurs in a proposition (as the subject), both the complex itself and its determinatum are involved in the proposition; yet we have seen that on the view in question, whenever ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m occurs in a proposition, it represents only the centre of mass of the Solar System, which is its determinatum, the representation of the complex itself being wholly relegated to the occurrence of $^{m\,m}$the centre of mass of the Solar System$^{m\,m}$ in a proposition. And similarly when the complex ^{m}the first line of Gray's *Ele-*

'Every proposition which we can understand must be composed wholly of constituents with which we are acquainted.'

  Though this point is closely related to the argument just given in the text, that argument does not rely on the assumption that any object of our acquaintance can be genuinely named nor on the Principle of Acquaintance. The very existence of the Collapse casts serious doubt on the former assumption. The argument employs instead a premiss that is significantly more certain: that understanding a definite description requires *knowing which* complex it expresses. And in lieu of Acquaintance the argument employs a premiss that is at least as certain: that in order to know which determining complex is such-and-such (as opposed merely to grasping the complex in question), one must know the singular proposition that it is such-and-such.

gy^m occurs in a proposition, when ^{m}the author of *Waverley*^{m} occurs, and so on. Therefore, the view in question has been wrongly conceived.

The remainder of the passage, which constitutes a supplementary final stage of the argument, may thus be recast, without undue violence to Russell's apparent intent, as follows:

(G$'_{ii}$) Moreover, when *c* occurs in a proposition, it is not *only* the determinatum that occurs (as we shall see in the next paragraph); yet, on the view in question, *c* [represents] only the determinatum, the content [i.e., the representing of *c* itself] being wholly relegated to $^{m\,m}D^{m\,m}$. This is an inextricable tangle, and seems to prove that the whole distinction of content and designation has been wrongly conceived.

(H$'$)   That the content is relevant when a determiner phrase occurs in [a sentence expressing] a proposition is formally proved by the puzzle about the author of *Waverley*. The proposition ^{m}Scott is the author of *Waverley*^{m} has a property not possessed by ^{m}Scott is Scott^m, namely the property that George IV wished to know whether it was true. Thus the two are not identical propositions; hence the content of 'the author of *Waverley*' must be relevant [to the proposition] as well as the designatum, if we adhere to the point of view to which this distinction belongs. Yet, as we have seen, so long as we adhere to this point of view, we are compelled to hold that only the designatum can be relevant. Thus the point of view in question must be abandoned.

The inextricable tangle does indeed seem to prove that the whole distinction of content and designation has been wrongly conceived … by Russell. Assuming stages (IV)–(VI) have been successful, on the theory that definite descriptions are singular terms, though the proposition is *about* the description's designatum and not about the content, the content itself is still relevant to the proposition's identity, and especially to its distinctness from other propositions involving determining complexes with the same determinata. This is the very point of the theory. To be sure, Russell knows this. He seems to be arguing in stage (VIII) more like a debating politician seeking votes, than the great philosopher that he is (and indeed that he proves himself to be in 'On Denoting').

6.

The heart of the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument comprises stages (IV)–(VII), in paragraph (F) and sub-paragraph (G_i). This portion is philosophically important. It deserves a thoughtful reply or, if a plausible reply cannot be found, nothing less than our endorsement.

On this reconstruction, the crux of Russell's objection to the theory that definite descriptions are singular terms is the Collapse: the attempt to form a singular proposition about a determining complex results instead in a general proposition about the complex's determinatum. The Collapse precludes "preserving the connection of content and designatum while preventing these from being one and the same, unless the content cannot be got at except by means of determining phrases". And this leads to the unsolvable mystery of second-level determining complexes (and higher-level complexes), Frege's *ungerade Sinne*. The "connection" of content and designatum may be given by the following:

> *P*: The content of a singular term represents the term's designatum in propositions expressed by means of sentences containing the term.

If this principle *P* is respected, then the proposition expressed by ' ^{m}The centre of mass of the Solar System^m is a determining complex' will incorporate the content of ' ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m '. If this proposition is a singular proposition about ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m (as was our intent), then the content of ' ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m ' just *is* ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m representing itself. Equivalently, if we disallow the content of ' ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m ' from being simply the designatum, then ' ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m ' will have a separate content, ^{m} ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m ^{m}. If there are singular propositions about determining complexes, then this separate content is completely idle, with no role to play in the singular propositions expressed using ' ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m ', in violation of *P*. It would appear, then, that if *P* is preserved *and* the content of an indirect quotation is prevented from being the designatum, then: (i) there cannot be singular propositions about determining complexes; (ii) ' ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m ' must be a disguised definite description; and (iii) determining complexes cannot be named *in the strict, logical sense*. But then there is, according to Russell, a further difficulty that stems from the fact that "content cannot be got at except by means of determiner phrases": we have insufficient information to

fix which determining complex ᵐ ᵐthe centre of mass of the Solar System*ᵐ ᵐ* is, and hence, we do not even so much as understand the indirect quotation.

There is a viable reply to this argument. Recall our attempt to inform Smith of Albert's view by uttering (5). We noted that on Frege's theory, Smith needs to know the indirect sense of 'centre of mass' in order to understand (5). But contrary to the argument that knowledge of the customary sense alone is insufficient, it would appear to be exactly this knowledge — nothing more and nothing less — that Smith needs in order to understand (5).[39] This suggests that there is indeed a backward road, not generally from designatum to sense but from customary sense to indirect sense. A thoroughgoing Fregean does not agree with Russell that we are *directly* acquainted with our concepts. A Fregean might nevertheless hold out the prospect that concepts are epistemologically special in that we grasp or apprehend them. It may be suggested that our very apprehension of a concept provides a distinguished second-level concept that presents the former concept in an epistemologically special, *de re* manner. Consider an analogy: the sentence 'Jane's dress is the same colour as my hair' fails to identify the colour that is in question. It is perfectly sensible to respond with 'But what colour is that?' By contrast, the sentence 'Jane's dress is black' pre-empts any such further query. The phrase 'the colour of my hair' does not specify the colour in the same definitive manner as the adjective 'black'. A Fregean should acknowledge that the adjective expresses a concept that determines the designated colour in a uniquely identifying way, a *special manner of presentation* with respect to which the question 'But which one is thus presented?' does not arise. Call this special manner of presentation *Sinnful identification*. The particular second-level concept ᵐ ᵐthe first line of Gray's *Elegy*ᵐ ᵐ that is postulated by Frege would have to be similarly privileged among second-level concepts that determine ᵐthe first line of Gray's *Elegy*ᵐ, enjoying this more intimate relationship to its determinatum than do its equivalence-classmates ᵐthe determining complex occurring in the second of Russell's instancesᵐ and ᵐthe determining complex that has given Russell's readers more headaches than any otherᵐ. The target complex is uniquely Sinnfully identified by the postulated second-level concept for one who correctly understands 'the first line of Gray's *Elegy*' and thereby apprehends the content expressed.

[39] The best way to see this point is to undergo the process for oneself. I have invented a new word: 'nosdog'. Suppose the following belief attribution is true: 'Vito believes that his nosdog is loyal'. What does Vito believe? Hint: Vito's belief is not about a pet. Still don't know? Very well, let me specify the customary sense of the mystery word: it is ᵐgodsonᵐ. Now try again: What does Vito believe?

Knowledge by Sinnfully identifying description is acquaintance Frege-style, the next best thing to Russellian direct acquaintance.[40] It generates a special choice function on concepts: for each concept c that we can apprehend, there is a distinguished second-level concept that is the Sinnful identifier of c. The Sinnful identifier function would also provide a solution to the problem of how it is that we understand definite descriptions: Understanding 'the first line of Gray's *Elegy*' would consist in knowing (as the result of an appropriate semantic computation) that the description expresses the determining complex that is *such-and-such*, where this knowledge invokes the postulated second-level complex c_1 which not only represents but Sinnfully identifies the complex in question, that is, it would consist in knowing: ^{M} 'the first line of Gray's *Elegy*' expresses in English c_1^M.[41]

This does not defeat Russell's stage (VI) argument. Even if a Sinnful identifier choice function were found that selects a distinguished second-level complex from the equivalence class of complexes that determine ^{m}the first line of Gray's *Elegy*^{m}, unless this function also works (or provides another function f that works) at the bottom level, it is of no help in constructing the postulated second-level complex from our target complex, because of the Collapse. The moment we put the target complex into a larger complex, at best the Sinnful identifier function will be applied to the determinatum rather than to the complex itself. If the Sinnful identifier function exists, it yields the high backward road. But to defeat the argument at stage (VII) Frege does not need to *construct* the second-level complex from the target complex; it is enough simply to single out the second-level complex given the target complex, by Sinnfully identifying the latter. The high road leads directly from where we are to where Frege needs to go.

The Fregean hierarchy is generated by the following schema, which we may call *Frege's Rule* (for English), where α may be any meaningful English expression:

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[40] I argue in 'The Very Possibility of Language' (Salmon 2001), sect. 4, that Church, and probably Frege, are committed to an epistemology of just this sort. Frege appeared to believe that certain indexicals, especially 'I', are typically used with a special identifying sense. The central point of Church's 'On Carnap's Analysis of Statements of Assertion and Belief' (Church 1950), is that an ordinary propositional-attitude or assertion attribution like 'Seneca said that man is a rational animal' differs from such surrogates as 'Seneca asserted the proposition expressed in English by 'Man is a rational animal'' precisely in that the former "conveys the content of what Seneca said" (in Linsky (1971), p. 169). The latter, by contrast, merely specifies what Seneca said by describing it as the content of a certain string of words in a certain language. See n. 37 above.

[41] The discussion in this paragraph has benefited from remarks made by Kripke in a seminar, though he may not entirely agree with the reconstruction proposed here.

The English n-fold indirect sense of α = the English customary sense of $\ulcorner {}^n\alpha^n\urcorner$,

where the superscript 'n' represents a string of n occurrences of the indirect-quotation mark 'm'. Thus, the indirect sense of 'the first line of Gray's *Elegy*' is the customary sense of ' ^{m}the first line of Gray's *Elegy*^{m} ', the doubly indirect sense is the customary sense of ' ^{m} ^{m}the first line of Gray's *Elegy*^{m} ^{m} ', and so on.[42] Below these is the customary sense, which may be identified with the zero-fold indirect sense. If one is given only the designatum of a definite description , one cannot determine what the customary sense is, but if one is given that customary sense, using Frege's Rule one can discover the n-fold indirect sense for any n—provided that one can derive the customary sense of an arbitrary indirect quotation $\ulcorner {}^m\beta^m\urcorner$ given the customary sense of β, that is, provided that, contrary to the stage (VII) argument, indirect-quotation marks do not constitute a restriction on the weaker version of Compositionality. The derivation of the sense of $\ulcorner {}^m\beta^m\urcorner$ from that of β will be possible if, but only if, one's apprehension of a sense provides one with a special manner in which that sense is presented, that is, iff there is a backward road of the sort envisaged. The procedure for working out the n-fold indirect sense of α from its customary sense proceeds as follow:. In understanding α, one thereby knows its customary sense c_0. The very knowledge that α expresses c_0 is of the form: α *expresses the determining complex that is such-and-such*, employing the particular second-level concept c_1 that Sinnfully identifies c_0. By cognitively attending to the special manner in which the customary sense c_0 is presented in one's very understanding of α, one *gleans* the Sinnfully identifying complex c_1. This enables one to understand the content quotation $\ulcorner {}^m\alpha^m\urcorner$ as expressing c_1—which, by Frege's Rule, is the indirect sense of α. (Gleaning c_1 from one's knowledge that α expresses c_0 is tantamount to computing the *identifier* function for the apprehended complex c_0 as argument.) By attending to the special manner in which c_1 is presented in one's newly acquired understanding of $\ulcorner {}^m\alpha^m\urcorner$, one gleans the third-level complex c_2 that Sinnfully identifies c_1. This now enables one to understand $\ulcorner {}^m {}^m\alpha^m {}^m\urcorner$ as expressing c_2 (by Frege's Rule, the doubly indirect sense of α), and so on. In this manner, one works out the sense of a nested indirect quotation not in one fell swoop, but from the innermost indirect quotation out, climbing Frege's hierarchy one rung at a time. Frege's Rule utilizes the high backward road, enabling one to generate

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[42] See n. 28 above. In Salmon (1989), at pp. 440–1, 455, n. 11, I propose Frege's Rule as a solution to Davidson's challenge to Frege (see n. 36 above) to state the rule that gives "the individual expressions that make up a sentence governed by "believes" … the meanings they have in such a context".

any level indirect sense from the customary sense as the situation demands ('Smith heard that Jones said that he believes that Salmon said that Russell believed that Frege thought that …'). Notice that on this reconstruction of Frege's theory, any pair of synonyms will be thoroughly synonymous, that is, they will share the same indirect sense, the same doubly indirect sense, the same triply indirect sense, and so on all the way up.[43]

In short, for largely independent reasons, Frege should have countenanced a high backward road even while denying the existence of a low backward road. If stage (V) of the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument is correct that *ST* is committed to disavowing singular propositions about determining complexes, then even if the stage (VI) argument is also correct and Strong Compositionality fails for embeddings within *ungerade* contexts, the high backward road provides exactly the escape route that the theory needs to evade stage (VII). The 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument thus does not succeed in refuting Frege's version of *ST*.

7.

The defence of *ST* invoking acquaintance Frege-style, though it may be the ticket for Fregeans, is not adequate for those, like myself, who wish to allow that definite descriptions are singular terms while retaining singular propositions about their contents. The defence does not contest stage (V), allowing the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument to score an early point by showing that the theory is indeed committed to rejecting singular propositions about determining complexes. Non-Fregean versions of *ST* must insert a wedge before stage (V). Indeed, our ground must be held at stage (II), in which the Collapse first appears. For non-Fregeans, it is the Collapse itself that must be defeated.

One obvious component of any viable non-Fregean defence against the Collapse (other than capitulating to it, as with the Theory of Descriptions) is to distinguish the propositions expressed by (3) and (4) by distinguishing two different ways in which the determining complex *ᵐ*the centre of mass of the Solar System*ᵐ* occurs therein. In fact, one finds exactly such a distinction of modes of occurrence in posthu-

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[43] As I argued in 'A Problem in the Frege-Church Theory of Sense and Denotation' (Salmon 1993), Church seems committed to accepting that expressions that are customarily synonymous are thoroughly synonymous, in his Church (1954), pp. 65–73. I have also speculated, in 'The Very Possibility of Language' Salmon (1998), sect. 4 (see especially n. 39), that Church may have believed in some such semantic computation of the sort described here. See n. 40 above. Indeed, since the procedure amounts to repeated applications of the *identifier* function by attending to the value at one step and gleaning the value at the next, the procedure parallels the sort of effective computation relevant to Church's Thesis.

mously published writings by that most resourceful of all neo-Millians, Russell. Repeatedly in 'On Fundamentals', written just prior to 'On Denoting' (see n. 24 above), no sooner is one conceptual apparatus proposed than it is modified and replaced. In the course of his discursive explorations, Russell eventually discovers, and opts for, a rudimentary version of Theory of Descriptions. But before he does, he distinguishes six modes of occurrences of propositional constituents, the two most significant of which he calls *primary occurrence* and *secondary occurrence*. He writes:

> When a *denoting* complex *A* occurs in a [propositional] complex *B*, it may occur in such a way that the truth-value of *B* is unchanged by the substitution for *A* of anything having the same denotation. (For the sake of brevity, it is convenient to regard anything which is *not* a denoting complex as denoting itself.) This is the case with "the author of *Waverley*" in "Scott was the author of *Waverley*", but not in "people were surprised that Scott was the author of *Waverley*." … We will call *A* a *primary constituent* of *B* when only the denotation of *A* is relevant to the truth-value of *B*, and we will call the occurrence of *A* a *primary occurrence* in this case; otherwise we will speak of *A* as a *secondary constituent*, and of its occurrence as a *secondary occurrence*.[44]

Roughly, then, a determining complex is here said by Russell to have *primary occurrence* in a containing complex (e.g., in a proposition) if it represents its determinatum in that occurrence—as ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^{m} occurs in the proposition expressed by (3)—and it is said to have a *secondary occurrence* if it represents itself, as in (4) and (5). The particular terms 'primary occurrence' and 'secondary occurrence' are conscripted in 'On Denoting' for a different distinction altogether, that of scope. I shall continue to speak instead of what is *represented* by an occurrence of the complex in a containing complex. What Russell in 'On Fundamentals' calls a *primary occurrence* in a proposition is a determinatum-representing occurrence, and what he calls a *secondary occurrence* is a self-representing occurrence. (A single complex may be self-representing in one occurrence and determinatum-representing in another in the same proposition, as in ' ^{m}The cen-

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[44] Russell in Urquhart (1994), p. 374. In the preceding pages Russell instead calls these *occurrence as entity*, or as *being*, and *occurrence as meaning*. He says, "When a complex occurs as being, any other complex having the same denotation, or the denotation itself, may be substituted without altering the truth or non-truth of the complex in which the said complex occurs" (p. 369), and goes on to say that ^{m}the author of *Waverley*^{m} occurs "as entity" in ^{m}Scott was the author of *Waverley*^{m}, and occurs "as meaning" in ^{m}people were surprised that Scott was the author of *Waverley*^{m} (p. 370). The connotations of these terms are—frustratingly—exactly the reverse of the concepts they express. The likely reason is that Russell here distinguishes among a complex, the complex's determinatum, and the complex's content, and he thinks of the complex as somehow going proxy for one or the other of these two attributes in the proposition. The terminology is scrapped just a few pages later, when these same terms are used for a different distinction altogether.

tre of mass of the Solar System^m determines the centre of mass of the Solar System'.)

The distinction between determinatum-representing and self-representing occurrences, though it is surely part of the solution, does not of itself solve the problem of the Collapse. In fact, it is *after* Russell develops this distinction (and other related distinctions of modes of occurrence) in 'On Fundamentals' that he presents the Collapse as a problem yet to be solved. It is assumed that a proposition is fully determined by its components and their mode of composition. Earlier in the essay, Russell states that when one complex occurs in another, the kind of occurrence is determined by the nature of the containing complex and the position that the contained complex occupies therein (pp. 369–70, and *passim*). The problem is that, as Russell views the situation, ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m occupies the same position in the propositions expressed by (3) and (4), and therefore is determinatum-presenting in both, hence the Collapse (pp. 381–2). To illustrate: it is now standard practice to represent propositions as sequences of proposition components. This allows one to distinguish the proposition that the author of *Waverley* is ingenious from the singular proposition about the author that he is ingenious. The latter proposition is identified with the ordered pair <Scott, ingenuity>, whereas the former proposition results by replacing Scott with ^{m}the author of *Waverley*^{m}. Now let *c* be ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m and let *d* be ^{m}is a point^m. We then represent the proposition formed from these two concepts, appropriately composed, by the ordered pair <*c*, *d*>. But which proposition is this, a general proposition about a point or a singular proposition about a determining complex? Suppose we stipulate that if *c* occurs as determinatum-representing then this is the true proposition that the centre of mass of the Solar System is a point, whereas if *c* occurs instead as self-representing, then this is the false singular proposition about *c* itself that it is a point. This is no solution. In each case, we have the same proposition composed of the same two concepts in the same way. How these concepts occur in the proposition seems a result of pragmatics—of speaker's intentions or the like. It is irrelevant to the identity of the proposition.

One ingenious line of defence against the Collapse has been proposed by another particularly resourceful neo-Millian, Kaplan. He writes:

> The solution to the difficulty is simple. Regard the "object" places of a singular proposition as marked by some operation which cannot mark a complex. (There always will be some such operation.) For example, suppose that no

> complex is (represented by) a set containing a single member. Then we need only add {…} to mark the places in a singular proposition which correspond to directly referential terms. We no longer need worry about confusing a complex with a propositional constituent corresponding to a directly referring term because no complex will have the form {*x*}. In particular, [*ᵐ*the centre of mass of the Solar System*ᵐ* ≠ {*ᵐ*the centre of mass of the Solar System*ᵐ*}]. This technique can also be used to resolve another confusion in Russell. He argued that a sentence containing a [nondesignating] directly referential term (he would have called it a nondenoting "logically proper name") would be meaningless, presumably because the purported singular proposition would be incomplete. But the braces themselves can fill out the singular proposition, and if they contain nothing, no more anomalies need result than what the development of Free Logic has already inured us to. ('Demonstratives', Kaplan (1989), p. 496 n. 23.)

The general idea is to distinguish the two modes of occurrence as constituents of propositions by actually *marking* some constituents so as to indicate that they represent themselves in the proposition. The singular proposition about Scott that he is ingenious is now represented by the ordered pair: <{Scott}, ingenuity>. This evidently requires some modification in Synonymous Interchange. If it is conceded that 'the centre of mass of the Solar System' has the same content as its indirect quotation (or any other name for its content), then some synonyms do not designate the same thing, and substitution of one expression by a synonym cannot be allowed when the two do not share the same designatum. Even substitution of co-designative expressions may involve more than mere substitution of one proposition component by another—as when ' *ᵐ*the first line of Gray's *Elegy*ᵐ ' is substituted for the grammatical subject in 'The determining complex occurring in the second of Russell's instances has given Russell's readers more headaches than any other complex'. For Kaplan, this substitution of a determinatum-representing complex by its determinatum is automatically accompanied by a mark transforming the position occupied into a self-representing position. Here the restriction on Synonymous Interchange comes into play, since we cannot go on to substitute 'the first line of Gray's *Elegy*' without altering the content. Kaplan proposes extending his marking procedure to the occurrence of nondesignating names, thereby providing semantic content where Russell finds none.

Russell explicitly considers a similar proposal in 'On Denoting', where he dismisses any such solution as being essentially Meinongian. Immediately after criticizing Meinong in 'On Denoting', Russell says:

> Another way of taking the same course (so far as our present alternative is concerned) is adopted by Frege, who provides by definition some purely

> conventional denotations for the cases in which otherwise there would be none. Thus, 'the king of France' is to denote the null-class … But this procedure, though it may not lead to actual logical error, is plainly artificial, and does not give an exact analysis of the matter. (Russell 1905, p. 484)

Russell would surely say the same about a more restrictive proposal that confines itself to names instead of descriptions. And he would be correct. There is something artificial about Kaplan's representation of the content of 'Nappy is a despot'[45] as <{ }, *m*is a despot*m*>, something that is equally plainly artificial about his representation of singular propositions about Scott as containing {Scott} in subject position instead of Scott.

There is a more liberal interpretation possible for Kaplan's proposal. It might appear as if Kaplan is back-pedalling, modifying the offending version of *ST* so that the content of a logically proper name is held to be not simply its designatum but the unit set of its designatum. But this may be to place undue weight on an artefact of the particular marking system he suggests. One might take the basic idea to be, rather, that the content of an indirect quotation is just the complex, which typically represents its determinatum when occurring in a proposition but which is marked instead for self-representation in the false singular proposition expressed by (4), analogously to the way in which the definite description itself is marked by indirect-quotation marks in (4). Even so, whatever the mark of self-representation is, it must be an actual feature of the proposition, else the Collapse. Indeed, the "proposition" that Kaplan provides in the case of a sentence with a nondesignating name as grammatical subject has no actual representing component in subject position, but instead only the mark. One suspects that Russell would resist this proposal on the same grounds that though it may not lead to actual logical error, it is plainly artificial and does not give an exact analysis of the matter. And it is by no means obvious that his complaint would be entirely misplaced. The proposal does seem a bit airy-fairy. Are we really to suppose that a singular proposition about Mont Blanc contains not only the mountain with all its snowfields but also the mountain with the hypothesized "mark"? What exactly is the mark? What portion or aspect of the sentence (e.g., 'Scott is ingenious') actually contributes the mark?

It remains true that a self-representing occurrence of *m*the centre of mass of the Solar System*m* in a proposition is very different from a determinatum-representing occurrence. This much, by itself, is not an ad hoc stipulation; it is a factual observation. The problem is to clarify

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[45] I have invented the name 'Nappy' for the present emperor of France. There is no such person.

this distinction in such a way as to distinguish (3) and (4) in its terms without making the distinction merely a matter of syntax and pragmatics, and without resorting to artificial and ad hoc alteration of the content of a name.

There is a way to do this. Though I came upon the idea independently (and used it extensively in my book, *Frege's Puzzle*[46]), it comes as little surprise to find the same idea in 'On Fundamentals'.

There Russell says that *ᵐ*the author of *Waverley*ᵐ is an *analysable* constituent of *ᵐ*Scott was the author of *Waverley*ᵐ whereas the latter's occurrence in *ᵐ*people were surprised that Scott was the author of *Waverley*ᵐ is *unanalysable*, in that the determinatum-representing proper constituents of the former proposition (e.g., *ᵐ*the author of *Waverley*ᵐ) are self-representing rather than determinatum-representing constituents of the latter proposition (pp. 375, 378, 379).[47] Analysable and unanalysable occurrences are both contrasted with a third mode of occurrence, *occurrence as meaning*. Something occurs in a proposition in this third way if it "can only be replaced [without loss of significance] by an entity of a certain sort, e.g. a proposition" (pp. 374, 378). Russell has in mind occurrences like a conditional proposition's antecedent, which must be a proposition (and not, e.g., a person) for the conditional to be meaningful. According to Russell, when a determining complex *A* occurs in this way in a complex *B*, *A* is not so much analysable as it is *analysed* in *B*, in that it "is not a constituent of the complex *B* in which it is said to occur, but its constituents occur in *B*, and occur in that relation to each other which constitutes the meaning of *A*" (p. 378).

Russell's notion of an *analysed* (as opposed to an *analysable*) occurrence provides for a mode of occurrence in a manner other than as a *constituent*. He stipulated that the proposition *ᵐ*Scott was the author of *Waverley*ᵐ occurs in just this manner in *ᵐ*if Scott was the author of *Waverley*, then he combined the talents of a poet and a novelist*ᵐ* (p. 375). There is no reason why the determining complex *ᵐ*the author of *Waverley*ᵐ itself should not occur in the proposition *ᵐ*Scott was the author of *Waverley*ᵐ in this very same manner: not as an analysable

[46] In Appendix C, pp. 143–51; see especially pp. 145–7, clauses 16, 23–4, 28–9, 32–6. (See also pp. 20–1.)

[47] Russell appears to believe that the proposition *ᵐ*Scott was the author of *Waverley*ᵐ determines itself (and is therefore determinatum-representing in *ᵐ*people were surprised that Scott was the author of *Waverley*ᵐ). This is highly dubious, however, since substitution of 'Scott' for 'the author of *Waverley*' in 'Scott = the author of *Waverley*', though it does not preserve the proposition expressed, should yield a proposition with the same determinatum. Frege relied on considerations like this to argue that a proposition determines its truth-value.

constituent, not as a constituent at all, but analysed (in Russell's senses of these terms). Instead Russell explicitly says that ^{m}the author of *Waverley*^{m} is an analysable, determinatum-representing ("primary") constituent of ^{m}Scott was the author of *Waverley*^{m} (p. 375).[48]

One should distinguish sharply between a determining complex "occurring in" a proposition as a *concept-component* and its occurring as what I call a *sub-concept*—analogous to the two ways in which one set might occur within another: as an element or as a subset. (At the very least, one should draw an analogous distinction for the occurrence of a determining complex within a proposition if determining complexes are, as Russell's terminology suggests, *complex*, that is, non-simple.) This distinction of modes of occurrence corresponds not to Russell's distinction between *analysable* and *unanalysable*, but to a Russellian distinction for which he introduces terms but of which he otherwise takes no special notice, that between *constituent* and *analysed*. The determining complex ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m analyses into two concept-components: ^{m}the^m and ^{m}centre of mass of the Solar System^m. (The latter concept-component is what Russell, in *The Principles of Mathematics*, called a *class-concept*; it is a concept of a unit class of points in real space. In *Frege's Puzzle*, the former concept-component is identified with the *operation* of assigning to any unit class its sole element.) To treat these two as concept-components also of the singular proposition about the complex that it is intriguing, and of the proposition expressed by (4), is to misunderstand the fundamental nature of a singular proposition. Here these concept-components are like the occurrence of arms and hands in the singular proposition about Scott that he is ingenious. The entire complex ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m is a concept-component ("constituent") of the singular proposition about it that it itself is intriguing, and likewise of the singular proposition expressed by (4), whereas the same complex is not a concept-component, in this sense, but a sub-concept of ("occurs analysed in") the proposition that the centre of mass of the Solar System is intriguing and of the general proposition expressed by (3)—just as $<a, b>$ is a sequence-element of $<<a, b>, e>$ and a sub-sequence of $<a, b, e>$.[49] Using the sequence representation for propositions, we may let

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[48] Cf. Russell (1903), pp. 64, 502.

[49] A sequence s is a *sub-sequence* of a sequence s' if there are positive whole numbers j, m, and n such that s is an m-ary sequence, s' is an n-ary sequence, $m \leq n$, and for each whole number i, $1 \leq i \leq m$, the ith sequence-element of s is the $(j + i)$th sequence-element of s'. In this sense, s "is not a constituent of s' in which it is said to occur, but its constituents occur in s', and occur in that rela-

$a = {}^m$the^m; $b = {}^m$centre of mass of the Solar System^m; $e = {}^m$is intriguing^m. Then the complex ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m is represented by $<a, b>$, the proposition that the centre of mass of the Solar System is intriguing by $<a, b, e>$, and the singular proposition about ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m by $<<a, b>, e>$. No marks, no pragmatic clutter, and no collapse—and any remaining artificiality (e.g., the representation of complexes by sequences) is reduced to a minimal level that ought to be acceptable, at least for the purpose of rescuing a non-Fregean version of *ST* from the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument.

The distinction between occurrence as concept-component and occurrence as sub-concept violates the principle *P* mentioned above. It is true that the moment we put a determining complex in a proposition as a sub-concept, the proposition is about the determinatum of the complex; but this is not true when we put the complex in as a concept-component. The distinction also shows that Compositionality does not directly yield Synonymous Interchange. Let us assume that sentences like (3) and (4) are mere sequences of words (rather than tree-structures or the like). The proposition represented by $<a, b, e>$ is the value of a computable function applied to the contents of the contentful component words and phrases of (3), just as $<<a, b>, e>$ is the value of a computable function applied to the contents of the contentful component words and phrases of (4). One may suppose that it is the same computable function, defined by cases (e.g., treating indirect quotations differently from definite descriptions). Even a version of Strong Compositionality is upheld, though the content of the description 'the centre of mass of the Solar System' occurs as sub-concept rather than concept-component. It is precisely this feature of the definite description that prevents substitution for it by its indirect quotation or by a name of the complex expressed. For though their contents are the same object, that object occurs differently in the content of the sentence, depending on whether its concept-components are contributed *en masse*, by the indirect quotation or name, or individually by the definite description's components.

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tion to each other which constitutes *s*". The notion of *sub-concept* should be understood analogously in terms of *concept-component*.

To forestall misinterpretation: I am not suggesting that a proposition is best represented as a sequence of concept-components, let alone that it *is* such a sequence. What I am proposing is that, whatever the real structure of propositions may be (e.g., perhaps a tree structure), one should distinguish these two modes in which entities might be said to "occur in" a proposition— as component, or alternatively as sub-concept—and that this distinction provides a promising solution to the central problem posed in Russell's 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument.

Though forceful and important, the reasoning of the 'Gray's *Elegy*' argument is mistaken at each stage. The alleged Collapse of (4) into (3) is a myth; hence *ST* is not committed to the Fregean hierarchy, though Millian versions of *ST* are committed to a restriction on Synonymous Interchange. Those who voluntarily undertake the commitment to Frege's hierarchy may concede that the indirect sense is not constructed from the customary sense, so that indirect-quotation marks and 'that' constitute further restrictions on Strong Compositionality. But they may also follow the high backward road to derive the indirect sense from the customary in compliance with the weaker version of Compositionality.

Ironically, had Russell seen that a determining complex occurs *analysed* in a proposition rather than as a *constituent*, in his sense, he might not have discovered the Theory of Descriptions—at any rate, not as the stream of consciousness flows in 'On Fundamentals'. It follows from nothing I have said that the Theory of Descriptions is wrong and that English is WRL rather than IRL. On the contrary, it was extremely fortunate for Philosophy that Russell was prompted by the threat of the Collapse to discover that paradigm of philosophy. Without it, the IRL hypothesis might never have been discovered and those of us who ponder content might forever have dreamed that we know which language we speak.[50]

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Appendix: Analytical translation of the obscure passage

On Russell's terminology, a *denoting phrase* is a noun phrase beginning with what linguists call a *determiner*, like 'every', 'some', or 'the'. Both definite and indefinite descriptions are denoting phrases, in Russell's sense. A definite description of a given language is said to *mean*—in a more standard terminology, it *expresses*—a *denoting complex c* as its *meaning*. The denoting complex *c*, in turn, *denotes*—in Church's terminology, it is a *concept of*—an object as its *denotation*. I here translate Russell's term 'meaning' as 'content'. Russell does not use any special term for the binary relation between a definite description and the object of which the expression's content in the language is a concept. Instead Russell speaks of "the denotation of the meaning", saying that a definite description α "has a meaning which denotes" an object *x*. Sometimes he says that α itself (as opposed to its content) denotes *x*. Here I shall avoid Russell's term 'denote' altogether. Instead I use 'determine' for the relation between a complex *c* and the object *x* of which *c* is a concept, and I shall call *x* the 'determinatum' of *c*. I shall use 'designate' for the relation between the expression α and *x*, and I shall call *x* the 'designatum' of α.

Russell uses '*C*' as a variable ranging over determining complexes, and sometimes instead as a metalinguistic variable ranging over determiner phrases. Frequently he uses '*C*' as a schematic letter (a substitutional variable), sometimes standing in for an arbitrary definite description, sometimes for a term designating an arbitrary determining complex. Any sentence in which '*C*' occurs as schematic letter is strictly speaking a *schema*, of which Russell means to assert every instance. Fortunately, with a little finesse, Russell's intent can usually be captured by taking '*C*' as a variable either ranging over definite descriptions or ranging over determining complexes. I use 'α' as a metalinguistic variable, and upper case '*D*' as a schematic letter standing in for an arbitrary definite description. I use lower-case '*c*' as a determining-complex variable. I use Quine's quasi-quotation marks, ⌜ and ⌝ in combination with 'α'. In quasi-quotation, all internal expressions are quoted, that is, mentioned (designated), except for metalinguistic variables, whose values are mentioned. I use single quotation marks for direct (expression) quotation. Following Kaplan, I use superscripted occurrences of '*m*' as indirect-quotation marks, and superscripted occurrences of '*M*' as indirect-quasi-quotation marks.[i] In indirect-quasi-quotation, the contents of all internal expressions are mentioned, except for determining-complex variables, whose values are mentioned. Here I avoid double

quotation marks, except as scare-quotes when using another's words. Departures from the original appear in **boldface**.

(*A′*)   The relation of the **content** to the **designatum** involves certain rather curious difficulties, which seem in themselves sufficient to prove that the theory which leads to such difficulties must be wrong.

(*B′*)   (*I*) When we wish to speak about, **i.e., to designate,** the *content* of a **determiner** phrase, **i.e., of a definite description,** as opposed to its *designatum*, the **present** mode of doing so is by **indirect-quotation marks**. Thus we say:

> The centre of mass of the Solar System is a point, not a **determining** complex;
>
> *ᵐ*The centre of mass of the Solar System*ᵐ* is a **determining** complex, not a point.

Or again,

> The first line of Gray's *Elegy* **expresses** a proposition.
>
> *ᵐ*The first line of Gray's *Elegy*ᵐ* does not **express** a proposition.

Thus taking any **determiner** phrase**, e.g., taking any definite description …, α,** we wish to consider the relation between **α** and ⌈*ᵐ*α*ᵐ*⌉, where the difference of the two is of the kind exemplified in the above two instances.

(C′)   We say, to begin with, that when **α** occurs it is the *designatum* **of α** that we are speaking about; but when ⌈*ᵐ*α*ᵐ*⌉ occurs, it is the *content*. Now the relation of **content to designatum** is not merely linguistic through the phrase, **i.e., it is not merely the indirect product of the semantic relations of** *being the content of* **a phrase and** *designating*: there must be a **direct, non-linguistic, logico-metaphysical** relation involved, which we express by saying that the **content** *determines* **the designatum**. But the difficulty which confronts us is that we cannot succeed in *both* preserving the connexion of **content to designatum** *and* preventing them—**the content and the designatum**—from being one and the same; also that the **content** cannot be got at except by means of **determiner** phrases. [ii] This happens as follows.

(D'_i)   The one phrase **α** was to have both **content** and **designation**. But if **in an effort to designate the content,** we speak of ⌜**the content of α**⌝, that gives us the **content** (if any) of the **designatum of α**. 'The **content** of the first line of Gray's *Elegy*' **designates** the same **complex** as 'The **content** of $'''$The curfew tolls the knell of parting day$'''$', and … not the same as 'The **content** of $'''$the first line of Gray's *Elegy*$'''$'. Thus in order to get the **content** we want, we must speak not of ⌜**the content of α**⌝, but of ⌜**the content of** $'''α'''$⌝, which **designates** the same as ⌜$'''α'''$⌝ by itself.[iii]

(D'_{ii})   Similarly the ⌜**determinatum of α**⌝ does not **designate** the **determinatum** we want, **the determinatum of α's content,** but means something, **i.e., expresses a determining complex,** which, if it **determines anything** at all, **determines** what is **determined** by the **determinatum** we want. For example, let α be 'the **determining** complex occurring in the second of the above instances'. Then ⌜**α** = $'''$the first line of Gray's *Elegy*$'''$⌝ and ⌜The **determinatum** of **α** = 'The curfew tolls the knell of parting day'⌝ **are both true.**[iv] But what we *meant* to have as the **determinatum** was $'''$the first line of Gray's *Elegy*$'''$. Thus we have failed to get what we wanted **from** ⌜**the determinatum of α**⌝.[v]

(E'_i)   (II)The difficulty in speaking of the **content** of a **determining** complex, **i.e., in using a phrase of the form** ⌜**the content of** $'''α'''$⌝, may be stated thus: The moment we put the complex in a proposition, the proposition is about the **determinatum;**[vi] and **hence** if we make a proposition in which the subject **component** is ⌜^{M}**the content of** c^M⌝, **for some determining complex** *c*, then the subject **represents** the **content** (if any) of the **determinatum of c**, which was not intended.[vii]

(E'_{ii})   (III) This leads us to say that, when we distinguish **content** and **determinatum of a determining complex, as we did in the preceding paragraph,** we must be dealing **in both cases** with the **content**: the **content** has a **determinatum** and is a **determining** complex, and there is not something other than the **content**, which can be called ⌜**the complex** $'''α'''$⌝, and be said to *have* both **content** and a **determinatum**. The right phrase**ology**, on the view in question, is that some **contents** have **determinata**.

(F′$_i$)   (**IV**) But this only makes our difficulty in speaking of **contents** more evident. For suppose *c* is our **target** complex, **and let '*D*' represent in what follows a determiner phrase that expresses *c* (for example, let *c* be ‴the centre of mass of the Solar System‴ and let '*D*' stand in for the phrase 'the centre of mass of the Solar System')**; then we are to say that ‴*D*‴ **, i.e., *c* is** the **content** of the **phrase '*D*', instead of saying that ‴*D*‴ itself has a content.** Nevertheless, whenever '*D*' occurs without **indirect-quotation marks**, what is said is not **about ‴*D*‴,** the **content of '*D*',** but only **about D,** the **designatum of '*D*',** as when we say:

> The centre of mass of the Solar System is a point.

(F′$_{ii}$) (**V**) Thus to speak of ‴*D*‴ itself, i.e., to **express** a proposition about the **content of '*D*',** our subject **component** must not be ‴*D*‴ *itself*, but something **else, a new determining complex,** which **determines ‴*D*‴**.^{viii} Thus ‴‴*D*‴‴—which **iterated indirect-quotation** is what we use when we want to speak of the **content of '‴*D*‴'**—must be not the **content of '*D*', i.e., not ‴*D*‴ itself**, but something which **determines the content.**

(F′$_{iii}$) (**VI**) And ‴*D*‴**, i.e., *c*,** must not be a constituent of this **higher-level** complex ‴‴*D*‴‴ (as it is of ^{M}**the content of *c*^{M}**); for if ‴*D*‴ occurs in the complex, it will be its **determinatum**, not **the content of '*D*', i.e., not ‴*D*‴ itself**, that will **be represented** and there is no backward road from **determinata** to **contents**, because every object can be **designated** by an infinite number of different **determiner** phrases.

(G′$_i$)   (**VII**) Thus it would seem that ‴‴*D*‴‴ and ‴*D*‴ are **altogether** different entities, such that ‴‴*D*‴‴ determines ‴*D*‴; but this cannot be an explanation of ‴‴*D*‴‴, because the relation of ‴‴*D*‴‴ to ‴*D*‴ remains wholly mysterious; and where are we to find the **determining** complex ‴‴*D*‴‴ which is to determine ‴*D*‴?

(G′$_{ii}$) (**VIII**) Moreover, when ‴*D*‴ occurs in a proposition, it is not *only* the **determinatum** that occurs (as we shall see in the next paragraph); yet, on the view in question, ‴*D*‴ **represents** only the **determinatum**, the **content (i.e., the representing of ‴*D*‴ itself)** being wholly relegated to ‴‴*D*‴‴. This is an inextricable tangle, and seems to prove that the whole distinction of **content** and **designation** has been wrongly conceived.

(H′) That the **content** is relevant when a **determiner** phrase occurs in **a sentence expressing** a proposition is formally proved by the puzzle about the author of *Waverley*. The proposition ^{m}Scott is the author of *Waverley*^{m} has a property not possessed by ^{m}Scott is Scott^m, namely the property that George IV wished to know whether it was true. Thus the two are not identical propositions; hence the **content** of 'the author of *Waverley*' must be relevant **to the proposition** as well as the **designatum**, if we adhere to the point of view to which this distinction belongs. Yet, as we have seen, so long as we adhere to this point of view, we are compelled to hold that only the **designatum** can be relevant. Thus the point of view in question must be abandoned.

Appendix Notes

[i]Kaplan (1971), at pp. 120–1. (Kaplan there calls indirect-quotation marks *meaning-quotation marks*.) The reader who is unfamiliar with these devices is advised to look them up.

[ii]It might have been more perspicuous for Russell to formulate his objection this way: We cannot succeed in both preserving the connection of content to designatum and *allowing* the content and the designatum to be one and the same. Moreover we cannot even succeed in both preserving the connection of content to designatum and *disallowing* the content and the designatum from being one and the same, *unless* the content cannot be got at except by means of determiner phrases. That is, if we preserve the connection whereby the designatum of a definite description is determined by the description's content, which is distinct from the designatum itself, then the content cannot be designated by means of a "genuine name in the strict, logical sense".

[iii]This yields the awkward result that $\ulcorner{}^m\alpha^m\urcorner$ = the content of $^m\alpha^m$ is true. I am here attributing to Russell a serious equivocation, resulting from his dual use of inverted commas both as direct-quotation marks and as indirect-quotation marks. He appears to believe that he has derived from the theory that definite descriptions have a content/designation distinction the consequence that in order to designate ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m, rather than using the inappropriate phrase 'the content of the centre of mass of the Solar System' we must use 'the content of ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m' (which Russell fails to distinguish from the perfectly appropriate 'the content of 'the centre of mass of the Solar System' '), thus ascribing a content to a determining complex itself. As a criticism of the content/designation theory, or even as a neutral description, this is a red herring. Instead the theory entails that one may designate ^{m}the centre of mass of the Solar System^m using the functor 'the content of' in combination with 'the centre of mass of the Solar System' and direct quotation, not indirect. Russell has a stronger criticism to make of the theory, though his presentation is coloured somewhat by this red herring.

[iv]In the original text, Russell here uses '*C*' as a schematic letter standing in for a term designating a determining complex. The preceding two sentences should read:

For example, let '*C*' [stand in for] 'the determining complex occurring in the second of the above instances'. Then *C* = ^{m}the first line of Gray's *Elegy*^{m}, and the determinatum of *C* = 'The curfew tolls the knell of parting day'.

I have reformulated this in the metalinguistic mode using 'α', quasi-quotation, and the predicate 'is true'.

[v] *Pace* Russell, his apparent observation that in order to designate the designatum of α we should use ⌜the determinatum of ^{m}α^m⌝ rather than ⌜the determinatum of α⌝, though correct, provides no support whatever to his apparent conclusion that in order to designate the content of α, rather than using ⌜the content of α⌝ we must use ⌜the content of ^{m}α^m⌝, which is in fact equally inappropriate. Instead we can designate α's content by using ⌜the content of 'α'⌝ or ⌜^{m}α^m⌝. Analogously, we can designate α's designatum by using ⌜the designatum of 'α'⌝ or α itself.

[vi] That is, as soon as we put a determining complex in a proposition, by using a sentence involving a singular term whose content is the complex, the proposition is about the complex's determinatum. This generates what I call *the Collapse*. As Russell will argue below, this same phenomenon arises even when designating the complex by using the simple indirect quotation ⌜^{m}α^m⌝.

[vii] Roughly, a proposition component *represents* an object x in a proposition p if p is about x in virtue of that component. This marks the first use by Russell of his variable 'C' as ranging over determining complexes rather than definite descriptions. Moreover, the quotation marks here are indirect-quasi-quotation marks. The quotation ' ^{M}the content of c^M ' designates the determining complex consisting of the content of the functor 'the content of' joined with the complex c.

[viii] In this sense, the content cannot be got at except by means of determiner phrases; it cannot be genuinely *named*, in the strict, logical sense.

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