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Russell on Meaning and Denoting by P. T. Geach

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concept denotes, the puzzlement over how to form a proposition about a meaning ensues. Searle's hypothesis regarding Russell's second argument has the additional merit of simultaneously offering an explanation as to why Russell thought that Frege's theory made "the King of France is bald" nonsense.

The difficulty in evaluating Searle's claim lies in the fact that when expressions, their meanings, and their denotations are carefully distinguished, and the various possible interpretations of certain other difficult expressions such as "proposition," "denoting complex," and "about" are sorted out, it becomes possible to supply for each sentence of Russell's argument an interpretation which makes the sentence correct. Of course, in the repaired version certain sentential transitions signaled by "thus," "this leads us to say," etc., become inexplicable, but this is to be expected in an argument with (now) true premisses leading to a false conclusion. Further, there are often a number of different interpretations each of which would correct some part of Russell's argument and which relocate the non-sequiturs. Thus the complete justification of any analysis of Russell's argument clearly awaits a fully annotated version of the two pages. (Although it is probably not ultimately crucial, it is annoying to discover that the two most accessible reprints of *On denoting*, in XIV 184 and XXV 332, differ from one another and from the original in their use of quotation marks and displayed material. In XXV 332 it is claimed that Russell sanctioned the changes therein.)

While awaiting the work of the scholars, the attempt to 'correct' Russell's argument provides an unsurpassed exercise for students of Frege's theory and the principles of mention and use.

DAVID KAPLAN

RONALD J. BUTLER. *The scaffolding of Russell's theory of descriptions. The philosophical review*, vol. 63 (1954), pp. 350-364.

Butler gives a generally accurate account of Russell's 1903 semantical theory as given in *Principles of mathematics* and shows in some detail how the theory of *On denoting* can be viewed against this background. This article along with J. W. Reeves's *The origins and consequences of the theory of descriptions (Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, vol. 24 (1934), pp. 211-230) provide a most useful historical accompaniment to *On denoting*.

On the question of Russell's second argument against Frege (see the preceding review), Butler proclaims the radical view that Russell's conception of 1903, retained in *On denoting*, that propositional constituents are entities of the world (universals, etc.) and not merely the names of those entities "left no room for distinguishing the sign from its referent. His logical tools forced him to refuse recognition of the distinction between use and mention." Russell's inattention to the distinction certainly makes it harder to reconstruct his theory confidently and may even have led him at places to draw unwarranted conclusions (as possibly in the argument against Frege), but it seems an exaggeration to claim that no plausible reconstruction of his theory can be made in accord with current canons of mention and use. Given this view of the author's, it is not surprising that he agrees with Church in analyzing Russell's argument. But in his own reconstruction of Russell's attempt to show that there is no valid distinction between meaning and denotation, Butler appears to require both the identification of a sign with its denotation (referent) and also the identification of a sign with its meaning. From these two the result follows easily. Though a peculiar theory emerges from either alone, the identification of meaning and denotation is not immediately obtainable.

DAVID KAPLAN

P. T. GEACH. *Russell on meaning and denoting. Analysis* (Oxford), vol. 19 (1959), pp. 69-72.

Geach claims to explain what he terms "the odd irrelevance" of Russell's criticism of Frege in the passage discussed by Searle (see above). The explanation is that "Russell has excusably, but wrongly, conflated Frege's distinction between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung* with his own distinction between what an expression 'means' and what it 'denotes', as expounded in *The principles of mathematics*." To establish that Russell's 1903 theory differs radically from that of Frege, Geach argues that Frege's "*bedeuten, Bedeutung*" should be equated with Russell's 1903 use of "mean, meaning" rather than with Russell's "denote, denotation" as has commonly been supposed. He further claims that there is really nothing in Frege that quite corresponds to Russell's "denotation."

The reviewer finds Geach's arguments on these points unconvincing. In presenting them

Geach has tacitly rewritten Russell's "indication" (words indicate the corresponding propositional constituent) as "meaning" (a word Russell almost never used in expounding his own theory). In connection with proper names, Russell explicitly denies that they have meaning, only indication. Only if we restrict attention to proper definite descriptions as normally used can we find a close parallel between Russell's 1903 theory and Frege's theory. In this case according to Russell, the phrase *indicates a denoting concept* which in turn *denotes* an individual. The denoting concept is a constituent of the proposition, and the proposition is *about* the individual. Here the denoting concept seems analogous to Frege's *Sinn* and the individual certainly corresponds to Frege's *Bedeutung*, the only differences being that for Frege the phrase *bedeutet* the individual whereas for Russell the individual is denoted not by the phrase but by the denoting concept.

In further support of the disparity of their conceptions Geach discusses what motivated Frege and Russell to make their distinctions. He claims that Frege's distinction was mainly derived from puzzles about oblique contexts. But it seems more likely that it was puzzles concerning identity sentences that primarily motivated Frege, who then found wide application for the distinction. In 1903, Russell uses his distinction between the indication of a denoting phrase and its denotation to analyze identity sentences involving definite descriptions in a way exactly parallel to Frege's. Geach claims that Russell's motivation was "his 'robust sense of reality'—his laudable dislike of such Meinongian monstrosities as the round square and the indefinite man." But these emotions were involved rather in *rejecting* the 1903 theory in favor of the theory in *On denoting*. In 1903 "a man" indicated a certain propositional constituent which denoted "a kind of combination of all men." This was admittedly "a very paradoxical object." In *On denoting* this object is banished by denying any corresponding propositional constituent to the indefinite description.

The article contains a fairly accurate discussion of the 1903 theory of definite descriptions and the way in which *On denoting* revises that theory. Unfortunately, Geach does not undertake to show us exactly how this illuminates the passage discussed by Searle. And although the reviewer believes that it is useful to view Russell's argument against the background of his own earlier theory, the relevant differences concern the 1903 treatment of proper names and 'unusual' uses of definite descriptions not the appropriate 1903 counterparts to Frege's "*Sinn*" and "*Bedeutung*".

DAVID KAPLAN

RONALD JAGER. *Russell's denoting complex*. *Ibid.*, vol. 20 (1960), pp. 53–62.

The phrase "denoting complex" occupies a prominent position in Russell's argument against Frege (see above). Searle claims that Russell's use of the phrase is slipshod, but that it stands for the meaning of a denoting phrase. Geach identifies its use with that of "denoting concept" in Russell's 1903 theory (wherein "denoting complex" does not occur). Butler and Reeves suggest an equivalence between the denoting concepts of the 1903 theory and the denoting phrases of *On denoting*, which makes it reasonable to assume that they understood "denoting complex" to be synonymous with "denoting phrase" (though neither Butler nor Reeves either uses or mentions "denoting complex").

All these (indeed all possible) views regarding the meaning of "denoting complex" are supported by the text. Jager advances still another view: that a denoting complex is that which denotes the meaning of a denoting phrase. According to Jager, Russell noticed that denoting complexes do not allow one to talk of meanings without talking of denotations, since the meanings spoken of are the denotations of denoting complexes. From this Russell is said to have erroneously concluded that even for a single phrase, the meaning and denotation cannot be distinguished. The denoting complexes of *On denoting* are thus seen as provisionally introduced to perform an impossible job (denote what is not a denotation), which Russell vaguely associated with a demand of Frege's theory.

One of the main drawbacks to this (and any other) analysis of Russell's argument is neatly stated by Jager. "It does not make the argument sound. Nothing could do that. Nevertheless, only a small part of the unsoundness has been caught by Searle, a smaller part by Butler, and none at all by others." With these sentiments the reviewer concurs, and also with Jager's simple epitome, "The argument as a whole has a number of defects." I doubt that we have heard the last of it.

DAVID KAPLAN