

The Language Revolution
Russell Marcus
Fall 2015

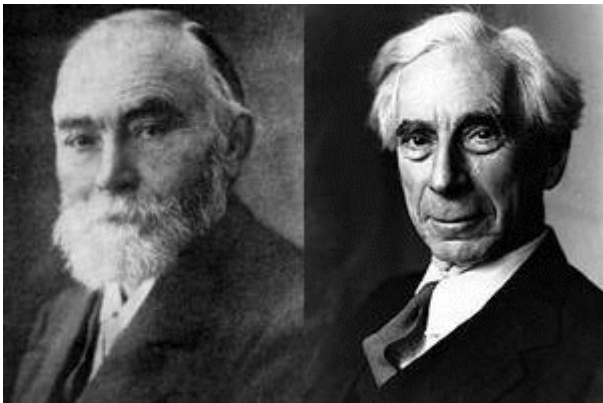
Class #8
Finishing Russell's "Descriptions"
On to Strawson

Business

- Midterm?
 - It would be October 8
 - Paper due on October 13
- Thursday:
 - Cameron on Donnellan
 - GTA
- Today:
 - Finish Mark's Presentation
 - My Russell Summary
 - Jake and Siri on Strawson
 - Finishing descriptivism

Russell's Response to Frege

- Russell is partly motivated by his concerns about Frege's profligacy and largely motivated by his desire to avoid truth-value gaps
- He does not oppose propositions.
- But he doesn't want quite so many abstract objects.
- And the notion of a proposition having meaning but lacking truth value seems odd.
- Russellian propositions are different from Fregean propositions.
- His solution to Frege's puzzles avoids senses for names.
 - He also avoids the second concern about analyticity.



Russellian Propositions

- Grammatical form is not (in many cases) proper logical form.
 - Logical form reveals truth.
- A real name has to name something.
- Most so-called names are really abbreviations.
 - Names are really definite descriptions.
 - Definite descriptions are really general quantified formulas.
- Fregean propositions are and contain senses.
- Russellian propositions contain objects and their properties.
 - Logically proper propositions contain the actual thing named.
 - 'That (spot in my field of vision) is red.'
 - avoids senses - Ockham's razor
- We must recast sentences with so-called names to reveal their true logical form.

Russell on Definite Descriptions

The king of France is bald.

- There is a king of France.
- There is only one king of France.
- That thing is bald.
- “Propositions verbally about “a so-and-so” are found to contain no constituent represented by this phrase. And that is why such propositions can be significant even when there is no such thing as a so-and-so” (68)



Russell on Cognitive Content

- 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' are abbreviated descriptions.
 - ▶ Thus 'Hesperus is Phosphorus' is not really of the form 'a=b'.
 - ▶ It has content only because it is not really an identity.
- Logically proper names never raise questions of various cognitive content.
 - ▶ 'a=a' and 'a=b' have the same content when logically proper names are used.



Russell on Empty Reference

- 'Sherlock Holmes lives at 221B Baker Street' is a disguised description.
 - ▶ Frege packs the description into the mode of presentation: the sense of 'Sherlock Holmes'.
 - ▶ Russell sees the name as an abbreviation for the description.
- Frege has truth-value gaps
 - ▶ Referential compositionality + names without bearers = sentences with no truth value
- Russell recasts such sentences as including an existential claim.
 - ▶ There is a thing, called Sherlock Holmes, with such and such other properties.
 - ▶ Since there is no such thing, the claim is false.
 - ▶ Look, Ma! No truth-value gaps!

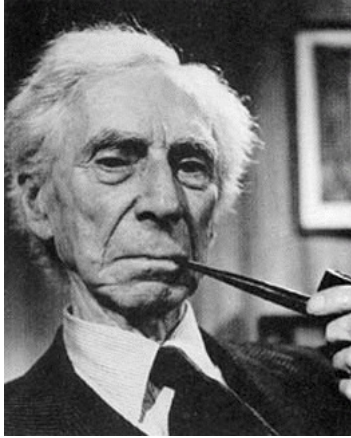


Russell on Opaque Contexts

Lois Lane believes that Superman can fly.
Superman is Clark Kent.
So, Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent can fly.

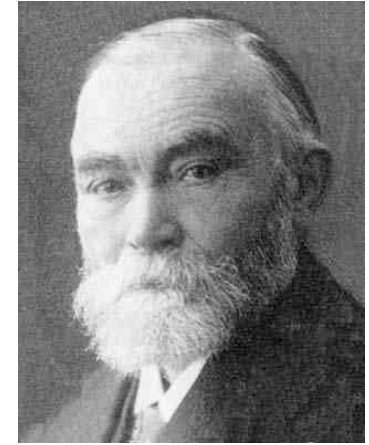
- 'Lois Lane believes that Superman can fly' does not contain a thing called Superman.
 - We must replace 'Superman' with a description.
- The description of Superman (according to Lois Lane) is different from the description of Clark Kent.
- So, the invalid inference is blocked.





Russell versus Frege

Extensionalism versus Intensionalism



- Frege and Russell agree that names are not just Millian denotations.
- Frege thinks that names have connotation, too.
 - Each object has different senses associated with it.
 - Different people can grasp the object under different modes of presentation.
- For Russell, ordinary names are abbreviations for the description which Frege associates with the sense of a name.
 - Descriptions are themselves disguised existential assertions.
- Frege sees sense and reference.
- Russell sees hidden logical form.
 - Analytic Philosophy

Descriptivism

- Both Frege and Russell are description theorists.
 - ▶ Frege is a sense descriptivist .
 - ▶ Russell is an abbreviational descriptivist.
- Descriptivism is opposed to Mill's theory of non-connotative names.
 - ▶ direct reference theory
 - ▶ 'Fido'-Fido
- We'll see the revenge of Fido soon!



Jake and Siri On Strawson