

## Judgements, Facts and Propositions: Theories of Truth in Russell, Wittgenstein and Ramsey

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### 1 Introduction

Our aim in this chapter is to outline a story that ought to be familiar and unsurprising, one that traces the fate of the correspondence theory of truth from its adoption by Russell in 'On the Nature of Truth and Falsehood' (1910) to its repudiation by Ramsey in 'Facts and Propositions' (1927). Central episodes in this story are indeed very familiar. But commonly held views of them, when placed one after the other, make for a story that is more surprising and less coherent than it should be: slightly misplaced emphasis at the beginning, regarding Russell's reasons for adopting his new theories of judgement and truth, sets things off in a direction that leads to simple error in the middle, regarding Wittgenstein's views in the *Tractatus*; this error then calls for a sudden and inexplicable plot-twist in the transition to the final chapter, regarding Ramsey's position, which in consequence is bungled.

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and through the period of *The Principles of Mathematics* (1903) and 'On Denoting' (1905a), Russell endorsed a theory of judgement or belief as consisting in a dyadic relation between a judging mind and a unitary objective entity embodying the content of the judgement, which he termed a 'proposition'. The truth or falsity of a judgement is on this view derivative from the truth or falsity of the proposition judged. Further, truth and falsity are held to be simple, unanalysable properties of propositions. In writings from 1904 onwards Russell presents various reasons for dissatisfaction with this early theory, and by 1910 they have led him to abandon it. Some of these reasons are acknowledged to be suasive considerations only; mostly these are elaborations of the intuitive appeal of the notion that 'true propositions express *fact*, while false ones do not', and that 'when a proposition is false, *something* does not subsist which would subsist if the proposition were true' (1904, p. 473). Others focus on difficulties internal to the early theory, which are said to be 'grave' (1904, p. 46), 'more fatal' (1910, p. 119), and ultimately to render that theory 'impossible' (1912, p. 193). Our contention in §2 is that an explanation of Russell's change of mind should emphasize considerations of the second kind over the first. Treatments which emphasize the first will tend to present the desire to accommodate a 'correspondence' intuition as central to Russell's motivation. They will in consequence tend to obscure the fact that the association between the two components of Russell's new view, the 'multiple-relation theory' of judgement and the 'correspondence theory' of truth, is optional. By this we mean that the association is optional *in itself*. It might have been inevitable *for Russell*, but if so then the reason lies in

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<sup>1</sup> While the chapter is jointly written, so that we are severally and collectively responsible for any mistakes in it, it may be helpful to note that most of the central section on Wittgenstein (§§3.1-3.3) was first drafted by Johnston and revised by Sullivan, while the reverse holds of other sections. §§3.1-3.3 make use of some material from Johnston's 'The Picture Theory', forthcoming in H-J. Glock and J. Hyman, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Wittgenstein*; some paragraphs in §§4.2-4.3 overlap with Sullivan's 'An introduction to "Facts and Propositions"', published on-line in an Aristotelian Society 'virtual symposium' in April 2013; we are grateful to the editors and publishers for permission to make use of this material. We should also like to thank Michael Potter for comments on a partial draft.

more basic commitments that persist through the change in his theories of judgement and truth, and merely assume a new form in his post-1910 theory of complexes.

In 1913 Wittgenstein famously criticized Russell's new theory of judgement; and it has been compellingly argued (Ricketts 1996; Potter 2009) that this criticism contains the seeds of the 'picture theory' Wittgenstein would present in the *Tractatus*. It is certainly true that the picture theory is offered as a corrective to Russell's views. However, neglect of the role of Russell's basic commitments about complexes, both in determining the specific form of his multiple-relation theory of judgement and in associating with it a correspondence theory of truth, leads to misunderstandings of what Wittgenstein retained from Russell's theories and what he rejected. Probably the most widely held views are that Wittgenstein repudiated the multiple-relation theory, but that he retained its associated correspondence theory of truth. In §3 we argue that the opposite is the case. We hold, first, that the picture theory is itself a multiple-relation theory, though one implemented without the framing commitments of Russell's view of complexes. And secondly, that by freeing itself from those commitments about complexes Wittgenstein's theory of judgement has no need for, and indeed allows no room for, a correspondence theory of truth.

Ramsey's 'Facts and Propositions' (1927) is the third of the three great published articles in which Ramsey expounds and builds on Wittgenstein's work. It addresses important gaps in the picture theory, which Ramsey had identified as early as in his Critical Notice of the *Tractatus* (1923, pp. 275-7). Famously, Ramsey denies in this essay the need for any such substantive theory of truth as the correspondence theory, concluding early on that 'there is really no separate problem of truth' (1927, p. 142). Less famously, Ramsey sets the theoretical context for his innovations by beginning the article with a compelling argument in favour of a multiple-relation theory. According to the widely held views just mentioned, these contentions would represent fundamental differences between Ramsey and Wittgenstein. Holders of such views must therefore resort to desperate contortions to explain, or else must simply ignore, Ramsey's closing acknowledgement to Wittgenstein: 'Everything that I have said is due to him', Ramsey says, excepting from this only the 'pragmatist' elements of his theory that he judged necessary to 'to fill up a gap in his [Wittgenstein's] system' (1927, p. 155). In §4 we present a sketch of Ramsey's views of judgement and truth that straightforwardly accords with this judgement.

We remarked at the outset that the story we aim to outline here ought to be familiar and unsurprising. One reason for this is that the story was already well told by Ramsey himself. Hence Ramsey will be a point of reference in earlier sections, as well as in the section devoted specifically to his own views.

## 2 Russell

### 2.1 *The early theory*

Russell's early theory of judgement and truth can be regarded as the upshot of two commitments. The first is an expression of the form Russell's realism took at this period, and holds that cognition is an external relation between a mind and an objective reality. Knowledge, Russell insists, is of nothing less than a mind-independent fact. In being known, the known fact of course enters into a relation with a mind, but the existence of the fact is in

no way dependent on that relation, nor is its nature in any way altered by it (1904, pp. 461-3; 1905b, p. 501; 1906-7, p. 45). The second commitment, which extends through Russell's change of mind, is that a false belief is still a belief: that someone believes that so-and-so is a state of affairs of a certain kind that is exemplified equally by true and false beliefs (1904, p. 467; 1910, p. 120). Again, Russell often presents this as an aspect of realism, though this time of a more common-sensical kind. If John believes that his train will be late arriving, then whether his belief is true or false depends on how things stand somewhere up the line, and is not to be discerned by an internal scrutiny or analysis of his state of believing. Truth and falsity are thus 'extrinsic', not 'internal' properties of belief (1912, pp. 189-90, 201). It follows that true and false beliefs must be analysed in the same way, and are ontologically on a par. Since the object of a true belief is a mind-independent fact, a false belief must similarly have as its object a similarly mind-independent entity, something that is just like a fact with the sole exception that it is not true. This something is a 'proposition'.

The above exposition follows Russell's typical practice in seeming initially to accord some priority to the notion of a fact, the object of a true belief (e.g. 1904, p. 467); propositions enter the account only secondarily, as the objects of belief considered independently of whether they are true or false. The upshot, however, is that facts have no fundamental status in Russell's theory. The parallel in structure and analysis between true and false belief demands that the theory's primary ontological notion is that of a proposition. Then, just as people who happen to have taken degrees are called 'graduates', so propositions 'are called *facts* when they happen to be true' (1905b, p. 492). When they happen instead to be false, they might be called 'fictions' (1906-7, p. 48), though Russell more often and more neutrally calls them 'objective falsehoods'. The key point, though, is that we need call them neither of these things. To name either a fact or a fiction for what it fundamentally is, without building in extraneous presumptions about it, we should call it a proposition.

This core theory provides for no connected entity which exists when a belief is true but which fails to exist when it is false. On the one hand, because they are abstract entities neither true nor false propositions can strictly be said to 'exist', in the narrow sense Russell reserves for that term (that of existing in time); on the other, both true and false propositions equally 'subsist' or 'have being'. Nonetheless, Russell readily acknowledges the appeal of this notion, and admits that it might be accommodated. We might, that is, recognize 'an allied concept of an entity, got grammatically [from a proposition] by turning the verb into a verbal noun, ... [which] denotes an entity when the proposition is true, but not when it is false' (1905b, p. 506). But this could only be a supplement to the core theory. If we do recognize such an entity, designated (for instance) by 'the death of Caesar', we must still insist that this entity 'is distinct from the proposition' that Caesar died. It does not enter into the analysis of judgement, and is not what is true or false (1904, p. 471).

The core theory, then, is that belief or judgement consists in a subject's entering into a dyadic relation to an objective proposition. A proposition is an abstract, complex entity. Its constituents are, like the proposition itself, entirely mind-independent. They are the actual entities with which the proposition is concerned; the proposition that Andrew loves Beatrice, for instance, has as its constituents Andrew, Beatrice, and the relation of loving (1905b, p. 494). Since the identity of a proposition is not determined solely by that of its constituents, but depends also on their configuration, a proposition is not a mere collection or 'aggregate' (1904, p. 437). It is a unity of a special kind, a kind that Russell finds it hard to characterize. It consists, he suggests, not in the presence of a relational constituent, but 'simply and solely

in the fact of relatedness in a certain way' (1904, p. 437); or, as he elsewhere puts it, 'a proposition consists of a relation between its terms' (1905b, p. 495), not merely of certain terms and a relation.

Truth and falsehood Russell then holds to be simple, unanalysable properties of propositions, from which the truth or falsity of beliefs or judgements derives. This view of the primitiveness of truth certainly coheres with, and is typically presented by Russell in close association with, the theory of judgement just outlined (1904, pp. 473-4; 1906-7, p. 48). However it is not, either in Russell's view or in fact, a direct consequence of that theory. Russell offers (1905b, pp. 493-4) an independent, general argument – strikingly reminiscent of Frege's (1979, pp. 128-9) though apparently deriving from Moore's (1899, pp. 64-5) – for the indefinability of truth; and he argues in detail against coherence and pragmatist analyses of the notion (1905b, 1906-7). What does follow from the considerations already presented is that truth is not to be explained by the notion of a fact, which is instead dependent on it.

## 2.2 *Problems for the early theory*

Even in the essays that advocate it Russell recognizes that the early theory faces serious problems, and as early as 1904 he formulates an alternative to it. According to this alternative, which represents the embryonic form of his multiple-relation theory, belief would be conceived, not as a state with a single complex object, but instead as a complex state with a multiplicity of objects (1904, p. 468). Although Russell develops what he then takes to be conclusive objections to it (pp. 468-9),<sup>2</sup> this alternative reappears almost unchanged in 'The Nature of Truth' (1906-7) as the view that belief is 'not a single idea' but 'a complex of ideas' (p. 47), or that 'a belief ... will not consist of one idea with a complex object, but will consist of several related ideas' (p. 46). In favour of this alternative Russell observes, first, that it removes a commitment to 'objective non-facts'; for, as we saw, if true beliefs have unitary objects, so must false beliefs, and 'if beliefs always have objects, it follows that there are objective non-facts' (p. 46). His second observation is that the alternative would resolve paradoxes, such as the *liar*, that are generated by quantification over propositions – by the clean but drastic device of eliminating from his ontology altogether the propositions quantified over (p. 49). Remnants of the 1904 objections persist, however, and so at this stage Russell declines to choose between his early theory and this alternative (p. 49).

By 1910, when Russell came to republish this paper in the collection *Philosophical Essays*, the issue had been decided in favour of the alternative theory. Hence only the first two, critical parts of the essay were reprinted, under the title 'The Monistic Theory of Truth', while the inconclusive part III was replaced by a new essay, 'On the Nature of Truth and Falsehood' (1910). Most of this section will be concerned with the reasons Russell gave there for this decision. First, though, we need a brief statement of the new theory.

The theory of judgement that I am advocating is, that a judgement is not a dual relation of the mind to a single Objective, but a multiple relation of the mind to the various other terms with

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<sup>2</sup> The decisive premise in Russell's objection is that 'the presentation of a relation is not a relation'. This serves to undermine the attractive suggestion that 'the presentation of "a and b related by R"' should consist in 'the presentations of a and b related by the presentation of R' (1904, p. 468). Wittgenstein and Ramsey were later to reject the premise of Russell's argument, holding that the presentation of a relation *is* itself a relation, and so they could simply accept the attractive suggestion.

which the judgement is concerned. Thus if I judge that A loves B, that is not a relation of me to 'A's love for B', but a relation between me and A and love and B. (1910, p. 122).

In the early theory, in judging that *a* loves *b* a subject stands in relation to a single complex entity, a proposition, of which *a*, love, and *b* are constituents. Schematically, the fact of *s*'s so judging has the form:  $J(s, \langle aLb \rangle)$ . The new theory recognizes no such entity as  $\langle aRb \rangle$ : 'the mere fact that the judgement occurs does not involve any relation between its objects A and love and B' (p. 122). Schematically, its form is:  $J(s, a, L, b)$ .

Building on this account of the form of a judgement Russell offers a correspondence theory of what it is for the judgement to be true. Given any judgement, it should be possible to define the notion of a corresponding complex, whose constituents will be all of the constituents of the judgement excepting the judging subject and the judgement relation. Continuing with the previous example of *s*'s judgement that *a* loves *b*, the constituents of this corresponding complex will be *a*, the relation of loving, and *b*; and the corresponding complex will be one in which *a* is related to *b* by the relation of loving.<sup>3</sup> The judgement will be true if there exists such a corresponding complex, and false if the corresponding complex does not exist.

In summary, according to Russell's early theory,

- (i) for each fact of judgement there is a corresponding complex entity, the judged proposition;
- (ii) truth and falsity are primarily features of propositions, and only derivatively of judgements which have those propositions as their objects.

On the new theory,

- (i) truth and falsity are features only of judgements;
- (ii) only in the case of a true judgement does there exist a corresponding complex entity, the fact that is judged to obtain.

Thus the general category of propositions is eliminated, and the only complex entities recognized are facts.

It is also interesting to compare this new theory with what we might call the proto-multiple-relation theory of the 1904 and 1906-7 papers. The suggestion then was that a judgement is 'a relation of presentations' (1904, p. 468), or 'a complex of ideas' (1906-7, p. 47). In the 1910 statement of the theory there is no mention of 'presentations' or 'ideas':<sup>4</sup> the multiple relation of judgement is said to hold between the judging subject and entities the judgement is about. One might suppose that this change in formulation shows Russell's realism reasserting itself after a temporary lapse, with an insistence that the objects of judgement are mind-independent things. But this superficial suggestion is mistaken. The proto-multiple-relation theory is in fact entirely consistent with the 1910 statement, since to be the subject of a complex of presentations of *a*, *L*, and *b* just is one way of being multiply-

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<sup>3</sup> Like Russell's own initial statement of the theory, this skates over complications to do with the ordering of the entities in the corresponding complex.

<sup>4</sup> At pp. 120-21 Russell does discuss the point that for *s* to be multiply-related by judgement to *a*, *L*, and *b*, *s* must be 'conscious of' (or acquainted with) each of the objects *a*, *L*, and *b*. He observes that relations of acquaintance with these objects 'separately and severally' will not add up to the judgement, which must be 'one single unity'. This familiar (Kantian) point was already made by Meinong, and endorsed by Russell earlier in the 1904 essay (pp. 439, 455). It does *not* run counter to the proto-multiple-relation theory, which advances the quite different suggestion that judgement is constituted by a *relation between* presentations, or a *complex* of presentations – not by a mere sum of presentations.

related to the objects of those presentations, i.e. one way of exemplifying the schema  $J(s, a, L, b)$ .<sup>5</sup> The real difference is that the 1910 statement provides *only* this schema, whereas the proto-multiple-relation theory had offered at least some indication of how it might be exemplified. Or, to put things the other way around, the 1910 statement highlights the form of the judgement relation, but it says (even) less than do Russell's preliminary formulations as to what the multiple relation of judgement actually is.

What, then, persuaded Russell to decide in favour of this new theory? His reasons are presented in three dense paragraphs of 'On the Nature of Truth and Falsehood' criticizing the view that true and false judgements equally have 'objectives'. The first considers the notion that the objective of a judgement, for instance, the judgement that Charles I died on the scaffold, might be 'the actual event' of Charles I's death on the scaffold. Its relation to the early theory is initially at least unclear. We will return to it after considering Russell's case against the theory that the objective is instead 'that Charles I died on the scaffold'.

Russell's first objection to this theory is simply that 'it is difficult to believe that there are such objects'. 'It seems evident', he says,

that the phrase 'that so-and-so' has no complete meaning of itself, that would allow it to denote a definite object... We feel that the phrase 'that so-and-so' is essentially incomplete, and only acquires significance when words are added so as to express a judgement, e.g. 'I believe that so-and-so'... (1910, p. 119)

Russell is here giving expression to his new doctrine that propositions – or, perhaps better, the phrases previously taken to express propositions – are 'incomplete symbols' (Whitehead and Russell 1910, p. 44). According to this doctrine there are no such entities as the early theory had taken propositions to be. Thus any apparent reference to such an entity must be analysed away, by giving a different account of the structure of the fact expressed by a statement in which the apparent reference is made. Belief-ascriptions provide one example of a class of such statements, but importantly they are only one example. The demand for analytical reconstrual applies wherever a given fact appears to involve a proposition as a 'subordinate complex' (1906-7, p. 48) – or, as we might now put it, it applies to any sentence apparently involving a sub-sentence or clause that can be supposed false without rendering the whole sentence meaningless. (Obvious further examples are truth-functionally complex statements, statements of implication, causal statements, statements of probability, and so on.) As Russell had reasonably said when first outlining this approach, whether its general analytical demand can be carried through will turn on many difficult 'considerations of detail' (1906-7, p. 49). It is hard to see how the outcome could be 'evident', or how the 'feeling' he mentions might be relevant to it.

The following paragraph, which Russell describes as developing a 'second' and 'more fatal' objection, in fact presents a range of considerations. They are united in focusing particularly on the early theory's commitment to *false* objectives.

First, that there should be, in the mind-independent world, entities describable as 'objective falsehoods' is, Russell now declares, 'in itself incredible'. In arguing for the early theory he had said, oppositely, 'it is very hard to believe that nothing is objectively false' (1904, p. 467). Plainly, someone's sense of reality can change. So we have here, not so much an argument, as an invitation to diagnose a shift in Russell's understanding of what an

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<sup>5</sup> This depends on Russell's view that presentation, or its converse acquaintance, is itself a direct cognitive relation between a subject and an independent object.

objective falsehood would be. A parallel passage in the later lectures on 'The Philosophy of Logical Atomism' is helpful in this. What Russell then 'cannot believe', and indeed finds it 'monstrous' to suppose, is that objective falsehoods should 'go about the real world', or that they should exist 'in the actual world of nature' as facts do (1918, pp. 196-7). The early theory's propositions were, we should recall, *abstract* entities. In Russell's rejection of them they have become concrete entities mysteriously lacking in substance – 'curious shadowy things', the ghosts of departed facts.

Russell now recalls the early theory's commitment to regard the distinction of truth and falsity as 'ultimate and not further explicable'. It cannot accommodate our feeling that, when we judge truly, there exists 'some entity "corresponding" in some way to our judgement', while when we judge falsely there is not, and that the difference between truth and falsity is to be explained by the presence or absence of this 'corresponding' entity. With only minor qualifications, the points Russell highlights in this passage are indeed part of the early theory. He now holds that they show the theory to be 'unsatisfactory' (1910, p. 119). We need not judge whether he is right, for it surely cannot have been these central and long-trumpeted features of the early theory that turned him against it.

About the arguments so far considered Russell is explicit that they are 'not decisive' and do not show the early theory to be 'logically impossible'. Yet he introduced the discussion by remarking that 'the possibility of false judgements *compels us* to adopt' the multiple-relation theory (p. 118, emphasis added). Only one passage even aspires to the demonstrative status this advertisement leads us to expect. In it Russell argues as follows:

If we hold that

(i) the judgement that Charles I died on the scaffold has as its objective 'the actual event' of Charles I's death on the scaffold,

then we must in parallel hold that

(ii) the judgement that Charles I died in his bed has as its objective the actual event of Charles I's death in his bed.

But there is no such event, 'since to say that there ever was such a thing as "Charles I's death in his bed" is merely another way of saying that Charles I died in his bed'.

So not (ii).

So not (i).

One asks: what have *events* to do with the early theory? We saw that the early theory can admit the notion of a corresponding entity, designated by a 'verbal noun', and existing only when the judgement is true. Those entities might be identified with events. This identification, however, immediately cancels any commitment to (ii); and in any case, those entities had only a peripheral and optional standing in the early theory. Perhaps, then, 'events' are the early theory's *facts*. But this identification undermines the move from (i) to (ii) in a different way. The judgement that Charles I died on the scaffold, according to the early theory, has as its objective a proposition which, because it is true, is describable as the fact that he so died. The parallel between true and false judgements requires that the judgement that Charles I died in his bed also has a proposition as its objective, but it clearly does not require that this proposition be describable as a fact.<sup>6</sup> Thus it seems that on no

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<sup>6</sup> Cartwright (1987, pp. 77-8) makes this same point, against an argument he attributes to Moore.

interpretation of its terms will the above argument connect with the early theory. Yet it is clearly this argument on which Russell later relies in declaring the early theory to be 'impossible' (1912, pp. 193-4).

The reasoning just gone through shows that the early theory's propositions must be distinguished from what Russell now calls 'events'. It reproduces Russell's own earlier reasoning, about complex entities denoted by such phrases as 'the execution of Charles I' or 'the blackness of the table', which led him to conclude that 'the proposition must be somehow distinguishable from such complexes'. But this conclusion, Russell immediately conceded, makes it 'very difficult to see what the proposition is' (1904, p. 471). The real explanation for Russell's change of mind must be whatever turned this *difficulty* into an *impossibility*, with the effect that reasoning he had all along endorsed now seemed to yield the conclusion that a proposition must be distinct from anything there actually is – i.e., that there can be no such things.

The relevant considerations were more clearly set out in *Theory of Knowledge*, when Russell asked 'what kind of entity a false proposition could be' (1913, p. 110). Recall from our statement of the early theory the proposition that Andrew loves Beatrice. This, we said, has as its constituents the objective entities it concerns, Andrew, Beatrice, and the relation of loving. Its identity depends not only on these constituents, but on how they are configured in it. For instance, it is distinguished from the proposition that Beatrice loves Andrew in that the relation of loving occurs in it as relating Andrew to Beatrice rather than vice versa. But is this not to say that the relation of loving *does* relate Andrew to Beatrice? And is this not to say that Andrews loves Beatrice, i.e. that Andrew, loving, and Beatrice are so combined as to constitute the *fact* that Andrew loves Beatrice? In short: try to specify what a false proposition would be, and you will find that what you have specified cannot fail to be true. 'It seems', Russell concluded, 'that nothing which is actually composed of these objects is the proposition; and it is not credible that anything further enters into the proposition' (1913, p. 110). It is, we think, this problem that Russell has in mind in 1910 in writing that his early theory 'leaves the difference between truth and falsehood quite inexplicable' (1910, p. 119). What is 'inexplicable' on the early theory is not merely *what* the difference consists in, but *how there can be* any difference.<sup>7</sup>

It is in retrospect rather difficult to see how Russell had held out for so long against this conclusion. Already in the *Principles* he attributed the unity of a proposition to a relation's occurring in it as 'actually relating', saying that '[the relation of loving] which occurs in the proposition actually relates A and B' (1903, §54). We quoted similar statements above, including the summary that a proposition consists 'solely in the fact of relatedness' (1904, p. 437), which should surely have sounded a warning.<sup>8</sup> But the case is not really one of a point that Russell had simply failed to see. More plausibly, it is a point that he gradually lost reason to think it *must* be possible to evade. In the passage just referred to, and throughout his exposition of the early theory, Russell struggled to characterize something he thought there must be, a 'special and apparently indefinable kind of unity' which is distinctive of

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<sup>7</sup> This account of Russell's rejection of propositions was, we think, first clearly laid out by Richard Cartwright (1987, pp. 82-4).

<sup>8</sup> For further illustration, consider the joint effect of 'a proposition consists of a relation between its terms' (1905, p. 495) and 'objects in relation form a complex object, which may be called a fact' (1906-7, p. 45).



propositions and can ground the duality of truth and falsehood. By 1910 he had come to accept that the struggle must end in failure, and that the project was misconceived.

### 2.3 *The character of Russell's new theory*

Our contention in the previous section was that the problem of false propositions – the impossibility of specifying what a false proposition could be – was the decisive consideration in motivating Russell's new theory. In this section we sketch the perspective on the new theory that is encouraged by this contention.

As we saw, Russell's other complaints against his early theory emphasize its failure to accommodate the intuition that drives a correspondence theory of truth. This is, in essence, that a true judgement is *made true* by the existence of some entity corresponding to it. Or, in something closer to Russell's formulation, it is that for any true judgement there exists a corresponding entity which would not exist if the judgement were false, and that the distinction between truth and falsity is to be explained by the existence or non-existence of this corresponding entity. If we suppose that the desire to accommodate this intuition was central in motivating Russell's change of mind, this will encourage us to view the correspondence theory of truth as an intrinsic part of the view he was led to: we will hold, in effect, that Russell's new theory of judgement is designed to suit a correspondence theory of truth. A better view, we suggest, is that Russell's correspondence theory of truth is designed to make good a deficiency in his new theory of judgement, one that is owed to the general style of ontological theorizing within which this theory is developed.

The problem of false propositions poses a general challenge to Russell's early ontology. Responding to it would call for thoroughgoing revision to all of his analyses or constructions that exploit the general category of propositions, conceived as complex entities that might be true (and, if so, facts) or false (and, if so, fictions). For instance, when he wrote the inconclusive 1906-7 paper, Russell had recently developed a type-theoretic solution to the paradoxes in the foundations of mathematics through his 'substitution theory' (Russell 1906). The basic idea of this theory is that the only genuine, ontologically committing quantifications are over propositions and individuals. Without propositions a quite different foundation for Russell's type-theoretic logicism would be needed. Clearly, then, the problem was anything but local. In his essays on judgement and truth Russell tended not to emphasize the more 'technical' issues in which commitment to propositions is at stake. Even so, in 'On the Nature of Truth' his first argument against the proto-multiple-relation theory and in defence of propositions is set on general logical ground, holding that false propositions are needed for the analysis of truth-functionally complex statements (1906-7, p. 48). And it is interesting to note that when, in *Theory of Knowledge*, Russell reviews the debate from the perspective of his later views, he declares that this general logical argument provided the *only* ground for his early commitment to propositions (1913, p. 153).

A similarly general strategy<sup>9</sup> for responding to this argument is, though, already outlined in the 1906-7 paper: 'a valid analysis, we shall have to contend, must break up any

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<sup>9</sup> Only 'similarly' general, since this strategy would not be invoked in *every* issue involving propositions. For instance, the substitution theory's quantification over propositions is replaced in *Principia* by the acceptance unreduced of quantification over propositional functions; see Bostock 2012, pp. 205-6. And the suggestion that truth-functionally complex propositions such as '*p* or *q*' should be structurally recast in this fashion is plainly crazy – though, amusingly enough, there is evidence that

apparent subordinate complexes into their constituents' (1906-7, p. 48). That is to say – taking  $\langle aRb \rangle$  as our representative 'subordinate complex' or proposition – that anything of the apparent form  $\varphi(\langle aRb \rangle)$  must be recast as being of the form  $\psi(a, R, b)$ . This strategy provides the analytical substance of the doctrine that propositions are 'incomplete symbols' – that analytical reconstrual will reveal that phrases taken to express propositions have no unitary meaning. Russell's new multiple-relation theory conforms to this general strategy. It says that the fact of someone's making a judgement consists in a relation the subject bears only to the several constituents of the erstwhile proposition –  $\psi(a, R, b)$  – and not to any complex entity forged out of those constituents –  $\varphi(\langle aRb \rangle)$ . But so far as the 1910 statement of the theory takes us, and insofar as it merely instances the general strategy, this is *all* that it says. Hence Russell has to add to this rump of a theory, to transform it into something recognizably a theory of *judgement*, an account of what it is for a judgement so formed to be true: this will be so just in case the various objects to which the subject is related in making the judgement are themselves so related as to constitute a second complex entity, a corresponding fact.

Viewed from the perspective we have reached, then, neither the problem Russell faced nor the immediate resolution he proposed for it has specifically to do with judgement or 'the analysis of cognition' (Ramsey 1927, p. 142). This perspective allows us to recognize Russell's new account of judgement and its associated theory of truth as separable components in a two-step approach. It also highlights a real oddity in the division of labour between these two steps. One minimally expects of a theory of judgement that it will seek to explain judgement's centrally defining feature: that a judgement is to the effect that something is the case, or that it has content. Russell's first step does not do this. His second step is needed because the first achieves so little.

This was Ramsey's diagnosis. He began 'Facts and Propositions' by first outlining and then importantly supplementing Russell's 1910 arguments for the conclusion that 'a judgement has not one object but many, to which the mental factor is multiply related' (1927, p. 142). 'But', Ramsey continued,

to leave it at that, as he [Russell] did, cannot be regarded as satisfactory. There is no reason to suppose the multiple relation simple...and it is desirable that we should try to find out more about it... Similarly, a theory of descriptions that contented itself with observing that 'The King of France is wise' could be regarded as asserting a possibly complex multiple relation between kingship, France, and wisdom, would be miserably inferior to Mr Russell's theory, which explains exactly what relation it is. (ibid.)

The comparison with the theory of descriptions, the archetype of Russell's theories of 'incomplete symbols', shows that Ramsey's complaint is directed towards what we have called Russell's first step: it is the account of judgement itself that is 'miserably inferior' to what we should expect. The continuation makes plain Ramsey's view that, if this deficiency were rectified, Russell's second step would no longer be needed.

Our perspective also makes clear that the form taken by Russell's second step, his correspondence theory of truth, is determined less by the specifics of the first step than by the general style of ontological theorizing that generates both the initial problem and the schema for resolving it. Speaking very broadly, Russell's analytical approach asks, of any given

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Russell set Wittgenstein to work on the suggestion in 1912 and that Wittgenstein pursued it enthusiastically; see Wittgenstein 2008, p. 32 and Potter 2009, pp. 51-2.

phenomenon, what kind of configuration, of what kinds of objects, might constitute it. His early commitment to propositions sought to reserve within this approach a special and central domain that would be governed by the demands of an analysis of cognition – a domain manifesting a ‘special’ kind of complexity, not needed in the analysis of any merely external phenomenon, that could internally ground the duality of truth and falsehood. But the tendency of the general approach was always against this, and in succumbing to the problem of false propositions Russell surrendered this special domain. Thus the task of his new theory of judgement becomes that of subsuming representation within a general ontological framework whose basic categories and contours are not dictated by its requirements. Had it been successful, its achievement would have been, in one sense of a much-used phrase, to ‘explain thought from outside’, as being merely one amongst various configurations of what there is.

The repudiation of this ambition is the basic ground of Wittgenstein’s criticism of Russell’s theory, presented in conversation and in letters in the late spring and summer of 1913. The exact analysis of Wittgenstein’s criticism has been endlessly discussed in recent years, and we will not here add to that discussion. For our purposes, the relevant point is only that the central premise of Wittgenstein’s complaint, like Ramsey’s, targets the inadequacy of Russell’s first step. It must, he insists, be made plain in the account of judgement itself, and cannot be left to any supplementary theory to explain, that judgement is to the effect that something is the case, that it has content, and is true or false (Wittgenstein 2008, p. 40).

Wittgenstein’s final comment on the matter to Russell that summer was that his central objection ‘can only be removed by a correct theory of propositions’ (2008, p. 42). This theory is our topic in the following section. We will show, as Ramsey did, that it displaces Russell’s second step too.

### 3 Wittgenstein

We have outlined the route by which Russell arrived at his 1910 view that, ‘when we judge truly some entity “corresponding” in some way to our judgment is to be found outside our judgment, while when we judge falsely there is no such “corresponding” entity’ (1910, p. 119). We move on now to consider what Wittgenstein made of this idea.

We should enter a terminological note at the outset. ‘Proposition’ is the accepted translation of Wittgenstein’s ‘*Satz*’, a meaningful sentence. In this section we follow this usage, since for the most part the objective, abstract entities that Russell’s early theory called ‘propositions’ are no longer in question. Henceforth, then, a ‘proposition’ will generally be the expression of a judgement, not its supposed ‘objective’, and any exceptions to this will be explicitly flagged.

#### 3.1 *The supposed role of a correspondence theory in the Tractatus*

Russell offers the following example of his correspondence theory:

If A loves B, there is such a complex object as 'A's love for B', and vice versa; thus the existence of this complex object [which Russell identifies as a fact] gives the condition for the truth of the judgment 'A loves B'. (1910, p. 123)

Numerous formulations in the *Tractatus* suggest that Wittgenstein shared the same basic conception. One central instance is the following:

If the elementary proposition is true, the atomic fact exists: if the elementary proposition is false, the atomic fact does not exist. (TLP 4.25)

It was for many years an orthodoxy amongst commentators on the *Tractatus*, and it seems still to be the dominant view amongst less specialist readers, that these formulations are to be taken at face value: Wittgenstein, like Russell, offers a correspondence theory of truth; that is, like Russell he holds that the obtaining of a truth condition consists in the existence of a corresponding fact. We will argue that this widespread view is mistaken. But it is certainly not groundless. After all, Wittgenstein wrote to Russell in 1919, in explanation of his terminology, that 'Sachverhalt [atomic fact] is what corresponds to an Elementarsatz [elementary proposition] if it is true' (2008, p. 98). And the exposition Russell provides in his 'Introduction' to the *Tractatus*, an account informed by a week's intense discussion with Wittgenstein at the end of that year, signals no major difference between them on this point.<sup>10</sup> However, a more substantive reason for attributing a correspondence theory to the *Tractatus* is that it appears to explain distinctive and central features of Wittgenstein's account, which are naturally viewed as responses to problems faced by a correspondence theory.

The first of these is what we will call 'the problem of logical complexity'. The passages just cited from Russell and Wittgenstein both have to do directly with *atomic* propositions (or judgments). How should we understand the account as extending to explain the truth of logically complex propositions? A straightforward implementation of the correspondence idea would have it that the proposition ' $p$  or  $q$ ' is true if and only if the 'disjunctive fact',  $p$ -or- $q$ , exists. But how should this fact be conceived of? It cannot consist of the facts  $p$  and  $q$  related by a 'disjunction relation', for then the existence of the fact  $p$ -or- $q$  would entail the existence of the fact  $p$ , and so the truth of the proposition ' $p$  or  $q$ ' would entail the truth of the proposition ' $p$ '. And what about 'negative facts'? How should we conceive the fact  $not$ - $p$ , such that it will exist just in case the fact  $p$  does not? There are in fact two problems here. The first runs parallel to the problem over disjunctive facts: if the fact  $not$ - $p$  were some sort of compound entity, with the fact  $p$  as a part, then the truth of ' $not$   $p$ ' would entail the *truth* of ' $p$ ' rather than, as we should expect, its falsity. But suppose this first problem can be overcome, so that the facts  $not$ - $p$  and  $p$  are understood as distinct facts, neither including the other; we will still lack any explanation for why one of these should exist precisely when the other does not.

At TLP 4.0132 Wittgenstein wrote: 'My fundamental thought is that the "logical constants" do not represent'. One common understanding of this thought connects it with

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<sup>10</sup> Russell *does* present Wittgenstein as holding that the statement that a certain complex exists 'reduces to' the statement that its constituents are related in a certain way (Russell 1922, p. 12). But the intended scope of this remark is not altogether clear – does it apply only to Wittgenstein's concerns at TLP 3.24? – and it does not dissuade Russell from the summary that 'facts are what make propositions true' (p. 11).

his early insistence that ‘whatever corresponds in reality to compound propositions must not be more than what corresponds to their several atomic propositions’ (Wittgenstein 1913, p. 98). For instance, the disjunctive proposition ‘ $p$  or  $q$ ’ will have no worldly correlate beyond those of the atomic propositions ‘ $p$ ’ and ‘ $q$ ’, hence no worldly correlate of which the meaning of the connective ‘or’ might be a constituent. Thus the intention of the fundamental thought, on this understanding of it, is to deny that a correspondence theory is to be extended in the simple way we imagined to non-atomic propositions. There is no disjunctive fact,  $p$ -or- $q$ , whose existence constitutes its being the case that  $p$  or  $q$ . Rather, the only facts envisaged in Wittgenstein’s account are those corresponding to the atomic propositions ‘ $p$ ’ and ‘ $q$ ’, and its being the case that  $p$  or  $q$  may be constituted either by existence of the fact  $p$ , or by the existence of the fact  $q$ , or by the existence of both. Similarly, Wittgenstein countenances no such entity as the negative fact  $not$ - $p$ , guaranteed somehow to exist whenever the fact  $p$  does not. Rather, its being the case that not  $p$  – that truth condition obtaining – will consist in the *non*-existence of the fact  $p$ .

The second problem for the correspondence idea, which we will call ‘the problem of falsity’, appears in Wittgenstein’s *Blue Book*:

How can one think what is not the case? If I think that King’s College is on fire when it is not on fire, the fact of its being on fire does not exist. Then how can I think it? (Wittgenstein 1958, p. 31)

For a thought to have as the condition of its truth the existence of the fact that King’s College is on fire is for it to be connected with that particular fact. (A thinker of such a thought might be said to think *just that fact*.) But how then is falsity possible? How can a thought be connected with a particular fact if no such fact exists to be connected with?<sup>11</sup>

Section 2 explained how Russell’s new account of the constitution of a judgment responds to this problem. A fact, Russell maintains, is a complex; and a thought is a relation between the thinker and the several, separate components of the complex whose existence would constitute the obtaining of its truth condition. Thus a thought may connect in the relevant way with a particular, non-existent fact by virtue of connecting to that fact’s existing components. In outline, then, Russell’s answer to the problem of falsity is the one envisaged by Wittgenstein in the continuation of the passage from the *Blue Book*:

‘How can we imagine what does not exist?’ The answer seems to be: ‘If we do, we imagine non-existing combinations of existing elements’. (1958, p. 31)

This same answer has been attributed to the *Tractatus*. A Tractarian atomic proposition pictures, or presents, a state of affairs: the sense of the proposition *is* the state of affairs it presents (TLP 2.221, 4.031). Hence to understand the proposition, or to have the thought expressed by it, is to ‘know [*kennen*] the state of affairs presented by it’ (4.021). Here one might sense the problem of falsity looming. But the proposition is *articulate* (3.141),

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<sup>11</sup> Obviously this is connected with what §2.2 called ‘the problem of false propositions’. They have in common the reasoning that falsity is impossible if (a) the content of a judgement is given by its association with a unitary, complex entity, and (b) the only such entities are facts. But we have introduced a different label here to indicate that the problems arise at different points in the dialectic. The argument of §2.2 turns (b) against a position, Russell’s early theory, that is clearly committed to (a). The problem of falsity, as intuitively sketched here, arises in advance of any such clear theoretical commitment.

consisting of names in combination (4.22); and the connection with reality in virtue of which the proposition presents the state of affairs it does – what Wittgenstein calls the ‘representing relation’ – consists only in coordinations between these names and objects, constituents of the presented state of affairs (2.1513-4). Hence one understands the proposition, and knows the state of affairs it presents, provided only that ‘one understands its constituent parts’ (4.024; cf. 3.4); and so one can understand the proposition without knowing whether it is true (4.024). These claims, one might suggest, constitute Wittgenstein’s response to the problem of falsity. For Wittgenstein, as for Russell, a thought or judgement may have a truth condition whose obtaining consists in the existence of a particular, non-existent fact by virtue of relations only to the several existing entities which, suitably configured, would constitute that fact.

A correspondence theory, then, has a central place in familiar interpretations of the *Tractatus*, and on those interpretations it has a centrally motivating place in Wittgenstein’s theorizing. We want now to outline an alternative.

### 3.2 *An alternative*

The correspondence theorist conceives of facts as things that exist or fail to exist in the world, as things that are present in or absent from the world. For *a* to love *b* is for there to exist in the world such a fact as ‘*a* loving *b*’. To conceive of facts in this way perhaps need not be to think of them as logically of a piece with the ordinary objects they concern, in all the ways Russell suggests when he talks of facts as ‘go[ing] about the real world’, or as ‘exist[ing] in the actual world of nature’ (1918, pp. 196-7), or again, when he insists that ‘just as much as particular tables and chairs, [they] are part of the real world’ (1918, p. 164). But it is to think of them as in some way ‘portions’ or ‘chunks of reality’ (cf. Strawson 1950, p. 211), and a ‘chunk’ conception of facts is far from obligatory.

Wittgenstein points towards an alternative in another later passage that raises the intuitive problem of falsity:

It makes no sense to say ‘I am killing something that does not exist’. I can imagine a stag that is not there, in this meadow, but not kill one that is not there. And ‘to imagine a stag in this meadow’ means to imagine *that* a stag is there. But to kill a stag does not mean to kill *that*... (Wittgenstein 1974, p. 137)

A fact, Wittgenstein here suggests, is nothing like a stag – it is no kind of chunk of reality – for then it would be as impossible ‘to think what is not’ as it is to kill something there is not. Rather, a fact is always *that p*: a fact is a way things are, and ‘to think what is not’ is to think *that* things are a certain way when in fact they are not that way.

This position bears some spelling out. On the correspondence idea, a fact was something in terms of which the obtaining of a truth condition was *explained*: the obtaining of a truth condition, in the basic case at least, consisted in the existence of a fact. On the present suggestion, however, a fact simply is a truth condition that obtains. A fact is not a chunk whose existence constitutes the obtaining of one truth condition and whose non-existence constitutes, perhaps, the obtaining of another. Rather, a fact is itself the satisfaction of a *single* truth condition: the proposition ‘*p*’ has as its truth condition *that p*.

How should we understand this identification of fact and truth condition? Well, it is not merely terminological. The claim is not that Russell (say) should use the word ‘fact’ not

for his complexes but rather for truth conditions. Nor, though, do we have here a substantial positive thesis. What we have, rather, is the substantial negative thesis that the obtaining of a truth condition is not to be understood in terms of a distinct theoretical item worthy of the name 'fact'. In particular, the obtaining of a truth condition is not in general to be understood in terms of the *existence* of an item of a distinctive theoretical kind. Rather, the word 'fact' has nothing to apply to other than, simply, truth conditions – and of course we may add, since the grammar of the English 'fact' is such that to talk of the fact that  $p$  is, in most contexts, to commit oneself to its being the case that  $p$ , that the word 'fact' will typically apply simply to those truth conditions that obtain.

We can consolidate our understanding of this thought in a couple of straightforward ways. First, we can note that the present proposal will respond to the correspondence theorist's emphasised talk of fact *existence* by – as it were – identifying a fact's existence with the fact itself. To recognize, affirm, deny, or hypothesize the existence of a certain fact will simply be to recognize, affirm, deny, or hypothesize that fact. Where  $A$  is any kind of chunk of reality, to identify the existence of  $A$  with  $A$  itself would be an incongruous grammatical blunder. As Ramsey remarked, no one will confuse the existence of a King of Italy, the fact that Italy has a King, with the King himself (1927, p. 141). Similarly, if an event, such as a football match, is a portion of reality, then no one will confuse the event itself with the existence of this event or the fact that it took place. By contrast, to distinguish the existence of a fact from the fact itself is mere long-windedness. To say that a certain fact exists, or obtains, is just to say of a certain way things may be that it exists, or obtains, and this will mean nothing other than that things are indeed that way. As Ramsey wrote, "The fact that  $a$  has  $R$  to  $b$  exists" is no different from " $a$  has  $R$  to  $b$ " (1927, p. 143).

Secondly, we can observe that, from the current perspective, the problems of falsity and logical complexity simply disappear. Or rather, they don't so much as appear. The problem of falsity – the would-be worry of how I can think the fact  $p$  when that fact does not exist – does not get beyond the question: how can I think that  $p$  when it is not the case that  $p$ ? That is to say, it does not get beyond the question of what it is for a thought to be a thought *that*  $p$ , i.e. of what it is for a thought to have a particular truth condition. This is of course an important question, but it is not one concerned in any special way with *falsity*. More, identifying facts with truth conditions that obtain removes both the need and the platform for worrying about negative and disjunctive facts. If things may be such that  $q$ , and may be such that  $r$ , then *of course* a further way that things may be, distinct from either of those, is such that  $q$  or  $r$ . And trivially, things will indeed be this way, and this distinct fact will exist, whenever the fact that  $q$  exists or the fact that  $r$  exists. For a fact that  $p$  to exist just is for it to be the case that  $p$ , and if it is the case either that  $q$  or that  $r$ , then it is the case that  $q$  or  $r$ .<sup>12</sup> As for negative facts, well, if things may be such that  $q$ , then *naturally* things may also be such that not  $q$ , and *naturally* the latter fact will exist just in case the former does not. (Every truth condition has an opposite: for every way things may be there is an opposite way things may be such that for things to be the one way is for them not to be the opposite way.)

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<sup>12</sup> We should perhaps note, to prevent a misunderstanding, that to be untroubled by disjunctive facts is not to countenance *irreducibly* disjunctive facts. By reasoning exactly like that in the main text, we can say that, if it is the case that  $p$  or  $q$  (i.e. if the fact that  $p$  or  $q$  exists), then it is the case either that  $p$  or that  $q$  (i.e. either the fact that  $p$  exists, or else the fact that  $q$  exists). Nothing in the alternative view we are recommending contradicts Wittgenstein's theory that the truth or falsity of *every* proposition is determined by the truth or falsity of atomic propositions: if it did, the view would be hopeless.

With the alternative so far sketched we can raise the question, what is the Tractarian position on these matters? We acknowledged that Wittgenstein's talk of fact existence, scattered liberally through the *Tractatus*, can suggest that he has a chunk conception of facts, and more particularly that he exploits this conception in offering a correspondence theory of truth. And we saw that this understanding is further supported by the ready interpretation it offers of Wittgenstein's 'fundamental thought' that the logical constants do not represent: in the assumed context of a correspondence theory, this thought will be understood as a rejection of logically complex fact-chunks involving such things as a relation of disjunction or a property of negation. Counting against this, however, and in favour of attributing to the *Tractatus* the alternative just sketched, is that whenever Wittgenstein wants to emphasise that something is a fact he invariably lays stress on the idiom 'that  $p$ '. So for instance we find:

A propositional sign is a fact...

Not: 'The complex sign " $aRb$ " says " $a$  stands in relation  $R$  to  $b$ "; but rather: 'That " $a$ " stands in a certain relation to " $b$ " says that  $aRb$ '. (TLP 3.14, 3.1432, Wittgenstein's emphases)

The contrast emphasized here makes plain that, when Wittgenstein insists that 'only facts can express a sense' (3.142), his primary intention is to deny that a *complex* may do so. This denial would hardly be intelligible if Wittgenstein himself conceived of a fact as any kind of complex.

If such reasoning persuades us that the alternative view is indeed Wittgenstein's, then we will of course have to account for the contrary evidence. But at least the first step in this task is easy. It is a *part* of the alternative view that talk of fact existence is, in one sense, cheap: it carries no theoretical weight. And, given the inveterate nominalizing tendency of ordinary grammar (cf. Strawson 1950, pp. 197-8), avoiding such talk is, in another sense, costly: our exposition of the alternative view provides, we fear, enough illustration of the prolixity needed to counter this tendency. (If not, then private experiments in recasting some of Wittgenstein's most prominent examples of 'fact-talk', in the 4.3s and 4.4s, will prove the point.) Wittgenstein's taste for succinctness is thus a more than adequate explanation for his allowing formulations suggestive of a chunk conception of facts to stand.

But then how is the issue to be decided? We have taken Russell's adherence to a chunk conception as clear, and have treated such passages as the following as clear examples of his invoking this conception in the service of a correspondence theory of truth:

The judgment that two terms have a certain relation  $R$  is a relation of the mind to the two terms and the relation  $R$  with the appropriate sense: the 'corresponding' complex consists of the two terms related by the relation  $R$  with the same sense. The judgment is true when there is such a complex, and false when there is not. (1910, p. 124)

Yet it seems that Russell's immediate purpose would be just as well served by a definition that ran instead:

The judgment is a relation of the mind to the two terms and the relation  $R$  with the appropriate sense; it is true when those two terms are related by the relation  $R$  with the same sense, and false when they are not.

This alternative definition inflates into Russell's just when we add the claim that for  $a$  to stand in relation  $R$  to  $b$  is for the complex ' $a$  in relation  $R$  to  $b$ ' to exist. But why should we



regard *this* claim as a substantive thesis, rather than, as the alternative view outlined in this section would construe it, a mere tautology? We suggest that this question offers the clearest route to resolving the broader issue of the position of the *Tractatus*. In the following section we will consider two very different answers to it – two different ways in which talk of fact existence might be made substantive – one grounded in Russell’s views, and one that has been supposed to represent Wittgenstein’s; and we will show that neither can be attributed to the *Tractatus*.

### 3.3 *The substance of talk about facts*

Russell specifies as the condition for the truth of an atomic judgement the existence of a corresponding complex or fact. But what gives substance to this specification, and to the notion of a complex that he invokes in it, cannot be seen in this application of it alone. Instead, we must attend to wider theoretical context on which the specification draws. For Russell, complexes are not *merely* the realizations of truth conditions. He conceives of them as entering into other kinds of relations, and thus as serving other theoretical purposes. Most importantly, he holds that complexes figure *as objects* as constituents of further complexes, a structuring that will yield substantive explanations of certain necessary relations amongst truth conditions. It is such further applications of Russell’s general theory of complexes, and not in itself his theory of judgment – not in itself, that is, his theory of a judgment’s possession of a truth condition – that provide substance to his correspondence idea.

The example given prominence in ‘On the Nature of Truth and Falsehood’ concerns perception. Russell there holds that the complex ‘knife-to-the-left-of-book’ – the complex in whose existence is constituted the knife’s being to the left of the book – is a constituent, along with Jack and the relation of perceiving, of the further complex ‘Jack-perceiving-<knife-to-the-left-of-book>’, this latter complex again existing just in case Jack enjoys the relevant perception. Since the existence of a whole requires the existence of its parts, Russell has here an explanation of why Jack’s perception is possible only if the knife is indeed to the left of the book, and more generally, of why perception is ‘infallible’ (1910, pp. 122-3).

Turning with this to Wittgenstein, we can straightaway note that he emphatically rules out any such context for thinking of facts as chunks. He both vigorously disassociates facts from objects and insists that objects are simple. A fact is not a possible constituent, as an object, of further facts. As for perception, Wittgenstein writes:

To perceive a complex means to perceive that its constituents are related to one another in such and such a way. (TLP 5.5423)

Perceiving ‘*a* in relation *R* to *b*’ is to be understood as perceiving *that a* is in relation *R* to *b*. And perceiving that *aRb*, Wittgenstein further implies, is a matter of having a true perceptual representation that *aRb*.

We noted Russell’s explanation of the ‘infallibility’ of perception: as a relation between a mind and a complex, a perception is possible only if the complex exists. Russell is, however, quick to point out that this does not confer infallibility on any perceptual *judgement*: while in perception the mind is acquainted with the complex as a single object, the judging mind has before it only the several constituents of that object. The transition

between the two – e.g. from the awareness of ‘this-before-that’ to the judgement ‘this is before that’ – Russell describes as ‘an analysis’, and ‘we should not understand the analysis if we were not acquainted with the meanings of the terms employed’ (1911, p. 150). This understanding, Russell however holds, must rest on a prior such transition, whereby the meanings of terms are ‘abstracted’ from the wholes in which they are first presented:

When we see a white patch, we are acquainted, in the first instance, with the particular patch; but by seeing many white patches, we easily learn to abstract the whiteness which they all have in common, and in learning to do this we are learning to be acquainted with whiteness. (1912, pp. 158-9; cf. 1911, p. 150)

Thus the representation of a complex *as a complex* rests on acquaintance with its constituents, which in turn rests on awareness of such complexes *as objects*. In this way the multiplicity of relations into which complexes may enter plays an essential role in Russell’s account of thought.

Turning to the *Tractatus* one again sees that any such dual role for facts is firmly rejected.

The meanings of primitive signs can be explained by elucidations. Elucidations are propositions which contain the primitive signs. They can, therefore, only be understood when the meanings of these signs are already known. (TLP 3.263)

Wittgenstein here adds no commentary even to soften the circularity that Russell aimed to avoid. Instead, it is left starkly signalling the commitment that entails its inevitability: there is, Wittgenstein clearly implies, no ‘pre-propositional’ presentation of facts; rather, a fact is simply what a proposition presents.

Interestingly, Wittgenstein at the same time signals a distance from his former self. The *Notes on Logic* include a curious – and in the end, we think, an incoherent – passage explaining how meaning is conferred on a simple predicate (Wittgenstein 1913, p. 104). The sound thought that Wittgenstein will retain from this account is that to lay down the meaning of a predicate is to establish a rule determining the truth conditions of basic sentences containing it. But he imagines that this will be done by (somehow) ‘dividing...the facts’ into those ‘of like sense’ and those ‘of opposite sense’ with the intended meaning. However exactly this is supposed to work, it seems to presuppose that the facts are available to and arrayed in front of a subject *in advance* of his understanding propositions expressing them – just as they are on Russell’s abstractionist account. Now it is clear that in 1912 Wittgenstein was working entirely within Russell’s theory of complexes.<sup>13</sup> What we called the sound point in this passage from the *Notes* was already a departure from Russell.<sup>14</sup> But the confused ideas surrounding it – not to mention Wittgenstein’s tortuously obscure formulation of those ideas – indicate that this was only a first step, and that he had not fully broken free of Russell’s framework. What matters most to our case, though, is that there is no trace whatever of those ideas when the same issue is reached in the *Tractatus*.

It seems, then, that we will need to look elsewhere if we want to think of Tractarian facts other than as truth conditions that obtain. But where? Well, the obvious place is where, for Russell, we didn’t find the relevant provision: namely, in the theory of judgment itself.

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. note 9 above.

<sup>14</sup> Russell was persuaded of the point by the *Notes*, and gave it prominence in his ‘Logical Atomism’ lectures (1918, p. 182).

Thus the thought we explore in the second part of this section is this: perhaps Wittgenstein's theory of the *possession* of a truth-condition will carry substantial implications for what it is for a truth condition to obtain.

The broad structure of Russell's new theory is that a judgement connects to a fact *in virtue of* having a truth condition. Although §2.3 above criticized his implementation of this thought, it is clearly the intention of Russell's theory that a judgement's possession of a truth condition should be explained by its connections only to a multiplicity of objects. Unitary, complex entities, facts, are to enter the account only secondarily, in explanation of what it is for a judgement's truth condition to obtain; and we have argued that, while this second step does involve a chunk conception of facts, it does so for reasons external to the theory of judgement. The broad structure of a view opposite to Russell's would suggest instead that a judgement or proposition has a truth condition *by virtue of* connecting to a fact – or perhaps to some unitary, fact-like entity that we might more neutrally call a 'state of affairs'. According to this anti-Russellian suggestion a proposition's first achievement is to 'pick out' a state of affairs; subsequently, it does something like 'asserting' this state of affairs; and it is only through this second step of 'asserting' that the proposition comes to have a 'sense' or truth condition. If a theory of this general shape of the functioning of an atomic proposition could be ascribed to Wittgenstein, then all would be set for thinking of Tractarian facts other than as ways things are. An 'atomic fact' or state of affairs (*Sachverhalt*) would be the object of a 'picking out' relation, and – depending on how the assertion part of the theory is understood – the door would be open for thinking of the obtaining of an atomic truth condition in terms of the *existence* (or something similar) of such an object.

Many commentators have understood the *Tractatus* as proposing just such a two-step theory of atomic propositions.<sup>15</sup> First, the proposition picks out a state of affairs – it *depicts* or *images* a state of affairs in a way which does not presume the existence of that state of affairs. Subsequently, the proposition asserts the picked out state of affairs, coming thereby to have a truth condition. There is, however, ample reason to reject any such understanding of Wittgenstein's picture theory. To begin with an indirect reason, the attribution is seriously undermined by criticisms Wittgenstein makes of Frege:

The verb of a proposition is not 'is true' or 'is false', as Frege thought: rather, that which 'is true' must already contain the verb [i.e. it must already have a truth condition].  
Every proposition must *already* have a sense [again, a truth condition]: it cannot be given a sense by affirmation. (TLP 4.063-4.064)

Rightly or wrongly (wrongly, we think), Wittgenstein here *accuses* Frege of explaining the possession of a truth condition by reference to an affirmation, or asserting as true, of some prior item. Moreover, his criticism does not target – it hardly even mentions – the detailed features of Frege's theory that (allegedly) commit him to this account: it is the two-step structure *itself* that Wittgenstein objects to. This makes it at least unlikely that Wittgenstein himself adhered to a theory with the same structure.

However, we need not rely on such indirect considerations. What most severely undermines the attribution to Wittgenstein of a two-step picture of atomic judgment is the complete and conspicuous absence of any such idea from Wittgenstein's central statement of his theory:

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<sup>15</sup> The most recent example we know of is Hanks 2012.

In the picture the elements of the picture are the representatives of objects.  
A picture is a fact.  
That the elements of the picture are combined with one another in a definite way, represents that the things are so combined with one another. (TLP 2.131, 2.141-2.15)

A proposition's having a certain truth condition – its representing *that something is the case* – is here explained *directly* in terms of its elements referring to objects; it is not explained via the proposition as a whole imaging some non-truth-condition fact-chunk.

In this section we have considered two routes by which talk of the existence of facts might be made substantial, or inflated to carry theoretical weight. The first, Russellian route locates the substance of this talk in the account that is offered of *the obtaining* of a truth condition. That a judgement *has* a truth condition is explained by reference to connections made only to a multiplicity of objects: the judgement does not possess a truth condition by virtue of relating, directly or indirectly, to a single, unitary entity. Such entities are invoked only in explaining what it is for a judgement's truth condition to obtain. But what gives substance to the conception then invoked, we argued, are the further theoretical applications Russell makes of his general theory of complexes, applications that Wittgenstein clearly rejects. The second, anti-Russellian route is represented by the 'two-step Wittgenstein' just considered, and locates the substance of fact talk in the account of a judgement's *possession* of a truth condition. This 'two-step Wittgenstein' – or at least, the most exegetically plausible version of this character – holds with Russell to the correspondence theory of truth. Against Russell, however, he does not offer a multiple relation theory of judgement: he denies the core thought of a multiple-relation theory, that a judgement's connections to several objects are sufficient for its possessing a truth condition, holding instead that these connections provide only for it neutrally to image a single, possibly non-existent fact, which then in turn provides, through the second step of asserting the imaged fact, for the judgement's possession of a truth condition. But this 'two step Wittgenstein' is not the real Wittgenstein. The real Wittgenstein does, like Russell, offer a multiple relation theory of judgement. Interestingly, though, whilst Russell's multiple relation theory of judgment is a response in part to his need to address the problem of falsity arising from his commitment to a correspondence theory of truth, Wittgenstein's offering a multiple relation theory of judgment is an aspect of his *not* offering a correspondence theory of truth, and so *not* being confronted by the problem of falsity.

Nothing in Wittgenstein's theorising, we conclude, provides for interpreting those points at which he talks of fact existence as the expression of a correspondence theory, or indeed of any theory of in which facts are distinguished from truth conditions that obtain. Nothing in the *Tractatus* provides for thinking of the sentence 'the fact "*aRb*" exists' as anything other than a periphrasis of the sentence '*aRb*'.

### 3.4 *Facts as incomplete symbols*

What we have argued at length in this section Ramsey appears to have seen immediately and without effort. In his 'Critical Notice', and in the course of a more substantive discussion to which this observation is almost an aside, Ramsey reports as something Wittgenstein 'clearly believes' that

we cannot talk about what makes a fact a fact, nor ultimately *about* facts at all, because every statement apparently about facts is really about their constituents. (1923, p. 273)

In other words, what Russell had come to believe about his early theory's abstract 'propositions', in declaring them to be 'incomplete symbols', holds equally, in Wittgenstein's view, of facts. Neither a 'proposition', conceived as embodying the content of a judgement, nor a 'fact', conceived as the condition whose obtaining constitutes the truth of the judgement, is an entity of any kind, a chunk of reality to which reference might be made. In *both* cases, any apparent reference to such an entity will be exposed by analysis as no more than a misleading form of expression. And indeed, the position Ramsey here ascribes to Wittgenstein is exactly the position Wittgenstein had reached in 1913.

The initially unpromising context for Wittgenstein's statement of this view is the distinction he drew, in the *Notes on Logic*, between the 'sense' and the 'meaning' of a proposition. The *sense* of a proposition, as one expects, is its truth condition: 'what we understand is the *sense* of the proposition' (1913, p. 103), and 'to understand a proposition is to know what is the case if it is true' (p. 104). The *meaning* of a proposition, however, is 'the fact which actually corresponds to it' (p. 94), and Wittgenstein describes it as 'the chief characteristic' of his theory that '*p* has the same *meaning* as not-*p*' (p. 103). At least as restricted to atomic propositions and their negations, the view seems relatively clear.<sup>16</sup> If an atomic proposition '*p*' is true, then it is the single 'positive fact' that *p* which at once grounds the truth of '*p*' and the falsehood of 'not *p*'; if, on the other hand, '*p*' is false, then the single 'negative fact' that not *p* will ground both the truth of 'not *p*' and the falsehood of '*p*'. The view is readily enough understood as a minor modification of Russell's correspondence theory, one that grants every proposition a worldly correspondent, but without indulging in 'fictions' or 'objective non-facts'. Thus Wittgenstein's summary: '*positive* and *negative* facts there are, but not *true* and *false* facts' (p. 97). At any rate, it is clear that Russell himself understood the view in this way (cf. Russell 1918, p. 185).

Small surprise, then, that Russell was disconcerted to find Wittgenstein also asserting in the *Notes*,

Neither the sense nor the meaning of a proposition is a thing. These words are incomplete symbols. (Wittgenstein 1913, p. 102)

Russell wrote to Wittgenstein, quoting this remark (in its original German, with '*Bedeutung*' for 'meaning') and asking for an explanation:

I understand neither being a *thing*, but I thought the *Bedeutung* was the *fact*, which is surely not indicated by an incomplete symbol? (Wittgenstein 2008, p. 52)

Wittgenstein first replied:

You say, you thought that *Bedeutung* was the 'fact', this is quite true, but remember that there are no such Things as facts, and that therefore this prop[osition] itself wants analysing! If we speak of 'die *Bedeutung*' we seem to be speaking of a Thing with a proper name. Of course the symbol for 'a fact' is a prop[osition] and this is *no* incomplete symbol. (p. 50)

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<sup>16</sup> For an explanation of how the view becomes much less clear when this restriction is lifted, see Potter 2009, ch. 14.

And then, finding this perhaps not entirely clear, he added in a second letter:

The answer is *of course* this: The Bedeutung of a prop[osition] is symbolized by the proposition – which is *of course* not an incomplete symbol, *but the word 'Bedeutung' is an incomplete symbol.* (p. 52)

The exchange is instructive, first, in displaying the very different understanding Wittgenstein had reached of what was originally a Russellian thesis; and secondly, in illustrating their contrasting conceptions of analysis. In Russell's hands the thesis that propositions are incomplete symbols is primarily a reductive ontological claim. The problem of false propositions had persuaded him that there can be no such entities as his early theory had countenanced, and thus that any truths regarding those supposed entities that are to be salvaged must be construed as having to do instead with entities of a different kind. The theory that provides for this reduction is his general theory of complexes. In a word, then, 'propositions' are to be reduced to 'complexes'; or, translated into Wittgenstein's words, the 'senses of propositions' are to be reduced to the 'meanings of propositions'. Now Russell was of course very familiar with the notion that such a reduction need not be ultimate: his own logicist constructions first reduce numbers to classes, then reduce classes in turn to propositional functions, and then those – at least in some versions – to yet more basic entities. So, on Russell's understanding, it would be open to Wittgenstein to propose that the 'facts' (the 'meanings of propositions'), to which 'propositions' (the 'senses of propositions') are reduced, should themselves be subject to a further reduction. But a move of that kind would of course require the specification of a further reductive class, comprising those entities to which facts are in turn to be reduced; and this is something Wittgenstein signally fails to provide.

The reason is clear from Wittgenstein's reply. His analytical proposal is targeted, not on the facts that form the meanings of propositions, but on *'the word "meaning"'*. That is to say, what Wittgenstein aims to eliminate is not a range of entities, for which some substitute entities would then have to be found, but merely a misleading form of verbal expression responsible for the suggestion that there is any such range of entities to be reduced. That propositions have sense and meaning is of course not to be denied. What is to be denied is that their having *either* sense *or* meaning is to be understood as their being associated with a kind of 'thing', a chunk of reality to which reference might be made by a 'proper name'. Wittgenstein does not, in these short responses to Russell, spell out the analyses by which the conception of the sense or meaning of a proposition as a 'thing' is to be avoided. He does, though, clearly indicate their general form. Any expression apparently referring to a proposition's sense or meaning is to be treated as an incomplete symbol, a form of words to be contextually analysed by the use of an expression by which that sense or meaning is properly symbolized, that is, by the *use* of a proposition. Thus, as a first step, we might have, instead of *"p"* has as its sense the (abstract) proposition  $aRb$ , *"p"* says that  $aRb$ ; and, applying the same model, instead of *"p"* has as its meaning the fact  $aRb$ , we will have: *"p"* says that  $aRb$ , and  $aRb$ . In 'Facts and Propositions' Ramsey indicates how these first steps are to be developed. For our immediate purposes, though, the first steps are enough. They already show that, in Wittgenstein's view, *neither* a proposition's having a certain content (its possession of a truth condition) *nor* its being true (its truth condition's being satisfied) is to consist in the proposition's connecting with any kind of 'thing'.

This confirms our negative contention in this section: Wittgenstein's theorizing, from 1913 onwards, simply makes no room for a correspondence theory of truth. But now, what *positive* view of truth do Wittgenstein's considerations suggest? To answer this question it is useful to return to the very beginning of the story we have outlined. In Russell's early theory both the 'sense of a proposition' (what Russell then called an abstract 'proposition') and the 'meaning of a proposition' (what Russell then called a 'fact') were things: in the case of a true proposition they were, indeed, the *same* thing. Russell's later theory then introduced an asymmetry between his accounts of what it is for a proposition to have a certain content and of what it is for the proposition to be true: the second is, but the first is not, a matter of its connecting with a unitary complex entity (a 'thing'). It is by introducing this asymmetry that Russell repudiates his early 'identity theory' of truth. Wittgenstein, as we have just seen, undoes this step, and so restores symmetry between the accounts of content and truth. He thereby opens up a new position in the space of theoretical alternatives, one that accommodates a new form of the identity theory.

To see that this is more than an abstractly characterized possibility, we need only reflect on the motivations of the identity theory. Moore wrote in 1902 that what refutes the correspondence theory is 'the impossibility of finding any difference between a truth and the reality to which it is supposed to correspond' (1902, p. 717). Russell echoed this in 1904, holding that a true (abstract) proposition cannot be distinguished from the supposedly corresponding fact (1904, p. 473). Wittgenstein echoed it again in the *Tractatus*, holding that 'What the picture represents is its sense' (TLP 2.221), so that 'Instead of, This proposition has such and such a sense, we may say, This proposition represents such and such a situation' (4.031). What all these formulations share is an insistence that there can be no distinction between what a proposition affirms and what obtains if the proposition is true. Where they differ is only in the grammatical construction they place on this claim. Moore and Russell construe it as an identity statement, understanding such phrases as 'what a proposition affirms' as singular terms. Wittgenstein, by contrast, holds that such phrases are 'incomplete symbols' or, in the more familiar terminology of ordinary grammar, that they formulate indirect questions. Thus a Wittgensteinian 'identity theory' asserts an identity, not between two species of abstract entities, but between two sorts of questions. To ask after the content of a proposition, and to ask what is required for its truth, are, according to Wittgenstein's identity theory, two ways of asking the same thing. If we have an answer to the first of these questions, then there is nothing that an answer to the second need, or even can, add to it.

## 4 Ramsey

### 4.1 Overview

The conclusion just reached, though we presented it as representing Wittgenstein's view, also represents the right understanding of the most often quoted passage of Ramsey's 'Facts and Propositions', in which he asserts that 'there is really no separate problem of truth' (1927, p. 142).<sup>17</sup> 'No *separate* problem' – we emphasize – taking him to mean that there is no

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<sup>17</sup> Further references to 'Facts and Propositions' in §4 will be given by page number alone.

problem about what it is for a judgement (or proposition) to be true that can be separated from the question of what it is for the judgement to have a certain content.

On Ramsey's reasons for this view we can be brief, since in essentials they recapitulate the Wittgensteinian considerations already reviewed in §3. In §4.2 we will explain how in the opening section of 'Facts and Propositions' (pp. 138-42) Ramsey deepens and extends Russell's argument for a multiple-relation theory, and will review the new justification he offers for Wittgenstein's contention, that phrases apparently referring to Russell's 'facts', as well as his early 'propositions', should be construed as 'incomplete symbols'. Then, in §4.3, we will outline, and begin to counter, the very widely held view that Ramsey advanced a 'redundancy theory' of truth. Our consideration of this view will, however, not be complete until the final section of the chapter, where we comment on what is probably the strongest reason for interpreting Ramsey as a redundancy theorist, namely, the role that this interpretation suggests for the 'pragmatist' elements that Ramsey introduces into the theory of content. In his essay 'Truth' (1959) Michael Dummett famously and influentially argued that a redundancy theory of truth cannot be combined with a truth-conditional account of content, one that accords with Wittgenstein's statement, quoted above, that 'to understand a proposition is to know what is the case if it is true' (1913, p. 104). Now suppose – as is very plausible – that Ramsey already appreciated Dummett's point. Then, if Ramsey had endorsed the redundancy theory, he would need an alternative, non-Wittgensteinian account of content, one that explains what it is for a judgement or proposition to have a certain content independently of any appeal to the notion of truth. According to the interpretation we are considering, Ramsey's pragmatism supplies precisely this need. A proper assessment of this interpretation would require a detailed treatment of the pragmatist theory of content it involves, and hence would carry us too far from the advertised theme of the chapter. Instead we will have to content ourselves in §4.4 with indicating how Ramsey's pragmatist innovations might be understood as complementing, rather than replacing, a basically Wittgensteinian approach to the theory of content.

The interpretation just mentioned emphasizes the need to account for how Ramsey conceived the relations amongst the various proposals advanced in 'Facts and Propositions'. It is right to do so. But we think the best way of meeting this need is to account for how Ramsey understood his proposals as relating to the theories of his predecessors. His essay opens with a question about the 'logical analysis' of belief, posed very much in the manner of Russell, who had spoken of 'the problem of the logical form of belief, i.e. what is the schema representing what occurs when a man believes' (1922, p. 19). It ends with the very generous acknowledgement to Wittgenstein that we mentioned in our Introduction: 'Everything that I have said is due to him, except the parts that have a pragmatist tendency, which seem to me to be needed to fill up a gap in his system' (p. 155). Taking these facts as a guide to Ramsey's intentions, what we should expect to find in the essay is a largely Wittgensteinian answer to a Russellian problem. In our view, this is just what the essay contains.

#### **4.2 Ramsey's multiple-relation theory**

We observed in §3.4 that Russell's thesis, that propositions are incomplete symbols, is primarily a reductive ontological claim. In this respect the thesis represents a departure from Russell's earlier applications of the notion of an incomplete symbol, canonically in his



theory of descriptions and in the treatment of class terms offered by his ‘no classes’ theory (Whitehead and Russell 1910, pp. 66-84). In those earlier applications the essence of the claim that phrases of a certain sort are incomplete symbols is that those phrases ‘never have any meaning in themselves’ (Russell 1905a, p. 416), or again, that such a phrase ‘is not supposed to have any meaning in isolation, but is defined only in certain contexts’ (Whitehead and Russell 1910, p. 67). The significance of the phrase will therefore not be specified by identifying what (the thing which) it means. Instead, its significance will be determined by a contextual definition, a rule for paraphrasing any sentence in which the phrase occurs into a sentence of a different form which will include no unitary constituent corresponding to the original phrase. Plainly, this understanding of the notion cannot apply to all of those phrases that Russell had formerly taken to have abstract propositions as their meanings. Those phrases are, or at least include, *sentences*, and it would be patently silly to suggest that sentences should be dissolved by eliminative paraphrase into their sentential contexts.

Russell of course does not advance that absurd suggestion. He nonetheless attempts to minimize the change to his earlier conception of an incomplete symbol that is forced by this new application of the notion. The attempt is unpersuasive:

The phrase which expresses a proposition is what we can call an ‘incomplete’ symbol; it does not have meaning in itself, but requires some supplementation in order to acquire a complete meaning. This fact is somewhat obscured by the circumstance that judgement in itself supplies a sufficient supplement, and that judgement in itself makes no *verbal* addition to the proposition. Thus ‘the proposition “Socrates is human”’ uses ‘Socrates is human’ in a way which requires a supplement of some kind before it acquires a complete meaning; but when I judge ‘Socrates is human’, the meaning is completed by the act of judging, and we no longer have an incomplete symbol. (Whitehead and Russell 1910, p. 44)

According to his new, multiple-relation theory, when *s* judges that Socrates is human, a fact exists in which *s*, Socrates, and humanity are combined by the relation of judgement. It is this fact which Russell proposes as the ‘complete meaning’ acquired by ‘Socrates is human’ when it is supplemented by *s*’s act of judgement. But this fact cannot be a ‘complete meaning’, since it is not a meaning at all. Specifically, it cannot be the meaning of ‘Socrates is human’ when this is judged by *s* (since that *s* so judges is no part of what *s* judges to be so), and it cannot be the meaning of ‘*s* judges that Socrates is human’ (since this sentences would then be meaningless unless true).<sup>18</sup> Of course, what Russell *ought* to say is, simply, that his new theory requires no such (unitary) things as ‘the meanings’ of sentences. Instead he tries to find, from amongst the entities his theory of complexes admits, replacements for them. This is an indication of the primarily ontological, rather than analytical character of Russell’s new theory. It is a consequence of the way this theory is centrally motivated, by the ontological problem of false propositions. And it is the feature of Russell’s theory that Ramsey targets in the opening arguments of ‘Facts and Propositions’.

We noted in §3.3 that, while the problem of false propositions led Russell to reject a dyadic conception of judgement as ‘impossible’, he retained a dyadic conception of perception: while *s*’s judgement that the knife is to the left of the book will be represented

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<sup>18</sup> Might the fact that Russell has in mind – or at least something very like it – be the meaning of (the thing meant by) another kind of phrase, for instance, a singular terms such as ‘*s*’s judgement’? Yes. We will see later in this section that Ramsey admits this suggestion; we will also see that it reinforces, rather than undermines, the point currently at issue.

by the schema,  $J(s, k, L, b)$ , the perception on which this judgement is based remains of the form,  $P(s, <kLb>)$ . Ramsey's first substantial move<sup>19</sup> is to argue that a dyadic analysis 'either of judgement or of perception' is inadequate (p. 140, emphasis added), and for the same reason. If successful, this first argument will show that, in motivating his multiple-relation theory by the problem of false propositions, Russell misidentified the issue. That perception is factive but judgement not – or in the material mode, that a perception is 'infallible' while a judgement may be false – is not the relevant point.

The argument begins by posing the question, whether 'He perceives that the knife is to the left of the book' asserts a dyadic relation between a person and a fact. It is short, and decisive:

Suppose that I who make the assertion cannot myself see the knife and book, that the knife is really to the right of the book, but that through some mistake I suppose that it is on the left and that he perceives it to be on the left, so that I assert falsely 'He perceives that the knife is to the left of the book'. Then my statement, though false, is significant, and has the same meaning as it would have if it were true; this meaning cannot therefore be that there is a dual relation between the person and something (a fact) of which 'that the knife is to the left of the book' is a name, because there is no such thing. (p. 140)

In brief, and accepting that perception is 'infallible', the *truth* of 's perceives that p' entails the truth of 'p'; but it is not the case, as Russell's dyadic analysis would imply, that the *significance* of 's perceives that p' entails the truth of 'p'.

This argument should be compared to the criticism, given independently above, of Russell's suggestion in *Principia* that the fact of a subject's making a certain judgement might serve as a 'complete meaning'. This fact is the only candidate Russell's theory of complexes provides to be the meaning of a statement that the subject so judges. Similarly, the fact of perception would be the only candidate to be the meaning of a statement that the subject enjoys a certain perception. In each case, though, the effect of electing this sole candidate would be that the statement becomes meaningless unless true. Perception is factive, judgement not. But *that* someone enjoys a certain perception, just as much as that he makes a certain judgement, is something that can be claimed to be so when it is not. Thus, just as what is claimed in the second case cannot be identified with any entity supplied by the theory of complexes, so likewise what is claimed in the first case cannot be constructed from materials supplied by that theory.

In this first argument we already see that Ramsey's approach to the issue contrasts with Russell's in just the same way that Wittgenstein's approach also contrasts with Russell's (see again §3.4). Russell in effect asks: What kind of occurrence is a perception, or a judgement? For answering a question posed in this ontological mode it was surely reasonable to think, as Russell did, that the difference between perception, as factive, and judgement, as non-factive, would be significant. Ramsey instead asks, in analytical mode: How should we understand the use of phrases serving to specify the content of a perception or judgement?

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<sup>19</sup> Before this Ramsey allows that the narrow problem of false propositions might be avoided by a theory according to which each of a pair of contradictory judgements has reference to the same fact – one of them, as it were, 'pointing towards' this fact, the other 'pointing away' from it (pp. 139-40, referring to Russell 1921, p. 272). We saw in §3.4 that this is how Russell understood Wittgenstein's 1913 view, and also that it represents a misunderstanding of that view. Ramsey's concession to this theory forms a minor part of his case that the specific problem of *false* propositions is not the proper ground for the multiple-relation theory.

For *this* question, as Ramsey's argument shows, the difference between factive and non-factive attitudes is irrelevant.

This contrast in approach stands out still more clearly, though, in Ramsey's second argument – where, we should note, Ramsey is clearly no longer borrowing from Wittgenstein but moving beyond him. The conclusion from the first argument is that '[a phrase such as] "that the knife is to the left of the book", whether it is true or false, cannot be the name of a fact' (p. 140). Ramsey now turns to the alternative suggestion that a phrase of this kind functions as a definite description of a fact. According to this suggestion, a sentence containing the phrase would be *significant* even if the phrase were empty, i.e. even if there were no fact meeting the description it expresses. We would then no longer face the consequence that the significance of 's perceives that p' entails 'p'. Instead, a phrase 'that p' would be exactly comparable to a description of an event, such as 'the death of Caesar': someone might significantly (though of course falsely) have said, 'He witnessed the death of Caesar', while Caesar yet lived.

What for our purposes is most important about Ramsey's response to this suggestion is that he does not enter into any dispute as to whether there are entities ('events') for descriptive phrases of this kind to denote. Nor does he dispute that phrases of this kind are often reasonably construed as denoting such entities. Instead, Ramsey draws attention to the contrasting logical behaviour of *different uses* of such phrases. A context in which 'the death of Caesar' functions as a definite description (and where no further operators create ambiguities of scope) is extensional: if s witnessed, or was present at, or caused, or took part in the death of Caesar, then s witnessed, or was present at, or caused, or took part in the murder of Caesar, since those were one and the same event. But when the same phrase is used in 'the discussion of cognition' – when, for instance, 'He was aware of the death of Caesar' is used with the meaning of 'He was aware that Caesar had died' – the context is non-extensional: 'he could quite well be aware that Caesar had died without knowing that he had been murdered' (p. 141).<sup>20</sup> Just as we saw with Wittgenstein, then, Ramsey's focus in this argument is not an a range of putative entities, but on the logical functioning of phrases that Russell had construed as denoting such entities. Independently of any ontological contention as to whether there are things – be they 'events', 'complexes', 'facts' – for these phrases to refer to, Ramsey's conclusion is that, in its use in specifying the content of cognition, 'a phrase beginning "the fact that" is not a name, and also not a description', of any such thing (p. 141). With this argument, then, Ramsey finally separates the multiple-relation theory from the style of ontological theorizing that originally motivated Russell to adopt it. Furthermore, while parts of the argument are clearly original with Ramsey, the conclusion it yields – that 'a proposition about "the fact that  $aRb$ " must be analysed into (1) the proposition  $aRb$ , (2) some further proposition about  $a$ ,  $R$ ,  $b$ , and other things' (pp. 141-2) – is exactly the view that Ramsey had earlier ascribed to Wittgenstein (1923, p. 273).

### 4.3 *Is Ramsey a redundancy theorist?*

The first claim of a redundancy theory is that explicit predication of truth is redundant – that nothing can be said with it that is not at least as well said without it. This much Ramsey clearly holds. The sentence, 'It is true that Caesar was murdered', he says, 'means no more

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<sup>20</sup> Is 'He perceived the death of Caesar' an extensional context for 'the death of Caesar'? Perhaps so. If so, it is not equivalent to 'He perceived *that* Caesar had died'.

than that Caesar was murdered' (p. 142). Some disquotationalists (e.g. Quine 1970) have held that a truth-predicate is eliminable in this kind of way only if the proposition to which it is ascribed is spelled out, and that the usefulness of the predicate shows itself when it is ascribed to propositions that are merely described or spoken of generally, as in 'Everything he says is true'. Ramsey goes further, holding that 'true' is eliminable even from these contexts. In 'For all  $p$ , if he asserts  $p$ ,  $p$  is true', he says, the need for the verb-phrase 'is true' is only an imposition of English grammar, which does not cope readily with generalization into sentence positions (p. 143).

As Wittgenstein remarked, though, to do away with the words 'true' and 'false' is not to 'do away with the puzzles connected with truth and falsity' (1979b, p. 106). The redundancy theorist is distinguished, not merely by advancing the eliminability claim, but by the explanation he offers for it: he holds that the word 'true' is eliminable without loss because there is no substantial notion for it to express. An alternative suggestion, due to Frege (1984, p. 354), is that explicit predication of 'true' *adds* nothing because the notion it expresses is *already present* in that to which it is ascribed.

Before we count Ramsey a redundancy theorist, then, we need to attend to more than the two paragraphs (at pp. 142-3) in which he presents the eliminability claim. In the previous section we considered the engagement with Russell that leads up to this claim; we saw that Ramsey's aim, like Wittgenstein's, was to separate the grounds of the multiple-relation theory from any involvement with an ontology of facts. In the remainder of this one we assemble some observations about the immediate use to which Ramsey puts this claim.

Here the most immediately telling fact is one we have already noted. Whereas a redundancy theorist might claim that there is really no problem about truth, Ramsey instead holds that 'there is really no *separate* problem of truth' (p. 142, emphasis added). In Ramsey's argument the immediate role of the eliminability claim is to redirect misguided enquiry as to 'the nature of truth' onto its proper object, 'the nature of judgement or assertion'. It serves, for instance, to convert 'His judgement is true' into 'If he asserts  $p$ , then  $p$ ', and plainly 'what is difficult to analyse in [this] formulation is "he asserts  $p$ "' (p. 143, variable altered).

A second telling fact is that in reformulating this point Ramsey shows no sign of shying away from, but instead seems clearly to endorse, the Tractarian view that for a judgement to have a certain content is for it to have a certain truth condition.

It is, perhaps, also immediately obvious that if we have analysed judgement we have solved the problem of truth; for ... the truth or falsity of [a judgement] depends only on what proposition it is that is judged, and what we have to explain is the meaning of saying that the judgement is a judgement that  $a$  has  $R$  to  $b$ , *i.e.* is true if  $aRb$ , false if not. (p. 143)

This should not be surprising, since in this paragraph Ramsey is simply repeating what he had said four years earlier, in exposition of Wittgenstein, in his *Critical Notice of the Tractatus*.

First, it may be remarked that if we can answer our question [the question Ramsey has just formulated, 'What is it for a proposition token to have a certain sense?'] we incidentally solve the problem of truth; or rather, it is already evident that there is no such problem. For if a thought or proposition token ' $p$ ' says that  $p$ , then it is called true if  $p$ , and false if  $\sim p$ . (1923, p. 275)

It is relevant to observe that in his lectures, too, Ramsey repeatedly presented instances of the eliminability claim as illustrations of *Wittgenstein's* analyses.

A third point worth noting is that Ramsey's eliminative paraphrases make use of a variable '*p*' in sentence position (one 'ranging over propositions'). Now Ramsey would be the last person simply to help himself to a variable without considering the question, what determines its range, or what notions are involved in grasping the generality it expresses. The subsequent argument of 'Facts and Propositions' is structured by Ramsey's Tractarian answer to this question: the variable ranges over all truth-functions of elementary propositions.

Finally we should note that, at the conclusion of this short passage on the problem of truth, Ramsey concentrates the critical force of his reflections against any explanatory appeal to the notion of a 'fact'.

... what we have to explain is the meaning of saying that the judgement is a judgement that *a* has *R* to *b*, *i.e.* is true if *aRb*, false if not. We can say, if we like, that it is true if there exists a corresponding fact that *a* has *R* to *b*; but this is essentially not an analysis, but a periphrasis, for 'the fact that *a* has *R* to *b* exists' is not different from '*a* has *R* to *b*'. (p. 143)

The most obvious point here is that Ramsey follows Wittgenstein (as we interpreted him in §3.3) in denying any theoretical weight to talk of the existence of facts. Such talk is, he very clearly says, no more than long-windedness. He thereby rules out any appeal to the notion in the service of a correspondence theory of truth. What perhaps stands out less obviously, but is more important for the overall story we have been telling, is the context in which Ramsey envisages this appeal being made. Talk of the existence of a corresponding fact is, he suggests, one of the things we might uselessly resort to through failure to answer the real question, what it is for a judgement to have the content that *aRb*. In §2.3 we suggested that Russell makes his resort to a correspondence theory of truth to compensate for the inadequacy in his new theory of judgement. We were at that point following exactly in Ramsey's footsteps. Ramsey's view is not only that the correspondence theory is a bad answer, but that it is a bad answer to the wrong question.

These observations support the conclusion that, in the paragraphs of 'Facts and Propositions' that have so often been cited as advancing a redundancy theory, Ramsey took himself to be developing views already advanced by Wittgenstein; and, on the account of Wittgenstein's views offered in §3, Ramsey was clearly right in this supposition. There is, then, no better reason to attribute a redundancy theory to Ramsey than to Wittgenstein.

#### 4.4 *Ramsey's pragmatism*

Wittgenstein wrote in the *Tractatus*:

The proposition is the expression of its truth-conditions.  
(Frege has therefore quite rightly put them at the beginning, as explaining the signs of his logical symbolism...<sup>21</sup>) (TLP 4.431)

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<sup>21</sup> Omitted here is a criticism, one of several Wittgenstein makes, of the specific form of Frege's explanations. Right or wrong, these specific criticisms are of much less importance than the agreement against which they are set.

We have so far seen no reason to distance Ramsey from this Tractarian conception. Putting together the results of the previous two sections we can say that Ramsey's aim, like Wittgenstein's, was to refuse any explanatory role, in the analysis of cognition and *hence* in the analysis of truth, to the notion of a 'fact'. This is a repudiation of the correspondence theory of truth, not of the notion itself, nor of its place 'at the beginning' of a theory of content. It would be entirely reasonable to complain, though, that we have so far considered only a part of Ramsey's essay. In this final section we offer a response to this complaint.

Adapting Ramsey's eliminative paraphrases one very soon arrives at the following principles governing ascription of truth and falsity to a belief:

$$\begin{aligned} B \text{ is true iff } \exists p (B \text{ is a belief that } p, \text{ and } p); \\ B \text{ is false iff } \exists p (B \text{ is a belief that } p, \text{ and not } p). \end{aligned}$$

Suppose that these principles were advanced, in the spirit of the redundancy theory or similar deflationary views, as explaining all that needs to be explained as to what it is for a belief to be true. Since these principles presuppose a prior understanding of a belief's being a belief that  $p$ , we could not then explain *this* notion – the notion of a belief's having a particular content – by reference to the condition for the belief to be true: we would need an alternative, non-truth-conditional theory of content. According to the style of interpretation mentioned in §4.1 this theoretical need is met by Ramsey's pragmatist proposal that 'the meaning of a sentence is to be defined by reference to the actions to which asserting it would lead, or, more vaguely still, by its possible causes and effects' (p. 155). Moreover, the very fact that he offers this pragmatist theory is the strongest reason for attributing to Ramsey the commitments about truth that create the need for it. The redundancy theory of truth (or perhaps a less stringent deflationism) forms, along with a pragmatist theory of content, a coherent theoretical package. Unless we attribute to Ramsey the first element of this package, the thought goes, we will be at a loss to explain what the second element is *for*.

Much of what we have to say against this style of interpretation has already been said in the two previous sections. Ramsey explicitly remarks that his pragmatist 'additions' represent a departure from Wittgenstein (p. 155). The interpretation offers to make sense of the overall structure of 'Facts and Propositions' by representing this acknowledged departure as necessitated by an earlier and more fundamental departure from Wittgenstein regarding the notion of truth. The suggestion thus falsifies Ramsey's clear statement that his pragmatism is the *only* non-Wittgensteinian element of the essay. More importantly, it makes a mystery of the fact, evidenced above, that in his discussions of judgement and truth Ramsey is advancing views that he elsewhere attributes to Wittgenstein. Insofar as the interpretation is recommended as making the best overall sense of Ramsey's intentions, these facts significantly undermine its appeal.

Ramsey's 'very vague and undeveloped' (p. 155) pragmatism has inspired the approach to the theory of content known as 'success semantics', most fully articulated by Mellor (2012), and the 'exclusionary semantics' of Rumfit (2011). It is not possible, and anyway it would not be relevant, to review here the strengths of these theories in themselves. Nor should our question be whether, in their developed forms, these theories can claim to represent Ramsey's intentions: both authors are completely clear that they are developing Ramsey's ideas in ways that he did not anticipate in any detail. It is relevant to ask, though, whether

the general shape of these theories suits them to 'fill up the gap in [Wittgenstein's] system' that Ramsey intended his pragmatism to fill.

We need first a description of the gap. Ramsey provides this in his Critical Notice, where the course of discussion anticipates and closely mirrors that in 'Facts and Propositions'. As there, Ramsey holds that the 'problem of truth' will be solved by a correct theory of the content of judgement; and he endorses the Wittgensteinian form of the multiple-relation theory – according to which 'A believes *p*' has the form of "'*p*' says that *p*' (TLP 5.542) – as having reduced the latter problem to the question, 'What is it for a proposition token [a sentence] to have a certain sense?' (1923, p. 275). The picture theory gives Wittgenstein's answer to this question:

the sense of a proposition is that the things meant by its elements (the words) are combined with one another in the same way as are the elements themselves, that is, logically. (ibid.)

This answer Ramsey judges to be seriously 'incomplete', in that it is applicable only to 'completely analysed elementary proposition[s]' (ibid.) He passes quickly over the issue of how it is to be adapted to the unanalysed propositions of colloquial language, anticipating (rightly) that Wittgenstein would dismiss the intricacies of ordinary speech as of no more than empirical interest. But he insists that a second issue, of how the picture theory extends to non-elementary propositions, 'must be faced' (1923, p. 276). Ramsey then provides a succinct account of Wittgenstein's theory of 'the sense of propositions in general' as truth-functions of elementary propositions, spelled out first for finite truth-functions and then for quantified propositions. But this theory, he holds, is certainly not an adequate response to the question posed:

For it is really only an account of what senses there are, not of *what propositional signs have what senses*. (1923, p. 277, emphasis added)

This, clearly, is 'the gap'. Wittgenstein holds that non-elementary propositions express truth-functions of elementary propositions, but he offers no account of *how* they do so. Obviously, the expression of non-elementary senses is achieved by the use of 'logical constants' (Ramsey here means the *words* 'not', 'or', 'all', etc.): somehow the constants serve to 'complete the determination of the sense', but the way in which they do this 'is left obscure' (1923, p. 288). How, then, do these words work?

The Critical Notice does not reach an answer to this question, but from the kinds of approach Ramsey canvasses we can draw further confirmation that this is the question that the pragmatist elements of 'Facts and Propositions' are designed to answer. He first considers and rejects the Wittgensteinian suggestion that the various propositional signs expressing a single sense should be those constructed according to a particular syntactic rule: even if such rules were possible,<sup>22</sup> the approach could only yield language-relative answers to a language-neutral problem. A Russellian suggestion, connecting the constants to 'special belief feelings', would avoid this language-relativity: 'Logical constants might then be significant as substitutes for these feelings, which would form the basis of a universal logical symbolism of human thought' (1923, p. 278); this approach, though, would need to be

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<sup>22</sup> Ramsey rightly doubts this, saying that such a rule 'seems to presuppose the whole of symbolic logic' (1923, p. 278): since '*p*' is equivalent to '*p* and Tautology', a rule determining *all* the equivalents of '*p*' would be a decision procedure for logical truth.

complemented by an account of equivalence amongst different configurations of these feelings. The 1923 discussion breaks off here, with Ramsey merely pointing to some of the obstacles in the way of such an account (1923, p. 279). 'Facts and Propositions' resumes the discussion. It again suggests that the constants have meaning as substitutes for special feelings: to take one central instance of this proposal, the word 'not' will be viewed as having acquired meaning through 'a sort of association' that renders it 'part of the internal language of a speaker', whereby feeling *disbelief* towards '*p*' and feeling belief towards '*not p*' come to be interchangeable, equivalent occurrences (p. 148). And it adds the distinctively pragmatist contention that '[this] equivalence...is to be defined in terms of causation, the two occurrences having in common many of their causes and effects' (p. 149).

On this account of 'the gap', does either of the pragmatist theories mentioned have the right general shape to fill it? In the case of success semantics, it seems clear that it does not. This approach draws on Ramsey's famous example of the chicken, about which we might say that 'it believes a certain sort of caterpillar to be poisonous, and mean by that merely that it abstains from eating such caterpillars on account of unpleasant experiences connected with them' (p. 144). Generalizing the example:

any set of actions for whose utility *p* is a necessary and sufficient condition might be called a belief that *p*, and so would be true if *p*, i.e. if they are useful. (p. 144)

The example thus leads directly to the behaviourist 'chicken equation':

to believe that *p* = to  $\phi$  iff (it is useful to  $\phi$  iff *p*).

Success semantics modifies this, identifying a belief not with a pattern of behaviour, but with the mental state that causes it. It thus proposes to identify the content of a belief with the circumstance in which actions which would be caused by the belief, in conjunction with various desires, would be successful in achieving the aims of those desires.

When we consider this theory as a possible realization of Ramsey's intentions, the most obvious point to make is that the example it builds on is offered by him as illustrating a kind of belief he does *not* intend to discuss (p. 144). Perhaps not too much should be made of this point on its own: although Ramsey sets aside 'chicken beliefs' at the start, there are passages later in the essay that clearly draw on the 'chicken equation' – as, for instance, when he raises the question of the value of true beliefs (p. 148).<sup>23</sup> But much greater weight attaches to Ramsey's elaboration of the point:

I prefer to deal with those beliefs which are expressed in words, or possibly images or other symbols, consciously asserted or denied; for these beliefs, in my view, are the most proper subject for logical criticism. (p. 144)

Beliefs expressed in words have their content in virtue of the compositional structure of the sentences used to express them. In the case of an atomic sentence, '*aRb*', Ramsey clearly sets compositionality as a constraint on any account of the causal powers of a belief expressed by

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<sup>23</sup> The 'chicken equation' directly yields 'It is useful to believe that *p* iff *p*'. (Substitute its right-hand side for its left in the context 'It is useful...', and observe that the result, being of the form '*q* iff (*q* iff *p*)', is tautologically equivalent to '*p*'; see p. 144, fn. 1.)



it.<sup>24</sup> And the central task of the paper is then to characterize on that basis the causal properties of beliefs expressed by logically complex sentences. In fundamental contrast to this, success semantics specifies a condition for something to have a certain content that is independent of attributing any compositional structure to it. This is not of course to say that the approach cannot be developed to account for the content of linguistically structured representations. It does imply, though, that in its basic conception success semantics is not designed to address the specific problem for which Ramsey sought a pragmatist solution.

Things stand differently with the ‘exclusionary semantics’ proposed by Rumfit, an explicitly compositional theory. This theory draws its inspiration from a later stage in the argument of ‘Facts and Propositions’, where Ramsey is discussing the attitudes expressed by truth-functionally complex sentences.

To say that feeling belief towards a sentence expresses such an attitude is to say that it has certain causal properties which vary with the attitude, i.e. with which possibilities are knocked out and which, so to speak, are still left in. Very roughly the thinker will act in disregard of the possibilities rejected, but how to explain this accurately I do not know. (p. 150)

In context, ‘possibilities’ are the truth-possibilities of Tractarian elementary propositions. An ‘attitude’ is specified as being in agreement with some set of these possibilities and in disagreement with the rest; an attitude, that is, is what Wittgenstein called a *sense*. Ramsey’s proposal is to connect with each such attitude those propositional signs (sentences) whose acceptance has causal properties appropriate to the attitude, thus answering the question ‘what propositional signs have what sense’ (1923, p. 277).

Rumfit however abstracts from this Wittgensteinian context to distil the more general idea that ‘a statement’s content is determined by the possibilities it excludes’, i.e. those which someone making or accepting the statement is committed to exclude (2011, p. 230). Possibilities are understood to be ‘extra-linguistic things’ specified by clauses (p. 233); and to exclude any possibility is thereby to exclude any more determinate possibility which would, of necessity, realize it (p. 234). (For instance, to accept ‘The plate is round’ is to exclude the possibility that the plate is square, and thereby to exclude its being nine-inches square.) With these framework ideas in place Rumfit develops in the central section of his paper an exclusionary semantics for the language of propositional logic. The semantics associates with each atomic statement the set of possibilities it excludes.<sup>25</sup> Non-classical clauses for the connectives then represent the possibilities excluded by any compound statement as a function of those excluded by its immediate constituents.

This minimal sketch – inadequate as it would be for an assessment of Rumfit’s theory in itself – allows us to ask whether a theory of this broad shape is suited to address the question Ramsey posed. From comparison with the passage that inspires it (quoted two paragraphs above) it seems plain that it is not. The proposal offers an alternative construal of the possibilities excluded by basic statements, and thus a different construction of the ‘attitudes’ definable by reference to them. But when we reach the notion Ramsey confessed

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<sup>24</sup> Ramsey stipulates (p. 149) that these causal properties must be ‘connected with *a*, *R*, and *b* in such a way that the only things which can have them must be composed of names for *a*, *R*, and *b*. (This is the doctrine that the meaning of a sentence must result from the meaning of the words in it.)’

<sup>25</sup> The paper includes no discussion of how the semantic values of atomic statements (the sets of possibilities excluded by them) are determined by those of their constituent words. Hence our comments will likewise abstract from Ramsey’s first compositionality constraint.

himself unable to explain – what it amounts to, in causal terms, to act in disregard of excluded possibilities – we are, surely, no further forward. In effect, then, exclusionary semantics offers a replacement for the part of the job which, in Ramsey's view, Wittgenstein had already done, and very little to make good what Wittgenstein had left undone. It seems likely that Ramsey would have said of this approach, as he said of Wittgenstein's, that it is 'really only an account of what senses there are, not of what propositional signs have what senses' (1923, p. 277).

Modulo an account of the contents of atomic sentences, a theory of this kind supplies, for each sentence of the language with which it deals, a specification of what content it has. If this were enough to fill 'the gap', though, there could have been no gap; for Ramsey of course had available, in the usual classical clauses for the logical constants, something to do exactly this job. The gap Ramsey identified needs to be filled, not with a specification of what content a given sentence has, nor yet with a statement of what in general the content of a sentence consists in (of 'what senses there are'), but with an account of what features those are in virtue of which any particular sentence expresses such a content (of 'what propositional signs have what sense'). It helps to clarify his understanding of this requirement to note that, when compared to the issue addressed by a systematic, compositional semantics, Ramsey's question is posed, as it were, in reverse. Instead of demanding, for each sentence, a specification of its content, Ramsey is seeking, for each content, a specification of those sentences which have it. The guiding thought behind this formulation is that we will understand what it is for any sentence to have such a content just in case we can characterize the feature that is shared in common between sentences having the same content. We saw that the Critical Notice rejects a syntactical approach to this question, attributed to Wittgenstein (1923, p. 278). Early in the discussion of 'Facts and Propositions' Ramsey likewise rejects an ontological approach to it, attributed to Chadwick, according to which equivalent complex sentences would present, as it were, the same logical configuration of elementary states of affairs (1927, p. 146). The decisive step in Ramsey's pragmatism is to turn, with Russell, to psychology for an answer to this question, locating the commonality between sentences sharing a sense in the causal role their acceptance plays in a subject's mental economy in general, and more specifically in the guidance of his actions.

To take this step is not to turn away from Wittgenstein. After all, when Russell put to Wittgenstein a similar though less general question, about the constituents of a 'thought' and their reference – or, in Ramsey's way of speaking, about the composition and content of 'non-verbal tokens' of a proposition (1923, p. 274) – he replied that 'it would be a matter of psychology to find out' (Wittgenstein 2008, p. 99). There is of course an important difference: referring it to psychology was for Wittgenstein a way of dismissing the problem, while for Ramsey it is a proposal for solving it. But it is one thing to acknowledge that Ramsey is taking a step beyond anything attempted by Wittgenstein, quite another to suggest that this step contradicts what Wittgenstein had already done.

Our consideration of Ramsey's pragmatism in this section – like the accounts of his discussions of judgement and truth given in the previous two – has turned up nothing to support this suggestion. Our discussion has been highly selective: we have not engaged at all with the many obstacles Ramsey identified to the detailed working out of a pragmatist theory, but have aimed only to characterize the role his pragmatism plays in the overall structure of the argument of 'Facts and Propositions'. For the purpose in hand, though, this selective treatment is enough. It is on just such broad, structural grounds that the style of

interpretation outlined at the start of this section presents Ramsey's advocacy of pragmatism as a reason to attribute to him a redundancy theory of truth. Thus to show that such an interpretation misidentifies the gap that pragmatism is to fill is to undercut that reason. And so our previous conclusion can stand: there is no good reason to attribute to Ramsey a redundancy theory of truth.

## 5 Conclusion

The story we set out to tell, spanning as it does some twenty-five years of profound thought expressed in far some from easy texts, has been rather a long one. So it might be useful to gather together at the end a stark summary of our conclusions.

Regarding Russell we have claimed:

- (i) Russell's rejection of his early theories, of judgement as a dyadic relation between a subject and an objective proposition, and of truth as a simple property of propositions, was centrally motivated by the ontological problem of false propositions.
- (ii) There is no essential or necessary connection between the two components of the position Russell then adopted, the multiple-relation theory of judgement and the correspondence theory of truth.
- (iii) Instead, these components are connected in Russell primarily through the style of ontological theorizing in which they are developed. His general theory of complexes supplies no configuration that might possess intrinsically, in virtue of its own internal form, the characteristic features of judgement – of having content and being true or false. Hence Russell aims to explain these features relationally, through a correspondence between one complex, the truth-bearing judgement, and another, the truth-making fact.

Regarding Wittgenstein we have claimed:

- (i) Wittgenstein saw (a) that the two components of Russell's new position are separable, (b) that the first component, Russell's version of the multiple-relation theory, is inadequate as an explanation of what it is for a judgement to have content, (c) that Russell appealed to the second component, his correspondence theory of truth, in an attempt to make good that inadequacy, and (d) that rectifying the inadequacy of the first component would render the second component unnecessary.
- (ii) The picture theory of the *Tractatus* is Wittgenstein's revised version of the multiple-relation theory.
- (iii) The picture theory leaves no room for a correspondence theory of truth.

Regarding Ramsey we have claimed:

- (i) Ramsey's remarks on judgement and truth are presented in criticism of a correspondence theory of truth, as advanced by Russell from 1910.
- (ii) In presenting this criticism, Ramsey supposed himself to be developing views already advanced by Wittgenstein, and in this supposition he was entirely right.

- (iii) The extent of agreement between Wittgenstein and Ramsey counts definitively against attributing to Ramsey a redundancy theory of truth.
- (iv) The pragmatist theory of content that Ramsey introduced in 'Facts and Propositions' provides no good reason to revise that judgement. Ramsey's pragmatism is an addition to Wittgenstein's approach, not a replacement for it: it is not an alternative to the truth-conditional conception of what the content of a judgement or sentence consists in, but a naturalistic account of the features that confer on a judgment or sentence such a content.

Our aims have been exegetical. We have tried to describe how Wittgenstein and Ramsey rejected the correspondence theory of truth. We have not tried to show that the correspondence theory *should* be rejected. It will no doubt have been obvious, though, that that is what we think.

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