SALIENCE:

Russell's Theory of Descriptions and a Solution to

Incompleteness

by

Emma Gabriel Nelson Borg

University College London.

M.Phil Degree Thesis.

ProQuest Number: 10046036

ProQuest 10046036

Abstract:

The contention of this thesis is that there are good reasons for preferring a Russellian analysis of descriptions to any other account, but that there exists a fundamental problem to be overcome for such an approach. This is the issue of incompleteness, for the quantificational treatment makes an appeal to uniqueness which is often not satisfied by the descriptive material mentioned, e.g. 'the dog' does not contain enough predicative material to secure a unique denotation. In this thesis I consider, and offer reasons for rejecting, the three most common (pragmatic level) solutions and suggest that we are instead forced to a semantic level alteration. I then go on to offer my own preferred version of such a move: a semantic level appeal to the pragmatic property of salience.

I suggest that we have antecedent reasons for requiring such a notion of salience, as a property which is both able to operate prior to the securing of a referent and which may be mutually recognisable between interlocutors. Such a property would then be available to underpin and direct decisions on intended reference in a communicative environment. To show this I briefly examine the nature of communication itself and argue that there is good reason to posit the shared ground in referential communication as mutual recognition of salience. Finally, having established an independent requirement for such a notion, I show how it might be adopted, as elided content, into the truth conditions of incomplete descriptions, without violating the major tenets of the quantificational theory.

CONTENTS:

Introduction:

In this thesis I shall claim that there exists a serious problem for an otherwise very well motivated and capable theory of descriptive phrases, due originally to Russell, which demands some solution if the theory is to be vindicated. I wish to suggest that there is a solution to this problem, available to the Russellian, but that it involves a more radical refinement of the truth conditions than may be expected at first. So, the initial task of this thesis will be to set out the Russellian analysis and the reasons why I believe it is to be preferred to any other account currently available, which will be done in Chapter 1. I will then provide the strongest reading of the theory, which will be done by seeing how it responds to certain difficulties. Though the full gamut of objections are beyond the scope of this enterprise, I shall pay particular attention to a certain subset of all the possible attacks, those which I feel are the most crucial, which turn on some form of 'impropriety'. That is to say, descriptions in natural language which do not seem to fit with the logical analysis proffered by Russell. The first two are well known within the history of this topic and yet, I will suggest, they are not the locus of the real problem. However by examining them, and the Russellian solutions, we will to an important degree 'set the stage' for what I see as the major objection and bring to the fore those tools which the Russellian will require; this scene-setting will be the project of Chapter 2.

The last objection, then, is the one which I wish to suggest proves the most problematic for our account. The issue, which, I believe, is yet to find a satisfactory account in the literature, is that of 'incompleteness'. The problem arises because the vast majority of our ordinary descriptions do not contain enough descriptive material to isolate a unique extension and thus the usual Russellian analysis, which trades on such uniqueness, must be supplemented in some way. In Chapter 3 I will outline several ways in which this supplementation might be thought to take place but will argue that for a certain, highly problematic, subset of incomplete descriptions none of these suggestions are adequate. I will seek to show that pragmatic level solutions are alone inadequate

at this stage and thus that we are driven to a semantic level alteration. Yet I will contend that, if we take this position seriously, many possible construals of elliptical content are ruled out by further considerations. So then, faced with the objection from incompleteness in its most intractable form, I will advance my own solution for the Russellian: incorporate (one aspect of) the pragmatic notion of salience at a semantic level.

Chapter 4 will then be concerned with arguing that the particular aspect of salience which can be of help to the Russellian is available, because its existence is independently motivated, as a fundamental requirement of any adequate theory of communication. On even the most general consideration of the constraints which a theory of communication must satisfy it will be contended that a mutual property, like the one I suggest the Russellian appeal to, will be ineliminable. The task of Chapter 4 will not in any way be to attempt to construct a theory of communication (a task far beyond the remit of this thesis); rather it will be to make the case for some general features of the nature of communication, which will support the positing of a shared recognition of one aspect of the property of salience. The thesis will be: first, that communication demands mutual ground which concerns more than grasping merely the correct extension of a term, rather allowance must be made for the way in which the extension of a term is reached. The proposal will be that the denotation of an incomplete description must be secured in the same way by both speaker and hearer, viz. secured as the intended referent of the speaker. Secondly, the suggestion will be that the only feasible way in which this can come about is via a mutual recognition of the objects salience in that context. In this way, it will be argued, positing the existence of the required aspect of salience, at least at a pragmatic level, is warranted.

To overcome any remaining objections of 'theory bias' (i.e. that claims concerning the recognition of a mutual aspect of salience are consequential on a realisation of the problems of incompleteness for a quantificational theory of descriptive phrases, rather than being antecedently required) I will, in conclusion to Chapter 4, briefly turn my attention to an opposing account of (some)

descriptions (as terms of direct reference) and show how salience would be a required feature of an account even here. The aim of this discussion will not be to dismiss either the referential theory of descriptions or the ambiguity thesis; rather it will be to show that the positing of a mutual, non-consequential aspect of salience, at least at a pragmatic level, is perfectly general (applying as it does even in the realm of directly referential terms).

Finally, I will return to Russell's Theory of Descriptions and illustrate how the property argued for in the preceding chapters can solve the problem of incompleteness, which seemed so intractable at the outset. The aim of the last chapter will be to put the case for a semantic level adoption of the pragmatic property of salience. Although arguing for a semantic level adoption will prove the most difficult stage of the thesis, it will be contended that the property established in the preceding chapters is available to play a semantic role and that, in the light of its ability to dissolve the very serious problems of incompleteness for the quantificational account, it is a position which warrants consideration.

In the course of this endeavour I will also seek to show how these considerations defeat or deflate the criticisms of salience offered by those few theorists who have considered it as a putative solution (viz. Schiffer and Recanati). I will conclude that, although the case for salience as the unique psychological property imposed by the demands of communication may not yet have been made, the case *for a property like salience,* which does the necessary work, does seem good and that, although this entails our semantic theory awaiting the outcome of advances in cognitive psychology, this is a reasonable position to be in. So then, the conclusion will be that, in the face of the objections from incompleteness, there exists a feasible solution for the Russellian in the adoption, into the truth conditions of descriptions, the aspect of salience put forward in this thesis and that, in the light of independent motivations for the quantificational analysis, combined with the fitting profile of this property, the solution is to be recommended.

1

Russell's Theory of Descriptions:

In 'On Denoting' Russell proposed a new treatment of what he termed 'definite descriptions' (phrases formed by concatenating the definite article 'the' with a common noun), which, although it has been appended and refined, is still at the forefront of philosophy of language today.[1] In this thesis I should like to defend the analysis to be found in that paper against a particular objection: that some descriptions fail (due to a property I will call 'incompleteness') to fit the logical form Russell's theory predicts. However, before we can turn to problems with the account we need to have before us a clear statement of the theory itself and the motivations we have for holding it correct. In this chapter then, I should like to begin by clarifying the fundamental move which characterises the Russellian approach and examine what motivation Russell himself offers us for its adoption. To see this we will need to look at the explicit motivation given in 'On Denoting' (henceforth OD) and, to a certain extent, the implicit support yielded by his whole philosophical position. However, as will become clear as this exegetical project proceeds, much of the support for the Theory of Descriptions in Russell arises from aspects of his philosophy which contemporary theorists will be leery of. Thus although the account should be traced back to its roots in Russell, the debate will quickly shift to more contemporary concerns. The central question of this chapter will then be: what reasons, if any, does a modern-day theorist have for eschewing a referential approach in favour of the quantificational picture? However, before we can consider this question, our first task is simply to set out the analysis and see what led Russell himself to its adoption.

---

[1] Russell (1905)

The logical framework within which Russell worked was inherited from Frege and it contains a semantically significant distinction between two classes of noun phrases: singular terms and quantifiers.[2] In Frege's own work exactly which terms qualify under the first heading is left fairly vague and he relies instead on a relatively intuitive grasp of the division. Although it seems the class can be tightened up for him, for our purposes an intuitive grasp will suffice; thus we might recognise the paradigm referring expressions as proper names ('John', 'Mary', etc.) and demonstratives ('this' and 'that').[3] Quantifiers on the other hand serve to express a statement about the number of objects which fall under a given predicate; thus 'all men are happy' informs us that there are no values for variables which satisfy 'x is a man' and yet fail to satisfy the predicate 'x is happy'. Russell's revolution was to contend that, unlike referring expressions which serve to select their referent and then stay with it through all changes, definite descriptions should be correctly construed as expressing something about the extension of the properties the phrase mentioned. According to his account, what we really do when we utter a description is express a complex statement of existential quantification: we are saying that there exists some object which satisfies a certain predicate. Thus the true logical form of a description is revealed as: $\exists x \, [Fx \, \& \, [\forall y \, [Fy \rightarrow y=x] \, \& \, Gx]]$; or, in 'logician's English', as:

1) There is one thing which is F

2) There is just one thing which is F

3) That thing is G

The motivation for such an analysis in OD stems primarily from its ability to overcome three 'logical puzzles', which Russell thought insurmountable for any referential treatment of such phrases.[4] The first puzzle concerned the issue of non-trivial identity statements; that is to say, how to explain the apparent cognitive value of an identity statement between two distinct terms, as opposed to the triviality of one repeating the same phrase on either side of the identity sign. The second puzzle highlighted the difficulty of applying what is known as

---

[2] Frege (1879)

[3] For clarification of the notion of a referring term in Frege see Dummett (1973), Chapter 4.

[4] Russell (1905), p.47

7

the 'Law of the Excluded Middle' (whereby either a proposition or its negation must be true) in the case of certain descriptions; i.e. how it is that either 'the present King of France is bald', or its negation, can be true. Finally, Russell raised the question of true, negative existential claims, such as, 'The present King of France does not exist', which are clearly problematic on a 'reference-only' account. The solution to these problems, given in OD, stems from consequences of the quantificational nature of denoting phrases (as Russell terms (both indefinite and definite) descriptions) and a distinction between *primary* and *secondary* occurrences of a phrase in a larger proposition. Primary occurrence of a denoting term occurs when it is given a large scope in the proposition; so that substitution of it for a description which selects the same object (what we might call a 'co-denoting' expression) has repercussions throughout the whole proposition. Whereas, secondary occurrence occurs where the term in question is only a constituent of some sub-sentential part; so that substitution for a co-denoting phrase has limited implications for the larger unit. To see how these features dissolve the puzzles let us look briefly at each in turn.

The initial trouble he recognises is with identity statements on a purely referential story: if two terms have a single referent in the world, we should be able to exchange one for the other *salva veritate* in propositions in which they occur; since, he suggests:

> If *a* is identical with *b*, whatever is true of the one is true of the other, and either may be substituted for the other in any proposition without altering the truth or falsehood of that proposition.[5]

Yet this claim is clearly at odds with most actual enquiries concerning identity, as in Russell's example: 'George IV wanted to know whether Scott was the author of *Waverley*'. This cannot be recast as 'George IV wanted to know whether Scott was Scott', despite the actual identity of the referent of 'Scott' and the object which satisfies 'the author of *Waverley*', since the first might be an accurate report of the King's inquiry whereas, as Russell writes, "an interest in the law of identity can hardly be attributed to the first gentleman of Europe".[6]

---

[5] Russell (1905), p.47
[6] ibid. p.48

However, this apparent difficulty is ameliorated by recognising an ambiguity between the primary and secondary occurrence of the denoting expression in what has been said:

> When we say, 'George IV wished to know whether one and only one man wrote *Waverley*', we normally mean 'George IV wished to know whether one and only one man wrote *Waverley* and Scott was that man'; but we may also mean: 'One and only one man wrote *Waverley*, and George IV wished to know whether Scott was that man'. In the latter, 'the author of *Waverley*' has a primary occurrence; in the former a secondary.[7]

Russell further contends that this first puzzle of identity actually does not arise for his account, because the statements in question are not, in fact, true identity statements, as treated by his 'law of identity', at all. 'Scott is the author of *Waverley*' does not have the form 'a=b', but rather: 'Scott wrote *Waverley*; and it is always true of *y* that if *y* wrote *Waverley*, *y* is identical with Scott'.[8] In this way, he suggests, it becomes evident why substitution may fail and why identity statements are often worth affirming.

However, it is application of scope distinction which supplies Russell with the solution to the second and third logical puzzles. As mentioned above, one of his aims was to show how we might preserve the Law of the Excluded Middle, which tells us that for any given proposition either it or its negation must be true. However, in the case of certain propositions containing descriptions this law seems to be broken, e.g. neither 'The present King of France is bald' nor 'The present King of France is not bald' appear to be obviously true. Yet, although 'The present King of France is bald' is, Russell tells us, 'certainly false', its negation may be true, if the occurrence of the denoting phrase has secondary occurrence (i.e. if it comes under the scope of 'not'). In this case what is being denied is not that the object denoted by 'The F' is G, but rather that there is an object which is F at all. Thus clear application of the scope distinction allows us to preserve the Law of the Excluded Middle, even in the case of propositions containing empty descriptions. A similar solution allows Russell to account for all true propositions containing empty descriptions, for any proposition in which

---

[7] ibid. p.52
[8] ibid. p.55

the description has primary occurrence must be false, yet one where it occurs in a secondary position, as above, may be true. This allows Russell to account for such statements without admitting non-existent objects into his ontology; the approach famously advocated by Meinong.[9]

These then are the three logical puzzles and their solutions which provide support for the Theory of Descriptions in OD. However, before evaluating their strengths and weaknesses, we might briefly note that further support also emerges from elsewhere in Russell's philosophy. Like Mill before him, Russell was committed to preserving a theory of linguistic reference which admitted of only word and object.[10] For him, referring terms were to be no more than transparent signs for the external object they were connected to; the object itself would be a constituent of any proposition directly about it. Thus if terms do no more than illustrate the central role of the object they are correlated with then they cannot fail to be completely exhausted by that object. As he wrote in his correspondence with Frege:

> I believe that in spite of all its snowfields Mont Blanc itself is a component part of what is actually asserted in the proposition "Mont Blanc is more than 4,000 metres high". We do not assert the thought, for this is a private psychological matter: we assert the object of the thought, and this is, to my mind, a certain complex (an objective proposition, one might say) in which Mont Blanc is itself a component part. If we do not admit this, then we get the conclusion that we know nothing at all about Mont Blanc.[11]

The last line of this passage indicates the difficulties inherent for him in adopting any sort of three-entity view (such as that propounded by Frege with his notion of *sinn*) for any intermediary between the object and the mind would stop the direct contact which was the lynch pin of Russell's epistemology.[12] For Russell there were two distinct ways to know about an object: this direct contact which provided 'knowledge by acquaintance' and a more mediated relation which

---

[9] Meinong (1904). Although Russell in his early philosophy (see Russell (1903)) was drawn by a Meinongian approach, such a route results in a vastly increased ontology and apparent contradiction, for things which exist in the ontology, such as the round-square, must also have the property of non-existence; thus the approach was later rejected by him.

[10] Mill, (1843)

[11] Frege (1979), p.169

[12] Frege (1893).

supplied 'knowledge by description'.[13] The former was to be the sort of first-hand, immediate relation with an object which would allow one to name it with a real proper name and refer to it directly. It was to supply the sort of information we could not be mistaken about: he writes "the question of truth or error cannot arise with regard to it [acquaintance]"[14].

It was this sort of unmediated relation which would, Russell hoped, allow him to preserve a mind-independent reality which we could know about through perception. However, when we lacked this kind of relation we could still talk about the world, but lacking any direct knowledge of the object in question, we could only do so circuitously, by mentioning certain properties objects might possess. In this way we get to items by use of denoting phrases, rather than a simple sign for an object appearing in the proposition. When we lack direct acquaintance we can exploit (corrigible) knowledge by description. Thus concerns from his epistemology told Russell there must be a large class of denoting phrases, which did not go directly to objects, and thus must possess some other kind of linguistic structure. In fact he claimed, whenever we are faced with an expression for which the assumption that it lacks a referent fails to render propositions in which it occurs meaningless, then we must have a denoting phrase as opposed to a singular referring expression.[15] (It is this contention, stemming from his refusal to admit more complexity to names than simple reference, which would seem to stand behind his later analysis of proper names as disguised descriptions, which leads the Theory of Descriptions to come to occupy such a central role in his philosophy.[16])

In passing we might also note one other possible motivation for the Theory of Descriptions actually within OD, and that is in order to reject a position Russell himself had held earlier. For recent exegesis suggests that the view under attack in famous passages like the Gray's Elegy argument is in fact his

---

[13] Russell (1911)
[14] Russell (1912), p. 184
[15] Whitehead and Russell, (1927), p.66
[16] See Russell (1912), p.29 and (1918), p.243

own.[17] In an earlier work, *The Principles of Mathematics,* Russell appears to provide an analysis of denoting phrases which differs from a three-entity Fregean picture primarily in terminology alone. In this work he laid claim to 'denoting concepts' which were to be the objects of denoting phrases, so that although the linguistic expression might appear complex it could still be correlated to a simple object. Yet the denoting concept, as brought in to bring recalcitrant phenomena to heel with the principle of knowledge by acquaintance, must fail; for denoting concepts themselves eventually violate this constraint (i.e. if we allow that the complex phrase 'the class of prime numbers' refers to a denoting complex and thus is a true referring term, still this denoting complex cannot be something I am directly acquainted with and thus his epistemic principle is violated). If recent commentators are correct then it is recognition of this point that underlies some of the passages in OD and provides the true object of derision, whilst also supplying further impetus for the quantificational analysis.

The exact interpretation and work of OD and the Theory of Descriptions in Russell's overall philosophy is a complex matter of exegesis and debate, and the above merely scratches the surface of the possible underlying motivations for his position. Yet it should be clear even from this brief survey that much of the motivation which was so pressing for Russell carries less weight in the present day. For instance, it is likely that few modern theorist's would wish to subscribe to Russell's stringent views on what can be known (the constraint of acquaintance narrowed down to incorrigible sense-data), the later analysis of proper names as disguised descriptions, or his account of the constituents of propositions, (actual objects), etc. Furthermore, there are questions which may be raised about the efficacy of the proposed solutions to the 'logical puzzles' in OD; for instance, Frege's original worry concerning the cognitive value of certain identity judgements was given in terms of simple sentences, lacking the complexity necessary to employ Russell's solution in terms of 'position of occurrence'. If this is correct, and the problem occurs even in simple contexts,

---

[17] See for instance Hylton (1993) and Kremer (1994)

then we may be unconvinced by the sufficiency of the Theory of Descriptions here.

In the light of these reservations, we might wonder what reasons, if any, we could have for accepting the theory; if we were to reject Russell's motivations, should we accept any of his account? However, although many of Russell's reasons may be less than convincing to contemporary theorists, it does seem that, at its heart, OD recognises a real worry with treating descriptions referentially. For instance, the issue of empty descriptions seems to touch on a significant discrepancy between descriptions and referring terms which we wish to preserve. Moreover, closer examination of the function of at least some descriptions in natural language highlights further anomalies between the two classes of noun phrases, which, it will be suggested, we should recognise by a difference in logical form.

Thus I should like to turn now to examine four major reasons for adopting such an account in a contemporary context: first, there is the basic worry of empty descriptions which motivated Russell initially; secondly, and closely connected to this concern, is an intuitive grasp of the cognitive difference between the role of descriptions and referring terms (a point which finds its clearest statement in the work of Evans in *Varieties of Reference*); thirdly, is the recognition of a certain class of descriptive phrases which seem simply impossible to capture on anything but a Russellian view and finally, there are recent advances in quantifier theory itself. So if we are to understand why the Theory of Descriptions might be thought so compelling, even to a theorist who rejects much else of Russell's work, we will need to examine these reasons in more detail.

The problem which Russell recognised in empty descriptions seems to hold good against a referential analysis even in the modern debate; for it seems that there is a degree of meaning empty descriptions have, which empty referential terms do not. Not only are there true, negative existential propositions containing descriptions, but there also appears to be an element of semantic

content possessed by descriptions with an empty extension, which is absent in the case of empty referential expressions. This discrepancy becomes clear if we compare a proposition containing an empty description with one containing a referring expression where, due to hallucination or illusion, etc., there is in fact no referent available. Thus:

1) 'The present King of France did not shoot Kennedy'

2) 'This is red' (uttered by a man suffering delusions about the presence of a coloured butterfly before him)

Although there is no object in the world picked out by either the utterance of (1) or (2), there seems to be a degree of content and meaning available for consideration in the former which is surely lacking in the latter. To claim that the utterance of (1) says nothing in exactly the same way as the utterance of (2) does, as the claim must be if empty descriptions and demonstratives are not differentiated, seems wrong. The vacuity of a simple referring term, such as a demonstrative, is enough to ensure that propositions in which it occurs in the subject position are meaningless, whereas this is not the case with descriptions.[18]

In *Varieties of Reference*, Gareth Evans builds upon this sort of realisation by examining the cognitive role of descriptions versus referring expressions. It seems that while the above point concerning empty terms indicates a divergence in existential requirements of descriptions and demonstratives, this may also be taken to indicate a different epistemological role. Evans suggests what he calls 'Russell's Principle': "the principle is that a subject cannot make a judgement about something unless he knows which object his judgement is about".[19] Although the principle in such a formulation is somewhat vague, and even though spelling it out more concretely is difficult, still it appears intuitively to contain a truth: someone can only be said to understand a statement about a particular individual when they are able to pick out that individual, as the referent, from all others. This is perhaps a somewhat controversial point in the light of some theories of reference (for instance, it seems unlikely that a theorist

---

[18] Evans (1982), pp.52-53, plus footnote 14, pp.70-73,132-135
[19] ibid., p.89

who adhered to a Kaplanesque account of direct reference would feel drawn by such a principle) and yet, I would suggest, at least *prima facie* the constraint is compelling.[20] Unless an agent has some sort of 'discriminating knowledge' in her possession she cannot grasp (or strictly speaking, use) a referential term or entertain a thought which would be correctly expressed by the use of such a term.

Evans prompts our intuitions over this matter by giving us the example of a man who sees two qualitatively indistinguishable balls rotating about the same point. Here he contends the agent will later be unable to entertain a thought about one ball in opposition to the other. He writes:

> He now believes nothing about one ball which he does not believe about the other. This is certainly a situation in which the subject cannot discriminate one of the balls from all other things, since he cannot discriminate it from its fellow. And a principle which precludes the ascription to the subject of a thought about one of the balls surely has considerable intuitive appeal.[21]

Yet, as Evans noted, this does not appear to be the case with descriptions: an agent can use, and be licensed in using, a descriptive phrase to talk about an object even when she lacks, in some way, this kind of direct, discriminating knowledge of *which* object she refers to. If Evans is right then referential terms are dependent on the identification of a referent, while descriptions are crucially object-independent. In this way then I might entertain propositions about 'the next leader of the labour party' or 'the seventh M.P to enter parliament today' even though there is an essential sense in which I do not know which person I am thinking about.[22] So then, this recognition of the cognitive role and constraints on singular thoughts as opposed to those properly expressed by descriptions may yield a second important reason to prefer the quantificational approach over a referential one; employing the Russellian analysis reveals why thoughts conveyed by (at least some) descriptive phrases should be object-independent in this way.

---

[20] Kaplan (1977), or see Chapter Four for a brief discussion of direct reference.

[21] Evans (1982), p.90

[22] As will become clear later in the thesis, it is not obvious that this is a principle we should hold for *all* descriptions (most notably, it will be contended that incomplete descriptions actually fail this criterion); however, that it holds good for *any* descriptions (such as those which will be labelled 'attributive' in Chapter 2) marks a difference between the class of referential expressions and descriptions, which would seem to support a distinction in their correct logical analysis.

15

We should note at this stage the two distinct aspects of object-independence which have been appealed to above. The first issue, of the degree of semantic content of empty descriptions, appeals to a logical independence; whilst the failure of Russell's Principle indicates an epistemic or psychological independence from the actual satisfier of the description. In the former case, descriptions are thought of as belonging to the class of 'logically object-independent' linguistic items; i.e. those for which the truth conditions of those sentences in which the term appears can be given without reference being made to the actual object of the expression. The proposal is thus that the truth conditions of descriptions can be given without mention of the actual object which satisfies the predicative content mentioned.

This is a distinct claim from the aspect of object-independence appealed to in Evans' latter proposal, which allows an agent to grasp the meaning of a descriptive phrase even in cases where she is either not acquainted with the object in question or where there is in fact no existing satisfier for the agent to come into contact with at all. Although some theorists (such as Russell or Evans) might expect the former dependency to hold just in case the latter does, it appears we can draw the notions apart and it seems at least plausible to suggest that while our intuitions as to the nature of descriptions demands that they all remain logically object-independent, this is consistent with at least some descriptions being epistemically object-dependent. This is an issue we shall return to in Chapter 5; but for the present we might simply observe that there is indeed support for some form of object-independence holding for descriptions, which may make us unwilling to treat them on the model of object-dependent, referential terms.

Furthermore, there are instances of descriptions which cannot fail to be treated as quantified phrases, since their surface grammar and syntactic complexity align them from the outset with quantifiers. These are descriptions which have positions within them bound by a higher quantifier; i.e. those formed

by the use of pronouns anaphoric on an earlier quantified expression. Such

phrases find their paradigm in the sort of examples given to us by Benson Mates,

in 'Descriptions and Reference', where a descriptive phrase is quite evidently

operating quantificationally, such as:

1. The woman every Englishman respects is his mother

2. The father of each girl is good to her

An expression like 'his mother' cannot be construed as acting referentially, since

there is no object which it should 'travel straight to' or 'hold on to' at all costs;

yet the role of such phrases can be captured by a quantificational analysis. Recent

accounts by Evans (1977), and Neale (1990), constructing theories of 'E-' and

'D-type' pronouns respectively, show how such an approach can be sufficient,

despite earlier problems with the issue of cross-sentential binding which seemed

to show the Russellian approach was not feasible (i.e. see Geach's 'Latin prose

theory' (1962)). Neale (employing the Chomskian notions of 'c-commanding'

and quantifier-raising) appears to be successful in revealing how all anaphoric

pronouns not governed by referential expressions, can be treated as literally

'going proxy' for a denoting expression. Thus the logical form of (1) above can

be revealed as:

3. [every y: Englishman y] ([the x: woman x & y respects x] ([The z: z mother of

y] (x=z)))[23]

If Neale's analysis of D-type pronouns is correct then it shows how descriptions

which require relativisation to a sequence for decisions on denotation (because

they contain positions bound by an earlier quantifier) can be accommodated

within the Russellian framework. Since these relations prove so problematic on

any other kind of account, this must lend further support to the Russellian.

The ability of the account to cope with meaningful empty descriptions, the

epistemic object-independence of at least some descriptions, and the role of

relativized descriptions must, I suggest, provide strong motivation for preferring

the quantificational approach. However, in conclusion, I should also like to touch

---

[23] Neale (1990), p.193. (Although the bracketing here diverges slightly from that found in
Neale).

on one further supporting feature; for it appears that recent advances in quantifier theory have begun to reveal that the Russellian analysis may fit the surface grammar of definite descriptions far more closely than is often imagined. A common complaint against the theory is that positing a hidden act of existential quantification beneath the unified surface of a simple description butchers surface grammar in an arbitrary and indefensible way, which contravenes our pre-theoretical intuitions about these linguistic items. Without going into this matter too deeply (since it is somewhat tangential to our primary concerns), it does seem that, even granted the worthiness of pre-theoretical intuitions in this area, the theory itself is not guilty of such a crime, once it is couched within a quantificational analysis more expressive than the one Russell struggled with. Recent advances in the understanding of quantifiers suggests that, despite the enormous power of a formal system which contains just the standard quantifiers ($\forall,\exists$), when faced with quantified phrases of natural language it is inadequate.[24] Furthermore within the development of systems to extend and replace this system (such as 'Generalised' or 'Restricted' quantification) it appears that the determiner 'the' should be treated as a quantificational device in its own right (along with determiners like 'most', 'some', etc.) and thus that Russell's theory may fit with surface form. In this case it would appear that a possible source of motivation for the quantificational approach may come from advances in the quantificational system itself.

Finally then, despite the fact that we may reject almost all of Russell's own argument for the theory, it appears that independent inquiry can yield further support. The basic contention, that descriptions are quantified phrases, which owes its allegiance to, and yet is separable from, the work of Russell, can be motivated in the current arena. For intuitively, we require that some distinction be preserved between the complete vacuity of propositions containing empty referring terms and the degree of meaning possessed by (possibly true) propositions containing descriptions with empty extensions. Furthermore, if Evans' proposal for the relation required to understand any proposition

---

[24] Wiggins (1980) and Barwise and Cooper (1981)

concerning a referring term (i.e. that the agent in some way 'know which' object is referred to) is correct, then it is clear that at least some descriptions (e.g. those which might be paraphrased 'The F, whichever it is...') cannot be treated as akin to referential expressions.

In addition to which, as the Mates examples showed, there are descriptions which cannot fail to be treated non-referentially and, indeed, there is growing evidence that in contemporary theory the role of the determiner 'the' is best accommodated as a quantifier in its own right. Moreover, if certain recent arguments are accepted, the quantifier theory is also an account which can be simply extended to cope with non-singular descriptions (e.g. 'the girls in the house'), relational descriptions ('Jill's hat') and inverted descriptions ('each girl's father').[25] However, although this chapter has been concerned with isolating the theory and removing some unwanted appendages, to get the strongest reading of the position available, the alterations must also go in the other direction and add features to the original account. For as became clear in the face of certain objections which greeted OD, the theory as it stands is inadequate to cope with some aspects of descriptions in our language. This then is the topic for the next chapter: to examine some objections to the theory and the responses the Russellian can make, and in this way build the most formidable construction around our original insight.

---

[25] See Neale (1990), p.33-38. This thus rejects Russell's contention that all the linguistic items we wish to deal with can be isolated by a particular grammatical form alone (i.e. the determiner 'the' concatenated with a common noun).

2

Objections and Responses

The primary concern of this thesis is with a single form of objection to the quantificational analysis proposed in the last chapter, which will stem from what I will term 'incomplete descriptions'.[26] However, before we can turn to this particular difficulty (as we will do in the next chapter) we need to equip our Russellian theorist with the most resilient formulation of her position available. To do this it will be helpful to consider the whole class of objections to which incompleteness belongs, which we might label 'objections of impropriety'. This in itself is a subset of all the possible objections that may be made (as the objection from surface grammar, noted at the close of Chapter 1, illustrates) but it is, I suggest, the most important and interesting class of complaint. Improper descriptions are descriptive phrases which operate in natural language in such a way as apparently to flaunt the truth conditions a quantificational approach imposes on them. There are several distinct ways in which descriptions might be improper:

i) emptiness or vacuity (no F)

ii) direct reference to an object which fails to fit the description (serving to pick out a particular object even though it is not-F)

iii) incompleteness (more than one object which satisfies F)

The first two kinds of impropriety, which belong historically to Strawson and Donnellan respectively, have traditionally been thought to be the most damaging objections to Russell's account and thus it is these we will examine first, before attention shifts to the form of impropriety I will suggest is the most intractable.[27]

---

[26] Although the descriptions in question may also be known as 'improper' or even 'indefinite definite descriptions'.

[27] The view that this is the central problem for Russell is, however, not in any way innovative; e.g. see Strawson (1950), pp.14-15 or Kripke (1977), p.255: "If I were to be asked for a tentative stab about Russell, I would say that although his theory does a far better job of handling ordinary discourse than many have thought, and although many popular arguments against it are inconclusive, probably it ultimately fails. The considerations I have in mind have

Yet before we turn to consider these objections in detail it will be helpful antecedently to outline the resources the neo-Russellian will be appealing to. For the first recourse of the quantificational theorist in the face of any impropriety is likely to be a notion of pragmatics versus semantics; thus some grasp of the issues involved here may help make the later defensive application of this distinction by the Russellian more comprehensible. The aim of this chapter will be to show how well the appeal to pragmatics solves the first two forms of impropriety, while the contention of the next chapter will be that such a move is inadequate in the face of incompleteness.

2.1 Semantics and Pragmatics:

It seems that there is a distinction to be drawn between features of language which have a role to play in a systematic theory, which might suffice for the understanding of linguistic types, and features more properly belonging to some situational story of the use of tokens of that language within a context of utterance. Intuitively the distinction is fairly easy to see, although attempts to make it more concrete quickly run into difficulties; since exactly how and where the line should be drawn is still a matter of much contention. Yet, even in an intuitive form, it appears that the distinction is one the Russellian might appeal to, since she will be concerned to explicate only features of the former kind, rather than the latter. The basic idea, then, is as follows: in natural language it seems we can often use a particular sentence to convey several distinct messages, depending on the way in which we employ it. However, if all the possible meanings which attach to sentences were given semantic status (so that semantics would be relegated to the level of utterance rather than sentence-level) it is hard to see how we might ever come to understand our language or treat it as a systematic and explicable activity. Thus we require a more persistent analysis of a given sentence, which reflects what an agent knows when she understands that sentence type (e.g. perhaps the conditions under which an utterance of that type might be

---

to do with the existence of 'improper' definite descriptions, such as "the table", where uniquely specifying conditions are not contained in the description itself".

true). This connection between semantics and understanding may not be universally accepted; however I would suggest that such a tie offers the best chance of an explanatorily useful theoretical level.

However, some account must also be given of the range of alternative messages attaching at the level of linguistic token, which explains where they stem from and how they are understood. It appears that what we can mean by an utterance (when we use it to say something that diverges from the semantic analysis of the phrase) is dependent on our ability as speakers (and our audience's ability) to recognise and exploit conventional and contextual aspects of our language use which are not incorporated at the semantic level. Such features as the force we attach to an utterance, the context in which it is uttered (which favours one interpretation over another) and assumptions about the aims and constraints observed in ordinary communication (such as the demands to be relevant, truthful, etc.[28]) all have a role to play in determining these other meanings. All or some of these features then may be grouped together under the heading of 'pragmatics' (features which are contingent and contextual) and employed to underpin a pragmatic account of meaning which may alter according to each occasion of use.

Although the above may help to crystallise our intuitive take on the notion, it is clear that it offers nothing approaching a rigorous definition of the division. However, this reflects a lack of consensus about the proper division of labour in this area amongst most contemporary philosophers of language and linguists. A major difficulty with drawing a firm distinction in this area has come to the fore recently, with a recognition that certain components which affect the truth conditional analysis appear to be context-bound. Investigations of the nature of indexicals and demonstratives in the work of Kaplan (1977, 1989), plus studies of the nature of presupposition and implicature by theorists such as Stalnaker (1973) and Kripke (1977), all serve to show that, at least sometimes,

---

[28] See Grice (1967), pp.28-29

truth conditions can only be determined contextually.[29] If this is the case, then it appears that we cannot define semantics as that element of meaning which may be abstracted from the context of utterance. This recognition, that to gain a complete (object-involving) truth condition for certain utterances ineliminable reference to the context of utterance must be made, serves to cloud the intuitive distinction we sought to draw at the outset.[30] Furthermore, it can be argued that, in order to include full lexical descriptions of a language, the grammar of that language must make reference to pragmatic information, since some words have a content uncapturable in context-independent terms.[31]

Thus, however the theorist seeks to draw a distinction between the notions of pragmatics and semantics, whether she attempts a positive interpretation (e.g. Bach (1994), pp.4-6, who suggests we view it as the theory of communication and speech acts) or whether she opts for a more negative definition (whereby pragmatics is simply whatever meaning is left in the picture once a truth conditional element has been removed (e.g. Gazadar (1979)), it is clear that holding the two notions apart will prove a difficult business. Yet, we have successful characterisations of pragmatic phenomena to hand, e.g. see Grice (1967) and Searle (1975), and the intuitive grasp of the distinction we began with does seem to be something we wish to preserve. So, despite the complexity and the controversy which surrounds any concrete drawing of the distinction between semantics and pragmatics, I suggest that we might allow our Russellian to make certain stipulations at this level of linguistic analysis.

We might allow her a conception of semantics which includes those features required to extract a truth condition for a declarative utterance from

---

[29] See, e.g., Kaplan (1977), pp.505-6, 523

[30] Kaplan (1989), p.575: "The central role of the notion of context of use in determining content might incline one to say that the theory of character is semantics, and the theory of content is pragmatics. But truth is a property of contents, and one wouldn't want to be caught advocating a pragmatic theory of truth.....If I continue to think, as Carnap taught me, that the overall theory of a language should be constructed with syntax at the base, semantics built upon that, and pragmatics built upon semantics, I am faced with a dilemma. The mechanisms of direct reference certainly are not post semantical. But equally surely they are not syntactical. Thus I put them in the bottom layer of semantics."

[31] Levinson, (1983), pp.33-34.

general rules plus a context, whilst allowing that more can be gleaned from a speech act than just that truth conditional content. Given this distinction then, she can claim that the analysis offered by the quantificational treatment of descriptions supplies a correct account of this truth conditional content, whilst accepting that this content may be defeated or refined in a context as the given content of the speech act. Borrowing from the seminal work of Grice, this theoretical distinction might then crystallise into two distinct notions of meaning for an utterance: a semantic value attaching at a sentential level and a second, contextually conveyed, pragmatic meaning.[32] Following Neale we might term the former, literal meaning, 'proposition expressed' and the latter 'proposition meant'.[33]

Positing such a difference allows us to assimilate apparently anomalous *uses* of phrases under a single semantic analysis by recognising that the peculiarities we witness come from what our flexible minds and language can allow us to do with words. For example, somehow I can manage to convey the proposition 'It is a nasty day' in certain contexts by an utterance of "It is a lovely day", even though this meaning is diametrically opposed to the semantic value of the spoken words. Although this remains a relatively intuitive grasp of the distinction, even in this form it is something which may be of help to the Russellian. For her account concerns the semantic analysis of descriptions and, if pragmatic appeal is allowed, then it seems not all instances of conveying a message by use of a descriptive phrase may be allowed to tell at a semantic level. The contention will be that, so long as the objections can be accommodated at a pragmatic level, rather than leading the theorist to alter the truth conditions of the descriptions in question, the unified, three-line schema originally given to us by Russell can be vindicated. (However, it will be argued later, in Chapter 3, that *not* all objections can be accommodated in this way.)

---

[32] Grice (1968)
[33] Neale (1990), p.62

In Chapter 4 of this thesis appeal will be made to the paradigm pragmatic notion of communication, in order to establish a demand for the existence of a mutual property, which it will then be argued is best construed as salience. Although such an appeal will only serve to establish a requirement for the property at a pragmatic level, once this is done it will then be argued (in Chapter 5) that a semantic level appeal, i.e. mention of the property within the truth conditions of descriptions, can be warranted, and indeed, that it must be if the property is to serve any purpose in a defence of the quantificational theory. In this way then, although the pragmatic concerns of communication do not lend direct support to either the quantificational analysis itself nor to a semantic level appeal to salience, they will be of use in establishing the tools I suggest the Russellian make use of. So, with these thoughts in mind, let us return to the objections of impropriety we listed at the start of this chapter.

2.2 Empty Descriptions:

Historically, the first major objection to 'On Denoting'[34] is to be found in 'On Referring'.[35] Here Strawson noted that Russell had failed to recognise the fundamental distinction between sentences (which are the bearers of meaning) and utterances (which are the bearers of truth). If this distinction is preserved, he claimed, Russell would be wrong to think that the only way in which empty terms could be meaningful would be by their underlying logical form being something other than the simple subject/predicate structure it appeared. Thus if we are careful to maintain the distinction between the properties of sentences and expressions (such as meaning) and the properties of uses of these sentences and expressions (such as reference and truth) the need for the quantificational account is simply obviated. He writes:

> So the question of whether a sentence or expression *is significant or not* has nothing whatever to do with the question of whether the sentence, *uttered on a particular occasion,* is, on that occasion, being used to make a true-or-false

---

[34] Russell (1905)
[35] Strawson (1950)

assertion or not, or of whether the expression is, on that occasion, being used to refer to anything at all.[36]

Strawson claimed that an expression like 'the present King of France' is significant because it *could* be used to refer to a particular person, the fact that it does not means uses of it in sentences will not select a referent and thus the whole utterance will be neither true nor false (since truth is a property applicable to utterances only once they attach to an object in the world), but this in no way affects the significance of the expression in general. We understand the general proposition because we understand how there might have been a King of France around today for it to select; that there is not should not be judged the fault of the expression with the incurred penalty of losing its meaning. So then, we must ask, did Russell fail to spot this basic distinction? And if so, does the quantificational account of descriptions collapse?

The answer to the first question, it seems, is somewhat open depending on how favourably disposed to Russell you feel. Most of the neo-Russellians suggest that the lack of a formal distinction in OD is not important because it is implicitly evident. For instance Neale writes:

> No substantive issue turns on Russell's failure to separate sentences from utterances when talking about descriptions. Russell is so very obviously concerned with the proposition expressed by a particular utterance - rather than the more abstract notion of the linguistic meaning of sentence types - that it is very hard to lend any sort of sympathetic ear to Strawson on this point. [37]

It does indeed seem that if we are to preserve the nature of Russell's inquiry then taking him as at any time concerned with types rather than particular utterances seems somewhat *ad hoc*. Yet, Strawson is quite correct that this distinction is nowhere formally made and this in itself must lend some credence to the contention that it is a distinction Russell simply failed to see. However, more fundamental than the exegetical question of whether or not Russell was aware of the distinction is the objection that if this distinction is in place then the phenomena of meaningful and yet empty descriptions can be handled without any

---

[36] Strawson (1950), p. 9
[37] Neale (1990), p. 25

alteration to their apparent surface structure. If Strawson is correct then, by attaching meaning at the level of sentence type and truth at the level of a particular use of a sentence, we can allow descriptions to remain within the class of true referring terms, where they were prior to OD.

However, before we demand a reply from our neo-Russellian, it seems we should be careful to spell out the Strawsonian claim in a little more detail. For although the distinction between sentence and utterance is clear enough, the implications of this distinction when used as a solution for empty descriptions are not immediately evident. Strawson's objection to Russell is that he is wrong to claim utterances containing empty descriptions are true or false, because truth is a property of utterances only when they succeed in expressing a proposition. In the case of an empty description no statement is made because the 'presupposition' that there is a referent is flaunted. The notion of presupposition is a semi-technical term utilised by Strawson to replace the existential commitment to a satisfier of the predicate, which Russell placed in the truth conditions of descriptions, and which Strawson suggests is too strong. Instead he writes:

> Whenever a man uses any expression, the presumption is that he thinks he is using it correctly: so when he uses the expression 'the-such-and-such', in a uniquely referring way, the presumption is that he thinks both that there is *some* individual of that species, and that the context of use will sufficiently determine what he has in mind. [38]

The notion of presupposition is fairly complex in Strawson's work but, although it appears that we may have some independent worries about it, which are unfortunately beyond the scope of this paper (for instance, it is less than clear in 'On Referring' whether Strawson sees the relation as a pragmatic or epistemological one between a person and a statement, or a logical relation between two statements), still it seems that we can recognise a great deal of intuitive credence in Strawson's position.[39] For he seems right to claim that people do not respond to utterances like "The present King of France is bald" by saying "That's false". Indeed, faced with such a bizarre utterance one would

---

[38] Strawson (1950), p. 14
[39] For an expansion of this point see Sellars (1954).

seem far more likely to respond by with-holding a truth value judgement, while indicating the impropriety of the description; e.g. "What do you mean? There is no present King of France!". However, the question must now be: should a recognition of this phenomena lead us to reject the Russellian account in favour of the Strawsonian distinction between sentence and utterance? The suggestion will be that it should not.

The reasons for this are two-fold: first the Strawsonian approach quickly runs into difficulties and secondly, the Russellian has an eminently suitable solution to hand to deflate the apparent anomaly. The problem which arises for Strawson comes from his avowed belief that the kind of logic operating at the level of sentence-type will be Classical (thus requiring the preservation of bivalence and the Law of the Excluded Middle) and the need to preserve a distinction between empty descriptions and empty demonstratives. As we saw in Chapter 1, we have good reason to demand of any theory of logical form that it accommodate in some way the evident difference between the vacuity of an empty demonstrative and the absence of a unique satisfier for an empty description. For Strawson an empty demonstrative is easily accounted for: let us imagine the sentence-type 'This is red' which can be used to express the proposition p. Then on every occasion where an utterance of this type manages to assert p, it will be determinately true or false. However, when there is no referent for the demonstrative the utterance will fail to make a statement - it will not be an act of saying p and thus it will not be amenable to a truth-value. However, if empty descriptions are handled in an exactly parallel way problems arise, for it seems then Strawson must claim that no empty description is ever an act of saying something, that there are no circumstances in which an utterance containing an empty description can manage to be more meaningful than a vacuous demonstrative.

Yet this is surely too extreme a conclusion; for instance, we might imagine the outcome of some long and complex mathematical proof which aims, and succeeds, in showing that in the case of a particular geometric shape a given

mathematical notion does not have application. Thus our mathematician concludes 'In this instance the x of y does not exist', and intuitively it appears she has succeeded in saying something; at least something more than an utterance of 'This does not exist', which fails of reference due to the non-existence of the intended object, could lay claim to. So, to claim that all expressions containing empty descriptions must be meaningless appears too strong; although we might be willing to accept that some express no proposition, there do seem to be contexts in which our intuitions run counter to Strawson's. We cannot, it seems, claim that the mere presence of an empty description in a given utterance must always result in no statement being made.

However, in this case it seems that Strawson's allegiance to Classical logic must be under threat, for some meaningful utterances will lack a truth value, viz. those utterances containing empty descriptions. In this case we must refine the original position so that at least sometimes a proposition can be made by such an utterance, although one which will lack a determinate truth value. Yet if we allow this then we cannot maintain Classical logic and indeed, it seems, will be quickly led to adopt a third truth-value (for to correctly account for the negation operation on empty descriptions it appears that they will have to have a third value, e.g. 'undetermined', rather than merely being neither true nor false). Although it is not the place of this thesis to argue against such a move, it does appear somewhat extreme and may perhaps shift the intuitive support back towards a Russellian approach, if it can proffer some alternative account of the data, which indeed it can.

It seems that the linguistic phenomena we noted, whereby natural language speakers are extremely reluctant to reply to a proposition containing an empty description that it is false, can be accommodated by a perfectly general pragmatic rule of conversational propriety, as noted by Grice.[40] We should remember that the Russellian analysis consists of a three-line conjunction and all that is required for the falsehood of a conjunction is that at least one conjunct be

---

[40] Grice (1967), p. 26-27

false. In this case then to reply to a descriptive proposition that it is false, when one knows that this falsehood stems from the falsity of the first conjunct, fails to meet the standards of openness and informativeness we expect in communication. If I know that the falsehood of this particular utterance stems from the unusual fact that the extension of the initial predicate is the empty set, I should make every effort to inform my audience of this fact and a simple reply of "It is false" would clearly not do this. Thus it seems that the Russellian can allow that the phenomenon which Strawson brought to light is perfectly acceptable, but that what it reveals is not, as Strawson thought, a rejection of the quantificational analysis but rather the need to maintain pragmatic standards in our discourse. However, this recognition that to meet Russell on his 'own ground' so to speak, the difficulties facing him must be truly semantic and not located within a mere pragmatic feature, will be of importance to us as we turn to the objections thrown up by a later (possible) critic, Donnellan.[41]

2.3 Referential Descriptions:

The problematic phenomenon which Donnellan first brings to light in 'Reference and Definite Descriptions' is that, even though at times descriptions seem unarguably to function as covert quantifications, sometimes they appear to function very differently indeed.[42] There are cases in which agents utter descriptions apparently not with the aim of casting about the world for any object which satisfies the predicates, but precisely with the aim of referring directly to a given individual. Obviously if it can be shown that even a single use of a description functions in this way because of features of its semantic structure then the Russellian claim to have given a single, unified account for all descriptions must be abandoned. Since this is a major selling point for the quantificational account we can appreciate just how damaging the Donnellan observation potentially is. However, all our examples so far seem to have fitted the pattern

---

[41] As will become evident later in the discussion it is not at all easy to determine whether Donnellan *himself* should be taken to be opposing Russell or not.
[42] Donnellan (1966)

proffered by the quantificational schema very well, so what evidence can Donnellan have for positing a different role for them? To see this we will do best to outline a famous example given by Donnellan himself. Here he asks us to compare the activity of a single description in two different scenarios:

Case One:

You and I are walking home one night when we come across the body of poor Smith, horribly murdered. Aghast at this senseless killing of a man renowned for his kindness and generosity, I exclaim to you "Smith's murderer must be insane!"

Case Two:

You and I are watching the trial of a man, Jones, who stands accused of murdering Smith. As we gaze across the court at the man in the dock, who is universally believed to be guilty of the crime, we see from his increasingly odd behaviour that he is clearly not in his right mind and I exclaim to you "Smith's murderer must be insane!"

Now in both scenarios we have used exactly the same words to try to talk about an object in the world, but intuitively the way we have done this in the two cases is diametrically opposed. In the first case it does indeed seem that the Russellian schema exactly mirrors the way in which my utterance is working: I have claimed that two properties are instantiated in exactly the same unique object and I have sent my words out into the world to secure the unique satisfier of the first predicate and discover whether or not that object also possesses the second property. If it does then what I have said will be true, if not false. However the difficulties begin when we turn to the second situation, for the very same description seems to be serving a different purpose here. In Case Two, what I say seems directed at a precise individual, the man in the dock we are both staring at. I want to say of that very man that he is insane, regardless of whether or not he does in actual fact fall under the extension of the first predicate. To see this, imagine that it was not the man in the dock who murdered Smith but really the crime was committed by the extremely rational Brown, who has succeeded in

31

framing the unfortunate Jones. In such a case, provided this information is not known by either of us, then it would seem irrelevant to the truth conditions of my utterance. I mean to comment on the mental instability of the accused and that is the person you would clearly take my words as about: why then should we be concerned with the lack of insanity of some other person, whom intuitively no one was talking about? Yet if this is right then we have a clear case of someone uttering a description with the intention of it operating like a directly referential term (i.e. going straight to an object in the world) and the term itself succeeding in operating in this manner. Thus the conclusion seems inescapable: some descriptions do not operate quantificationally and the Russellian schema must be either limited in application or entirely wrong.

However, before we accept this result we must remember just what has to be shown for the case against Russell to be made. The Theory of Descriptions is concerned with revealing an underlying logical form, therefore to show that it is wrong it must be shown that at least some descriptions have a different logical structure to the one proposed; that is to say, we must be clear that the above phenomenon stems from a semantic difference. Yet so far it seems we have no argument for this conclusion. Donnellan has highlighted a use of descriptions which patently needs to be accounted for by the quantificational story but he has not yet shown why this must reflect a different semantic account. In fact Donnellan never really seems to conclude this and thus, as we initially noted, it is hard to determine whether or not he has really joined issue with Russell at all. However, we might ignore this point of exegesis, for since we know what must be said to attack Russell, we might perhaps attribute the stronger thesis to him anyway and seek to discover whether this position is tenable. So the claim is that we have two kinds of uses of definite descriptions: first, the kind captured by the quantificational schema (which Donnellan calls 'attributive') and secondly the kind which functions as a term of direct reference (which Donnellan calls 'referential') and the difference between these two uses stems from a difference in the semantic structure of the terms employed. This means that we must allow that descriptions are semantically ambiguous; that we can have no idea just by

looking at the surface form which truth conditions are in operation. (I shall leave aside for the moment the strong claim which could also be made here: that the class is not ambiguous because *all* descriptions are terms of direct reference, but we shall briefly return to this idea later, in Chapter 4.)

Since the phenomenon itself seems undeniably present in our natural language, the only route open to the quantificational theorist is to deny that this difference is correctly characterised as a semantic level difference. At first it might be thought this too is hard to deny: where else could such a remarkable difference in the way the terms operate come from? However, the neo-Russellians have an answer to hand here, which in fact has already been implicit when we talked about the different *uses* of the terms, and that is to stress the distinction we noted at the outset between proposition expressed and proposition meant. The suggestion is that what we do when we use a description referentially is convey a meaning very different to the literal one attached to the semantics of the phrase: thus, although Russell gets the literal truth conditions (the proposition expressed) right, there may be a second, pragmatically conveyed instance of 'speaker meaning' concerning a distinct proposition meant. This latter, object-dependent, proposition is accounted for primarily by contextual features of the interlocutors and not by the semantic (Russellian) analysis of the utterance.

The ability of this distinction to cope with the phenomenon seems unquestionable, we simply allow that on certain occasions the semantic content (attributive) is superseded by a referential proposition which contextual features allow to be pragmatically conveyed. However, the admissibility of such a move at this point is another matter. The critic may object that while the original Gricean distinction holds, referential descriptions are not a case in point. Indeed all of Grice's examples were governed by conversational maxims; principles which revealed pragmatic meaning as systematic and explicable.[43] I can understand that it is raining from hearing "It is a lovely day" because I know about irony, and I can grasp Jones has little philosophical talent from reading a

---

[43] Grice (1967)

reference which commends him only by "Jones has nice handwriting" since I can reasonably expect my interlocutor not to flaunt the constraints of relevance without reason and I understand about the conventions of politeness. Yet none of these pragmatic 'rules' seem in operation in the case of referential descriptions, thus if the neo-Russellian is to advocate the adoption of implied, referential propositions attached to such descriptive utterances she must, it seems, offer us further argument for her position.

To this end Kripke in his article 'Speaker's Reference and Semantic Reference' has considered some of the consequences which arise from treating these improper, referential cases in the two ways outlined: i.e. by accommodating the difference at either the semantic or the pragmatic level.[44] He imagines the case of a couple spotted at a party where the kind and solicitous nature of a gentleman toward his lady is remarked on. However, the speaker mistakenly takes the man in question to be the lady's husband and so utters "Her husband is very kind to her". Yet the other conversational partners are all aware that the man before them is not the lady's husband but her lover, and that in fact her husband is a cruel and vicious man who regularly beats his wife. The question Kripke then poses is whether the speaker has managed to say something true concerning the visible couple at the party; i.e. has her description indeed acted referentially, by referring to an object which is not-F, rather than concerning the actual denotation specified by the phrase? It seems intuitively that it has not, for we, who are aware of the discrepancy in what she has said, cannot it seems accept her words as true. Yet if this is the case then it would seem that the truth conditions for a description, even one which the speaker utters with the apparent intention of saying something referential, are just the ones proffered by the quantificational account. Strictly speaking, what has been said depends for its truth or falsity on the object which is in fact her husband, the actual satisfier of the predicate; whether or not the speaker had this man in mind. Kripke drives the point home by considering how we should report what the speaker has said: we cannot use the very same words our speaker did to pick out the man at the party

---

[44] Kripke (1977)

because we know he is not her husband, and there would seem to be no way we can use "her husband" to select someone other than her spouse. The description seems independent of our referential intentions (in a way that true referring terms are not), governed as it is by the search for a satisfier of the predicative content. Yet if it is really the case that the original utterance had truth conditions concerned with that very man in front of us there would seem to be no reason why we also should not be able to talk about him using a token of the self-same utterance type.

Although it seems that Donnellan has recognised a phenomenon of our language use, it does seem to be one which should be accounted for in the pragmatics of our language use. That Kripke is right about this can be seen even if we reconsider the example Donnellan gave us, for even here it seems the truth conditions are nearer the Russellian story than not. In our original Case Two, if it so happens that the hearer knows the man in the dock is not guilty then it seems likely she will not take the speaker, S, to be referring to Jones after all, or if she does then clearly her process of reasoning to this conclusion will have to be much more complicated than in normal instances of directly referential terms (i.e. she will have to reason that S may not know that Jones is innocent and that lacking this piece of knowledge S may be using the description 'Smith's killer' with the aim of selecting someone other than the individual who really meets this criterion, viz. the individual she believes meets this criterion, so S should be taken as attempting to refer to Jones). Yet it seems clear that what agents do or don't know concerning the properties of others can only be a pragmatic feature of the context and not something we can, or should, be expected to build into the semantics of descriptions. Thus it would seem ad hoc at the best to start tinkering with truth conditions, claiming one set may be in play if nobody knows who killed Smith (so the description can be allowed to function referentially) and another if anybody is aware that Jones is innocent (so that the utterance has to reclaim its Russellian form), especially when we have a far simpler solution providing we incorporate the proposition meant/proposition expressed distinction from Grice.

Since it is the quantificational approach which is advocated in this thesis (motivated by the concerns already expressed in Chapter 1) and it is the aim here to show how such an approach can deal exhaustively with all descriptions, little direct argument will be offered against the ambiguity thesis proffered by Donnellan. For if the quantified account is well motivated and entirely sufficient for all occurrences of descriptions in natural language, the ambiguity thesis is rejected by simple concerns of Ockam's Razor. However, with this in mind we might in passing note just some consequences of adopting the semantic ambiguity thesis, which, I suggest, make the unified Russellian theory worth preserving if at all possible. For instance we should be fully aware that adhering to Donnellan's route would mean that there are at least two totally separate semantic kinds, even though we use homonyms to express them. If the ambiguity picture is right then an utterance of "(The murderer)$_1$ is insane" (attributive) will possess a completely different logical structure from "(The murderer)$_2$ is insane" (referential) and understanding the two will require completely different skills. For instance, I should know in the former case that, if the utterance is true, I am licensed in the inferential move to the proposition 'there is someone who murdered Smith', while in the latter case, even if the utterance secures an object, I am not so licensed (for the description may be misapplied to the innocent Jones, while Smith actually died of natural causes, etc.). Yet this sort of structural ambiguity is not countenanced by any other elements of language: we do not propose a semantically ambiguous entry for the phrase "It is a nice day" when it is used to express the thought 'It is a horrible day' or allow that the pronoun "he" can sometimes mean 'she' because it is misapplied by a short-sighted speaker. So, on the negative side, the position of semantic ambiguity would seem to have certain unpleasant consequences avoided by the simplicity and clarity of the exhaustive Russellian account; while, on the positive side, the phenomena of improper referential descriptions, which might be thought to prompt the ambiguity position, can be seen to be handled by ordinary pragmatic concerns.

So, to recap: we have an original position given to us by Russell as part of

an overall philosophy, which we have seen is separable from that philosophy, which is motivated in the contemporary arena and which can be enhanced by recent moves in distinguishing semantics from pragmatics. We have seen that to face down opposition from Strawson we must be very clear that the phenomena in question are utterances and not some more abstract notion of sentences or types. We observed that Strawson's correct observations concerning the presupposition of a satisfier of the initial predicate and the likelihood of a response indicating the failure of this presupposition (rather than the falsity of an utterance containing an empty description) can be captured by a neo-Russellian at a pragmatic level, and indeed that attempts to construe this feature at a semantic level run into difficulties. Finally we turned to improper descriptions which appeared to act referentially, due to their apparent ability to secure an extension which did not satisfy the contained predicative material. Thus we admitted of opposing uses of descriptions, but saw that there was no direct argument for this leading to a semantic bifurcation and indeed that there is positive reason to preserve the unified, quantificational account. Thus it seems that the neo-Russellian, armed with the refined and capable Theory of Descriptions which all these elements lead toward is ready to enter the arena of current debate with her head held high.

3

Incompleteness

Although we have witnessed how well the neo-Russellian can cope with two problematic objections, the suggestion is that her real worry is still waiting in the wings. For the contention of this thesis is that, as it stands, Russell's Theory of Descriptions fails to give a fitting account of the operations of most descriptions in our actual language. We can locate the problem in the second part of the original analysis, where it is claimed that only one object satisfies the property mentioned in the first line; whereas a cursory examination of our everyday use of descriptions reveals this criterion is rarely met. There may be only one Golden Mountain or tallest man in the world, but there are very many big cats, pretty little girls, husband and wives, etc. Such descriptions, which require additional predicative information to secure a unique extension, I shall call 'incomplete descriptions'. Yet the Theory of Descriptions claims for utterances containing any of these terms to stand a chance of being true the initial predicate must be uniquely satisfied. Since this would appear too strong a claim, the neo-Russellian must, on pain of outright rejection, offer us some more fitting account whereby the vast majority of our ordinary descriptions, which do not express uniqueness, can be accommodated within the quantificational framework. If the account ultimately holds good only for a tiny fraction of descriptions, viz. those with a single satisfier, then it seems we may be licensed to go in search of a more universally applicable account.

However, this problem has been recognised by neo-Russellians and certain solutions have been proffered. The most promising (and thus those that I shall consider in the chapter) might be labelled thus:
i) Pragmatic appeal to an object-dependent proposition meant
ii) Pragmatic appeal to elided material

iii) Pragmatic constraint of the domain of quantification

iv) Semantic appeal to elided material

The contention of this chapter will be that, for a certain intractable subset of all incomplete descriptions, the pragmatic solutions of (i)-(iii) are insufficient. Thus the Russellian is forced into some refinement of her semantic analysis of descriptions. I will then argue that, if this step is to be taken, many suggestions as to elided material are inadmissible and that constraints concerning language use reveal the need for mention of a certain *kind* of covert content if we are to vindicate the unified Russellian account. I will not seek to argue that there is, or indeed that there should be, a single treatment for *all* incomplete descriptions (and thus that the solution I propose is to be preferred to the *exclusion* of the above), but rather that the solutions commonly found in the literature must be appended in some way if they are to be adequate. Thus the position advocated in this thesis should not be seen as in direct competition either with certain pragmatic accounts (such as (ii) and (iii)) or other (select) stories of semantic ellipsis.[45] What this account seeks to provide is the necessary appendage to pragmatic solutions and, what I believe, is the most plausible, refinement of elided material at a truth conditional level. However, we might note in passing that, if the salience-based solution I advocate is successful, it would be capable of dealing with *all* instances of incompleteness. So then, before we come to questions of salience, let us examine the problem in more detail by seeing in just what way (i)-(iii) fail.

To see how the first pragmatic route goes let us look at an example: imagine an utterance of "The dog is big" which, according to the Russellian analysis will be true just in case there is one unique object such that it satisfies the predicate 'is a dog' and this single object also instantiates the property of being big. However the description 'the dog' is not satisfied by one object alone; there is not just one dog in existence in the world and the belief that there is does not seem to be something we should wish to attribute to any ordinary speaker.

---

[45] Although this account sets constraints on elided material, it does not claim to narrow the class exclusively. Thus mention of any other property meeting those constraints would be admissible as accounts of elliptical content.

According to the quantificational analysis then we know that, just as with the Donnellan-style referential descriptions, what the speaker has said is strictly and literally false; her utterance fails at the first hurdle as it were since the uniqueness claim implicit in the correct logical form of the description is not met. Yet if we employ the mechanisms of 'proposition meant' once again, it seems that the speaker might manage to convey a second proposition, one which fits the context, even though she has uttered something literally untrue.

So in this example, although what the speaker has said at a semantic level requires the existence of just one dog, she can convey a different, object-dependent proposition about the particular dog which is her intended referent. Thus if it is obvious to her conversational partners which canine is in question, e.g. the creature in the perceptual environment or the one currently under discussion, etc., then they can retrieve the (possibly true) proposition meant by the speaker on this occasion, as well as the false proposition expressed. In this way we have a solution exactly mirroring that accepted for Donnellan objections in the last chapter: Russell reveals the correct semantic analysis of the content of the utterance, but on certain occasions a second, referential, proposition is also conveyed.

However, this is not the only way in which an appeal to the Gricean distinction may be made here; there is a second account available, whereby what is conveyed is not necessarily a directly referential proposition concerning the extension of the term, but rather a suitably completed description. In this way the theorist might appeal to elided predicative material, claiming that the incomplete description is indeed literally false but that a complete descriptive proposition is conveyed by its use in certain contexts. Thus given an utterance of an incomplete description (like "The dog is big") a uniquely denoting phrase, containing material elided from the vocalised form, is also conveyed, e.g. 'The dog *(which Harry owns)* is big' or 'The dog *(beside that tree)* is big'. In this way, although the literal, Russellian analysis of the utterance is thought to stand (so that the speaker has in fact asserted that there is only one dog in the world and that it is big) the

speaker is thought to express or convey the more reasonable, elliptically completed proposition.

However, there are serious objections to handling incomplete descriptions in either of these ways. For such a *carte blanche* appeal to alternative conveyed propositions here apparently violates our intuitions about the aims and requirements operating in communication. Although the Gricean mechanism seems unquestionably in play on certain occasions (such as the flaunting of convention when conveying 'It is a horrible day' by an (ironic) utterance of "It is a lovely day"), it seems that in general we do not countenance the systematic uttering of falsehoods in order to convey a truth. In the majority of cases if you want to convey something verbally you must make every effort to characterise correctly your thought in that language; we simply do not want a semantic theory which makes us all repetitive untruth tellers, even when we know that we have been trying our hardest to aim at the truth. Whatever covert conversational maxims we operate with, it seems one of them must direct us to express ourselves via true propositions wherever we can. Yet in the instance of incomplete descriptions the neo-Russellian must tell us that we reject numerous truths we know and which could express what we say (e.g. "That dog is big", "The dog you were talking about is big", etc.) in favour of a patent falsehood in the hope that some act of inference on your behalf will get you to the meaning I am trying to convey. Yet there is no conversational maxim being flouted in the case of incomplete descriptions (as there is in the case of irony, etc.), so why should we expect the normal, forthright aims of communication to be cast aside here?

Furthermore, such a stance creates an enormous gap between semantic level analysis and the propositions people believe or expect to be conveyed by utterances. Utilising a Gricean mechanism in all these cases must lead us to posit some very far-fetched literal meanings to speakers; we should have to accept that speakers repeatedly express literal propositions which are not only false but pretty much meaningless, yet which both they and their audience may be entirely unaware of. For instance on this interpretation we should have to attribute to the

speaker who utters "The dog is big" the literal proposition 'There is one and only one dog in existence and that is big' and allow that by this she convey some more restrained, referential or elliptical version. Yet this proposition simply does not seem a plausible rendering of what the speaker actually said or what her hearer would take her to have said. Such a radical departure between truth conditions and propositions meant must, I suggest, make us at least suspicious of such a pragmatic option.

In the Donnellan cases, where an honest mistake is made concerning an object's satisfaction of given predicative material, there seems to be more reason to accept such a pragmatic tale. The speaker does not reject known truths in favour of a known falsehood to convey her thought, but rather opts for what she believes to be the most suitable descriptive phrase to secure the desired object. Whereas, in the present case, although the speaker clearly does not believe this to be the only dog in existence, we are asked to accept that she asserts this, with the hope of actually conveying a reference to the dog in question or some completed, elliptical proposition; yet we have little reason to think this can be the case.

So then for these reasons it seems that, while a simple appeal to 'proposition meant' might be enough to cope with a subset of mistaken uses of descriptions, it cannot be enough to explain away the vast majority of our ordinary uses of these linguistic items. However, there is a further appeal to pragmatics which is available to the neo-Russellian here, whereby what is refined by the context is not the whole proposition meant, but merely the range of the quantifier, (as in (iii)). Support for this sort of move may be gained from examining the operation of overt quantifiers in our language: although the domain of quantification is very rarely explicitly stated, it is clearly implicitly restricted (indeed were it not it is not clear that quantifiers could be used to say anything meaningful at all).[46]

---

[46] Although we should note that the legitimacy of appealing to similarities between the restrictions on overt quantifiers and the constraint of the domain for denoting expressions has been called into question by some, e.g. See Larson and Segal (forthcoming).

Imagine the utterance "All the girls were beautiful" given in reply to a question about how the people at a certain party had looked.[47] Here it is obvious that the range of the universal quantifier must be 'people at the party', or some similar class. It would be both wrong and obstinate of the audience to take the speaker as having meant to quantify over all things. The feature of natural language which this reflects is known as 'domain constraint': the scope of the quantifiers we use is constrained by features of the context in which they are operating. The fact that ordinary, overt quantified phrases make appeal to such a constraint should mean that descriptions, which are after all on this picture simply covert quantifications, are also able to utilise this feature. Thus when I utter "The dog is big" and it is analysed as the Russellian logical sentence: $\exists x[Fx \ \& \ [\forall y$ $[Fy \rightarrow y=x] \ \& \ Gx]]$, what I have said is to be understood and evaluated as true or false only relevant to a subset of objects in the universe, e.g. 'dogs in the present environment' or 'dogs in the picture', etc. In this way the vast majority of incomplete descriptions can be analysed according to the original Russellian formula, for uniqueness is indeed present, so long as it is looked for only relative to a context. So then, since domain constraint is something our semantic theory for natural language will need anyway and since it appears to supply an answer so well to the lack of definiteness in descriptions, this route has been the favoured response for the neo-Russellian.

Unfortunately however, although such a mechanism seems to provide an apt and capable solution in many cases, it is questionable whether it alone can be sufficient, for it does run into difficulties in some instances. There are examples of uses of incomplete descriptions which seem simply not amenable to this kind of treatment. To see this we need to look more closely at the way in which the restriction of the domain actually takes place. Intuitively it seems that some natural subset of objects provides itself within which the incomplete description gets to denote uniquely, e.g. objects within the domain of discourse or objects in the perceptual horizon, etc. (In our above example we can see that this was precisely the way the domain was shrunk: a given class had already been

---

[47] This example is taken from Neale (1990), p.95

mentioned, viz. 'people at the party', and thus was obviously available as a fitting range.)

However, this naturally suitable domain may on occasion fail to provide a context within which a description applies uniquely and thus it cannot be the one appealed to by the neo-Russellian. Imagine an utterance of "The dog bit the winning dog", exclaimed in the middle of a greyhound race. Here we have two descriptions serving to select two different objects, yet the only way in which the first description can be made to operate correctly is by cutting the domain smaller than the smallest unit of discourse: the utterance in which the descriptions appear. The natural domain to select would seem to be 'dogs in the race' and yet this is clearly not small enough to secure the uniqueness the quantificational analysis demands. For there will be nothing in the restriction of the domain in this way to ensure that the object denoted by "the dog" is the losing dog, as is required for the truth of the utterance. This problem receives its starkest formulation if we allow the possibility of utterances containing two tokens of the same denoting expression; thus if I ask you how the debate between Professor X and Professor Y went and you reply "The Professor hit the Professor!", clearly no amount of domain constraint, short of splitting the sentence, can be of assistance. David Lewis puts the point thus:

> It is not true that a definite description the F denotes x if and only if x is the only F in existence. Neither is it true that "the F" denotes x if and only if x is the one and only one F in some contextually determined domain of discourse. For consider this sentence: "The pig is grunting, but the pig with the floppy ears is not grunting" (Lewis). And this: "The dog got in a fight with another dog" (McCawley). They could be true. But for them to be true, "the pig" or "the dog" must denote one of two pigs or dogs, both of which belong to the domain of discourse.[48]

If we were to shrink the domain small enough to get the Russellian truth conditions to come out right, then we should forfeit the apparent unity of the sentence and everything that goes with it. We must in an apparently arbitrary manner postulate divisions within a single sentence, multiple quantifications each with a scope smaller than the smallest unit of discourse, which would cancel any

---

[48] Lewis (1979), p.240

implications or entailments which might be thought to hold within it. In a simple sentence like "the dog bit the dog" we will posit two completely distinct acts of quantification made relative to two totally distinct domains and thus the relation between the two dogs (as objects sharing a single logical space) must be lost forever. We might never assess the implications of an ordinary utterance containing multiple incomplete descriptions for a plethora of quantifiers would carve things up too small; thus questions of how to assess natural language arguments for validity should have to be given entirely new answers. What examples like this seem to indicate is that, although domain constraint might be thought a plausible solution for a whole range of incomplete descriptions, it cannot alone account for all the phenomena.

However, it should be noted here that not all theorists take this challenge as refuting the sufficiency of domain constraint, for some in fact allow the domain to be curtailed within an utterance. It might be suggested that no single domain should be expected to provide the unique values of all the variables within a single utterance, but rather that multiple domains may be active dependent on recognised features of the context of utterance. Thus Recanati writes, in connection with a certain position on domain constraint he labels 'Austinian':

> For the Austinian semanticist, the situation talked about may change within the limits of a single utterance. The situation talked about is whatever is mutually taken to be the situation talked about, and what is mutually taken to be the situation talked about depends on a host of contextual factors. Those factors vary as the utterance takes place, in part as a result of the utterance itself.[49]

Recanati and others (such as Barwise and Perry) are able to adopt this stance because they appeal to the notion of a 'parameter situation' relative to which utterances (even those which do not contain descriptions but rather terms of 'direct reference') are to be interpreted.[50] Thus part of the complete content of an utterance on this kind of approach is thought to be a reference to the partial situation (the parameter situation) in which the utterance is to be evaluated. The utterance contains the usual proposition we might expect the words to possess on

---

[49] Recanati (forthcoming), p. 9.
[50] Barwise and Perry (1983)

any semantic analysis and an additional component which is the reference to the partial situation.

Although by this kind of indexing of the propositional content to a situation it seems slicing the domain smaller than a single utterance might be permitted, the move to such 'situational semantics' is not altogether a happy one. For incorporating an appeal to some such construct as a 'partial situation' seems very far removed from the notion of truth conditions we have so far been used to and which have proven so capable in the handling of linguistic phenomena. On this kind of approach it seems likely we will run into problems accommodating relations, such as entailment and validity, which ordinarily hold between whole sentences. We must wonder how, if sentences are allowed to be carved up into ever smaller units, each making reference to a certain situation, we can ever assess ordinary language arguments as entailing a given conclusion or being proven to be valid. Thus, if we can find another account which deflates the problem without this move we will, I believe, be best advised to take it. So, although we might adopt domain constraint as partially adequate, we must, I suggest, still search for an account to append to it, to create a sufficient solution for all occurrences of incomplete descriptions.

Underlying all these objections are, I suggest some deeper concerns with the adequacy of pragmatic solutions in general with respect to this issue. For it appears that the opponent of the quantified approach might object that the neo-Russellian is helping herself far too freely to a theory of pragmatics which she has not as yet even supplied. Although Grice offers us some 'pragmatic rules of thumb' with his 'conversational maxims', it is still the case that pragmatics is a relatively underdeveloped area. Since this is the case, the theorist who makes appeal to the notion in such a repeated and systematic way must begin to beg the question as to whether stopping up the holes with pragmatic considerations is really any answer or whether she should look for a more capable semantic theory in the first place. If pragmatics must come into play not only to explain away uses of descriptions where an object-dependent proposition is apparently

conveyed, as Donnellan showed, but *also* to deal with the lack of uniqueness in the overwhelming majority of descriptions, it seems the original analysis must be based on only the tiniest fragment of actual descriptions. But now the intuitive appeal which the theory possessed, whereby descriptions really did seem to operate like quantified phrases, must be lost and the move to construe them as such may seem little more than arbitrary.

Thus the contention is that, in the light of these difficulties, pragmatic solutions alone are simply not going to be adequate to deal with the problems of incomplete descriptions for the Russellian. So then, we are forced to the final option recognised above: a semantic level alteration in the literal content of the description. In this way the vocalised description is thought to be a truncated version of a longer denoting expression, which contains elided material specifying a unique extension. Thus "The dog is big" contains, as part of its semantic content, more predicative information; this may be 'context-free', e.g. 'The dog (*first put into space*) is big' or 'context-dependent', e.g. 'The dog (*beside that tree*) is big'. Although the additional information is both silent in the vocalisation and hidden from view in the surface grammar, it is still a real component of the semantics; whatever elided material is incorporated will be an element in the conditions under which the utterance is to be understood as true or false. The final argument of this chapter is that, although we are now in the right area for a solution to incompleteness, only a very particular kind of elided information can be plausible here. To see this I should like to look first at the difficulties with positing elided mention of context-free properties, then at elided demonstrative or locative information, before finally proposing my own solution.

The problem which arises for the elided mention of further context-independent predicates, or conjunctions of predicates, stems from the recognition that neither speaker or hearer must be in possession of/utilising any uniquely determining context-free description of an object when it is denoted by an incomplete description. There simply does not seem any reason to think that we can only grasp the extension of an incomplete description if we *know* some

uniquely determining, context-free, denoting material. Without employing any context-dependent expressions in the elided material, it seems highly unlikely that agents will be able to supply, or indeed should be required to procure, a unique denoting expression on all occasions of use of incomplete descriptions.

However, clearly this is not the only kind of elided predicative information available; we might also make appeal to context-dependent, e.g. referential or locative, expressions. Although at first such a suggestion may seem in direct conflict with the entire ethos of the Russellian approach (i.e. the claim that descriptions are quantified, not referring, expressions), this is not the case, as certain theorists have pointed out. Although eliding referential terms which refer directly to the satisfier of the description would appear to make incomplete descriptions and referential expressions semantically equivalent, clearly this is not the kind of material envisaged. Rather what is required is some demonstrative/locative information by which the denotation itself is narrowed uniquely, e.g. 'The dog *(beside that tree)...*' or 'The dog *(in this corner)* is big'. Thus the referential component is not attached to the denoted object directly but rather picks out an object/locale by reference to which the denoting phrase is completed. Neale writes:

> [I]f a description may contain overtly referential components (including indexical and demonstrative components), then there is nothing to prevent the ellipsed elements of incomplete descriptions from being referential. And this is very different from saying the *description* is interpreted referentially.[51]

It seems obviously correct to allow that elided material may be referential without this in turn making the denoting phrase itself a referential expression, and, I believe, we are very close to a plausible solution here. Yet, I would suggest that the elided material under consideration here, while it fits with the motivation of the Russellian by not making descriptions referential terms, is not the most satisfactory form of elided information, due to concerns stemming from language use. The suggestion is that, while theorists such as Neale are correct to believe that a semantic level solution is required and that context-dependent expressions

---

[51] Neale (1990), p. 100

are admissible, the material to be appealed to here must meet a further constraint. Since what is to be elided is to be semantically relevant, I suggest that it must be amenable for public recognition. It must be possible, indeed guaranteed, that the relevant completing information can be grasped by an audience, in order to understand the proposition expressed by the speaker.

Communication seems to demand a degree of openness and shared information between interlocutors and part of this mutual element tells us that the extension alone is not solely important; in addition to getting the right object it must be got in the right way, i.e. in the way the speaker grasped it.[52] Yet even elided locative information places this sort of constraint entirely beyond us; there will be an infinite amount of possible completers for any incomplete description as used in a context, how then is the audience to select the right one? The difficulty here is not, as with elided context-free material, that the speaker and audience may not know a sufficient completer, but rather that there are just too many perfectly adequate completers available for interlocutors to choose from. Furthermore, on some very plausible assumptions about the nature of communication, even if speaker and hearer did *happen* to coincide concerning the completer actually appended to the description this would still not be enough, for it seems likely that we want agents to be able to reflect on the shared nature of the route to the extension (i.e. so that the audience can view α as the denotation and reflect that the speaker intended them to view it in this way). What we need if ellipsis is to be a viable solution at a semantic level is, I suggest, something which can be guaranteed as the common completer between conversational partners.

However, we should note that this form of objection will not hold against all theorists who have offered a positive account of semantically elided material. For some, such as Steven Schiffer's account of the 'hidden indexical Theory of Descriptions', allow the audience to be unsure of the completer in operation without jeopardising the possibility of communication. Schiffer recognises the

---

[52] This position will be argued for in the next chapter.

above constraints from communication but faces them head on, responding by offering a distinct picture of communication; one which trades on the often vague and imprecise nature of the activity. He suggests that if we construe communication as something far more indeterminate than we have so far allowed we can thus, by adopting a laissez-faire attitude toward the precise meanings conveyed by our interlocutors, allow incomplete descriptions to remain vague without conversational breakdown. In this way a whole range of context-dependent information might be thought of as supplying suitable completers for an incomplete description, but instead of a precise or discrete elided content, reference should be to a loose set of possible propositions. To this end he outlines what he calls the 'hidden-indexical Theory of Descriptions' whereby it is wrong to expect a determinate completer for an incomplete description, rather one should allow that the statement made is, as it stands, indeterminate. He writes:

> In the [incomplete description] example you did not definitely mean any general proposition in uttering 'The guy is drunk', but you *sort-of-meant*, or vaguely meant, several general propositions, one for each definite description that could be used to sharpen what you vaguely meant. And your indeterminate statement might reasonably be held to be true just in case it is true under every admissible sharpening of what you meant, false in case it is false under every such admissible sharpening, and neither true nor false if it is true under some admissible sharpenings while false under others.[53]

Such a suggestion circumvents our call for a common precise completer by making communication possible just so long as the description chosen by the hearer is an admissible sharpening of what the speaker said. So then might this, *prima facie* quite appealing, picture of communication plus the incorporation of elided material at the syntactic level provide a solution to the problems of incompleteness?

I would suggest not, for despite the potential suitability of such an approach for certain linguistic phenomena (such as vagueness), I suggest that incomplete definite descriptions resist incorporation to this body. The difficulty is

---

[53] Schiffer, (1995), p.115

that, in contrast to other cases considered by Schiffer in his paper, incompleteness does not appear to be a simple case of semantic indeterminacy. On the contrary, it appears, at least *prima facie*, that such descriptions serve perfectly well to introduce a definite object into the conversation in which they are used. An utterance of "The dog is big" is not, I would suggest, something to be understood by reference to some set of 'admissible sharpenings', but rather by grasping the actual object intended, which is not settled by the overt predicative content. This contrasts with more obvious cases of indeterminacy raised by Schiffer (such as "My only dog is *here*", where there may indeed be no *precise* location intended by the speaker, by her use of the indexical expression, which the audience must grasp), in such a way as to make it highly questionable whether the former cases can really be amenable to treatment via a 'hidden-indexical' theory. Furthermore, we might in passing note that, even if the semantic indeterminacy approach were to be pursued, it would seem, *prima facie*, that it should have to utilise elements available to all accounts to solve the issue of incompleteness. This being the case, it would thus appear to be possible to solve the problem without taking the further step to semantic indeterminacy; thus the route proposed by Schiffer would, in this instance, be otiose in any case.

It seems then that what we need is mention of predicative information which can complete the description uniquely, and yet not fall foul of the constraint that the information be guaranteed in common between interlocutors. What I suggest we need is some way to formalise the intuitive grasp we have on the way we naturally understand incomplete descriptions, that is as denoting the relevant object which satisfies the fragment of description we are supplied with. When we hear an utterance like "The dog is big" we understand it, despite the fact that the vocalised descriptive material does not secure uniqueness, so long as a single, unique dog is somehow suggested in the context as the extension of the term, and this is what we need to capture. On the most intuitive level, it seems that how we secure a unique satisfier for an utterance of an incomplete description is simply by recognising one object, above all others, as the relevant satisfier of the predicative fragment uttered in that context. We have been

concerned with how one might understand an utterance of 'The dog is big' in a context full of dogs, and yet in reality there is rarely such a difficulty in grasping what is meant; for it appears we simply 'see' one dog alone as relevant in the context or as the fitting extension of the words.[54] So then, initial reflection on the way in which we operate with natural language seems to offer the possibility of a solution based on our ability to recognise, from amongst countless candidate objects, the single relevant one. Our question then must be, can we make direct, theoretical appeal to the property which intuitively seems to be doing the work in such cases, to allow that denotation in incomplete descriptions is mediated by relevance or salience.

One way we can spell this out is by claiming that what is incorporated as elided material in the incomplete description is not more ordinary predicative information but mention of the particular, contextual property which an object possesses when it is the most relevant object of its kind in the context. Thus the explicit form of our example utterance will be:

1) 'The (*salient*) dog is big'

In this way what is covert in the description is just mention of a property we all know and can utilise when determining the communicated extension of a phrase in a context; so there can be no question of whether or not the audience are able to share the elided completer because this is guaranteed. To understand this fully we need to look more carefully at the kind of property salience is thought to be.

In one form the existence of salience seems hard to deny, for in the mind of the speaker whatever object is selected as the intended extension for a term must be the most salient object for her. As soon as a particular object is chosen by a speaker (via any means necessary) that object cannot fail to come to possess the property of salience, at least for the speaker. It will be the single object she is thinking of above and beyond all others of that kind; by focusing her attention on that object it must be relevant for her. Thus whether the agent picks out the

---

[54] That this is the way an object must appear to be the unique satisfier has been stressed by some theorists, see for instance Lewis (1979) and Sperber and Wilson (1986).

object directly by use of a referential expression or whether she thinks of it under some description which denotes it uniquely, the object thus selected will be, in that context, the most salient object for her. The operation of the property in this way we might call 'consequential salience': simply by S's referring to α, α becomes salient for S. It seems that few theorists would deny this aspect of the property, simply as a by-product of reference/denotation, which is achieved in some other way.

However this is clearly not the only aspect of the property we can recognise, for there is a notion of salience which operates before the agent's decision on extension and it is in this way that we more usually talk of an object 'being salient/relevant in a situation'. This can be seen if we imagine what I would like to call a 'neutral case': in such an instance we might imagine being faced with an incomplete description but features of the context of utterance itself providing a unique salient object. So we might imagine looking at a field of soldiers on parade when one faints dramatically in the hot midday sun. In such a scenario the soldier has succeeded in making herself salient and as such will be available as the unique satisfier of the incomplete description. Similarly we might imagine cases where the description is part of a whole conversation in which an earlier speaker (or the present speaker herself in an earlier utterance) has raised a particular object to salience in some way, so that this object is now available as the unique satisfier of incomplete descriptions. Such cases, although they utilise salience to draw reference or narrow the class of objects satisfying a description (thus they are not *dependent* on the agent's decision on the extension of a term in the same way as the consequential aspect of salience), are in some sense 'neutral' for they depend in no way on the occurrent actions or intentions of the interlocutors.

Yet there does seem to be one last aspect of salience to be recognised and it is this which may be of help to the Russellian. It seems that there are cases where an incomplete descriptive utterance might be made and yet the uniqueness lacking from the descriptive material is supplied by the actions of the speaker: she

might indicate which of several candidates she intends by in some way raising one object to salience for her audience. Furthermore, it appears that her audience might select just that object by their recognition of its salience and the speaker's intention to make it salient. Thus we have a shared recognition of salience, yet not one which is consequential on acts of reference or denotation, but rather which draws and determines decisions on extension in virtue of its mutual recognition. It is this aspect of the property, which I shall label 'mutual' (but which, it should be remembered, means both mutually recognised and non-consequential), that can be seen in operation across the board in both referential and denoting phrases, and the existence of which the next two chapters will be concerned with establishing.

It is this third aspect which is of interest to us for it is only in this form that the property can be of help to the quantificational theorist: what is elided in the truth conditions will be mention of a mutual recognition of salience. Salience must then be a property each interlocutor can recognise and it must be the completer each expects or believes (and is warranted in expecting or believing, as we shall see later) the other is utilising. However, although it seems that many philosophers are quite willing to admit to some notion of salience, perhaps as it operates purely as a consequential feature of denotation or reference, this mutual aspect is not universally accepted as admissible. So we have two main tasks immediately ahead of us: first we must establish the need for any sort of property with the qualities we are attributing to this aspect of salience (i.e. mutual recognition) operating in instances of communication of extension, and, once this is established, it must be shown that the best candidate here is a unified notion like salience.

Making the initial case for some sort of common ground will involve turning first to the general concerns of communication; for the contention will be that recognition of certain kinds of 'breakdown' in communication will require a mutual property of some kind utilised as the route to the object by speaker and hearer. The argument will be that the way in which an object is established, either as referent or as satisfier of a description, is important, and that the only way in

which it is guaranteed in common is via salience. Whilst recognising that communication is itself a pragmatic notion and thus that any tools it demands will themselves make appearance only at this level, our investigation will initially serve at least to reveal the requirement, at some level, for the kind of property I suggest the quantificational theorist may make semantic appeal to. Once this has been established the argument will later be advanced, in Chapter 5, that the mutual ground established in Chapter 4, which is best handled by a single unified property such as salience, can appear in the truth conditions of incomplete descriptions.

4

SALIENCE AND COMMUNICATION:

The possibility of a mutual recognition of salience operating to secure an object in the way we sketched at the end of the last chapter is dependent initially on the plausibility of a certain picture of communication; that is as a process which is itself, in a fundamental way, open and mutual. Such an assumption about the essential nature of communication is evidently well-motivated by our intuitions about the process and indeed is something that most theorists dealing with this topic would seem to be willing to accept. Indeed, some have argued that adopting a requirement for shared ground between interlocutors is not only eminently plausible, but an indisputable pre-requisite for any possibility of communication. For instance, if we want it to be at least possible that I can sometimes come to know a proposition purely through being told that it is the case, (i.e. if we wish to preserve the role of communication as essentially concerning the transfer of information and the formation of warranted beliefs) it seems that there must be an allowance for mutual knowledge.[55]

However, in this thesis I shall not seek to argue for the strong claim, that without mutual knowledge communication would be impossible, but I shall advocate a weaker stance: that *certain* communicative acts do reveal a demand for mutual knowledge. Although we should be aware that this is a non-trivial assumption to make (for it places difficult demands on the theorist which might be avoided otherwise), most theorists accept that the demand for some kind of

---

[55] This form of argument, that there can be no theory of communication without mutual knowledge, is propounded by theorists such as Evans and McDowell. See Evans (1982), Chapter 9; e.g. "The audience must proceed beyond this, to the *right* (i.e. intended) interpretation. For it is a fundamental, though insufficiently recognised, point that communication is *essentially* a mode of transmission of knowledge", p.310.

mutual knowledge in communication is unavoidable.[56] Unless, at least in some instances, it can be the case that interlocutors are in possession of information which is not only in common between them but is also known by each agent to be common, the full nature of communication will be impossible to capture. For instance, acts of inference to meaning (e.g. as required in speaker meaning, linguistic redundancy and significant word choice, etc.) will be beyond the reach of any theory which does not allow the possibility of information, beliefs and assumptions which are known to be shared.

However, in addition to this widely held and accepted assumption, there is a further position to be argued for in this chapter: first, that to communicate concerning a given object, interlocutors must not only possess shared knowledge of that object, this must also be the actual information employed to secure the extension, and secondly, it must be possible for the audience to know/anticipate that this is the case. They must be able to reflect that the object selected as denotation/referent is the object the speaker intended them to recognise as the extension of that term. The contention will be that for truly successful communication, not only must the correct extension be secured, it must also be secured in a mutual way. This conjecture will be supported by recognition of a specific type of communicative breakdown and the positing of a weak notion of 'sense' in communication, along lines advocated by Evans. Once this requirement has been established (viz. that the audience are constrained to think of the object *in the way the speaker does* if communication is to go ahead), the second main contention of the chapter will be raised: that the most general constraint which interlocutors can be seen as fulfilling, which secures the route to the object as the same in both cases, is that the object in question be secured as the salient one.

What is to be established initially, then, is that there are constraints on successful communication which run beyond purely 'externalist' questions about

---

[56] For a theoretical account of mutual knowledge see Schiffer (1972), p.32, and for a recognition of the difficulties with the notion, plus one possible solution, see Sperber and Wilson (1986), pp.39-42

the object *actually* selected and reveal that there is *some way* in which one is constrained to think about that object, i.e. in *the way the speaker thinks of it*. To see this let us imagine a situation in which you and I are working as security guards, monitoring the building to be protected via a bank of video screens. These screens are located within the building itself: a fact which is known to you but which I am unaware of. One night you are alarmed to smell smoke and notice flames creeping around the door and thus exclaim to me "The house is on fire!". With my attention firmly concentrated on the screens I see that you are quite correct and am alarmed but not unduly worried, since I believe the location of the conflagration is quite removed from my own situation. In such an instance it would seem that, although I have heard you correctly, understand what your words means and, crucially, have even succeeded in selecting the correct extension (perhaps by averting to elided material such as 'the house we are guarding' or '29 Acacia Avenue', etc.), we have nonetheless, at least to some extent, failed to communicate. Intuitively what you want me to grasp is that it is *this* house which is on fire, a fact which, merely by securing the right object in the world, escapes me. It doesn't matter that we have both settled on the same extension, communication will fail unless I think about it in the relevantly right way, i.e. in the way you think about it.

It seems that what we require to constrain communication is not just external questions of the object arrived at but some (perhaps limited) notion of sense.[57] If I think of an object in any other way than as the intended referent of your utterance, I will fail to truly grasp what you are saying. Gareth Evans puts the point thus:

> The limited recognition of sense comes in with our claim that understanding the remarks we are concerned with requires not just that the hearer think of the referent, but that he think of it in the right way. But we recognise the primacy of the referent by recognising that the hearer always confronts just one question, 'Which object does the speaker mean?' - not two questions, 'Which object does the speaker mean?' and 'How am I intended to think of it?' The second question is answered in passing; for if he understands the remark, he

---

[57] For further and fuller argument for this kind of wide application of a Fregean notion of sense, see Heck (1995): "It is because communication must enable the transfer of knowledge that more than reference must be common to the cognitive values different speakers attach to a given name" (p.94).

> will know which object is meant; and in the normal course of events (i.e.
> without assistance from others, etc.), he will know which object is meant only
> if he thinks of it in the particular way intended by the speaker. [58]

The contention is then that one aspect of the mutual demands placed upon speaker and hearer by the nature of communication is that objects are reached in a suitable manner, i.e. one in common to both. If this is correct then, as indicated in the last chapter, it tells against many proposals for ellipsis, for it seemed that most were unable to guarantee this common feature.

Forms of communicative failure of this kind then indicate a need not only for mutual knowledge of the object in question, but a requirement that interlocutors reach the object in the same way. To understand what you have said, I am constrained to think about your intended denotation in a suitable manner, i.e. as you do. The task now then is to examine in more detail the nature of such mutual ground and decide whether some one feature can be taken as guaranteeing this common route in all cases. The proposal will be that the most general constraint which interlocutors can be seen as fulfilling, which satisfies these communicative demands, is an appeal to a mutually recognisable and exploitable notion of salience. Consideration of the role and nature of salience will, I hope, reveal that we are warranted in seconding the many and various ways in which a speaker may indicate an object under the umbrella notion of adversion to salience.

4.1 Common Knowledge Consists in Salience:

Let us imagine a situation (using an example originally found in Evans) in which a speaker, S, is faced with row upon row of pills and takes it into her head to share with her audience the thought that one in particular is good to eat.[59] S has a particular pill in mind, α, which she intends to refer to and she attempts to convey this by an utterance of:

---

[58] Evans (1982), p. 315-16
[59] ibid., p.172.

a) "That is nice"

So the speaker has used a demonstrative utterance but how are the audience, A, to recover a determinate content here? Well, at first, it seems they might be able to complete the proposition if the context itself, as it were, supplies a referent. That is to say, if the situation is akin to the 'neutral' one we recognised in Chapter 3, then there will be a single suitable object which is already salient which would seem to proffer itself as referent with no further demands on the speaker. So, in our imaginary situation, it might be that one of the pills rests on a six foot dais or is about to be gobbled up by little Sally or is luminous pink instead of dull red. Alternatively it might be that all the pills are qualitatively indistinguishable but that S's utterance is part of a whole conversation in which an earlier speaker (or S herself in an earlier utterance) has raised α to salience in some way. In all these possible situations it appears that α's place in the salience spotlight prior to S's remark ensures that her words will be taken as intended to refer to α without S being required to do or say anything more. Thus all her audience will need to recognise to grasp the full content contained in (a) is that an attribution of the following form holds true of S:

b) 'The (salient) object is nice'

However, situations such as the above form only a subset of situations in which reference by demonstrative may be achieved. Far more common it seems are the cases where no object stands out proud, but rather all or many seem on an equal footing as possible referents for the term. So, if α lurks in turgid anonymity with multiple other dull, unappetising pills, how then is the audience to select the correct referent? It seems they need more information to complete the thought contained within the demonstrative utterance, yet if the context alone does not supply this then what can? Our audience need some way of latching on to the pill in question but since we have already stated that, in the present context, all the possible referents are on a par, there seems to be nothing available to help them tie the utterance down. Luckily, however, this is not the case for, just because the perceptual or conversational environment fails to proffer a solution, this does not mean that there is no other arbitration available. In fact

further arbitration might be supplied by the 'consequential' notion of salience we have allowed from the outset; for α is only not salient *prior* to being referred to by S. In our example we know that S has a particular pill in mind to talk about and this entails that that one is currently salient for S. However she initially contrived to refer to it, α now cannot fail to stand full-square in the centre of her attention. So it seems perfectly possible that her audience might simply advert to the speaker's greater authority in matters such as these and complete the content of the thought behind the utterance by mentioning the successful act of reference by the speaker. Thus now our audience grasp the content by entertaining a proposition of the form:

b_1) 'That (what is salient for S) is nice'

In this way the reference is stabilised for the audience by deferring to the speaker and coincidentally to the dictates of salience within her attention span. The kind of salience at work here operates solely in the pragmatics of reference and is merely a result of anything being referred to by anyone at all; thus we should recognise that the notion doing the work is not necessarily salience itself but the prior act of reference. It is the prior grasp of reference which carries the weight in (b_1) and there will be no independent role which salience is required to fulfil.

However, although entertaining (b_1) might help as a reference fixing element for a further act of reference on behalf of the audience, it does not seem altogether satisfactory as a complete specification of the content of (a). The objection is that (b_1) makes no direct mention of the object in question. Since this is the case it would seem that the content would remain unchanged even if the referent of the utterance were altered. For imagine S takes it into her head to refer to a second pill, β, by a second utterance of (a), still the content required to be entertained by her audience would be the same; just that characterised by (b_1). Yet this does not fit with our intuitive view of what is to be grasped when one understands a demonstrative. Rather we expect the audience who has understood such an utterance to have grasped in some more immediate way which particular object is in question; the audience who hears (a) and entertains (b_1) without going on to discriminate the actual referent in any way will, on this picture, have fully

grasped the content of the demonstrative and yet this alone must be inadequate.

What this inadequacy reflects is the role here of something akin to Evan's formulation of 'Russell's Principle': (as noted in Chapter 1) what we require of the agent who understands a demonstrative utterance is that she is in possession of some sort of identifying information concerning the referent of that utterance. Evans puts the point thus:

> I shall suppose that the knowledge which [Russell's Principle] requires is what might be called discriminating knowledge: the subject must have a capacity to distinguish the object of his judgement from all other things.[60]

Although, as Evans readily admits, such a formulation is still somewhat vague, it does seem that we can get an intuitive grasp on it. What we want to be reflected in successful understanding of referential communicative acts is a handle on the individual which sets it apart from all others. However, as we saw in the last chapter, it appears that successful communication requires not just any kind of discriminating knowledge but rather knowledge of a very precise kind: I must think of α as you do. We saw that communication could fail in those cases where discriminating knowledge of the right referent is present but it fails to fetch the object *in the right way*. We have already established that there is more to communication than simply getting hold of the correct object in the world, we need to provide that the identifying knowledge in play is of the relevantly right kind on each side, shared between speaker and hearer. How then are we to ensure our audience see α as the referent of our utterance and arrive at this object in the same way we did? The only way to do this, I suggest, is to make α the salient object for them. What we need for communication is that the speaker commands the audience to see the world as she does; that A come to stand in the speakers shoes and pay attention to whatever is relevant from there, and she can do this by utilising salience. By making α the salient object she can be sure that her attentive audience will be compelled, in the majority of cases, to take just this object as the referent. So the agent completes her utterance of (a) with a

---

[60] Evans (1982), p.89

demonstration: she points, she nods, she waves, she shoves and the result of a well executed action is just to raise the intended utterance to 'stage centre' in the salience spotlight. If this is right then we should recognise a possible distinction between the way in which a speaker initially secures her referent, which may indeed not be salience governed, and the way in which she is duty bound to try and convey this referent to her audience. It is this latter move which cannot fail to appeal to a property such as salience.

Yet even if we accept this, we should be clear just what kind of salience this sort of picture leads to, for we still have no need to move to a consciously accessible and exploitable aspect. Indeed, the picture of salience we have so far seems amenable to use not only by us but also within the animal kingdom (and thus would be a less viable candidate for mutual knowledge). For instance imagine the alarm displays of monkeys who point and screech to call attention to the presence of a predator or meercats who nod and bob feverishly in the direction of a hawk once spotted. Here the aim of the animal giving the alarm is surely to command the attention of its fellow creatures and force them to attend to the approaching danger. The way in which this is affected, while it seems to involve making the predator highly salient, and thus forcing another's attention in just the way outlined above, would seem best accounted for at no more than a mechanistic level. We might imagine the sort of cognitive heuristic which would provide for the right output (say transmitting the alarm call itself or running away) given the input (the creatures attention being drawn to the killer) which would not require positing the process as a consciously accessible one. So, might not the notion of salience at work in securing the referent of a demonstrative utterance be accounted for on a similar model, so that all we need to talk about are the mechanisms actually in common between speaker and hearer? On this picture we must attribute to the speaker (or screecher or scraper in the monkey or meercat case) an ability to make an object salient. There must be a mechanism which provides for producing an output which triggers the salience recognition in her audience, but at no stage need we attribute knowledge of this mechanism or reflection on its operation to either speaker or hearer.

However, if we reflect more closely on our own communicative acts, it seems that there is far more reason to posit salience as a consciously accessible phenomena. If we return to our communicators above we can see that the utterance of the demonstrative in (a) succeeds as an act of communication just in case:

1) S has it in mind to talk about α and thus attempts to force A to attend to this object

2) A attends to α

3) A recognises that S intends that A's attention should be so directed

The element of justification A can have for paying attention to α comes from a recognition of the communicative aims of S, encapsulated in (3); A's recognition that she should think about α because S wants her to. By attempting to discern the intentions of the speaker, rather than stopping simply as soon as one's attention is forced to an object, we incorporate a degree of reflection and reason into the process which can only be accommodated by granting agents conscious access to the mechanisms of salience. The move to belief in communication requires a feature beyond the brute fact that my attention has been led to the right object; it requires the possibility of an element of reflection or regression, a codicil to tell me I am right to be looking at/thinking about α, that this is what the speaker aimed to achieve. Yet if this is right then what we need is not only a property which, *de facto*, decides reference (as in (2)) but one which is consciously recognisable and exploitable by the agents, which can provide them with the justification they need.

That the property in question is consciously accessible and not just in operation can also be seen by the agent's ability to decide on how to direct another's attention: the agent can be sure that utilising salience will ensure the right effects simply by extrapolating from her own case. We all know that having an object made salient succeeds in directing our own attention in communicative acts, therefore we have every reason to suppose that the same will hold for other like-minded individuals with whom we engage in conversation. Generalising the

strategy we witness as so successful when others communicate reference to us, must lead us to utilising salience in our own communicative endeavours to try to draw our interlocutor's attention to the object we have in mind, and time and again we succeed. Yet we should be aware that this could only come about if we had first-hand access to the mechanisms of salience within our own minds and could anticipate and exploit the mechanisms of salience within others. When deciding on the communicated extension of a term (or how to communicate that this is the object in question) salience is needed not only as a mechanism of reference but as a conscious feature of the agent's reasoning. This conception of interlocutors, either as speakers trying to communicate or hearers trying to grasp what has been said, requires that they advert to the most general feature they can be assured all parties will fulfil.

In this respect then, salience is a functional notion: although there are many ways to direct someone's attention to an object in a context, the demands of mutuality require that what is relevant is that the speaker exploit a method which is manifestly intended to draw her audiences attention to that object. This, I suggest, provides the unifying feature of salience: the general criterion which all speakers indicating objects must satisfy is to make them relevant for the audience. Salience is thus that property which all actions serving to draw attention have which can reasonably be taken by someone to be mutually manifestable as a means of drawing attention. Construed in this way, the property must stand or fall with the constraint to mutuality in communication (for it is only if communication is required to be mutual that a functional definition relying on that mutuality could be plausible), but since intuition and argument seem inclined to support the latter assumption, claims for the existence of this aspect of salience may be warranted.

Furthermore, it seems that appeal to such a functional analysis provides at least the promise of uniqueness here; for if we were to explicate the functional definition carefully enough, we might limit the range of possible satisfiers here to one. Yet, however the property is ultimately defined and whether or not this

definition can guarantee uniqueness, still, so long as the requirement for mutuality in communication is upheld, we seem assured of something with enough psychological reality for agents to be aware of it and thus able to exploit it. It must be a property which is not just in brute operation but which the agents can have attitudes toward: a mutual property which may ultimately be of assistance to the Russellian.

However, there is one residual objection still to be faced in this chapter; for it might be thought that the concerns we have illustrated so far reflect not necessary features of communication itself but are weighted in favour of the Theory of Descriptions. This can be seen if we summarise the main moves of the thesis so far: we began with the recognition of a serious problem for the (otherwise well motivated) quantificational theory and the suggestion of a plausible solution, through some constraints on communication to the conclusion that a mutual property like salience is both possible and warranted at a pragmatic level. Yet still there may be doubts about the full generality of the position here; since we have followed this route to the requirement for salience, might it not be that another approach to the question of the logical form of descriptions could circumvent the call for salience entirely? That is to say: it might be contended that if descriptions were not to be analysed as quantified phrases, but rather as proper referring terms, there would remain no need for salience. The opponent who suggests such a position is in effect contending that the requirement for salience does not arise from questions of communication for truly referential terms and thus that descriptions, if analysed as akin to this class of noun phrases, require no notion of salience, pragmatic or otherwise. If this were the case then the existence of salience would appear as no more than an ad hoc move made by the quantificational theorist to answer tensions only internal to her own scheme. This would clearly greatly weaken the position and thus, in answer to this critic, I should like to conclude the chapter by sketching such an alternative picture of descriptions and reveal how salience is required even here.

The aim of this last section will not be to present a rigorous case for or against either the thesis that all descriptions are referring terms or that some are (the semantic ambiguity thesis); although the inadequacies of the first position will be briefly indicated. The case for the Russellian analysis has already been given in the first chapter and it is not within the scope of this thesis to attempt a rejection of the ambiguity thesis. Rather it will be hoped that by supplying a method by which the quantificational analysis can be seen to be adequate for all descriptions, even incomplete ones, simple concerns of parsimony will mitigate against the ambiguity position.[61] Instead, the aim of this last section is to show that the demands for the mutual, non-consequential notion of salience as a pragmatic property, which it will be argued in the concluding chapter the Russellian can make semantic level appeal to, are perfectly general, applying to noun phrases across the board, whether analysed quantificationally or referentially.

Although no theorist has as yet offered an indepth account of descriptions as referential terms, it seems likely that the most successful picture will follow the model set up by Kaplan to deal with more obviously referential terms.[62] Thus the task is at first to show how descriptions might fit Kaplan's picture and then to reveal the demand which exists, even here, for appeal to salience. As will become clear, this may or may not constitute a semantic level appeal (indeed the suggestion will be that it is more likely to amount to a pragmatic appeal only), but it will reveal the notion as not merely an ad hoc construct for the beleaguered Russellian, but as a warranted property in its own right.

4.2 Direct Reference:

Quantification is one way to analyse noun phrases, but it is clearly not the only way; for at least some terms pick out their object in a far more direct

---

[61] In this I follow Kripke's (1977) 'policy of caution': "Do not posit an ambiguity unless you are really forced to, unless there are really compelling theoretical or intuitive grounds to suppose that an ambiguity is really present", p.268.

fashion. These terms seem actually to refer in a context; rather than simply establishing an extension by determining the class of objects satisfying given predicates, referring terms go straight to the object in the world they tie up with. In this class seem to lie most definitely demonstratives and indexicals, together with unbound pronouns, proper names and a whole host of other linguistic terms depending on antecedent decisions about their behaviour. If descriptions are taken as belonging to this class then our earlier metaphor of a descriptive phrase selecting an object just as it satisfies certain properties is mistaken; instead we should picture the phrase going straight to its referent, without pause or delay, and keeping hold of that very object no matter what. The objection then is, if the structure of a description (now construed as a term of direct reference) itself provides for the securing of the referent, what requirement could there be for salience here? Thus there are three tasks ahead of us in this section: first, to grasp in outline the Kaplanesque framework of referential terms, then to see how descriptions might fit this picture and finally to show how, even if such an analysis is advocated still the requirement for salience is not obviated.

Direct reference tells us that if we use a demonstrative (plus an associated demonstration) to pick out α in world$_1$, then wherever we choose to evaluate that utterance it will still succeed in referring to α, even if in world$_2$ the act of demonstration no longer singles out α, but rather is directed at another object entirely. The notion is related to, although distinct from, that of a Kripkean rigid designator, where whatever possible world you take the term to for evaluation it will always pick out the same object, regardless of whether that object still falls under the extension of those predicates which served to make it the referent in the original world.[63] For Kaplan these terms have two distinct components: the 'character' which remains constant across occasions of use and changes in selected referent, and the 'content' which can alter on each occasion and may be

---

[62] However, we should note that Kaplan himself sketches a picture of descriptions as terms of direct reference in the course of spelling out his 'dthat' operator, Kaplan (1978).

[63] We should be clear however that the notions do differ, since Kripke remains neutral on the vexed question of reference in worlds where the original referent does not exist, whereas Kaplan specifies the term will continue to refer, since the referent will be 'bought in' to that world by the proposition.

selected in other ways. Thus two utterances of 'today' have the same character, while an utterance of 'today' now and 'tomorrow' yesterday diverge in character but converge in content. The further item Kaplan distinguishes with regard to demonstratives is the attached demonstration.

Although it is impossible within our present inquiry to provide anything approaching a satisfactory account of the nature of demonstrations in Kaplan's work (not least since his treatment alters across time), it should be clear even from the most cursory examination that if salience does have a role to play it will concern this third element.[64] For however the nature of the demonstration is ultimately to be analysed and indeed whatever level it is to be accommodated at, it seems that a working demonstration must make appeal to a mutual notion of salience, since it is the demonstration which will carry the burden of communication. However, before tackling this issue let us return to the question of descriptions and see how they might be thought to fit this referential framework.

It seems we now have a rough picture of the way in which direct reference might be achieved: what is needed is for part of the semantics of the term in question (its character) to provide that it go straight to an object (its content), regardless of that object's satisfying of any predicative information, and that once it is attached it should never let go. Further we need some attached contextual feature like a demonstration to ensure that the object selected as the intended referent by the speaker is made publicly available for grasping in the right way by her audience. Initially it seems that we may have hit upon a very plausible solution to some of the difficulties which arose for the quantificational theory, for it seems that certain descriptions, which proved problematic for the Russellian, might be handled far more easily as terms of direct reference. For

---

[64] Kaplan (1977) initially advocates a 'three-entity' theory consisting of demonstration, demonstratum and 'sense' of the demonstration which he calls the 'Fregean theory of demonstrations', however he later recants and opts for a less entitative picture, (1989), where the demonstration is no more than a pragmatic appendage, at one stage writing: "I now see the demonstrations as playing the same role for true demonstratives as does pointing at oneself when using the first-person pronoun", (1989), footnote 35, p.514.

instance, the 'referential use' in Donnellan (1966) seemed to rest on precisely those cases where the description in question was acting as a referential term: what we were interested in explaining was how a description could be thought to pick out a particular object (i.e. the man in the dock), regardless of its properties. On reflection, with our present grasp of such a referential framework, we might be inclined to see this feature of descriptions as reflecting a semantic alignment with demonstratives, rather than as something to be explained pragmatically.

Furthermore it seems, *prima facie*, that treating incomplete descriptions in a referential way might also overcome the difficulties we encountered earlier.[65] We saw that the Russellian ran into problems with this class because the uniqueness needed for the quantificational analysis to come out correctly was lacking, yet if the terms were thought of as strictly referential then this difficulty is avoided altogether. The predicative content may not serve to secure a unique satisfier, but this is unimportant if the semantic structure of the phrase acts to deliver an actual referent. In this way incomplete descriptions might perhaps be thought of as akin to complex demonstratives, so that "The F is G" is semantically equivalent to the object-dependent proposition 'That F is G'.

However, suitable as this solution may at first appear for some descriptions, we should recognise its drawbacks. We should remember that such an account could only ever offer a partial treatment of the whole class of descriptions, for, as we noted at the outset, there are some descriptions (i.e. the Mates examples) which we simply cannot help but analyse with Russellian truth conditions. Furthermore, the other considerations in Chapter 1 concerning the object-independence of the semantic content of denoting expressions plus advances in quantifier theory indicate, I suggest, a fundamental anomaly in the

---

[65] This is perhaps a somewhat tendentious point in this context; for although making descriptions referential expressions *per se* might answer the Donnellan objections, it is not clear that treating them as Kaplanesque terms of direct reference would supply such a solution. The difficulties arise, initially, from Kaplan's rejection of the need for acquaintance with the object referred to by the use of a referential description and secondly, the role allotted to the descriptive content as helping to determine reference, once rigidified with 'dthat', (Kaplan, 1978, pp.24-28). Both these points run counter to the proposals of Donnellan in referential cases.

assimilation of all descriptions to terms of direct reference. However, our opponent might yet object that even if this is the case, all it shows is that descriptions are semantically ambiguous: sometimes they are to be treated quantificationally and at other times they operate referentially. So, it can be contended, even if direct reference is appealed to only as a partial solution still it is the case that the call for salience in the treatment of descriptions is negated. If the quantified account is needed only to cope with descriptions where incompleteness is not a problem, then it seems the solution of domain constraint alone will be enough to aid the original Russellian truth conditions.

However, we should recognise that, even if this were the case, the demand for the advocated aspect of salience will only be avoided if the direct reference relation does not also need to make appeal to this property, and this is something which we have not as yet established. Indeed, the contention is that recognition of the role and nature of demonstrations imposes its own demand for salience, thus even if the ambiguity thesis were ultimately to be adopted, the call for a mutual and non-consequential aspect of salience will remain. This will show that the Russellian is indeed warranted in appealing to a property which is independently motivated and not a mere theoretical construct arising from recognition of the problem of incompleteness.

In *Demonstratives* Kaplan writes:

> Since as we remarked earlier, the speaker and different members of the audience generally have different perspectives on the demonstration, it may appear slightly different to each of them. Thus each may take a slightly different demonstration to have been performed. Insofar as the agent and audience of a given context can differ in location, the location of a context is the location of the agent. Therefore the demonstratum of a given demonstration set in a given context will be the individual, if any, thereby demonstrated from the speaker's point of view. [66]

Now this idea, that a demonstration functions solely from a speaker's point of view seems intuitively correct; how else could I ostensively indicate an object except from my own stance? But now, we might wonder, how is a shared grasp of referent to be assured, if what I am doing when I use a demonstrative and

---

[66] Kaplan (1977), footnote 48, p.526

complete it with a demonstration is securing an object as referent only from my perspective how can I hope to communicate this to anyone else? Yet clearly we need to preserve public access to the intended referent, so how can we square the recognition that a demonstration makes reference to my point of view with the requirement that you see how I am aiming? It is all very well to claim that this is how demonstratives function, they 'streak straight to their referents' in some highly visible and accessible way, but before the salience theorist is rebutted it seems fair to ask: how does this happen? How do we move from a private intention to refer to a public recognition, via no more than words and deeds which, as we have already seen, only serve to pick out an object from the speaker's point of view?

The contention is that the only way to illuminate and explain how demonstrations and demonstratives function to make reference public will be by appeal to a mutual grasp of salience on behalf of interlocutors. As we saw earlier, commands like 'getting others to see the world as you do', 'standing in the speakers shoes', or 'seeing from the intended perspective' are all reliant on the mutual ground interlocutors are aware of. If it is right that a demonstrative succeeds in securing the intended referent 'from the point of view of the speaker' then, if communication is ever to be assured, what is needed is for both parties to have some insight and expectation concerning the mind and method of the other. In addition to this, it seems we want our audience to be aware of why they select α as the referent of my words when I succeed in directing their attention there. It is not just that one agent utters "That", points, and draws her partner's attention to α, but that her partner can reason 'S intends me to take α as her referent'. Only in this way can the appended demonstration or the demonstrative itself ever be successful as a communicative tool: by recognising and exploiting a common awareness of salience. I would suggest that there is not anything in the account of demonstratives or demonstrations thus far given, other than some additional notion of salience, which can rule out transgressions and preserve the possibility of communication; terms of direct reference unfettered by salience are worthless.

Of course, the appeal outlined above belongs primarily to the realm of pragmatics: we are concerned with an aid to communication, not necessarily some semantic feature of the term in question. However, this is not necessarily the case; indeed Kaplan himself seems at first to cede a possible semantic role to demonstrations, whereby the character or linguistic rules of the term requires the inclusion of a demonstration. This semantic inclusion for the contextual demonstration is also currently maintained by some, e.g. Reimer (1992).[67] However, Kaplan's later view seems to be that the character of a directly referential term requires no more than a directing intention on the behalf of the agent; thus the public demonstration of this intention is a purely pragmatic appendage.[68] So on one possible account of the nature of referential expressions, i.e. where demonstration is integral to the character or content of demonstratives, salience would warrant semantic level adoption; whereas on the alternative view, where demonstrations were mere pragmatic appendages and thus semantically 'off-the-record', salience would remain a pragmatic notion. Yet wherever salience appended demonstrations make an appearance, still the requirement for salience exists and thus the demand can be seen not to be consequential on the adoption of the Theory of Descriptions.[69]

The conclusions of this chapter have been positive: first, that there is more required for communication than simple questions of extension; secondly, that we are warranted in grouping the, possibly disparate, ways in which the intended extension of a phrase may be communicated together, under the general heading of the mutual recognition of salience and thirdly, that this property is independently motivated and not an ad hoc construction of the quantificational

---

[67] Kaplan's initial view being that "A demonstrative without an associated demonstration is incomplete....Something else - an associated demonstration - must be provided. The linguistic rules assume that such a demonstration accompanies each (demonstrative) use of a demonstration." (1977), p.490, which may indicate semantic inclusion for demonstrations. While Reimer (1992) advocates both contextual and intentional features as criterial to demonstratives.

[68] This latter position coincides with Kaplan's later account, (1989), p.582

[69] Since this is all that the Russellian need to establish to show that the third aspect of salience is independently warranted, it seems that we might remain agnostic on the finer details of the referential picture (i.e. whether salience is part of the literal content, semantic character or a contextual appendage).

approach. What is required now, having established at least the existence of this pragmatic notion, is to examine whether or not the Russellian can present a case for a semantic level adoption. This then is the task of the last chapter: we need to return to our Russellian theorist and see whether a case can be advanced that would license semantic level adoption, allowing her to overcome the difficulties of incompleteness and propose a fully adequate theory for descriptions. For, by constraining interlocutors to advert to the mutual property of salience as the semantically elided content of the description, the uniqueness required by the quantificational theory will be provided, whilst the shared ground necessary for communication will be insured.

5

Semantic Level Salience and its Critics

L et us recap on what has been established thus far: first, an assumption was made about the best way to treat the logical analysis of descriptive phrases and reasons for this preference were presented. It was then suggested that there exists a real problem for this approach, in the form of a certain subset of incomplete descriptions, which an appeal to a mutually recognisable aspect of salience might be thought to ameliorate. The task in hand then was to establish the existence of that aspect of salience, motivated independently of the quantificational account, which was done via recognition of general constraints upon any theory of communication. It was shown that this demand was perfectly general (since it could be seen in operation even in a diametrically opposed account of descriptions where they functioned as terms of direct reference) and thus it was concluded positively that there is a strong case for such a property. Our final question, then, is: having established this much, can it be of assistance to the quantificational theorist? We saw initially that the appeal needed by the Russellian, in order to avoid the problems of incompleteness, was to the property as incorporated in the content of descriptions. So, on the current proposal, the literal truth conditions of any descriptive phrase will be thought to contain mention of the property of salience. Thus "The dog is big" is analysed as a truncated utterance of a complete description, containing the elided material 'The (*most salient*) dog...'. The question then is, is salience available in this way?

The contention is that such an appeal is indeed admissible, for several reasons. In this final chapter I should like to consider, first, the positive reasons the Russellian has for making such a move. These will concern primarily the notions of explanatory power and best explanation, plus the methodological

appeal of preserving a unified, unambiguous approach to descriptive terms. These positive reasons will then be reinforced by a consideration of some of the possible objections to a semantic adoption of salience and an indication of how well the account can deflect or deflate these criticisms. In order to do this, it will be helpful to compare and contrast the approach advocated here to a *prima facie* similar account offered in Lewis' 'Scorekeeping in a Language Game'.[70] I shall then consider some recent objections to salience based approaches: first, from Schiffer, that the approach is simply wrong or insufficient (failing in cases of conflict between the intended referent and the most salient F, and guilty of circularity or vacuity); secondly, that the approach is in conflict with earlier accepted features of the quantificational account (viz. the accepted solution to the Donnellan cases and the object-independence of descriptions); finally, I shall consider a concern of Recanati's over salience-ranking. The conclusion will be that, on closer inspection, none of these objections serve to defeat the thesis and thus, in the absence of a good argument against, and in the light of positive reasons for, the thesis is warranted.

Initially then, we should note just what kind of property we have established: it is to be something which both interlocutors are aware of and, furthermore, which they can both anticipate and expect the other to be aware of. It is something, the mutual aspect of which, agents may consciously exploit, both in the search for the correct extension and in their reflections on the speaker's intentions in her moves to direct attention. Thus, I would suggest, we have a property whose nature and whose function make it highly amenable to inclusion in truth conditions. Permitting the semantic adoption of a property with such a profile, especially as it allows us to preserve a very successful theory of descriptions in the light of an otherwise intractable problem, would seem far from profligate. In addition to this we should not underestimate the considerable theoretical appeal of preserving a single unified account, sufficient to handle all descriptive phenomena. Positing a semantic level ambiguity (the route which is perhaps the most viable alternative in the face of incompleteness if the present

---

[70] Lewis (1979)

approach is rejected) is a serious step, with unpleasant consequences for accounts of our understanding of definite descriptions and logical form. Thus, since we have antecedent reason to prefer the quantificational approach and since we have established the existence of such a good candidate property to overcome its difficulties, the option is one I believe we should pursue.

The approach advocated in this thesis is somewhat similar to that propounded by Lewis (1979), whereby:

> The proper treatment of descriptions must be more like this: "the F" denotes x if and only if x is the most salient F in the domain of discourse, according to some contextually determined salience ranking. The first of our two sentences means that the most salient pig is grunting but the most salient pig with floppy ears is not. The second means that the most salient dog got in a fight with some less salient dog.[71]

Although Lewis never explicitly states in his paper whether he accepts a Russellian analysis of definite descriptions, if he did, then the construal of an utterance such as "the pig is grunting" as *meaning* 'the most salient pig is grunting' might suggest he was also inclined toward a semantic level inclusion; however, this is not necessarily the case. [72]

The main aim of Lewis' paper is to establish and elaborate the special notion of 'conversational score'. This is somewhat analogous to the complex n-tuple of information that makes up the score at any stage of, say, a baseball game, e.g. <runs scored by each team, time elapsed, balls remaining,...>, which determines which moves or what play is admissible in the context. Lewis is concerned with formalising notions like 'presupposition' and 'permissibility', common grasp of which makes communication possible, and which combine to form a similar kind of 'score' for a conversation; this delimits which moves or interpretations are open to speaker and hearer. Components of the score (of which conversational salience is one) are vital in many respects, as Lewis notes:

---

[71] Lewis (1979), p.348

[72] For some comments in the paper indicate he may have a Kaplanesque analysis in mind, with salience as part of the mechanisms of reference, e.g. p.350. While a more prolonged treatment in Lewis (1973) suggests treating 'the' as a special connective: "□→ will serve as a connective of *contextually definite descriptions*", p.114. See pp.111-117.

> What play is correct depends on the score. Sentences depend for their truth-value, or for their acceptability in other respects, on the components of conversational score at the stage of conversation at which they are uttered. Not only aspects of acceptability of an uttered sentence may depend on score. So may other semantic properties that play a role in determining aspects of acceptability. For instance, the constituents of an uttered sentence - subsentences, names, predicates, etc.,- may depend on the score for their intension or extension.[73]

In the case of definite descriptions, it is the salience ranking in the context which determines extension; to select an object adversion must be made to an objects place on a salience scale, thus "denotation of definite descriptions is score dependent".[74]

Lewis' suggestion here seems to be that, in order to deliver a complete truth condition for a description, pragmatic features of the context will need to be alluded to. This relates back to our discussion of semantics and pragmatics at the beginning of Chapter 2, where we noted that there are arguments (particularly as advanced by Kaplan (1977, 1978)) to show that pragmatic features may, in some cases, be prior to semantic features (i.e. the former is required for an account of the latter). Lewis' suggestion then seems to be that descriptions belong to the class of linguistic items which must take note of the conversational score before a truth conditional analysis of utterances in which they occur can be given. This runs counter to the Russellian contention that descriptions can be analysed without direct mention of an object or context, and views (incomplete) descriptive expressions as more akin to the demonstrative or indexical terms of Kaplan.

Clearly then, the account offered in this thesis differs from (this interpretation of) that already extant in Lewis' paper; in the first case, the notion of salience appealed to here (i.e. the mutually accessible, consciously exploitable aspect) differs from the undifferentiated account in Lewis and, secondly, this aspect is viewed as part of the actual predicative content of a quantificationally analysed definite description and not as part of the referential mechanisms utilised

---

[73] ibid. p.345
[74] ibid. p.349

to supply a complete (object-involving) truth condition for a referential description. It seems then that, while both accounts agree that the correct analysis of "The F" is 'the most salient F', there is serious divergence after this point. However, the suggestion is that, this being the case, the present approach is to be preferred, for it is able to overcome certain objections levelled at salience based approaches, which the Lewis account seems unable to. For, not only have we seen that at least some descriptions cannot be analysed referentially, but it also seems preferable to preserve a unified account if possible, rather than positing the semantic ambiguity which adopting a Lewis-style salience approach would entail.[75] Not only this, but we should also be clear that the salience approach advocated here is able to avoid certain difficulties which might otherwise be levelled. To illustrate this, I should like to turn to look now at some problems which have been raised for this approach.

There are cases, as Schiffer has objected, where the apparently most salient murderer may fail to be the one intended as the satisfier of the description. He writes:

> This suggestion presupposes that the description *the most salient F* will be the most salient of the candidate definite descriptions, but that is simply false: the fact that the notion of salience occurs in a description does not make the description the most salient description. When the speaker utters 'The F is G', the description *the most salient F* is at best one of any number of definite descriptions that might be meant, and it need not be the most salient description. For example, when a speaker attributively utters 'The murderer must be insane', what she intuitively means is that *Smith's murderer* -- or *the murderer of that person* -- must be insane, and not that the most salient murderer must be insane.[76]

To see this more clearly, we might imagine a case where the speaker and a famous murderer (let us say, the now-reformed, Sweeny Todd) approach the body of poor dead Smith and the speaker utters "The murderer must be insane", intending to denote the murderer of Smith and not her erstwhile companion. Yet on the undifferentiated appeal to salience (as is found in Lewis' approach) it is surely her companion who satisfies the completed description 'The *most salient*

---

[75] See, e.g. Kripke (1977), p.268
[76] Schiffer (1995), p.115

murderer'. However, as we have already noted, the notion of salience appealed to as the elided completer on this picture is not merely the neutral notion of an object already salient in the context or conversation. Rather, it is the more refined notion of an object *raised to salience* by the speaker; without any action by the speaker it may well be the case that 'ambient' salience denotes Sweeny Todd, but the onus is thus on the speaker to displace this famous murderer in favour of the murderer of Smith. For salience to operate properly in such a context it is correct that the speaker must act to raise the relevance of her intended referent, but this is not to claim that salience does not operate correctly here, but to recognise the precise aspect of the property adverted to.

Schiffer raises a second objection to salience based theories, which also seems to reflect a failure to differentiate the appropriate aspects of salience. He writes:

> The description *the most salient F* is itself incomplete: salient in what respect? I strongly suspect that when this is spelled out the intended description will amount to the circular *the F to which I am referring in this utterance of 'the F'*.[77]

The thought is that since what makes one object salient is the fact that it is the one being referred to then the property is circular; it seeks to specify a unique extension only by relying on the speaker's act of intending a referent. In this way it is reference that does the work, while appeal to salience is merely a cosmetic appendage. Yet, I suggest, the Schiffer objection is misdirected if it is thought to damage the mutual notion of salience we have been concerned with.

What we need to keep hold of is the distinction noted all along between the most basic aspect of salience and any other; in one form the connection to intended referent is indeed insolubly tight, but move away from this aspect and distance is created. The consequential aspect of salience is as a property which attaches to any object simply as a result of its being the subject of a referential act; when a speaker intends to denote α, α has no choice but to move to the centre of her attention and thus to be the salient object for her. In this case

---

[77] ibid.

Schiffer is right to believe there is little more to the notion than reference; it is a by-product of that original act and thus there seems little reason to posit it as an autonomous property. However, the notion of salience we have seen to be necessary moves beyond this, it must operate *prior* to decisions on extension in order to ameliorate and underpin the latter. How is it that I can get my audience to take α as the extension of my utterance? The answer, as we have seen, is that I must succeed in making α salient for them, I must force their attention to the object and thus ensure that they recognise it as the unique object I have in mind. What Schiffer fails to note when he objects that salience collapses into reference is the distinction between *making something salient by thinking about it* and *thinking about something because it is salient.* It is only against the former that the charge of circularity can be laid and yet it is the latter which we have been appealing to to explain how contextual reference can come about.

A second form of objection to this approach is that salience appended descriptions fail to fit with some already accepted features of the quantificational approach. For instance, it might be thought that the pragmatic solution already accepted for referential uses is no longer available to us, or that we have now contravened the original object-independence of descriptions. However, I would suggest that on closer inspection salience can be made to cohere with most of the preceding proposals concerning descriptions.

As we saw in Chapter 2, referential uses were to be explained in virtue of a false proposition expressed which nonetheless succeeded in conveying a second proposition meant. Thus in the case of a referential utterance of "The murderer must be insane", said of the innocent Jones in the dock, what is said is literally false but a further, fitting, proposition is conveyed. On the approach advocated here however, what has literally been said is 'The *salient* murderer is insane', and this appears to have repercussions for the proposed solution. There appear to be two, closely related issues here: first, how the action of making an object salient interacts with the overt predicative content and, secondly, how the contextually-bound predicate 'being most salient' interacts with the other predicates in the

description. Turning initially to the first issue: on the approach advocated here, it should be clear that any proposition conveyed must concern that object made salient in the context. However, exactly how we see the act of making an object salient as interacting with the utterance made will effect which object is ultimately spoken about.

Returning to the court-scene: imagine we see two men before us. One is the innocent Jones (believed by all to be guilty) and the other is the infamous Sweeny Todd (presently unrecognised), but both are behaving very strangely. In discussing this scene, the speaker utters:
"That man next to Jones seems very odd. But it is the murderer who is the most strange!"
On the usual Donnellan solution, whatever the literal content of the second sentence, the speaker will succeed in conveying a proposition concerning Jones. On the salience-governed approach, however, this is not necessarily the case. For Todd appears to have been in some way raised to salience by the first part of the utterance and, thus, even allowing that the object spoken about must be the one made salient, the speaker will still end up saying something true of Todd and not false of Jones.

There is, however, a second option at this juncture, whereby the salience-theorist might claim that the act of making something salient is always relative to a given phrase or part of an utterance. In this case, the original Donnellan style solution might be preserved, for the description would no longer concern Todd, since he has in no way been raised to salience with respect to the latter part of the utterance. In this case it would be Jones who succeeds as the object made salient, relative to the description "the murderer", since all believe him to be guilty, and thus the speaker says something false of him. However, I should like to suggest that there is no absolute requirement for the salience-theorist to commit herself definitely to one view or the other at this stage. For it is simply unclear whether we should expect the speaker to be able to speak about Jones and to convey a

proposition about him, or whether intuition and theory demand that this aim is frustrated by the prior salience of Todd.[78]

However, there is a further issue to be raised, as we noted above, concerning the interaction of predicative material within a single descriptive phrase. This is a highly complex matter which can unfortunately receive only a cursory examination within this thesis; yet it is clear that there are real issues to be raised concerning the way in which the predicate 'is most salient' combines with the overt predicate 'is F'.[79] The question is whether the full formulation of the content is correctly given by either a schema such as:

i) 'The x such that (x is most-saliently-a-murderer) is insane' or

ii) 'The x such that (x is most salient & x is a murderer) is insane'

On (i), in our envisaged court-room drama, the description is satisfied by Todd (if the initial option above concerning the raising of Todd to salience by the first part of the utterance is accepted) or nothing (if objects are thought to be made salient only relative to parts of utterances or particular phrases). Whereas, in (ii), no single object satisfies the conjunction of predicates, although part of the descriptive condition is met by Jones and part of it by Todd. I would suggest, the Russellian may have some reason to prefer the former option here, since the latter move seems to take us perilously close to asserting an equivalence between incomplete descriptions and demonstratives. There seems little reason to preserve a formulation such as:

iii) [The x: x is most salient] (x is a murderer & x is insane)

as opposed to 'That x..'. On the other hand, there is at least some intuitive support for (i) to be derived from the thought that it is taking x to be a murderer which leads to x getting into the conversation in the first place; so the predicate

---

[78] Although, it might be suggested that the latter option is somewhat preferable, since it apparently coheres better with certain aspects of discourse theory.

[79] For a more detailed examination of the issues involved than can be offered here, see Braun (1994), pp.202-213 or Richard (1993). Evans (1982) also touches on this issue in connection with complex demonstratives, seeming to allow a proposition to be conveyed by a demonstrative containing a mis-description, even though the phrase literally fails of reference: "Thus if a speaker intends to refer to a boy in saying 'That girl is F', he cannot have succeeded in doing so, even if his intentions are perfectly plain; for his utterance cannot be judged *correct* even if the boy is F.", p.319.

must be relevant to how the candidate is actually singled out, whether they are genuinely referred to in the content of the utterance or not.

Choices made here clearly have further repercussions for the solution to Donnellan cases: for if the former option is pursued, so that salience in definite descriptions requires an object to be saliently-F, then, even at the level of proposition meant, nothing is conveyed about Jones. Since Jones cannot be raised to salience by any utterance with the predicative content 'is a murderer', it seems we not only have an utterance with a semantic content which does not literally concern Jones but also one which may fail to countenance a conveyed proposition about him. This is a complex area and it is hard to see how intuition or theory, concerning whether or not the speaker manages to convey a proposition, even when the predicative content is misleading, demands we should go. However, we should note that, even though adoption of this salience position appears to lead to the conclusion that S does not succeed in conveying a proposition about Jones, this does not necessarily entail that there is no communication in such a case. As Kripke has shown, there may still be occasions where, even though S fails to say p or convey p, her audience may still know that a proposition like p is the one S is trying to communicate.[80] If this is correct, then adoption of salience might not lead us so far from a (fairly) standard position here, whereby A can still know what S has in mind, even where she fails to say or convey what she intends, e.g. by choosing an inappropriate descriptive condition to convey her thought.

Alternatively, if the salience theorist were to be able to take the second option above, without making incomplete descriptions akin to complex demonstratives, she might preserve the claim that, while the proposition expressed fails to fit the speaker's intentions, there can still be successful communication at the level of conveyed proposition meant. I would suggest then that, although this salience based approach creates some problems with a

---

[80] See Kripke's discussion of the mistaken identity of Smith and Jones, seen raking leaves; (1977), pp.261-264.

straightforward adoption of the usual Donnellan solution, it does not place it completely out of reach and, even if it should ultimately lead one to reject the claim that a fitting proposition is conveyed by a mis-description, this is not necessarily entirely out of kilter with any intuitions we may have in these highly complex matters.

A further tension between the salience approach and initial claims about denoting expressions becomes apparent when we come to look at their object-independent nature. The problem is that, *prima facie*, by making descriptions advert to elided salience, we have lost the original aspect of object-independence, elaborated by Evans, which served to motivate the non-referential treatment initially. Evans, in his construal of Russell's Principle, told us that to entertain a thought concerning a referential expression one must possess discriminatory knowledge of the object in question, but that this was not the case for denoting expressions. Yet, with the addition of salience at a semantic level, we seem to have made it a criterion of understanding that, at least for some descriptions, the agent *know which* object is salient. However, although this objection does appear to hold against the present approach we should remember, in the first case, the distinction between the aspects of object-independence we drew at the outset, and, secondly, that it is a form of complaint that will hold against *any* feasible (i.e. context-dependent) ellipsed content.

As noted in Chapter 1, a major recommendation for the quantificational approach was that some descriptions appeared to possess a semantic content which was not reliant on the existence of the particular object or the agent's acquaintance with it; the presence of a vacuous description was not enough to make whole propositions in which it occurred entirely meaningless. What this seemed to reflect was the absence of a logical object-dependency; i.e. that within the truth conditions of the expression reference is made to an object, the existence of which is thus a criterion for semantic content. Descriptions, it seemed, could possess some content even if their extension was empty. However, maintaining that descriptions are not curtailed by this constraint is still

consistent with allowing that some descriptions may be subject to the epistemic form of object-dependency we recognised: that without the existence of the object/acquaintance with it, the particular thought to be expressed by the denoting phrase is not available. Drawing these two notions apart means that an utterance such as "The dog wants to come in", in a context where no dog is salient, can still possess a degree of semantic content (since its truth conditional analysis, which mentions salience, will not mention an object directly), even though there is no thought expressed by it on this occasion. In this way then, it seems, although incomplete descriptions fail the criterion of epistemic or psychological object-independence, which Evans predicted would hold for them, we can preserve the intuition that they remain logically object-independent.

Furthermore, we should be clear that this epistemic object-dependency will hold for incomplete descriptions if *any* context-dependent elided material is allowed; e.g. "The dog *(beside that tree)* is big" depends on the existence of the demonstratively selected tree for the availability of the thought. Thus, if the objections to the pragmatic solutions offered in Chapter 3 are compelling, it will be the case that any adequate solution to this difficulty is in tension with Evans' claim. I would suggest then that, although the adoption of salience means that some descriptions may depend on objects for the availability of a thought, the Russellian can preserve the idea that, unlike true referring expressions, it is not the existence of the particular object in question that is a prerequisite for their semantic content.

The last objections I should like to consider stem from Recanati, who, although he considers ellipsed salience, explicitly rejects placing it on a par with other mentioned properties:

> Narrowly interpreted, Lewis's suggestion would reduce to the claim 'the F' is elliptical for 'the most salient F'. But this sounds odd. When I say that the dog has fleas, what I say involves the property of being a dog and the property of having fleas, but it does not seem that the property of being 'salient' is involved in the same sense.[81]

---

[81] Recanati, 'Domains of Discourse', p.12

Yet, it is unclear exactly what force the claim, that salience 'does not seem' to be involved in the same way as overt predicates, has. For the claim here just is that interlocutors must advert to salience to decide on questions of extension, even though the property is very rarely mentioned in the vocalised form; unless I can establish which is the salient dog, I cannot entertain the thought Recanati wishes to convey by saying the dog has fleas. However, he goes on to offer further reasons why salience should not be introduced in the truth conditions:

> From this point of view there is an obvious difference between 'The dog has fleas' and 'The most salient dog has fleas'. The first utterance can be understood even if one does not realise that there is more than one dog in the universe, or a salience ranking among dogs; the latter cannot.[82]

Yet with all that we have seen concerning the requirements of communication it seems questionable to what extent the former utterance can be truly understood if the latter is not grasped. For if it is right that Russellian truth conditions are what must be grasped to understand the utterance at all, then they have to be appended or refined in some way to deal with incomplete descriptions and thus it is just question-begging to assume that 'The dog has fleas' can be understood without grasping 'The salient dog has fleas'. Furthermore Recanati's suggestion that salience cannot operate where one believes the object in question is unique in the universe seems misplaced; for the consequential aspect salience will still occur and the further act of communicating which object is denoted may again depend on salience recognition, unless we can be sure that all our interlocutors share our belief in its uniqueness. Recanati's final objection then is that to incorporate salience in the truth conditions 'sounds odd', yet on reflection even this intuitive claim may be questionable.

So, I would suggest that positive arguments stemming from best explanation, explanatory power and the ability of this solution to preserve a comprehensive and unambiguous theory of descriptions, plus the evident ability of the differentiated notion of salience to meet Schiffer's objections and cohere with the most fundamental intuitions which prompted the quantificational account

---

[82] ibid.

initially, should all combine to warrant a semantic inclusion for salience. Thus that the analysis of the predicative content of an incomplete description as containing ellipsed mention of salience is the most promising approach for the Russellian in this area.

Conclusion:

Recapitulating: the aim of this thesis has been to try to offer a plausible defence, available to the Russellian, in the face of a very serious objection from her critics. It was argued initially that the analysis of descriptions, along the lines originally proposed by Russell, whereby their logical form is that of quantification as opposed to reference, was supported first, by the evident differences between empty descriptions and vacuous referring terms; secondly, by the failure of a requirement that the agent 'know which' object is in question in order to understand (at least some (attributive)) descriptions; thirdly, by the clearly non-referential role of descriptions bound by higher acts of quantification (as in the Mates examples). Finally, it was suggested that recent advances in quantificational theory (Wiggins (1980)) and arguments extending the scope of Russell's approach (Neale (1990)) both yielded support for such a quantificational approach. It was then contended that the major obstacle in pursuing this approach was the issue of incompleteness and that the seriousness of this problem, combined with the insufficiency of merely pragmatic solutions, must lead to an alteration in the truth conditions of incomplete descriptions. It was suggested that the best form such an alteration could take would be to advert to mention of the property of salience, as the elided content in these cases.

Salience was proposed as a mutually accessible property, licensed independently by the demands already exercised from communication; which differed from versions already extant in Lewis (1979) and objected to in Schiffer (1995), since it concerned the active raising of an object to salience in a mutually manifestable way. The objections thus raised by Schiffer were seen to miss their target in connection with this consciously accessible, mutual notion. It was however seen that adoption of this property into the truth conditions of descriptions raised some difficult questions for the Russellian, concerning the interaction of salience and overt predicates, but it was suggested that these concerns were not necessarily fatal to the account.

In conclusion, we should note that there are also other objections to be raised to such an approach; for instance it certainly serves to cloud the distinction between semantics and pragmatics, which we tried to impose at the outset, if we allow a pragmatic property such as salience to be incorporated at a semantic level. Furthermore, evidence against elided descriptive material may also be discovered if we look at the way in which descriptions are used in natural language, for as Gabriel Segal has pointed out, elided material is treated as though it were overt in ordinary discourse: although it is phonetically inert it is semantically active.[83] Yet if you try and treat the elided material in descriptions in this way then you get some fairly strange results.

Imagine three fragments of conversation (where elided material is represented as '[*]'):

<u>Case One:</u>

S_1: "Did you know dogs can [$_{vp}$ fly]?"

S_2: "No, they can't [$_{vp}$*]"

S_3: "I agree: dogs don't fly"

<u>Case Two:</u>

S_1: "The dog [$_{np}$which Harry owns] is big"

S_2: "No, the dog [$_{np}$*] is not"

S_3: "I agree: the dog which Harry owns is small"

<u>Case Three:</u>

S_1: "The dog [$_{np}$] is big"

S_2: "No, the dog which Harry owns is small"

---

[83] This point is made in Larson and Segal (forthcoming)

In the first two cases the uses of elided material seem perfectly acceptable; there is no problem with a speaker referring to the elided content in an earlier utterance as if it had been vocalised by that speaker. However, in the third case when the elided material (which remember on this view is already very much a part of the vocalised description) is referred to as semantically present by the interlocutor the results seem strange: S_2's reference to the covert information seems out of place. The argument, then, is that this is because, unlike (1-2), here the information was no part of what was said by the earlier speaker, elided or otherwise. This objection relates to the problem linguists often see with this kind of solution: if elided material is really syntactically present, then it should be recoverable on purely syntactic grounds, or at the very least there should be independent syntactic grounds for positing the deleted information. This appeared to be the case with our first two examples but not with the third.

However, the suggestion is that none of these final objections are sufficient to pronounce definitely against the salience solution: for it is uncertain exactly what weight we should attach to the intuition (even if we have it) that Case Three is different to the earlier cases nor to the suggestion that there is no linguistic trace available in any instance of an incomplete description. Moreover, none of these putative problems should obscure the fact that, if the arguments against pragmatic solutions in Chapter 3 are convincing, then ellipsis must rank at the top of possible options for the theorist concerned to preserve the Russellian approach and, this being the case, salience is the best option for elliptical content.

It appears, however, that the ultimate credence afforded to the position put forward in this thesis may come to rest with advances in cognitive psychology; for it will only be if questions concerning how we actually settle on an intended referent are answered by calling on a property such as the one outlined here, that the approach may be vindicated. Although there does seem to be some experimental evidence to support this position, it is clearly too early for

cognitive psychology to mitigate one way or another on this issue.[84] However,

even with this degree of indeterminacy remaining, I should like to conclude that,

for the present, if one wishes to preserve the Russellian insight into the logical

form of descriptions without falling foul of the intractable difficulties of

incompleteness, then one must look to append the truth conditional analysis with

a property such as that advocated here in the form of salience.

---

[84] See for instance Baldwin (1993); although note that the notion of salience rejected here is
what I have called the 'neutral' aspect, while the property actually appealed to is a mutually
anticipated property exploited in demonstrations which perfectly fits the profile of consequential
salience. Also Crawley and Stevenson (1990) illustrating the preference for less explicit terms
of reference according to the increased salience of the intended referent in a context, elliptical
terms of reference (including, in this study, pronouns) being the most inexplicit terms available
and thus reserved for occasions where the intended referent was most salient.

Bibliography:

Baldwin, D. A. (1993). Early Referential Understanding: Infant's ability to
recognise referential acts for what they are. *Developmental Psychology*
29, 832-843.

Barwise, J., and R. Cooper (1981). Generalised Quantifiers and Natural
Language. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 4, 159-219.

Barwise, J. and J. Perry (1983). *Situations and Attitudes*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT
Press.

Braun, D. (1994). Structured Characters and Complex Demonstratives.
Philosophical Studies 74, 193-219

Crawley, R. and R. Stevenson (1990). Reference in Single Sentences and Texts.
Journal of Psycholinguistic Research 19, 191-210.

Davies, M. (1987). Relevance and Mutual Knowledge. *Brain and Behavioural
Sciences* 10, 716-717

Donnellan, K. (1966). Reference and Definite Descriptions. *Philosophical Review*
77, 281-304.

Dummett, M. (1973). *Frege: Philosophy of Language*. London: Duckworth.

Evans, G. (1977). Pronouns, Quantifiers and Relative Clauses (I). *Canadian
Journal of Philosophy 7*, 467-536.

Evans, G. (1982). *The Varieties of Reference*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Fine, K. (1975). Vagueness, Truth and Logic. *Synthese* 30, 265-300.

Frege, G. (1879). *Begriffsschrift*. English translation in J. van Heijenoort (ed.),
From   Frege to Gödel. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press,
1967.

Frege, G. (1893). Uber Sinn and Bedeutung. *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und
Philosophische Kritik*. Translated as "On Sense and Reference," in P. T.
Geach and M. Black (eds.), *Translations from the Philosophical
Writings of Gottlob Frege*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1952, 56-78.

Frege, G. (1979). Philosophical and Mathematical Correspondence, H. Hermes,

    F. Kambartel, F. Kaulback (eds.). Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Gazadar, G. (1979). *Pragmatics: Implicature, Presupposition and Logical Form.*

    New York Academic Press.

Geach, P. (1962). *Reference and Generality.* Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University

    Press.

Grice, H. P. (1957). Meaning. In *Studies in the Way of Words.* Cambridge,

    Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Grice, H. P. (1967). Logic and Conversation. (William James Lectures.) In

    Studies in the Way of Words. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University

    Press, 1989.

Grice, H. P. (1968). Utterer's Meaning, Sentence Meaning and Word Meaning.

    In *Studies in the Way of Words.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University

    Press, 1989.

Grice, H. P. (1969). Utterer's Meaning and Intentions. *Philosophical Review* 78,

    147-177.

Heck, R. (1995). The Sense of Communication. *Mind 104,* 79-106.

Hylton, P. (1993). Functions and Propositional Functions in *Principia*

    Mathematica. In A. D. Irvine and G. A. Wedeking (ed.) *Russell and*

    Analytic Philosophy. Toronto: University of Toronto Press

    Incorporated, 1993

Kaplan, D. (1977) Demonstratives. In J. Almog, J. Perry, and H. Wettstein (eds.),

    Themes from Kaplan. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989, 481-

    563.

Kaplan, D. (1978). Dthat. In Yourgrau (ed.), *Demonstratives.* Oxford University

    Press, 1990, 11-34.

Kaplan, D. (1989). Afterthoughts. In J. Almog, J. Perry, and H. Wettstein (eds.),

    Themes from Kaplan. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989, 565-

    614

Kremer, M. (1994). The Argument of 'On Denoting'. *Philosophical Review* 103,

    249-297.

Kripke, S. A. (1977). Speaker Reference and Semantic Reference. In P. A.
    French, T. E. Uehling, Jr., and H. K. Wettstein, *Contemporary
    Perspectives in the Philosophy of Language*. Minneapolis: University of
    Minnesota Press, 6-27.

Larson and Segal, (forthcoming). *Knowledge of Language*. MIT Press.

Levinson, S. (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambidge University Press.

Lewis, D. (1973). *Counterfactuals*. Oxford: Blackwell

Lewis, D. (1979). Scorekeeping in a Language Game. *Journal of Philosophical
    Logic* 8, 339-359.

Mates, B. (1973). Descriptions and Reference. *Foundations of Language* 10,
    409-418.

Meinong, A. (1904). The Theory of Objects. In *Untersuchungen zür
    Gegenstandstheorie und Psychologie*. In G. Isemenger (ed.), *Logic and
    Philosophy*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968.

Mill, J. S. (1843). *System of Logic*. London: Longmans

Neale, S. (1990). *Descriptions*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Recanati, F. (forthcoming). Domains of Discourse. (Quoted with the author's
    permission).

Reimer, M. (1992). Three Views of Demonstrative Reference. *Synthese 93*, 373-
    402.

Richard, M. (1993). Articulated Terms. In Tomberlin (ed.) *Philosophical
    Perspectives 7: Language and Logic*. Ridgeview, Atascadero.

Russell, B. (1903). *The Principles of Mathematics*. London: George Allen and
    Unwin.

Russell, B. (1905). On Denoting. *Mind* 14, 479-493. (Reprinted in R. C. Marsh
    (ed.), *Logic and Knowledge*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1956,
    41-56.)

Russell, B. (1911). Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description.
    In *Mysticism and Logic*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1917, 152-
    167.

Russell, B. (1912). The Nature of Sense Data: A Reply to Mr. Dawes Hicks. In J.
G. Slater (ed.), *Logical and Philosophical Papers 1909-1913*. London:
Routledge, 1992.

Russell, B. (1912). *The Problems of Philosophy*. Oxford Paperbacks, 1968.

Russell, B. (1918). The Philosophy of Logical Atomism. Lectures delivered in
London in 1918, Monist 28 and 29. (Reprinted in R. C. Marsh (ed.),
Logic and Knowledge. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1956.)

Schiffer, S. (1972). *Meaning*. Oxford: Clarendon Press

Schiffer, S. (1995). Descriptions, Indexicals and Belief Reports: Some Dilemmas
(But Not the Ones You Expect). *Mind* 104, 107-131.

Sellars, W. (1954). Presupposing. *Philosophical Review* 63, 197-215.

Sperber, D., and D. Wilson (1986). *Relevance*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Stalnaker, R. (1973). Presuppositions. *Journal of Philosophical Logic 2*, 447-
456.

Strawson, P. F. (1950). On Referring. *Mind* 59, 320-344. (Reprinted in Strawson
(1971), 1-27.)

Strawson, P. F. (1964). Identifying Reference and Truth-Values. *Theoria* 30, 96-
118. (Reprinted in Strawson (1971), 75-95.)

Strawson, P. F. (1971). *Logico-Linguistic Papers*. London: Methuen.

Wettstein, H. (1981). Demonstrative Reference and Definite Descriptions.
Philosophical Studies 40, 241-257.

Whitehead, A. N., and B. Russell (1927). *Principia Mathematica*, vol.I, 2nd ed.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wiggins, D. (1980). "Most" and "All": Some Comments on a Familiar
Programme and on the Logical Form of Quantified Sentences. In M.
Platts (ed.) *Reference, Truth and Reality*. London: Routledge and Kegan
Paul, 318-346.