Russell’s Multiple Relation Theory of Judgment

Evolution and Demise

BY

ALEXANDER C. DOLNICK
BA, University of Wisconsin at Madison, 2000
MA, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2011

THESIS

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Defense Committee:

Peter Hylton, Chair and Advisor
Walter Edelberg
W. D. Hart
Daniel Sutherland
Sean Ebels-Duggan, Northwestern University
To my parents, Fay and Carl
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# Abbreviations

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Russell</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Autobiography</strong></td>
<td>The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMP</td>
<td>Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAKD</td>
<td>“Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leibniz</td>
<td>A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz</td>
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<tr>
<td>ML</td>
<td>“Mathematical Logic as Based on the Theory of Types”</td>
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<tr>
<td>MTCA</td>
<td>“Meinong’s Theory of Complexes and Assumptions”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSD</td>
<td>“The Nature of Sense-Data: A Reply to Dr. Dawes Hicks”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>“The Nature of Truth”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OD</td>
<td>“On Denoting”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OKEW</td>
<td>Our Knowledge of the External World as a Field for Scientific Method in Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONT</td>
<td>“On the Nature of Truth”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONTF</td>
<td>“On the Nature of Truth and Falsehood”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OP</td>
<td>“On Propositions: What They Are and How They Mean”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLA</td>
<td>“The Philosophy of Logical Atomism”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principles</td>
<td>The Principles of Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems</td>
<td>The Problems of Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RA</td>
<td>“Analytic Realism”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RUP</td>
<td>“On the Relations of Universals and Particulars”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMP</td>
<td>“On Scientific Method in Philosophy”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TK</td>
<td>Theory of Knowledge: The 1913 Manuscript</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Whitehead and Russell</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>PM</td>
<td>Principia Mathematica</td>
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<td><strong>Wittgenstein</strong></td>
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<td>CL</td>
<td>Ludwig Wittgenstein: Cambridge Letters</td>
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<tr>
<td>MN</td>
<td>“Notes Dictated to G. E. Moore in Norway”</td>
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<tr>
<td>NB</td>
<td>Notebooks 1914–1916</td>
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<tr>
<td>NL</td>
<td>“Notes on Logic”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO</td>
<td>Philosophical Occasions: 1912–1951</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tractatus</td>
<td>Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus</td>
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Summary

At some time between 1906 and 1909 Russell adopts the so-called multiple relation theory of judgment, according to which a belief or judgment is not a two-place relation between a mind and a proposition, but rather a three-or-more-place, or multiple, relation among the mind and the various entities concerning which it judges. The multiple relation theory of judgment undergoes various transformations in the period from 1910 through 1913, as Russell encounters difficulties with the view that require modifications. Moreover, in 1913, Wittgenstein obscurely but sharply and effectively criticizes the theory. In his January 1913 letter to Russell, Wittgenstein raises a complex objection to the version of the multiple relation theory that Russell produces in 1912 and sets out in The Problems of Philosophy. Wittgenstein's objection leads Russell to modify the multiple relation theory in the spring of 1913. In the manuscript entitled Theory of Knowledge, written in May and early June of 1913, Russell puts forward a new and more sophisticated version of the theory, one that he believes will not be vulnerable to Wittgenstein's earlier objection. Nevertheless, in conversation with Russell late in May 1913, and then in a letter to Russell written in June of the same year, Wittgenstein criticizes the version of the multiple relation theory that Russell advances in Theory of Knowledge. Wittgenstein's criticisms of the 1913 multiple relation theory convince Russell that that version of his theory of judgment is untenable. This, in turn, leads Russell to reject the 1913 theory, to abandon work on Theory of Knowledge, and, ultimately, to give up the view of judgment as a multiple relation altogether. The exact nature of Wittgenstein's criticism of the multiple relation theory of judgment is not clearly established by surviving documents. This dissertation is a historical study of the evolution of Russell's multiple relation theory of judgment, and of Wittgenstein's critique of that theory in 1913, which led to Russell's abandoning his attempts to formulate a workable version of the theory.

In Chapter 1 I introduce the topic which is my concern in this dissertation. I discuss some of the difficulties facing the attempt to come to an understanding of the issues involved, difficulties that arise, in part, from the nature of the available evidence. I highlight several aspects of the significance of Wittgenstein's criticisms in the history of twentieth-century analytic philosophy. And I summarize my discussion in Chapters 2 through 7 of this dissertation.

In Chapter 2 I focus on Russell's views in the years between 1900 and 1905 or 1906. During this period, Russell attempts to develop a comprehensive theory of propositions to serve as a metaphysical foundation for logic and logicism. I elaborate and explain Russell's views about the nature of propositions
Summary

and the status of their constituents. And I connect these views with aspects of his epistemology, with aspects of his fundamental metaphysics, and with aspects of his analysis of language. In concluding the chapter, I discuss Russell’s reasons for adopting the theory of descriptions in 1905.

In Chapter 3 I articulate relevant general aspects of, and developments in, Russell’s views about the notion of judgment and the nature of the world in the period, roughly, from 1906 to 1918. At some time between 1906 and 1909, Russell rejects the theory of propositions in favor of the multiple relation theory of judgment. I discuss the philosophical shift that Russell’s adoption of the multiple relation theory represents, and I elaborate and explain his stated motivations for the theory. I also survey some of the leading features of Russell’s universalist conception of logic. In concluding the chapter, I examine Russell’s fundamental idea of philosophical analysis and describe its relationship to his views about language, logic, knowledge, and metaphysics.

In Chapter 4 I discuss salient aspects of the version of the multiple relation theory of judgment that Russell produces in 1912 and sets out in *The Problems of Philosophy*. In doing this, I focus especially on Russell’s analysis of judgments that assert asymmetrical relations and on his view of how these judgments correspond to facts. In its account of judgments that assert asymmetrical relations, the 1912 multiple relation theory appeals explicitly to the notion of *relational sense*. I examine Russell’s conception of this notion, the role which it plays in his 1912 theory of judgment, and its origins in his thought.

In Chapter 5 I turn to the version of the multiple relation theory of judgment that Russell develops in 1913 and puts forward in *Theory of Knowledge*. The 1913 version of the multiple relation theory of judgment differs from the 1912 version in (at least) two crucial respects. First, the 1913 theory, but not the 1912 theory, takes the logical form of a judgment’s would-be corresponding fact to be among the judgment’s objects. Second, the 1913 theory denies what the 1912 theory asserts, namely that the sense (or direction) of a relation is intrinsic to it. This revised conception of relations undermines Russell’s 1912 account of judgments that assert asymmetrical relations. It thus leads him to modify that account quite dramatically in 1913. I discuss the various changes that Russell makes to the multiple relation theory in *Theory of Knowledge*, and I explain his reasons for making them.

In Chapter 6 I consider Wittgenstein’s criticisms of the 1912 version of the multiple relation theory of judgment. I argue that, in his January 1913 letter to Russell, Wittgenstein charges that the 1912 multiple relation theory does not make it impossible for a person to judge nonsense. On my reading, Wittgenstein claims that the 1912 theory does not allow for the fundamental ontological distinctions among the objects that figure in our judgments, so it does not rule out the existence of judgments that represent their objects as combined in a way that they simply cannot be combined in reality.
Wittgenstein argues that Russell cannot resolve this difficulty by modifying the theory of judgment so as to build in the relevant distinctions and restrictions. He observes that the attempt to state type-restrictions within a theory that is itself subject to such restrictions is self-defeating: it engenders the very nonsensical assertions whose existence it is meant to preclude. This observation contains one crucial point of origin for Wittgenstein's well-known distinction in the *Tractatus* between saying and showing.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I conclude the dissertation with a detailed examination of Wittgenstein's criticisms of the 1913 version of Russell's multiple relation theory of judgment. I maintain that these criticisms lead Russell to reject that version of the theory of judgment, to abandon work on *Theory of Knowledge*, the manuscript in which he sets out the theory, and, ultimately, to give up the view of judgment as a multiple relation altogether. I argue that Russell modifies the multiple relation theory in 1913, incorporating both logical forms and restrictions of logical type into his analysis of judgments in *Theory of Knowledge*, in order to overcome Wittgenstein's objection to the 1912 theory. I claim, however, that Wittgenstein thinks that even with the modifications in question Russell's theory of judgment still is vulnerable to the charge that it does not explain why it is impossible to judge nonsense. I contend that, in his June 1913 letter to Russell, Wittgenstein argues that Russell's method of imposing type-theoretic distinctions and restrictions on judgments makes a judgment's possession of sense extrinsic to it. Yet Wittgenstein now maintains that the proper analysis of judgment must show that it is intrinsic to the notion of judgment that only sense can be judged. I suggest that the view of sentences and representation that Wittgenstein puts forward in his 1913 “Notes on Logic” is designed to satisfy this requirement. I argue, in part, that Wittgenstein's conception of sentences as facts enables his account of judgment to capture the distinctive role that is played in a judgment by the relation that forms its would-be corresponding fact. I conclude that it is precisely the failure of the multiple relation theory to account for the distinctive role of the subordinate relation in a judgment that convinces Russell that the theory is unsatisfactory, and that leads him, ultimately, to abandon the view of judgment as a multiple relation altogether.
I

Introduction

On the advice of Frege, Wittgenstein came to Cambridge University in October 1911 in order to study with Russell, who was then beginning his second year as a lecturer at Trinity College. Over the next two academic years, Wittgenstein worked closely with Russell and became involved in the details of a number of his most important philosophical views. In particular, the two men discussed and debated crucial features both of the logic of *Principia Mathematica* and of Russell’s so-called multiple relation theory of judgment, a doctrine on which *judging* is a three-or-more-place relation that holds among a person [or mind] and the various entities [including relations] with which the person’s judgment is concerned.

Russell adopted the multiple relation theory of judgment at some time between 1906 and 1909, as part of a fundamental shift in his metaphysics. In the period from 1910 through 1913 he produced three increasingly sophisticated versions of the theory itself. However, he never arrived at a version of the theory which satisfied him. This was due in no small part to his discussions of the theory with Wittgenstein. Indeed, Russell’s intense and historically formative philosophical engagement with Wittgenstein in the period leading up to the First World War had a significant and lasting impact on his multiple relation theory of judgment, and, indeed, on his philosophical thought quite generally. In 1913, in particular, Wittgenstein obscurely but sharply and effectively criticized the multiple relation theory of judgment. In a letter to Russell written in January 1913, he raised objections to the version of the multiple relation theory that Russell produced in 1912 and set out in *The Problems of Philosophy*.\(^1\) Wittgenstein’s objections to the 1912 multiple relation theory led Russell to revise that theory considerably in the spring of 1913. In the manuscript entitled *Theory of Knowledge*,\(^2\) written in May and early June of 1913, Russell put forward a new and more sophisticated version of the multiple relation theory, one which he thought would not be vulnerable to Wittgenstein’s earlier objections. However, in conversation with Russell late in May 1913,\(^3\) and then in a letter to Russell written in

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\(^2\) This was a projected book, of which Russell completed the first two of three proposed parts. Russell abandoned the book early in June 1913 following criticisms by Wittgenstein. Russell published the first six chapters of the book in the *Monist* for 1914 and 1915. The book has been reconstructed from the published articles and from manuscript and published as vol. 7 of *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, ed. Elizabeth Ramsden Eames with Kenneth Blackwell (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1984).

\(^3\) See Russell’s letter of 27 May 1913 to Lady Ottoline Morrell. (As in the case of all of Russell’s letters to Morrell cited here, the original is in the Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin, and a microfilm copy
June of the same year, Wittgenstein criticized the version of the multiple relation theory that Russell advanced in Part II of Theory of Knowledge. Wittgenstein's criticisms convinced Russell that that version of his theory of judgment was untenable, which in turn led him to reject it. And since the 1913 version of the multiple relation theory was to be a central element of the epistemological program that Russell hoped to enact in Theory of Knowledge, the flaws in that version of the theory of judgment undermined that epistemological program. Russell thus abandoned work on the Theory of Knowledge manuscript early in June 1913. He did not, however, immediately give up the view of judgment as a multiple relation altogether. In his 1918 lectures, “The Philosophy of Logical Atomism”, Russell put forward a new version of the multiple relation theory. But the admittedly tentative and inconclusive nature of his discussion of judgment in those lectures strongly suggests that by this point he had lost faith in the theory and that he had essentially abandoned it.

This dissertation is a historical study of the evolution of Russell’s multiple relation theory of judgment, and of Wittgenstein’s critique of that theory in 1913, which led to Russell’s abandoning his attempts to formulate a workable version of the theory. Russell first adumbrates, but does not endorse, the multiple relation theory of judgment in the 1906 essay “On the Nature of Truth”. Sometime between 1906 and 1909, however, he comes to adopt the theory. Thus in the 1910 essay “On the Nature of Truth and Falsehood”, Russell explicitly advocates the multiple relation theory. From 1910 through 1913 Russell’s theory changes considerably. The multiple relation theory of judgment is thus not a fixed object but rather something more like a process. One purpose of this dissertation is to give an account of the way in which the multiple relation theory evolves—to explain how, and in response to what intellectual pressures, Russell’s view shifts. In tracing the development of the multiple relation theory through time, I focus primarily on the versions of the theory that Russell produces in 1912 and in 1913, respectively [although I do consider other versions of the theory more briefly; in particular, the 1910 and the 1918 versions of the theory]. The multiple relation theory changes quite markedly over time, because at each point Russell meets with difficulties which require shifts, which in turn give rise to further difficulties, so that a definitive version of the theory never emerges. In discussing potential weaknesses of the multiple relation theory, I emphasize those which Russell finds most pressing in order to see how they lead to changes in the theory. Many of the changes that Russell makes to the multiple relation theory are responses to difficulties with the view that he comes to recognize on his own. But some of the most significant changes that he makes to the
theory are responses to difficulties with it that Wittgenstein identifies and then presses on him. An understanding of the influence of Wittgenstein on Russell is therefore essential to an understanding of the way in which the multiple relation theory evolves. My aim in this dissertation is to advance an interpretation of Wittgenstein’s criticisms of Russell’s multiple relation theory of judgment. In doing this, I hope to provide a picture of the criticisms that recaptures and articulates Wittgenstein’s thought; that reveals how Russell understands the criticisms; that makes it clear why Russell finds the criticisms convincing; that shows how the criticisms lead to changes in Russell’s theory; and that explains why the criticisms ultimately cause Russell to abandon the multiple relation theory of judgment altogether.

Part of the difficulty in coming to an understanding of Wittgenstein’s criticisms of Russell’s theory of judgment stems simply from the fact that the issues involved are very complex. But another part of the difficulty in coming to an understanding of these criticisms has to do with the nature of the available evidence. Let me briefly elaborate on this point.

I take Wittgenstein’s criticisms of the 1912 version of the multiple relation theory of judgment to be contained in his January 1913 letter to Russell. This claim, however, is neither obvious nor uncontroversial, for Wittgenstein does not explicitly attack Russell’s 1912 theory of judgment in the letter in question. Instead, Wittgenstein’s ostensible target in the letter is his own 1912 account of judgment, an account which he details in a series of letters written to Russell in 1912. So I need to demonstrate that Wittgenstein’s 1912 account of judgment is relevantly similar to Russell’s 1912 multiple relation theory in order to substantiate my claim that Wittgenstein’s criticisms of his own account of judgment in his January 1913 letter to Russell are also criticisms of Russell’s 1912 theory of judgment. There is also another factor complicating the process of interpreting Wittgenstein’s criticisms of the 1912 multiple relation theory. Wittgenstein’s argument in his January 1913 letter to Russell is abstruse. So considerable work is needed to unravel his reasoning in the letter and to reconstruct his critique of the 1912 multiple relation theory of judgment.

The sources for our knowledge of Wittgenstein’s criticisms of the 1913 version of the multiple relation theory are several. They include, but are not limited to, Russell’s correspondence with Lady Ottoline Morrell, which was almost daily during the period in question; the *Theory of Knowledge* manuscript itself, including various notes and diagrams that Russell composed while drafting the text; Wittgenstein’s correspondence with Russell during the spring and summer of 1913, of which only Wittgenstein’s contribution has survived; Wittgenstein’s pre-TRACTarian writings, especially his “Notes on Logic”, dictated in October 1913; and the *Tractatus* itself. Russell’s correspondence with Ottoline Morrell records the order and dates involved in Russell’s progress on the manuscript. The
correspondence also indicates how and when Wittgenstein launched his attack, and how Russell responded to it. However, Russell's letters to Lady Ottoline do not reveal what Wittgenstein's criticisms of the manuscript were or even to which doctrine (or set of doctrines) put forward in the book they pertained. Further complicating matters is the fact that Wittgenstein himself left us with no clear statement of his criticisms. In his June 1913 letter to Russell, Wittgenstein attempted to express his objections to Russell's theory of judgment in clearer terms than he had done previously. Nevertheless, his statement of the crucial objection in this letter is terse and obscure. In a letter to Russell, dated 22 July 1913, Wittgenstein wrote that he was sorry that his objections to Russell's theory of judgment had “paralyzed” Russell, but that he thought that to overcome them Russell required “a correct theory of propositions.” In his pre-Tractarian writings, and in the *Tractatus* itself, Wittgenstein repeatedly criticizes Russell's multiple relation theory, charging in particular that the doctrine does not explain why it is impossible to judge nonsense. Moreover, in these early works, Wittgenstein undertakes to produce the “correct theory of propositions” to which he referred in his July 1913 letter to Russell. That is to say: Wittgenstein attempts, in these texts, to develop an account of judgment which would not be vulnerable to his objection to Russell's multiple relation theory. So it would seem that by examining Wittgenstein's early account of judgment and seeing how it differs from (or is similar to) Russell's theory of judgment, we can shed light on the nature of Wittgenstein's critique of Russell's theory of judgment and thus come to understand the impact upon Russell of that critique.

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5 For example, Russell's letter of 27 May 1913 to Lady Ottoline makes it clear that Wittgenstein first delivered the crucial objection during a meeting with Russell which took place on 26 May: “Wittgenstein came to see me—we were both cross from the heat—I showed him a crucial part of what I have been writing. He said it was all wrong, not realizing the difficulties—that he had tried my view and knew it wouldn't work. I couldn't understand his objection—in fact he was very inarticulate—but I feel in my bones that he must be right, and that he has seen something I have missed” (#787). Since Russell had been working for just two days on Part II of the *Theory of Knowledge* manuscript, that dealing with the notion of judgment, it seems likely that this was what Wittgenstein criticized. Russell's letter of 19 June 1913 to Ottoline Morrell confirms that the proximate cause of the abandonment of the book was Wittgenstein's criticism. In the letter, Russell wrote to Lady Ottoline that “yesterday” he had felt “ready for suicide”, and confessed: “All that has gone wrong with me lately comes from Wittgenstein's attack on my work—I have only just realized this. It was very difficult to be honest about it, as it makes a large part of the book I meant to write impossible for years to come probably” (#811). It was, he said, the first time that he had ever failed in honesty over his work [see #811]. Three years later, writing to Ottoline Morrell about the events surrounding the abandonment of *Theory of Knowledge*, Russell wrote: “His [Wittgenstein's] criticism ... was an event of first-rate importance in my life, and affected everything I have done since. I saw he was right, and I saw that I could not hope ever again to do fundamental work in philosophy” ([The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell], ii. 57).

6 In the letter, Wittgenstein wrote, in part: “I can now express my objection to your theory of judgment exactly ...” ([Cambridge Letters], 29). Recall that in his letter of 27 May 1913 Russell had complained to Ottoline Morrell that Wittgenstein was “very inarticulate” (#787) during their meeting on 26 May.


8 See Wittgenstein, “Notes on Logic”, 95, 103. See also Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 5.5422. The objection that the multiple relation theory does not explain why it is impossible to judge nonsense is, as we shall see, very closely related to the objection which Wittgenstein presents in his June 1913 letter to Russell.
Wittgenstein’s criticisms in May and June 1913 of the theory of judgment advanced in Part II of Russell’s unfinished *Theory of Knowledge* manuscript represent a pivotal moment in the history of early analytic philosophy. First, as already noted, these criticisms have a devastating effect on Russell and decisively influence the development of his thought. More specifically, Wittgenstein’s criticisms convince Russell that the version of the multiple relation theory of judgment that he puts forward in *Theory of Knowledge* is untenable. And this leads Russell to abandon that version of his theory of judgment, to stop work on the book in which he presents it, and, ultimately, to give up the doctrine that judging is a multiple relation altogether. Russell does set forth a version of the multiple relation theory of judgment in “The Philosophy of Logical Atomism”, a course of lectures given early in 1918. However, his discussion of judgment in these lectures is so tentative and inconclusive—as he himself admits—that one gets the distinct impression from reading the lectures that by that time his heart was no longer in it.

In addition to their impact on Russell’s philosophy, Wittgenstein’s criticisms make a crucial contribution to an important theme in twentieth-century analytic philosophy quite generally. The criticisms represent one of the roots of, or points of origin for, the philosophy of language, in something like its modern sense. As I indicated earlier, Wittgenstein’s pre-Tractarian writings and the *Tractatus* itself can been seen, in large measure, as having as their concern the development of an account of judgment which would not be vulnerable to Wittgenstein’s objections to Russell’s multiple relation theory of judgment. In thinking through the problems facing Russell’s attempts to come up with a theory of judgment, Wittgenstein acquires an approach to judgment very different from that of the multiple relation theory. On Russell’s approach to the notion of judgment, the real focus of the theory of judgment is not language or symbolism but rather the thoughts or judgments themselves that lie behind our sentences, and give them such meaning as they have. Before 1905 Russell treats language as a more or less transparent medium through which we can perceive the underlying reality which is our concern. In 1905, however, Russell discovers the theory of descriptions. Russell first puts forward the theory of descriptions in his famous 1905 essay “On Denoting”.

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11 Russell first puts forward the theory of descriptions in his famous 1905 essay “On Denoting”.
12 As analyzed by the theory of descriptions, an ordinary subject-predicate sentence, with either an ordinary proper name or a definite description for its grammatical subject, does not express a subject-predicate proposition. It expresses, rather, a proposition whose large-scale ontological structure is that of an existential quantification. Hence a crucial consequence of the theory of descriptions is the idea that the superficial grammatical structure of a sentence sharply contrasts with, and thus does not reflect, the structure of the underlying proposition.
Russell’s attitude towards language and symbolism, more particularly his lack of concern with these subjects, is in stark contrast to the attitude of Wittgenstein. On Wittgenstein’s approach to the notion of judgment, the theory of symbolism bears the weight of the theory of judgment. In “Notes on Logic”, as in the *Tractatus*, questions that on their face concern the nature and status of the notion of judgment are reinterpreted as being questions that really concern the nature and status of the fundamental representational relationship between sentences and the reality that they are about. Wittgenstein follows Russell in holding that our sentences generally have grammatical forms quite different from the real logical forms of the underlying reality and of the thoughts which they express. For Wittgenstein, however, the importance of language in the analysis of judgment does not consist merely in the fact that ordinary or colloquial language is deceptive, that it masks the form of the corresponding fact. Rather, Wittgenstein takes it that to explain what is really going on in thought one must explain what is really going on in language, and that this involves working out at the most general level what the phenomenon of (linguistic) representation consists in. The idea that language is primary and that thought is to be understood in terms of it—this is an idea which has had a significant influence on, and has played an important role in, the development of twentieth-century analytic philosophy.

As I have already indicated, my primary aim in this dissertation is to carry out an investigation of the evolution of Russell’s multiple relation theory of judgment, of Wittgenstein’s criticisms of that theory in 1913, and of the impact upon Russell of those criticisms. Before beginning this investigation, however, let me briefly describe the subject-matter of each of the remaining chapters of this dissertation.

Chapters 2 and 3 provide an overview of some of the central features of Russell’s philosophy in the period after his break with British idealism, around 1900, and before his shift towards pragmatism and behaviorism, around 1920. In Chapter 2 I focus on Russell’s views in the years between 1900 and 1905 (although I give some attention to his post-1905 works as well). During this period, Russell attempts to develop a comprehensive theory of propositions to serve as a metaphysical foundation for logic and

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13 See, for example, Russell, “The Philosophy of Logical Atomism”, 166.

14 Note that in the *Tractatus* the notion of a thought is introduced before that of a proposition (at 3), and the notion of a proposition is introduced in terms of a thought and its expression (at 3.1). However, the notion of a picture is introduced before that of a thought (at 2.1), and the notion of a thought is introduced in terms of a picture and what it pictures [i.e. represents], which is a fact or state of affairs. A proposition, then, is a particular kind of picture (see *Tractatus*, 48). Remark 4 of the *Tractatus* tells us that a thought is a proposition with a sense. Wittgenstein uses the English word “proposition” as a translation of the German word “Satz”. For him a Satz, and thus a proposition, is a meaningful piece of language. More specifically it is a sentence with a sense, that is, a sentential sign “in its projective relation to the world” (*Tractatus, 3.12*).
logicism. Propositions, according to Russell’s early view, are what individuals judge true or false. The sentences that we use to express our judgments signify these propositions. Russell takes propositions themselves to be objective, nonlinguistic abstract entities which are capable of truth or falsehood, and quite literally made up of the things themselves that constitute their subject-matter. I elaborate and explain Russell’s views about the nature of propositions and the status of their constituents. And I connect these views with aspects of his epistemology, with aspects of his fundamental metaphysics, and with aspects of his analysis of language. In concluding the chapter, I discuss Russell’s reasons for adopting the theory of descriptions in 1905.

In Chapter 3 I articulate general aspects of, and developments in, Russell’s views about the notion of judgment and the nature of the world in the period from 1906 to 1918 (although here again I sometimes consider his later works). At some time between 1906 and 1909, Russell rejects the theory of propositions in favor of the multiple relation theory of judgment. Russell’s adoption of the multiple relation theory is a fundamental shift in his metaphysics; it is a shift from a metaphysics which takes the notions of a proposition and of truth as fundamental to a metaphysics which takes the notion of a fact as fundamental. I discuss the philosophical shift that Russell’s adoption of the multiple relation theory represents, and I elaborate and explain his stated motivations for the theory. I also survey some of the leading features of Russell’s universalist conception of logic. In concluding the chapter, I examine Russell’s fundamental idea of philosophical analysis and describe its relationship to his views about language, logic, knowledge, and metaphysics.

Chapters 4 and 5 concern Russell’s development of the multiple relation theory of judgment. In Chapter 4 I discuss salient aspects of the version of the theory that Russell produces in 1912 and sets out in *The Problems of Philosophy*. In doing this, I focus especially on Russell’s analysis of judgments that assert asymmetrical relations and on his view of how these judgments correspond to facts. One purpose of this discussion is to elucidate the conception of representation that the 1912 multiple relation theory involves. In its account of judgments that assert asymmetrical relations, the 1912 multiple relation theory appeals explicitly to the notion of *relational sense*. I examine Russell’s conception of this notion, the role which it plays in his 1912 theory of judgment, and its origins in his thought.

In Chapter 5 I turn to the version of the multiple relation theory that Russell develops in 1913 and puts forward in *Theory of Knowledge*. The 1913 version of the multiple relation theory of judgment differs from the 1912 version in (at least) two crucial respects. First, the 1913 theory, but not the 1912 theory, takes the logical form of a judgment’s would-be corresponding fact to be among the judgment’s objects. Second, the 1913 theory denies what the 1912 theory asserts, namely that the
sense (or direction) of a relation is intrinsic to it. This revised conception of relations undermines Russell’s 1912 account of judgments that assert asymmetrical relations. It thus leads him to modify that account quite dramatically in 1913. I discuss the various changes that Russell makes to the multiple relation theory in *Theory of Knowledge*, and I explain his reasons for making them.

Chapters 6 and 7 focus on Wittgenstein’s criticisms of Russell’s multiple relation theory of judgment. In Chapter 6 I consider Wittgenstein’s criticisms of the 1912 version of the multiple relation theory. I indicated earlier that I see Wittgenstein’s explicit critique of his own 1912 view of judgment in his January 1913 letter to Russell as involving an implicit critique of Russell’s 1912 multiple relation theory. In order to demonstrate this claim, I elaborate and explain relevant aspects of Wittgenstein’s 1912 view of judgment, and I articulate the various connections between that view and Russell’s 1912 multiple relation theory. Then, after presenting my account of Wittgenstein’s objection to his own 1912 view of judgment, I go on to argue that by virtue of the various fundamental similarities between that view of judgment and Russell’s 1912 multiple relation theory, the problem that Wittgenstein exposes for his own 1912 view of judgment in his January 1913 letter to Russell also infects Russell’s 1912 theory. On the interpretation that I propose, Wittgenstein’s objection to Russell’s 1912 theory of judgment is that the theory itself cannot explain why it is impossible to judge nonsense. Wittgenstein argues that Russell’s 1912 theory treats the objects of a judgment as on a level with each other, as simply being entities with which the judger is acquainted. Russell’s theory of judgment thus fails to allow for the fundamental ontological distinctions among the objects that figure in our judgments. As a result, the theory does not rule out the possibility of a person’s bringing a group of objects together to form a judgment that represents those objects as combined in a way that they simply cannot be combined in reality. Wittgenstein argues that Russell cannot resolve this difficulty by modifying the theory of judgment so as to build in the necessary distinctions and restrictions. He observes that the attempt to state restrictions of logical type within a theory that is itself subject to type-theoretic restrictions is self-defeating: it gives rise to the very nonsensical assertions whose existence it is meant to preclude. This observation contains one crucial point of origin for Wittgenstein’s well-known distinction in the *Tractatus* between saying and showing.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I conclude the dissertation with a detailed examination of Wittgenstein’s criticisms of the 1913 version of Russell’s multiple relation theory of judgment. I argue that these criticisms lead Russell to reject that version of the theory of judgment, to abandon work on *Theory of Knowledge*, the manuscript in which he sets out the theory, and, ultimately, to give up the view of judgment as a multiple relation altogether. I begin by taking up the subject of Russell’s response in *Theory of Knowledge* to Wittgenstein’s earlier criticisms of his 1912 multiple relation theory. I argue
that Russell incorporates both the notion of logical form and explicit type-theoretic restrictions on the argument places of judging relations into his analysis of judgments in *Theory of Knowledge* in order to protect the multiple relation theory from those earlier criticisms. I then claim, however, that Wittgenstein finds Russell’s modifications to the theory of judgment to be inadequate for addressing the central difficulty exposed by his earlier objection to the 1912 multiple relation theory. Wittgenstein insists that even with the modifications in question Russell’s theory of judgment still is vulnerable to the charge that it does not make it impossible for a person to judge nonsense. In raising this objection to the 1913 theory, Wittgenstein again focuses on the issue of the attempt to impose type-theoretic restrictions on the argument places of judging relations. In this case, however, he does not invoke the inexpressibility of the restrictions in his critique of the theory. Rather, he charges that Russell’s method of imposing restrictions of logical type on the argument places of judging relations makes a judgment’s possession of sense *extrinsic* to it. Yet Wittgenstein now maintains that the proper analysis of the notion of judgment must show that it is *intrinsic* to the notion of judgment that only sense can be judged. In “Notes on Logic”, Wittgenstein proposes an account of judgment that is designed to satisfy this requirement. To elucidate the nature of the requirement itself, and to bring out the difficulty which it generates for Russell’s multiple relation theory, I examine Wittgenstein’s new account of judgment. Like his old account, Wittgenstein’s new account of judgment focuses on the sentences themselves. His new account, however, involves a shift from a conception of sentences as collections of names to a conception of sentences as *facts*, i.e. as names standing in relations to one another. I argue, in part, that the conception of sentences as facts enables Wittgenstein’s account of judgment to capture the distinctive role that is played in a judgment by the relating relation of the (would-be) corresponding fact, and that this feature of the account is crucial to its success both in explaining how our judgments manage to represent an outside reality either correctly or incorrectly, and in showing that the sense of a judgment is intrinsic to it. The conclusion that I draw is that it is precisely the failure of the multiple relation theory to account for the distinctive role of the subordinate relation in a judgment that convinces Russell that the theory is unsatisfactory, and that leads him, ultimately, to abandon the view of judgment as a multiple relation altogether.
Towards the end of the 1890s, Russell follows G. E. Moore in rejecting monistic idealism in favor of an atomistic and object-based form of pluralist realism. With this philosophical shift, Russell himself comes to hold that the world consists, at bottom, of infinitely many independently subsisting and genuinely distinct absolutely simple objects, with equally simple properties and external relations holding among them. Operating within this metaphysical framework, Russell attempts to develop a comprehensive theory of propositions to serve as a foundation for logic and logicism. Logic on Russell’s conception is the maximally general science; its laws comprise an intrinsically systematized body of absolute, objective, and unconditioned truths about the most general features of reality. For Russell, then, logic has direct and immediate metaphysical or ontological implications (see Principles, xviii). If we are to take Russell’s logic as ultimate truth, then we have to accept the absoluteness and objectivity of truth and falsehood, the reality of abstract objects, including propositions and relations, and at least a certain degree of atomism.¹ The theory of propositions is the metaphysics that Russell sketches in order to accommodate the demands of logic. In the period from 1900 through 1906, then, that theory just is his account of what there is and its general structure. My primary aim in this chapter is to elaborate and explain the central features of Russell’s theory of propositions.

2.1 Direct Realism

Let us begin our main discussion of Russell’s theory of propositions by focusing our attention on the view of knowledge which is implicit in its fundamental doctrines. According to that view, the foundation of all our knowledge is a relation of direct, unmediated, and wholly presuppositionless contact between the mind, which is passively receptive in cognition, and the known object, which is non-mental, or outside the mind, and completely unaffected by its being known. After 1905 Russell calls this fundamental epistemic relation acquaintance, and it comes to play an increasingly explicit role in his thought. But even before 1905, from his rejection of British idealism onwards, it is an essential element in his philosophy. Thus in Principles, for example, Russell says:

The discussion of indefinables—which forms the chief part of philosophical logic—is the endeavor to see clearly, and to make others see clearly, the entities concerned, in order that the mind may have that kind of acquaintance with them which it has with redness or the taste of a pineapple. (Principles, xv)

¹ See Hylton, Russell, Idealism, and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy, 116.
Russell appeals here to our knowledge of simple sensory qualities both to suggest the directness and immediacy which are characteristic of his notion of acquaintance, and because he regards it as the most plausible case of knowledge which lacks presuppositions. His claim, however, is that all our knowledge of the world is similarly direct, unmediated, and wholly presuppositionless: “the mind, in fact, is as purely receptive in inference as common sense supposes it to be in perception of sensible objects” (Principles, 33). It is therefore not only simple sensory qualities, or even ordinary concrete objects, with which we can be directly acquainted, but entities of all kinds, including purely abstract ones:

entities which are not regarded as existing in space and time, ... if we are to know anything about them, must be also in some sense perceived, and must be distinguished one from another; their relations also must be in part immediately apprehended. [Principles, 129]

Russell’s realism about abstract entities is thus reinforced by his epistemology.

Acquaintance is Russell’s only fundamental epistemic relation. It is the means by which, on his view, the mind comes to have direct and unmediated contact with objects outside it. But clearly to say that acquaintance performs this function does not explain how it enables the mind to achieve direct and unmediated contact with outside objects. Instead it simply stipulates that it does. But that is precisely the point of the notion of acquaintance. For Russell there can be no complexity to our contact with outside objects, no story to be told: we just are in contact with them, and there is nothing more to do or to say about the matter. Thus the point of acquaintance, as Russell designs the notion, is precisely that there is very little to be said about its fundamental nature: the point is that knowledge itself is both wholly presuppositionless and unproblematic.

One way in which the notion of acquaintance is important for Russell’s philosophy of the period from 1900 through 1906 is in his conception of a proposition. Propositions, on Russell’s account, are what we judge true or false (see NT, 503). The sentences that we use to express our judgments signify these propositions (see Principles, 42). Russell takes propositions themselves to be nonlinguistic and non-mental, abstract entities subsisting independently of us (see NT, 492, 503, 506). When we make a judgment or understand a sentence we are, in his view, directly and immediately related to such an entity. According to Russell, then, propositions themselves are among the abstract entities with which the mind may be acquainted. To make a given judgment, or to understand a given sentence,

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3 My discussion in this paragraph draws on Hylton, Russell, Idealism, 111, and Hylton, “Beginning with Analysis”, 38.
4 The idealists, by contrast, argue that all genuine knowledge is judgmental or propositional in character, and that judgment has a structure, a complexity, which imposes presuppositions on what can be judged. These presuppositions then appear as the presuppositions of all possible knowledge and so of knowable reality itself (see Hylton, Russell, Idealism, 128).
involves being acquainted with the relevant proposition. In what follows I shall sometimes call this early Russellian view of judgment “the binary relation view”, for judgment appears here as a two-place relation holding between a mind on the one hand and a proposition on the other.\(^5\)

In Russell’s early philosophy the notions of truth and falsehood are very closely connected with that of a proposition. Propositions are the (exclusive) bearers of truth and falsehood [see Principles, xix; cf. NT, 494]. In direct opposition to idealism, Russell takes it that truth and falsehood are absolute concepts: either a thing is true or it is false, there can be no qualifications, and no degrees [see Principles, 454; cf. NT, 492].\(^6\) So for Russell each proposition has the property that it is either absolutely and unqualifiedly true or equally absolutely false [see NT, 502, 506].

Although Russell insists on the nonlinguistic nature of the proposition [see e.g. Principles, 47], it seems clear that in designing his notion of a proposition he draws on certain features that might be thought to characterize declarative sentences. One such feature is the fact that sentences have a grammatical structure. Drawing on this feature of sentences, Russell attributes an ontological structure to the propositions which they express. A proposition, as Russell conceives the notion, is a complex structured entity made up of a plurality of independent and distinct relatively simpler entities. For Russell, then, a proposition contains constituent parts; it consists, indeed, of certain constituents in a certain configuration. The method of composition here is conceived on the model of the relation of a physical object to its parts: the proposition is thought of as made up of its constituents in a quite literal sense, almost as a wall is made up of bricks.\(^7\) Now in Principles Russell assumes that in general the ontological structure of a proposition very closely reflects the grammatical structure of the sentence which expresses it, and that each word or semantic unit will generally stand for some constituent in the proposition. Thus he says:

The study of grammar … is capable of throwing far more light on philosophical questions than is commonly supposed by philosophers. Although a grammatical distinction cannot be uncritically assumed to correspond to a genuine philosophical difference, yet the one is primà facie evidence of the other. … Moreover, it must be admitted, I think, that every word occurring in a sentence must have some meaning. … The correctness of our philosophical analysis of a proposition may therefore be usefully checked by the exercise of assigning the meaning of each word in the sentence expressing the proposition. On the whole, grammar seems to me to bring us much nearer to a correct logic than the current opinions of philosophers. [Principles, 42]

The question thus arises: what are (in paradigmatic cases at least) the constituents involved in a Russellian proposition?

\(^5\) The use of the term “the binary relation view” to describe Russell’s early account of judgment also helps to make the contrast with his later account, the so-called multiple relation theory of judgment, according to which judgment is not a two-place relation between a mind and a proposition, but rather a many-place, or multiple, relation among a mind and various objects—exactly those objects which, according to the early account, are the constituents of the proposition.

\(^6\) See Hylton, Russell, Idealism, 10, on which my discussion in this paragraph draws.

\(^7\) See Hylton, Russell, Idealism, 146, and Hylton, “Beginning with Analysis”, 32.
Propositions, for Russell, are what individuals judge; they are the objects to which judging minds are directly related. According to Russell’s view, our judgments are about the entities which they are about precisely because the propositions to which we are related in judgment are themselves about those entities. So when we make a judgment about Socrates, say, we stand in the relation of judging to a proposition that is itself about the actual man Socrates. Now one might think that a proposition about Socrates gets to be about Socrates by containing some element which represents him, i.e. an element, such as an idea, which stands in some representational relation to him. But this is decidedly not Russell’s view of the matter, at least for the propositions which he takes as paradigmatic. For him this view of propositions implies that when we grasp (i.e. are acquainted with) the proposition about Socrates, our thought does not succeed in getting through to Socrates himself: although we endeavor to think about him, yet our thought is instead restricted to the idea of him; our thought does not really get through to the man himself (see KAKD, 155–56). To avoid this result, Russell insists that in paradigmatic cases propositions actually contain the objects that constitute their subject-matter. He thus takes the proposition about Socrates to have that man as one of its constituents. For Russell, then, a proposition (again, in paradigmatic cases) does not have a representational element. It does not contain a constituent which somehow represents the things that it is about; rather, it contains those very things. Following Hylton, I shall sometimes speak of this nexus of Russellian views as “direct realism”, including under this head both Russell’s insistence on a direct and unmediated relation between the mind and the known object and the idea that propositions paradigmatically contain the entities that they are about.

Hylton maintains that Russell’s emphasis on direct and unmediated contact with objects “is to be explained in part by his reaction to Kant and to post-Kantian idealism; those views emphasize the mediation of all knowledge by necessary structures which impose form on the known object”. Hylton observes that, from Russell’s point of view, “[t]he presence of an intervening structure would … simply mean that our knowledge failed to attain its desired object. We would end up knowing not the object itself but rather only the intervening structure”.

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9 We shall see in Section 2.3 why this qualification is needed.
According to Russell’s view in *Principles*, propositions paradigmatically have two fundamental features. The first fundamental feature is that a proposition will, in most cases, have the same structure as the sentence expressing it: the semantic composition of the sentence will, in general, mirror the ontological composition of the proposition. The second fundamental feature is, to put it negatively, the denial of representation: that propositions, at least paradigmatically, do not contain entities which represent the things that they are about; propositions, rather, contain those things. Russell thus takes the proposition expressed by the sentence “Socrates is mortal” to have the actual man Socrates and the property of mortality as its constituents. According to Russell, the proposition is about that man and that property in virtue of its containing them.

As Hylton points out, a crucial consequence of the denial of representation is that for Russell at this period there is no independent notion of a fact. Since the true proposition that Socrates is mortal literally contains Socrates and the property of mortality as constituents, it just is the fact that Socrates is mortal. In general, then, Russell holds that for something to have a property or to be related to something else is for a proposition containing the items to be true. The notion of a fact, in Russell’s hands, is thus simply that of a true proposition [see *NT*, 492, 495; cf. *MTCA*, 473]. Given this view of facts, it follows immediately that Russell cannot explain what it is for a proposition to be true by appealing to the obtaining of a corresponding fact (or indeed in any other way). With the correspondence view of truth thus ruled out by his fundamental metaphysics, Russell is forced to take truth and falsehood as indefinably simple notions: “What is truth, and what falsehood, we must merely apprehend, for both seem incapable of analysis” (*MTCA*, 474). In the next chapter we shall see that this point comes to play an important role in Russell’s finally abandoning the theory of propositions (see Chapter 3, Section 3.1, p. 31, below).

Another crucial consequence of the denial of representation is that Russell takes a simple bipartite analysis of language as paradigmatic: an analysis which accepts only words and sentences, on the one hand, and the entities which form their subject-matter, on the other hand. For Russell, then, the paradigmatic kind of analysis rejects the notion that there are entities of a third kind, intrinsically representational in nature, which mediate between the words and the reality which they are about. The proposition expressed by the sentence “Socrates is mortal” contains the entities which this sentence is about. The proposition here is thus not an intermediary between the sentence and its

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13 Here again I follow Hylton, “Beginning with Analysis”, 36.
14 In general, then, for a proposition to be about a particular object (whether concrete or abstract) is simply for the proposition to contain that object as a constituent.
15 See Hylton, “Beginning with Analysis”, 36, on which my discussion in this paragraph draws.
subject-matter; the proposition, rather, just is the sentence’s subject-matter. There is thus a clear contrast between Russell’s theory of propositions and Frege’s view. Frege distinguishes the Sinn of a linguistic expression from its Bedeutung. The Bedeutung of an expression, on his view, is the entity that the expression refers to or is about. The Sinn of an expression, on the other hand, represents the expression’s Bedeutung, and is what the mind grasps when one understands the expression. So for Frege there are Sinne intermediate between the words and the reality. Frege thus puts forward a tripartite analysis of language, whereas Russell’s theory of propositions puts forward a bipartite analysis. As Hylton observes, the point of the bipartite analysis, for Russell, is that “the mind is in direct contact with the entities that it thinks or speaks about”.

For him, however, it is only our being in direct contact with entities outside the mind that makes it possible to speak or think of them at all.

2.2 The Underlying Metaphysics: Objects and Atomism

In this section I shall discuss other relevant aspects of the metaphysical vision behind Russell’s theory of propositions. I shall consider, in particular, the extreme form of atomism which Russell takes for granted. And I shall elaborate and explain the crucial role which the notion of an object plays in his early thought.

As an alternative to Bradley’s monistic idealism, Russell espouses an atomistic and object-based form of pluralist realism

which regards the world, both that of existents and that of entities, as composed of an infinite number of mutually independent entities, with relations which are ultimate, and not reducible to adjectives of their terms or of the whole which these compose. ([Principles], xviii)

At first, however, this pluralism does not lead Russell to acknowledge any fundamental distinctions of ontological category among entities. In Principles, indeed, Russell denies that any such distinctions are tenable. Instead he takes the view that all entities are objects with the same ontological status. The notion of an object thus comprises Russell’s primitive and all-embracing ontological category: for him “everything absolutely is an object” (“Functions and Objects”, 51; cf. Principles, 55 n.). The

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16 See, for example, Frege, “Über Sinn und Bedeutung”, 158.
17 Hylton, “Functions and Propositional Functions”, 125.
18 We shall record a partial qualification to this claim in Section 2.3 [see pp. 21–22, below; see also n. 38, below].
19 This point is clear from an exchange between Russell and Frege. See Frege, Philosophical and Mathematical Correspondence, 163, 169.
fact that Russell takes objects (in the most general sense) as fundamental illustrates what, following Hylton, I have called his object-based metaphysics.\(^{20}\)

The object-based nature of Russell’s view can be articulated into a number of interrelated doctrines that play a fundamental role in the theory of propositions.\(^{21}\) The first to be considered here is directly connected with his general conception of the nature and status of the constituents of propositions. For Russell, the world is composed of propositions and their constituents. In *Principles* Russell refers to the constituents of propositions as “terms” [see *Principles*, 43, 366–67]. The notion of a *term* is thus one of the central concepts of his early metaphysics. According to that metaphysics, everything is a constituent of propositions, and everything that can be a constituent of a proposition “must have being” (*MTCA*, 453). From these two doctrines it follows immediately that everything is a term, and that every term is a genuine object [i.e., roughly, objective and independent of us]. Thus “term” is, Russell says, “the widest word in the philosophical vocabulary” ([Principles*, 43]). In *Principles*, then, the notion of a *term* serves as Russell’s fundamental, and all-inclusive, ontological category; it simply is his [general] notion of an *object*.

Russellian terms *unite* to form Russellian propositions. A proposition is thus no mere aggregation of disparate elements but rather a certain complex *unity* formed of its various constituents. How is this unity to be understood? From within Russell’s early post-idealistic metaphysics, the unity of the proposition is to be explained in terms of certain features of its constituents. Russell holds that every proposition must contain a term that binds the constituents of the proposition together to constitute that proposition. The recognition of this fact leads him to make a distinction among terms on the basis of the ways in which they are capable of occurring in propositions. In *Principles* Russell distinguishes two ways in which terms may occur in propositions. In the proposition that Brutus killed Caesar, the individuals Brutus and Caesar occur non-predicatively, as logical subjects, and the relation of killing occurs predicatively, as the logical cement or ontological glue that holds the constituents of the proposition together. Similarly, in the proposition that Socrates is mortal, the individual Socrates occurs non-predicatively, as the proposition’s logical subject, and the property of mortality occurs predicatively. Russell holds that certain terms—e.g. Brutus, Caesar, and Socrates—can occur only non-predicatively in propositions, as logical subjects. Such terms are what he calls “things” [see *Principles*, 44–45, 212]. Terms like killing and mortality, on the other hand, which have the ability to occur predicatively, Russell calls “concepts” [see *Principles*, 44, 212]. In any proposition, it is the predicative


\(^{21}\) In what follows I shall discuss several of these doctrines, but my discussion is not intended to be exhaustive.
occurrence of a *concept* that unites the constituents of that proposition into a whole: “In all unities, one term at least is either a predicated predicate or a relating relation” (*Principles*, 442).²²

Russell insists that any term that can be a predicative constituent of a proposition can also be a nominative one. For our purposes this point is crucial. It illustrates the fact that, unlike Frege’s distinction between objects (*Gegenstände*) and concepts (*Begriffe*), Russell’s distinction between things and concepts is not a distinction between what can occur only as subject and what can occur only predicatively. In Russell’s metaphysics *everything* is capable of being a logical subject in a proposition [see *Principles*, 44, 48]. Russell claims, indeed, that the attempt to deny this thesis is logically self-refuting, since the term *a* occurs as a logical subject in the (false) proposition expressed by “*a* occurs as a logical subject in no proposition”. Russell thus takes as genuinely contradictory what Frege himself simply dismisses as “an awkwardness of language”⁵¹ namely that the concept *horse* is not a concept [see *Principles*, 507–10]. In contrast to Frege, Russell holds that the same term that occurs as logical subject in the proposition expressed by “mortality is a concept”, occurs predicatively in the proposition expressed by “Socrates is mortal” [see *Principles*, 45–46, 48].

The idea that there is only one fundamental ontological category, and that it includes everything, is reflected formally in the logical system of Russell’s *Principles* by the doctrine that there is only one sort of variable in logic, and that it is absolutely unrestricted. Unrestricted variables, for Russell, range over absolutely all entities—tables, numbers, spatial points, propositions, classes, propositional functions, and so on.²⁴ General propositions, as Russell constantly suggests, actually contain unrestricted variables as constituents (see e.g. *Principles*, 5–8). This implies, and Russell clearly accepts, that variables are themselves nonlinguistic entities. In *Principles* Russell identifies the unrestricted variable with the denoting concept *any term*. Thus he says: “Any term is a concept denoting the true [i.e. unrestricted] variable” (*Principles*, 91).²⁵

For Russell, everything is a term, i.e. is the subject of propositions. And all terms have the same ontological status, in the precise sense that if any term which is the subject of a proposition is replaced by any other term then what we obtain is still a proposition.²⁶ As Russell puts it: “It is characteristic of the terms of a proposition that any one of them may be replaced by any other entity without our ceasing to have a proposition” (*Principles*, 45). Now as Hylton points out:

²² It is not clear, however, that the idea of a relating relation, or of a predicated predicate, actually explains the unity of the proposition. It seems, rather, merely to label the problem.


²⁵ I shall briefly discuss Russell’s theory of denoting concepts in the next section; see Section 2.3, pp. 21–22, 24–25, below.

If everything is a term, then in the proposition that Socrates is a term, any entity may be substituted for Socrates to yield a new proposition. Thus the notion of a term, one of the central concepts of Platonic Atomism [= Russell’s theory of propositions], runs counter to the view that entities divide into types such that we only obtain a proposition if we replace an entity in a proposition by another of the same type.\footnote{Hylton, \textit{Russell, Idealism}, 227.}

Russell’s refusal to accept that there are any ultimate distinctions of ontological category among the various entities that make up the world is thus a direct expression of the object-based nature of his fundamental metaphysical thought.

Russell pays a high price for his failure to embrace type distinctions in a thoroughgoing fashion. The doctrine that all entities are logical subjects, together with the doctrine that all logical subjects are intersubstitutable in propositions \textit{salva significatione}, yields the analogue of Russell’s class paradox for predicates. (A predicate, here, is not a linguistic entity, but a constituent of a proposition.) Since the predicate \textit{mortal}, say, is a logical subject, and since logical subjects are intersubstitutable, we can substitute this predicate for Socrates in the proposition that Socrates is mortal. We thereby obtain a proposition in which the predicate is ascribed to itself. This proposition is false: the predicate \textit{mortal} is not predicatable of itself. Since we can say this, there must be such a predicate as \textit{not predicatable of itself}. But as Russell points out: “to suppose either that this predicate is, or that it is not, predicatable of itself, is self-contradictory” (\textit{Principles}, 102).

Russell’s assumption that the distinctions among various kinds of entities are not fundamental also shows up in his attitude towards the (putative) distinction between abstract objects and non-abstract objects. That distinction, indeed, is relatively unimportant to his thought during the time with which we are concerned. For the first few years of that period he holds that all entities \textit{subsist} or have being; some have the additional property of \textit{existing} (i.e., roughly, being in space and time). Thus it is being, not existence, that is Russell’s fundamental ontological status: “though a term may cease to exist, it cannot cease to be; it is still an entity, which can be counted as \textit{one}, and concerning which some propositions are true and others false” (\textit{Principles}, 471). The priority of the notion of subsistence indicates that Russell’s ontology is an abstract one: its fundamental objects are not intrinsically spatiotemporal but just atemporally \textit{are}. So if we are to understand the distinction between the abstract and the concrete in terms of the distinction between \textit{subsistence} and \textit{existence}, then we should say that for Russell concrete objects are just special cases of abstract objects [roughly, those that stand in a certain relation to the concept \textit{existence}]. Abstract objects, in turn, encompass \textit{all} objects: they are, as it were, just objects in general. The distinction between abstract objects and concrete objects is, accordingly, not a fundamental one for Russell. On his account, human beings and propositions,
numbers and mountains, all are, or have being, in exactly the same sense. The idea that all entities are
real in exactly the same sense is an instance of the more general idea that all entities are on the same
level. And this more general idea is encapsulated in Russell’s doctrine that all entities are objects (or
terms) with the same ontological status.

The primacy of the concept of an object in Russell’s early philosophy is in part a product of his
extreme realism. Underlying his various expressions of that realism is the assumption that objectivity
requires objects. Thus in Principles, for example, Russell says:

Misled by neglect of being, people have supposed that what does not exist is nothing. Seeing that numbers,
relations, and many other objects of thought, do not exist outside the mind, they have supposed that the thoughts
in which we think of these entities actually create their own objects. Every one except a philosopher can see the
difference between a post and my idea of a post, but few see the difference between the number 2 and my idea
of the number 2. Yet the distinction is as necessary in one case as in the other. ... In short, all knowledge must
be recognition, on pain of being mere delusion; Arithmetic must be discovered in just the same sense in which
Columbus discovered the West Indies, and we no more create numbers than he created the Indians. The number
2 is not purely mental, but is an entity which may be thought of. Whatever can be thought of has being, and its
being is a precondition, not a result, of its being thought of. [Principles, 450–51]

Like Russell, Frege is strongly opposed to psychologism and believes in a third realm, neither physical
nor mental, which provides the subject-matter for objective judgments about abstract matters. Frege,
however, takes the objectivity of our knowledge for granted and seeks to explain the notion of an object
in terms of it. For Russell the situation is reversed: the objects themselves are taken as fundamental,
as genuine and independent entities, and the phenomenon of objectivity is explained in terms of them.
Russell’s approach thus locates objectivity in a realm of objects distinct from and independent of us.
Russell insists that absolutely everything is an object as a way of insisting that the various entities
which make up the world, and to which, in knowledge, we attempt to gain access, are themselves real
and objective.

In breaking with idealism, Russell adopts an extreme atomism according to which each thing exists,
and can be understood, in isolation from all other things. The concept of an object plays a crucial role
in Russell’s atomistic conception of the world, for he sees it as made up of infinitely many separate

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30 Frege’s metaphysics is thus judgment-based: for him the fundamental notions are those of truth and falsity,
and of a judgment as that to which truth and falsity can be ascribed. Concepts and objects are to be understood
essentially in terms of the analysis of whole judgments: “What is distinctive about my conception of logic is
that I begin by giving pride of place to the content of the word ‘true’, and then immediately go on to introduce a
thought as that to which the question ‘Is it true?’ is in principle applicable. So I do not begin with concepts and
put them together to form a thought or judgment; I come by the parts of a thought by analyzing the thought”
[Frege, Posthumous Writings, 253].
31 As we saw just two paragraphs back, Russell distinguishes existence from subsistence in his early post-
idealistic work. Here, however, I use the word “existence” broadly, to encompass both ways of being.
and distinct objects. The nature of any one such object is independent of anything else.\(^3\) There are relations among these objects, but these relations are external: they do not affect the objects. An object which is related to another would be exactly the same if it were not so related. Moreover, these relations themselves are conceived of as object-like, as distinct entities which could, again, be known in isolation from everything else. Russell’s object-based metaphysics thus sustains his atomistic conception of the world. The doctrine that each object stands entirely alone and is completely self-subsistent requires, as a precondition of its possibility and coherence, that the existence of an object be an elemental and presuppositionless fact, i.e. that the idea of an object’s existing or not existing be something that makes sense by itself, in isolation from other ideas.

Russell’s ontological atomism underlies his epistemological atomism. Here again the notion of acquaintance is crucial. The idea of an independently existing object, an object which is what it is without regard to anything else, draws on our [supposed] capacity for acquaintance, our ability to stand in a direct cognitive relation to an object.\(^3\) In its essential features, then, knowledge by acquaintance is a purely atomistic form of knowledge. Direct acquaintance with an object provides the mind with knowledge of the object in the form of a discrete and independent unit that is fully comprehensible taken by itself, in isolation from all other pieces of knowledge. In this precise sense, then, acquaintance gives us perfect and complete knowledge of its objects. Acquaintance itself is an external relation, so it does not affect its relata. The mind’s having direct epistemic contact with an object thus in no way influences or distorts the object itself. When we are acquainted with a given object, that object is known to us, just as it is, without regard to anything else. If we can know an object perfectly and completely by being acquainted with it, then that piece of knowledge is independent of all others. And if that is what knowledge is like, then one could know a single object completely while being ignorant of everything else. For Russell, then, knowledge and understanding must come piecemeal. It must be possible to know a single truth, or to understand the intrinsic nature of a single object, and to be otherwise completely ignorant; and one’s ignorance must in no way impugn the knowledge or the understanding that one has. Otherwise, holism would threaten. According to the kind of holism that is characteristic of the views of Russell’s idealist opponents, nothing can be fully known until we know all its relations, and all the things to which it is related. So on the idealists’ picture of knowledge, we cannot have fully adequate knowledge of anything short of the world as a whole. Russell’s view of knowledge in general, and his insistence on the notion of acquaintance in particular,

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are in direct opposition to this holism. For Russell acts of acquaintance are the separate and distinct acts of knowledge by which the world is known to us. The world can be known by these separate and distinct acts precisely because it is made up of separate, distinct objects.

2.3 Russell on Denoting

In his famous 1905 essay OD, Russell puts forward the theory of descriptions. In this section I shall discuss relevant aspects of this theory, including [but not limited to] its fundamental method of analysis, its relationship to Russell’s earlier views in Principles about the nature of descriptions, and its impact upon Russell’s conception of the philosophical enterprise itself.

For Russell, let us recall, the issue of direct realism is closely related to the distinction between a bipartite analysis of language and a tripartite analysis. As Hylton points out:

To invoke intermediate entities, as in a [tripartite] analysis of language, would violate direct realism, at least as Russell understands it. Paradigmatically, on his view, the entities that the mind grasps or is in contact with are not intermediate between the mind and the objects that it thinks about, rather they are those very objects.

In designing his notion of a proposition, Russell seeks to accommodate this facet of his direct realism by insisting on the idea that propositions—the entities that we are most directly related to in making judgments—actually contain the objects which they are about. This idea of a proposition functions as a paradigm for Russell. For a brief period, however, he deviates from this paradigm. The issue that brings about the deviation is the need to account for generality. In Principles Russell introduces the theory of denoting concepts for this purpose, and this theory commits him to the existence of intermediate entities of precisely the kind that his direct realism in general hoped to avoid.

According to the theory of denoting concepts, a description, whether definite or indefinite, most immediately stands for a denoting concept. The denoting concept is in turn “connected in a certain peculiar way” (Principles, 53) with the object or objects that the description describes (or is about). Russell expresses this sort of relation between the denoting concept and the objects by saying that the former denotes the latter (see Principles, 53). Consider the phrase “all philosophers”. Russell holds that when this phrase occurs in a sentence, such as “All philosophers are wise”, that sentence expresses a proposition which contains not the totality of individual philosophers (which is the reality described by the phrase) but rather the single denoting concept all philosophers which (somehow) denotes that

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34 Hylton, “Functions and Propositional Functions”, 127.
35 The need to arrive at some understanding of generality operates at the most fundamental level of Russell’s metaphysics.
totality. The proposition contains all philosophers but is not about that denoting concept. Rather it is about—indirectly about—the objects which that concept denotes. So the sentence “All philosophers are wise” is about objects which do not occur in the proposition which it expresses. It is about those objects—again, indirectly about them—in virtue of expressing a proposition which contains a denoting concept that denotes them. That proposition thus contains a representational element, that is, an element that mediates between “all philosophers” and the reality which the phrase is about. On the other hand, a paradigmatic subject-predicate proposition for Russell, one not containing a denoting concept, does not contain something which represents its subject, rather the subject itself is contained in the proposition. Thus the proposition corresponding to the sentence “Socrates is mortal”, for example, both contains and is about the actual man Socrates, no denoting concept occurs in this proposition. The proposition corresponding to the sentence “The teacher of Plato is mortal”, by contrast, contains a denoting concept, the teacher of Plato, which denotes Socrates. In virtue of this fact the proposition is about Socrates, who is not a constituent of the proposition. The proposition is not in any sense about the denoting concept the teacher of Plato. Rather it contains that concept without being about it. As Hylton observes:

This is why the role of the denoting concept is a representational one: its only role is to point to another object, which the proposition is indirectly about.37

Denoting concepts are thus intrinsically representational, intermediate entities of precisely the kind envisaged by a tripartite analysis of language. When we grasp the proposition expressed by a sentence containing a description, we are in direct contact with the denoting concept for which the description stands. Our contact with the described entities, which are the subject-matter of the sentence, is indirect, being mediated by the denoting concept. The theory of denoting concepts is thus a tripartite analysis of language for descriptions and the sentences in which they occur.38

The theory of denoting concepts is thus a deviation from the paradigm of the bipartite analysis of language. It is not, however, a permanent one. In OD Russell rejects the theory of denoting concepts for the theory of descriptions, which (among other things) enables him to eliminate from his conception of (general) propositions the representation-theoretic element that the theory of denoting concepts introduces into it.39

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38 For certain kinds of phrases, then, Russell accepts a distinction that is in some ways analogous to Frege’s distinction between Sinn and Bedeutung. In Principles, indeed, Russell himself says that Frege’s distinction between Sinn and Bedeutung is “roughly, though not exactly, equivalent” (Principles, 502) to his own distinction between a denoting concept and the denoted object.

39 But see n. 45, below, for an important qualification to this claim.
Russell’s theory of descriptions provides a method for analyzing both indefinite descriptions (such as “everything”, “any person”, “some gray cat”, “every fast car”, etc.) and definite (or singular) descriptions (such as “the dissertation that you are reading”, “the man in the gabardine suit”, “the greatest number”, etc.). The salient difference between these two kinds of denoting phrases (as Russell calls them) is, of course, that only definite descriptions purport to pick out a single (or definite) object. In analyzing descriptions, Russell takes the notion of generality as fundamental and indefinable. Presupposing this notion, he proceeds to regiment sentences containing indefinite descriptions in the manner familiar from quantification theory. Thus the sentence “All philosophers are wise” is taken to express a proposition whose underlying logical form is more accurately reflected by the sentence “For every object x, if x is a philosopher then x is wise”. This goes over into logical notation as: “(∀x) (x is a philosopher ⊃ x is wise)”. Russell’s analysis of definite descriptions is analogous, though more complex. In general, a sentence of the superficial grammatical form “The F is G”, which ascribes the property signified by the predicate “is G” to the object definitely described by “the F”, is understood as asserting that the predicate “is F”, from which the definite description “the F” was constructed, is uniquely satisfied, and that whatever object satisfies it has the property signified by “is G”. Thus the sentence “The teacher of Plato is mortal” is to be understood as expressing a proposition whose form is more accurately mirrored by the sentence “There is an object x such that x is a teacher of Plato, and for every object y, if y is a teacher of Plato then y is identical to x, and x is mortal”. This can be put into logical notation as: “(∃x) (x is a teacher of Plato & (∀y) (y is a teacher of Plato ⊃ y = x) & x is mortal)”. Russell’s theory of descriptions explains descriptions by explaining the logical form of the propositions expressed by the (unanalyzed) sentences in which they occur. A central claim of the theory is that definite descriptions are incomplete symbols. In PM Russell tells us that what he means by an incomplete symbol is “a symbol which is not supposed to have any meaning in isolation, but is only defined in certain contexts” (PM, i. 66). Why should we think that, according to the theory of descriptions, a definite description has no meaning in isolation? Russell’s fundamental notion of meaning is just that of direct reference: for him a symbol has a meaning if it stands for an entity, and the entity for which it stands is its meaning (see PM, i. 66; cf. PLA, 221). On Russell’s bipartite analysis of language, then, proper names (and predicates) possess exactly one semantic property: that of standing for the entities for which they stand. So for Russell the presence of a proper name in a sentence implies,

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40 Thus Russell says: “I take the notion of the variable as fundamental” (OD, 416).
43 This view of meaning has the [perhaps unfortunate] consequence that any expression which stands for no entity has no meaning, and thus is literally meaningless.
at least in paradigmatic cases, that the sentence expresses a proposition that contains the named object.\footnote{Likewise the presence of a predicate in a sentence implies—again, in paradigmatic cases at least—that the sentence expresses a proposition that contains the concept \(i.e\). property or relation} for which the predicate stands.\footnote{For my purposes in this dissertation the importance of these ideas lies in the connections between them and Russell’s post-1910 views, in particular, the analogies between the theory of descriptions and the multiple relation theory of judgment. According to the latter theory, there are no propositions; symbols which appear to represent or express propositions are said to be incomplete symbols, which make sense in context even though there are no propositions \(see Chapter 3, Section 3.2, p. 35, below, and Chapter 4, Section 4.3, pp. 87–88, below, for further discussion of this issue\).} According to the theory of descriptions, however, a definite description does not function referentially. In a proposition expressed by a sentence using a definite description, that is to say, there is no entity for which the definite description stands. The proposition expressed by “The teacher of Plato is mortal” contains the properties of being a teacher of Plato, and of mortality, the relation of identity, as well as various logical entities. But the proposition does not contain Socrates. Nor does it contain a denoting concept which denotes him. There is no entity in the proposition expressed by the sentence “The teacher of Plato is mortal” for which the definite description “the teacher of Plato” stands. That is what Russell means by saying that definite descriptions have no meaning in isolation. Sentences in which definite descriptions occur, however, often succeed in expressing propositions: the sentences as wholes are meaningful. That is what Russell means by saying that definite descriptions, like other incomplete symbols, are “defined in certain contexts”. An incomplete symbol makes a systematic contribution to a sentence in which it occurs, only it does not do so by indicating an entity which is contained in the proposition which the sentence expresses.\footnote{Some qualification to this statement should be made. In \textit{Principles} Russell takes it that to explain generality one must explain the notion of the variable \(see Principles, 89–90\). The theory of denoting concepts seeks to explain this notion by identifying the variable with the denoting concept \textit{any term} \(see Principles, 91\). In doing so, the theory relies on the relation of denoting, which, as we have seen, introduces a representation-theoretic element into Russell’s conception of propositions. The problem is that the theory of descriptions does not in fact explain generality, \i.e. the variable, but rather takes it for granted, as primitive and unexplained. So it might be said that the theory of descriptions does not, after all, eliminate denoting, or therefore the representational} 

According to the theory of denoting concepts, the sentence “The teacher of Plato is mortal” expresses a proposition which contains not Socrates but rather a denoting concept, \textit{the teacher of Plato}, which denotes him. The proposition contains the denoting concept \textit{the teacher of Plato} but is about—indirectly about—Socrates. How, in virtue of containing that denoting concept, is the proposition \textit{about} an entity wholly distinct from it, an entity which, in grasping the proposition, we do not in any sense grasp? To this question Russell has no answer: the relation of denoting is simply asserted to have that effect.

The theory of descriptions avoids the representational element which plays the central role in the theory of denoting concepts.\footnote{Likewise the presence of a predicate in a sentence implies—again, in paradigmatic cases at least—that the sentence expresses a proposition that contains the concept \(i.e.\) property or relation} for which the predicate stands.
“indirect aboutness”. On the contrary: when subject to the new method of analysis, the sentence “The teacher of Plato is mortal” is still about Socrates, and the proposition which it expresses still does not contain that man, so the sentence is still indirectly about him. So one might think that here too, as in the theory of denoting concepts, there is a violation of Russell’s direct realism. But in fact this is not so. The theory of descriptions explains the phenomenon of indirect aboutness without relying on a representational element. The crucial idea here is that as analyzed by the theory of descriptions, the sentence is directly about the constituents of the proposition which it expresses, and is indirectly about Socrates in virtue of being directly about those constituents. In particular, the sentence is directly about the property, being a teacher of Plato. And it states that exactly one thing has this property [and that thing has the property of mortality]. For Russell, then, the sentence is [indirectly] about Socrates because it is [directly] about a certain property that holds of him, but only of him. Here the idea of indirect aboutness does not rely on a mysterious relation of denoting, introduced only for this purpose. It relies, rather, on the idea of an object’s satisfying a property, and this is not in the same way mysterious or ad hoc. Indeed, as Hylton points out, it is an idea which is needed for quite general purposes in almost any account of language.47

In OD and after Russell puts forward what I shall call “the principle of acquaintance”; in connection with this principle he introduces a distinction between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description. The principle of acquaintance states that I must be acquainted with every constituent of any proposition which I understand [see OD, 427]. This principle is not new with the theory of descriptions. Russell does not state the principle of acquaintance in Principles, but it is, I think, implicit in that work.48 As Hylton points out, it receives no formulation there because at that time Russell simply has no interest in issues of this sort.49

Now in the light of the constraint which the principle of acquaintance imposes on the mind’s capacity to understand propositions, it might be said that part of the significance of the theory of descriptions is that it explains, in non-mysterious fashion, how I can understand propositions about entities with which I am not acquainted.50 When I grasp the proposition expressed by the sentence “The teacher of Plato is mortal”, I manage to think (indirectly) about Socrates, a person with whom I

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48 In this view I follow Hylton, Russell, Idealism, 246.
49 See Hylton, Russell, Idealism, 246.
50 See Hylton, “Frege and Russell”, 166.
am not acquainted, by thinking [directly] about the proposition’s constituents, i.e. by being acquainted with these abstract entities. In this case, I have what Russell calls descriptive knowledge, or knowledge by description, of Socrates. As he says: “All thinking has to start from acquaintance; but it succeeds in thinking about many things with which we have no acquaintance” (OD, 415).

Once Russell establishes the theory of descriptions, he quite willingly extends its analysis to many expressions which grammatically are proper names, treating them as if they were disguised definite descriptions (see PLA, 178–79; cf. Problems, 37). The question at once arises: in what circumstances is this strategy to be used? Russell’s answer is that, if a given sentence contains a name that appears to refer to an object whose existence is any way open to doubt, then that sentence is to be analyzed in accordance with the theory of descriptions (see PM, i. 66; cf. PLA, 212–13). And since in the analyzed sentence the name does not occur, the proposition which the sentence expresses is to be taken, in turn, as not containing the named object.

On what basis is the existence of an object open to doubt? According to Russell, our ability to doubt whether a certain object exists stems from our lack of acquaintance with that object. Our being acquainted with an object, on the other hand, guarantees that it is real—i.e. that it exists or has being (see TK, 48). For Russell, our being acquainted with an object not only guarantees its existence but also enables us to name it, that is, to affix a name to it as a label (see TK, 39, 48; cf. PLA, 178–79). And this, in turn, ensures that its name is a genuine one (see TK, 7; cf. PLA, 178–79).

Given the principle of acquaintance, it follows that whenever we lack acquaintance with some object, the presence of the object’s name in a sentence which we understand does not indicate the presence of the object itself in the proposition expressed by the sentence. So the name does not satisfy Russell’s criterion for being a genuine name. Sentences which contain it are to be analyzed along the lines laid down by the theory of descriptions, and thereby transformed into sentences which do not contain the name.

In thus purging from ordinary language most of its [putative] singular terms, Russell retains only a very limited category of genuine singular terms. He dubs these terms logically proper names. For such names, unlike others, their presence in a sentence does imply that the sentence expresses a proposition that contains the named object. Logically proper names are thus simple genuine referring expressions. As such, they operate in accordance with the paradigm of Russell’s bipartite analysis of language, for their sole semantic function is to pick out certain objects. Logically proper names can only be used to name entities with which we are acquainted (see PLA, 178–79; cf. TK, 36–37). So logically proper names must survive analysis, for our being acquainted with the objects that correspond to them gives us an epistemological guarantee that the entities to which they appear to refer do in fact exist. And
this implies that those entities occur in the propositions expressed by the sentences in which their logically proper names occur.

A crucial consequence of the theory of descriptions is a thoroughgoing rejection of the idea that surface grammar is a reliable guide to the form of the underlying proposition. As Hylton points out:

this idea ... is a natural concomitant of the theory of denoting concepts. In that theory, a subject-predicate sentence, with a description [definite or indefinite] for the subject, is taken to express a proposition with subject-predicate form, with a denoting concept taking the place of the subject. In the new theory, however, from 1905 onwards, such a sentence is taken to represent a proposition with a wholly different form. 51

According to the theory of descriptions, a sentence containing a definite description expresses a proposition whose large-scale ontological structure is that of an existential generalization. 52 Russell’s work, from 1905 on, is thus replete with warnings that the superficial structure of language is systematically misleading and masks the structure of the underlying reality.

With his discovery of the theory of descriptions, the distinction between superficial grammatical form, on the one hand, and underlying logical form, on the other hand, comes to occupy a central place in Russell’s conception of the philosophical enterprise. A primary task of philosophy now becomes that of advancing from the misleading surface structure of the sentences of ordinary language to the underlying structure of the reality to which those sentences correspond. The aim of philosophical analysis, seen in this light, is the production of a fully analyzed sentence: a sentence which accurately reflects the logical form of the proposition expressed by the original [unanalyzed] sentence. The crucial point here is that analysis may lead us to a proposition with a quite different logical form from that of the sentence with which we started. After OD, this view of philosophical analysis, and its associated notion of logical form, come to dominate Russell’s view of philosophy as a whole. Thus he comes to see philosophy itself as the systematic inquiry to discover, examine, and classify logical forms [see PLA, 191–92; cf. OKEW, 52, 60].

52 Similarly any unanalyzed sentence that I can understand which contains a name that appears to name an object with which I lack acquaintance will be shown on analysis to express an existentially quantified proposition.
We saw in the last chapter that the notion of the proposition is the central metaphysical idea of the philosophy that Russell develops after his rejection of British idealism in 1900. From 1904 onwards, however, Russell is increasingly skeptical about the existence of propositions. And at some time between 1906 and 1909 he concludes that there are no such things. Instead of the theory of propositions, and its attendant binary relation view of judgment, Russell attempts to develop an alternative metaphysical view and analysis of judgment. The new metaphysics that he proposes is the view which I call “the theory of facts”. The new analysis of judgment is the view which Russell himself calls “the multiple relation theory of judgment”. In this chapter I shall examine relevant aspects of these two doctrines. I shall begin, however, by discussing Russell’s reasons for rejecting his earlier views.

3.1 Difficulties of the Theory of Propositions

Sometime between 1906 and 1909 Russell comes to hold that there are no propositions. Two basic kinds of considerations appear to motivate his abandonment of propositions. One centers on the issue of the ontological status of propositions, especially false ones. And the second has to do with the notions of truth and falsehood themselves. These two considerations, as we shall see, are not entirely independent of one another.

At the heart of Russell’s opposition to British idealism is his insistence on the objectivity and absoluteness of truth and falsehood. By contrast with the idealist talk of degrees of truth or reality, Russell adopts a straightforward and absolute attitude towards these notions: “Truth and falsehood do not have degrees, but every proposition is simply true or simply false” (NT, 506; cf. Principles, 454). In the context of the theory of propositions, then, the absoluteness and objectivity of truth and falsehood requires the objective reality of propositions, the true ones as well as the false ones. Russell thus sees true and false propositions alike as genuine entities (see Principles, 450). So given that his theory of propositions identifies true propositions with facts, Russell is compelled by his assumption that “false propositions subsist just as much as true ones do” (MTCA, 462; cf. Principles, 450) to accept the idea that false propositions possess the same kind of objective metaphysical reality as facts possess, and to see false propositions as differing from facts only in their being false. For Russell, then, the
false proposition that Caesar killed Brutus and the fact, or true proposition, that Brutus killed Caesar 
subsist on a par as ontological equals. Each proposition is an objective complex whole in which the 
actual men Brutus and Caesar are united by a predicative occurrence of the relation of killing.\footnote{They are not, of course, the same proposition. What precisely the difference is between these two propositions, is a question that I shall take up in the next chapter (see Chapter 4, Section 4.1, pp. 64–66, below).}

The idea here that a false proposition is, so to speak, just like a fact except that it happens not to 
be true is a feature of the theory of propositions that in *Principles* Russell seems to embrace: “True 
and false propositions alike are in some sense entities, and are in some sense capable of being logical 
subjects” [*Principles*, 49]. In *Principles* the capacity of propositions, true and false, to occur as logical 
subjects forms the basis for Russell’s account of the truth-functional part of logic, and is crucial to 
his analysis of the notion of judgment as well. Propositions occur as logical subjects in *molecular 
propositions*; a molecular proposition is a complex, capable of truth or falsehood, which has one or 
more propositions among its constituents. In the proposition expressed by the conditional “Caesar 
killed Brutus implies Caesar loved Brutus”, the relation of material implication joins the proposition 
expressed by the antecedent to that expressed by the consequent to form a molecular proposition. 
Here, then, the propositions expressed by the two sentences, “Caesar killed Brutus” and “Caesar 
loved Brutus”, occur as the relata of a relation [and thus as logical subjects] in another, more complex 
proposition. In the same way, in the proposition expressed by the judgment ascription “Cassius judges 
that Caesar killed Brutus”, the relation of judging joins Cassius to the proposition expressed by the 
sentence “Caesar killed Brutus”. According to Russell’s early view, Cassius’ judgment is absolutely and 
objectively false, while the proposition expressed by the sentence “Caesar killed Brutus implies Caesar 
loved Brutus” is absolutely and objectively true, precisely because each contains the absolutely and 
objectively false proposition that Caesar killed Brutus as a constituent [see *MTCA*, 472]. So by virtue 
of its treatments of logic and of judgment, Russell’s theory of propositions is formally committed to 
the existence of false propositions as objective mind-independent entities, subsisting on a par with 
true propositions as ontological equals.

In 1903, as we saw, Russell explicitly acknowledges this commitment and suggests that it is 
indispensable to his philosophical theorizing. By 1910, however, he has come to take a very different 
attitude towards his earlier idea of a false proposition. Now he considers the supposition that the 
world contains such entities to be “the very reverse of plausible” (*ONTF*, 118) and “in itself almost 
incredible” (*ONTF*, 119). In *PLA* Russell expresses his worry about false propositions like this:

Time was when I thought there were propositions, but it does not seem to me very plausible to say that in addition 
to facts there are also these curious shadowy things going about such as “That today is Wednesday” when in fact 
it is Tuesday. I cannot believe they go about the real world. It is more than one can manage to believe, and I do
think no person with a vivid sense of reality can imagine it. ... To suppose that in the actual world of nature there is a whole set of false propositions going about is to my mind monstrous. I cannot bring myself to suppose it. I cannot believe that they are there in the sense in which facts are there. There seems to me something about the fact that “Today is Tuesday” on a different level of reality from the supposition “That today is Wednesday”. When I speak of the proposition “That today is Wednesday” I do not mean the occurrence in future of a state of mind in which you think it is Wednesday, but I am talking about the theory that there is something quite logical, something not involving mind in any way, and such a thing as that I do not think you can take a false proposition to be. [PLA, 196–97]

What we have here in Russell’s own statement of his position is an appeal to what, in contemporary philosophical jargon, is called an “intuition”: for Russell the implausibility of false propositions, entities that are exactly like facts except that they happen not to be true, represents rock bottom.

From Russell’s perspective, then, any acceptable metaphysical alternative to the theory of propositions must not countenance the existence of false propositions in this sense.

As Russell grows increasingly skeptical in his attitude towards the reality of propositions, he begins to have doubts about whether we are in fact acquainted with propositions—in particular, with false propositions. In *TK* he expresses these doubts like this:

The fundamental characteristic which distinguishes propositions (whatever they may be) from objects of acquaintance is their truth or falsehood. An object of acquaintance is not true or false, but is simply what it is: there is no dualism of true and false objects of acquaintance. And although there are entities with which we are not acquainted, yet it seems evident that nothing of the same logical nature as objects of acquaintance can possibly be either true or false. ...

... We might be induced to admit that true propositions are entities, but it is very difficult, except under the lash of a tyrannous theory, to admit that false propositions are entities. “Charles I dying in his bed” or “that Charles I died in his bed” does not seem to stand for an entity. It is traditional to say that what is true “corresponds” with reality, and what is false does not. The word “correspond” requires investigation, but in any case it seems plain that a false proposition is not itself an actual entity. [*TK*, 108–9]

That we do in fact have acquaintance with propositions, both true and false, is, of course, a fundamental presupposition of the account of judgment that implicitly accompanies Russell’s early view. Writing in 1905, for example, Russell says:

to judge a proposition is to have a state of mind which has the cognitive relation to the proposition. ... Since false propositions may be judged just as well as true ones, they too are entities. [*NT*, 503]

Thus it is plain that once Russell ceases to accept that there are propositions, he requires a new analysis of judgment, one which does not presuppose the existence of such entities or demand that we stand in any direct and unmediated epistemological relation to them.

Russell’s abandonment of propositions also necessitates his finding alternative entities to be the bearers of truth and falsehood, as well as his developing a new understanding of these two notions.

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3 Thus a view which Russell had previously taken as a self-evident truth, he now takes as a self-evident falsehood.

4 That Russell has these doubts and treats them as constituting evidence against the theory of propositions offers a specific example of a more general trend in his philosophical theorizing, that towards greater psychological realism about acquaintance. In embracing a more realistic notion of acquaintance, Russell begins to take an increasingly restrictive view of precisely what entities we are acquainted with. (I shall return to this issue in the final section of this chapter; see Section 3.5, pp. 57–59, below.)
This way of stating the matter is, however, somewhat misleading, for the demand for a new account of truth and falsehood is not so much a result of Russell’s change of mind about the existence of propositions as a reason for that change. Indeed the second kind of reason that Russell offers for abandoning propositions is drawn from considerations having to do with the notions of truth and falsehood.

In the last chapter we saw that Russell’s paradigmatic conception of a proposition, as containing the entities which it is about, permits him no distinction between facts and true propositions: facts simply are true propositions on this conception (see Chapter 2, Section 2.1, p. 14, above). The absence in the theory of propositions of any proposition-independent notion of a fact proscribes Russell’s explaining the difference between truth and falsehood in terms of some sort of correspondence between propositions and reality. It seems, indeed, that within the metaphysical framework which Russell establishes, no explanation of the notions of truth and falsehood, or of the distinction between truths and falsehoods, is available. The problem is that, according to Russell’s early metaphysics, everything that might be used to explain the notion of truth—notions such as fact or existence or reality—is itself to be understood in terms of the truth of propositions: for an object to satisfy a property, or for two objects to be related by a given relation, is for propositions containing the objects, properties, and relations to be true. The notions of truth and falsehood thus represent rock bottom. In 1904 Russell acknowledges the inexplicability of truth and falsehood and of the difference between truths and falsehoods, and begrudgingly accepts it:

It may be said—and this is, I believe, the correct view—that there is no problem at all in truth and falsehood; that some propositions are true and some false, just as some roses are red and some white. … Thus the analogy with red and white roses seems, in the end, to express the matter as nearly as possible. What is truth, and what falsehood, we must merely apprehend, for both seem incapable of analysis. ([MTCA], 473–74)

In 1913, however, he cites it as being the most important consideration leading to his abandonment of the theory of propositions. Speaking of that theory, he says:

it is very difficult to believe that there are objective falsehoods, which would subsist and form part of the universe even if there were no such thing as thought or mind. But the chief objection is that the difference between truth and falsehood, on the theory in question, has to be accepted as ultimate and unanalyzable, whereas it seems obvious that the difference between truth and falsehood must be explicable by reference to fact, i.e. to what is actually in the universe whatever we may see fit to believe. ([TK], 153)

As we shall see, the notion of a fact plays a pivotal role in the evolution of the philosophy that Russell espouses and elaborates after rejecting the theory of propositions.\(^5\)

\(^5\) Notice that here again we see Russell’s appealing to the [alleged] obviousness of the view that he is advocating and to the [alleged] implausibility of the view that he is denying.
3.2 The Multiple Relation Theory of Judgment

In the previous section I attempted to articulate what Russell himself identifies as the chief difficulties confronting his early theory of propositions and its attendant binary relation theory of judgment. In response to these difficulties, Russell rejects the two theories and attempts instead to develop the theory of facts and the multiple relation theory of judgment. My aim in this section is to sketch the essential features of Russell’s multiple relation theory. I shall begin, however, by briefly describing some central aspects of his switch from the theory of propositions to the theory of facts.

Russell’s rejection of the theory of propositions in favor of the theory of facts constitutes an important change in his general metaphysical views, for it involves a shift from a metaphysics in which the notions of a proposition and of truth are regarded as ontologically fundamental to one in which the notion of a fact is so regarded. Indeed, in the theory of propositions, the notion of a fact is defined in terms of the ontologically prior notions of a proposition and of truth: a fact is simply a proposition which is true. In the theory of facts, by contrast, the notions of a proposition and of truth are defined in terms of the ontologically prior notion of a fact: the former as a special kind of fact, and the latter as a certain relation (of correspondence) between judgments and facts. In the theory of facts, then, the existence of propositions is explicitly rejected. According to this theory, it is not propositions, true or false, which make up the world; rather, it is facts which make it up. Truth and falsehood are thus no longer treated as indefinably simple properties of propositions. Instead they are understood as properties of judgments, definable in terms of the correspondence of such items with facts: a judgment is true, if there is a fact corresponding to it, and false in the absence of a corresponding fact. With the theory of facts, then, Russell advocates a version of the correspondence theory of truth. In doing so, truth and falsehood cease to be unanalyzable notions for him, and the difference between truth and falsehood ceases to be inexplicable.

Russell’s idea that the notion of truth can be defined in terms of the more fundamental notion of a fact, as a certain relation of correspondence between judgments and facts, depends upon the possibility of his producing an analysis of judgment which does not invoke propositions. This analysis is the so-called multiple relation theory of judgment.

To get a general idea of this theory, let us consider a simple judgment. Suppose I form the belief or judgment that Matt loves Julie. According to the theory of propositions’ picture, there is a single

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6 More exactly, the new view is not that there are propositions, and that they are facts. Rather, the new view is that there are no propositions, but that the (useful and important) things that we used to say using the term “proposition” can now be said in other ways (see TK, 114–16; for further discussion of this point, see p. 37, below).

7 The definition of the correspondence that constitutes truth simply is Russell’s analysis of the notion of truth (see TK, 154).
objective entity, the proposition that Matt loves Julie, and in judging I am related to it. Judging is thus a two-place relation between a person (or mind) on the one hand, and a proposition on the other. When Russell abandons the doctrine of propositions, he has to find another account of judgment. According to his old account I am acquainted with the proposition that Matt loves Julie. According to his new account I am separately acquainted with Matt, and with Julie, and with the relation of loving. In judging that Matt loves Julie, I unite these objects in thought. The simplest possible kind of judgment will be one which asserts that a certain thing has a certain property [e.g. that Socrates is mortal]. In making such a judgment, the mind unites two objects in thought—the thing and the property. In all cases, then, judging will involve a mind’s uniting in thought at least two other objects [three in our example]. Judging itself is therefore a relation that holds among a mind and at least two other objects. Accordingly, it is a multiple relation, not a binary one. (In our example, it is a four-place relation.)

Although the multiple relation theory of judgment dispenses with the assumption that we are acquainted with propositions, it manages to retain the essential features of Russell’s direct realism. The crucial point here is that the objects which were formerly construed as being the constituents of the propositions to which we are related in judging are now taken to be the various entities with which we are in direct and unmediated contact when we judge. On Russell’s old view, the constituents of a proposition that we judge are not intermediate entities between our thought and its subject-matter; rather, they are the very objects which our judgment is about. So given that his new view retains these objects, taking them to be the separate relata of the many-place judging relation that forms our judgment, it follows that according to the new view the various elements that figure in our judgment are the objects themselves at which our thought aims.

All of the objects of my judgments must be things with which I am acquainted. This principle, which we called the principle of acquaintance, is, as we saw, explicit in OD and at least arguably implicit earlier. Although it is stated in OD [and elsewhere] in terms of propositions, it survives the change that occurs when Russell adopts the multiple relation theory of judgment. Thus in KAKD, for example, the principle is stated explicitly in terms of judgments:

*Whenever a relation of supposing or judging occurs, the terms to which the supposing or judging mind is related by the relation of supposing or judging must be terms with which the mind in question is acquainted.* [KAKD, 155; emphasis in the original]

For Russell acquaintance is the only fundamental epistemological relation [see Problems, 32]. All knowledge, if it is to be worthy of the name, must be based upon direct and unmediated contact between the mind and the object which is known [see Problems, 28, 31; cf. RA, 134]. There is of

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course a serious question about whether the notion of acquaintance is an appropriate or reasonable one at all. But given the fundamental role that this notion plays in Russell’s thought, and the picture of knowledge and understanding that is implicit in it, the principle of acquaintance is obvious and uncontroversial. Russell says that to assert this principle “is merely to say that we cannot make a judgment or a supposition without knowing what it is that we are making our judgment or supposition about” (KAKD, 155). Because acquaintance is his only fundamental epistemic relation, Russell sees the principle of acquaintance as indubitable. In KAKD he says: “the truth of this principle is evident as soon as the principle is understood” (KAKD, 155). According to the multiple relation theory, a judgment clearly requires that the judger be epistemically related to each object of the judgment. Russell insists that “a constituent with which we are not acquainted is unintelligible to us” (KAKD, 161). So the epistemic relation here can only be that of acquaintance.

Through its account of the structure and contents of judgment and its analysis of the notions of truth and falsehood, the multiple relation theory enables Russell to eliminate false propositions from his ontology, and thus to avoid their posit on an ontological par with facts. To begin with, the theory’s analysis of judgment extrudes false propositions from the realm of possible objects of acquaintance. By taking judgment to consist in a multiple relation that holds among a mind and a plurality of non-propositional entities with which the mind is acquainted, the theory explains our capacity to make false judgments and to understand false statements without assuming that we are acquainted with false propositions. When I judge falsely that Matt hates Julie, I am directly related, not to a false complex in which the relation hates unites Matt to Julie to form a whole, but rather to the separate objects Matt, Julie, and hatred. The multiple relation theory’s analysis of truth eliminates false propositions from the world altogether. The crucial idea here is that the falsity of a judgment is taken to consist in the absence of a corresponding fact. My judgment that Matt loves Julie is true, for there exists a corresponding fact, Matt’s loving Julie. Russell thinks of this fact as he earlier thought of the true proposition that Matt loves Julie, as a complex in which the relation of loving unites Matt to Julie, in that order. On the other hand, my judgment that Matt hates Julie is false, not because there is a false complex, Matt’s hating Julie, corresponding to it, but rather because there is no such complex at all. So by taking falsity to consist in the absence of a corresponding fact, Russell manages to avoid the posit of false complexes on an ontological par with facts. By these means, then, he rids his ontology of propositions themselves.  

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9 It is thus not simply a matter of stipulation that judging is the relation of the mind to more than one object. The salient characteristic of judgment, as distinct from, say, perception, is that judgments can be true or false. According to Russell’s new view, this fact about judgments is to be explained in a way which requires that judgment be a relation among a multiplicity of objects.
The bipartite analysis of language survives the change that occurs when Russell adopts the multiple relation theory, and replaces propositions with facts as the complexes of his metaphysics. Russell thus continues to see language as divided into expressions on the one hand, and the objects that they refer to or are about on the other. Since he no longer accepts the existence of propositions, such entities have no (official) role to play in his analysis of language. Instead of taking a sentence to express a proposition, Russell now says that it expresses a judgment. When a judgment occurs the mind which judges is related to a number of objects, none of them proposition-like; the judgment is a mental act which occurs when a mind is so related (see *Problems*, 91). The objects to which the mind is related in judgment are the things which form the subject-matter of the corresponding sentence. In judging, the mind is in direct and unmediated contact with these things. If the sentence is true then there is a corresponding fact. Like the judgment itself, the fact is made up of the entities with which the judging mind is in direct contact. There are thus no intermediate entities between our language or thought and its subject-matter.

According to the theory of propositions, complete declarative sentences have meaning by virtue of the fact that they express propositions. According to the multiple relation theory, most such sentences are incomplete symbols, which make sense in context even though there are no propositions (see *PM*, i. 44; cf. *TK*, 109). Considering matters from a linguistic perspective, then, we can say that the function of the multiple relation theory is to explain how sentences which appear to express propositions can be meaningful, at least in certain contexts, even though there are no propositions. Using the multiple relation theory, Russell attempts to *simulate* the theory of propositions without supposing that there are propositions, by defining phrases which were formerly construed as expressing propositions in those contexts where the theory requires them.

Russell has limited success in accomplishing this task. One problem is that the only contexts for which he manages to provide such definitions are those in which sentences are asserted (or denied, etc.) and those in which judgments are ascribed to others. In the latter case, the context is provided by a phrase of the form “*s* judges that …”, where “*s*” is the name of the person to whom the judgment in question is being ascribed. In the former case, the context is provided simply by the act of assertion (or of denial, etc.), rather than by further words (see *PM*, i. 44). Russell’s inability to extend the multiple relation analysis to sentences that appear to express propositions in non-psychological contexts is a problem because, as he himself points out:

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when we say that “aRb” has “meaning”, it seems impossible to maintain that we mean that somebody understands it. If it has meaning, it can be understood; but it still has meaning if it happens that no one understands it. (TK, 134)

A second problem is that the only kinds of sentences for which Russell is able to provide contextual definitions are those that he formerly construed as expressing singular propositions, i.e. those not involving generality (quantification). This limitation has two crucial consequences. First, it leaves Russell without an account of judgments which are general, i.e. which are correctly expressed using quantified variables. This is a crucial limitation in any case, but especially for Russell. His doctrine that we must be acquainted with the objects of our judgments, together with the increasingly narrow view of what we are in fact acquainted with, leads to the view that many judgments which we express using names are more correctly expressed when those names are treated as Russell treats definite descriptions. But his analysis of definite descriptions replaces them, in context, by statements involving variables and quantifiers. So, for Russell, it is clear that almost none of our actual judgments are correctly expressed by quantifier-free sentences. So the problem of extending the multiple relation analysis to apply to general judgments is crucial. The second crucial consequence of Russell’s failure to extend the multiple relation analysis to sentences that he formerly construed as expressing non-atomic propositions is that he is left without an explanation of how (most of) the sentences of logic manage to be meaningful. Russell’s logic contains (what appear to be) generalizations about propositions, and PM is full of statements that quantify over propositions, e.g. (∀p) (∀q) (((p ⊃ q) & p) ⊃ q). But if we take seriously the idea that there are no propositions but only acts of judgment, then what sense can Russell make of such statements? In TK Russell acknowledges that he has no answer to the problem that (Russellian) logic requires propositions which are independent of our acts of judgment (see TK, 155). But the attraction that the multiple relation theory has for him is by now so strong that he continues to accept it even though he cannot answer this objection (see TK, 155).

In an attempt to forestall a particular confusion, it is important to recognize that, in his works from 1910 onwards, Russell uses the word “proposition” in three distinct senses. One sense in which he uses this word is in its old sense.11 When Russell denies in his post-1910 works that there are propositions he is using the word in precisely the same sense as in his earlier works. What he is denying is that there are objective nonlinguistic and non-mental entities which paradigmatically contain the things that they are about [see e.g. TK, 109–10].

But Russell also uses the word “proposition” in a (straightforwardly) linguistic sense, to mean a complete declarative sentence in the logically perfect language which is either true or false [see e.g.

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11 See Hylton, Russell, Idealism, 342.
When Russell speaks of propositions in this way, he does not, of course, deny that there are such things.

The third way in which Russell uses the word “proposition” after he adopts the multiple relation theory is as shorthand for the objective, and intersubjectively available, content “which a number of mental events have in common” (TK, 114). Thus in TK he says:

If two men judge that A and B are similar, or if one man makes this judgment on two occasions, it is obvious that the difference between the two events is only on the subjective side, and that on the objective side there is a similarity consisting not only in the fact that the same objects are concerned, but also in the fact that the different judgments bring the objects into the same relation to each other. The objective side, it would seem, remains unchanged if a person doubts or desires or wills that A and B are similar. In the former case of two judgments, we changed only the subject, not the relation of the subject to the objects, while in this case we change also the relation of the subject to the objects; but when we abstract both from the subject and from its relation to the objects, what remains seems to be exactly the same in the case of doubt or desire or will as in the case of judgment. It is this common element that we call the “proposition”, and wish, if possible, to isolate from its subjective context. (TK, 114–15)

For Russell abstraction is not a psychological process; it is, rather, a technical, logical one. To be precise, it is the process of existential generalization. That is to say, the process by which we abstract both from the judging mind and from the judging relation to isolate the putative proposition judged consists in replacing that mind and that relation in the judgment-fact with existentially quantified variables of the corresponding logical types. This method of constructing propositions has a noteworthy result: it makes propositions into a special case of facts. Thus the proposition that Matt loves Julie, for example, is to be identified with the existentially general fact that there is a mind and there is a judging relation such that the mind stands in that relation to the objects Matt, Julie, loving [the constituents of the putative proposition].

### 3.3 Particulars, Universals, and Facts

Sometime between 1906 and 1909 the notion of a fact supplants the notion of a proposition as the fundamental metaphysical idea of Russell’s philosophy. In this section I shall discuss salient aspects of Russell’s views about the nature of facts and the status of their constituents. I shall focus especially on developments in his metaphysical thought concerning the nature of ontological complexity and categorial distinctions in ontology. I shall begin my discussion, however, by returning to the issue of judgment.

For Russell, our judgments include both subjective and objective components. According to the multiple relation theory, a judgment is formed by a mental act of combination: in judging, the mind unites certain elements in thought [see TK, 116; cf. OKEW, 68]. The act of unification (or combination)
which is involved in judgment is of course subjective—it is the act of the mind which judges. The subjectivity of this act confers subjectivity on the judgment itself. So in this respect, our judgments themselves are subjective: they depend upon our minds for their existence. In another respect, however, our judgments are objective. The principal source of their objectivity is their constituents. Two points in particular illustrate this. The first is that, according to Russell’s direct realism, the individual elements that the mind unites in thought to form a given judgment are not intermediate mental entities which merely represent the things which that judgment is about. Rather, they are those things themselves. Thus Russell says:

it is necessary to examine the view that judgments are composed of something called “ideas” … This view seems to be that there is some mental existent which may be called the “idea” of something outside the mind of the person who has the idea, and that, since judgment is a mental event, its constituents must be constituents of the mind of the person judging. But in this view ideas become a veil between us and outside things—we never really, in knowledge, attain to the things we are supposed to be knowing about, but only to the ideas of those things. … On the contrary, I hold that acquaintance is … a relation, not demanding any such constituent of the mind as is supposed by advocates of “ideas” … [and that] in judging, the actual objects concerning which we judge, rather than any supposed purely mental entities, are constituents of the complex which is the judgment. ([KAKD], 155–56; cf. [TK], 139–40)

Thus when I judge that Matt loves Julie, it is Matt, the man himself, Julie, the woman herself, and \textit{loving}, the relation itself, which enter into my judgment, not concepts or ideas of these objects; I bring the objects themselves together to form the judgment. The objects which are united by the mental act of judgment are thus objective and entirely independent of the mind. The second point is that, according to Russell’s correspondence conception of truth, the \textit{objects} of a judgment (i.e. the constituents of a judgment, other than the judge’s mind and the judging relation) are also the separate constituents of the fact that corresponds to the judgment, if the judgment is true. And in this corresponding fact these objective elements are united in reality.

Russell thus conceives of a fact as an objective abstract entity which subsists atemporally and independently of the mind:

Given any fact, there is an assertion which expresses the fact. The fact itself is objective, and independent of our thought or opinion about it; but the assertion is something which involves thought, and may be either true or false. ([OKEW], 61–62)

This passage suggests both an important similarity and a crucial point of difference between Russell’s new idea of a fact and his earlier idea of a proposition. The similarity in question is that Russell conceives of facts, just as he earlier conceived of propositions, as paradigmatically objective mind-independent entities. The point of difference is that in his earlier view propositions were the bearers of truth and falsehood, whereas in his new view facts are neither true nor false (see also [PLA], 165).

In Russell’s post-1910 metaphysics, facts play the role of constituting reality, of making up the world. So if Russell is to guard against idealism, then he must see facts as objective and wholly independent of
the mind. Otherwise, reality itself would be subjective and mind-dependent. Thus it is that Russell insists that “the world contains facts, which are what they are whatever we may choose to think about them” (PLA, 163). For Russell, then, a fact in paradigmatic cases has to be something which we do not in any sense make; it has to be something out there (see PLA, 164).

The case of judgment serves as an exception to this paradigm (as, of course, do all cognitive facts). If I make a judgment then it is a fact that, say, Dolnick judges that Matt loves Julie. My act of judgment creates a certain unity among me, Matt, Julie, and loving. Judgments are facts formed by mental acts, so they do not exist independently of minds that judge or understand. For Russell, then, a judgment is a fact which a mind makes.

Russell insists, however, that this does not threaten us with idealism. The crucial point in this regard is that, while the mind creates judgment-facts, it does not create their objects or the ordinary facts to which they correspond, if they are true. The objects of the judgment and their combination into its would-be corresponding fact are completely objective and independent of the mind. So although the mind creates the entities which are the bearers of truth and falsehood, since it does not create the reality which those entities are about, it does not create their truth or falsehood (see Problems, 93–94). So by insisting on the objectivity and absolute mind-independence of the subject-matter of our judgments and of the reality which makes them true or makes them false, as the case may be, Russell can accept the mind-dependence of judgments themselves and the fact-creating power of the mind in this limited case without being force to accept the idealist doctrine of the mind-dependence of reality itself. Thus the existence of facts represents a rock-bottom metaphysical assumption for Russell.

A fact, as Russell conceives the notion, is a complex structured entity made up of a plurality of distinct and independent relatively simpler entities:

The existing world consists of many things with many qualities and relations. ... When I speak of a “fact”, I do not mean one of the simple things in the world; I mean that a certain thing has a certain quality, or that certain things have a certain relation. Thus, for example, I should not call Napoleon a fact, but I should call it a fact that he was ambitious, or that he married Josephine. Now a fact, in this sense, is never simple, but always has two or more constituents. ... The constituents of facts, in the sense in which we are using the word “fact”, ... are things and qualities or relations. (OKEW, 60–61)

Russellian facts are complex entities precisely because they contain various simpler entities as constituent parts (see OP, 278). For Russell, a fact consists of certain constituents in a certain, definite arrangement. Clearly this idea represents an important point of contact between the theory of facts and the theory of propositions.

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13 In My Philosophical Development, Russell directly links his acceptance of “the doctrine that fact is in general independent of experience” (My Philosophical Development, 42) with his rejection of monistic idealism in favor of pluralist realism.
Another connection between these two theories is that Russell takes the constituents of a fact, as he had previously taken the constituents of a proposition, to be the things themselves that constitute its subject-matter:

That Socrates was Greek, that he married Xantippe, that he died of drinking the hemlock, are facts that all have something in common, namely, that they are “about” Socrates, who is accordingly said to be a constituent of each of them. (OP, 278)

In general, then, Russell holds that for a fact to be directly about a particular object is for the fact to contain that object as a constituent. Indeed, that is how facts get to be about the objects that they are about: by containing them as constituent parts.

For Russell, then, facts and their constituents are notions with immediate ontological significance. Two issues in particular are worth emphasizing. The first is that Russell holds that for an object to have a property (or for two objects to be related by a given relation) is for the object and the property (or the objects and the relation) to be united into a fact. Thus, e.g., for Socrates to have the property of mortality is for Socrates and the property of mortality to combine to form a certain fact, namely the fact that Socrates is mortal. And on Russell’s account this fact actually contains Socrates and mortality as constituents (see PLA, 171–72). According to Russell’s view, then, facts are not simply aggregates of disparate elements; rather they are made up of one or more objects, together with some of their properties or relations. A fact that contains, or is made up of, a certain object together with a certain property simply is the fact that the object has the property. In Russell’s theory of facts, then, fundamental ontological or metaphysical notions, such as something’s satisfying a property and something’s bearing a relation to something else, are to be explained, in part, in terms of the notion of a fact.14 Hence that notion’s immediate ontological significance for Russell.

The second issue is that, in Russell’s view, everything which is (or can be) a constituent of a fact must have some sort of (genuine or positive) ontological status: “Every fact that occurs in the world must be composed entirely of constituents that there are, and not of constituents that there are not” (PLA, 194).15 Connected with Russell’s idea that a thing must exist (or have being) in order for it to be a constituent of a fact is his claim that facts themselves “logically depend … on their constituents” (RA, 136). The nature of this dependence is twofold. First, given that facts are complexes of objects, it cannot be a fact that, say, Brutus killed Caesar, unless of course there are such things as Brutus, the

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14 This point is a bit tricky. There is something that is going to end up not being explained. Is it a relation’s relating some objects to make a fact? Or is it just the notion of a fact?—Does anything turn on the difference? Is there a difference? Hence the qualification “in part”.

15 Russell’s claim here may seem tautological [or, perhaps less contentiously, merely obviously true] in the light of his basic assumption that facts contain things. Still, it is worth noting that the claim itself suffices to show that in his hands the notion of a (factual) constituent is one with direct ontological import.
relation of killing, and Caesar. Clearly no objective complex could be formed of these three objects if they were not genuine objects at all. Secondly, the constituents of a fact “have an existence which is logically antecedent to the existence of the [fact]” ([RA], 146). Russell’s claim here presupposes that no constituent of a fact exists because it is a constituent of a fact, i.e. that the existence of an object is in no way conditional on, or influenced by, its occurring in a fact. For Russell, rather, a fact’s constituents exist in and of themselves, in isolation from one another, and independently of the fact.

(This, of course, is not to say that something could exist without its being a constituent of facts.) As he says: “the constituent of a complex, taken as a constituent, is absolutely identical with itself as it is when we do not consider its relations” ([RA], 133).

Let us now turn to another important issue that is closely connected with Russell’s notion of a fact. This is the issue of the development of Russell’s views about the nature of ontological complexity in the period from 1900 through 1914.

In *Principles* Russell admits into his ontology three basic kinds of complex entities. Along with propositions (and propositional functions), he takes both classes and denoting concepts to be among the ontological primitives. So in the earliest phase of the theory of propositions, the issue of the nature of ontological complexity represents a general metaphysical problem for Russell. In elucidating the nature of the notions of a proposition, of a class, and of a denoting concept, Russell must characterize, and distinguish between, their respective forms of complexity.

Throughout the period which is our concern, Russell’s conception of ontological complexity, as a general phenomenon, is dominated by the part–whole metaphor. In 1903 he says: “Whatever is complex … must be composed of simple elements” ([Principles], 442). And in 1914 he insists upon “the impossibility of explaining complexity without assuming constituents” ([OKEW], 152). For Russell, then, the complexity of a complex object consists at bottom in the object’s containing, or being made up of, various simpler objects. Likewise the simplicity of a simple object consists in the fact that the object itself “has no constituents” ([Principles], 145).
various forms of complexity that these three kinds of objects exhibit. In each case, he claims, we have constituents combined into a unity in a way that is distinct from their combination (into a unity) in the other two cases. Let us begin by focusing on Russell’s conception of the nature of propositional complexity, the kind of complexity that is characteristic of a proposition.

Hylton observes that Russell understands propositional complexity as the complexity of relations and relata. A proposition, in Russell’s view, is a complex structured object in which a multiplicity of relatively simpler objects are joined together by a relation to form a whole. In accordance with the part–whole metaphor that dominates his view, Russell conceives of the proposition as made up of these simpler objects and the relation which relates them as a whole is made up of its parts. (Again, this relationship sometimes seems to be understood in something like the way that a wall is made up of bricks.) Yet what is distinctive about the complexity of propositions is not simply that propositions contain relations, for classes and denoting concepts may have relations among their constituents too. Instead, what is distinctive about propositional complexity is that the relations in propositions actually relate the other constituents:

Every verb, in the logical sense of the word, may be regarded as a relation; when it occurs as verb, it actually relates, but when it occurs as verbal noun it is the bare relation considered independently of the terms which it relates. ... Owing to the way in which the verb actually relates the terms of a proposition, every proposition has a unity which renders it distinct from the sum of its constituents. [Principles, 52; emphasis added]

In NT Russell states that “verbs seem to be used to express just that particular kind of complexity which propositions have and other complexes do not have” (NT, 503). In the case of propositions, then, the complexity of parts and wholes simply is the complexity of relations and relata.

In his early works, Russell struggles to produce an account of the complexity of classes and that of denoting concepts, i.e. to explain the nature of the particular part–whole relationship that is at issue in each case. The specific details of his various attempts and of the difficulties which they face are beyond the scope of our investigation. For our purposes the crucial point about them is that they all proceed based on the assumption that both classes and denoting concepts exhibit a non-propositional form of ontological complexity. The class of teachers, for example, contains every individual teacher; it is a complex whole made up of these individuals. But this complex is non-propositional: there is no class-constituting relation among the members of this [or any other] class that binds them into the class. As Russell puts this point: “its parts have no direct connection inter se, but only the indirect connection involved in being parts of one and the same whole” [Principles, 140]. Here, then, Russell pinpoints the source of the difference between the complexity of classes and the complexity

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of propositions. Propositions are wholes “which contain relations or what may be called predicates, not occurring simply as terms in a collection, but as relating or qualifying” (Principles, 140). The case of denoting concepts is somewhat less clear than that of classes. The denoting concept signified by the definite description “the teacher of Plato” is a complex composed of three objects: the relation of teaching, the actual man Plato, and the entity named by the word “the” (see “On Meaning and Denotation”, 320, 357). But it too is a non-propositional kind of complex. It is a complex composed of two objects and a relation, but its complexity is non-relational. That is, the denoting concept the teacher of Plato does not consist, say, of Plato joined together with the notion of the by the relation of teaching.

The theory of descriptions, which Russell develops in 1905 and puts forward in OD, enables him to eliminate denoting concepts and their particular brand of (non-propositional) complexity from his ontology in favor of propositional complexity. This theory provides Russell with a method of analyzing complete sentences which contain phrases that appear to signify denoting concepts into sentences that contain only symbols that signify propositional functions, quantifiers, and variables. On this method of analysis, the semantic complexity of a definite description is accounted for in terms of the complexity of the complete proposition, not in terms of the complexity of any constituent part.

In 1906 Russell extends the regimen of contextual definition of incomplete symbols introduced in OD to the case of class-symbols. The definition which introduces symbols which appear to refer to classes is this:

\[
f(\tilde{z}|\psi|z) = (\exists \phi) (\forall x) (\phi!x \equiv \psi x) & f(\phi!\tilde{z})) \quad \text{Df.}
\]

According to this definition, a subject-predicate sentence whose subject is a class-symbol is to be understood as an existential quantification, asserting the existence of a propositional function satisfying certain conditions [it has the property indicated by the predicate, it is predicative, it is coextensive with the propositional function satisfaction of which is the criterion for membership in the class]. In this way, Russell shows how mention of and quantification over classes can be systematically paraphrased away in favor of mention of and quantification over propositional functions. On his approach, the apparent complexity of a class is explained in terms of the complexity of the entire proposition. Classes themselves are thus analyzed away, leaving only the complexity of relations and relata.

In 1906, then, the only complexity in Russell’s ontology that remains is propositional complexity, the complexity of relations and relata. Bearing in mind our discussion in the previous section, however, a [partial] qualification to this point needs to be recorded here. At some time between 1906 and 1909...

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21 My discussion in this paragraph draws on Hylton, “Frege and Russell”, 175–76.
Russell comes to adopt the multiple relation theory of judgment. According to this theory, the notion of a proposition is not fundamental; it is replaced as the fundamental metaphysical idea by the notion of a fact. Propositions are explained in terms of facts, rather than vice versa. Yet crucially this shift from a view which takes proposition as the fundamental notion of metaphysics to a view which takes fact as fundamental does not bring with it a new understanding of the nature of ontological complexity. On the contrary: propositional complexity, as the old view understands the phenomenon, and factual complexity, as it is understood in the new view, are akin. Propositions and facts alike are complexes in which a plurality of independently subsisting ontological atoms are united by a relation to form a whole. So in spite of the change in his basic metaphysical views, Russell persists in treating all ontological complexity as the complexity of relations and relata. Under both the old view and the new view, this is the kind of complexity which typifies propositions. The difference is that, according to the new view, this sort of complexity is to be understood as being, at bottom, the complexity of a fact. From 1910 onwards, then, facts are the only complex entities that Russell admits into his ontology.

Russell’s paradigmatic conception of a fact, as a complex structured entity composed of absolutely simple entities united by a relation, forces attention to the issue of ontological simplicity. Russell has a robust notion of a simple object. In his philosophy, this notion is thought of as given ontologically, as an independent feature of the world. After 1911 Russell uses the term “logical atom”, quite generally, to speak of any kind of ontologically simple entity:

I believe there are simple beings in the universe, and that these beings have relations in virtue of which complex beings are composed. Any time a bears the relation R to b there is a complex “a in relation R to b”. ...

You will note that this philosophy is the philosophy of logical atomism. Every simple entity is an atom. One must not suppose that atoms need persist in time, or that they need occupy space: these atoms are purely logical. ([RA], 134–35)

Presumably then, logical atoms comprise a primitive category in Russell’s ontology. Russell makes clear at least that these entities do have a special status in his philosophy:

One purpose that has run through all that I have said, has been the justification of analysis, i.e. the justification of logical atomism, of the view that you can get down in theory, if not in practice, to ultimate simples, out of which the world is built, and that those simples have a kind of reality not belonging to anything else. ([PLA], 234)

Logical atoms are thus the ultimate constituents of facts, the absolutely simple structureless building blocks from which all facts are at bottom composed. The idea of a logical atom is, accordingly, crucial to Russell’s view of philosophical analysis:

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22 Propositions are the facts formed by our acts of judgment.

23 I say “presumably”, because the fact that there are categorial differences among logical atoms implies that there is no one property, being a logical atom, which applies to every logical atom; the property of being a logical atom is typically ambiguous. (Or more exactly: the predicate “is a logical atom” is typically ambiguous.)
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I call my doctrine logical atomism … because the atoms that I wish to arrive at as the sort of last residue in
analysis are logical atoms and not physical atoms. Some of them will be what I call “particulars” … and some of
them will be predicates or relations and so on. (PLA, 161)

In Principles Russell says in a similar vein that “the indefinables”, i.e. the absolutely simple entities
making up the world, are “obtained primarily as the necessary residue in a process of analysis”
(Principles, xv).

Since logical atoms are the absolutely simple entities of Russell’s post-1910 ontology, it follows
that a genuine particular must be “something destitute of complexity” (ML, 76). Simple objects, on
Russell’s conception, “have in their various ways some kind of reality that does not belong to anything
else” (PLA, 234). In PLA Russell attempts to characterize the nature of the unique form of reality that
belongs to particulars, hoping thereby to establish the criterion for ontological simplicity itself:

Particulars have this peculiarity, among the sorts of objects that you have to take account of in an inventory of the
world, that each of them stands entirely alone and is completely self-subsistent. … That is to say, each particular
that there is in the world does not in any way logically depend upon any other particular. (PLA, 179)

For Russell, then, logical independence is one criterion for ontological simplicity. A complex object
contains constituents, so it logically depends upon them for its existence [see RA, 133–34]. But a simple
object has no constituents, or is structureless, so it logically depends upon nothing for its existence
[see RA, 133–34].24 The notion of a logical atom thus underlies Russell’s ontological atomism. The
existence and intrinsic nature of any one logical atom is wholly independent of anything else [see PLA,
181]. Logical atoms, for Russell, are thus also ontological atoms.25

The doctrine of atomism, and the associated idea of an absolutely simple object, are not new in
Russell’s thought with the introduction of the notion of a logical atom. On the contrary: in breaking
with idealism Russell adopts an extreme form of atomism according to which the world consists,
at bottom, of absolutely simple objects standing in external relations to one another [see Principles,
xviii]. In view of Russell’s long-standing commitment to atomism, then, one way to think of his
notion of a logical atom is simply as that early atomism now formalized.

Despite the fact that Russell takes the notion of a logical atom as metaphysically fundamental,
he does not think of all logical atoms as objects with the same ontological status. Russell’s natural
metaphysical inclinations are to deny that there are ultimate distinctions of ontological category
among entities; his atomistic view of the world, with its insistence on self-subsistent objects and

24 In TK Russell says: “particulars may be good to eat or likely to kill us, and therefore it is useful to pay
attention to them” (TK, 132–33). When this remark is juxtaposed with various of Russell’s comments about
particulars, it illustrates how, in characterizing these entities, Russell seems to vacillate between treating them
as ordinary concrete objects on the one hand, and as logical atoms on the other.

25 As we shall see, Russellian logical atoms are epistemological atoms as well [see Section 3.5, p. 59, below;
see also n. 45, below].
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external relations, cannot easily accommodate any such distinctions at a fundamental level. Russell’s early metaphysics appears then to leave no room for distinctions of type. The failure to embrace type distinctions in a thoroughgoing fashion makes the basic metaphysics vulnerable to the paradox which bears Russell’s name. This paradox can be avoided if there are distinctions in ontological type among the various entities involved (classes, propositional functions, predicates, and propositions). So in spite of his natural metaphysical inclinations, Russell is forced, by the need to escape the paradox that bears his name, to acknowledge fundamental distinctions, in the form of the theory of types. In *PM* Russell expounds the theory of types and deploys it in establishing a complex array of categorial distinctions among propositions and propositional functions. Once the theory is in place, Russell’s strong realist and objectivist metaphysical attitude leads him to accept the idea that type-theoretic distinctions correspond to fundamental features of the world.\(^{26}\) The rejection of the theory of propositions in favor of the theory of facts does not alter this situation.\(^{27}\) On the contrary: Russell continues to see the world as intrinsically stratified into an infinitude of ontological categories. In the case of logical atoms, in particular, he says: “Simples ... are of an infinite number of sorts. There are particulars and qualities and relations of various orders, a whole hierarchy of different sorts of simples” (*PLA*, 234).

The most elemental of the multiplicity of ontological divisions among logical atoms is the one between particulars and universals (see *RA*, 133). In Russell’s hierarchy of logical types, particulars or individuals (Russell uses the two terms interchangeably) comprise the first or lowest type (see *ML*, 76). There are thus no ultimate categorial distinctions among particulars, for particulars themselves comprise a single ontological category. With universals, it is otherwise. One point is this. Russell sees universals as coming in various levels (or orders): first-level universals apply to particulars, second-level universals to first-level universals, and so on.\(^{28}\) Russell accepts then that there are fundamental categorial (or type-theoretic) distinctions among universals. Given two universals of distinct logical types, the differences between them may stem from differences between the number of their argument places, the types of the objects to which they are significantly (i.e. truly or falsely) applicable, or their internal structures. Thus one-place universals that apply (truly or falsely) to particulars are of a different type from two-place universals that apply (truly or falsely) to particulars, from one-place universals that apply (truly or falsely) to universals, and from one-place universals that apply (truly or falsely) to particulars but contain a quantifier that ranges over objects of any kind. Russell uses the

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\(^{26}\) The alternative position takes such distinctions as having to do most directly with language. But there are good reasons to think that Russell would reject a syntactic approach to type theory.

\(^{27}\) It does, however, undermine the justification for these distinctions: the notion of a propositional function.

\(^{28}\) Here I have ignored various complexities that arise from the fact that Russell formulates a ramified type-hierarchy.
words “concept”, “predicate”, “property”, and “quality”, interchangeably, to speak of any kind of monadic universal. He uses the word “relation”, on the other hand, to speak of any kind of polyadic universal.

In Russell’s hands, then, the notions of a particular, and of a universal, are logical types. Within the metaphysical framework that Russell establishes, the type of an object is most naturally thought of as its possibilities of combination with other objects. As thus conceived, an object’s logical type serves to delimit the range of objects with which it can combine to form facts. Clearly not just any group of objects can be united to form a fact. In Russell’s post-1910 metaphysics, a given group of objects is capable of uniting to form a fact only if those objects are of the appropriate logical types with respect to one another. A particular is the kind of object that a first-level universal can take as argument. A first-level universal in turn is the kind of object that a second-level universal can take as argument. A second-level universal can be understood in like manner as the kind of object that a third-level universal can take as argument. A similar account can be given for universals at each level of the type-hierarchy. The first level of the hierarchy consists of particulars. Each level after the first consists of universals that apply to entities at the previous level. To say of a given universal that it is applicable to objects of a certain kind, that it can take those objects as arguments, is to say that it can combine with objects of that kind to form facts. The actual man Socrates and the property of mortality can unite to form the fact that Socrates is mortal, for Socrates is a particular and mortality is a first-level universal. On the other hand, the property of mortality cannot be attributed (either truly or falsely) to the property of being a coffee cup, for one first-level universal cannot take another first-level universal as argument. In Russell’s post-1910 metaphysics, then, the capacity, or lack thereof, which a group of objects has for combining into a fact is to be explained in terms of their logical types.

The particular–universal distinction is a feature of Russell’s post-1910 ontology. This distinction is, however, in some ways analogous to his distinction in *Principles* between things and concepts. The basis of this earlier distinction is the idea that objects of these two kinds are capable of playing different roles in propositions. Things are objects that cannot play the predicate role in propositions, but can occur only as subject. Concepts, by contrast, are objects that can play either role. In the theory of facts, the distinction between objects that combine or unify objects and (other) objects which lack this capacity is explained in terms of the distinction between particulars and universals (see *RUP*, 169–70). A particular can occur only non-predicatively in a fact, as a logical subject. But a universal has the ability to occur both as subject and predicatively. Just as Russell sought earlier to explain the unity of the proposition by invoking the predicative nature of concepts, so he now endeavors to explain the phenomenon of factual unity in terms of the logical character of universals. According to his new
view, universals are the constituents of facts which are responsible for their unity. When the universal in a fact binds together the remaining constituents to form the fact itself, it confers unity upon the fact.

Another important point of similarity between Russell’s earlier notion of a concept and his new notion of a universal is that universals, like concepts, are capable of occurring as logical subjects in facts (see TK, 80). Contra Frege, then, Russell continues to hold that the same entity that occurs predicatively in the complex (i.e. proposition or fact) expressed by the sentence “Socrates precedes Plato”, occurs as logical subject in the complex expressed by the sentence “preceding is the converse of succeeding”. In the theory of propositions, this entity is said to be a concept. In the theory of facts, it is said to be a universal.

Crucially, however, this shift is no mere relabeling of concepts as universals. For one thing, as noted, in the theory of facts there are distinctions of ontological category among universals and between universals and particulars. In the theory of propositions, by contrast, there are no such distinctions among the subjects of propositions: all such entities are intersubstitutable salva significatione. This doctrine, together with the doctrine that concepts are logical subjects, yields the analogue of Russell’s class paradox for predicates (see Principles, 102). But since in the theory of facts a universal must be of a higher type than any object that it can take as argument, there can be no facts in which a universal is its own argument. So the paradox of predicates which are not predicable of themselves cannot be generated.

From the metaphysical point of view, Russell’s distinction between particulars and universals coincides with that between the concrete and the abstract (see KAKD, 150). That is, the particular–universal distinction coincides with that between those things which exist in time [or also in space] and those things which are intrinsically non-spatiotemporal. Particulars, on Russell’s conception, all have temporal extension, while many also occupy points of space (see RUP, 182). For Russell, there are thus no abstract particulars. For this reason, he holds that the axiom of infinity “can only be legitimately believed or disbelieved on empirical grounds” (PM, ii. 183). Universals, on the other hand, are paradigmatically abstract entities. They do not exist in space and time but rather subsist [or have being] atemporally:

We shall find it convenient only to speak of things existing when they are in time, that is to say, when we can point to some time at which they exist [not excluding the possibility of their existing at all times]. Thus thoughts and feelings, minds and physical objects exist. But universals do not exist in this sense; we shall say that they subsist or have being, where “being” is opposed to “existence” as being timeless. The world of universals, therefore, may also be described as the world of being. (Problems, 71)
In *Problems*, then, Russell uses the words “subsistence” (or “being”) and “existence” to mark a distinction between the ontological status which one kind of object has, and that which another kind of object has. One kind of object, the universal, is intrinsically non-spatiotemporal; if an object of this sort has any kind of reality at all, then it *subsists* or has *being*. Another sort of object, the particular, is intrinsically spatiotemporal; if an object of this sort has any kind of reality, then it *exists*. It seems then that in *Problems* Russell uses the words “subsistence” and “existence” to mark a distinction of a somewhat different nature from the one which he uses these words to mark in *Principles*. In the metaphysics articulated in *Principles*, subsistence is an ontological status that *all* objects have. Some objects that subsist also have the additional property of existing (i.e., roughly, being in space and time). Objects which exist may cease to do so, but they cannot cease to subsist. Thus Socrates, for example, although dead, continues to *be* in some sense. After 1905, this is something which Russell denies. Now he holds that when Socrates drank the hemlock and ceased to exist, he ceased to be in any sense.

In Russell’s post-1910 logical theory the notion of existence is identified with the existential quantifier, \( \exists z \) \( \hat{F}z \), which ranges over particulars. The notion of subsistence, on the other hand, is identified with the existential quantifier, \( \exists F \) \( \hat{\varphi} (\hat{F}z) \), which ranges over universals. It is important to note that in Russell’s view a quantifier, whether existential or universal, is *not* a linguistic item but rather a higher-level universal. Existence is a second-level universal; it takes first-level universals as arguments. Existence holds of a given first-level universal just in case that first-level universal holds of some particular. Subsistence of a first-level universal is a third-level universal; it takes second-level universals as arguments. Subsistence holds of a given second-level universal just in case that second-level universal holds of some first-level universal. Existence and subsistence are thus somewhat peculiar properties, for they apply to their objects at one remove. We say of a given particular that it exists and of a given universal that it subsists. But really existence itself does not apply directly to the existent particular; that is, existence does not combine with the particular to form the fact that constitutes its existence. Nor does subsistence apply directly to the subsistent universal, in the sense of uniting with it to form the fact that it subsists.

We have seen that Russell accepts that there are ultimate distinctions of ontological category among the constituents of facts. It is important to note, however, that he also accepts that there are such distinctions among the facts themselves. To this point, our discussion of his views about the nature of

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29 In the remainder of this paragraph my discussion draws on Hylton, *Russell, Idealism*, 242–43.

30 More exactly, for Russell the notion of subsistence, like most of the other important notions that one wishes to talk about, is typically ambiguous. Since there are universals of various levels (greater than first), with various numbers of argument places, there must be different existential quantifiers ranging over them and over the objects to which they apply.
facts and the status of their constituents has focused primarily on his notion of an *atomic fact*. Atomic facts are, ontologically and structurally, the simplest kind of Russellian fact, for these are complexes made up of one or more particulars together with a single (first-level) universal (see *PLA*, 176–77; cf. *OKEW*, 60–61). Atomic facts are not, however, the only kind of fact whose existence Russell accepts.\(^{31}\) His ontology also includes *general facts*. In *PLA* Russell observes that there must be general facts in addition to atomic ones (see *PLA*, 164–65, 207). He argues, in effect, that the supposition that the world contains only atomic facts is logically self-refuting since its truth presupposes the existence of the general fact that every fact is atomic. What are the constituents of a general fact? Socrates and mortality are the constituents of the atomic fact that corresponds to the sentence “Socrates is mortal”; what are the constituents of the general fact that corresponds to the sentence “All humans are mortal”? Russell rejects the idea that this fact simply contains all humans (see *RA*, 138). Instead he argues that its constituents are the first-level universals *humanity* and *mortality*, and the second-level universal *formal implication*, which he represents as: “(\(\forall x\) (\(F^x \supset G^x\))”). For Russell, then, general facts are complexes composed of universals of various levels.

3.4 The Logic of Facts

In this section I shall survey some of the leading features of Russell’s universalist conception of logic. One idea that shall emerge as particularly important is the fact that mathematical logic provides the general framework for Russell’s view of philosophical analysis.

Russell conceives of logic as universal and all-inclusive.\(^ {32}\) The laws of logic are supremely general truths embodying comprehensive principles of correct reasoning. According to Russell’s understanding of logic, the correct principles of reasoning concern, not linguistic phenomena, but rather the behaviors and configurations of nonlinguistic items out there, in the world, existing independently of our language and our knowledge. Russell’s logic is thus an intrinsically systematized body of absolutely general truths about the world itself. According to Russell, any thinking or reasoning at all must employ logic, and so will be subject to logic. Logical laws are therefore laws to which all reasoning is subject. The language of *PM*, the language in which Russell’s logic is articulated, provides a universal linguistic framework within which all genuine thought can be expressed.

Russell’s conception of logic, as universal and all-inclusive, leaves no room for the meta-theoretic approach to logic. If all reasoning is subject to logic, then there is no stance outside logic from which

\(^{31}\) Given the axiom of infinity, it follows immediately that atomic facts are infinite in number. For every individual \(a\) there is a corresponding atomic fact, namely the fact that \(a\) is an individual.

\(^{32}\) My discussion in this paragraph, and in the next, draws on Goldfarb, “Russell’s Reasons for Ramification”, Hylton, “Russell’s Substitutional Theory”, and Hylton, “Logic in Russell’s Logicism”.
we can reason about logic. On this point, Russell’s conception of logic contrasts very sharply with the schematic conception of the modern logician. Indeed the schematic conception of logic is alien to Russell’s thought. On his approach, logic is not a metaphysically neutral formal system consisting of empty schemata that acquire meaning via the specification of an interpretation. On the contrary: Russell takes logical laws to be independently significant statements about the world; they have a content and a truth-value on their own account. As he says: “logic is concerned with the real world just as truly as zoology, though with its more abstract and general features” [IMP, 169].

For Russell, then, it is not merely our thinking about the world which is subject to the laws of logic. It is, rather, the world itself which is subject to these laws. In Problems Russell takes the law of contradiction as an example of a traditional law of thought, and says:

Now what makes it natural to call this principle a law of thought is that it is by thought rather than by outward observation that we persuade ourselves of its necessary truth. When we have seen that a tree is a beech, we do not need to look again in order to ascertain whether it is also not a beech; thought alone makes us know that this is impossible. But the conclusion that the law of contradiction is a law of thought is nevertheless erroneous. What we believe, when we believe the law of contradiction, is not that the mind is so made that it must believe the law of contradiction. The belief in the law of contradiction is a belief about things, not only about thoughts. It is not, e.g., the belief that if we think a certain tree is a beech, we cannot at the same time think that it is not a beech; it is the belief that if the tree is a beech, it cannot at the same time be not a beech. Thus the law of contradiction is about things, and not merely about thoughts; and although belief in the law of contradiction is a thought, the law of contradiction itself is not a thought, but a fact concerning the things in the world. [Problems, 62–63]

Russell contends that, as a general term for logical principles, “The name ‘laws of thought’ is ... misleading, for what is important is not the fact that we think in accordance with these laws, but the fact that things behave in accordance with them” [Problems, 51; emphasis added]. Because things behave in accordance with the principles of logic, “when we think in accordance with them we think truly” [Problems, 51].

Logic, for Russell, is a codification of the correct structure of inference, of the principles implicit in all correct reasoning. A crucial point is that Russell’s conception of logical inference rules is object-based, rather than syntactic. To fix ideas, consider the rule of existential generalization: from “Fa”, follows “(∃x) Fx”. This principle, as Russell understands it, does not state anything about linguistic phenomena. It does not state, for example, that whenever marks of such-and-such a kind appear on some line of a given proof then it is always permissible to make marks of so-and-so a kind on a subsequent line of that proof. For Russell, the principle states, rather, that whenever there exists an atomic fact in which some particular is combined with some first-level property then there also exists a general fact in which that first-level property is combined instead with the existential quantifier which ranges over particulars. More generally, logical inferential principles on Russell’s conception
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state that if the world contains a fact of a certain kind that consists of objects of certain kinds in a
certain, definite arrangement, then the world also contains another fact of a certain kind that consists
of objects of certain kinds in a certain, definite arrangement. It is these general truths about facts
which underlie and render legitimate the manipulations of syntax that one performs in constructing a
proof. Seen in this way, principles of inference depend essentially on the ideas that Russellian facts are
complex entities, and that via analysis we can reveal the nature of their complexity. Indeed a central
task of logic, according to Russell's view of the subject, is to convey what the complexity of facts
consists in.

For Russell, not only do the principles of logic not make claims about language, but also they are
themselves not pieces of language. Russell is unwilling to accept a notion of possibility as fundamental:
"the notion of what is 'logically possible' is not an ultimate one, and must be reduced to something
that is actual before our analysis can be complete" ([TK], 111; cf. [TK], 27). He thus seeks an account
of logical inferential principles that will enable him to explain how they guarantee the validity of all
the corresponding inferences which could be made, but will not force him to accept the existence of
mere possibilia. Russell attempts to satisfy these apparently conflicting requirements by identifying
principles of inference with [certain] logical forms:

In all inference, form alone is essential: the particular subject-matter is irrelevant except as securing the truth
of the premises. This is one reason for the great importance of logical form. When I say, “Socrates was a man, all
men are mortal, therefore Socrates was mortal”, the connection of premises and conclusion does not in any way
depend upon its being Socrates and man and mortality that I am mentioning. The general form of the inference
may be expressed in some such words as: “If a thing has a certain property, and whatever has this property has
a certain other property, then the thing in question also has that other property”. Here no particular things or
properties are mentioned: the proposition is absolutely general. All inferences, when stated fully, are instances of
propositions having this kind of generality. ([OKEW], 53–54)

The logical form that Russell discusses in this passage can be expressed in his logical notation as:
“((∀x) (∀F) (∀G) (F x & (Fx ⊃ Gx)) ⊃ Gx)”. This sentence accurately represents the form but is not
itself the form. The form itself is not a linguistic item at all, but rather an absolutely general fact
whose constituents are variables and the logical constants “is-a, all, and if-then” (“The Philosophical
Importance of Mathematical Logic”, 36). Since the quantifiers in a given logical form range over all
items of the appropriate logical type, Russell does not need to invoke the notion of logical possibility
in order to secure the validity of every potential inference of that form. In [SMP] Russell states explicitly
that the notion of logical possibility is to be understood in terms of the notion of quantificational
generality:

We may sum up these two characteristics of philosophical propositions by saying that philosophy is the science of
the possible. But this statement unexplained is liable to be misleading, since it may be thought that the possible
is something other than the general, whereas in fact the two are indistinguishable.
... The study of logic ... is concerned with those general statements which can be made concerning everything without mentioning any one thing or predicate or relation, such for example as “if \( x \) is a member of the class \( \alpha \) and every member of \( \alpha \) is a member of \( \beta \), then \( x \) is a member of the class \( \beta \), whatever \( x, \alpha, \) and \( \beta \) may be”. ... In this way logic provides an inventory of possibilities, a repertory of abstractly tenable hypotheses. ([SMP, 65–66]) The truths of logic, as Russell sees the matter, embody the correct principles of reasoning, and logical forms are the facts (or logical objects) in which these truths (or principles) consist.\(^{33}\)

According to Russell’s understanding of logic, then, the laws of logic, although absolutely general, are substantive, i.e. have content on their own account. In particular, they are wholly general facts containing only quantified variables and logical constants as constituents. As thus conceived, the laws of logic are about the entities over which their quantified variables range.\(^{34}\) In one sense, the ranges of the quantified variables occurring in the formulae of PM are restricted: for they range over all entities of a given ontological type. Still, there is, for Russell, no question of specifying a universe of discourse. Instead Russell sees restrictions on the ranges of variables, not as imposed on the variables from without by mere stipulation, but rather as intrinsic to them and thus as coming from within [see ML, 71–72; cf. PM, i. 4]. In contrast to schemata, then, Russell’s logical formulae do not contain parts which are subject to an interpretation. The symbols that figure in them [besides those expressing logical constants] are variables, not schematic letters. Thus the letters “\( p \)” and “\( F \)” in the formula “\( p \supset Fx \)” are understood by Russell as free (or real) variables, just as the letter “\( x \)” is understood as a free variable in that formula too. This has the immediate implication that the facts expressed by Russell’s logical formulae assert not merely that there are objects over which the objectual variables range, but also that there are facts over which the factual variables range, and predicates or their analogues over which the predicate variables range.\(^{35}\)

Logic, for Russell, is therefore higher-order logic, not merely first-order logic. Indeed, his paradigmatic conception of facts, as nonlinguistic complexes made up of one or more objects together with some of their properties or relations, precludes his seeing first-order logic as a genuine segment of higher-order logic, i.e. as in principle separable from it along preexisting lines of division. Given this conception of facts, the ontology of concepts—the objective correlates of the predicates of sentences—is implicit in all ordinary facts. The fact expressed by the sentence “Plato is human” ascribes the property of humanity to the actual man Plato in virtue of its containing an entity corresponding to the predicate “... is human”. Clearly, however, the entity in question cannot be a linguistic one, since if it were

\(^{33}\) This is why Russell takes the form of a fact to be a logical form, the discovery of the form of a fact to be a logical analysis of the fact, and forms themselves to be the subject-matter of logic.

\(^{34}\) In accordance with our discussion of the theory of descriptions in the last chapter, this must be an example of indirect aboutness.

merely linguistic, it would be wholly mysterious how a complex object consisting of the entity, together with Plato, could be the *fact* that Plato is human. From Russell’s point of view, then, the analysis of singular (i.e. quantifier-free) facts requires that we accept that the predicates of sentences are genuine referring expressions, and that the entities to which they refer are nonlinguistic properties and relations. This understanding of the way that predicates function is not peculiar to the analysis of singular facts, however, for doing first-order logic presupposes this view of predicates as well. Thus, "\(\exists x \) [x is human]" follows from "Plato is human", according to the laws of logic, in part because the facts expressed respectively by these two sentences actually contain the property of humanity, the abstract entity to which the predicate "... is human" refers. This much is necessary to show that "Plato is human" does not imply "\( \exists x \) [x is an elephant]". Thus quantification over individuals requires that we accept that there are nonlinguistic properties and relations. But this existential claim is a claim of (what we would call) higher-order logic. Accordingly to explain the validity of the inference from the fact expressed by "Plato is human" to that expressed by "\( \exists F \) [Plato is F]", we need make no special ontological assumptions about some special subject matter. From Russell’s point of view, the introduction of quantification over properties and relations simply makes explicit the existence assumptions that are implicit in the ordinary rules of quantification theory. For Russell, then, higher-order logic is implicit in first-order logic.\(^\text{36}\)

According to Russell’s post-1910 metaphysics, the world consists of facts, complexes made up of simple objects together with some of their properties or relations. So given that the laws of logic, on Russell’s conception, contain only logical constants and quantified variables ranging over all entities of a given type, it follows that *nothing* (i.e. no entity and no fact) falls outside the purview of logic. Russell’s logic is thus the maximally general theory of facts and their constituents. The laws of logic concern both the ontological categories of the basic elements from which facts are composed and the ways in which those elements can join together to form facts. This is the idea to which Russell alludes when he says that “Philosophy ... becomes indistinguishable from logic”, and that logic is “concerned with the analysis and enumeration of logical *forms*, i.e. with the kinds of propositions that may occur, with the various types of facts, and with the classification of the constituents of facts” (*SMP*, 65).

\(^{36}\) Hylton points out that this aspect of Russell’s logic is reflected formally by the fact that the axiom of *PM* that guarantees the existence of propositional functions (namely, *9.15*) is articulated and deployed in the transition from truth-functional logic to quantification theory, whereas in *12* no such axiom is required by the transition from first-order logic to higher-order logic (see Hylton, “Logic in Russell’s Logicism”, 67).
3.5 Analysis in Russell’s Analytic Philosophy

In this final section I shall elaborate and explain Russell’s fundamental idea of philosophical analysis, including his conceptions of its method and of its aims. I shall begin my discussion, however, by briefly considering Russell’s general attitude towards analysis itself.

The notion of analysis is central to the philosophy that Russell evolves in the period which is our concern. In Russell’s hands, philosophical analysis is no mere convenience, not a merely pragmatic point of philosophical method.\(^{37}\) On the contrary: Russell thinks of his own version of analysis as providing the correct method for understanding the fundamental nature of the world. The primary task of philosophical analysis is to expose the world’s genuine underlying structure, a structure which is, according to Russell, not transparent to us (see *PLA*, 161–62).

The idea of philosophical analysis, as Hylton emphasizes, “is empty unless some constraints are imposed upon it. We must have some idea of what constitutes a satisfactory analysis, some criterion of success, before the idea has any content at all”.\(^{38}\) The criteria of success for analysis that Russell articulates are themselves bound up with his metaphysical and epistemological views.

To begin with, Russell’s view of philosophical analysis is based in part on his understanding of the nature of ontological complexity. He insists that genuine analysis is possible only when the object (or notion) in question is something complex. Simple objects (and notions) are in principle not susceptible of analysis, for their discovery represents the terminus of the process of analysis (see *PLA*, 173). Complex objects are composed of simple objects. Understanding complex objects involves analyzing them into their simple constituents. But understanding these simple constituents involves perceiving them directly; we must be acquainted with them (see *Principles*, xv, 129–30; cf. Leibniz, 170–71).

From 1906 onwards, Russell holds what one might call a relation-relata view of ontological complexity. During this period, he thinks of all such complexity as arising from simple objects standing in relations to one another.\(^{39}\) Thus in *Problems* he says:

Wherever there is a relation which relates certain terms, there is a complex object formed of the union of those terms; and conversely, wherever there is a complex object, there is a relation which relates its constituents. [*Problems*, 92]

This view of the fundamental nature of ontological complexity informs Russell’s atomistic conception of the world. In accordance with it, he conceives the world as consisting of simple objects standing in various relations to one another:

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\(^{38}\) Hylton, “Beginning with Analysis”, 44.

\(^{39}\) See Hylton, “Frege and Russell”, 175.
The universe consists of objects having various qualities and standing in various relations. Some of the objects which occur in the universe are complex. When an object is complex, it consists of interrelated parts. \( \textit{PM}, \text{i. 43} \)

According to Russell, then, \textit{all} complex objects consist at bottom of certain simple objects standing in certain relations to one another. The complex object is made up of the relation and its simple relata as a whole is made up of its parts.

According to Russell’s post-1910 metaphysics, the complexity of relations and relata, of parts and wholes, simply \textit{is} the complexity of facts. Two points in particular illustrate this. The first is that a fact, as Russell conceives the notion, quite literally contains the objects which it is about; those objects are the simple parts, and the fact which they compose is the complex structured whole. The second point is that, in Russell’s view, that certain objects stand in certain relations is itself a fact. So by taking as the fundamental form of ontological complexity that of a relation to its relata, Russell is advocating a metaphysics in which all complexity is factual complexity.\(^{40}\)

Russell thus sees the world as consisting of complex objects, or \textit{facts}, composed of simpler items joined together by relations. His fundamental method of analysis is, accordingly, the decomposition of a whole into its parts.\(^{41}\) For Russell, then, analysis is the method of getting from complex wholes to their absolutely simple constituent parts, which subsist in and of themselves [see \textit{RA}, 134]. Russell views the process of analysis as the discovery of the uniquely determinate primitive parts of the given complex and of the manner of their combination in that complex [see \textit{TK}, 119]. \textit{Discovery} here consists at bottom in our having direct perception of the entities involved [see \textit{TK}, 119]. Analysis, for Russell, is thus a process of breaking the complex object down into the various simple objects that make it up. These simple objects do not admit of being analyzed, for they have no parts into which they can be decomposed. Consequently to grasp them we must be directly acquainted with them.

On the basis of the foregoing description of Russell’s dominant mode of philosophical analysis, one might be tempted to conclude that \textit{facts} are the primary objects of analysis for Russell. Such is not his view, however. Instead, he takes \textit{sentences} to be what we analyze. When we analyze, we seek to formulate a sentence which reflects the structure of the corresponding fact. The analysis of a sentence involves determining what constituents its [would-be] corresponding fact contains and explaining how those constituents are put together to form that [putative] fact. A fully analyzed sentence consists of the logically proper names of its corresponding fact’s constituents. Such a sentence displays the fact, in a perspicuous fashion, as made up of the simple entities for which these names stand. For Russell, a fact has an intrinsic ontological structure: it is a complex constructed in a unique way from its

\(^{40}\) See Hylton, “Frege and Russell”, 175–76.

\(^{41}\) See Hylton, “Frege and Russell”, 176.
constituents. The way in which the constituents are combined in a fact is its logical form (see OKEW, 52). So the process of analysis articulates structures which are already there, in the fact, objectively and independently of us. In this process, the logic of PM plays a crucial role, for it provides Russell with a tool for investigating and explaining the relation-relata form of complexity that typifies facts, especially how that complexity is exploited in correct inference. For Russell, then, the immediate goal of any individual case of analysis is the production of a fully analyzed sentence. The ultimate goal of analysis is, presumably, the production of a fully analyzed language.

Implicit in Russell’s notion of a fully analyzed sentence is the idea that the analysis of a given sentence is complete when [but only when] that sentence has been transformed into another sentence which exactly represents the constituents and logical form of the corresponding fact. At this point, it is natural to ask: how are we to know that the sentence has been so transformed? The notion of acquaintance provides the answer to this question. In a fully analyzed sentence, each term stands for an object with which we are acquainted. That is the standard by which it is decided that the sentence is fully analyzed, and thus that the process of its analysis is complete.

For Russell, then, acquaintance provides a criterion of the success of the analysis of a sentence: the analysis must show that the corresponding fact is made up only of constituents with which we are acquainted. Putting it this way may be misleading, however, because it makes it sound as if the notion of acquaintance which we are invoking is itself fixed and clear-cut. In fact, however, Russell’s attitude towards this notion shifts considerably during the period which is our concern.

In Principles Russell takes a very lax attitude towards the notion of acquaintance. In that book, the philosophical theory is worked out quite independently of any epistemic considerations. Once the theory is in place and its metaphysical or ontological implications are identified, Russell seeks to account for our knowledge of the theory simply by asserting that we are in fact acquainted with the various propositions that comprise it, and with the indefinable entities to which it is committed. Yet no argument is given for, or explanation given of, the possibility of our having such direct and unmediated contact with these abstract entities. Nor for that matter is the plausibility of such contact even considered. Instead, when the exigencies of Russell’s theorizing in Principles demand that we be acquainted with objects of a particular kind, he does not hesitate in claiming that we do indeed have acquaintance with objects of that kind. The point then is that, at least initially, the notion of acquaintance does not impose any independent constraints on Russell’s thought but rather functions simply as a way of avoiding any discussion of epistemological questions.

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This situation changes from 1905 on; over the following decade the constraints imposed by the notion of acquaintance come to dominate Russell’s views. In particular, Russell increasingly narrows the range of concrete objects with which he is willing to say that we can be acquainted.\footnote{It is notable that Russell continues to think that we are acquainted with a very wide range of abstract objects. In this case, it seems, the notion of acquaintance continues to impose no independent constraints. As we shall see in Chapter 5, however, this situation changes to a certain extent in the 1913 TK.} Once his attention is focused on the notion of acquaintance itself, and he begins to reflect upon the epistemic demands that he takes to be embodied in the associated idea of direct and unmediated contact, he becomes convinced that ordinary concrete objects simply cannot meet those demands. His worry about such objects stems from the possibility of sensory illusion. The knowledge that we have of an object solely in virtue of being acquainted with it is perfect, complete, and indubitable (see Problems, 32). So dubitable knowledge cannot be knowledge by acquaintance. But clearly our knowledge of physical objects is dubitable: we may be subject to delusions, or hallucinations, or mistaken in some more ordinary way. Ordinary concrete objects cannot, therefore, be among the things with which we are acquainted. Ultimately, then, Russell comes to hold that we are acquainted with none of the concrete objects about which we take ourselves to have knowledge.

What, then, does Russell take as the immediate object about which in principle we cannot be mistaken? From his break with British idealism onwards, Russell regards our simple sensory knowledge as paradigmatically certain and presuppositionless. In Principles, for example, he says that the discussion of the indefinables of logic “is the endeavor to see clearly, and to make others see clearly, the entities concerned, in order that the mind may have that kind of acquaintance with them which it has with redness or the taste of a pineapple” (Principles, xv). So after 1910, when his attention is focused directly upon the notion of acquaintance, and he begins to draw increasingly narrow limits to the scope of our acquaintance with concrete objects, his search for suitable particulars for us to be acquainted with leads him to formulate the notion of a sense-datum. Sense-data are, Russell tells us, “the things which are immediately known in sensation: such things as colors, sounds, smells, hardnesses, roughnesses, and so on” (Problems, 4). Sense-data are thus not ordinary physical objects but rather something more like the appearances of such objects (see Problems, 5, 17, 32).\footnote{It should not be inferred from this that Russellian sense-data are subjective mental entities, for a given sense-datum [even if in fact available only to one person] does not depend for its being on the mind of the person to whom it is an object of acquaintance [see RA, 133, 135].} Since our experience of sense-data can never be delusory, our acquaintance with sense-data provides “a solid basis from which to begin our pursuit of knowledge” (Problems, 11; cf. NSD, 187).
After 1910, then, Russell restricts the scope of our acquaintance with ontologically simple objects to sense-data and to universals (and, it seems, to the self and to certain abstract logical facts as well). So given the principle of acquaintance, it follows immediately that any judgment that we can make must be composed entirely of sense-data and of universals (or perhaps only of universals, as in the case of a general judgment) with which we are acquainted. On its face, of course, virtually all of our knowledge fails to conform to this standard. But this just means that philosophical analysis is required to show that our knowledge does in fact conform to it. Such analysis consists in demonstrating that sentences about ordinary concrete objects are really only indirectly about them, and in determining which sense-data and universals such sentences are directly about. Thus a sentence which appears to be about a certain table is taken instead to express a judgment which does not contain the table itself but rather contains sense-data (and universals) with which we are acquainted, and uses them to provide a definite description of the table (see Problems, 32). But if we cannot be acquainted with the table itself, how can we know that it really exists? Russell’s answer in Problems is that our knowledge of the table’s existence (and of the existence of physical objects more generally) is based on inference. We infer from our sense-data to the existence of the familiar table, of which they are (alleged to be) an appearance, on the basis of a general principle that establishes the relevant causal link between the table and the associated sense-data (see Problems, 41).

Russell seeks in this way to explain how we can make judgments and know truths which are, on the face of it, about physical objects without being acquainted with such objects. He thus attempts to construct our knowledge of physical objects from the various sense-data and universals with which we are acquainted. The theory of descriptions is central to Russell’s program. Our knowledge about things with which we lack acquaintance is descriptive knowledge, and from 1905 on Russell holds that all such knowledge is to be explained in accordance with the method of analysis established by the theory of descriptions. In Russell’s hands, then, the theory of descriptions and the idea of analysis which is a concomitant of it are no mere conveniences. On the contrary: Russell sees them jointly as the correct tool and method for ascertaining the ultimate structure of our knowledge of reality.

From 1910 onwards, then, the assumption that sense-data and universals are the only kinds of simple objects with which we can be acquainted functions as a fundamental presupposition of Russell’s idea of a fully analyzed sentence. Other presuppositions of this idea have to do with the nature of language, and with the essential features of facts. Thus one such presupposition is that language has

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45 In this sense, then, Russellian logical atoms are equally epistemological atoms, for these are objects which are suitable to play the role of relata to the relation of acquaintance.

representational capacities, that it can be used to represent facts and their constituents. [Indeed, one
might say that the only notion of representation that Russell is willing to accept is this linguistic
one.] Facts and their constituents are out there, and we are capable of standing in a direct cognitive
relation to them. Yet, as Russell sees the matter, we are not in general aware of the structure of the
judgments that we make; our thoughts are not transparent to us. The ultimate goal of analysis is to
make our thoughts transparent to us, that is, to reveal the real constituents, and the real structure, of
the facts corresponding to the sentences that we understand. Accordingly, a second presupposition of
Russell’s idea of a fully analyzed sentence is that each fact has the structure that it has eternally and
quite independently of our knowledge of it, and of how we choose to represent it in language. Russell
repeatedly suggests that analysis is essentially concerned with facts, that facts themselves are the
principal objects of analysis. In PLA, for example, he says:

The analysis of apparently complex things … can be reduced by various means, to the analysis of facts which are
apparently about those things. Therefore it is with the analysis of facts that one’s consideration of the problem of
complexity must begin. (PLA, 171; cf. PLA, 172)

In view of what we have just been saying, however, it would seem that, in spite of Russell’s own
rhetoric, the notion of analysis does not really apply to facts at all, for there can be no such thing as a
less than fully analyzed fact. So a third presupposition [of Russell’s idea of a fully analyzed sentence]
is that what can be analyzed are the sentences which we use to represent facts. It is the sentences that
express facts [or that try to express facts], rather than the facts themselves, which are candidates for,
and can be subjected to, philosophical analysis.

Together, the three presuppositions that we have identified imply that a sentence can reflect a
fact’s ontological structure, its logical form, more or less accurately. For a single fact, in spite of any
indications or expectations to the contrary, is expressed equally by the completely unanalyzed version
of the given sentence and by its fully analyzed version as well as by each of the sentences produced by
the analysis at the various stages in the transition from the former to the latter. Analysis will transform
a sentence which does not reflect the form of the underlying fact, or does so only imperfectly, into
a sentence which more accurately reflects that form, and, ultimately, into a sentence that perfectly
reflects it, that is, a sentence whose grammatical structure is completely isomorphic to the ontological
structure of the fact.47 Seen in this perspective, Russell’s conception of philosophical analysis, as the
process of the discovery of the genuine structure of the fact corresponding to a given sentence, depends
upon the idea that a fact has a uniquely determinate, analysis-invariant ontological structure, and
that a sentence is the kind of entity which is capable of reflecting that structure with some degree of

47 See Hylton, “Beginning with Analysis”, 43.
accuracy. Here the notion of logical form is crucial. The logical form of a given fact simply is that fact’s underlying structure. So logical form is what we aim to represent when we analyze a sentence.

Russell’s idea of logical form as constituting the genuine structure of the facts underlying the sentences that we utter seems to suggest that, for him, there is at bottom only one language. Ordinary languages, since they consist of unanalyzed or less than fully analyzed sentences, fail to reach the real structure of the reality that underlies our discourse. But a fully analyzed language would convey that structure exactly. So it would be the language. The notion of a logically perfect language represents the culmination of this idea in Russell’s thought. Such a language would consist entirely of sentences whose grammatical structures are completely isomorphic to the ontological structures of the facts which they express.

Russell maintains that the syntax of the logically perfect language would be furnished by the logic of PM (see PLA, 176). Since Russell understands the notion of meaning in terms of the notion of reference, he takes it that categorial differences between symbols issue not from any differences between the ways in which they symbolize items but rather from the ontological differences between the items which they symbolize. For Russell, in other words, grammatical categories in the logically perfect language supervene on ontological ones. In a logically perfect language, symbols of distinct grammatical categories would stand for entities of distinct logical types. So the grammatical structure of such a language would correspond exactly to the ontological structure of the world. Since it is only that structure which makes representation possible at all, it follows that whatever can be said about the world with sense can be said within the framework of the logically perfect language.

The primitive simple symbols of the logically perfect language would be logically proper names, logically simple unary and relational predicates (including truth-functional sentential connectives and quantifiers), and variables. The language's primitive complex symbols would be fully analyzed sentences (including atomic, molecular, and general ones) formed from these primitive simple symbols in accordance with the basic rules of the logical syntax of the language of PM. The vocabulary of the logically perfect language, Russell says, “would be very largely private to one speaker” [PLA, 176]. It would consist of simple symbols that have meaning in virtue of the speaker’s fastening them to simple sense-data and universals with which he is acquainted, and of sentences that have meaning in virtue of their expressing facts whose constituents are the logical atoms signified by the simple symbols from which they are composed.

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48 See Hylton, “Beginning with Analysis”, 43–44.
In virtue of its grammar and its vocabulary, the logically perfect language would perfectly and perspicuously convey the anatomy of our thought and our knowledge:

in a logically correct symbolism there will always be a certain fundamental identity of structure between a fact and the symbol for it, and ... the complexity of the symbol corresponds very closely with the complexity of the facts symbolized by it. ...

... In a logically perfect language the words in a proposition would correspond one by one with the components of the corresponding fact. ... In a logically perfect language, there will be one word and no more for every simple object, and everything that is not simple will be expressed by a combination of words, by a combination derived, of course, from the words for the simple things that enter in, one word for each simple component. A language of that sort will be completely analytic, and will show at a glance the logical structure of the facts asserted or denied. (PLA, 175–76)

In exposing the genuine structure of the reality that backs up and makes possible the sentences that we utter, the logically perfect language would provide us with a means of solving metaphysical problems. Since the language would accurately represent the arrangement of, and relations between, the basic elements from which the world is composed, it would make the nature of the world transparent to us:

The purpose of ... an ideal logical language ... is twofold: first, to prevent inferences from the nature of language to the nature of the world, which are fallacious because they depend upon the logical defects of language; secondly, to suggest, by inquiring what logic requires of a language which is to avoid contradiction, what sort of a structure we may reasonably suppose the world to have. (“Logical Atomism”, 174–75)

The notion of a logically perfect language is in this way crucial to Russell’s conception of philosophical analysis. Such a language would provide us with a universal linguistic framework within which to formulate, systematize, and clarify the content of, and logical relations among, the facts making up a given body of truths. The limits of the logically perfect language are thus the limits of philosophical analysis.
In the previous chapter I surveyed some of the central features of Russell's multiple relation theory of judgment. In this chapter I shall consider this theory more closely. I shall discuss, in particular, salient aspects of the version of the theory which Russell produces in 1912 and sets out in Problems. Asymmetrical relations, the judgments that assert them, and the facts formed by them all pose problems for the multiple relation theory. These problems lead to significant changes in the theory between 1910 and 1913. The 1912 version of the theory makes essential use of the notion of relational sense in its account of judgments that assert asymmetrical relations. In doing so, the theory relies on the conception of asymmetrical relations that Russell proposes in Principles. I shall therefore begin my examination of the 1912 multiple relation theory in this chapter by considering that conception of asymmetrical relations.

4.1 Propositional Identity and Relational Sense in Early Russell

In this section I shall examine relevant aspects of the view of relations that Russell puts forward in Principles. I shall elaborate and illustrate these aspects by considering the criteria for propositional identity that Russell articulates. I shall begin, however, by looking very briefly at Russell's early notion of a class.

In Principles Russell argues for, and attempts to prove, logicism, the thesis that mathematics is reducible to logic. The notion of a class is central to Russell's early logicism, for classes are the entities with which Russell identifies the numbers. Russell takes classes as complex entities; according to him they contain constituent parts [see Principles, 69, 77, 139]. The complexity that is exemplified in a class is of the non-propositional sort; that is to say, in a class constituents combine into a unity in a way which is distinct from their combination into a proposition [see Principles, 140–41]. One point is this. Classes, for Russell, as for everyone else, are extensional entities. The identity of an individual class is wholly determined by its membership [see Principles, 20–21]. Classes that have exactly the same members are identical, whereas classes that have different members are themselves distinct.

1 The logic that Russell develops and employs in Principles to carry out the logicist reduction thus includes a theory of classes. In the earliest phase of Russell's logicism, then, classes are regarded as genuine entities; they are among the ontological primitives. Russell's early attitude towards classes contrasts of course with his attitude towards these entities in his mature type theory, developed from 1906 onwards. Russell's claim here is that there are no classes: phrases which appear to refer to classes are to be explained without supposing that there are classes.
Matters are different, however, with Russell’s propositions, for these are intensional entities. The identity-criteria for a proposition are given not by its truth-value but by its constituents and their arrangement. Thus “Socrates is mortal” expresses a different true proposition from the true proposition expressed by “Plato is a philosopher”. The importance of the arrangement of the constituents can be seen from the fact that “All whales are mammals” expresses a different proposition from that expressed by “All mammals are whales”. Since these two propositions contain precisely the same constituents [namely: the properties of being a whale, and of being a mammal, and the relation of formal implication] it follows that the identity of a proposition, in contrast to that of a class, is not always fixed by the identities of its constituents alone (see *Principles*, 141). One may exhaustively enumerate a proposition’s constituents but still fail to fix its identity precisely because, in certain cases, distinct propositions can be formed from the same selection of objects. As Russell views matters, the crucial point about such propositions is that they involve non-symmetrical relations. Any non-symmetrical binary relation can unite the same pair of individuals in two ways to form two distinct propositions (see *Principles*, 228). Thus the relation of killing, for example, joins the individual Brutus to the individual Caesar to form the [true] proposition that Brutus killed Caesar. But it also joins Caesar to Brutus to form the [false] proposition that Caesar killed Brutus. The difference between these two propositions is captured linguistically by the difference between the two sentences, “Brutus killed Caesar” and “Caesar killed Brutus”. The question thus arises: how is the ontological difference which underlies this linguistic one to be understood within the framework of Russell’s metaphysics?

For Russell, let us recall, the part–whole complexity of propositions simply is the complexity of relations and relata. In accordance with this conception of propositional complexity, Russell’s explanation of the ontological difference between the propositions expressed by the two sentences “Brutus killed Caesar” and “Caesar killed Brutus” is based in large measure on his understanding of the nature of relations. Russell maintains that these two propositions count as different complex wholes, in spite of the fact that they contain exactly the same constituent parts, because they involve different combinations of those constituents. And, in general, he seeks to account for the combinatorial way in which the constituents are put together in a relational proposition in terms of certain features of its relating relation. One of these features is what he calls the sense of the relation.

In *Principles* Russell gives a partial characterization of the notion of the sense of a relation as the direction in which the relation proceeds when it holds between [or among] its relata, thereby uniting them into a proposition [see *Principles*, 86]. Russell takes the sense of a relation to be intrinsic to it:

A relational proposition may be symbolized by $aRb$, where $R$ is the relation and $a$ and $b$ are the terms; and $aRb$ will then always, provided $a$ and $b$ are not identical, denote a different proposition from $bRa$. That is to say, it is
characteristic of a relation of two terms that it proceeds, so to speak, from one to the other. This is what may be called the sense of the relation, and is, as we shall find, the source of order and series. It must be held as an axiom that aRb implies and is implied by a relational proposition bR’a, in which the relation R’ proceeds from b to a, and may or may not be the same relation as R. But even when aRb implies and is implied by bRa, it must be strictly maintained that these are different propositions. We may distinguish the term from which the relation proceeds as the referent, and the term to which it proceeds as the relatum. [Principles, 95–96]

Various points suggest themselves on the basis of this passage. One is that when Russell says here that in the proposition that bR’a, the relation R’ proceeds from b to a, he is saying that R’ relates b to a, in that particular order. Clearly his use of the word “proceeding” in this context, as a synonym for “relating (in a certain order),” is in keeping with the spatial language in which he tends to speak about propositions, and the use of such language accords well with the part–whole metaphor that dominates his view. Another point which is suggested by the passage is that Russell holds that the difference between distinct propositions in which the same non-symmetrical binary relation relates the same pair of individuals is at bottom a matter of the sense of that relation [see also Principles, 107, 171–72, 225]. So for Russell the proposition that Brutus killed Caesar differs from the proposition that Caesar killed Brutus, in part, because in the former complex the relation of killing proceeds from Brutus to Caesar, whereas in the latter complex it proceeds from Caesar to Brutus. Together, the two points that we have identified suggest that the propositions in question are distinct entities for Russell, even though they involve the same individuals and binary relation, because that binary relation relates those individuals in different orders in the two cases. The question therefore arises: how does Russell understand the phenomenon of objects’ having a certain order in a relation? To answer this question, we need to look more closely at his notion of relational sense.

For Russell the sense of a relation is intrinsic to it; it is in fact part of the relation itself. A relation’s sense is, so to speak, an inbuilt feature of its argument places [see Principles, 99]. Russell seems, indeed, to reify the argument places of relations, i.e. to treat them as if they were objects of a sort. In Principles he identifies “the sense of the relation” xRy with “its direction from x to y” [Principles, 86]. Here Russell uses the letters “x” and “y” to single out distinct argument places of xRy itself. In doing so, he implies that there is an object-based distinction between the first (or x) argument place of xRy, and its second (or y) argument place. And his characterization of the nature of that distinction

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2 In TK, for example, Russell says that “a relation must have essentially some ‘from-and-to’ character, even in its most abstract form, like a goods-truck which has a hook in front and an eye behind”, and that “the main fact about relations ... is that there is something in their nature that cries out for terms, some sort of grappling apparatus which is always looking out for things to grapple on to” [TK, 86].

3 If Russell were using these letters merely to single out linguistic argument places of the relational predicate “xRy”, then we would still require some explanation of why their typographical order in that predicate conveys information about the sense of xRy, the relation for which the predicate stands.
indicates that he takes these two argument places to be *intrinsically ordered.* On Russell's account, then, in any binary relation, one argument place is intrinsically the *first,* and one is intrinsically the *second.*

Russell's view of relations in *Principles* makes it possible to speak with sense, and in general, of the individual argument places (e.g. the first, the second, etc.) of non-symmetrical relations and of the corresponding *positions* in the propositions formed by such relations. Thus we can, for example, speak with sense of the second argument places of the relations of loving and of killing. And we can ask of these argument places whether in two propositions formed respectively by these two relations they are occupied by the same individual. Russell's view of relations thus provides us with a general ontological framework within which, and a general method by which, to discern the position of an object in a proposition and to determine whether the object occupies that, or some other, position in a different proposition.

Using this account of relations, Russell is able to distinguish between different propositions formed from the same individuals and non-symmetrical relation. He determines a unique combination of objects, and therefore a single proposition, by specifying for each individual contained in the proposition the particular argument place of the relating relation which it occupies. The difference between the propositions expressed respectively by the two sentences “Brutus killed Caesar” and “Caesar killed Brutus” now becomes explicable. In the proposition expressed by “Brutus killed Caesar”, Brutus occupies the *first* argument place of the killing relation and Caesar occupies the *second.* In the proposition expressed by “Caesar killed Brutus”, on the other hand, the individuals Brutus and Caesar are *permuted.* Thus it is that “the interchange of the two terms gives a different proposition” (*Principles*, 95).

Let us now endeavor to state Russell's fundamental idea of relational sense in a more precise form. In *Principles* Russell insists that every genuine non-symmetrical binary relation has *one* proper sense. He expresses this idea by saying that when such a relation relates two objects (i.e. unites them into a proposition) it proceeds essentially from one of them to the other (see *Principles*, 86, 95–96). Russell calls the object from which the relation proceeds its *referent*; and he calls the object to which it proceeds its *object.*

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4 In ascribing this view of the argument places of relations to Russell, I follow Ricketts, “Pictures, Logic, and the Limits of Sense in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*”, 66–69. However, my method of explaining and of arguing for this interpretation of Russell differs from the method that Ricketts employs.

5 See Ricketts, “Pictures”, 66, 68.

6 From Russell's perspective, to speak in general of the individual argument places of relations is to quantify over the argument places themselves. And quantification, as Russell sees the matter, presupposes a realm of discrete and independent entities over which the quantifier ranges. Thus, by this account too, the argument places of relations must be separate and distinct objects.
proceeds its \textit{relatum} (see \textit{Principles}, 24, 96). Clearly then when Russell says that a relation proceeds from its referent to its relatum, he is saying that the relation \textit{relates} its referent to its relatum (see \textit{Principles}, 24, 50, 263). Thus it would seem that in order to give an account of what the sense of a relation consists in, Russell must explain what it is for an object to be the referent of a relation, and what it is for an object to be a relation’s relatum. Because Russell conceives of relations as independently subsisting ontological atoms, he assumes that the general notion of relational sense, as well as the notions of referent and of relatum, must be explicable \textit{if at all} in terms of the intrinsic structural features of relations themselves.\footnote{I say, parenthetically, “if at all”, because Russell remarks in \textit{Principles} that the “sense of a relation is a fundamental notion, which is not capable of definition” (\textit{Principles}, 96). Yet he also says that an indefinable notion is one which he knows no way of defining (see \textit{Principles}, 139). Throughout the period which is our concern, Russell consistently maintains that fundamental indefinable notions can only be understood via the mind’s having direct non-sensuous perception of them (see \textit{Principles}, xv, 129–30; cf. \textit{PLA}, 175).} For Russell, in other words, these notions must be explicable \textit{without} our having to appeal to any features of the objects between which relations hold, or to any features of the propositions in which relations occur predicatively (see \textit{Principles}, 227). In accordance with these restrictions, Russell seeks to account for the phenomenon of relational sense by appealing to the ordering of argument places that he takes as intrinsically part of relations themselves. For him an object’s being the referent of some binary relation consists in the object’s occupying the \textit{first} argument place of that relation. And similarly for an object to be the relatum of the relation in question, it must occupy the relation’s \textit{second} argument place (see \textit{Principles}, 49–50, 100). So, on Russell’s view, for Brutus to kill Caesar is for the relation of killing to unite Brutus and Caesar into a true proposition in which Brutus occupies the first argument place of the killing relation and Caesar occupies the second. Thus the sense of the killing relation, as Russell conceives the notion, just is the relation’s directionality from \{the object occupying\} its \textit{first} argument place to \{the object occupying\} its \textit{second} argument place. In saying that each \{binary\} relation has \textit{one} proper sense, Russell is saying that each relation is \textit{uniquely} directional, that \textit{whenever} the relation holds between two objects it relates whichever of those objects happens to occupy its \textit{first} argument place to whichever of them happens to occupy its \textit{second} argument place.\footnote{At one point in \textit{Principles} Russell says that a relation has \textit{two} senses: “We have now seen that order depends upon asymmetrical relations, and that these always have two senses, as before and after, greater and less, east and west, etc.” (\textit{Principles}, 227; cf. \textit{ONTF}, 123–24). As we shall see, however, Russell’s claim here is not that the sense of a given binary relation is twofold, and thus not unique. Rather his claim is that a relation and its converse are different entities, and that their senses are directly opposed (see pp. 69–70, below; see also n. 10, below).} Russell’s ascription of sense to relations is thus rooted in his conception of their argument places as discrete and independent, intrinsically ordered objects.

The idea of a relation as containing intrinsically ordered argument places provides Russell with a framework within which to characterize the structure of propositions. This framework easily
accommodates the antecedently established part–whole metaphor that dominates his view, for it
arises from extending that metaphor to relations. A relation should be thought of as having the same
sort of complexity as a proposition. Russell reifies the notion of a relation and then inquires into its
composition. For him a proposition has the same sort of ontological structure as its relating relation. In
terms of ontological structure, the crucial difference between the proposition and the relation is that
the proposition contains ordinary objects in those positions where the relation contains intrinsically
ordered argument places [of the corresponding logical types]. The proposition results from the relation
by filling the relation's argument places with the proposition's constituents.

The class of referents of a non-symmetrical binary relation consists of all the objects that occupy the
relation's first argument place in the true propositions formed by it. The class of relata of such a relation
consists of all the objects that occupy its second argument place in the propositions in question. So
given Russell's conception of the sense of a relation, as the direction in which the relation proceeds
when it unites its terms into a proposition, it follows that the referents of a given binary relation are
those things which bear that relation to some object or other, and that its relata are the things to which
some object or other bears the relation [see Principles, 24]. In the case of the relation of killing, in
particular, the referents of this relation are killers and its relata are their victims, i.e. the things which
they kill. The fact that killing is a relation that holds between killers and the things which they kill is
thus part of what we mean when we say that the sense of the killing relation is its directionality from
its first argument place to its second argument place. To say that Brutus is a killer is to say that there
is some object to which he bears the killing relation. To say that Caesar has been killed is to say that
there is some object which bears the killing relation to him. The property of being a killer is thus the
concept signified by the complex unary predicate “(∃y) [x killed y]”. The expression “(∃x) [x killed y]”
is likewise the name of the property of being killed by something. In Principles Russell notes that the
properties defined by the ordered argument places of binary relations are ineluctably presupposed in
our ordinary thought and speech as well as in our technical philosophical discourse:

the notion of the classes of referents and relata with respect to R ... are unhesitatingly admitted in such words
as parents and children, masters and servants, husbands and wives, and innumerable other instances from daily
life, as also in logical notions such as premisses and conclusions, causes and effects, and so on. All such notions
depend upon the class of propositions typified by xRy, where R is constant while x and y are variable. [Principles,
85–86]

So the general idea here is that, given a relation's content together with its directionality, each of its
individual argument places will give rise to a certain property that in some sense defines the role that
the objects which occupy the argument place play in the propositions that are formed by the relation.
[We shall return to this issue in the final section of this chapter; see Section 4.3, pp. 90–93, below.]
Finally, in this section, I shall argue that the view of relations that I have sketched and attributed to Russell is the basis for Russell’s claim that an asymmetrical relation and its converse are distinct entities [see Principles, 228–29]. In *Principles* Russell insists that given any relation \( R \), there is a converse relation \( S \), such that, for any pair of objects \( x \) and \( y \), the proposition that \( y S x \) is true (or false) just in case the proposition that \( x R y \) is true (or false) too [see Principles, 25, 97]. This “primitive proposition” (*Principles*, 25), which establishes the fundamental connection between an asymmetrical relation and its converse, can be restated using Russell’s idea that the argument places of relations have an intrinsic order. Thus if \( R \) is an asymmetrical relation, then \( S \) is the converse of \( R \) if, but only if, for every true (false) proposition, \( p \), which has \( R \) as its relating relation, there is a corresponding true (false) proposition, \( q \), which has \( S \) as its relating relation, and in which \( S \)'s first argument place is occupied by the object that occupies \( R \)'s second argument place in \( p \), and \( S \)'s second argument place is occupied by the object that occupies \( R \)'s first argument place in \( p \). The converse of an asymmetrical relation is thus defined by the fact that for every proposition in which the asymmetrical relation combines a pair of objects in a certain, definite order there is a corresponding proposition, of identical truth-value, in which its converse combines the same pair of objects in the opposite order. The fact that, for a given pair of relations, this mutual implication holds for all cases in which they relate the same pair of objects suffices to establish that they are one another’s converses [see Principles, 96–97].

In *Principles* Russell claims that the definitive relation of an asymmetrical relation to its converse is that “of oppositeness, or difference of sense” (*Principles*, 96; cf. *Principles*, 228). For Russell every relation has one proper sense. The sense of the relation \( R \) is simply its intrinsic directionality from \( \text{[the object occupying]} \) its first argument place to \( \text{[the object occupying]} \) its second argument place. The sense of the relation \( S \) is similarly its intrinsic directionality from \( \text{[the object occupying]} \) its first argument place to \( \text{[the object occupying]} \) its second argument place. Since (ex hypothesi) \( R \) and \( S \) are mutually converse asymmetrical relations, it follows that, for any two objects \( x \) and \( y \), \( R \) proceeds from \( \text{[i.e. relates]} \) \( x \) to \( y \) just in case \( S \) proceeds from \( \text{[relates]} \) \( y \) to \( x \). So whenever \( R \) proceeds from the object occupying its first argument place to the object occupying its second argument place, it proceeds from the object occupying the second argument place of \( S \) to the object occupying \( S \)'s first argument place. And likewise whenever \( S \) proceeds from the object occupying its first argument place to the object occupying its second argument place, it thereby proceeds from the object occupying \( R \)'s second argument place to \( \text{[the object occupying]} \) its first argument place.

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9 Clearly, however, the implication’s holding in some cases but not in others does not suffice to establish this result. The sentences “Brutus killed Caesar” and “Caesar was acquainted with Brutus” express true propositions in which different relations relate the same individuals in opposite orders. So the biconditional formed from them expresses a true proposition. But this fact does not entail that the relation of killing is the converse of the relation of acquaintance, for this assertion is false.
argument place to the object occupying \( R \)'s first argument place. Thus it would seem that the sense of the relation \( R \) is equally its directionality from [the object occupying] the second argument place of the relation \( S \) to [the object occupying] the first argument place of \( S \); and that the sense of the relation \( S \) can be thought of, in like manner, as its directionality from [the object occupying] the second argument place of the relation \( R \) to [the object occupying] the first argument place of \( R \). As thus understood, the sense of the relation \( R \) is directly opposed to the sense of the relation \( S \) [and vice versa].

In *Principles* Russell canvasses an objection to his claim that an asymmetrical relation and its converse are distinct entities (see *Principles*, 228–29). Consider the asymmetrical relation *greater than* and its converse *less than*. If these two relations are in fact distinct ontological atoms, as Russell maintains, then the two sentences "a is greater than b" and "b is less than a" ought to express different propositions which merely imply one another (see *Principles*, 95–96, 229). In *Principles* Russell raises the question of whether these two sentences really do express different propositions:

A question of considerable importance to logic, and especially to the theory of inference, may be raised with regard to difference of sense. Are \( aRb \) and \( bRa \) really different propositions, or do they only differ linguistically? It may be held that there is only one relation \( R \), and that all necessary distinctions can be obtained from that between \( aRb \) and \( bRa \). It may be said that, owing to the exigencies of speech and writing, we are compelled to mention either \( a \) or \( b \) first, and that this gives a seeming difference between "a is greater than b" and "b is less than a"; but that, in reality, these two propositions are identical. (*Principles*, 228)

Russell seems to suggest here that we can take the sentences to express the same proposition, and thus analyze one of them as a definitional abbreviation of the other, by selecting one of the relations *greater than* or *less than* as the genuine ontological primitive. For example, if we were to select *greater than* as the primitive relation and to treat "b is less than a" as a definitional abbreviation of "a is greater than b", then we would get the result that these sentences express precisely the same proposition: namely the proposition that a is greater than b. Russell conceives of this proposition as a complex in which the *greater than* relation unites a to b. So in the proposition that a is greater than b, the term a occupies the first argument place of the *greater than* relation and the term b occupies the second argument place. Similarly the sentence "a is less than b" can be analyzed as a definitional abbreviation of the sentence "b is greater than a" and taken to express a proposition in which *greater than* relates b to a, in that order. In this proposition, then, b occupies the first argument place of the *greater than* relation and a occupies the second argument place. It is important to note that the proposed analysis presupposes, rather than challenges, Russell’s claim that the argument places of relations are intrinsically ordered.

*I shall return to this issue in the next chapter, see Chapter 5, Section 5.2, pp. 106–121, below.*

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10 Thus what Russell misleadingly calls the two senses of an asymmetrical relation are really the relation and its converse. The two senses of the relation of loving, for example, are really the two distinct relations loves and is loved by. (The loving relation is, of course, a non-symmetrical relation, rather than an asymmetrical one; but this fact does not affect the argument.)
If we accept this analysis then we should draw the twofold conclusion that there are no propositions in which the *less than* relation combines objects, and that the predicate “is less than” is not in fact the name of a genuine relation at all. As Russell puts it, we come to use this predicate in our sentences “owing to the exigencies of speech and writing” by which “we are compelled to mention either \(a\) or \(b\) first” ([Principles], 228). We use the predicate “is less than” in cases where we express a singular proposition in which one term is asserted to be of greater magnitude than another term by mentioning *first* the term which is asserted to be of lesser magnitude. On the other hand, when we use the predicate “is greater than” to express the very same proposition we mention *first* the term which we assert to be of greater magnitude.

It is important to note, however, that the method of analysis used here to eliminate the *less than* relation in favor of the *greater than* relation can also be used to eliminate *greater than* in favor of *less than*. It seems in fact that nothing in the method of analysis taken by itself suffices to establish which of these relations is the ontological primitive, and which of them is not a genuine entity at all. As Russell sees the matter, however, the fact that the analysis does not suffice for these purposes is not a product of some defect in the analysis itself. Rather, it merely reflects the fact that there simply is no basis for choosing between these two relations. Russell claims, indeed, that direct inspection reveals the relations of *greater than* and of *less than* to be equally fundamental, genuine entities. There is, he says, an “indubitable distinction between *greater* and *less*” which can be recognized in isolation, that is, “even when no terms are mentioned as related by them” ([Principles], 228). So on Russell’s account the relational predicates “is greater than” and “is less than” name distinct independently subsisting ontological atoms.

Russell points out, however, that if we wish to persist in the view that the sentences “\(a\) is greater than \(b\)” and “\(b\) is less than \(a\)” express the very same proposition, then we must find some “third abstract relation” ([Principles], 228; cf. [Principles], 222), one which is wholly distinct from the relations *greater than* and *less than*, to serve as its relating relation. Let us call this new relation “\(T\)”. In that case, Russell claims, the single proposition expressed by the sentences “\(a\) is greater than \(b\)” and “\(b\) is less than \(a\)” can be thought of as a complex consisting of the terms \(a\) and \(b\) standing in the relation \(T\) to one another.

In [Principles] Russell insists that the proposed analysis is untenable. The problem with it is, he claims, that it does not in fact enable us to make do without the relations *greater than* and *less than*. In reaching this conclusion, Russell draws explicitly on his doctrine that every relation has one proper sense, and thus relies implicitly on the ordering of argument places that he regards as intrinsic to relations. Russell thus insists that, as a relation, \(T\) itself must have one proper sense, that it must
proceed essentially and invariably from the object occupying its first argument place to the object occupying its second argument place. So in the single proposition expressed by the two sentences “a is greater than b” and “b is less than a”, it must be the case either that a occupies the first argument place of T and b occupies the second, or that b occupies the first argument place of T and a occupies the second. In the first case, however, the analysis simply equates the relation T with the greater than relation (while in the second case it equates T with less than). The binary predicate “T” thus becomes merely another name for this relation. But if we accept that the predicates “T” and “is greater than” name precisely the same asymmetrical relation then we must take the relation in question to be the greater than relation itself. For we can only say that one term is of greater magnitude than a second term when the first term occupies the first argument place of the greater than relation. In other words, we understand what it is for a given term to be of greater magnitude than another term by understanding what it is for that term to be a referent of the greater than relation. Clearly, however, we can know that a given term occupies the first argument place (or is a referent) of the relation T without knowing whether that means that that particular term is greater than some other term or is less than some other term. To know this, we have to know that a term’s occupying the first argument place of the relation T constitutes its being greater than (or its being less than) some other term. So our capacity for understanding sentences that (supposedly) assert that the relation T holds between two terms presupposes our having acquaintance with the greater than relation. Thus we cannot maintain without circularity that T is the genuine ontological primitive. On the basis of the various considerations that we have adduced, Russell concludes that an asymmetrical relation and its converse are distinct entities: “Hence R and Ř must be distinct, and ‘aRb implies bŘa’ must be a genuine inference” (Principles, 229).

4.2 Judgment, Fact, and Truth

In this section and the next, I shall examine relevant aspects of the 1912 version of Russell’s multiple relation theory of judgment. Russell first adumbrates, but does not endorse, the multiple relation theory of judgment in the 1906 essay ONT. Sometime between 1906 and 1909, however, he comes to adopt the theory. Thus in PM the multiple relation theory is explicitly advocated (see PM, i. 43–46). In the period from 1910 through 1913, Russell produces three increasingly sophisticated versions of the multiple relation theory. According to each of these versions, the theory consists of

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11 And similarly we can only say that a given term is less than some other term when that term fills the first argument place of the less than relation.

12 It is perhaps worth adding that this theory does not seem to fit with the logic of PM, which makes free use of the notions of proposition and propositional function, and presupposes that we can quantify over such entities.
two separate though intimately related parts. The *first* part of the theory consists in giving the analysis of judgments—of determining what entities they are really about, as opposed to what they appear to be about, and of saying what their real form is, as opposed to their apparent form. The *second* part of the theory consists in giving the analysis of truth and falsehood—of characterizing the correspondence of judgments (as analyzed by the first part of the theory) with facts that inflicts truth on some of them. I shall consider the two parts of the multiple relation theory in turn, focusing in each case on the formulation which it receives in the 1912 version of the theory. Then I shall turn to a nexus of issues having to do with Russell’s account of (the identity-criteria for) judgments that assert non-symmetrical relations.

I begin then with the 1912 theory’s analysis of judgment. In explaining this analysis, it is instructive to contrast it with Russell’s old view of judgment. Recall that according to his old view, judgment is a binary relation that relates a mind to a single mind-independent proposition. So for Cassius to judge that Brutus killed Caesar is for the two-place relation of judging to relate Cassius’ mind to the proposition that Brutus killed Caesar, a complex in which the relation of killing unites the actual man Brutus to the actual man Caesar. In contrast to this old view, the multiple relation theory takes judging to be a many-place relation that holds among a mind and a *multiplicity* of non-propositional entities with which the mind is acquainted. What are these entities? According to the theory, they are precisely those entities which, according to the earlier view, are the constituents of the proposition being judged [see *PM*, i. 43–44]. Thus when Cassius judges that Brutus killed Caesar, a four-place relation of judging relates Cassius’ mind, Brutus, the relation of killing, and Caesar, respectively. Here two elements of a single issue discussed in the previous chapter are relevant: namely that according to Russell’s post-1910 metaphysics all complexity is the complexity of facts, and that the complexity of facts is the complexity of relations and relata. Thus for Russell a relation’s holding among a group of objects is to be understood in terms of the notion of a *fact* [see *Problems*, 92]. So given that judging is a multiple relation, it follows that our acts of judgment are themselves facts [see *Problems*, 91–92; cf. *KAKD*, 154]. I shall sometimes call these facts “judgment-facts” so as to distinguish them from ordinary facts, i.e. facts formed by non-cognitive relations. Cassius’ judgment that Brutus killed Caesar is thus a judgment-fact that consists of a four-place judging relation holding among Cassius’ mind, Brutus, the relation of killing, and Caesar, respectively. On the basis of this analysis, Russell regiments the colloquial English sentence “Cassius judges that Brutus killed Caesar” as “Judges (Cassius, Brutus, Killing, Caesar)”.

The second part of the multiple relation theory, to which I now turn, concerns the analysis of truth and falsehood. Here again the contrast with Russell’s old view of these notions is instructive.
According to his old view, let us remember, truth and falsehood are indefinably simple, mutually exclusive properties of propositions: every proposition has one of these properties but none has both (see ONT, 48). The truth-value of a judgment, according to the old view, is determined by (or is parasitic on) the truth-value of the proposition being judged: a person’s judgment is true (or false) if the proposition which he judges is true (or false). In opposition to the old view, the multiple relation theory seeks to analyze the notions of truth and falsehood. It attempts, indeed, to define these notions in terms of the more fundamental idea of a fact. The theory thus takes truth and falsehood to be properties of judgments (and derivatively of sentences), defining them in terms of the correspondence of judgments with facts. Thus Cassius’ judgment that Brutus killed Caesar is true, for there exists a corresponding fact, Brutus’ killing Caesar. Russell conceives of this fact as he earlier thought of propositions, as a complex in which the relation of killing unites Brutus to Caesar. Truth thus consists in the existence of a fact corresponding to a judgment-fact. The absence of a corresponding fact falsifies Cassius’ judgment that Caesar killed Brutus.

The multiple relation theory must capture the difference between Cassius’ judgment that Brutus killed Caesar and Cassius’ judgment that Caesar killed Brutus. These two judgments have precisely the same constituents: a certain four-place judging relation, Cassius’ mind, the actual men Brutus and Caesar, and the relation of killing. Yet they are clearly distinct judgments: the former is true and the latter is false. According to Russell’s old view, the difference between these two judgments consists in the fact that they express the same attitude towards different propositions. According to his new view, however, judgment is a relation among the judging mind and the separate constituents of the judged proposition (to speak loosely), so no complex whole composed of these objective elements actually enters into the judgment itself. The question thus arises: in cases where distinct judgments have the same objects, how does the 1912 multiple relation theory distinguish between them?

On its face, the problem in question appears to be simply a special case of the more general problem that we considered in the last section: namely that of distinguishing between distinct relational propositions containing the same constituents. To a certain extent, this appearance is correct. (We shall enter a partial qualification of this point shortly.) Russell’s solution to the present problem thus proceeds along similar lines to his solution to the earlier problem. That is, he once again appeals to his doctrine that relations have sense. But before we see how the notion of relational sense functions in the 1912 multiple relation theory, let us briefly consider the role which this notion plays in the 1910 version of the theory.

The 1910 multiple relation theory is put forward in ONTF. In this essay Russell explains the difference between the two judgments in question as follows:
We may now attempt an exact account of the “correspondence” which constitutes truth. Let us take the judgment “A loves B”. This consists of a relation of the person judging to A and love and B, i.e. to the two terms A and B and the relation “love”. But the judgment is not the same as the judgment “B loves A”; thus the relation must not be abstractly before the mind, but must be before it as proceeding from A to B rather than from B to A. The “corresponding” complex object which is required to make our judgment true consists of A related to B by the relation which was before us in our judgment. We may distinguish two “senses” of a relation according as it goes from A to B or from B to A. Then the relation as it enters into the judgment must have a “sense”, and in the corresponding complex it must have the same “sense”. Thus 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. ([ONTF, 123–24])

According to the 1910 theory, then, Cassius’ judgment that Brutus killed Caesar differs from his judgment that Caesar killed Brutus, because in the former judgment the relation of killing is before Cassius’ mind as proceeding from Brutus to Caesar, whereas in the latter judgment it is before his mind as proceeding from Caesar to Brutus. Cassius’ judgment that Brutus killed Caesar is true, according to this theory, because there is a corresponding fact in which the killing relation proceeds from Brutus to Caesar. Cassius’ judgment that Caesar killed Brutus is false, on the other hand, because there is no corresponding fact in which the killing relation proceeds from Caesar to Brutus.

There are various objections to this account of the difference between Cassius’ two judgments. But the one which seems to have most weighed with Russell is that the account is tantamount to treating the judgment that Brutus killed Caesar as a relation of the judging mind to a single complex unity formed of the objects Brutus, Caesar, and killing. According to the 1910 theory, for Brutus to kill Caesar is for Brutus, Caesar, and the relation of killing to unite into a fact in which the relation of killing proceeds from Brutus to Caesar. So if the relation of killing enters into the judgment that Brutus killed Caesar, not as a term, but rather as proceeding from Brutus to Caesar, then it is hard to see how the judgment itself does not involve a fact as its object. Yet the chief claim of the multiple relation theory is that “judgment is not a dual relation of the mind to a single Objective [i.e. proposition], but a multiple relation of the mind to the various other terms with which the judgment is concerned” ([ONTF, 122]). Thus the 1910 multiple relation theory’s account of the nature of the distinction between the judgment that Brutus killed Caesar and the judgment that Caesar killed Brutus appears to undermine the central idea of the theory itself. This objection is pointed out by G. F. Stout, who says that the version of the multiple relation theory which appears in ONTF “seems fatal to the view that nothing single is before the mind in judgment except the complex formed by the judging mind itself and the manifold of objects to which it is related”.

13 Stout, “The Object of Thought and Real Being”, 203.
Stout communicated this objection to Russell in writing. In his reply, Russell acknowledges the objection as serious but explains that the issue which Stout raises has already occurred to him, and that he has modified the multiple relation theory in order to address it:

As regards the sense of the relation \( r \) in judging \( A \ r \ B \), you make a point which had already occurred to me. But it is met by a slight rewording of the account of sense in judgment, and this rewording is in any case necessary to my theory. There must never, so I now perceive, be any relation having sense in a complex except the relating relation of that complex; hence, in the act of judging \( A \ r \ B \), the sense must be confined to judging, and must not appear in the \( r \). But judging being a multiple relation, its sense is not merely twofold like that of a dual relation, and the judging alone may arrange the terms in the order Mind, \( A \), \( r \), \( B \), as opposed to Mind, \( B \), \( r \), \( A \). This has the same effect as if \( r \) had a sense in the judgment, and gives all that one wants without being obnoxious to your objections.

In Problems Russell expresses the same basic view of judgment as follows:

It will be observed that the relation of judging has what is called a “sense” or “direction”. We may say, metaphorically, that it puts its objects in a certain order, which we may indicate by means of the order of the words in the sentence. … Othello’s judgment that Cassio loves Desdemona differs from his judgment that Desdemona loves Cassio, in spite of the fact that it consists of the same constituents, because the relation of judging places the constituents in a different order in the two cases. Similarly, if Cassio judges that Desdemona loves Othello, the constituents of the judgment are still the same, but their order is different. This property of having a “sense” or “direction” is one which the relation of judging shares with all other relations. The “sense” of relations is the ultimate source of order and series and a host of mathematical concepts. (Problems, 91–92)

According to the 1912 multiple relation theory, then, Cassius’ judgment that Brutus killed Caesar differs from his judgment that Caesar killed Brutus, even though it contains precisely the same constituents, because the judging relation imposes a different order upon the objects in the two judgments. Russell holds that the order in which a relation puts its relata when it combines them into a given fact fixes the manner of their arrangement in that fact. In any given fact, each of the constituents occupies a determinate position. For Russell, a constituent’s position in a fact is determined by the ordered argument place which it occupies of the fact’s relating relation. Thus in order to fix a fact’s identity, we must exhaustively enumerate its constituents, and we must specify for each of these entities the argument place(s) of the relating relation which it occupies. Now since judgments are themselves facts, it follows that their identities must be fixed along these lines too. Russell thus takes an object’s position in a judgment to be a function of the ordered argument place that the object occupies of the judgment’s relating relation. According to him, then, the difference between Cassius’ judgment that Brutus killed Caesar and Cassius’ judgment that Caesar killed Brutus just is the difference between the judgment-facts expressed by the two sentences, “Judges (Cassius, Brutus, Killing, Caesar)” and “Judges (Cassius, Caesar, Killing, Brutus)”. The difference between these two judgment-facts is that

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14 See Stout, “The Object of Thought and Real Being”, 203.
15 Stout, “The Object of Thought and Real Being”, 203.
in the former complex Brutus occupies the second argument place of the judging relation and Caesar occupies the fourth, whereas in the latter complex Brutus and Caesar are permuted.\textsuperscript{16}

Do the considerations adduced thus far suffice to solve the problem with which we began? The answer is, I think, that ultimately they do not. For one thing, the argument set forth in the previous paragraph contains a lacuna. It is suggested there that Russell takes the ontological difference between Cassius’ two judgments to consist in the fact that two objects of the same logical type are permuted in them. But this characterization of the distinction between these two judgment-facts does not itself suffice to resolve the question of which fact should be identified with which act of judgment. I indicated that Russell identifies the judgment-fact expressed by the sentence “Judges (Cassius, Brutus, Killing, Caesar)” with Cassius’ judgment that Brutus killed Caesar on the one hand, and that he identifies the judgment-fact expressed by the sentence “Judges (Cassius, Caesar, Killing, Brutus)” with Cassius’ judgment that Caesar killed Brutus on the other. But on its own the fact that Brutus and Caesar are interchanged in Cassius’ two judgments in the way that Russell’s analysis alleges does not imply that the former fact is the former judgment or that the latter fact is the latter judgment. Indeed the supposition that these two individuals are so interchanged is equally compatible with the view that the first fact is really the second judgment, and that the second fact is really the first judgment. Hence some further considerations are necessary in this case in order to license Russell’s particular correlation of analyzed judgment-facts with unanalyzed acts of judgment.

Ultimately, the identification of a judgment-fact with the act of judgment from which it arises cannot be merely a matter of definition, since if it were, then for each pair of distinct judgments involving the same two individuals and non-symmetrical binary relation, the question of which fact should be identified with which act of judgment would simply arise anew. In that case, however, no progress towards a theory of judgment, in the sense of a systematic account of the fundamental nature of that notion, would have been made. What Russell requires, then, is a general method for associating analyzed (sentences expressing) judgment-facts with the unanalyzed acts of judgment from which they arise. At this point, the second part of the multiple relation theory comes to play the crucial role. In order to justify his particular correlation of judgment-facts with acts of judgment, Russell must appeal not only to his analysis of judgment but also to his analysis of truth and falsehood. The crucial idea here is that Russell’s view of truth as agreement with (or correspondence to) reality makes the notion of the content of a judgment dependent upon both the judgment’s ontological constitution (i.e. the

\textsuperscript{16} See Ricketts, “Pictures”, 66.
identities of its constituents and the manner of their arrangement) and its relationship to the reality that makes it true or makes it false, as the case may be.

What a judgment is in itself is simply a certain combination of elements. For the purposes of explicating Russell’s view, however, it is useful to make a distinction (though one which is perhaps artificial to his explicit thought) between what a judgment \textit{is}—a certain combination of elements—and what it \textit{says}, or its \textit{content}. Thus, to take an example, Aristotle’s judgment that Socrates is mortal \textit{is} a certain complex in which a three-place relation of judging relates Aristotle’s mind, the actual man Socrates, and the property of mortality. But this judgment \textit{says} that Socrates is mortal. According to Russell’s direct realism, for a judgment-fact to \textit{say} that Socrates is mortal, it must \textit{contain} Socrates and mortality as constituents. Yet a judgment-fact’s containing these two objects does not suffice for its saying that Socrates is mortal. Most obviously, this would not distinguish the judgment from the nonsensical assertion that mortality is Socrates, which presumably also contains Socrates and mortality as constituents. On Russell’s approach, then, what the content of a given judgment (i.e. a given combination of elements) \textit{is} will depend upon more than just the identities of the objects to which the judging relation relates the judger and the way in which the judging relation arranges those objects within the judgment. What the content of a given judgment \textit{is} will also depend upon the nature of that judgment’s relationship to its \{would-be\} corresponding fact.

There is a sense in which the identity of the fact corresponding to a judgment (so that the judgment is true if there is such a fact, false if not) is constitutive of the judgment’s content. Clearly, for a given judgment to be the judgment that Socrates is mortal is (at least in part) for the truth of that judgment to depend upon whether the actual man Socrates has the property of mortality. According to Russell’s post-1910 metaphysics, Socrates’ having the property of mortality simply \textit{is} the fact that Socrates is mortal. Hence for a given judgment to be the judgment that Socrates is mortal, its truth must depend upon whether there is such a fact as Socrates’ being mortal. The judgment that Socrates is mortal may thus be thought of as that particular judgment which would be rendered true by the obtaining of the fact that Socrates is mortal and false by its failing to obtain. In this precise sense, then, the identity of a judgment’s corresponding fact is constitutive of the judgment’s content.

In Russell’s post-1910 metaphysics, our judgments (beliefs, assertions, etc.) are the only facts to which the dualism of truth and falsehood applies (see \textit{PLA}, 200). So it might be thought that the idea that the identity of the fact corresponding to a judgment is somehow constitutive of the content of the judgment opens up further problems in the case of false judgments. If a judgment is false, there is no fact corresponding to it; so how can the identity of a false judgment’s corresponding fact be
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As already noted, we cannot simply identify the content of a given judgment with the combination of objects which is that judgment. But in the light of the existence of false judgments, we cannot identify the judgment's content with its corresponding fact, either.

A false judgment, unlike a true judgment, does not have a corresponding fact. But it does, like a true judgment, have truth-conditions. That is: there is a fact that describes the circumstance which must obtain in order for the judgment to be true. So rather than saying that the identity of the corresponding fact is constitutive of the judgment's content, let us say that the judgment's truth-conditions are partially constitutive of its content. According to this line of thought, then, the content of a given judgment will be specified by its truth-conditions together with the identities of its constituents and its logical form.

To recapitulate: Russell's multiple relation theory of judgment consists of two parts: the analysis of judgment and the characterization of the correspondence of judgments so analyzed with facts that makes some judgments true. According to the interpretation that I am proposing, both parts of the theory are crucial to the process of determining what a given judgment says, i.e. what its content is. The analysis of judgment furnishes us with the objects of the judgment and with the manner of their arrangement in the judgment. In doing so, the analysis identifies the particular configuration of entities in which the judgment itself consists. The characterization of the correspondence that constitutes truth explains the judgment's [would-be] corresponding fact as a definable function of the analyzed judgment, i.e. as a function of its constituents and their arrangement. Russell insists that the nature of this function must be evident from the analysis of the judgment, that we should be able to read off from that analysis what the world must be like in order for the judgment to be true. His task then is to define the correspondence that constitutes truth.

According to the 1912 multiple relation theory, the judgment and the corresponding fact [if there is one] have precisely the same objects. In judging the mind unites these objects in thought; in the

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17 We cannot invoke the notion of logical possibility here to explain the idea of a fact that does not actually obtain since the judgment is false but would have obtained if the judgment were true, for Russell is unwilling to take the notion of possibility as basic (see TK, 27, 111, 152). There are no merely possible facts in his theory of facts. That is, there are no facts about possible combinations of items and no merely possible but non-actual facts in his post-1910 metaphysics.

18 Since the fact which expresses the judgment's truth-conditions is a conditional whose antecedent definitely describes the judgment's corresponding fact, it follows that the existence of that corresponding fact is not essential for the existence of the fact that establishes the truth-conditions for the judgment.

19 This point cannot be taken for granted. As we shall see in the next chapter, this feature of the multiple relation theory changes in TK. According to the version of the theory put forward in that work, the logical form of the corresponding fact is to be included among the objects of the judgment but not among the constituents of the fact.
fact they are united in reality. So one might be tempted to define the correspondence in this way: a judgment is true just in case there is a fact whose constituents are all and only the judgment’s objects. In *PM* Russell takes precisely this approach:

When a judgment occurs, there is a certain complex entity, composed of the mind and the various objects of the judgment. When the judgment is *true*, in the case of the kind of judgments we have been considering, there is a corresponding complex of the *objects* of the judgment alone. Falsehood, in regard to our present class of judgments, consists in the absence of a corresponding complex composed of the objects alone. (*PM*, i. 44)

While this approach works well for subject-predicate judgments, and for judgments asserting symmetrical relations, it does not seem to work at all for judgments asserting non-symmetrical relations. In the case of a subject-predicate judgment, as in the case of a judgment asserting a symmetrical relation, exactly one fact can be formed of the objects of the judgment. So the existence of a fact whose only constituents are those objects gives the condition for the judgment’s truth. In the case of a judgment asserting a non-symmetrical relation, however, there are always two facts that can be formed of the objects of the judgment, and only one of these two facts would make the judgment true.\(^\text{20}\) So, in this case, the assertion that there is some fact whose constituents are all and only the judgment’s objects does not suffice to define the correspondence that constitutes the judgment’s truth.

The central problem with this approach is that it leaves out the way in which the objects are to be combined. The analysis of a judgment should convey information, not only about the identities of the constituents of the judgment’s would-be corresponding fact, but also about how those objects are to be combined in that fact (if there is one). This is the requirement that we should be able to read off from the analysis what the world must be like in order for the judgment to be true.

According to Russell’s view, then, the way in which the objects are combined in a judgment should indicate, in a perspicuous and systematic fashion, the way in which they are combined in the corresponding fact (if there is one). But clearly the way in which the objects are combined in the judgment should be *distinct* from the way in which they are combined in the fact. By bringing the objects into relation with one another, the judgment must not actually combine them into the corresponding fact, since if it were to do this, then *ipso facto* it would be true. So by bringing the objects into relation with one another, the judgment should indicate precisely how these objects are actually combined in the corresponding fact (if there is one) without simply bringing it about that they are so combined. Let us express this requirement by saying that the judgment should combine the objects so as to *represent* them as combined in the same way that they are actually combined in the

\(^{20}\) Indeed the other fact might entail the fact that would make the judgment *false*. 
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fact. So, on this view, distinct judgments that have the same objects, but that correspond, if true, to different facts composed of those objects, should represent the objects themselves as combined in different ways. Each judgment should combine its objects so as to represent them as combined in the same way that they are actually combined in its corresponding fact (if there is one).

Russell holds that for a given judgment to be the judgment that Brutus killed Caesar is for the truth of that judgment to depend upon whether the actual man Brutus stands in the relation of killing to the actual man Caesar. And similarly he takes it that for a given judgment to be the judgment that Caesar killed Brutus, its truth must depend upon whether Caesar stands in the relation of killing to Brutus. So it would seem that in order to establish that the judgment-fact expressed by the sentence “Judges (Cassius, Brutus, Killing, Caesar)” is the complex formed when Cassius judges that Brutus killed Caesar, it is necessary to explain why Brutus’ bearing the killing relation to Caesar, not Caesar’s bearing the killing relation to Brutus, is the possibility whose obtaining would verify that judgment-fact.

According to this line of thought, then, part of what justifies Russell’s identifying the configuration of objects represented by the sentence “Judges (Cassius, Brutus, Killing, Caesar)” with Cassius’ judgment that Brutus killed Caesar, rather than with his judgment that Caesar killed Brutus, is that it is this particular configuration of objects, rather than the configuration of objects represented by the sentence “Judges (Cassius, Caesar, Killing, Brutus)”, which is rendered true by the configuration of objects which simply is the fact that Brutus killed Caesar. According to Russell’s account, the one configuration of objects must be a definable function of the other. On the basis of the judgment’s analysis, we should be able to specify the identity of the fact whose obtaining would make the judgment true.

The suggestion made above depends, of course, upon our being able to give a definition of truth for judgments involving non-symmetrical relations. This definition must exploit the structure of judgment, and in particular the fact that judging is a multiple relation. In *Problems* Russell attempts to give just such a definition by appealing to his doctrine that relations have sense. In doing so, he relies implicitly on the ordering of argument places that he regards as intrinsic to relations. I shall quote the relevant passage at some length:

When an act of believing occurs, there is a complex, in which “believing” is the uniting relation, and subject and objects are arranged in a certain order by the “sense” of the relation of believing. Among the objects, as we saw in considering “Othello believes that Desdemona loves Cassio”, one must be a relation—in this instance, the relation “loving”. But this relation, as it occurs in the act of believing, is not the relation which creates the unity of the complex whole consisting of the subject and the objects. The relation “loving”, as it occurs in the act of believing, is one of the objects—it is a brick in the structure, not the cement. The cement is the relation

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21 The force of the idea of representation here is that the judgment should combine the objects so as to make it appear as if they were combined in the corresponding fact without so combining them. To combine the objects so as to represent them as combined in the right way must be distinct from actually combining them in that way.

22 See Ricketts, “Pictures”, 66.
“believing”. When the belief is true, there is another complex unity, in which the relation which was one of the objects of the belief relates the other objects. Thus, e.g., if Othello believes truly that Desdemona loves Cassio, then there is a complex unity, “Desdemona’s love for Cassio”, which is composed exclusively of the objects of the belief, in the same order as they had in the belief, with the relation which was one of the objects occurring now as the cement that binds together the other objects of the belief. On the other hand, when a belief is false, there is no such complex unity composed only of the objects of the belief. If Othello believes falsely that Desdemona loves Cassio, then there is no such complex unity as “Desdemona’s love for Cassio”. (Problems, 92–93)

For Russell, then, what makes the difference between the judgment-facts expressed by the two sentences, “Judges (Cassius, Brutus, Killing, Caesar)” and “Judges (Cassius, Caesar, Killing, Brutus)”, the difference between Cassius’ judging that Brutus killed Caesar and his judging that Caesar killed Brutus [that is, what makes the former fact the former judgment and the latter fact the latter judgment, rather than vice versa] must be the exploitation of the intrinsic ordering of argument places in relations to characterize the correspondence that makes a judgment true. 23 According to the 1912 theory, a judgment-fact formed by the four-place judging relation Judges (x, y, R, z) is true, if the two-place relation occupying the judging relation’s third (or R) argument place relates the individual occupying its second (or y) argument place to the individual occupying its fourth (or z) argument place. That is, there is a fact in which the individual occupying the second argument place of the judging relation occupies the first argument place of the two-place relation occupying its third argument place, and the individual occupying its fourth argument place occupies that two-place relation’s second argument place. Thus Cassius’ judgment that Brutus killed Caesar is true, for there exists a corresponding fact, Brutus’ killing Caesar, in which Brutus occupies the first argument place of the killing relation and Caesar occupies the second. Cassius’ judgment that Caesar killed Brutus is false, on the other hand, because there is no fact in the world in which Caesar occupies the killing relation’s first argument place and Brutus occupies its second.

On the 1912 version of the multiple relation analysis, then, a judgment represents its objects as combined in the same way that they are actually combined in the corresponding fact [if there is one] not by so combining them but rather by placing them in the same relative order as they have in the fact. (It should be noted that all three objects have the same relative order, the subordinate relation is quite literally between its relata in both facts; see Principles, 210–11.) The objects’ occurring in the judgment in the same relative order as they occur in its would-be corresponding fact is what enables the judgment to say [though perhaps falsely] that the objects combine to form that [putative] fact. According to Russell’s view, the unity of the objects in the judgment is distinct from their unity in the corresponding fact, even though their order is the same, because in the judgment the objects are united (along with the judging mind) by the relation of judging, and the subordinate relation occurs

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23 See Ricketts, “Pictures”, 66, on which my discussion in this paragraph draws.
non-predicatively in this context, alongside the judgment's other objects, as a term or logical subject, whereas in the corresponding fact the subordinate relation occurs predicatively, joining the other objects of the judgment into a whole.

Russell's 1912 characterization of correspondence truth for judgments involving non-symmetrical relations presupposes that there is a general distinction between the first, the second, etc., argument places of relations, for the approach specifies the corresponding fact by correlating the objects occupying the ordered argument places of the judging relation with the objects occupying the ordered argument places of the relation which forms the corresponding fact. This characterization of correspondence truth makes essential use of the analysis of judgment. In turn the analysis of judgment is informed by the characterization of the correspondence that constitutes truth. The two parts of the 1912 multiple relation theory are thus interdependent. Together they enable Russell to specify the content of a judgment.

4.3 Representing Reality and the Unity of Judgment

In the last section we examined both parts of Russell’s 1912 multiple relation theory of judgment: the analysis of judgment on the one hand, and the characterization of the correspondence that constitutes truth on the other. As our examination revealed, the interlock of these two parts fixes what a judgment says, i.e. what its content is. Together the analysis of judgment and the characterization of correspondence provide Russell’s account of representation: they explain what makes a given judgment the judgment that such and so is the case. In this section we shall come at this issue from a different angle, by seeing exactly how the multiple relation theory enables Russell to explain what is, in his view, the undeniable fact that our judgments appear to express attitudes towards propositions without his having to accept that there are any such things as propositions.

From 1900 through 1906, the notion of the proposition forms the basis for Russell’s explanation of the nature and possibility of complex discursive thought. During this period he holds that all such thought is at bottom a matter of a direct and unmediated relation between minds and propositions. The proposition here embodies the content of our thought; it is the object that the mind grasps or understands [i.e. has acquaintance with] when it makes a judgment or an assertion. Thus in 1905 Russell says:

it is obvious that desires, presentations and cognitions have objects. When I see a tree, my seeing is not the same as the tree; when I desire that you should agree with me, my desire is not the same as your agreement; when I believe that Caesar crossed the Rubicon, my belief is not the same as that event. It is the things which are or may be objects of belief that I call propositions, and it is these things to which I ascribe truth or falsehood. I should not define them as possible objects of belief, but as things having a certain particular kind of complexity; for the present, however, we may confine ourselves to objects of belief, since all these, at any rate, are propositions. Now
the actual fact of Caesar’s crossing the Rubicon is not itself in my mind: it is something which I think of, and which many other people also think of, but it is itself not a thought, nor indeed anything mental at all. It was the actual man Caesar and the actual river Rubicon which had the relation that one crossed the other; and if the Rubicon is to be an idea in my mind, I must be suffering from water on the brain. \( \text{[NT, 494]} \)

The idea that our judgments and beliefs express attitudes towards propositions serves as a starting point for Russell’s early philosophy. The basic intuition behind this idea can, I think, be expressed quite simply. The intuition is that each of our judgments and utterances has an objective, perfectly definite content that is independent of human action and absolutely, unconditionally, and timelessly either true or false. A proposition, as Russell articulates the notion, is an abstract entity possessed of precisely these features, features that, in his eyes, make it a suitable candidate for being the object of objective knowledge and of complex discursive thought.

When Russell gives up the view that there are propositions, he has to find another account of how we manage to form complex discursive thoughts. His new account is, of course, the so-called multiple relation theory of judgment. The multiple relation theory involves an explicit denial of Russell’s old notion of a proposition: according to the theory there are no propositions. In judgment the mind is related not to a proposition but rather to a number of objects, none of them proposition-like.\(^{24}\)

In spite of this fundamental change of doctrine, however, the idea that our judgments and beliefs express attitudes towards propositions continues to exert considerable influence upon Russell’s thinking about the notion of judgment. The nature of its influence is complex. For one thing, Russell now explicitly denies that judgment is in fact a two-place relation between minds and mind-independent propositions, so he naturally regards the idea that our judgments and beliefs express attitudes towards such entities as being ultimately quite misleading. Yet his insistence upon its misleading nature is complicated by the fact that he continues to think that the idea captures the way in which our judgments appear to be constituted, that it embodies their apparent form (see \( \text{PLA, 199–200} \)). This attitude is reflected in his continuing to speak, for some years after he adopts the multiple relation theory, of propositions as objects of understanding and of the constituents of propositions as the objects with which we must be acquainted in order to understand the propositions (see \( \text{KAKD, 153–55, 161}; \) cf. \( \text{Problems, 36–40} \)). This usage is to be explained, in part, as being a shorthand:

It is not accurate to say “I believe the proposition \( p \)” and regard the occurrence as a twofold relation between me and \( p \). … That is not the right way to analyze the occurrence, although that analysis is linguistically convenient, and one may keep it provided one knows that it is not the truth. \( \text{[PLA, 197]; emphasis added} \)\)

\(^{24}\) With the adoption of this view, however, Russell’s direct realism continues. The judging mind has acquaintance with exactly those objects which, according to the old view, are the constituents of the judged proposition.
Yet Russell's expository rhetoric here and elsewhere cannot be understood as mere expediency. Rather it should be seen as evincing his acknowledgment of the fact that our judgments and beliefs appear to express attitudes towards propositions:

What is the form of the fact which occurs when a person has a belief? Of course you see that the sort of obvious first notion that one would naturally arrive at would be that a belief is a relation to the proposition. “I believe the proposition $p$”. “I believe that today is Tuesday”. “I believe that two and two are four”. Something like that. It seems on the face of it as if you had there a relation of the believing subject to a proposition. ([PLA], 192)

The view of propositions as objective and non-mental is fundamental to an entire metaphysics that Russell sketches in conscious opposition to British idealism. In elaborating and espousing that metaphysics—the view which I call the theory of propositions—Russell seems to treat the notion of a proposition as if it were an obvious and straightforward one, no more than common sense ([see Leibniz], 8). This attitude is reinforced by his assumption that propositions are directly and immediately accessible to the mind. Propositions, on Russell's early view, are themselves the data for philosophy. Thus Russell, at least at certain points, is quite willing to claim that the existence of propositions is an obvious and uncontroversial fact, and that we are able to perceive propositions themselves (in some non-sensuous sense of perception). Seen in this perspective, the fact that Russell now thinks that there simply are no propositions would seem to indicate that, at the very least, there do appear to be such things. According to Russell this appearance is something which requires an explanation. From his point of view, that is to say, any satisfactory account of the notion of judgment must explain the fact that our judgments appear to express attitudes towards propositions without assuming that there are propositions. Providing this explanation, within these constraints, is the task of the multiple relation theory.

From Russell's point of view, then, the thesis that judgment is a multiple relation that relates a mind to a number of objects, none of them proposition-like, represents no mere self-evident truth. This thesis is not given immediately as soon as one thinks; nor is it ineluctably presupposed in our ordinary thought and speech. On the contrary: for Russell the multiple relation theory represents a significant philosophical discovery [one achieved only through his own painstaking analysis of the concept of judgment itself]. By Russell's lights, the discovery of this theory represents genuine philosophical progress in part because what appears to be the case is that judging is really a direct relation between minds and propositions. First and foremost, Russell thinks, is the fact that the binary relation view of judgment is immediately suggested by the surface structure of our language. Writing in 1904, for example, he says: “there is no way of describing a particular judgment except as the judgment that so-and-so, i.e., by means of its object” ([MTCA], 462).

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According to Russell, then, the binary relation view of judgment is suggested quite naturally by the superficial grammatical form of the sentences of colloquial language that we usually use to express our acts of judgment. A sentence (or judgment ascription) such as “Dolnick judges that Matt loves Julie” appears to express a fact in which the object signified by the relational predicate “judges” relates the object signified by the proper name “Dolnick” to the complex object signified by the declarative sentence “Matt loves Julie”. That is, the sentence appears to assert that I stand in a two-place judging relation to the proposition that Matt loves Julie. Part of the motivation for this analysis of judgment comes from the idea that the relation, other than judging, that figures in the judgment appears to occur as a relating relation in the judgment itself. In a true judgment, as in a false judgment, the relation which the judgment is about appears to unite the other objects with which the judgment is concerned into a subordinate whole—into a proposition. This fact about how a judgment appears to be constituted is immediately suggested by the surface structure of the sentence which expresses the judgment. Thus the fact that the word “loves” occurs as a grammatical predicate (or verb in the linguistic sense) in the sentence “Matt loves Julie” indicates that the relation for which it stands occurs as a relating relation (or verb in the nonlinguistic sense) in the proposition expressed by this sentence. Just as the relational predicate “loves” joins the proper name “Matt” to the proper name “Julie” to form the sentence “Matt loves Julie”, so too the relation of loving joins the actual man Matt to the actual woman Julie to form the proposition that Matt loves Julie. We thus have a good reason to take the sentence “Matt loves Julie” as a unit to express the object of my judgment. The fact that “loves” plays the predicate role [i.e. functions as a linguistic verb rather than as a verbal noun] in the sentence “Matt loves Julie” and occurs within the scope of the phrase “Dolnick judges that …” in the judgment ascription “Dolnick judges that Matt loves Julie” is consonant with the idea that in the reality expressed by this sentence I judge that the relation of loving actually relates Matt to Julie. Thus in the unanalyzed sentence that expresses my act of judgment, each sub-sentential expression plays a grammatical role that mirrors the ontological role which its referent plays (or at least is judged to play) in the corresponding proposition. Thus the binary relation view, it seems, accords well with the surface structure of colloquial language.

With his discovery of the theory of descriptions in 1905, Russell begins to develop a conception of philosophical analysis according to which the logical form of the sentences involved is crucial. Analysis, on this conception, will typically lead to a sentence of a quite different logical form from that with which we began, and the chief task of analysis is that of finding the underlying logical form of the proposition, a logical form which may be masked by the sentence expressing the proposition.\(^\text{26}\)

The idea that the superficial grammatical form of a sentence of ordinary language is generally an unreliable guide to the genuine logical form of the underlying reality is thus a commonplace of Russell’s philosophy from 1905 on. The multiple relation theory simply extends this paradigm of analysis to the sentences that we use to express our acts of judgment.

The multiple relation theory is a concomitant of a new metaphysics according to which the notion of a fact is fundamental. Russell’s new view treats our acts of judgment as a special case of facts. The job of the multiple relation theory is to find the distinguishing characteristics of those facts which are the making of judgments. In part this task consists in an endeavor to discover the real logical form of such facts: “The problem of the nature of judgment or belief may be taken as an example of a problem whose solution depends upon an adequate inventory of logical forms” \textit{[OKEW, 67]}. Russell’s multiple relation analysis of judgment engenders a schism between the underlying logical form of the fact which is the act of judgment on the one hand, and the superficial grammatical form of the sentence of colloquial language that is usually used to express the act on the other. According to the surface structure of the sentence, the judgment consists in the mind’s apprehension of a single proposition. But according to the fully analyzed version of the sentence, the judgment consists of a many-place relation of judging holding among the mind and the various objects about which it judges. The contrast that the analysis brings between the grammatical form of the sentence which is to be analyzed and the logical form of the underlying fact goes along with Russell’s insistence that symbols which appear to represent propositions are really incomplete symbols \textit{[PM, i. 44, i. 48; cf. TK, 109]}. What Russell means by an incomplete symbol is, he says, “a symbol which is not supposed to have any meaning in isolation, but is only defined in certain contexts” \textit{[PM, i. 66]}. The unanalyzed sentence which expresses the act of judgment contains a phrase which appears to represent a proposition. But Russell’s analysis of the sentence shows that in the judgment-fact which is the act of judgment there is no proposition for which the phrase stands. The judgment-fact expressed by the sentence “Dolnick judges that Matt loves Julie” does not contain the proposition that Matt loves Julie. There is no entity in that judgment for which the sentence “Matt loves Julie” stands. This is what Russell means by saying that expressions which appear to refer to propositions have no meaning in isolation \textit{[PM, i. 44; cf. ONTF, 119]}. Sentences in which these expressions occur, however, often succeed in expressing facts: the sentences as wholes \textit{are} meaningful. Most obviously the phrase which appears to express a proposition has meaning in a context when we assert it, or suppose it, or deny it, etc. \textit{[see ONTF, 119]}. Thus the judgment ascription “Dolnick judges that Matt loves Julie” as a single unit is meaningful, even though the sentence “Matt loves Julie” does not signify a proposition. This is what Russell means by saying that phrases that appear to express propositions, like other incomplete symbols, are
“defined in certain contexts”. An incomplete symbol makes a systematic contribution to a sentence in which it occurs, only it does not do so by indicating an entity which is contained in the fact which the sentence expresses.

The multiple relation theory of judgment is intended to achieve the same effect as the old view without assuming that there are propositions. Russell contends that our judgments appear to express attitudes towards propositions, i.e. to contain these entities as genuine constituents. He claims, indeed, that when we make a judgment the various objects about which we judge appear to occur in our judgment as united into a single proposition [in the old, objective sense]. According to his new view, however, this appearance is merely an appearance, for there are no such things as propositions [at least in the sense in which he earlier advocated them]. Yet this is not an obvious fact but rather a truth unearthed only through the effort of analysis. The job of the multiple relation theory is to explain this appearance without positing propositions. On its analysis all apparent references to propositions have to be understood as being in fact references to mental acts of judgment or of understanding.

The ontological significance of this analysis is twofold. First, by treating the expressions which appear to refer to propositions as incomplete symbols, defining them in those contexts where it requires them, the multiple relation theory explains how sentences which contain these expressions can be meaningful, and even true, without supposing that the expressions in fact refer to anything. In this case, analysis is elimination. The use of the technique of contextual definition to eliminate propositions contributes to a second ontologically significant aspect of the multiple relation theory, which is that propositions themselves are treated as logical constructions. For Russell, part of the process of constructing propositions consists in identifying and explaining those features of judgment-facts that are responsible for creating the appearance [or illusion] that our acts of judgment express attitudes towards propositions. By singling out the relevant features of judgment-facts, the multiple relation theory seeks to simulate the theory of propositions.

The primary function of the multiple relation theory of judgment is to explain how, in the absence of Russellian propositions, so-called propositional [i.e. complex discursive] thought is possible. In performing this function, the theory makes essential use of the notions of representation and of uniting objects in thought. According to the multiple relation theory, in any judgment the objects and the judger are related by the relation of judging; it is this relation that unites these various entities into a whole—into a judgment-fact. For Russell, then, the facts formed by judging relations subsist on an
ontological par with the facts formed by non-cognitive relations: in a judgment-fact, as in an ordinary fact, the constituents are combined in reality (see Problems, 91–92). According to Russell’s old view of judgment, when I make a judgment the objects about which I judge enter into my judgment as already combined in reality into an independent unity—into a proposition. According to his new view, however, the objects about which I judge all occur severally in my judgment, as the separate relata of the judging relation (see Problems, 90). If my judgment is true, then the objects of my judgment are combined in reality (albeit, independently of, and externally to, my judgment), for they unite to form the corresponding fact. If my judgment is false, however, then there is no such unity formed of the objects of my judgment alone. In a sense, then, when I judge what I judge is that the objects of my judgment are combined in reality. So by bringing the judging mind into relation with the objects, the act of judgment enables the mind to judge—i.e. to form the discursive thought—that the objects are united in reality. In true and false judgments alike, the judging mind judges that the objects form an independent unity. Russell expresses this point by saying that in judgment the mind which judges unites the objects of the judgment in thought (see TK, 116; cf. OKEW, 68). So by bringing the mind into relation with the objects, the judgment enables the mind to unite the objects in thought. Clearly, however, when the judging mind brings a group of objects together to form a judgment, it does not unite these objects in reality, thus creating the corresponding fact. Indeed the avoidance of idealism requires that uniting objects in thought be distinct from uniting them in reality. So when I bring the objects Matt, Julie, and loving together to form the judgment that Matt loves Julie, I do not make Matt love Julie. In judging I unite these objects in thought only. Nevertheless, Russell insists that our judgments appear to express attitudes towards propositions in the old, objective sense, and thus that the several objects of a judgment appear to occur in the judgment itself as united into a single proposition. He thus concludes that when the act of judgment brings the judging mind into relation with the objects to produce the fact which is the judgment, that judgment-fact creates the appearance (or illusion) that the objects are united into an objective subordinate whole. The judgment-fact does not actually unite the objects into such a whole. Rather it merely represents them as so united. In a true judgment, as in a false judgment, the mind which judges unites the objects of the judgment in thought so as to represent them as united in reality into an objective complex whole. Thus we are led to posit propositions—objective, non-mental and nonlinguistic, abstract entities, capable of truth or falsehood, which paradigmatically contain the things that they are about—as the objective correlates of our psychological acts of judgment.

How, in forming a judgment, does the judging mind manage to unite the objects themselves in thought so that its judgment represents those objects as united into a proposition in the old, objective
sense? In *Problems* Russell takes a threefold approach in essaying an answer to this question, for he appeals to the combinatorial nature of the judging relation that forms the judgment, to the positions that the judging relation’s relata occupy in the fact which is the judgment, and to the positions that these entities occupy in the fact (if any) which corresponds to the judgment.

To fix our ideas, let us consider the judging relation at issue when I judge that Matt loves Julie. Russell’s 1912 multiple relation analysis identifies my judgment that Matt loves Julie with the fact expressed by the sentence “Judges [Dolnick, Matt, Loving, Julie]”. So we can use the four-place predicate “Judges (x̂, ỹ, ṕ, ẑ)” to represent my judgment’s four-place relating relation. 29 Russell implicitly assumes that the argument places of this judging relation have an intrinsic order, and that their order is reflected by the order of the variables in the predicate in question. Accordingly, he holds that in the predicate “Judges (x̂, ỹ, ṕ, ẑ)”, the letters “x”, “y”, “ṕ”, and “z” signify the judging relation’s first, second, third, and fourth argument places, respectively.

Russell maintains that in any given judging relation each individual argument place corresponds to a certain complex property that, in effect, constitutes the role which the objects that occupy the argument place play in the judgments involving the relation [see Section 4.1, p. 68, above, where this issue is discussed in connection with Russell’s views about the nature of binary relations]. To put essentially the same point a different way: for Russell the particular assertion that a judgment-fact makes about a given constituent is in part a function of the argument place which that constituent occupies of the judging relation that forms the judgment-fact. Thus, in a judgment-fact formed by the judging relation Judges (x̂, ỹ, ṕ, ẑ), for example, the first (or x̂) argument place of the relation will be occupied by the mind of the person who makes the judgment. The judging relation’s second (or ỹ) argument place will be occupied by the object which that mind judges to be related by a certain relation to another object. The judging relation’s third (or ṕ) argument place will be occupied by the relation which the mind in question judges to relate two objects. And the judging relation’s fourth (or ẑ) argument place will be occupied by the object to which the mind judges that some object is related. 30

So for each argument place of the judging relation in question we can, by existentially quantifying its three remaining argument places, form a complex property that applies to objects that are type-theoretically capable of occupying that argument place. The crucial point about the property that this procedure produces is that the property encapsulates the particular role that the objects of which it holds play in the judgment-facts in which they occupy the corresponding position. The property

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29 The particular relation of judging here is of course the same as that which forms Cassius’ two judgments.

30 From Russell’s point of view, this is what makes the sentence “Judges [Dolnick, Matt, Loving, Julie]” an appropriate paraphrase of the unanalyzed judgment ascription “Dolnick judges that Matt loves Julie”.
Russell’s 1912 Multiple Relation Theory of Judgment

signified by the unary predicate “(∃y) (∃z) (∃R) Judges (x, y, R, z)” is thus the property of judging that something has some relation to something. The property signified by “(∃x) (∃z) (∃R) Judges (x, y, R, z)” is the property of being judged to have some relation to something. The property signified by “(∃x) (∃y) (∃z) Judges (x, y, R, z)” is the property of being judged to relate something to something. And finally the property signified by “(∃x) (∃y) (∃R) Judges (x, y, R, z)” is the property of being judged to be that to which something has some relation.

In part what makes each property here the relevant property is simply the way that, in the given judgment, the judging relation at issue actually relates the object that happens to occupy the corresponding argument place to the other objects of that judgment. The judging relation must relate the object so as to represent it as occurring in the same way that it is said (or judged) to occur in the (putative) proposition towards which the judgment appears to express an attitude. In virtue of the way in which the judging relation actually relates the objects of the judgment to one another, the judgment-fact which it thereby produces manages to represent those objects as united into a proposition in the old, objective sense.

Connected with the issue of the representational capacities of judgment-facts is the issue of the nature and status of the subordinate relation in such facts. The subordinate relation, let us remember, is the constituent of the judgment-fact which forms the corresponding fact (if there is one). So on the old view what the new view calls the subordinate relation is simply the relating relation of the proposition towards which the judgment expresses an attitude. After Russell adopts the new view, he speaks of this relation as the subordinate relation in order to emphasize the idea that it must occur non-predicatively in the judgment, as a term or logical subject. In the context of the judgment itself, the subordinate relation does not actually relate the other objects of the judgment (since its doing so would immediately give rise to the corresponding fact, or in the case of false judgments would require the posit of false propositions as genuine mind-independent entities). In spite of this fact, however, the judgment must represent the subordinate relation as occurring predicatively, since that is precisely how this relation appears to occur in the (putative) proposition whose existence is asserted by the judgment, and thus how it actually occurs in the fact that obtains if the judgment is true. According to the old account, when I judge that Matt loves Julie, I am directly and immediately related to the proposition that Matt loves Julie. In this proposition, the relation of loving occurs as a relating relation: a predicative occurrence of loving joins Matt to Julie to constitute the proposition as a unity. According to the new account, however, judgment is a multiple relation “in which the mind and the various objects concerned all occur severally” (Problems, 90). So when I judge that Matt loves Julie, the relation of judging knits together into one complex whole the four terms my mind, Matt, Julie, and
loves (see Problems, 91; cf. ONTF, 120–21). In the context of my judgment, then, the relation of loving occurs non-predicatively, as a term or logical subject, and thus on a level with Matt and with Julie. As Russell says: “The relation ‘loving’, as it occurs in the act of believing, is one of the objects—it is a brick in the structure, not the cement” (Problems, 92). When my act of judgment brings my mind and the objects Matt, Julie, and loving into relation with each other, it combines these objects so as to create the appearance that they form an independent proposition. My judgment thus combines them so as to represent them as combined into the (putative) proposition that Matt loves Julie. It follows immediately that my judgment represents the objects as occurring in the same way that they are said to occur in that proposition. In particular, it represents the actual man Matt as occurring as the referent of the loving relation, the actual woman Julie as occurring as the loving relation’s relatum, and thus the loving relation itself as actually relating Matt to Julie.

There are thus crucial distinctions among the various objects of a judgment that are relevant to the judgment’s capacity to express a discursive thought about those objects. The analysis of judgment must capture these distinctions; it must show that they are present, in some decisive way, in the act of judging. Mostly obviously the analysis of judgment must capture the distinction between relations, which combine or unify objects, and (other) objects which lack this capacity. The multiple relation theory cannot easily capture this distinction, however, for on its analysis the various objects of a judgment all occur in precisely the same way in the judgment itself. They occur as terms of the judging relation, and as logical subjects of the judgment-complex. On its face, of course, this fact conflicts with the apparent unity of what is judged. After all, a judgment is not a list of its objects but rather an objective, complex discursive thought about them. In the old account the unity of what is judged is secured by its status as an independent proposition (see MTCA, 455–56; cf. Principles, 52). In the new account, the unity of the objects is merely apparent and must be constructed. In the new account, then, the subordinate relation, as it occurs in the judgment, is abstractly before the mind, rather than before it as actually relating its relata. Because on the multiple relation analysis the subordinate relation does not occur predicatively in the judgment, its predicability must be simulated by the act of judgment.

According to the 1912 multiple relation theory, my judgment that Matt loves Julie is a fact in which my mind occupies the first argument place of the judging relation Judges (\(\bar{x}, \bar{y}, \bar{R}, \bar{z}\)), the individual Matt occupies the second argument place, the loving relation occupies the third argument place, and the individual Julie occupies the fourth argument place. My judgment is true if, but only if, there is a corresponding fact in which Matt occupies the first argument place of the loving relation, and Julie occupies the second. Thus my judgment is true just in case there is a certain fact whose constituents
are all and only the objects of my judgment, and in which these three entities occur in the same relative order as they occur in my judgment. Russell conceives of the fact that Matt loves Julie, as he had earlier conceived of the proposition that Matt loves Julie, as a complex in which the relation of loving unites Matt to Julie, in that order. So the fact which is my judgment that Matt loves Julie represents the objects Matt, Julie, and loving as combined in the same way that they are said to be combined in the (putative) proposition that Matt loves Julie not by bringing it about that they are so combined but rather by placing them in the same relative order as they occur in that proposition. But there is in fact no such proposition. So the order in which the objects are said to occur in the proposition is really the order in which they actually occur in the fact which obtains if the judgment is true.
Russell’s 1913 Multiple Relation Theory of Judgment

The focus of this chapter is the version of the multiple relation theory of judgment which Russell produces in 1913 and sets out in TK. I begin, in Section 5.1, with the 1913 theory’s analysis of judgments that assert symmetrical relations. I explain that the crucial difference between the way in which the 1913 theory treats these kinds of judgments, and the way in which the 1912 theory treats them, is that according to the former, but not the latter, they include the logical form of the corresponding fact among their objects. I then go on to discuss Russell’s reasons for incorporating the notion of logical form into his analysis of judgments in TK, to describe the role which this notion plays in the 1913 multiple relation theory, and to examine Russell’s conception of logical forms themselves. Although their analyses of judgments involving symmetrical relations differ with respect to the issue of logical form, both the 1913 theory and the 1912 theory hold that these kinds of judgments and their corresponding facts are atomic complexes, i.e. complexes involving no quantifiers or logical constants. In the case of the 1912 theory, moreover, judgments that involve asymmetrical (or simply non-symmetrical) relations are treated similarly; that is, these kinds of judgments, and the facts to which they correspond (if they are true), are taken to be atomic complexes too. In the 1913 theory, however, these sorts of judgments are given a quite different analysis. In this version of the theory, what appear to be atomic judgments involving asymmetrical relations are treated as, and thus held to be really, existentially generalized molecular judgments, asserting the existence of atomic facts with certain features. Russell devises this alternative analysis in response to a sweeping change in his conception of relations. In Section 5.2, I discuss the nature and extent of this change and its impact upon Russell’s analysis of relational facts. In Section 5.3, I describe in detail the modifications that Russell makes to the multiple relation theory in 1913 in order to accommodate the change. Then, in Section 5.4, I explain Russell’s reasons for making the change itself.

5.1 Logical Form

In the last chapter we examined the 1912 version of Russell’s multiple relation theory of judgment. According to that version of the theory, in judgment the mind is related by a many-place relation of judging to the various entities (including universals) which are mentioned in the expression of the judgment. On the earlier account these entities are the constituents of the judged proposition.
The 1913 version of the multiple relation theory suggests a much more complex picture of judgment than that suggested by the 1912 theory. The added complexity has two sources, one of which is the introduction of a new notion: that of logical form.¹ In *TK* Russell contends that the fact which is an act of judgment relates a judger not merely to the constituents of the proposition (to speak loosely) but also to its logical form.² Accordingly he adds to judging relations an argument place for logical forms. Two closely connected questions at once arise: why does Russell now regard the notion of logical form as essential for a correct account of judgment? and what is logical form itself? In this section we shall endeavor to answer these two questions.

In regard to the first question, we can distinguish what appear to be three closely connected answers which Russell offers to it. One is that to be able to make a judgment we need acquaintance not only with the constituents of the proposition (to speak loosely again) but also with the way in which these constituents are to be combined:

Let us take as an illustration some very simple proposition, say “*A* precedes *B*”, where *A* and *B* are particulars. In order to understand this proposition, it is not necessary that we should believe it, or that it should be true. It is obviously necessary that we should know what is meant by the words which occur in it, that is to say, we must have acquaintance with *A* and *B* and with the relation “preceding”. It is also necessary to know how these three terms are meant to be combined, and this ... requires acquaintance with the general form of a dual complex. (*TK*, 110–11)

Russell holds that acquaintance with logical form “is a primitive constituent of our experience, and is presupposed ... in any understanding of a proposition otherwise than by actual acquaintance with the complex whose existence it asserts” (*TK*, 99; cf. *TK*, 101). In order to understand a given proposition we need to be separately acquainted with each of its constituents and with its logical form. Yet these separate acts of acquaintance do not constitute understanding the one proposition, for the act of understanding “brings the ... constituents and the form into relation with each other, so that all become parts of one complex” (*TK*, 112).

According to the 1913 multiple relation theory, then, for Aristotle to judge that Socrates is spouse of Xantippe is for a five-place relation of judging to relate Aristotle’s mind, the actual man Socrates, the actual woman Xantippe, the *spouse* relation, and the logical form of elementary binary complexes, respectively. Thus on this picture of judgment, when Aristotle judges that Socrates is spouse of Xantippe, his act of judgment creates a certain unity among his mind, Socrates, Xantippe, the *spouse* relation, and a certain logical form. What Aristotle judges, however, is that there is a certain unity

¹ The second source is a fundamental change in Russell’s view of relations which takes place in *TK*. The nature and extent of this change, as well as the modifications that Russell makes to the multiple relation theory in order to accommodate it, shall be discussed in sections 5.2 and 5.3. Then, in Section 5.4, we shall examine Russell’s reasons for making the change itself.

² So logical forms are typically *not* constituents of the propositions whose forms they are.
created by the *spouse* relation between Socrates and Xantippe. The logical form that enters into his judgment is simply the way in which these three objects are said to be combined into that unity. The particular unity into which they are *said* to be combined is, of course, the putative fact that Socrates is spouse of Xantippe, for this is the fact that the judgment asserts, and that obtains if the judgment is true. As thus understood, the logical form that figures in a given judgment is the form of the *fact* which corresponds to that judgment, if the judgment is true. As Hylton observes:

> the crucial point about a judgment and its “corresponding” fact is that the judgment is to be true if (but only if) there is such a fact, and this requires that the judgment should not merely have the same objects as the fact, but should also represent them as combined in the way that they are combined in the fact (if there is one).³

So the logical form that enters into the judgment must be the form of the fact which corresponds to the judgment.⁴

Let us now turn to the second argument for the necessity of logical form that Russell offers. As we have said more than once, Russell’s direct realism is in part an insistence upon the mind's being in direct and unmediated contact with the objects themselves that constitute the reality that it attempts to think about. In the case of judgment, in particular, the doctrine of direct realism demands that the objects to which the judging relation relates the mind which judges be the constituents of the fact which corresponds to the judgment. For it is precisely these *external* objects, rather than any *internal* ideas or mental representations of them, at which our thought aims. A judgment, understood in this way, is a cognitive fact in which a judging mind unites in thought the very objects whose being united in reality would verify it. By uniting the objects in thought to form the judgment, the mind which judges does not unite them in reality, creating the corresponding fact. Yet the judgment must *represent* the objects as combined in the same way that they are *actually* combined in the corresponding fact (if there is one). So when the judging mind forms the judgment that *a* and *b* are similar, it must unite in thought the individuals *a* and *b* and the relation of similarity so as to represent these three objects as combined in the same way that they are actually combined in the (putative) fact that *a* and *b* are similar. As Hylton points out, however:

If the judgment does this simply by bringing it about that the objects are so combined, then this no longer appears to be uniting them in thought only. So we seem to be in danger of losing the crucial distinction between uniting

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³ Hylton, *Russell, Idealism*, 345. In the 1912 multiple relation theory of judgment there is an implicit recognition of the requirement that Hylton identifies here; for further discussion of this point, see Chapter 4, Section 4.2, pp. 80–83, above.

⁴ There is no asymmetry between Russell’s analysis of true judgments and of false ones. In both cases, he takes it that the mind which judges unites in thought the objects themselves about which it judges, and that one of these objects must be a logical form. The form that figures in a false judgment, to which no fact corresponds, is the form of the fact that corresponds to some true judgment concerning objects of precisely the same ontological types as the objects with which the false judgment is concerned.
the objects in thought and uniting them in reality, so that to bring \( A \) and \( B \) and similarity into relation with one another would be to make \( A \) similar to \( B \). But clearly this will not do.\(^{5}\)

What is needed, then, is an account of what it is for the mind to unite objects in thought that keeps this notion clearly distinct from the notion of uniting objects in reality.

In *Problems* Russell attempts to give just such an account by exploiting the *sense* of the judging relation. He contends that the judgment represents the objects as combined in the same way that they are actually combined in the corresponding fact (if there is one) by placing them in the same relative order as they have in the fact [see *Problems*, 91–93; for further discussion of this issue, see Chapter 4, Section 4.2, pp. 80–83, above]. In *TK* Russell no longer regards this tactic as viable [see Section 5.2, pp. 106–121, below, and Section 5.3, pp. 125–130, below, where this issue is discussed at length]. Instead, he seeks to make the distinction in question by appealing to his notion of logical form:

What is the proof that we must understand the “form” before we can understand the proposition? I held formerly that the objects alone sufficed, and that the “sense” of the relation of understanding would put them in the right order; this, however, no longer seems to me to be the case. Suppose we wish to understand “\( A \) and \( B \) are similar”. It is essential that our thought should, as is said, “unite” or “synthesize” the two terms and the relation; but we cannot actually “unite” them, since either \( A \) and \( B \) are similar, in which case they are already united, or they are dissimilar, in which case no amount of thinking can force them to become united. The process of “uniting” which we can effect in thought is the process of bringing them into relation with the general form of dual complexes. (TK, 116)

According to Hylton’s reading, Russell’s idea here is that when the judging mind unites the objects of the judgment in thought to form the judgment itself, the judgment-complex which it thereby produces represents the objects “as combined in the right way not by so combining them but by including ‘the way they are to be combined’ as a further entity, the logical form, which the judging mind combines with the others”.\(^{6}\) This approach enables Russell to avoid having to equate uniting in thought with bringing about the corresponding fact in part because it ensures that the mode of combination of the objects in the judgment will be distinct from the mode of combination of the objects in the fact. The fact in which Aristotle’s judging that Socrates is spouse of Xantippe consists is distinct from the fact in which Socrates’ actually being Xantippe’s spouse consists in part because the former complex contains an objective constituent, the logical form of binary complexes, which the latter complex does not contain. Thus the two complexes consist of different constituents in different configurations.

Russell’s third reason for invoking the notion of logical form in his discussion of judgment in *TK* has to do with an issue which we considered at some length in the last chapter in connection with our exposition of his 1912 multiple relation theory. The issue in question is that of the dual role of the subordinate relation of the judgment. On the one hand, the subordinate relation occurs as a term of


the judging relation and as a logical subject in the judgment-fact. On the other hand, it occurs as the relating relation, and thus predicatively, in the judgment’s would-be corresponding fact. In any fact, it is the predicative occurrence of a relation that unites the various constituents of that fact into a whole. In the fact that \( a \) and \( b \) are similar, for example, a predicative occurrence of the relation of similarity joins the individual \( a \) to the individual \( b \) to constitute the fact as a unity. And in precisely the same way, when a person judges that \( a \) and \( b \) are similar, a five-place relation of judging unites the person’s mind, the individuals \( a \) and \( b \), the relation of similarity, and the logical form of a two-place relational fact into a whole—into a judgment-fact. There is thus a fundamental difference between, on the one hand, the way in which the relation of similarity occurs in the judgment that \( a \) and \( b \) are similar, and, on the other hand, the way in which it occurs in the fact that \( a \) and \( b \) are similar. In the context of the judgment, similarity occurs non-predicatively, as a term of the judging relation, and thus on a level with the judgment’s other objects. In the corresponding fact, by contrast, the relation of similarity occurs predicatively; it combines the remaining objects of the judgment into a whole. So given Russell’s assumption that a judgment should not merely have the same objects as its corresponding fact, but should also represent the objects as united in the same way that they are actually united in the fact, it follows that a judgment should represent its objects as occurring in the same way that they actually occur in the corresponding fact. In the present case, this is the requirement that the judgment that \( a \) and \( b \) are similar should represent the relation of similarity as actually relating the individuals \( a \) and \( b \). And this desideratum in turn has the consequence that the judgment should represent similarity as occurring predicatively. How does the judgment manage to perform this function? In \( TK \) Russell’s answer is that the act of judgment brings the similarity relation into relation with the logical form of the corresponding fact.

In Russell’s theory of facts, acts of judgment are singled out as a special case of facts. The task of the multiple relation theory is to find the distinguishing characteristics of those facts which are the making of judgments. In \( TK \) Russell frames this issue in terms of the notion of logical form. Since acts of judgment are (complex) facts, they must have logical forms. That is, there must be something which is the way in which the constituents are put together in a judgment. So the task of the multiple relation theory is to discover the logical form of a particular kind of fact—namely the fact that a given judgment is made. In accordance with this conception of the theory’s goal, Russell now sees the notion of the logical form of judgment as providing the basis for the answer to the question: how does a judgment manage to unite its various constituents into a fact so as to represent only its objects as united into an independent proposition?
In TK Russell envisages the sentence that accurately represents the logical form of a judgment as a map of the fact which is the judgment. What he says is this:

when a subject S understands “A and B are similar”, “understanding” is the relating relation, and the terms are S and A and B and similarity and R(x, y), where R(x, y) stands for the form “something and something have some relation”. Thus a first symbol for the complex will be

\[ U[S, A, B, \text{similarity, } R(x, y)]. \]

This symbol, however, by no means exhausts the analysis of the form of the understanding-complex. There are many kinds of five-term complexes, and we have to decide what the kind is.

It is obvious, in the first place, that S is related to the four other terms in a way different from that in which any of the four other terms are related to each other. (It is to be observed that we can derive from our five-term complex a complex having any smaller number of terms by replacing any one or more of the terms by “something”. If S is replaced by “something”, the resulting complex is of a different form from that which results from replacing any other term by “something”. This explains what is meant by saying that S enters in a different way from the other constituents.) It is obvious, in the second place, that R(x, y) enters in a different way from the other three objects, and that “similarity” has a different relation to R(x, y) from that which A and B have, while A and B have the same relation to R(x, y). Also, because we are dealing with a proposition asserting a symmetrical relation between A and B, A and B have each the same relation to “similarity”, whereas, if we had been dealing with an asymmetrical relation, they would have had different relations to it. Thus we are led to the following map of our five-term complex.

In this figure, one relation goes from S to the other four objects; one relation goes from R(x, y) to similarity, and another to A and B, while one relation goes from similarity to A and B. This figure, I hope, will help to make clearer the map of our five-term complex. [TK, 117–18]

According to Russell, then, a judgment’s logical form shows how the judgment’s constituents are related to one another by the relation of judging to produce the fact which is the judgment. The form of the judgment thus describes the structure of our thought when we make the given judgment. Russell’s diagram (or map) of the judgment that a and b are similar (i.e. his linguistic representation of its logical form) shows how the act of judgment—via the judging relation—brings the objects of the judgment {a, b, similarity, and the logical form of elementary binary facts} into relation with each other and into relation with the judging mind {s}. In doing so, the diagram shows how the judgment combines the objects so as to represent them as combined into the (putative) proposition that a and b are similar.
In this process, the logical form of the (putative) proposition in question plays the crucial role. The form is responsible for capturing the distinctions among the various objects of the judgment (i.e. the constituents of the putative proposition towards which the judgment appears to express an attitude), in particular between the similarity relation, which has the capacity to combine or unify its terms, and appears to do so in the (putative) proposition asserted by the judgment, and the individuals $a$ and $b$, which are the terms that similarity appears to combine or unify:

in order to understand “$A$ and $B$ are similar”, we must know what is supposed to be done with $A$ and $B$ and similarity, i.e. what it is for two terms to have a relation; that is, we must understand the form of the complex which must exist if the proposition is true. ([TK, 116])

In the 1913 multiple relation theory, then, the logical form of the would-be corresponding fact is the constituent of the judgment which enables this cognitive-complex to simulate the predicability of its subordinate relation. By bringing the relating relation of its would-be corresponding fact into relation with the logical form of that fact (in the relevant way), the fact which is the act of judgment represents the relation itself as occurring predicatively in the context of the judgment. Thus in the 1913 multiple relation theory the merely apparent unity of the putative proposition judged is to be explained in part by the notion of logical form.

Perhaps the role that the notion of logical form plays in the process of simulating the predicability of the subordinate relation is most perspicuous in the case of existential judgments. According to Russell’s 1913 multiple relation analysis, the judgment that (say) something is similar to something is a complex of three terms: the judging mind, the relation of similarity, and the logical form of elementary binary complexes ([TK, 133]). This judgment says, in effect, that there are facts in which similarity occurs as the relating relation, or that there are things between which the similarity relation holds. The judgment makes this assertion, not by indicating any particular objects between which similarity is said to hold, or by bringing it about that similarity actually occurs as a relating relation, but rather by bringing similarity itself into relation with the relevant logical form ([TK, 133]). The relation of similarity occurs non-predicatively in the judgment that something is similar to something, as a term of the judging relation. The only other object of this judgment is the logical form of elementary binary complexes. Hence by uniting the similarity relation and this logical form in thought, the judgment in question represents similarity as occurring predicatively. In this way similarity appears to occur as a subordinate relating relation in the judgment that something is similar to something.

The final issue that I shall discuss in this section is Russell’s conception of what a logical form is in itself. The logical form of a fact is, Russell says, “the way in which the constituents are put together” ([TK, 98]). In accordance with his basic metaphysical prejudices, Russell conceives of logical forms as
“genuine objects” [TK, 129]. In TK he identifies the logical form of a given fact with a certain wholly general abstract fact: that fact which is obtained by replacing all of the constituents of the original fact with existentially quantified variables ranging over entities of the corresponding logical types. Thus the logical form of the fact that corresponds to the sentence “Socrates is mortal”, for example, is the fact that some individual satisfies some first-level one-place property, i.e. the fact that \( \exists x \ [\exists \Phi \ \Phi x] \) [see TK, 114]. This multiply existentially generalized fact is the logical form of elementary unary complexes, for it is shared by every complex consisting of an individual united with a first-level one-place universal. With respect to our example, then, the logical form of unary complexes simply is the manner in which Socrates and the property of mortality are united in the fact that Socrates is mortal.

A crucial point is that the form in question does not actually unite Socrates and mortality so that this fact is formed. It is, rather, the universal mortality which unites the constituents into a whole—into a fact. The form of the fact that Socrates is mortal is not even among this subject-predicate fact’s constituents. Russell insists, indeed, that no form can be a constituent of any fact of which it is the form:

\[ \text{[in the form of a subject-predicate fact] “is” represents merely the way in which the constituents are put together. This cannot be a new constituent, for if it were, there would have to be a new way in which it and the two other constituents are put together, and if we take this way as again a constituent, we find ourselves embarked on an endless regress. [TK, 98; cf. “What is Logic?”, 55]} \]

So the form is not what unifies the various constituents of the fact but rather what explains how these constituents are to be united.8

Russellian logical forms are facts. Yet the facts with which Russell identifies the forms differ markedly from ordinary facts. For one thing, these facts are ontologically simple: they contain no constituent parts at all. Thus Russell says:

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7 Since for Russell neither facts nor their logical forms are linguistic entities, this way of characterizing his notion of logical form seems to require his having an account of the variable as a nonlinguistic entity. As Hylton emphasizes, however, Russell has no such account of the variable [see Hylton, Russell, Idealism, 216–18]. Still Russell often writes as if he possesses an understanding of variables as nonlinguistic objects. There is then a tension in his thought about the notion of the variable. I shall argue that this tension has important consequences for his conception of logical forms. In particular one reason why Russell characterizes forms as absolutely simple constituent-less facts is, I think, that he wishes to avoid the posit of nonlinguistic variables as their constituents.

8 The basic argument given in the passage from TK quoted above was familiar to Russell as early as 1904. In the 1904 manuscript “On Functions”, for example, he writes: “The mode of combination of the constituents of a complex is not itself one of the constituents of the complex. For if it were, it would be combined with the other constituents to form the complex; hence we should need to specify the mode of combination of the constituents with their mode of combination; thus what we supposed to be the mode of combination of the constituents would be only a mode of combination of some of the constituents. In short, in a complex, the combination is a combination of all the constituents, and cannot therefore be itself one of the constituents. ... A mode of combination, like everything else, is an entity; but it is not one of the entities occurring in a complex composed of entities combined in the mode of combination. Thus e.g., in the case of ‘A is greater than B’, the mode of combination may be denoted by \( \hat{x} \hat{R} \hat{y} \). This is a definite entity, but is not a constituent of ‘A is greater than B’, of which the constituents are only A, greater than, and B” (“On Functions”, 98).
Since we desired to give the name “form” to genuine objects rather than symbolic fictions, we gave the name to the “fact” “something is somehow related to something”. ... [S]uch absolutely general facts as “something is somehow related to something” have no constituents, are unanalyzable, and must accordingly be called simple. (TK, 129)

Perhaps this is the most perplexing feature of Russell’s logical forms: that they are simultaneously facts and simple entities. This feature is perplexing in part because according to Russell’s post-1910 metaphysics all ontological complexity is factual in nature. And this doctrine seems to suggest that being complex is the defining characteristic of a fact. Russell articulates something like the ordinary notion of a fact, as consisting perhaps in an object’s having a certain property, or standing in certain relations to one or more other objects. But since Russellian facts are quite literally made up of one or more objects, together with some of their properties or relations, surely they must have some complexity. The logical form of elementary binary complexes is the fact that something has some relation to something. Even if we accept the notion that no particular objects or relations figure in this fact, it still may seem to have some complexity or structure. After all, it is essential to the symbols which we use to represent logical forms that these symbols be articulated. Otherwise, they could not be used to convey the structure of facts. If one were trying to understand the form of the fact that corresponds to the judgment expressed by “Socrates is spouse of Xantippe”, then clearly it would be of no help to learn that this form can be represented [correctly, presumably, since it is ontologically simple] by a simple symbol such as “a”, whereas it would be of great help to learn that it can be represented [correctly] by the complex symbol “(∃x)(∃y)Φxy”. But if the form itself has no complexity and is not articulated in the way that the latter symbol suggests, then why does this symbol convey essential information about the form, information that the simple symbol does not convey? And if the form has no complexity, then what sort of information is this? In TK Russell recognizes the perplexity here. He asks:

How can an object be at once simple and a “fact”, in the sense in which a “fact” is opposed to a simple particular and is the sort of object whose reality makes a proposition true? Why, if pure forms are simple, is it so obviously inappropriate to give them simple proper names, such as John and Peter? (TK, 130)

But he has no way to resolve it. So after raising the issue he immediately puts it aside.

The name of a logical form is a complex symbol consisting of type-theoretically restricted quantified variables [see TK, 98, 113]. But the form itself does not contain any constituents corresponding to these variables. In TK Russell maintains that variables are merely linguistic items, i.e. “letters having no meaning” [TK, 98]. This view of variables contrasts with the one which he takes both in Principles and in PM. In these works, Russell regards variables as nonlinguistic entities. More exactly, in the earlier works, he [writes as if he] thinks that there are linguistic variables, which are letters, and nonlinguistic variables, which are the indefinable concepts involved in quantificational generality. He takes the
presence of a linguistic variable in an expression (sentence or predicate) to indicate the presence of a nonlinguistic variable in the complex entity (proposition or propositional function) corresponding to the expression. Russell distinguishes *apparent* (i.e. quantified or bound) variables from *real* (i.e. free or unbound) variables. The former are constituents of general propositions; the latter are constituents of propositional functions. On this point, then, the view of logical forms that Russell articulates in *TK* represents a departure from the view of general propositions that he articulates in *Principles* and in *PM*. Russell’s insistence in *TK* that logical forms are simple entities is in part an insistence on the idea that variables are merely linguistic items. General sentences containing linguistic variables, according to Russell’s new account, do not express facts containing nonlinguistic variables.⁹

As facts without constituents, logical forms cannot be subjected to philosophical analysis. For Russell, analysis is the twofold process of decomposing a given complex whole into its absolutely simple parts and of determining the manner of arrangement of these simple parts in that complex (see *TK*, 119). In *TK* Russell defines the notion of a simple object ontologically, as an entity which has no constituents (see *TK*, 120; cf. *Principles*, 144–45). Clearly then simple objects do not admit of analysis, for there is nothing into which they can be decomposed. So the supposition that forms are ontologically simple, that they are wholly devoid of constituents, makes them unsuitable candidates for philosophical analysis. This is why the discovery of the simple things that make up a fact, together with the discovery of its logical form, represents the *terminus* of the process of its analysis.

Now even though Russell’s logical forms are genuine facts, they cannot themselves have logical forms. The form of a fact is the way in which its constituents are united. So given that a logical form does not contain any constituents, it follows that there is nothing which is the way in which its constituents are united. Hence there is nothing which is its form.

Suppose to the contrary that forms do indeed have forms. Then a form must be a complex entity consisting of certain simpler entities in a certain, definite arrangement. The manner of arrangement of these constituents is, accordingly, the form of the form. But on this picture of the forms, the facts

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⁹ In part this explains Russell’s (strange) claim that “‘something’ is nothing” (*TK*, 114). He holds that when we employ the rule of existential generalization to infer “Something killed Caesar”, i.e. “(∃x) [x killed Caesar]”, from “Brutus killed Caesar”, we substitute at the linguistic-level an existentially quantified variable ranging over individuals for the proper name of an individual. But at the ontological-level, although Brutus is removed from the proposition that Brutus killed Caesar, yet nothing (no object) replaces him in that complex. According to Russell the proposition expressed by “Something killed Caesar” has only two constituents. This account does not, however, distinguish this proposition from the complex property, being Caesar’s killer, which also contains only Caesar and the relation of killing. Nor does this account distinguish the proposition from the proposition expressed by “Everything killed Caesar”.

Russell’s insistence that the expression “something” stands for nothing also is connected with his theory of descriptions. According to this theory, indefinite descriptions, like “something”, do not have any meaning in isolation, i.e. they do not stand for denoting concepts.
which are the forms of forms are similarly complexes composed of simpler entities. So they too must have forms. And likewise their forms must have forms. A regress thus ensues. So it would seem that if the manner of combination of the objects in a fact is to be understood in terms of the notion of logical form, then the forms themselves must, in order to avoid this regress, be taken as absolutely simple entities.

I have been discussing the reasons why logical forms, on Russell’s conception, cannot themselves have forms, or contain constituents, or be analyzable. In *TK* Russell clearly recognizes these aspects of his forms. Taking as an example the logical form of elementary binary complexes, he says:

The logical nature of this fact is very peculiar. If we take some particular dual complex $xRy$, this has three constituents, $x$, $R$, and $y$. If we now consider “something has the relation $R$ to $y$”, we get a fact which no longer contains $x$, and has not substituted any other entity for $x$, since “something” is nothing. Thus our new fact contains only $R$ and $y$. For similar reasons, “something has the relation $R$ to something” contains no constituent except $R$, and “something has some relation to something” contains no constituent at all. It is, therefore, suitable to serve as the “form” of dual complexes. In a sense, it is simple, since it cannot be analyzed. At first sight, it seems to have a structure, and therefore to be not simple; but it is more correct to say that it *is* a structure.

Language is not well adapted for speaking of such objects. ([TK], 114)

Russell’s emphasis here on the *defectiveness* of ordinary language as a medium for the perspicuous expression of fundamental notions such as logical form is in accordance with his general attitude, from 1905 onwards, that ordinary language is misleading in philosophically significant ways. Logical form, as Russell emphasizes, is not a linguistic notion. Indeed it cannot be such a notion, for our grasp of logical form is a precondition of our understanding language (see *TK*, 99, 101). The notion of logical form is thus what makes possible the sentences that we utter. For Russell this notion is ontologically prior to the existence of meaningful language and epistemologically prior to our understanding of such language. This is why ordinary language cannot easily express logical forms.

Another feature of the facts which are logical forms that makes these facts quite unlike other facts is that they must be objects of acquaintance. Russell speaks of the faculty of being acquainted with logical forms as “logical experience” ([TK], 97) and as “logical intuition” ([TK], 101). He takes such acquaintance to be “that kind of immediate knowledge, other than judgment, which is what enables us to understand logical terms” ([TK], 97; cf. *TK*, 99, 101, 130). In his view our acquaintance with the logical form of binary complexes is the source of our knowledge of the notion *binary relation* and of our capacity for understanding the word “relation” ([see TK, 97–98, 101]). For each fundamental logical notion and term which expresses it, there is a corresponding logical form our acquaintance with which constitutes both our grasp of the notion and our understanding of the term.

Acquaintance with logical forms is a binary relation of direct, unmediated, and wholly presuppositionless epistemic contact between the knowing mind and these wholly general abstract facts. Since the objects of acquaintance are themselves of various different logical types, it follows
that there is not one relation of acquaintance which holds between knowing minds and the objects
which they know, but rather as many relations of acquaintance, each of a different logical type, as
there are logical types among the objects of knowledge [see TK, 100]. Despite the various distinctions
of ontological category among these objects, however, our acquaintance with them has a uniform
character. Knowledge by acquaintance is, paradigmatically, an objectual, non-propositional form
of knowledge. It is knowledge of the object itself, rather than propositional knowledge about it. In
paradigmatic cases, then, knowledge by acquaintance is completely separate from knowledge of truths.
So in general the objects of acquaintance are themselves not complete propositions or judgments but
rather the simple entities which compose them.\(^\text{10}\)

It would seem, however, that Russellian logical forms constitute an exception to this paradigm.
Unlike other objects of acquaintance, they do have a propositional character. It makes sense to say
that one may judge that something has some property, not only that one may be acquainted with
this object. By contrast, it makes no sense whatsoever to say that one judges that Socrates, the man
himself. One can of course make judgments about Socrates and understand statements that involve
him. But Socrates himself cannot constitute the whole of what one judges or understands. But since
it is possible to judge that something has some property (and to understand the sentence “something
has some property”) it makes sense to speak of this logical form as being a proposition in the sense in
which Russell uses the word.

The question thus arises: what is the nature of the cognitive relation that is involved in the
understanding of logical forms? Since logical forms do not contain any constituents, it follows
immediately that understanding a logical form cannot be a multiple relation.\(^\text{11}\) Instead, in this case,
understanding must be a binary relation. In TK Russell identifies this relation with acquaintance [see
TK, 130]. An abstract fact which is a form is thus also an object of acquaintance. Hylton points out
that, in this one kind of case, Russell seems to retain the old picture of propositions, “so that a (true)
proposition is also a fact”.\(^\text{12}\) In the special case of logical forms, then, understanding the proposition
is identified with being acquainted with the corresponding fact. Russell insists, however, that
understanding propositions cannot in general be accounted for in this way, i.e. by taking it to consist
in our acquaintance with the corresponding fact. Acquaintance is a genuine relation: “when we are
acquainted with an object, there certainly is such an object, and the possibility of error is logically

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\(^\text{10}\) This is of course a feature of the new view (i.e. the multiple relation theory), for on the old view propositions
are first and foremost among the things with which the mind has direct contact.

\(^\text{11}\) There simply is no multiplicity of objects composing the form to which the multiple relation of understanding
can relate the mind that understands the form.

\(^\text{12}\) Hylton, Russell, Idealism, 347.
excluded” (TK, 49). So acquaintance with the fact corresponding to a proposition is possible only when there is such a fact (see TK, 130). But if understanding the proposition always consists in acquaintance with the corresponding fact, then the understanding of propositions is, quite obviously, restricted to those to which facts correspond. Yet if it really were so restricted, we should be unable to understand false propositions, since a false proposition is one to which no fact corresponds. So given that we can, and indeed often do, understand false propositions, it follows that in the general case understanding a proposition is not a matter of being acquainted with the corresponding fact (if there is one). In the light of this argument, it is crucial to Russell’s view of our understanding of the constituent-less propositions with which he identifies the forms that the duality of truth and falsehood does not apply to them; all such propositions must be true (see TK, 132). Indeed it is only because they are true that we can understand them, for here understanding is a binary relation between a judger and a fact; if there were no fact there would be no understanding, but since there is a fact the proposition is true.\(^{13}\)

5.2 The Theory of Position

In TK Russell’s conception of relations undergoes a sweeping change. In this section I shall discuss the nature and extent of this change and its impact upon Russell’s analysis of relational facts. In the next section I shall describe the modifications that Russell makes to the multiple relation theory in 1913 in order to accommodate the change. Then, in the final section, I shall explain Russell’s reasons for making the change itself.

The crucial change in Russell’s conception of relations which takes place in TK is that he gives up the idea that the argument places of relations have an intrinsic order.\(^{14}\) Thus in the case of asymmetrical binary relations like before and after, Russell now denies that there is a general distinction between their first and second argument places. He does not, of course, deny that these relations include two argument places. What he denies, rather, is that either of the argument places is intrinsically the first or intrinsically the second: “In a dual complex, there is no essential order as between the terms. The order is introduced by the words or symbols used in naming the complex, and does not exist in the complex itself” (TK, 87).

Russell’s revised conception of relations undermines the analysis of the notion of relational sense that he proposes in Principles. According to that analysis, the sense of an asymmetrical binary relation is its intrinsic directionality from (the object occupying) its first argument place to (the object occupying) its second argument place. Clearly, however, if there is no general distinction between the first and


\(^{14}\) See Ricketts, “Pictures”, 66–68.
second argument places of an asymmetrical binary relation, then the notion of relational sense cannot be explained along these lines. So once Russell ceases to accept the view that the argument places of relations have an intrinsic order, he abandons the doctrine that the sense of a relation is intrinsic to it [see TK, 88].

In the following passage from TK, Russell sets forth his new account of relations by contrasting it with his earlier account in a way that makes clear the fundamental shift in his attitude towards the argument places of relations:

Whatever exactly may be meant by “understanding” the word “before”, it is plain that such understanding enables us to distinguish between the two propositions “A is before B” and “B is before A”. This fact shows that, in the understanding of the abstract “before”, which is what we are trying to isolate, there must be some kind of reference to terms, something, in fact, which we call “sense” or “direction”. The two propositions “A is before B” and “B is before A” contain the same constituents, and they are put together according to the same form; thus the difference is neither in the form nor in the constituents. It would thus seem that a relation must have essentially some “from-and-to” character, even in its most abstract form, like a goods-truck which has a hook in front and an eye behind. The hook and eye are of course merely symbolic; but they have the merit of illustrating the main fact about relations, which is that there is something in their nature that cries out for terms, some sort of grappling apparatus which is always looking out for things to grapple on to.

But all this is pictorial, and in one respect it is positively misleading. We decided that “before” and “after” only differ linguistically; hence whatever a relation is, it must be symmetrical with respect to its two ends. It must not be pictured as having a hook in front and an eye behind, but as having a hook at each end, and as equally adapted for traveling in either direction. This fact must not be lost sight of in the endeavor to explain difference of sense. [TK, 86]

According to Russell’s revised picture of relations, then, an asymmetrical relation has no intrinsic directionality. The relation can, of course, combine its relata into a fact. But in doing so, it does not proceed essentially from one of these objects to the other [see TK, 86–88].

Connected with Russell’s adoption of this new view of relations is a fundamental change in his attitude towards the nature of the distinction between an asymmetrical relation and its converse. In Principles Russell deploys the notion of relational sense to argue that any two mutually converse asymmetrical (or simply non-symmetrical) relations are distinct entities [see Principles, 228–29]. In doing so, he appeals in effect to the ordering of argument places that is intrinsic to relations [see Chapter 4, Section 4.1, pp. 66–72, above, where this issue is discussed at some length]. Russell thus distinguishes the asymmetrical relation before from its converse after by claiming that before proceeds from (i.e. relates) the object occupying its first argument place to the object occupying its second argument place if, but only if, it proceeds from (relates) the object occupying the second argument place of after to the object occupying the first argument place of after; and that after proceeds from (relates) the object occupying its first argument place to the object occupying its second argument place just in case it proceeds from (relates) the object occupying the second argument place of before to the object occupying the first argument place of before. In this way the sense of the relation before is directly opposed to the sense of the relation after [and vice versa]. It is quite plain, however, that if
the argument places of (binary) relations have no intrinsic order, so that there is no general distinction between their first and second argument places, we cannot define the converse of an asymmetrical relation by correlating the objects occupying the ordered argument places of the one relation with the objects occupying the ordered argument places of the other one. Nor can we explain on this basis the closely connected idea that any two mutually converse asymmetrical relations have directly opposed senses. It would thus seem that Russell’s new conception of relations renders his old account of the ontological difference between an asymmetrical relation and its converse wholly untenable. In the absence of any (other) suitable explanation of this putative phenomenon, Russell simply concludes that an asymmetrical relation and its converse are not distinct entities after all: “We must therefore explain the sense of a relation without assuming that a relation and its converse are different entities” (TK, 87).

In accordance with this conclusion, Russell now insists that the sentences “a is before b” and “b is after a” are synonymous, that they express the same judgment, that if true they correspond to the same fact [see TK, 85–87]. It might be thought that Russell could account for the synonymy of these two sentences by selecting one of the relations before or after as the genuine onto- logical primitive, for he then could analyze one of the sentences as a definitional abbreviation of the other. In *Principles* Russell insists that this approach cannot be sustained, for he thinks that there are no grounds for choice between the relations before and after. In his early view, each of these relations is a genuine entity [see *Principles*, 228–29]. In TK, however, Russell is no longer constrained by the latter consideration, for he has become persuaded that a relation and its converse are not distinct entities after all. So it appears that the approach in question is now available to him. This appearance is, however, fundamentally misleading. Russell is not in fact at liberty to select either before or after as the genuine relation, defining the other in terms of it, for this approach presupposes precisely what he now denies, that the sense of an asymmetrical relation is intrinsic to it:

It might perhaps be supposed that every relation has one proper sense, i.e. that it goes essentially from one term to another. In the case of time-relations, it might be thought that it is more proper to go from the earlier to the later term than from the later to the earlier. And in many relations it might be thought that one term is active while the other is passive; thus “A loves B” seems more natural than “B is loved by A”. But this is a peculiarity of certain relations, of which others show no trace. Right and left, up and down, greater and less, for example, have obviously no peculiarly “natural” direction. And in the cases where there seemed to be a “natural” direction, this will be found to have no logical foundation. In a dual complex, there is no essential order as between the terms. The order is introduced by the words or symbols used in naming the complex, and does not exist in the complex itself. Our problem arises from the fact that, although this is the case, a different complex results from interchanging the terms, and that such interchange looks like a change of order. (TK, 86–87)

The logical foundation for the view that every asymmetrical relation has a peculiarly natural direction, to which Russell alludes in this passage, simply is the intrinsic ordering of the argument places of these relations. In giving up the idea that relations have these intrinsic structural features, Russell
effectively undermines the logical foundation upon which in *Principles* he builds his account of relational directionality.\(^{15}\)

Rather than taking one of the relations *before* or *after* as the genuine ontological primitive, Russell introduces a new asymmetrical relation that is wholly distinct from both of them. He calls this new relation *sequence*. In *TK* Russell maintains that in ordinary language the relational predicates “before” and “after” both name the relation of sequence; the presence of either of these predicates in a sentence indicates the presence of the *sequence* relation in the corresponding fact.\(^{16}\) Recall that in *Principles* Russell considers just this possibility, i.e. that of introducing a third abstract relation, but rejects it on the basis of its [alleged] circularity [see *Principles*, 228; for discussion of this point, see Chapter 4, Section 4.1, pp. 70–72, above]. The argument that he produces to demonstrate its circularity hinges largely on the idea that every relation has *one* proper sense. Crucial to Russell’s view of the relation of sequence, therefore, is the claim that this relation, unlike the relations of *before* and of *after*, is “neutral with regard to sense” (*TK*, 88). The relation of sequence has *no* intrinsic directionality. In combining its relata into a fact, it does not proceed essentially *from* one of these objects *to* the other. And this implies that its two argument places are themselves *unordered*.

Thus although Russell now denies that an asymmetrical relation and its converse are distinct entities, yet he does not renounce asymmetrical relations and facts formed by them. On the contrary: Russell continues to accept that at least some such relations are among independently subsisting ontological atoms, and to insist that there are always two ways in which an asymmetrical binary relation can combine the same pair of individuals into a fact. The relation of sequence, in particular, can unite the individuals \(a\) and \(b\) in two ways to form two separate facts. Since *sequence* is an asymmetrical relation, at most one of these facts actually obtains.\(^{17}\) In ordinary language, these two [logically possible] facts are expressed by the sentences “*a* is before *b*” [or “*b* is after *a*”] and “*a* is after *b*” [or “*b* is before *a*”].

Since in the two facts that can be formed from the relation of sequence and the individuals \(a\) and \(b\) there is no difference between the *order* of \(a\) and \(b\), it follows that no pair of fully analyzed *atomic* sentences can express these two facts in a way that distinguishes between them [see *TK*, 148]. The problem here is that any meaningful pair of sentences that can be constructed from the logically

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\(^{15}\) So Russell insists in the passage that the view that every asymmetrical relation has a natural direction is itself without any logical foundation, not because he thinks that this view is straightforwardly incoherent, but because he no longer accepts that relations possess the relevant intrinsic structural features to provide this necessary foundation.

\(^{16}\) As we shall see, however, Russell thinks that “before” and “after” name the relation of sequence in a misleading fashion.

\(^{17}\) Russell’s metaphysics does not include any merely possible but non-actual entities, so it does not reify logically possible facts [see *TK*, 27, 111].
simple relational predicate “sequence” and the logically proper names “a” and “b” must mention the individuals a and b in a particular order. So distinct sentences composed of these three expressions cannot constitute complex proper names of the two temporal sequence facts unless we assume that the order in which “a” and “b” occur in the sentences corresponds (either exactly or inversely) to the ontological order in which a and b occur in the facts. But we cannot make this assumption, for Russell denies that the relation of sequence imposes any order on its relata. Hence no pair of fully analyzed atomic sentences can distinguish between the two facts in which the relation of sequence relates the individuals a and b.

The difficulty that Russell faces here with the attempt to use genuine atomic sentences to distinguish between distinct temporal sequence complexes formed of the same selection of objects is not peculiar to such complexes or to the relation of sequence itself. On the contrary: given the view of relations that he puts forward in TK, this difficulty will arise for any genuine atomic fact whose relating relation is asymmetrical [or simply non-symmetrical]. When Russell comes to identify mutually converse asymmetrical binary relations, he concludes that pairs of correlative relational predicates, such as “before” and “after”, “greater than” and “less than”, and so on, which appear to express such relations are not in fact the logically proper names of any independently subsisting ontological atoms. The problem with these predicates is that they “always involve, in addition to the relation, an indication as to ‘sense’” (TK, 88). “For any such pair of correlative terms”, Russell insists, “there is only one relation, which is neutral as regards sense” (TK, 88). Russell assumes that there always is such a relation, and that it is the genuine ontological primitive. In the logically perfect language, then, the only logically simple relational predicates will be labels for relations whose argument places are not ordered. So in cases where these predicates happen to signify asymmetrical relations, we cannot use them to discriminate between the various facts that can be formed by the underlying relations.

The question thus arises: if the particular configuration of a relational fact’s constituents is not a product of their order in its relating relation, then what is the difference between the two facts which can be formed from the relation of sequence and the individuals a and b? And, more generally, given that Russell now denies that the argument places of relations have any intrinsic order, what is the difference between the two distinct facts which can be formed from any asymmetrical binary relation and the same pair of distinct individuals?

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18 Russell says that a complex proper name of a fact is a fully analyzed sentence which is “composed of the [logically proper] names of its constituents suitably combined” (TK, 177). Russell’s requirement that the names be suitably combined, though it must be satisfied in order to secure that the sentence is not nonsensical, is merely the requirement that the sentence be well-formed, for in the special case of sentences which happen also to be complex proper names “the mere enumeration of simple names determines the complex meant” (TK, 148).
In *TK* Russell proposes the view that the difference between two such complexes consists in the fact that the terms of their shared relating relation occupy different *positions* in each of them. So given his new conception of relations, it follows that, in order to sustain this view, Russell requires an account of the position that an object occupies in a fact which takes this notion to consist in something other than a relation between the object and an argument place of the fact’s relating relation. Since he now denies that the argument places of an asymmetrical relation have any intrinsic order, he cannot explain the position that an object occupies in a relational fact in terms of the argument place that the object occupies of the fact’s relating relation. Nor can he take an object’s having different positions in two facts that are formed by the same relation to consist in the object’s occupying different argument places of that relation.19

In response to these various restrictions, Russell proposes an analysis of the notion of relational sense that, in sharp contrast to the analysis that he proposed in *Principles*, treats this notion as a logical construction. In *TK* he enunciates the new analysis for the first time in the following passage:

> if we are given any relation \( R \), there are two relations, both functions of \( R \), such that, if \( x \) and \( y \) are terms in a dual complex whose relating relation is \( R \), \( x \) will have one of these relations to the complex, while \( y \) will have the other. The other complex with the same constituents reverses these relations. Let us call these relations \( A_R \) and \( B_R \). Then if we decide to mention first the term which has the relation \( A_R \) to the complex, we get one sense of the relation, while if we decide to mention first the other, we get the other sense. Thus the sense of a relation is derived from the two different relations which the terms of a dual complex have to the complex. Sense is not in the relation alone, or in the complex alone, but in the relations of the constituents to the complex which constitute “position” in the complex. But these relations do not essentially put one term before the other, as though the relation went *from* one term *to* another; this only appears to be the case owing to the misleading suggestions of the order of words in speech or writing. (*TK*, 88)

Let us call the view that this passage illustrates the *theory of position*. According to this theory, corresponding to each \( n \)-place relation \( R \), there are \( n \) two-place positional relations \( C_1, C_2, \ldots, C_n \), such that, if \( \gamma \) is a fact in which \( R \) is the relating relation and the objects \( a_1, a_2, \ldots, a_n \) are the relata of \( R \) in \( \gamma \), then each of these objects bears one of these positional relations to \( \gamma \) (see *TK*, 146). The positional relations \( C_1, C_2, \ldots, C_n \) constitute the *positions* of the objects \( a_1, a_2, \ldots, a_n \) in \( \gamma \) (see *TK*, 146).

Russell contends that we can fix any fact’s identity by specifying its logical form, the identity of its directionless relating relation, the identities of this relation’s relata, and the various positions which these relata occupy in the fact (see *TK*, 146–48). The function of the theory of position is in part to explain the nature and status of the various possible positions that objects can occupy in facts.

In presenting the theory of position, Russell introduces a classification of facts according to the positions of their constituents. A fact, for Russell, is a complex structured entity made up of a plurality

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19 Since Russell no longer holds that positional change is constituted by ordinal change, he cannot take an instance of change of the former kind to be an instance of change of the latter kind. In this way, then, the notions of position in a fact and of order in a relating relation seem to come apart for Russell.
of relatively simpler entities of various logical types. In *TK* Russell speaks of distinct facts that contain precisely the same constituents as permutative complexes (see *TK*, 144), for he holds that two such facts may be obtained from each another by permuting (or interchanging) two or more of their constituents (see *TK*, 123).

According to the logic of *PM*, two constituents can be permuted in a fact if and only if they are entities of the same logical type (this restriction on permutability follows from the analogue for binary propositional functions of axiom *10.121 of PM*). In *TK* Russell says that any mutually permutable constituents of a fact are homogeneous with respect to the fact (see *TK*, 123). Accordingly the constituents of a fact that belong to different logical types are said to be heterogeneous with respect to the fact (see *TK*, 123). Unlike its homogeneous constituents, a fact’s heterogeneous constituents cannot be interchanged.

According to Russell’s type theory, a propositional function must belong to an ontological category distinct from that of any object to which it applies (see *PM*, i. §3). So the relating relation in a fact will always be heterogeneous with respect to its relata (see *TK*, 123). If this relation takes objects only of a single type as arguments, then its relata will all be homogeneous with respect to the fact. But if the relation relates objects of different types, then some of its relata will be heterogeneous with respect to the fact.

Russell says that two homogeneous constituents are unsymmetrical with respect to a fact if their being permuted yields a different fact (see *TK*, 123). Thus the individuals Socrates and Xantippe are unsymmetrical and homogeneous with respect to the fact that Socrates loves Xantippe, for a distinct fact, that of Xantippe’s loving Socrates, results from interchanging them. Since the new fact contains precisely the same constituents as the old one but is nonetheless distinct from it, it follows that the permutation produces a different arrangement of the same group of objects. The permuted objects must therefore occupy different positions in the two facts. In general, then, if two objects are homogeneous and unsymmetrical with respect to a certain fact, the two will occupy different positions in that fact (see *TK*, 122–23). According to Russell’s theory of position, this means that the objects must bear distinct positional relations to the fact itself.

On the other hand, two homogeneous constituents of a given fact are said to be symmetrical with respect to that particular fact if permuting them fails to yield a different fact. Thus the individuals *a* and *b*, for example, are homogeneous and symmetrical with respect to the fact that *a* and *b* are similar, for this fact is identical to the fact that *b* and *a* are similar, the complex that results from interchanging these two individuals (see *TK*, 112). A crucial point, to which I shall return shortly, is that when two objects are homogeneous and symmetrical with respect to a given fact, they occupy exactly the same
position in that fact (see TK, 122). So on Russell’s theory of position two such objects stand in exactly the same positional relation to the fact (see TK, 146).

Finally, Russell holds that when two constituents are heterogeneous with respect to a certain fact, they occupy different positions in that fact. The two thus bear different positional relations to the fact. In this case, Russell claims, the constituents’ respective positional relations to the fact are mutually incompatible (see TK, 146).

The fact that Russell now thinks that distinct objects can occupy the same position in a single fact indicates that the notion of position with which he is operating in 1913 is, in important respects, quite different from the one with which he operates in 1903. Russell tends to speak of propositions in spatial terms. A proposition, for him, is a complex structured entity composed of a plurality of independently subsisting and genuinely distinct relatively simpler entities. The method of composition here is conceived on the model of the relation of a physical object to its parts. In Principles Russell seems to think of a proposition as made up of its constituents in a quite literal sense, almost as a wall is made up of bricks. There would seem, therefore, to be a tension between this idea of a proposition on the one hand, and the idea that distinct objects are capable of occupying precisely the same position in a single fact on the other. Clearly separate spatiotemporally extended entities cannot occupy the same spatiotemporal position. Russell’s acceptance of the idea that distinct objects can occupy precisely the same position in the same fact may thus indicate a retreat on his part from the extreme realism that he espouses in Principles concerning the existence of complex unities such as propositions and facts. Alternatively, it may represent a change only in his expository rhetoric, which need not therefore (or also) suggest any fundamental change in the underlying metaphysics. After all, if a fact really is an abstract entity, then its structure is not spatial in nature. Thus Russell can still hold that a fact possesses an analysis-independent, eternal ontological structure in virtue of the way in which it is constructed from its various constituents. But since the fact is not a physical object, it would seem that there is no genuine contradiction in the idea that two of its constituents can occupy the same position in it. Clearly, however, the same cannot be said of the idea that distinct bricks can occupy precisely the same position in a single wall at precisely the same moment.

We have now examined enough of Russell’s theory of position to enable us to see how he deploys this theory to distinguish between distinct temporal sequence complexes consisting of the same constituents. There are a number of passages in TK where Russell presents his solution to this problem. Of these passages, the following offers the clearest and most detailed explanation of his view:

The two complexes A-before-B and A-after-B are composed of the same constituents, namely A and B and sequence, combined in the same form. The words before and after differ, and are not names for the relation of sequence,
which is unique, not twofold. What then is meant by before and after? In the complex A-before-B, which we will call γ, A has one “position” and B another; that is to say, A has one relation to γ and B has another. We may say A is earlier in γ, and B is later in γ, where earlier in and later in are heterogeneous relations, and therefore complexes in which they are the relating relations are completely determined by their constituents. Then “A-before-B” is the name of that complex (if any) in which A is earlier and B is later; while “A-after-B” is the name of that complex (if any) in which A is later and B is earlier. The distinction between earlier and later is indefinable, and must simply be perceived. It may be said, of course, that “A is earlier in γ and B is later in γ” is composed of the same constituents as “A is later in γ and B is earlier in γ”. But these are both molecular complexes, and the atomic complexes which enter into them are different; the identity of constituents only appears when we carry our analysis further, to the constituents of the atomic complexes. And this remoter identity of constituents does not raise the problems with which we are at present concerned.

The proposition “There is a complex in which A is earlier and B later” is one which contains four constituents, namely A and B and earlier and later. This is a molecular proposition, whose atomic constituents are different from those of the proposition which results from interchanging A and B. Moreover, each of the atomic constituents is non-permutative. It is thus that the two words before and after become distinguishable, and that language is able to discriminate between the two complexes that may be formed of A and B and sequence. (TK, 145–46)

In the case of the binary relation of sequence, then, the two corresponding binary positional relations are \( \hat{x} \) is earlier in \( \hat{p} \) and \( \hat{x} \) is later in \( \hat{p} \) [see also TK, 88, 111–12, 134–35]. Russell holds that if \( \gamma \) is a fact in which sequence is the relating relation and the individuals \( a \) and \( b \) are the relata of sequence in \( \gamma \), then \( a \) must bear one of these positional relations to \( \gamma \) and \( b \) must bear the other. There are thus two atomic facts which can be formed from the sequence relation and the individuals \( a \) and \( b \): one to which \( a \) bears the relation being earlier in and \( b \) bears the relation being later in; and one to which \( a \) bears the relation being later in and \( b \) bears the relation being earlier in.

The two positional relations being earlier in and being later in are not relations between the relation of sequence and its relata [see TK, 111, 146], for they are not relations to sequence’s argument places. But these two positional relations are functions of the sequence relation [see TK, 88, 122, 134]. According to Russell, they hold between an object and a given fact only if sequence is that fact’s relating relation. So an individual cannot be earlier in, or be later in, a fact unless its relating relation is sequence itself. The two positional relations being earlier in and being later in are thus unique to the relation of sequence. The difference between them is, accordingly, not explicable in general terms [see TK, 111]. These relations are not, as they may appear to be, instances of the general concept of a positional relation. Strictly speaking, there is no such general concept. For Russell, rather, every system of positional relations is sui generis. The positional relations corresponding to a given relation are determinate only when that relation is specified [see TK, 146]. Hence systems of positional relations are “not describable in general terms” but rather must “be simply recognized in each case” [TK, 147]. Owing to their uniqueness, the difference between the relations being earlier in and being later in is unanalyzable [see TK, 111, 145]. In order to understand the difference between them, one must be directly acquainted with the relations themselves [see TK, 100, 111, 145].
The identity of a fact in which the relation of being earlier in, or that of being later in, is the relating relation is not sensitive to the arrangement of its terms, for such a fact is heterogeneous with respect to its primary constituents. Russell says that “there are not in this case two logically possible complexes, and the whole difficulty of ‘sense’ does not arise” (TK, 112; cf. TK, 135, 145–46). The crucial idea here is that these two positional relations hold between entities (specifically, individuals and facts) that “differ logically” (TK, 112), i.e., presumably, in ontological type, so that to attempt to permute them would result in nonsense. The statement that the fact is earlier in \(a\) may be thought to violate type restrictions and therefore to be nonsensical, whereas the same could not be claimed for the statement that \(b\) is before \(a\) (see TK, 112). The identity of any relational fact that is heterogeneous with respect to its primary constituents is not sensitive to the arrangement of those constituents because no complex results from rearranging them.

It follows from this that we can fix the identity of any fact whose constituents are the sequence relation and the individuals \(a\) and \(b\) by determining which of these two individuals is earlier in the fact, and which of them is later in it. Let \(\alpha\) be the fact in which \(a\) is earlier and \(b\) is later; and let \(\beta\) be the fact in which \(a\) is later and \(b\) is earlier. Then \(\alpha\) and \(\beta\) are complexes containing the same constituents, namely the individuals \(a\) and \(b\) and the relation of sequence, combined in the same logical form, that of elementary binary complexes. Russell holds that for one object to be before another object is for the first object to be earlier in a fact in which the second object is later (see TK, 135). And similarly he takes it that for one object to be after another object, the first object must be later in a fact in which the second object is earlier (see TK, 135). Thus \(\alpha\) must be the fact expressed by “\(a\) is before \(b\)”, and \(\beta\) must be the fact expressed by “\(a\) is after \(b\)” (or by “\(b\) is before \(a\)”). In this way Russell attempts to distinguish between distinct facts formed from the relation of sequence and the same pair of individuals. A crucial point, to which I shall return, is that the analysis that Russell proposes does not involve any relations with sense or invoke the notion of relational sense in a way that gives this notion any explanatory force or weight (see pp. 118–121, below).

I have claimed that Russell takes the various positional relations that correspond to a given relation to be functions of that relation. This is an idea that he articulates clearly in a few passages in TK (see e.g. TK, 88, 122, 134). There is, however, one passage in the book where this idea is explicitly denied. In this troublesome passage, Russell states: “Although … the various possible positions are determinate when \(R\) is given, they are not functions of \(R’\)” (TK, 146). On its face, Russell’s remark here appears to be flatly inconsistent with his other remarks in TK concerning the nature of the connection between a relation and its corresponding system of positional relations. But in spite of this appearance, I disagree
with Griffin’s assessment of the latter passage as expressing a change in Russell’s theory of position.¹⁰ I think, to the contrary, that Russell advances a single view of the notion of position in TK, and I see the passage in question as corroborating the interpretation of that view which I have been developing.

To understand why Russell’s remark does not constitute a change in his view we need to consider the passage in context. Immediately after he denies that the various possible positions in a complex are a function of its relating relation, Russell attempts to clarify his claim like this:

That is to say, there are not \( n \) relations \( T_1, T_2, \ldots, T_n \) such that, whatever \( R \) may be, \( C_1 \) has the relation \( T_1 \) to \( R \), \( C_2 \) has the relation \( T_2 \) to \( R \), and so on. \( C_1, C_2, \ldots, C_n \) are a system of relations, determinate when \( R \) is given, but requiring to be simply recognized in each case, and not describable in general terms. When \( C_1, C_2, \ldots, C_n \) are given, conversely, \( R \) is determinate. (TK, 146–47)

As these explicatory remarks make clear, Russell is not denying that the system of positional relations that corresponds to a given relation is a function of that relation. Rather, he is denying that there is a single system of positional relations that corresponds to all relations of the same polyadicity and logical type. It is this general notion of position that Russell seeks to reject when he denies that the various possible positions in a complex are a function of its relating relation. From his perspective, the central problem with treating position in a complex as a general notion is that doing so presupposes that the argument places of relations have an intrinsic order. There simply is no notion other than order which Russell can deploy to give a general account of the notion of position. If separate objects occupy the same position in two facts formed by different relations, then their sameness of position cannot be understood except in terms of the idea that they fill distinct though ordinarily equivalent argument places of those relations. But unless we can speak with sense of the first, the second, etc., argument places of relations, we cannot speak in general of the positions in the facts formed by relations. Thus if Russell were to accept that the notion of position is specifiable in general terms, and that the system of positional relations that corresponds to a given relation can be defined independently of that relation’s specific content or subject-matter, then he would have to identify an object’s position in a fact with its order in the fact’s relating relation. In TK, however, Russell is no longer willing to accept that the argument places of relations have an intrinsic order. His reasons for this unwillingness shall be examined in detail in the final section of this chapter [see Section 5.4, pp. 134–146, below]. The present point, however, is simply that, clearly, none of this is to say that the positions in a given fact are not functions of its relating relation.

Further support for my interpretation of Russell’s view comes from Russell’s own assertion in TK that the difference between the (putative) relations before and after cannot be accounted for in terms of the nature and status of binary complexes in general, but only in terms of the nature and status of

temporal sequence complexes, i.e. complexes in which the relation of sequence serves as the relating relation (see TK, 111). If the difference between these two relations could be explained by reference to binary complexes generally, then this would imply that there is a general distinction between the two positions in a binary complex, and that the relations being earlier in and being later in merely encapsulate that distinction for the special case of temporal sequence complexes. But the fact that the difference between before and after can be explained only by reference to temporal sequence complexes strongly suggests that the positional relations being earlier in and being later in are peculiar to the relation of sequence, and not simply a particular case of a more general concept.\footnote{Indeed the connection between the sequence relation and its positional relations is so intimate that the positional relations can go proxy for sequence; complexes in which sequence is the relating relation can be described unambiguously without mentioning sequence at all (see TK, 147).} In connection with this idea, Russell insists that, in general, the system of positional relations that corresponds to a given relation is not determined by the logical form of the facts in which that relation is the relating relation, but only by the relation itself:

It is to be observed that the relations $C_1, C_2, \ldots C_n$ are not determined by the general form, but only by the relation $R$. So far as the general form “$xRy$” is concerned, the position of $A$ is the same in “$A$-before-$B$” as in “$A$-after-$B$”. It is only after the relation $R$ has been assigned that positions can be distinguished. (TK, 146)

So by giving up the idea that relations contain intrinsically ordered argument places and insisting instead that the relations that constitute position in a given fact are uniquely determined by its relating relation, Russell is denying that there is a general notion of position in a fact that covers all facts. This denial is not simply an expression of the typical ambiguity of the notion of position. For Russell there is no single concept of position in a fact that covers facts involving different relating relations even when those relations happen to belong to the same ontological category.

It follows from Russell’s rejection of any such general notion of position that we can neither assert nor deny that (say) Brutus occupies the same position in the fact that Brutus killed Caesar as he does in the fact that Brutus loved Caesar. For Russell, the positional relations that correspond to the relation of killing are distinct from those that correspond to the relation of loving. In the fact that Brutus killed Caesar, Brutus occupies the position of the killer, and Caesar occupies the position of the victim. In the fact that Brutus loved Caesar, on the other hand, Brutus occupies the position of the lover, and Caesar occupies the position of the beloved. In the earlier view, let us remember, the positions of killer and of lover were explained in terms of the intrinsic ordering of the argument places of relations; they were identified with the first argument places of the relations of killing and of loving, respectively [for further discussion of this point, see Chapter 4, Section 4.1, p. 68, above]. But in the new view these notions are now taken as primitive. This means that, in general, when two facts contain a common
constituent but involve different relating relations, we cannot state meaningfully that the position which that constituent occupies in the one fact is the same as, or differs from, the position which it occupies in the other fact. In the next section we shall see that this point has a crucial consequence for Russell’s 1913 definition of truth for judgments involving asymmetrical relations [see Section 5.3, pp. 126–130, below].

In the light of Russell’s new analysis of facts that involve asymmetrical relations, what status does the notion of relational sense now have in his philosophy? Throughout the preceding decade, Russell holds that sense is a genuine feature of relations [see Principles, 95–96; cf. Problems, 91–92]. Every relation has one proper sense. Mutually converse asymmetrical relations have opposite senses. The relations before and after are thus distinct independently subsisting ontological atoms: these are “two different correlated relations, … each of which goes essentially from one term to another” (TK, 87).

In TK Russell rejects this view. He argues instead that the real ontological atom here is the sequence relation, and that this relation is directionless or completely neutral with regard to sense [see TK, 88]. According to his new view, the so-called sense of a relation is really a constructed notion: “Sense is not in the relation alone, or in the complex alone, but in the relations of the constituents to the complex which constitute ‘position’ in the complex” [TK, 88]. There are two ways that an asymmetrical binary relation can combine individuals into a fact. These two ways can be symbolized linguistically by the order in which the relata are mentioned in a sentence. The underlying ontological difference between the facts corresponding to these sentences does not consist in the individuals’ having different orders in the two cases; it consists, rather, in their occupying different positions in the complexes. Russell claims that each genuine relation is uniquely associated with a certain system of positional relations that expresses the various possible positions that its relata may have in a fact in which it serves as the relating relation. In a temporal sequence complex, in particular, one term of the sequence relation has the earlier position, and one term has the later position; i.e. one terms bears the being earlier in relation to the complex, and one term bears the being later in relation to it. In colloquial language it is possible to express this fact in two ways. One way involves mentioning the earlier term first and the later term second; in this case we use the predicate “before” in addition to the names of the two terms. The second way involves mentioning the later term first and the earlier term second; in this case the predicate “after” is used in addition to the two names. In a manner of speaking, the first way of expressing the fact gives us one sense of the sequence relation, while the second way gives us the other sense [see TK, 88]. Crucially, however, sense itself is not a feature of sequence, or of the temporal sequence complex, but rather something “derived from the two different relations which the terms of a dual complex have to the complex” [TK, 88]. As Russell emphasizes, however, these
positional relations themselves are not what have sense either, for they “do not essentially put one term before the other, as though the relation went from one term to another; this only appears to be the case owing to the misleading suggestions of the order of words in speech or writing” (TK, 88). The conclusion to be drawn, then, is that, on Russell’s new view, sense itself is not a primitive, or even an ultimately genuine, feature of the relation but rather something whose reality we mistakenly posit and then attribute to the relation under the influence of the misleading surface structure of our ordinary language.

It seems indeed that, in Russell’s new view, sense—in the only sense in which there is such a thing—is really a feature of language [see TK, 87–88, 147–48]. Russell claims that in ordinary language the words that we use to signify asymmetrical relations almost all have a definite sense [see TK, 88, 147]. And he argues that their possession of sense is what allows us to use them to distinguish between the two ways in which the asymmetrical relations that they signify are capable of combining their relata into facts [see TK, 147].

Thus although Russell accepts that an asymmetrical relation can unite the same pair of individuals in two ways to form two distinct facts, yet he denies that its capacity for doing so is a matter of its being intrinsically directional, i.e. of its having sense. According to his new account, for an asymmetrical relation to have the capacity in question is for its relata to occupy distinct positions in the facts that it forms. Rather than attempting to explain the difference between these positions in terms of the ordered argument places of relations, Russell now attempts to explain this difference in terms of the existence of complexes formed by relations which do not involve sense.

Russell’s analysis of the notion of relational sense thus provides us with a method for paraphrasing sentences that appear to express facts involving relations with sense as sentences that express facts which do not involve any such relations. From the point of view of surface structure, the unanalyzed sentences are atomic; these sentences thus appear to express atomic facts [i.e. facts involving no quantifiers or logical constants]. But the sentences which Russell’s analysis produces contain bound variables and sentential logical connectives. So these analyzed sentences express existentially quantified molecular facts. The analyzed sentences describe the contents and structure of atomic facts which appear to involve relations with sense without supposing that there are any such relations. Russell’s paraphrastic technique constitutes an eliminative analysis of relations with sense.22

22 I have characterized Russell’s treatment of relational sense as an eliminative analysis of relations with sense. But in fact the point of the analysis is epistemological rather than ontological. The point is to show how we can make judgments that appear to be about relations with sense without having to suppose that we ever are in fact acquainted with any such relations. Russell comes to think that our having acquaintance with relations with sense is problematic, in particular that it is at odds with the atomistic structure of his philosophy. He thus devises an analysis which recasts our putative knowledge about such relations as really being about relations which do
In thus purging relations with sense from his ontology, Russell does not renounce asymmetrical relations whose relata are homogeneous and the permutative atomic facts formed by them. On the contrary: his analysis of the putative fact that \( a \) is before \( b \) as the temporal sequence complex in which \( a \) has the earlier position and \( b \) has the later position assumes the existence of such entities (in this case, the relation of sequence, and the temporal sequence fact itself). Russell does not treat signs for asymmetrical relations as incomplete symbols to be eliminated by analysis.

Russell claims that our purchase on relations with sense, and on the notion of relational sense itself, derives from our understanding of the facts expressed by the sentences that his analysis produces (see \( \text{TK}, 111-12, 134-35, 144-48 \)); that is to say, we understand the [unanalyzed] predicates “before” and “after”, in part, because we are acquainted with the positional relations being earlier in and being later in. Clearly, however, our understanding of unanalyzed sentences involving relational predicates which appear to signify intrinsically directional relations antedates the discovery of what Russell takes as the true analysis of the facts that such sentences express. Still, his claim is that our understanding of these sentences has always really been a matter of our being acquainted with the constituents and with the logical forms of the underlying facts which only now have been revealed.

Russell’s analysis describes the structure of a temporal sequence complex using relations and complexes which do not involve the notion of sense. The distinctions that the analysis makes perspicuous must be grasped in order to make judgments about cases of temporal succession. In the absence of Russell’s analysis, colloquial language has been forced to compensate by building the relevant features of relations into the predicates which it uses to name them:

In ordinary language, the positions of the constituents in the complex are indicated by inflections, by the order of words, and by the use of pairs of terms such as before and after. But such methods of expression, except in the cases of pairs like before and after, are not sufficiently explicit for a symbolism which is to be a help in philosophical analysis. If such symbolism is to be obtained, it must be by means of our relations \( C_1, C_2, \ldots, C_n \) or something analogous.

The necessity for the above process is concealed by the fact that it is presupposed in ordinary language. When different complexes can be composed of the same constituents, it is essential that language should distinguish between them. Hence language cannot well express what is prior to these distinctions. If we are to name one out of several complexes composed of the same constituents, we can only do it by means of some such process as the above; hence such a complex always has rather a description than a complex proper name. But since names for unsymmetrical relations always take account of difference of sense, it is very hard to express what can be known before this distinction is taken into account. \( \text{TK}, 146-47 \)

According to Russell’s view, then, the words that we use to signify asymmetrical relations make it appear as if these relations are in fact intrinsically directional. And although this appearance is ultimately quite deceptive, yet it is born of the necessity for expressing the various distinctions that one must grasp in order to make judgments involving asymmetrical relations. Russell’s analysis makes

not involve the notion of sense. I shall postpone further discussion of this issue until I reach Section 5.4, at which point it shall be my primary concern.
these distinctions explicit. The logic of PM is the tool which Russell uses to carry out the analysis. Philosophy is thus a technical enterprise.

5.3 Permutative Judgments and Correspondence Truth

In the preceding section we examined a number of closely connected aspects of Russell's philosophy of the relevant period, including the nature and extent of the fundamental change in his conception of relations which occurs in TK, the difficulty which that change engenders for his account of the distinction between permutative atomic facts involving the same asymmetrical relating relation, and the strategy that he proposes for resolving this difficulty. In this section we shall consider the related issues of Russell's 1913 analysis of judgments that assert asymmetrical relations and of his characterization of correspondence truth for these sorts of judgments. We shall begin, however, by discussing Russell's analysis of judgments that involve symmetrical relations and the definition of truth that he offers for this class of judgments.

The structure of judgment—its essential compositeness—is central to Russell's definition of the correspondence that constitutes truth. In TK Russell attempts to give a definition of truth that exploits the structure of judgment as it is characterized by his 1913 multiple relation analysis. He states his leading and foundational idea as follows:

It is obvious that the question whether a belief is true depends only upon its objects. ... The belief is true when the objects are related as the belief asserts that they are. Thus the belief is true when there is a certain complex which must be a definable function of the belief, and which we shall call the corresponding complex, or corresponding fact. Our problem, therefore, is to define the correspondence. (TK, 144)

This is one problem to which Russell offers a relatively simple solution for one class of judgments. This is the class of judgments for which the corresponding complexes are, as he says, “completely determined by [their] constituents” (TK, 144). In all such cases, Russell claims, both the judgment-fact and the corresponding fact are non-permutative complexes. (We shall enter a partial qualification to this point shortly.) Since these kinds of complexes are always symmetrical with respect to each group of their homogeneous constituents, it follows that no new complexes will result from interchanging these entities (see TK, 123). Thus we can fix the identity of any non-permutative complex simply by enumerating its constituents and logical form (see TK, 123). Such a complex, but only such a complex, can be given a complex proper name, i.e. a fully analyzed sentence “composed of the names of its constituents suitably combined” (TK, 177), where “the mere enumeration of simple names determines the complex meant” (TK, 148).

An atomic judgment is one which asserts that a certain individual has a certain first-level property, or stands in a certain first-level relation to one or more other individuals. In Russell’s ontology, minds
are treated as individuals (see TK, 45; cf. Problems, 35, 39). So in any atomic judgment, the judger will be of the same logical type as one (or more) of the objects of the judgment. Consequently the judger and the object(s) in question will be homogeneous with respect to the fact which is the judgment. So they will be mutually permutable in that judgment-fact. But unless the judger is making a judgment about himself, the judgment-fact will also be permutable with respect to the judger and the object(s). If we interchange Aristotle and Socrates in Aristotle’s judgment that Socrates is mortal, we get a different fact, namely the fact that Socrates judges that Aristotle is mortal. Given this situation, it follows that no atomic judgment is non-permutative simpliciter, that is, non-permutative with respect to all of its homogeneous constituents. This point notwithstanding, however, an atomic judgment-fact may still be non-permutative with respect to its objects, i.e. the entities which constitute its subject-matter. In such a case, I shall sometimes speak of the judgment-fact as a non-permutative complex, and of the judgment itself as non-permutative, with the implicit proviso that its non-permutativeness is limited to its objects.

According to Russell, judgments that assert symmetrical relations are always non-permutative with respect to their objects (i.e. the entities which constitute their subject-matter), for these judgments are unchanged by interchanging their terms. In Russell’s view, then, to judge that \( a \) and \( b \) are similar just is to judge that \( b \) and \( a \) are similar: these are one and the same judgment. Russell thus treats the two fully analyzed sentences, “Judges \( \{s, a, b, \text{Similarity}, (\exists x) (\exists y) (\exists \Phi) \Phi xy\} \)” and “Judges \( \{s, b, a, \text{Similarity}, (\exists x) (\exists y) (\exists \Phi) \Phi xy\} \)”, as complex names that stand for precisely the same non-permutative atomic judgment-complex. In effect, these sentences are orthographic variants. (They are not, however, the same sentence.)

In the two sentences “\( a \) and \( b \) are similar” and “\( b \) and \( a \) are similar”, the orders of the names “\( a \)” and “\( b \)” are different. Thus in reading these sentences, or in hearing them spoken, we come into contact with these two names in different orders. No doubt, then, there is a difference in the order of our thoughts while we read the two sentences or hear them spoken. But according to Russell’s analysis of judgment this difference is not reflected in the judgments expressed by the sentences:

For the sake of definiteness, let us suppose that \( A \) and \( B \) are two patches of color, of distinguishable but very similar shades. In this case, we can say that “\( A \) and \( B \) are similar”, which will express absolutely the same proposition as is expressed by “\( B \) and \( A \) are similar”. Thus the relation of similarity, unlike that of time-sequence, gives rise to only one complex with given terms: the verbal difference according as \( A \) or \( B \) is mentioned first is merely the inevitable result of the temporal or spatial order of our words, and does not correspond to any difference in what the words mean. \( \text{TK, 112} \)

Russell reaches this conclusion in part by considering the nature of the judgment’s corresponding fact. Indeed, note how in the passage he connects the idea that the sentences express the same proposition with the idea that the relation of similarity can unite \( a \) and \( b \) into only one complex. In this context
Russell uses the word “proposition” to refer to the judgment, while he uses the word “complex” to refer to the corresponding fact. He seems to suggest that we cannot take the sentences “a and b are similar” and “b and a are similar” to express different judgments (or propositions) unless we can reasonably maintain that the fact (or complex) that corresponds to the one [so that the sentence or judgment is true if there is such a fact, false if not] is different from the fact that corresponds to the other. According to his metaphysics, however, similarity’s status as a symmetrical relation effectively precludes this possibility, for a symmetrical relation can combine its relata in only one way. If, then, there is some fact that consists of the individuals a and b related by the relation of similarity, there can be only one: a’s being similar to b is precisely the same fact as b’s being similar to a. And since these are the same fact, they must be the same complex of constituents. So the judgments expressed by the two sentences “a and b are similar” and “b and a are similar” correspond, if true, to precisely the same fact, i.e. complex of constituents. Hence by Russell’s criterion they must be the very same judgment. But this, of course, just is to say that the judgment that a and b are similar is non-permutative with respect to its objects. In general, then, when a fact is non-permutative, the judgment that asserts its existence will be non-permutative too.

Russell’s argumentative strategy here illustrates a crucial theme emphasized in the last chapter, namely that the two parts of the multiple relation theory are interdependent: the analysis of judgment informs and is informed by the characterization of the correspondence that constitutes truth. The analysis of judgment should make it obvious what fact obtains if the judgment is true, while the definition of truth should exploit the structure of the judgment-complex to characterize the correspondence that constitutes its truth.

Putting to one side the issue of the logical type of the judging subject, the homogeneous constituents of the fact which is s’s judgment that a and b are similar are the individuals a and b. So if this judgment-fact is non-permutative [with respect to its objects], then it must be symmetrical with respect to a and b. That is to say, a and b must occupy the same position in it; and they must bear the same positional relation to it. Otherwise, the judgment that a and b are similar would be distinct from the judgment that b and a are similar, the complex in which a and b are permuted. The formal reflection of the non-permutativeness of s’s judgment is thus that the system of positional relations that corresponds to the five-place judging relation which forms his judgment consists itself only of four binary relations. One of these relations determines the position occupied by s’s mind in the judgment-fact. One of them determines the position occupied by the relation of similarity in the judgment-fact. One of them determines the position occupied by the logical form of binary complexes in the judgment-fact. One of them determines the position occupied by the logical form of binary complexes in the judgment-fact.

And one of them determines the single position occupied both by a and by b in the judgment-fact. Of course, the judging relation itself is a constituent of the judgment-fact. So it must occupy a determinate position in the fact too. But since it is the judgment-fact’s relating relation, its position in the judgment-fact is determined not by the positional relations but rather by the logical form of the judgment-fact.

If a and b occupy the same position in s’s judgment that a and b are similar, then shouldn’t the particular judging relation that forms this judgment be a four-place relation rather than a five-place one? The answer is no because position in a complex is no longer understood in terms of the argument places of the complex’s relating relation. An n-place relation combines with n objects to form a complex of n + 1 constituents. But if the relation’s relata are all of the same logical type, then there may be no more than two positions in the complex occupied by the constituents.
In connection with the issue of truth, then, the crucial point about a judgment which is non-permutative with respect to its objects is that these entities just are the constituents and logical form of its non-permutative (would-be) corresponding fact. An enumeration of these various entities will therefore suffice to fix the identity of that (putative) fact. In _TK_ Russell exploits this relationship between non-permutative judgments and ordinary non-permutative facts to define the correspondence in virtue of which the latter complexes inflict truth upon some of the former complexes. For non-permutative judgments, then, Russell is able to give a rather simple definition of truth, as follows:

Let our belief be

$$[S, F, x_1, x_2, \ldots x_n]$$

where $J$ is the relation “belief” or “judgment”, $S$ is the subject, $F$ the form, and $x_1, x_2, \ldots x_n$ the objects of the belief; and suppose that $F$ is a form such that there cannot be more than one complex having this form and composed of given constituents; suppose, that is to say, that no complex having this form is homogeneous and unsymmetrical with respect to any of its constituents. Then, if there is any complex whose constituents are $x_1, x_2, \ldots x_n$ there can only be one; this one may therefore be defined as the corresponding complex. If there is such a complex, the belief is true; if not, it is false. A belief of this sort may be called non-permutative, because no different belief results from permuting the objects. (_TK_, 144)

When both the judgment and its would-be corresponding fact are non-permutative then the task of defining the correspondence that constitutes truth is quite straightforward. In such a case the correspondence is a definable function of the judgment in that it consists in the judgment’s objects’ being the fact’s constituents and logical form (see _TK_, 144–45). Thus the judgment that $a$ and $b$ are similar is true, according to Russell’s simple definition of truth, just in case there is an elementary binary fact whose only constituents are the individuals $a$ and $b$ and the relation of similarity.\(^{24}\)

Otherwise, the judgment is false.

It would seem, however, that this just is to say that we judge truly that $a$ and $b$ are similar when but only when these two individuals are in fact similar. Throughout _TK_, Russell appeals to the notion of self-evidence (and to its kin) in order to justify his various philosophical claims.\(^{25}\) Thus he speaks, for example, of his earlier admission of false propositions on an ontological par with facts as “repugnant” (_TK_, 109) because, by running “counter to the rejection of unrealities, fictions, and mere possibilities which seems to me, on general grounds, necessary and vital to all sound philosophizing” (_TK_, 155), the

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\(^{24}\) Since the form does not determine the order of the constituents in the corresponding fact, there is a sense in which Russell’s simple definition of truth leaves out the way in which these objects are to be combined. In Russell’s eyes, however, this is not a defect of the definition but rather its point. The point is that, if we are given the judgment, then we can specify the corresponding fact by brute appeal to [sameness of] objects and thus without our having to indicate how these objects are to be combined. If exactly one complex can be formed of a given group of objects then to specify that complex we need only list its constituents. Of course more can be said about their manner of combination in the complex. But for the purposes of defining correspondence truth for non-permutative judgments no more needs to be said.

\(^{25}\) Indeed part of Russell’s epistemological program in _TK_ is concerned with the analysis of the notion of self-evidence. Russell intends for this notion to play the foundational role in all propositional knowledge.
doctrine does “violence to instincts which deserve respect” (TK, 108). In keeping with this mode of argument, Russell insists that the chief ground in favor of any theory of truth “must always be that it satisfies our feelings as to what is obvious concerning truth, and that it adds nothing except analysis” (TK, 149). In the case of his simple definition of correspondence truth, Russell has no doubt that it satisfies this adequacy criterion fully:

Now if we ask: “When is the belief that \( A \) and \( B \) are similar true?” the only possible answer is: “When \( A \) and \( B \) are similar”—that is to say, when there is a complex composed of \( A \) and \( B \) and similarity. It would seem, therefore, that we have merely expressed what is obvious. This is the whole of the positive argument in favor of our theory. (TK, 149)

We should perhaps see this sort of appeal as connected with the idea that all knowledge is based upon certain claims simply striking us as intrinsically obvious [see “The Regressive Method of Discovering the Premises of Mathematics”, 279].

Russell’s simple definition of truth, while it may have the merit of being consonant with our [supposed] intuitions concerning the notion of truth, is nonetheless quite limited in its scope. Most obviously, the definition does not directly apply to permutative judgments (i.e. judgments that are permutative with respect to their objects) that correspond to permutative facts. There are two connected difficulties here. The first has to do with the permutativeness of the judgment-fact; and the second has to do with the permutativeness of the corresponding fact. In the case of a permutative judgment we can obtain a different judgment by rearranging its objects: that Dolnick judges that \( a \) is before \( b \) is one judgment, that Dolnick judges that \( b \) is before \( a \) is another. Since these are different judgments, it follows that they correspond, if true, to different facts. But these corresponding facts are permutative too: that \( a \) is before \( b \) is one fact, that \( b \) is before \( a \) is another. The objects of the permutative judgment that \( a \) is before \( b \) are the individuals \( a \) and \( b \), the relation of sequence, and the logical form of elementary binary complexes. But these entities are the objects of the permutative judgment that \( b \) is before \( a \) as well. So the fact that a given judgment has these various entities as its objects does not suffice to establish what judgment it is. Similarly the permutative fact that \( a \) is before \( b \) has the same three constituents and the same logical form as the permutative fact that \( b \) is before \( a \). So here again we see that merely enumerating the fact’s constituents and form is not sufficient for fixing its identity. In general, then, when more than one fact can be formed of the objects of a

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26 For a detailed discussion of this idea, see Hylton, Russell, Idealism, 321–25, 338–39, 382–84. Note also that in this spirit Russell offers a fourth reason for the necessity of form. In TK he claims that it is simply obvious that form is required: “It is obvious, in fact, that when all the constituents of a complex have been enumerated, there remains something which may be called the ‘form’ of the complex, which is the way in which the constituents are combined in the complex” (TK, 98).

27 Nor does it apply to general judgments, i.e. those expressed most perspicuously by sentences containing quantifiers. Given the pervasiveness of descriptions, this is crucial.
given judgment then enumerating those objects does not suffice to fix that judgment’s identity or to fix the identity of the fact (if any) to which it corresponds. In this case, then, the existence of a fact whose constituents and logical form are all and only the given judgment’s objects does not give the sole criterion for the judgment’s truth. So Russell’s simple definition of truth does not apply to the judgment.

How does Russell manage to resolve the difficulty for his multiple relation theory that results from the phenomenon of permutativeness? In *Problems* he attempts to resolve this difficulty by offering a definition of truth that is specifically designed for permutative judgments. For this class of judgments, Russell seeks to specify the identity of the corresponding fact by correlating the objects occupying the ordered argument places of the judgment’s relating relation with the objects occupying the ordered argument places of the relating relation of the corresponding fact (as described in the last chapter; see Chapter 4, Section 4.2, pp. 81–82, above). In *TK*, however, the 1912 characterization of correspondence truth for judgments involving asymmetrical relations is no longer available to Russell, for the revised conception of relations that he sets out in the book is incompatible with it. The problem is that, on this conception, no single system of positional relations can determine the positions of the constituents in facts formed by different relations (see Section 5.2, pp. 117–118, above, for further discussion of this point). But since a judgment-fact and its corresponding fact must involve different relating relations, it follows that there is no longer any method for comparing the position that an object occupies in a judgment-fact with the position that it occupies in the corresponding fact. Russell thus needs a new analysis of the judgments expressed by the sentences “a is before b” and “b is before a”, as well as a new account of how one of these judgments can be true and the other false.

In order to overcome the difficulty created by his new view of relations, Russell does not offer an alternative definition of truth for permutative judgments. Instead, he holds fast to his simple definition of truth, and attempts to eliminate permutative judgments and their permutative corresponding facts in favor of non-permutative judgments and non-permutative corresponding facts. In effect, Russell reduces (or proposes a method for reducing) each permutative judgment to a conjunction of non-permutative judgments and the permutative corresponding fact to a conjunction of non-permutative facts. Russell thus extends his simple definition of truth to permutative judgments and to the permutative facts to which they correspond by attempting to find for these particular complexes “associated complexes unambiguously determined by their constituents” (*TK*, 145). Associated complexes are, as he says, “complexes which exist whenever the original complexes exist, and not otherwise” (*TK*, 145). To define a permutative fact’s associated non-permutative fact, Russell deploys the system of positional relations that is uniquely associated with the permutative fact’s relating relation.
Russell thus distinguishes the permutative fact that \(a\) is before \(b\) (or that \(b\) is after \(a\)) from its associated non-permutative fact. He claims that the permutative fact that \(a\) is before \(b\) is an atomic complex. More specifically it is the actual temporal sequence complex in which \(a\) has the earlier position and \(b\) has the later position. Again, this temporal sequence complex is a permutative fact: by rearranging the individuals \(a\) and \(b\) we obtain a different fact, namely the temporal sequence complex in which \(b\) has the earlier position and \(a\) has the later position (i.e. the fact that \(b\) is before \(a\), or that \(a\) is after \(b\)). The phrase “the fact in which \(a\) is earlier and \(b\) is later” is a definite description. Using this definite description, we can form the sentence: “The fact in which \(a\) is earlier and \(b\) is later exists”. This sentence can be expressed in quantificational notation as: “\(\exists p \ (a \text{ is earlier in } p \& \ b \text{ is later in } p \& (\forall q \ (a \text{ is earlier in } q \& \ b \text{ is later in } q) \supset q = p))\)”. This general sentence asserts that the relevant temporal sequence complex exists. The fact for which it stands, however, is not itself that particular atomic complex but rather an existentially generalized molecular fact, asserting the existence of that atomic fact. This quantified molecular fact is a complex in which the higher-level relation \(\exists p \ (\hat{f}p \& \hat{g}p)\) relates the complex property \(a \text{ is earlier in } p\) to the complex property \(b \text{ is later in } p\). This existentially quantified fact is molecular, because it involves the notion of conjunction, and the complex properties \(a \text{ is earlier in } p\) and \(b \text{ is later in } p\) are its atomic constituents. The fact itself is non-permutative with respect to its atomic constituents, and each of these atomic constituents is non-permutative because it is heterogeneous (see TK, 147). The fact is non-permutative with respect to its atomic constituents, because its relating relation \(\exists p \ (\hat{f}p \& \hat{g}p)\) is symmetrical with respect to its homogeneous relata, the complex properties \(a \text{ is earlier in } p\) and \(b \text{ is later in } p\). Accordingly, the two sentences “\(\exists p \ (a \text{ is earlier in } p \& \ b \text{ is later in } p)\)” and “\(\exists p \ (b \text{ is later in } p \& \ a \text{ is earlier in } p)\)” express precisely the same fact. The fact’s atomic constituents are non-permutative, because the positional relations \(\text{being earlier in}\) and \(\text{being later in}\) take objects of distinct ontological types as arguments. The type restrictions on the argument places of these relations entail that the expression “\(\hat{x} \text{ is earlier in } a\)” is meaningless, rather than the name of a complex property in which the individual \(a\) occupies the \(\hat{p}\) argument place of the relation expressed by “\(\hat{x} \text{ is earlier in } \hat{p}\)”. The fact expressed by the sentence “There is a fact in which \(a\) is earlier and \(b\) is later” is thus a non-permutative complex. Moreover, it obtains if, but only if, the atomic, permutative, temporal sequence complex whose existence it asserts actually obtains. It is therefore the associated non-permutative complex of that temporal sequence fact, i.e. of the atomic fact that \(a\) is before \(b\).

To recapitulate: the atomic fact that \(a\) is before \(b\) is an elementary binary complex whose constituents are the individuals \(a\) and \(b\) and the relation of sequence. In this temporal sequence complex, the individual \(a\) has the earlier position and the individual \(b\) has the later position. The existentially
generalized fact which asserts this temporal sequence fact’s existence is its associated non-permutative fact. Russell claims that this non-permutative fact is the complex which corresponds to the judgment expressed by the sentence “a is before b” [see TK, 148]. What, then, is his account of the nature of this particular judgment? What are its objects? What logical form does it involve?

Russell insists that the judgment that a is before b cannot be a relation among the judger, the individuals a and b, the relation of sequence, and the logical form of elementary binary complexes [see TK, 111, 135]. He raises two separate though related objections to this analysis. The first objection is epistemological in its orientation and shall be considered in more detail in the next section (see Section 5.4, pp. 136–138, below). Very briefly, then, the first objection is that a subject’s being separately acquainted with the various entities in question does not suffice for his understanding the statement that a is before b, because it does not distinguish his understanding that statement from his understanding the statement that a is after b [see TK, 135]. The problem here is that neither the relation of sequence nor the logical form of elementary binary complexes carries with it any information about the two distinct positions that an individual can occupy in a temporal sequence complex [see TK, 89, 146]. Thus in order to distinguish understanding the statement that a is before b from understanding the statement that b is before a, Russell includes the notion of position in his analysis of the two understanding-complexes.

The second objection, which by this point in our discussion should be very familiar, is metaphysical in nature and has to do with the issue of the correspondence that constitutes truth. According to this objection, two binary complexes can be formed of the individuals a and b and the relation of sequence, so the mere fact that a given judgment contains these various entities, and the relevant logical form, does not suffice to settle the issue of its identity, while the existence of a fact composed of the entities in question is not enough to resolve the question of its truth or falsehood.

In effect, Russell’s response to these two difficulties is the same: he simply identifies the apparently atomic judgment expressed by the sentence “a is before b” with the existentially generalized molecular judgment expressed by the sentence “There is some fact in which a is earlier and b is later” [see TK, 145–46]. Again, the question is: what are the constituents and logical form of this judgment?

Russell claims, to begin with, that the sentences “a is before something” and “a is earlier in some complex” are synonymous, that they express the same judgment, that if true they correspond to the same fact [see TK, 134–35]. The constituents of this judgment are a certain four-place relation of judging, the judger’s mind, the individual a, the positional relation being earlier in, and the logical form of binary facts in which a simple object is related to a complex one, i.e. the fact that (∃x) (∃p) (∃Φ) Φxp [see TK, 135]. The two sentences “Dolnick judges that a is earlier in some complex” and “Dolnick
judges that \( b \) is later in some complex” may thus be more perspicuously rewritten as “Judges \( \{\text{Dolnick, a, } x \text{ is earlier in } p, \exists x (\exists p (\exists \Phi \Phi xp))\} \) and “Judges \( \{\text{Dolnick, b, } x \text{ is later in } p, \exists x (\exists p (\exists \Phi \Phi xp))\} \)”, respectively. The judgments expressed by these two sentences are non-permutative with respect to their objects, and the facts to which they correspond respectively are themselves non-permutative complexes [see TK, 135].

But now consider the judgment-fact expressed by the sentence “Dolnick judges that there is some complex in which \( a \) is earlier and \( b \) is later”. What are the constituents and logical form of this judgment-fact? In the completed portions of TK Russell gives no definitive account of this judgment. The natural move to make in this case is to identify the judgment with the fact expressed by the sentence “Judges \( \{\text{Dolnick, a, b, } x \text{ is earlier in } p, x \text{ is later in } p, \exists x (\exists p (\exists \Phi \Phi xp))\} \). The problem, however, is that, so conceived, the judgment is permutative (see TK, 154). The individuals \( a \) and \( b \) and the positional relations being earlier in and being later in can combine with the logical form of binary complexes consisting of a simple and a complex to form two distinct existentially generalized molecular facts: namely the facts expressed respectively by the sentences “There is a fact in which \( a \) is earlier and \( b \) is later” and “There is a fact in which \( b \) is earlier and \( a \) is later”.\(^{18}\)

Perhaps, then, what we ought to do instead is to identify the judgment with the fact expressed by the sentence “Judges \( \{\text{Dolnick, a is earlier in } p, b \text{ is later in } p, \exists p (\exists \Phi (\exists \Psi (\Phi p \& \Psi p)))\} \). In this case, however, the fact involves the notion of conjunction. Russell acknowledges this point but postpones further discussion of it to a later stage which was not reached before the book was abandoned:

The proposition “\( a \) is before \( b \)” must be interpreted as meaning “there is a complex in which \( a \) is earlier and \( b \) is later”. This involves the word “and”, which is one of the words that indicate molecular complexes. We cannot therefore deal, at present, with the understanding of this proposition, which must be postponed until we come to deal with molecular propositional thinking. (TK, 135; cf. TK, 145–46)

Russell’s analysis of the judgment expressed by “\( a \) is before \( b \)” gives a curious result. The actual temporal sequence complex in which \( a \) is earlier and \( b \) is later is an atomic fact. But the understanding

\(^{18}\) Here I have assumed that in the special case of quantified facts the logical form is a constituent of the complex. There is some support in the text for this interpretation of Russell’s view. Russell says, for example: “It is to be observed that, if it is true that something is similar to something, then there is a single fact expressed by these words, and towards this fact we may have a dual relation of the nature of an acquaintance. This may be called perceiving the fact. It cannot be identified, in this case, with understanding the proposition, as it could in the case of the pure form, because here the understanding of the proposition is a three-term relation, and the proposition is of a form which does not logically guarantee truth. And for the same reasons, perceiving the fact cannot be identified with believing the proposition” [TK, 133]. Obviously acquaintance with the fact that something is similar to something is not simply acquaintance with the relation of similarity. Nor is it acquaintance with the fact that \( a \) and \( b \) are similar [see TK, 133]. On the other hand, there are various passages in TK where Russell seems to deny that the logical form of a quantified fact is among the fact’s constituents. For instance, at one point he says: “The proposition ‘There is a complex in which \( A \) is earlier and \( B \) later’ is one which contains four constituents, namely \( A \) and \( B \) and earlier and later” [TK, 145]. Ultimately the issue is not settled in TK. Russell fails to give an explicit account of general facts before abandoning the book. And his expository rhetoric, including his speaking of facts which involve apparent variables as molecular complexes, reflects the unsettled nature of his views on these matters.
of this fact is not an atomic understanding [see TK, 177]. Russell acknowledges this point and suggests that it is one of the drawbacks of the analysis:

This result is curious, for the complex “a-before-b” is atomic, and yet the corresponding proposition is not atomic. It is not very easy to believe that such a difference can exist, and perhaps some other theory of “sense” can be found which would avoid such a difference. (TK, 135)

According to the 1913 multiple relation theory, when I appear to judge that the relation before relates the individual a to the individual b, in that particular order, what I really assert is the associated non-permutative fact [see TK, 147–48]. That is, I directly assert the general fact that there is some atomic fact in which a has the earlier position and b has the later position. The objects that figure in my judgment are the atomic constituents and logical form of this existentially quantified molecular fact. Since there can be only one fact consisting of these constituents, united in this form, there can be only one judgment that has these various entities as its objects. My judgment itself is therefore non-permutative (with respect to its objects). And this has the immediate consequence that Russell’s simple account of the correspondence which constitutes truth applies to it [see TK, 148]. According to this account, my judgment is true just in case there is a fact consisting of its objects, other than the logical form, united in that form. Thus although my judgment is true if there is a permutative atomic fact consisting of the objects a, b, and sequence suitably combined, and is false otherwise, yet this temporal sequence fact “is not itself the one directly ‘corresponding’ to the belief, but is one whose existence is asserted, by description, in the belief, and is the condition for the existence of the complex which corresponds directly to the belief” (TK, 148). On the 1913 multiple relation analysis, then, the judgment expressed by “a is before b” does not involve the sequence relation. There is, on this analysis, no atomic judgment that a is before b, only an existentially general, molecular surrogate.

It is evident, then, that Russell’s proposal for extending his simple definition of truth to permutative judgments presupposes his having some appropriate account of molecular logical forms and of the constituents and structure of judgments that assert molecular facts. Unfortunately, TK contains almost no discussion of these issues. Russell abandoned the book before he reached that portion which was to have dealt with molecular propositional thought. In the completed portions of TK, Russell does make some remarks about molecular logical forms, molecular judgments, and molecular facts; but his remarks are too brief and tentative for any definite picture of these notions to emerge.

Moreover, my concern in this dissertation is with Russell’s reasons for abandoning the multiple relation theory of judgment. In Chapter 7 I shall argue that Wittgenstein’s objections to this theory lead Russell to give up the approach and to stop work on TK. Wittgenstein’s objections do not pertain to molecular facts or to the judgments which express them; rather, it is problems with Russell’s theory
of atomic judgments that discredit it in Wittgenstein’s eyes and that lead Russell to abandon the view. So I shall not go into the issue of how Russell might have extended the multiple relation theory to molecular judgments, including generalizations, any further.

5.4 Argument from Acquaintance

Throughout this chapter I have emphasized the change in Russell’s conception of relations which takes place in TK. And I have explained the various modifications which Russell makes to the theory of facts and to the multiple relation theory of judgment in 1913 in order to accommodate this change. To this point, I have not, however, said anything about Russell’s reasons for making the change itself: why does he give up the idea that the argument places of relations have an intrinsic order? In this final section I shall attempt to answer this question.

One possible answer to this question is offered by Ricketts, who suggests that Russell becomes dissuaded of the view that the argument places of relations have an intrinsic order by a synonymy argument against his 1912 characterization of correspondence truth.\(^{29}\) Consider, again, the two sentences “a is before b” and “b is after a”. In TK Russell now takes it as obvious that the same fact whose existence verifies the former sentence also verifies the latter sentence; according to him the same configuration of the same three elements is in question in each case [see TK, 85, 87]. On the basis of this assessment, Russell insists that whether we choose to symbolize the complex by the sentence “a is before b” or by the sentence “b is after a” is “a mere matter of language” [TK, 85]. He thus concludes that these sentences are synonymous, i.e. that they express the same judgment. Since, for Russell, the identity of a judgment is determined by the identities of its constituents, together with the manner of their arrangement, it follows that the relational predicates “before” and “after” must name the same asymmetrical relation; our understanding of these two predicates is derived from our acquaintance with that relation [see TK, 85]. In TK Russell takes it that this point holds generally. He thus identifies mutually converse asymmetrical relations [see TK, 87].

Strictly speaking, the predicates “before” and “after” are not synonyms, since replacing one of them by the other in a given sentence may alter that sentence’s truth-value [see TK, 85]. This fact notwithstanding, however, any judgment which can be expressed using one of them can also be expressed using the other. But then there is no more point to having both predicates in the language than there is for having multiple names of the same object. So we should be able to eliminate one

\(^{29}\) See Ricketts, “Pictures”, 69.
of the predicates from the language without loss of expressive power.\(^\text{30}\) Two questions at once arise: which of the two predicates should we eliminate? and on what basis are we to make this decision?

If the predicates “before” and “after” name precisely the same asymmetrical relation, it follows that either before or after is not a genuine entity at all. So the obvious answer to both of these questions is that we should retain the predicate which stands for the genuine relation and eliminate the one which does not. Just here we are confronted with a difficulty. If every asymmetrical relation is intrinsically directional, then there is no more reason to suppose that before is the genuine ontological primitive than there is for supposing that after is the genuine ontological primitive. But then there is no more reason to suppose that the predicates name the relation before than there is for supposing that they name the relation after. Russell claims, indeed, that there can be no basis for choice between an asymmetrical relation and its converse, that any such choice has “no logical foundation” (TK, 87).

So if Russell is to accommodate the synonymy of the sentences “a is before b” and “b is after a” while persisting in the view that the relational predicates “before” and “after” name one and the same asymmetrical relation, then in the light of the fact that he denies that there is any basis for taking one of the relations before or after as the genuine ontological primitive, he must give up the idea that sense is an intrinsic feature of relations. He must in fact renounce relations with sense all together and admit the existence of asymmetrical (or non-symmetrical) relations only if they are also directionless. In TK Russell takes precisely this approach. In combination with the theory of position that he articulates in the book, the approach obviates the view that the ordering of argument places is part of the relation itself. This now completely otiose view is accordingly rejected.

The argument that I have just sketched is, I conjecture, the one that Ricketts sees as bringing about Russell’s change of mind about the fundamental nature of relations. Ricketts suggests that the source of this synonymy argument is Wittgenstein.\(^\text{31}\) There is, however, precious little direct textual evidence to support this suggestion. Granted, in NL Wittgenstein does repeatedly criticize Russell’s multiple relation theory of judgment (see NL, 94, 103; cf. Tractatus, 5.5422). But in doing so, he does not mention the problem that asymmetrical relations pose for it. Ricketts points out, however, that Russell drafts the chapter in TK in which he identifies relations and their converses shortly after a conversation with Wittgenstein on 20 May 1913. In a letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell, postmarked the following day, Russell reveals that in the course of their conversation Wittgenstein raised objections to a previous version of the multiple relation theory (see #782). Ricketts reports that this chronology

\(^{30}\) Recall that in PLA Russell says: “In a logically perfect language, there will be one word and no more for every simple object” (PLA, 176).

\(^{31}\) See Ricketts, “Pictures”, 69.
coupled with Russell’s reversal of a position that had been stable since 1903 is what leads him to suspect that Wittgenstein was the source of the synonymy argument against the 1912 characterization of correspondence truth.\textsuperscript{13}

An alternative, though related, explanation of Russell’s reasons for taking the sentences “a is before b” and “b is after a” to be synonymous is offered by Hylton. He suggests that the adoption of the multiple relation theory, especially the associated shift to a correspondence view of truth, leads Russell to coarser standards for synonymy:

The multiple relation theory of judgment is in one obvious way a denial of the fundamental Platonic Atomist notion of a proposition: according to the multiple relation theory there are no propositions. More subtly and indirectly, the new theory also threatens a vaguer and more general idea that stands behind Russellian propositions. This is the idea that the criteria which must be satisfied for two sentences to say the same thing are extremely stringent. This idea is manifest, before the introduction of the multiple relation theory, in the view that two sentences which are intuitively very alike in meaning may nonetheless express different propositions.\textsuperscript{13}

Thus, to return to our example, the sentence “a is before b” expresses a different proposition from that expressed by the sentence “b is after a”. A proposition is defined by its constituents (and their order), and on Russell’s early account the proposition expressed by “a is before b” consists of different constituents (in a different order) from that expressed by “b is after a”. Here, then, we have two sentences which seem to make precisely the same assertion but in fact do not do so, according to Russell’s early view, because they express different propositions. Russell’s old notion of a proposition thus gives rise to the idea that what we express is susceptible of extremely fine-grained distinctions. Hylton argues that the multiple relation theory threatens to undermine that idea:

The subversive claim is that truth is definable in terms of the more fundamental idea of fact. This claim makes it natural to think that when two sentences are true (or false) in virtue of the same fact then they say exactly the same thing, it thus becomes hard to maintain that they express different propositions.\textsuperscript{14}

In the new view we cannot maintain that the sentences “a is before b” and “b is after a” differ in expressive power unless we can believe that the complex corresponding to the one (so that the sentence is true if there is such a complex, false if not) is different from the complex corresponding to the other. But once articulated, this position is quite implausible. The same complex whose existence makes true the judgment expressed by “a is before b” also makes true the judgment expressed by “b is after a”: it is the same objects in the world, and the same configuration of those objects, which is at stake in each case (see TK, 85). On this basis, Hylton concludes:

It thus becomes natural to think that two sentences or beliefs which are made true (or false) by the same fact have the same expressive power, and to distinguish facts less finely than the old view distinguished propositions.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{13} See Ricketts, “Pictures”, 69.
\textsuperscript{14} Hylton, \textit{Russell, Idealism}, 351.
\textsuperscript{15} Hylton, \textit{Russell, Idealism}, 351.
This tendency is manifest in TK, both in Russell’s taking sentences like “a is before b” and “b is after a” as synonymous, and in his identifying asymmetrical relations and their converses.

It is reasonable to suppose that multiple factors contribute to Russell’s change of mind about the nature of relations. Russell seems indeed to adduce no single conclusive argument against his old view of relations but rather only a number of considerations that suggest its potential weaknesses. In this regard, then, the issues raised respectively by Ricketts and by Hylton are crucial to understanding the change in Russell’s view, and should be acknowledged as significantly influencing that change. That being said, there is, I believe, another issue, one not mentioned in this context either by Ricketts or by Hylton, which also motivates the change. In particular, it seems to me that Russell comes to believe that there is a fundamental tension between, on the one hand, his atomism, and, on the other hand, his implicit assumption in Problems and elsewhere that acquaintance with an asymmetrical relation is sufficient for understanding its contribution to any judgment that asserts it. The revised conception of relations that Russell sets out in TK is, I contend, his attempt to resolve this tension.

On my reading, then, Russell’s reasons for his change of mind about the fundamental nature of relations are drawn largely from considerations having to do with his notion of acquaintance. As I have said more than once, for Russell acquaintance is the only fundamental epistemological notion. Acquaintance itself is a binary relation of direct and unmediated contact between the mind and objects outside it [see Problems, 28]. The directness and immediacy of this contact are crucial to Russell’s idea of acquaintance, for he intends these features of the relation to preclude the possibility of there being any complexity to our contact with outside objects. And in precluding this possibility he seeks to ensure that our knowledge of the objects themselves is always wholly presuppositionless and unproblematic. Russell thus presumes that, if the mind’s knowing an object is at bottom a matter of its being in direct and unmediated contact with the object itself, then there is no room for any subjective element to intermediate between the mind and the object. Thus if our contact with outside objects is always direct and unmediated, then nothing can interfere with or distort our knowledge of the objects themselves. So by postulating the relation of acquaintance, and taking it to play the fundamental role in knowledge, Russell seeks to show that our knowledge of objects [and thus of the world which they compose] presupposes nothing other than the mind that knows, which is purely passive in cognition, and the objects themselves, which are wholly unaffected by their being known. In this way, he argues, acquaintance enables us to have knowledge of the world which is genuinely objective.

As Russell views matters, for acquaintance to perform the desired function the knowledge of objects with which it provides us must be purely atomistic in nature. Such knowledge must be strictly of the object’s bare nature, and therefore must involve no complex [i.e., presumably, propositional
or judgmental) knowledge about the object at all. It is tempting to think that Russell can ensure the essentially atomistic character of knowledge by acquaintance by restricting the scope of our acquaintance with external objects to logical atoms alone, for these independently existing, absolutely simple entities possess no complexity at all which the mind might come to know through its having direct and unmediated contact with them in isolation. For various reasons, however, it is not open to Russell to take this approach. Instead, he admits acquaintance with complex objects but stipulates that such acquaintance need carry with it no knowledge about their complexity. In other words, Russell does at least sometimes allow knowledge by acquaintance of complexes, but in doing so he assimilates them to simples, treating them as epistemologically simple. Thus in PM, for example, he says:

Some of the objects which occur in the universe are complex. When an object is complex, it consists of interrelated parts. Let us consider a complex object composed of two parts \( a \) and \( b \) standing to each other in the relation \( R \). The complex object “\( a \)-in-the-relation-\( R \)-to-\( b \)” may be capable of being perceived; when perceived, it is perceived as one object. Attention may show that it is complex; we then judge that \( a \) and \( b \) stand in the relation \( R \). Such a judgment, being derived from perception by mere attention, may be called a “judgment of perception”. This judgment of perception, considered as an actual occurrence, is a relation of four terms, namely \( a \) and \( b \) and \( R \) and the percipient. The perception, on the contrary, is a relation of two terms, namely “\( a \)-in-the-relation-\( R \)-to-\( b \)”, and the percipient. (PM, i. 43)

For Russell, then, acquaintance with a complex object does not involve any knowledge about its complexity. We can, of course, acquire knowledge about the object’s complexity. But to acquire this knowledge entails our forming a judgment about the object. And in our judgment the complex object is, as it were, decomposed into its simple components (see also Problems, 98–100).

The contrast between judgment as the vehicle for complex propositional knowledge on the one hand, and acquaintance as the vehicle for atomistic objectual knowledge on the other, is blurred in Russell’s early work by the view that propositions are themselves objects of acquaintance. For this view has the immediate consequence that complex knowledge must fall within the purview of acquaintance. With the advent of the multiple relation theory, the contrast between propositions and (simple) objects, and thus between propositional and non-propositional forms of knowledge, emerges more clearly. In doing so, it forces Russell’s attention to issues having to do with the limits of acquaintance. What is at stake here is not merely the identification of suitable objects of acquaintance, that is, objects which, in the light of the epistemological constraints imposed by the notion of acquaintance, Russell can reasonably suppose to play the role of relata to this relation. What is also at stake here is the very nature of the constraints themselves. Connected with this issue are questions as to the nature and extent of purely atomistic knowledge; of what it means to have knowledge of an object’s bare nature; of the boundary between simple and complex knowledge; and of how much Russell can, as it were, pack into his notion of acquaintance without thereby undermining its essential character and the foundational role that he intends it to play in all our knowledge and understanding of the world. I think that it is in the course of
ruminating on these kinds of questions, and, more particularly, the atomistic constraints that he sees as being built into the idea of direct and unmediated contact, that Russell becomes persuaded that the argument places of relations are not intrinsically ordered after all.

In TK Russell is centrally concerned with questions about the basis of our knowledge, its manner of acquisition, and its ultimate justification. A crucial component of the epistemological program that he pursues in the book is the need to explain the nature and status of our knowledge of abstract universals, especially relations (see TK, 79–89). Russell attempts to show that the knowledge that we have of relations is direct knowledge, rather than strictly based on inference (see TK, 82–85, 100). The need to demonstrate this point connects with his principle of acquaintance. On Russell’s analysis, most (if not all) of our judgments include relations among their objects. So if we must have acquaintance with the objects of our judgments, then we must have acquaintance with relations.

Russell states that the function of the relation of acquaintance is to provide “the data for judgment and inference” (TK, 100). So on his account the point of this notion is to guarantee that we have direct and unmediated contact with the things themselves concerning which we judge. The principle of acquaintance implies that our acquaintance with the various entities that figure in our judgments should be prior to our making the judgments themselves.

Russell thus insists that the relation of judgment presupposes that of acquaintance (see TK, 45–47, 110). Implicit in this idea of presupposition is the claim that acquaintance with an object is the only thing necessary for the judging to be possible, and thus that acquaintance provides the judger with whatever information about the object is relevant for understanding its contribution to the judgment. Presumably there are cases where a subject’s making a certain judgment about a certain entity demands his making prior judgments about that entity. But at some point we must reach the bottom level of analysis and thus a class of judgments that do not presuppose any other judgments. Epistemologically, these judgments, at the bottom level of analysis, presuppose only our being acquainted with their constituents.

In Problems Russell implicitly assumes that judgments that involve relations with sense belong to the class of judgments for which acquaintance with their constituents is the only thing necessary for the judging to be possible (see Problems, 74, 91–93). He thus becomes committed to the view that acquaintance with an asymmetrical relation suffices for understanding its sense.

It is therefore important to observe that Russell gives up this view in TK. In that book, he implicitly denies that mere acquaintance with an asymmetrical relation suffices for understanding the contribution which it makes to any judgment that asserts it. To this end, he argues that a subject’s being separately acquainted with the relation of sequence, and with the individuals $a$ and $b$, and with
the logical form of a two-place relational fact, are not the only acts of acquaintance that are required for the subject’s judging that a is before b. On the basis of the subject’s acquaintance with these objects alone, even if they all were united by his mind in one act of judgment, it would not be possible to distinguish the judgment that a is before b from the judgment that b is before a. Russell’s worry here is not simply the definability of correspondence truth for permutative judgments (see Section 5.3, pp. 125–128, above). In this case his worry is rather an epistemological one, having to do with the possibility of explaining the nature and status of our grasp of the distinction between the mutually converse relations before and after. Thus Russell says:

But for the difficulty of naming, i.e. of knowing when to speak of before and when of after, we could explain the understanding of “a is before b” more simply than was done in the above account. We may say: There are two understanding-complexes consisting of the subject, the form “x and y in a relation”, sequence, A and B, and of these two complexes, one is called the understanding of “A is before B”, while the other is called the understanding of “B is before A”. But the difficulty here is that we cannot tell which is to be called which. In order to know this, we must be able to explain the separate word before, and this can only be done by the help of a sequence-complex. (TK, 135)

Russell thus claims that to understand the difference between before and after, we need to be acquainted with the two different positions that objects may have in a temporal sequence complex (see TK, 100). Accordingly his 1913 analysis of judgment includes these two positions among the judgment’s objects. In effect, then, Russell breaks down the epistemologically problematic relation before into separate unproblematic (or at least less problematic) objects of acquaintance [see pp. 144–145, below].

There are two ways in which the relation of sequence can unite individuals into a complex. But knowledge of this fact is not implicit in our grasp of the relation of sequence, for Russell insists that when we have acquaintance with sequence, we have direct acquaintance with this relation “in the abstract signification which does not distinguish between the two ‘senses’” [TK, 89]. Nor is the information part of our understanding of the logical form. According to Russell, mere acquaintance with the logical form of binary complexes does not enable us to distinguish between the positions of the two terms in a temporal sequence fact: “So far as the general form ‘xRy’ is concerned, the position of A is the same in ‘A-before-B’ as in ‘A-after-B’” [TK, 146].

On the earlier account, by contrast, the information in question was thought to be implicit in our acquaintance with the relation before. Thus in KAKD, for example, Russell says:

In regard to relations, it might be urged that we are never aware of the universal relation itself, but only of complexes in which it is a constituent. For example, it may be said that we do not know directly such a relation as before, though we understand such a proposition as “this is before that”, and may be directly aware of such a complex as “this being before that”. This view, however, is difficult to reconcile with the fact that we often know propositions in which the relation is the subject, or in which the relata are not definite given objects, but “anything”. For example, we know that if one thing is before another, and the other before a third, then the first is before the third; and here the things concerned are not definite things, but “anything”. It is hard to see how
we could know such a fact about “before” unless we were acquainted with “before”, and not merely with actual particular cases of one given object being before another given object. And more directly: A judgment such as “this is before that”, where this judgment is derived from awareness of a complex, constitutes an analysis, and we should not understand the analysis if we were not acquainted with the meaning of the terms employed. Thus we must suppose that we are acquainted with the meaning of “before”, and not merely with instances of it. ([KAKD, 150])

This argument seeks to establish that we have direct acquaintance with (some) abstract relations. Russell uses the relation before to illustrate this claim because at this point (i.e. in 1911) he regards this particular relation and the question of our knowledge of it as quite straightforward. He thus takes what he sees as an unproblematic example of an object with which we are acquainted to argue for the more general claim that we have, at least in certain cases, direct and unmediated contact with universal relations.

In 1913 Russell is still willing to accept that we have acquaintance with the relating relation of temporal sequence complexes but only as he now understands this relation. He is no longer willing to accept that we have acquaintance with this entity as he previously understood it. Why does Russell think that the notion of sequence is ideally suited to be an object of acquaintance? Why does he now regard before as unsuitable to play the role of relatum to his fundamental epistemic relation?

One problem here is that if, as in the earlier view, the relation before is taken as the genuine underlying relation then we need to make sense of the idea that this relation contains intrinsically ordered argument places. To make sense of this idea, it is necessary to think of these argument places as being objects in their own right. An immediate consequence of this view of the argument places is that the relation before must have some complexity or structure corresponding to its individual argument places. Since for Russell ontological complexity is always the complexity of relations and relata, it follows that the complexity of a relation must be of this sort too. So there must be simple relations, i.e. relations which are genuine logical atoms having no complexity at all, in terms of which the relation of a complex relation to its argument places can be explained. Otherwise a regress would threaten. But then the relation before cannot be regarded as a logical atom. So if we are to have acquaintance with this relation, then that acquaintance need not provide us with any knowledge about its complexity. Yet if in being directly acquainted with a complex relation we need not be able to distinguish parts within it, then it must be possible to be acquainted with the relation before without thereby managing to discern its individual argument places. On this view to be acquainted with this (or with any other) relation is to perceive it non-sensuously as an unarticulated whole. But if acquaintance with the relation before need not involve acquaintance with its two argument places, then can this acquaintance suffice for understanding the relation’s contribution to the judgments which assert it?
Acquaintance gives us complete and indubitable knowledge of its objects. Yet it is essential to Russell’s idea of acquaintance that we be able to be acquainted with an object without the fact of our being acquainted with the object being itself immediately apparent to us. Since acquaintance “does not, theoretically at least, imply even the smallest ‘knowledge about’” (OKEW, 151), it follows that we can be acquainted with an entity without thereby being acquainted with our acquaintance with it (see TK, 39, 121). In the case of complex objects, in particular, our acquaintance with them may involve our having acquaintance with their constituents. But even when it does so, the fact that we are acquainted with these entities need not be, and in general is not, transparent to us (see TK, 120–21).

In TK Russell expresses this latter idea by saying that we can be acquainted with a complex and with its constituents, without thereby having to attend to the constituents themselves (see TK, 122). He thus distinguishes attentive acquaintance from inattentive acquaintance. For Russell, then, attention is a technical notion. Attention is that relation between the knowing mind and the objects with which it is acquainted in virtue of which it selects some small number of these objects as its immediate focus: “attention is a selection among objects that are ‘before the mind’, and therefore presupposes a larger field, constituted in some less exclusive manner, out of which attention chooses what it wants” (TK, 9). Attention is thus acquaintance with an object which involves explicit awareness or recognition of the object itself. According to Russell, attention gives rise to “that principle of selection which, to a given person at a given moment, makes one object … intimate and near and immediate, as no other object … can be to that subject at that time” (TK, 40). At a given moment we are acquainted with a certain, perhaps quite large though always finite, assemblage of objects, including particular sense-data, abstract universals, complex facts, and logical forms. Yet at any such moment we are explicitly thinking of (or about) only some small number of these objects. The objects that we happen to be thinking about in this particular way are those things to which we bear the relation of attention. So conceived, “attention is a kind of intensified acquaintance” (TK, 162).

The importance of Russell’s admitting the notion of attention as a fundamental cognitive relation that is distinct from but still presupposes acquaintance can be brought out by noting the constraints that his principle of acquaintance imposes on our capacity for making judgments. According to this principle, any judgment that a given person can make must be composed entirely of objects with which that person is acquainted (see Problems, 40; cf. KAKD, 154–55). In Problems Russell claims that sense-data are the only particulars (or individuals) with which the mind has direct acquaintance (see

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* One might think that given the view that acquaintance is direct and immediate knowledge of an object which in principle cannot be erroneous, then we should be consciously aware of the objects with which we are acquainted. This does not seem to be Russell’s position, however.
Ordinary physical objects, according to his view, are thus not among the things with which the mind is acquainted (see Problems, 35). On this basis, Russell concludes that ordinary proper names, which are the words which appear to refer to ordinary physical objects, are really disguised definite descriptions (see Problems, 37). So the thought that we entertain when we understand the sentence “Caesar is human” does not contain Julius Caesar, the man himself, with whom we are not acquainted, but rather contains only sense-data and universals with which we are acquainted (see Problems, 40).

Now even if we grant all of this, it remains a fact that a person can be a competent speaker of English (or indeed of any other language) without his ever having read The Problems of Philosophy, and thus, according to the doctrine of that book, without his being aware of the real nature of the judgments that he makes. Thus although any sentence that I can understand must express a judgment that consists of sense-data and of universals with which I am directly acquainted, yet I need not know that the judgments that I can make are so constituted in order to make them. But since I can make a judgment only if I am acquainted with its constituents, it follows that I must be able to be acquainted with these constituents, and it would seem with objects more generally, without having to be explicitly aware of the entities themselves. In Russell’s philosophy this circumstance is to be explained by the fact that I have inattentive acquaintance with the entities in question. The notion of attention thus provides Russell with a tool for reconciling the epistemological constraints that are imposed by his principle of acquaintance on the notion of understanding with the presumably undeniable fact that almost every judgment that either has been formed or will be formed involves no explicit consciousness on the part of the judger of the entities that actually figure in it.\(^37\)

In TK Russell articulates the notion of *simple perception*, which he characterizes as that kind of acquaintance with a complex entity that must involve our attending to it, and may also involve our being acquainted with its constituents, but always excludes our attending to them (see TK, 125, 177). In simple perception, then, we are immediately aware of complex entities only as unanalyzed wholes. Russell claims, however, that once we have simple perception of a complex entity, we may then transfer our attention to its constituents. He notes that this transfer of attention does not give us acquaintance with these constituents, for we may already have acquaintance with them, but rather gives us only direct awareness of them. The cognitive act in which our attention is transferred from

\[^{37}\text{It is for this reason that the fully analyzed versions of the unanalyzed sentences that a given speaker understands are not immediately accessible to that speaker. Even though the speaker has acquaintance with all the constituents of the corresponding judgments, in order to name these constituents (which is obviously something that he must do if he is to produce the fully analyzed sentences but just as obviously not something that is required for understanding the unanalyzed ones) he must attend to them individually.}\]
the complex whole to its simple interrelated parts is what Russell calls complex perception. Russell takes complex perception to be a multiple relation (see TK, 131). In complex perception, the mind perceives the complex as a complex, “where the interrelated parts are present to consciousness, and not merely discoverable by subsequent attention” (TK, 125). Complex perception is thus acquaintance with a complex object which involves attentive acquaintance with its constituents.

Do the notions of simple perception and of complex perception provide Russell with epistemic relations that he can use to account for our knowledge of asymmetrical relations in a manner consonant with the atomistic structure of his philosophy? The answer is, I think, that ultimately they do not. One problem is that even if we were to transfer our attention from the unanalyzed relation before to (say) its first argument place, we still would be unable on the basis of our attentive acquaintance with that argument place alone to determine that it is in fact the relation’s first argument place. What is needed here is a method by which to discern the relation’s internal structure in a way that permits us to recognize that the relation contains certain argument places and then to establish the intrinsic ordinal position of each of them. But it would seem that in order to implement any such method we would need to form a judgment in which the relation and its various argument places all occur severally, as the relata of the judging relation. It is not enough that the relation may occur prima facie in this way in complex perception, for the fact that a given argument place of a given relation has a certain ordinal position within that relation is quite clearly a truth about that argument place, and in Russell’s view to recognize something as true, one must make a judgment. Knowledge by acquaintance, on the other hand, except in the special case of logical forms, is completely separate from knowledge of truths.

To this point, I have discussed the idea that Russell’s notion of acquaintance imposes an atomistic constraint on the knowledge of objects that the mind can obtain through its having direct and unmediated contact with them in isolation. And I have suggested that this constraint appears to preclude the mind from having appropriate knowledge of asymmetrical relations as Russell thinks of these entities throughout the decade that precedes TK. The significance of this point can be brought out from another direction by observing that the epistemological constraint in question also appears to undermine Russell’s (tacit) assumption that our understanding of the notion of relational sense is derived from disparate acts of acquaintance with relations.

Recall that for Russell the sense of an asymmetrical relation is simply the direction in which the relation proceeds when it holds between (or among) its relata, thereby uniting them into a fact; if the relation is binary, then its sense is its directionality from the object occupying its first argument place to the object occupying its second argument place. So conceived, the sense of a relation is quite clearly a complex notion. We cannot account for this notion in terms of the relation’s constitution alone, for
we must also appeal to features of its relata, and of the facts formed by it, in order to account for its sense. In *TK* Russell clearly recognizes this point:

Whatever exactly may be meant by “understanding” the word “before”, it is plain that such understanding enables us to distinguish between the two propositions “*A* is before *B*” and “*B* is before *A*”. This fact shows that, in the understanding of the abstract “before”, … there must be some kind of reference to terms, something, in fact, which we call “sense” or “direction”. The two propositions “*A* is before *B*” and “*B* is before *A*” contain the same constituents, and they are put together according to the same form, thus the difference is neither in the form nor in the constituents. It would thus seem that a relation must have essentially some “from-and-to” character, even in its most abstract form, like a goods-truck which has a hook in front and an eye behind. The hook and eye are of course merely symbolic, but they have the merit of illustrating the main fact about relations, which is that there is something in their nature that cries out for terms, some sort of grappling apparatus which is always looking out for things to grapple on to. (*TK*, 86)

In so far as the notion of relational sense is complex, our knowledge of this notion must be complex too. It would thus seem that to understand the sense of a relation is to have a quite complex piece of knowledge about the relation, a piece of knowledge that we cannot have of the relation in isolation. From Russell’s perspective this sort of knowledge is essentially propositional in nature. It thus requires that we form a judgment in order to obtain it. We must be acquainted with the simple elements from which the corresponding fact is formed. But to make the judgment itself requires synthesizing (or uniting) these elements in thought. Hence we cannot, it seems, acquire knowledge of the sense of the relation simply through one or more isolated acts of acquaintance with the relation itself.

This fact threatens to undermine Russell’s basic assumption in *Problems* that a subject’s having acquaintance with the various constituents of a given judgment is the only prerequisite for the subject’s making that judgment. According to the 1912 multiple relation theory, when we judge that *a* is before *b*, we entertain the thought that the relation *before* and the individuals *a* and *b* combine to form a fact in which *a* occupies the first argument place of the relation *before*, and *b* occupies the second argument place. But if mere acquaintance with *before* does not allow us to distinguish between its two argument places, or to determine their respective intrinsic ordinal positions, then it does not on its own enable us to know that there are two ways in which this relation can combine the same individuals into a fact. So we cannot by virtue of being acquainted with the relation *before*, and with the individuals *a* and *b*, distinguish the judgment expressed by “*a* is before *b*” from that expressed by “*b* is before *a*”. But clearly this result is unacceptable, since we can (and do) distinguish between these two judgments.

The problem here is not solved by supposing that through complex perception of an asymmetrical relation we can understand its sense. To attend to the simple things making up a complex object is, Russell says, “a very difficult mental feat, and in certain cases is one which seems never to have been performed by human beings” (*TK*, 128). “As a matter of psychological experience”, Russell claims, “the effort of attention involved in passing from simple to complex perception may be very
great” (TK, 128). In the case of purely abstract entities like relations, Russell insists that attending to these entities is a task whose performance requires considerable effort and skill: “as the object grows more abstract, attention grows progressively more difficult” (TK, 132). Complex perception of an asymmetrical relation involves, we are assuming, not only acquaintance with the bare relation itself and with its various argument places, but also attention to these argument places and recognition of the fact that they are the argument places of the given relation. But even if we grant that the performance of this particular act of the mind is sufficient for understanding the sense of the relation, we can see clearly that it is by no means necessary for achieving this result. Otherwise, our forming a judgment involving an asymmetrical relation would presuppose our engaging in the protracted and laborious psychological investigation that is characteristic of attending to purely abstract entities. But clearly almost none of our judgments are preceded by any such deep reflection. So if our having complex perception of an asymmetrical relation were a precondition of our forming judgments that involve the relation then these judgments would be so difficult to form as to become the sole province of Russellian logicians, who are the “few eccentric persons, unusually relieved from the struggle for existence, whose attention wanders to such unimportant objects” (TK, 133; emphasis added). But then it would seem that, contrary to Russell’s explicit doctrines, our knowledge of the world is neither presuppositionless nor unproblematic.

There is thus a clear conflict between the atomistic epistemological constraints that Russell takes as intrinsic to the relation of direct acquaintance on the one hand, and the possibility of our obtaining appropriate knowledge of relations via acquaintance on the other. Russell’s view of relations, at least in the period from 1903 through 1912, seems to suggest that the fundamental features of these entities are not explicable in isolation. These features can be explained only by reference to their relata and to the facts which they form. In its most extreme version this view of relations seems to suggest a kind of ontological holism according to which the world is not made up of separate and independent items, but rather constituted by a unified system or structure made up of internally interrelated, mutually

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38 In the case of logical forms, in particular, Russell says that it is owing to their having the maximal “degree of abstractness” that they are “fugitive to attention” (TK, 132).

39 The “unimportant objects” of which Russell speaks in this passage are actually his logical forms, not asymmetrical relations. Still the idea that attending to logical forms is an exceedingly difficult task also serves to illustrate the general point that I am trying to make. Since having acquaintance with the logical form of a given fact is a prerequisite for making a judgment that asserts that fact, it follows that any person who makes a judgment has acquaintance with some form. And since the capacity for judgment is a commonplace of human beings, having acquaintance with logical forms must be so as well. But if not just mere acquaintance with a given form were required for making a judgment that corresponds to a fact of that form but attentive acquaintance with the form were required for this purpose too, then owing to the difficulty of attending to logical forms judgment would not be a presuppositionless and unproblematic act of the mind. Rather, it would be a mental act so complex and intellectually grueling to perform as to be beyond the reach of almost everyone.
dependent parts. On this holistic view of the world the nature of an asymmetrical relation is not a fundamental and independent fact about the relation itself, but rather depends upon the relation’s place within the structure that is reality as a whole. This ontological holism seems in turn to suggest a kind of epistemological holism according to which our grasp of any single asymmetrical relation requires our having knowledge of a complex structure, and of the place within the structure of the given relation. According to this view the relation cannot be known in isolation because the world itself is comprehensible only as a whole. These ideas are quite clearly in direct conflict with Russell’s explicit doctrines, especially the atomistic and object-based metaphysics that we have attributed to him. According to that metaphysics, each thing is what it is, in isolation from, and independently of, every other thing. There simply is no room here for the idea of an entity whose intrinsic features are dependent upon the features of other entities. Nor is there any room here for the idea that knowledge of a single entity must involve knowledge of its various relations to other entities.

It is, I think, with an eye to resolving the conflict in question that Russell abandons the view that the argument places of asymmetrical relations are intrinsically ordered and the associated notion that sense is an intrinsic feature of these relations. He thus attempts to retain asymmetrical relations as independently subsisting ontological atoms that can be known perfectly and indubitably in isolation from everything else by rejecting intrinsically directional relations like before and after in favor of nondirectional ones like sequence, earlier, and later. Thus he says:

From what has been said, it follows that such words as before and after, greater and less, and so on, are not the names of relations: they always involve, in addition to the relation, an indication as to “sense”. For any such pair of correlative terms, there is only one relation, which is neutral as regards sense. The word “sequence” would be better than “before” or “after” as the name of the relation involved. I think—though this may be doubted—that the apparent incapacity of relations for subsisting without terms is partly due to the fact that our words for relations are nearly all such as involve a definite sense, and that sense is only explicable by means of terms. The difference between “before” and “after” is not explicable except by reference to the fact that two complexes can be made out of two given terms and a given relation. But “sequence” (if we take this as neutral with regard to sense) does not require this reference to complexes. Hence it would seem that, when the relation is pure, it ceases to demand terms in order to be intelligible.

The conclusion to be drawn is, if I am not mistaken, that no difficulty stands in the way of admitting acquaintance with the bare abstract relation itself. When we perceive, as we easily can, that the same relation is involved in “x is before y” and in “x is after y”, it seems as though we must be having or have had acquaintance with the relation of sequence itself. This view is by far the simplest of those that are compatible with the facts, and it explains all the facts adequately. I shall therefore henceforth assume that we have, in some cases, direct acquaintance with relations, in the abstract signification which does not distinguish between the two “senses” of a relation. (TK, 88–89)

What this passage seems to suggest is that Russell regards a relation’s possession of sense as compromising both its ontological status as an independent, self-subsistent object and its epistemological status as something that can be known perfectly and indubitably in isolation from everything else. From Russell’s perspective this is the advantage of relations without sense: that they require no context either for their being or for their being known.
In *TK* Russell’s analysis of permutative atomic facts whose relating relations are asymmetrical explains the permutativeness of these facts without supposing that their relating relations actually possess sense. The analysis dispenses with the idea that sense is a genuine feature of asymmetrical relations by using their associated positional relations to *construct* their sense. This tactic does not simply transfer the problem of sense to these positional relations, for positional relations are heterogeneous with respect to their relata, so they do not themselves possess sense. The analysis furnishes Russell with an account of asymmetrical relations which strips them of their epistemologically problematic complexity and thus transforms them into entities that the mind can know perfectly and indubitably through its having direct acquaintance with them in isolation. In cases where we appear to form a permutative judgment asserting an asymmetrical relation with sense, the judgment that we actually form involves no such relation. Instead the judgment involves only relations which are symmetrical, or if unsymmetrical then also heterogeneous, with respect to their relata. And these kinds of relations can be known perfectly and completely in isolation in a manner consonant with the fundamental tenets of Russell’s philosophy.

In Chapter 3 we saw that, from 1905 onwards, Russell is increasingly restrictive in his view of what ordinary concrete objects the mind can be acquainted with. Russell’s restrictive attitude towards our acquaintance with ordinary concrete objects contrasts quite sharply with the considerable laxity of his attitude towards our acquaintance with abstract objects. Even after 1905, Russell continues to think that in the case of abstract objects acquaintance has a very wide scope. It seems indeed that with two notable exceptions (namely classes and propositions of infinite complexity) the notion of acquaintance imposes no independent constraints upon his theorizing about abstract objects. My claim, however, is that this general trend is, at least to some extent, reversed in *TK*. I believe that the revised view of relations that Russell sets forth in the book is fashioned by him in accordance with, and as a direct response to, the independent epistemic constraints imposed by his notion of acquaintance. On my reading, Russell comes to think that certain features of this notion conflict with our having knowledge of asymmetrical relations as he conceives of these entities in the period leading up to 1913. He attempts to resolve this conflict not by altering his view of acquaintance but rather by holding this view fast and adopting a new view of asymmetrical relations instead.

In a crucial respect, then, Russell’s notion of acquaintance in 1913 is the same as his notion of acquaintance in 1903: in each case the notion encapsulates, and ensures, Russell’s realism, for it is the
point of direct epistemic contact between the mind and what is alien to it.\footnote{See Hylton, \textit{Russell, Idealism}, 371.} What changes in the period from 1903 through 1913 is thus not Russell's reasons for insisting on the notion of acquaintance but rather his attitude towards this notion. In \textit{Principles} he takes a very lax attitude towards acquaintance: in those cases where the exigencies of his theorizing require that we be acquainted with objects of a certain kind, he does not hesitate to assert that we are in fact acquainted with objects of that kind. Here then the notion of acquaintance, we might say, functions to deflect epistemological worries but does not impose any constraints on Russell's thought. This changes from 1905 on; over the following decade the constraints imposed by the notion of acquaintance come to dominate his views.\footnote{See Hylton, \textquotedblleft The Theory of Descriptions\textquotedblright, 207.} At first, the change is most pronounced in the case of ordinary concrete objects. But by 1913 the constraints imposed by the notion of acquaintance have come to dominate Russell's views as they concern abstract objects too.
Wittgenstein’s Criticisms of Russell’s 1912 Multiple Relation Theory of Judgment

During the two academic years that followed his arrival at Cambridge University in October 1911, Wittgenstein worked closely with Russell and became involved in the details of a number of his most important philosophical views. In 1912, in particular, the two men discussed crucial features both of the logical system of *PM* and of the 1912 version of the multiple relation theory of judgment (see e.g. #325, #360, #338, #422). Early in 1913, however, Wittgenstein obscurely but sharply and effectively criticized this version of the multiple relation theory. The purpose of this chapter is to give an account of his objections.

Wittgenstein delivers his critique of the 1912 multiple relation theory in a letter to Russell written in January 1913. It should be noted, however, that in this letter Wittgenstein does not directly or explicitly attack Russell’s 1912 multiple relation theory. Instead, Wittgenstein’s explicit target in the letter is his own 1912 view of judgment, a view which he describes to Russell in a series of letters written in 1912. Wittgenstein’s 1912 view of judgment is in some respects very similar to Russell’s 1912 multiple relation view, so we can understand Wittgenstein’s criticisms of the latter by looking at his criticisms of the former. I shall therefore proceed as follows.

I begin, in Section 6.1, with the view of judgment sketched by Wittgenstein in his 1912 correspondence with Russell. I give the name “the theory of copulas” to Wittgenstein’s 1912 view of judgment in order to convey the idea that the notion of the *copula* is central to it. My discussion of Wittgenstein’s theory of copulas emphasizes its distinctive approach to the notion of judgment, its conceptions of language and of linguistic representation, and its views about the nature of facts and the status of their constituents. In the course of discussing these (and related) aspects of the theory of copulas, I also endeavor to identify and to explain (what I take to be) the most significant points of similarity, and of difference, between its fundamental doctrines and the various Russellian doctrines which I examined in earlier chapters. I argue, in particular, that Wittgenstein’s theory of copulas includes many points of striking agreement with the version of the multiple relation theory of judgment that Russell produces in 1912 and sets out in *Problems*. I claim, however, that Wittgenstein’s early view of judgment differs fundamentally from the view which Russell espouses, in part, because Wittgenstein takes *language*, in the sense of words and sentences, to be the focus of the theory of judgment, whereas Russell dismisses the idea that language is the real subject with which he is dealing and instead
seeks an explanation of the notion of judgment that functions on the nonlinguistic level. Despite this difference between their views, however, I maintain that Wittgenstein’s theory of copulas shares with Russell’s multiple relation theory the same basic conception of words and sentences—in particular, that both philosophers think of sub-sentential expressions as names, and of sentences as collections or mixtures of names—and that, in positing a realm of facts that inflicts truth or falsity on sentences, Wittgenstein embraces a conception of facts that is thoroughly Russellian in nature.

The main focus of Section 6.2 is the issue of Wittgenstein’s reasons for rejecting the theory of copulas put forward in his early letters to Russell. These letters indicate that Wittgenstein holds the theory of copulas from the spring of 1912 until the winter of 1913. In his January 1913 letter to Russell, however, Wittgenstein raises a crucial objection to the theory. In this letter he sets forth an argument that purports to show that the theory of copulas does not explain why it is impossible to judge nonsense. On the basis of this particular objection, Wittgenstein abandons the theory of copulas altogether. I examine Wittgenstein’s objection to the theory of copulas, and explain why this theory is vulnerable to the charge that it does not make it impossible to judge nonsense. On the interpretation that I propose, Wittgenstein sees the theory’s vulnerability to the objection in question as stemming from its failure to distinguish the ontological role which individuals play in atomic facts from the ontological roles played by their properties and relations, and from its closely related inability to distinguish the grammatical function of proper names in atomic sentences from the grammatical functions of unary and relational predicates. In concluding the section, I discuss the view of judgment which Wittgenstein proposes in his January 1913 letter to Russell as an alternative to the theory of copulas which he explicitly rejects in that letter.

Finally, in Section 6.3, I turn to the issue of Wittgenstein’s criticisms of Russell’s 1912 multiple relation theory of judgment. Having demonstrated in sections 6.1 and 6.2 that there are a number of crucial similarities between Wittgenstein’s theory of copulas on the one hand, and the 1912 version of Russell’s multiple relation theory of judgment on the other, I now argue that by virtue of those similarities the problem that Wittgenstein exposes for the theory of copulas in his January 1913 letter to Russell infects Russell’s 1912 theory as well. That is: the 1912 multiple relation theory, like the theory of copulas, does not show that it is impossible to judge nonsense. I claim, moreover, that Wittgenstein sees that Russell’s 1912 theory of judgment is vulnerable to this objection, and that he is saying so to Russell in the letter. With regard to the objection itself, I argue that the crucial problem for the 1912 multiple relation theory is that it treats the various objects of a judgment as on a level with one another, as simply being entities with which the judging mind is acquainted. The theory thus fails to allow for the fundamental type-theoretic distinctions among these objects. As a consequence
of its failure to allow for these distinctions, the 1912 multiple relation theory cannot show why it is impossible to judge that (say) the individual Socrates holds of the universal mortality. Wittgenstein points out, however, that the attempt to rectify this problem by imposing the relevant type-theoretic restrictions on the argument places of judging relations is self-defeating, for the statements of these restrictions violate the theory of types, and thus give rise to the very nonsensical judgments whose existence they are meant to preclude.

6.1 Wittgenstein's Theory of Copulas

In this section we shall discuss relevant aspects of Wittgenstein's theory of copulas, the view of judgment sketched by Wittgenstein in his 1912 correspondence with Russell. One purpose of this discussion is to establish that there are relevant, fundamental similarities between the theory of copulas and the 1912 multiple relation theory of judgment. Nevertheless, we can perhaps best begin our discussion of Wittgenstein's theory of copulas by considering one way in which its basic approach to the notion of judgment differs fundamentally from the approach that Russell's multiple relation theory involves. Roughly put, the issue concerning which their respective approaches disagree is the idea that language is the real subject-matter of the theory of judgment.

Like his philosophical approach more generally, Russell's fundamental approach to the notion of judgment is object-based. He seeks an account of judgment that functions largely on the objectual level. This facet of the approach is reflected in the dominance of the part–whole metaphor. In accordance with this metaphor, Russell conceives of a judgment as a complex structured entity made up of simpler entities, in something like the way that a wall is made up of bricks. According to his direct realism, the entities that actually figure in a judgment, with which the judging mind has direct and unmediated contact (i.e. acquaintance), are not linguistic or mental items that merely represent the objects with which the judgment is concerned. On the contrary: the various entities that figure in the given judgment are the objects themselves at which the judger's thought aims.

1 In this section I also draw on Wittgenstein's works other than his 1912 letters to Russell. These works include NL, dictated in October 1913, MN, dictated in April 1914, NB, written between 1914 and 1916, and the Tractatus, completed in 1918 but not published until 1922. It is therefore important to understand—and we shall come to see for ourselves in the next chapter—that there are a number of significant differences between the view of judgment sketched by Wittgenstein in his 1912 letters to Russell, on the one hand, and the view of judgment which Wittgenstein articulates in the later works just mentioned, on the other. So in drawing on these later works, using them to illustrate Wittgenstein's 1912 view, my intention is to identify doctrines and issues which are common to both views of judgment. Thus, for example, the doctrine that the world consists of facts, the correspondence conception of truth, and the claim that sentences have content or express thoughts because they represent facts, all are views which are common to the earlier theory and to the later theory. These views are explicitly stated in the later works, but they are, I think, implicit in the early letters too. In saying that these views are common to the earlier theory and to the later theory, I do not mean to suggest that they are understood in precisely the same way in both theories.
Implicit in Russell’s object-based view of judgment is the assumption that issues having to do with language are not the primary concern of the multiple relation theory. The primary concern of that theory is rather the thoughts or judgments themselves that lie behind our sentences, and give them such meaning as they have. As it happens, we may give expression in language to our individual thoughts and judgments by means of complete declarative sentences. But our thoughts and judgments themselves are, for Russell, paradigmatically nonlinguistic items: the entities that figure in them are not words but rather the objects in the outside world for which words stand. So when we make a judgment which is directly about a particular object we are, in Russell’s view, directly and immediately related to the object itself. In judging the mind unites the objects themselves in thought so as to represent them as united in reality into an independent proposition. For Russell, then, representation takes place at the objectual level, rather than at the linguistic one: the subjective combination of the objects themselves in the fact which constitutes the judgment is what represents the objective combination of these objects in the fact which corresponds to the judgment (i.e. the fact which is asserted by the judgment, or the fact which obtains if the judgment is true). For Russell the importance of language in the analysis of judgment is purely negative. Its importance consists in the fact that ordinary or colloquial language is deceptive; it masks the logical form of the underlying reality.

In contrast to Russell, Wittgenstein sees issues having to do with language as central to the theory of judgment. Wittgenstein takes indeed what one might call a sentence-based approach to the notion of judgment: an approach that places complete declarative sentences at the center of the theory of judgment. Wittgenstein thus insists that any ultimately satisfactory analysis of the notion of judgment must be rooted in a proper understanding of the nature of the linguistic representations that we use to express our thoughts: “The epistemological questions concerning the nature of judgment and belief cannot be solved without a correct apprehension of the form of the proposition [= sentence]” (NL, 106). The leading idea of his sentence-based approach to the notion of judgment is, accordingly, the

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2 Thus in NL Wittgenstein says: “Judgment, question and command are all on the same level. What interests logic in them is only the unasserted proposition [= sentence]” (NL, 96). And again: “Judgment, command and question all stand on the same level; but all have in common the propositional [= sentential] form, which does interest us” (NL, 107).

3 I have here assumed that Wittgenstein is using the English word “proposition” as a translation of the German word “Satz” (presumably, he is still thinking in German in October 1913, which is when he dictates NL), and that he thinks of a proposition as a meaningful sentence, and thus as a meaningful piece of language. So in NL he says, for example, that “propositions … are symbols having reference to facts” (NL, 97), and that “every proposition is a new symbol” (NL, 98). He also says that the constituents of (atomic) propositions are names and forms (see NL, 96), and that forms, like names, are symbols, that is, significant bits of language (see NL, 95, 104). In his 1912 letters to Russell, moreover, Wittgenstein also appears to use the word “proposition” to mean meaningful sentence. He claims, for example, that propositions mean complexes (see CL, 17–18).
assumption that to explain the nature and possibility of judgment it suffices to explain how sentences manage to represent a reality outside of them either correctly or incorrectly.

So, rather than our psychological acts of judgment, Wittgenstein takes complete declarative sentences to be the primary vehicles of content and bearers of truth-values. According to his view, individual sentences have content, or express thoughts, because they represent facts. There is a parallel here between sentences and the individual words from which they are built up. Wittgenstein claims that, like the sentences in which they figure, the various sub-sentential units of language also have content or meaning because they stand in symbolizing relations to objective nonlinguistic entities in the external world (see NL, 95, 104; cf. NB, 37, 53). On his view of language, however, the unique characteristic of sentences, as distinct from the various proper names and predicates of which they are composed, is that they represent an outside reality either correctly or incorrectly (see NB, 8–9). Thus in 1914 Wittgenstein says:

There are different ways of giving a representation, even by means of a picture, and what represents is not merely the sign or picture but also the method of representation. What is common to all representations is that they can be right or wrong, true or false. (NB, 21; emphasis in the original)

According to Wittgenstein, then, it is intrinsic to sentences qua representations of reality that they are either true or false. The question therefore arises: what sort of understanding of the notions of truth and falsehood does Wittgenstein put forward?

Like Russell, Wittgenstein holds to a correspondence view of truth. The truth or falsity of an individual sentence is, on his view, a matter of its agreeing or disagreeing with reality, of its corresponding or failing to correspond to some fact (see NL, 94, 98). In the Tractatus, Wittgenstein tells us that an elementary sentence asserts that an atomic fact obtains (see Tractatus, 4.21). The elementary sentence agrees with reality (or is true), if the atomic fact which it asserts actually obtains (see Tractatus, 4.25). It disagrees with reality (or is false), if the asserted atomic fact does not actually obtain (see Tractatus, 4.25).

For Wittgenstein, then, facts are the units of reality that are representable in individual sentences, for they are what inflict truth or falsity on these elementary sentences. In his pre-Tractarian writings, Wittgenstein assumes the existence of facts as objective complex entities, and asks how they are represented in language. So for him the central question in the analysis of judgment is this: how do sentences manage to represent facts in the world either correctly or incorrectly? It is appropriate to think of the theory of copulas as embodying Wittgenstein’s first sustained attempt to answer this question, i.e. to specify the nature of a sentence’s fundamental representational relationship to reality.
By placing the notion of a complete declarative sentence at the center of his theory of judgment, Wittgenstein seeks to avoid some of the difficulties confronting Russell’s object-based view of judgment. In particular, the sentence-based approach to the notion of judgment seems to obviate the need for the intractable distinction between uniting the objects in thought and uniting the objects in reality.\footnote{Of course this is made easier by the fact that it gives up the Russellian requirement that the mind must be in direct and unmediated contact with the objects themselves.} Instead, Wittgenstein asks how the combination of meaningful names into a sentence manages to represent the particular objects designated by those names as combined into a single complex whole—i.e. into a possible fact. Because on this approach the constituents of a judgment are \textit{words} that go proxy for [i.e. designate, or mean] the things that make up the would-be corresponding fact, we are clearly in no danger of having to identify bringing objects together to form a judgment with bringing objects together to form the corresponding fact. As a corollary of this point, we can combine representatives of objects into a \textit{false} sentence, i.e. combine them into a sentence that represents reality \textit{incorrectly}, without our having to combine the objects themselves in reality:

In the proposition we—so to speak—arrange things \textit{experimentally}, as they do \textit{not} have to be in reality, but we cannot make any \textit{unlogical} arrangement, for in order to do that we should have to be able to get outside logic \textit{in} language.\footnote{NB, 13}

In a sense, the representational relationship of a sentence to its would-be corresponding fact is simply that the sentence specifies the identity of that fact [see NB, 38]. A meaningful sentence consists of names of its would-be corresponding fact’s various constituents. These names have meaning independently of their occurrence in the sentence. That the sentence consists of certain independently meaningful names in a certain, definite arrangement is what enables it to assert that the corresponding fact [if there is one] consists of certain independently existing objects in a certain, definite arrangement.

In accordance with the basic picture of judgment that Wittgenstein seeks to establish, his theory of copulas includes both a theory of facts and a theory of symbolism. The theory of facts is concerned with certain metaphysical or ontological issues having to do with the nature of facts and with the status of their constituents. The theory of symbolism, on the other hand, is concerned with certain linguistic issues having to do with the establishment of the proper analysis of complete declarative sentences, the bits of language that we use to represent facts, and that are made true or made false by the subsistence of facts. A crucial point here is that in its basic ideas of a fact, and of how a sentence manages to represent a fact, Wittgenstein’s theory of copulas takes a Russellian framework for granted. Wittgenstein thus conceives of facts as complex structured objects made up of a multiplicity of independent and distinct relatively simpler objects. And he conceives of sentences as combinations of logically proper names of ontological atoms of different logical types. Wittgenstein’s theory of facts
identifies and classifies these ontological atoms, and describes how they unite to form facts. His theory of symbolism, on the other hand, explains how combinations of names of the atoms into sentences manage to express thoughts (or judgments) that are rendered true or false by the subsistence of facts involving the named atoms. Along with operating at the level of sentences, where Wittgenstein’s approach to judgment differs fundamentally from Russell’s (and, presumably, attempts to improve upon it) is in its use of the notion of the copula. It is therefore to that notion that I now turn.

Just as Russell does with the word “verb” in the course of elaborating and explaining his own philosophical views, Wittgenstein, in his exposition of the theory of copulas, uses the word “copula” both in the linguistic and the nonlinguistic senses. I shall argue, however, that the nonlinguistic sense of this word is the fundamental one for him.

As I noted earlier, Wittgenstein rejects the theory of copulas in his January 1913 letter to Russell (see CL, 24–25; see also Section 6.2, pp. 164–176, below, where Wittgenstein’s reasons for rejecting this theory are discussed in detail). In a passage from MN, a work composed more than a year after that letter, Wittgenstein describes his erstwhile theory of copulas as “the theory which held that a relational fact contained the terms and relations united by a copula [ε]” (MN, 117–18). Clearly, in this context, Wittgenstein is using the word “copula” in its nonlinguistic sense, as a general term for entities that perform a certain function in facts. More specifically the copula seems to be understood here as something like a relation of predication. On this view the copula is the ontological glue that binds individuals and their properties or relations into atomic facts.

Various other passages from Wittgenstein’s early writings also strongly suggest that copula is ultimately an ontological notion in his hands, rather than a purely linguistic one. Thus, to take an example, in an early letter to Russell, written several months before he rejects the theory of copulas, Wittgenstein characterizes the notion of inference as a copula which copulates complexes. He then attempts to deploy this molecular copula, in combination with quantification over atomic copulas, which he introduces without fanfare, to give a contextual definition of the symbol for disjunction, “∨”.

I shall quote the relevant part of the letter at some length:

What troubles me most at present, is not the apparent-variable-business, but rather the meaning of “∨”, “⊃”, “⊃”, etc. This latter problem is—I think—still more fundamental and, if possible, still less recognized as a problem. If “p ∨ q” means a complex at all—which is quite doubtful—then, as far as I can see, one must treat “∨” as part of a copula which held that a relational fact contained the terms and relations united by a copula [ε]. In this way we have talked over before. I have—I believe—tried all possible ways of solution under that hypothesis and found that if any one will do it must be something like this: Let us write the proposition “from ⊢ p and ⊢ q follows ⊢ r” that way: “i[∧ p, q; r]”. Here “i” is a copula [we may call it inference] which copulates complexes. Then “ε 1 [x, y] ∧ ε 1 [z, u]” is to mean:

\begin{align*}
\varepsilon 1 (x, y) & \wedge \varepsilon 1 (z, u) \\
\varepsilon 1 (x, y) & \wedge \varepsilon 1 (z, u) \\
\varepsilon 1 (x, y) & \wedge \varepsilon 1 (z, u)
\end{align*}
If “p ∨ q” does not mean a complex, then heaven knows what it means!! (CL, 17–18)

There is a complication here that must be disposed of before we can get to the point that concerns us. There appear to be two (typographical) errors in the symbolic expression for a disjunction proposed in this passage. One is that the order of the variables in the second disjunct of the definiendum is reversed. Instead of “ε₁ (x, y) ∨ ε₁ (u, z)”, the entire definiendum should read “ε₁ (x, y) ∨ ε₁ (z, u).” The second error is that the fourth inference of the definiens fails to negate the expression “β (x, y, z, u)”. So the fourth inference should read “(ε₁ (x, y), ε₁ (z, u), β (x, y, z, u)) . i[~ ε₁ (x, y); ~ ε₁ (z, u); ~ β (x, y, z, u)].” These two errors having been properly noted, we can now turn our attention to the issue with which we are really concerned: namely the picture of the copula that is suggested by the passage. According to that picture, the notion of inference is a copula that binds atomic facts into molecular facts. More specifically: it binds the atomic facts that correspond to the sentences that express the premises of a given argument to the atomic fact that corresponds to the sentence that expresses that argument’s conclusion, to form the molecular fact which is the argument itself.

In several other of his early letters to Russell, all written between July 1912 and January 1913, Wittgenstein grapples with issues having to do with the nature and status of the logical constants, including disjunction, negation, and the quantifiers, with the establishment of the main outlines of a proper theory of symbolism, and with something which he calls “the complex problem” (see CL, 14–15, 16, 17–18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24–25). Wittgenstein sees these various issues as interconnected. Complexes are facts, and facts are the reality that is representable in sentences. So a symbolism that makes it possible to give a clear, completely explicit, and unambiguous expression to the contents judged true or false thereby makes it possible to identify the real constituents and ontological structure of the facts corresponding to our judgments. A fully analyzed sentence “must enable us to see the logical structure of the situation that makes it true or false” (NB, 15).

At the heart of the theory which Wittgenstein proposes as the basis for a solution to these various issues is the notion of the copula:

I believe that our problems can be traced down to the atomic propositions. This you will see if you try to explain precisely in what way the Copula in such a proposition has meaning.

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5 These two errors are pointed out by the editors of CL, the volume in which the letter appears, in a footnote attached to the letter (see CL, 18 n.).
6 I shall return to this transpositional error very briefly at the end of the next section; see n. 16, below.
7 There is an obvious similarity here between, on the one hand, the contextual definition of the symbol for disjunction given by Wittgenstein in the letter, and, on the other hand, the contemporary truth-table explanation of disjunction, which is also Wittgenstein’s innovation.
I cannot explain it and I think that as soon as an exact answer to this question is given the problems of “v” and of the apparent variable will be brought very near their solution if not solved. I therefore now think about “Socrates is human”. [Good old Socrates!] [CL, 20]

On its face this letter appears to use the word “copula” in a straightforwardly linguistic sense, for Wittgenstein speaks here of a copula in a proposition, and a proposition according to his view is a linguistic entity. A proposition, as Wittgenstein uses the term, is a meaningful declarative sentence that is either true or false. As the letter also makes clear, however, Wittgenstein’s concern here with the copula qua component of an atomic sentence is really a concern with the nonlinguistic entity for which it stands. For he is concerned with the question of how the linguistic copula in an atomic sentence manages to have meaning. The object which the copula in such a sentence means is the nonlinguistic copula that figures in the fact that corresponds to that sentence. It is with the nature and status of this nonlinguistic copula that Wittgenstein’s theory (of copulas) is really concerned. That being said, the fact that Wittgenstein thinks, as he clearly does, that we can come to understand the fundamental nature of the nonlinguistic copula by establishing the correct account of the way in which the expression that designates it functions in a sentence illustrates both the sentence-based nature of his approach to the notion of judgment as well as the object-based nature of his fundamental metaphysics.

To recapitulate: the view of the copula that emerges from Wittgenstein’s brief remarks is one in which this notion is understood as something like a relation of predication. The copula is the ontological glue or logical cement that joins together individuals and their properties or relations to form atomic facts, and that joins together atomic facts to form molecular facts. Copula itself is therefore a nonlinguistic notion in Wittgenstein’s hands. On his account, that is to say, the entities that contain copulas are facts, not sentences. Any fully analyzed sentence will contain, among other expressions for independently subsisting ontological atoms, the name of the copula that forms the fact to which it corresponds.

To get a general idea of Wittgenstein’s theory of copulas, let us consider the case of a simple fact. Take, for example, the atomic fact that corresponds to the colloquial English sentence “Brutus killed Caesar”. To represent individual copulas, Wittgenstein employs multiply existentially generalized sentences. In his theory an expression of the form “(∃x_0) … (∃x_n)_ε x_(x_0 … x_n)” is said to name an m-place copula that can bind n individuals and an n-place universal (i.e. ordinary property or relation) into an atomic fact. Thus the atomic fact that Brutus killed Caesar is, on this account, a complex consisting of four objects in which the three-place copula named by “(∃x) (∃y) (∃z) ε x, y, z” relates the individual
Brutus, the relation of killing, and the individual Caesar, respectively. The sentence “Brutus killed Caesar” can thus be perspicuously rewritten as “ε₂ [Brutus, Killing, Caesar]” (see CL, 25).

Wittgenstein maintains that copulas are involved in all atomic facts, including apparently subject-predicate ones. He thus takes the fact that corresponds to the sentence “Plato is human” to be a complex consisting of three objects in which the two-place copula named by “{(∃x) (∃y) ε₁[x, y]}” joins the individual Plato to the property of humanity. On the basis of this analysis, Wittgenstein regiments the colloquial English sentence “Plato is human” as “ε₁ [Plato, Humanity]” (see CL, 24).

Various points suggest themselves on the basis of the foregoing analysis of atomic facts. One is that, in Wittgenstein’s view, the copula, (∃x₀) … (∃xₙ) εₙ(x₀, … xₙ), is really the holding relation. The sentence “ε₂ [Brutus, Killing, Caesar]” asserts that the killing relation holds between Brutus and Caesar, while the sentence “ε₁ [Plato, Humanity]” expresses the fact that the property of humanity holds of Plato.⁸

A second point which the analysis suggests is that Wittgenstein’s theory of copulas presupposes the atomistic and object-based metaphysical framework of Russell’s theory of facts. The theory of copulas thus shares with Russell’s multiple relation theory of judgment the same basic underlying metaphysical vision. In particular, both theories take fact to be the fundamental notion of metaphysics. And both theories think of facts as complex structured entities in which independently subsisting simpler entities are combined by the predicative occurrence of a relation to form a whole. For Wittgenstein, as for Russell, facts are not merely a special case of the more general notion of a complex entity. On the contrary: facts are the only complex entities whose existence either philosopher is willing to accept.

A closely connected point is that Wittgenstein, like Russell, takes facts and their constituents to be objects (see NB, 48–49, 61; cf. Tractatus, 2.01, 2.0124). Among other things, this means that Wittgenstein sees these particular entities as objective and as existing totally independently of us and of one another.⁹

A fourth point that is immediately suggested by Wittgenstein’s early analysis of atomic facts is that Wittgenstein embraces a conception of philosophical analysis that closely resembles the conception of that activity which Russell himself articulates. It seems clear indeed that Wittgenstein’s conception of analysis is directly patterned after Russell’s conception of that notion. Like Russell, Wittgenstein

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⁸ Speaking loosely, we can say that, for Wittgenstein, the issue of the unity of the proposition is located in the notion of the copula. On his account, the unity of a complex comes from the copula.

⁹ Wittgenstein’s early realism is evident in his first known publication, a review of Coffey’s The Science of Logic (see PO, 2–3). Here Wittgenstein criticizes Coffey for his “many grave mistakes” [PO, 3], including the fact that “He [i.e. Coffey] believes that reality is changed by becoming an object of our thoughts” [PO, 3]. Incidentally, Wittgenstein’s review of Coffey’s book also reveals his early interest in the notion of the copula: “[Coffey] confounds the copula ‘is’ with the word ‘is’ expressing identity. [The word ‘is’ has obviously different meanings in the propositions—‘Twice two is four’ and ‘Socrates is mortal’]” [PO, 3].
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is concerned with the questions of how facts are constructed from their simpler parts, and of how these parts (or representatives of them) are put together into judgments. Facts are thus taken to have a unique structure, built up from absolutely simple entities. The task of analysis, according to both men, is to expose the genuine logical structure of the reality that underlies our discourse.

On Wittgenstein's sentence-based approach to the notion of judgment, the theory of judgment is chiefly concerned with the question of how sentences (ordinary and fully analyzed ones alike) manage to represent the external reality that they are about either correctly or incorrectly. For Wittgenstein this question is closely connected with the notion of sentential sense, for the sense of a sentence, according to his view, just is the sentence's fundamental representational relationship to reality.

In his early writings, then, Wittgenstein appropriates Frege's terminology of *Sinn* and *Bedeutung* and frames a distinction between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung* for sentences. The *Bedeutung* of a sentence, on Wittgenstein's view, is the fact that actually corresponds to it, that is, makes it true or makes it false (see *NL*, 94; cf. *MN*, 112). Wittgenstein takes it that an atomic or elementary sentence and its negation correspond to precisely the same fact: “The chief characteristic of my theory is that, in it, *p* has the same meaning as not-*p*” (*NL*, 103; cf. *NL*, 95). Wittgenstein thus distinguishes positive facts from negative ones:

There are positive and negative facts: if the proposition “this rose is not red” is true, then what it signifies is negative. ... [T]he signification of the proposition “this rose is red” (when it is true) is positive. ... Negative facts only justify the negations of atomic propositions. ...

Positive and negative facts there are, but not true and false facts. ([NL], 97; cf. [NB], 21, 33)

For Wittgenstein, then, the false atomic sentence “Plato is an elephant” (or “ε₁[Plato, Elephantine]”) and its true negation, the sentence “Plato is not an elephant” (or “~ε₁[Plato, Elephantine]”), correspond to (and thus mean) one and the same fact: namely the negative fact that Plato is not an elephant. This negative fact is the single reality that makes the latter sentence true and the former sentence false. Now we have—for the first time—the idea of a false sentence's corresponding to a fact. In *MN*, for example, Wittgenstein says:

The *Bedeutung* of a proposition is the fact that corresponds to it, e.g., if our proposition be “aRb”, if it's true, the corresponding fact would be the fact aRb, if false, the fact ~aRb. ([MN], 112; cf. [NL], 104)

In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein says that the existence and non-existence of atomic facts is reality (see *Tractatus*, 2.06). And he calls the existence of atomic facts a positive fact, and their non-existence a negative fact (see *Tractatus*, 2.06).

Wittgenstein distinguishes the meaning of a sentence from its sense. He identifies the sentence's meaning with the [positive or negative] fact to which the sentence actually corresponds. He takes the sense of the sentence, on the other hand, to be the circumstance under which the sentence would be
true. In *NL* Wittgenstein describes the epistemological significance of this conception of the notion of sense as follows:

What corresponds in reality to a proposition depends upon whether it is true or false. But we must be able to understand a proposition without knowing if it is true or false.

What we know when we understand a proposition is this: We know what is the case if the proposition is true, and what is the case if it is false. But we do not know (necessarily) whether it is true or false. ...

Every proposition is essentially true-false: to understand it, we must know both what must be the case if it is true, and what must be the case if it is false. Thus a proposition has two poles, corresponding to the case of its truth and the case of its falsehood. We call this the *sense* of a proposition. (*NL*, 98–99)

On the basis of these ideas, Wittgenstein concludes:

It is clear that we understand propositions without knowing whether they are true or false. But we can only know the *meaning* of a proposition when we know if it is true or false. What we understand is the *sense* of the proposition. (*NL*, 103)

On Wittgenstein’s account, then, the *sense* of a sentence is what we *know* when we *understand* the sentence, even if we do not know whether the sentence is true. What we know in this case is the identity of the particular circumstance under which the sentence *would* be true. That is to say, we know what fact obtains *if* the sentence is true. The sense of the sentence does not depend upon the particular truth-value which the sentence actually possesses: the sentence represents what it does independently of its truth or falsity (see *NL*, 97; cf. *Tractatus*, 2.22). So when we grasp the sense of the sentence we know the identity of the particular fact whose obtaining would verify the sentence whether or not that particular fact actually obtains. We are thus not *acquainted* (in the Russellian sense of the term) with that fact. Rather we know its identity because we grasp the *way that* the sentence represents it. To grasp the sense of a sentence is thus to grasp the sentence’s representational relationship to reality:

We use the perceptible sign of a proposition [spoken or written, etc.] as a projection of a possible situation. *The method of projection is to think of the sense of the proposition.* (*Tractatus*, 3.11; emphasis added)

Thus on Wittgenstein’s conception of truth as agreement with reality, the sense of a sentence—i.e. the circumstance whose obtaining would verify the sentence—just *is* the possible fact in logical space that the sentence represents: “Instead of, ‘This proposition has such and such a sense’, we can simply say, ‘This proposition represents such and such a situation’” (*Tractatus*, 4.031; cf. *NB*, 8).

Wittgenstein calls the sign with which we express a thought a sentential sign (see *Tractatus*, 3.12). We use a sentential sign as a projection of a possible situation (see *Tractatus*, 3.11). A sentence is thus a sentential sign in its projective relation to the world (see *Tractatus*, 3.12). Let us see what this projective relation comes to in the case of atomic sentences.

Wittgenstein’s theory of copulas treats atomic sentences as collections or mixtures of logically proper names of ontological atoms of different types. In a subject-predicate sentence, for example, the
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The projection of atomic sentences onto reality occurs via the projection of their component names onto reality. These names are projected onto reality via rules of designation that associate them with particular objects: “I regard … the relations of the elements of the proposition to their meanings as feelers, so to say, by means of which the proposition is in contact with the outer world” (NB, 13; cf. Tractatus, 2.1515). The possibility of sentences is thus based on the principle that objects have signs as their representatives (see Tractatus, 4.0312); for in a sentence a name is the representative of an object (see Tractatus, 3.22).

Consider then the colloquial English sentence “Socrates is mortal”. According to Wittgenstein’s analysis, this sentence consists of three genuine (or logically proper) names: the ordinary proper name “Socrates”, the unary predicate “mortality”, and the linguistic copula “is”. The ordinary proper name “Socrates” is meaningful in that we use it to designate the actual man Socrates. The unary predicate “mortality” is meaningful in that we use it to designate the property of mortality. And the linguistic copula “is” is meaningful in that we use it to designate the nonlinguistic copula $\forall x \exists y \varepsilon_1 (x, y)$. According to Wittgenstein’s view, this nonlinguistic copula is a binary relation whose function in an atomic (subject-predicate) fact is to predicate the object that happens to occupy its $y$ argument place of the object that happens to occupy its $x$ argument place. So given the particular rules of designation that project the expressions “Socrates”, “mortality”, and “$\forall x \exists y \varepsilon_1 (x, y)$”, separately, onto reality, it follows that the sentence “$\forall x \exists y \varepsilon_1 (x, y)$”, which results from filling the “$x$” variable in the copula-expression “$\forall x \exists y \varepsilon_1 (x, y)$” with the proper name “Socrates”, and the “$y$” variable with the unary predicate “mortality”, represents the actual man Socrates, the property of mortality, and the copula $\forall x \exists y \varepsilon_1 (x, y)$ as combined into a single complex whole in which Socrates occupies the copula’s $x$ argument place and mortality occupies its $y$ argument place. The complex represented by the sentence “$\forall x \exists y \varepsilon_1 (x, y)$” thus predicates the property of mortality of the actual man Socrates. So this particular complex just is the fact that Socrates is mortal. In the theory of copulas, then, the sentence “$\forall x \exists y \varepsilon_1 (x, y)$” is the fully analyzed version of the ordinary sentence “Socrates is mortal”. That is: it is this ordinary sentence only now reformulated in terms of the primitive notions and the basic vocabulary of the theory of copulas’ attendant theory of symbolism and metaphysics of facts.

Wittgenstein’s theory of copulas thus explains how atomic sentences have sense in terms of the way that proper names symbolize, in terms of rules of designation for proper names. The sense of an atomic sentence is fixed by rules that specify the identity of the object that each of its sub-sentential components labels. In this way the theory specifies what a given sentence says, that is, what fact in
the world [or possible combination of objects] the sentence represents. The sentence is true, if the fact which it represents actually obtains. It is false, however, if that represented fact does not actually obtain. In this way, then, elementary sentences represent atomic facts in the world either correctly or incorrectly.

As we have just seen, Wittgenstein characterizes the notion of sentential sense in several different ways. In addition to his epistemological characterization of the notion [as what one knows who understands the sentence], Wittgenstein takes the sense of a sentence to be the circumstance under which the sentence would be true, the possible fact in logical space that the sentence represents, and the sentence's fundamental representational relationship to reality. How are these various ideas of sentential sense related to each other? What makes them all, ultimately, the same idea? To begin with, it is clear that, in Wittgenstein's metaphysics, the circumstance under which the sentence would be true just is the possible fact whose obtaining would verify the sentence: these are simply two ways of speaking of the very same entity or configuration of objects. So in identifying the sense of the sentence with the circumstance under which it would be true, Wittgenstein just is identifying the sentence's sense with the possible fact whose existence the sentence represents. On the other hand, the sense of the sentence is both the circumstance under which the sentence would be true and the sentence's fundamental representational relationship to reality, for in specifying the way in which the sentence represents a reality outside of it either correctly or incorrectly we thereby specify the identity of the possible fact [i.e. configuration of objects] whose obtaining would verify the sentence.

Let us now turn to another crucial feature of Wittgenstein's early analysis of atomic facts. The notion of the copula is the basis for Wittgenstein's account of the phenomenon of factual unity. The problem of accounting for the unity of a fact—i.e. of explaining how entities combine to form a fact—is the issue that Wittgenstein refers to as “the complex problem” in his early letters to Russell [see CL, 21, 23]. In these letters, Wittgenstein follows Russell in treating atomic facts as complex wholes in which a multiplicity of independently subsisting items of various ontological kinds are united by a relation. He breaks with Russell, however, in claiming that this relation must always be a copula. Wittgenstein thus insists that, in any fact, it is the predicative occurrence of a copula that unites the constituents of that fact into a complex whole. For him, then, the copula that forms a given fact is the source of that fact's unity. The copula is, as it were, the fact's real relating relation.

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10 The Bedeutung of the sentence, let us remember, is its corresponding fact, that is, the fact that makes the sentence true, if it is true, or false, if it is false. The Sinn of the sentence, on the other hand, is the possible fact whose obtaining would verify the sentence. Thus the agreement or disagreement of the sentence's sense with reality constitutes its truth or falsity [see Tractatus, 2.222].
Wittgenstein’s account of the phenomenon of factual unity represents an important point of difference between his conception of the notion of a fact and the conception of Russell. Russell understands factual unity in terms of the predicative character of ordinary properties and relations (see RUP, 169; cf. Principles, 49–50, 52). That factual unity is a notion for which Wittgenstein seeks to account, however, indicates that his view results from his rethinking Russell’s views from within, that he is starting with a view straight out of Russell and thinking it through.

Wittgenstein’s account of factual unity has several important consequences for his views about the nature and status of ordinary properties and relations (i.e. non-copular, Russellian ones). For one thing, it leads him to take the view that these entities can occur only non-predicatively in facts. When an ordinary property or relation occurs in a given fact, it does so as a relatum of the copula which forms that fact, and thus as a logical subject of the fact itself. But the property or relation does not actually unite (or therefore directly property or relate) the other constituents so that the fact itself is formed, for that function is performed by the copula alone. Thus for Wittgenstein copulas are essentially relations of predications, whereas ordinary properties and relations are merely objects which can be related by copulas to one or more individuals (and, presumably, to other ordinary properties and relations). According to the theory of copulas, then, for one individual to love a second individual is not for these two individuals to be joined together by a fact-constituting predicative occurrence of the relation of loving. Rather it is for the two individuals and the relation of loving to be joined together by a fact-constituting predicative occurrence of the ternary copula $\exists x \exists y \exists z \in_2 (x, y, z)$.

Like Russell, Wittgenstein sees all ontological complexity as factual in nature, and sees factual complexity as the complexity of relations and relata. So in his philosophy, as in the philosophy of Russell, the notion of uniting objects to form a fact serves as the technical metaphysical idea that underlies the notion of a relating relation: uniting is the mechanism by which relations relate. In the light of this particular feature of Wittgenstein’s view, however, it would seem that to speak of the universal loving as actually relating one individual to another is quite misleading, for in the theory of copulas this abstract entity is said to relate its relata only indirectly (if at all), by virtue of the copula’s joining it to them to form the relevant fact.

In a sense, then, copulas are the only genuine relations whose existence Wittgenstein is willing to accept.¹¹ By taking copulas to be the only complex-forming entities, his theory divests ordinary

¹¹ I say, “in a sense”, because Wittgenstein does not deny that the various unary and relational predicates of colloquial language name objects of a distinct ontological kind from individuals. Nor does he deny that the objects that such expressions name are themselves genuine constituents of facts. Indeed, as we have seen, it is explicit in Wittgenstein’s analysis of the sentence “Brutus killed Caesar”, for example, that this sentence represents a fact of which the killing relation is a constituent.
relations of their capacity to occur predicatively in facts. Yet on most accounts, the capacity to combine objects into facts is essential to relations. Relations, it may be said, relate; they simply would not be relations unless they had the power to combine their terms. So by depriving ordinary relations of this combining power, Wittgenstein’s theory seems to compromise their ontological status as genuine relations. Copulas, on the other hand, by virtue of their capacity to combine their terms, serve as the only genuinely relational entities (or relating relations) in Wittgenstein’s early ontology.

As a direct consequence of his basic ontological attitude towards ordinary properties and relations, Wittgenstein makes no sharp distinction between these entities on the one hand, and individuals on the other. This is reflected, for example, in his use of a single style of linguistic variable to express generalization over individuals and their properties and relations [see CL, 18, 19, 24–25]. This style of variable is the one that PM reserves for individuals [see PM, i. 51]. Thus Wittgenstein’s theory of copulas, while nominally distinguishing ordinary properties and relations from individuals, seems in fact to treat them as on an ontological level with one another. This point, as we shall see, comes to play an important role in Wittgenstein’s finally abandoning the theory of copulas [see Section 6.2, pp. 166–176, below]. And even more importantly, for our purposes, it forms the basis for his critique of Russell’s 1912 multiple relation theory of judgment [see Section 6.3, pp. 178, 182–189, below].

The ideas of a fact as a complex structured object made up of simpler objects standing in an ordinary relation to one another, and of an ordinary relation itself as that which unites the objects so that the fact is formed, are immediately suggested by our ordinary discourse, by the surface of our language. Just as the declarative sentence “Socrates loves Xantippe” is to be a complex structured symbol in which the binary predicate “loves”, a simple symbol, joins the proper name “Socrates” to the proper name “Xantippe”, both of which are simple symbols, so the fact to which “Socrates loves Xantippe” corresponds, the fact that Socrates loves Xantippe, is to be a complex structured entity in which the relation loves joins the actual man Socrates to the actual woman Xantippe. So if the surface of language is a generally reliable guide to the underlying structure, then facts will indeed contain a plurality of objects in relation to one another, and ordinary relations will indeed occur predicatively in facts.

Wittgenstein, however, denies that ordinary properties and relations really do have the capacity to occur predicatively in facts. So for him their apparent predicability is merely an illusion of ordinary language. Here, then, we see in Wittgenstein’s early thought the continuation of a theme which perhaps begins with Frege but certainly reaches its apotheosis in Russell, and has run through much twentieth-century analytic philosophy: namely the idea that in philosophy we are misled by the apparent structure of our language. Thus Wittgenstein says:
The structure of the proposition must be recognized, the rest comes of itself. But ordinary language conceals the structure of the proposition: in it, relations look like predicates, predicates like names, etc. (NL, 107; cf. Tractatus, 4.002, 4.0031)

According to Wittgenstein: “Distrust of grammar is the first requisite for philosophizing” (NL, 106). And in the Tractatus he says, in a passage that seems to allude to the theory of descriptions: “It was Russell who performed the service of showing that the apparent logical form of a proposition need not be its real one” (Tractatus, 4.0031).

Russell maintains that every non-symmetrical binary relation can combine its relata in two ways to form two separate facts. Before 1913 he attempts to explain this phenomenon by appealing to his doctrine of relational sense and to the underlying idea that the argument places of relations have an intrinsic order (see Chapter 4, Section 4.1, pp. 64–72, above, where Russell’s views on these matters are discussed at some length). On this approach, then, the facts that correspond respectively to the sentences “Socrates loves Xantippe” and “Xantippe loves Socrates” constitute distinct complexes, in spite of their consisting of precisely the same objects, because they involve different configurations of those objects. More specifically, the individuals Socrates and Xantippe are permuted in these two facts. For Russell at this period this means that these two individuals occupy different intrinsically ordered argument places of the relation of loving in the two cases.

Wittgenstein also recognizes that two different complexes may be formed from a given non-symmetrical binary relation and the same pair of distinct individuals. But since his theory of copulas denies that ordinary relations are intrinsically predicative, it cannot characterize the phenomenon in question in precisely the same way as Russell’s theory characterizes it. So instead, Wittgenstein reinterprets Russell’s existence claim about the combinatorial capacities of non-symmetrical relations as a claim about the combinatorial capacities of copulas. He maintains, in particular, that the ternary copula \( \exists x \exists y \exists z \epsilon_2 (x, y, z) \) can combine any non-symmetrical binary relation and the same pair of individuals in two ways to form two distinct facts. Russell’s explanation of the combinatorial capacities of non-symmetrical relations in terms of the ordering of their argument places is likewise appropriated by Wittgenstein and transformed in accordance with his metaphysical presuppositions into the thesis that the argument places of copulas have an intrinsic order. According to Wittgenstein, then, the difference between Socrates’ loving Xantippe on the one hand, and Xantippe’s loving Socrates on the other, just is the difference between the atomic facts that correspond to the fully analyzed sentences \( \epsilon_2 \{ \text{Socrates, Loving, Xantippe} \} \) and \( \epsilon_2 \{ \text{Xantippe, Loving, Socrates} \} \). The difference between these two facts is that two objects of the same logical type are permuted in them. In general, then, Wittgenstein holds that for one individual to bear a first-level non-symmetrical binary relation to a second individual
is for the three-place copula \( (\exists x \mid \exists y \mid \exists z) \epsilon_{[x, y, z]} \) to combine the two individuals and the relation into an atomic fact in which the first individual occupies the copula’s first (or \( x \)) argument place, the relation occupies its second (or \( y \)) argument place, and the second individual occupies its third (or \( z \)) argument place. The complex that results from interchanging the individuals simply is the fact that the second individual bears the relation in question to the first individual.

On my reading, then, Wittgenstein takes it that the argument places of copulas have an intrinsic order, for he uses this idea to account for the difference between distinct relational facts that contain the same constituents. In contrast to Russell, Wittgenstein does not invoke the notion of relational sense in this context. But clearly the idea that the unifying element in a complex contains intrinsically ordered argument places which it uses to impose an order upon the other constituents of the complex represents an important similarity between Wittgenstein’s theory of copulas and Russell’s 1912 multiple relation theory of judgment.

6.2 Wittgenstein’s Objection to the Theory of Copulas: The Charge of Nonsense

In the previous section I surveyed some of the leading features of the theory of copulas which Wittgenstein develops in 1912 and sets out in a fragmentary way in a series of letters written to Russell at the time. In his January 1913 letter to Russell, Wittgenstein raises a crucial objection to the theory of copulas. In this letter he presents an argument that purports to show that the theory of copulas does not explain why it is impossible to judge nonsense. Wittgenstein regards the theory’s failure on this point as fatal, for it demonstrates that the theory of copulas is quite inadequate to play the role that he intends it to play. So on the strength of the objection, Wittgenstein abandons the theory of copulas altogether. He then proposes the basis for an alternative treatment of the notion of judgment which would, he suggests, make it impossible to judge nonsense [I shall return to this issue; see pp. 174–176, below].

I shall quote the relevant part of the letter at some length:

I have changed my views on “atomic” complexes: I now think that Qualities, Relations [like Love], etc., are all copulae! That means I for instance analyze a subject-predicate proposition, say, “Socrates is human” into “Socrates” and “Something is human” (which I think is not complex). The reason for this, is a very fundamental one: I think that there cannot be different Types of things! In other words whatever can be symbolized by a simple proper name must belong to one type. And further: every theory of types must be rendered superfluous by a proper theory of the symbolism: For instance if I analyze the proposition Socrates is mortal into Socrates, Mortality and \( (\exists x, y) \epsilon_{[x, y]} \) I want a theory of types to tell me that “Mortality is Socrates” is nonsensical, because if I treat “Mortality” as a proper name [as I did] there is nothing to prevent me to make [sic] the substitution the wrong

\footnote{Like his old view, Wittgenstein’s new view makes essential use of the idea of a copula in its analysis of judgment. His new view, however, differs from his old one in that it takes ordinary properties and relations to be copulas. In order to avoid any confusion to the reader which might result from the fact that both the old view and the new view use the (same) word “copula” to designate somewhat different notions for which they seek to give an account, and are therefore, in some sense, both theories of the copula, I shall [continue to] use the term “the theory of copulas” to refer exclusively to Wittgenstein’s old view.}
way round. But if I analyze [it] (as I do now) into Socrates and (∃x) x is mortal or generally into x and (∃x) q(x) it becomes impossible to substitute the wrong way round, because the two symbols are now of a different kind themselves. What I am most certain of is not however the correctness of my present way of analysis, but of the fact that all theory of types must be done away with by a theory of symbolism showing that what seem to be different kinds of things are symbolized by different kinds of symbols which cannot possibly be substituted in one another’s places. I hope I have made this fairly clear! (CL, 24–25)

*Propositions which I formerly wrote \( \varepsilon_1 (a, R, b) \) I now write \( R(a, b) \) and analyze them into \( a, b, \) and \( (∃x, y) R(x, y) \).

This passage is enormously complex, it expresses several different views and contains various lines of reasoning. And, on the whole, Wittgenstein’s reasoning here is obscure. In this section I shall attempt to unravel his reasoning in the letter and to reconstruct his basic argument against the theory of copulas.

There is, to begin with, a crucial connection between, on the one hand, the view of ordinary properties and relations that implicitly accompanies the theory of copulas rejected by Wittgenstein in the letter, and, on the other hand, the notion of a thing as it occurs in Russell’s *Principles*. In his January 1913 letter to Russell, Wittgenstein seems to rely on this connection. In some ways, indeed, he appears to be directly responding to the section in *Principles* where Russell first articulates his distinction between things and concepts (see *Principles*, 44–45).

In *Principles* Russell refers to the constituents of propositions as “terms” (see *Principles*, 43). Among terms, the fundamental entities of his early ontology, Russell makes a distinction between those that cannot play the predicate role in propositions, but can only occur as subject, and those that can play either role. Terms of the latter sort are what he calls “concepts”. Terms of the former sort are what he calls “things”. On this picture of the constituents of propositions, then, concepts include both ordinary properties and ordinary relations.

In contrast to the view that Russell espouses in *Principles*, Wittgenstein’s 1912 analysis of judgment—the view which I call the theory of copulas—maintains that ordinary properties and relations lack the capacity to unify objects to form facts. According to Wittgenstein’s 1912 metaphysics, then, these entities cannot play the predicate role in facts. They are thus not capable of that curious twofold use to which Russell alludes in *Principles* (see *Principles*, 45). In the theory of copulas, the atomic fact that corresponds to the colloquial English sentence “Socrates is mortal” is taken to be a complex whole in which the individual designated by the ordinary proper name “Socrates” is combined by the copula designated by the word “is” with the universal designated by the unary predicate “mortality”. Thus although the fact that Socrates is mortal attributes the property of mortality to the actual man Socrates, yet the notion of attributing that is involved here is not itself a feature of, or introduced by, the property of mortality. It is, rather, an entirely separate element of the fact in question. Wittgenstein
identifies this element with the copula. One upshot of this analysis is that, just like the individual Socrates, the property of mortality occurs non-predicatively in the fact that Socrates is mortal, as a term of the copula relation, and as a logical subject of the fact itself. For Wittgenstein this point holds generally: in any fact the constituents which are (what we would call) individuals will have precisely the same manner of occurrence as the concepts (i.e. ordinary properties and relations) that are attributed to them. For Wittgenstein, then, the apparent predicability of concepts is merely an illusion of ordinary language. Just like the individuals that they are said to property or relate, concepts are intrinsically incapable of combining objects into facts. In effect, then, Wittgenstein’s 1912 view of individuals and their properties and relations assimilates them to the category of entities that Russell in Principles dubs “things”.

This feature of Wittgenstein’s early ontology has important implications for his views about language and logical grammar. In Principles Russell characterizes the expressions that we use to designate things as proper names (see Principles, 44). From the linguistic point of view, then, Wittgenstein’s 1912 account of ordinary properties and relations has the consequence that ordinary unary and relational predicates are to be thought of as proper names (i.e., in part, as independently meaningful labels for objects of acquaintance). Wittgenstein’s conception of unary and relational predicates as proper names is not, however, merely a terminological consequence of his claim that ordinary properties and relations are things. Rather his conception of predicates as names is based on his understanding of the way that these expressions function in sentences. On Wittgenstein’s 1912 analysis of language, the expressions that we use to designate ordinary properties and ordinary relations are taken to play the same basic role in forming complete declarative sentences as the expressions that we use to designate individuals. An atomic sentence, for Wittgenstein, is a complex symbol in which certain simple symbols that directly designate individuals are joined by a symbol that directly designates a copula with other simple symbols that directly designate properties and relations. Thus, in speaking of his 1912 view, Wittgenstein says: “if I analyze the proposition Socrates is mortal into Socrates, Mortality and (∃x, y) ε₁ (x, y) … I treat ‘Mortality’ as a proper name” (CL, 24). In Wittgenstein’s early philosophy, then, ordinary unary and relational predicates are treated as proper names of properties and of relations, respectively.

Over the last few paragraphs I have described some of the fundamental similarities between the entities which Wittgenstein’s theory of copulas counts as things on the one hand, and those which Russell’s theory of propositions counts as things on the other. I turn now to consider a crucial difference between the two notions. In the theory of copulas there are ultimate distinctions of logical type (or ontological category) among things. In particular: some things (e.g. Socrates, Xantippe, etc.) are what we
would call individuals; some things (e.g. mortality, humanity, etc.) are what we would call properties of individuals; and some things (e.g. loving, killing, etc.) are what we would call relations of individuals. As we have already seen, individuals, properties of individuals, and relations of individuals all count as things for Wittgenstein, because these entities can only occur in a fact as subject; there are no facts in which they play the predicate role, i.e. facts in which they manage to unify the constituents. What demonstrates that these entities belong to different logical categories, on the other hand, is the fact that the expressions by which we designate them are not intersubstitutable salva significatione in sentences. For Wittgenstein, indeed, this latter idea is the hallmark of type-theoretic equivalence.

To clarify this issue, let us consider again Wittgenstein’s 1912 analysis of the colloquial English sentence “Socrates is mortal”. Clearly this sentence makes sense (i.e. it has content or is meaningful). The sentence says that Socrates is mortal, i.e. that the actual man Socrates has the property of mortality (or that mortality holds of Socrates). According to Wittgenstein’s view, for a sentence to say that Socrates is mortal is for the sentence to assert the existence of an atomic fact in which the property of mortality is predicated of (or attributed to) the actual man Socrates. In the theory of copulas, the fact whose existence is asserted by the sentence “Socrates is mortal” is seen as made up of three elements, one corresponding to “Socrates”, one to “mortality”, and one to the linguistic copula “is”. The actual man Socrates is the element that corresponds to “Socrates”; and the property of mortality is the element that corresponds to “mortality”. The element that corresponds to the word “is”, on the other hand, is simply the copula (∃x) (∃y) ε₁(x, y). Recall that this particular copula is a binary relation whose function in an atomic subject-predicate fact is to predicate the object that happens to occupy its second (or y) argument place of the object that happens to occupy its first (or x) argument place. Consequently the sentence that results from filling the first (or “x”) variable in the copula-expression “(∃x) (∃y) ε₁(x, y)” with the proper name “Socrates”, and the second (or “y”) variable with the unary predicate “mortality”, represents the individual Socrates, the universal mortality, and the binary copula (∃x) (∃y) ε₁(x, y) as combined into a fact in which mortality is predicated of Socrates. On this basis, then, Wittgenstein analyzes the atomic sentence “Socrates is mortal” as “ε₁[Socrates, Mortality]”.

For Wittgenstein, two entities belong to precisely the same logical type just in case the expressions by which we designate the two are intersubstitutable salva significatione in sentences. Given this standard for type-theoretic equivalence, the actual men Socrates and Plato will count as entities of the same logical type. When we substitute the proper name “Plato” for the proper name “Socrates” in the meaningful sentence “ε₁[Socrates, Mortality]”, we produce the meaningful sentence “ε₁[Plato, Mortality]”. According to Wittgenstein’s view, this new sentence asserts the existence of an atomic fact in which the binary copula (∃x) (∃y) ε₁(x, y) predicates the property of mortality of the actual
man Plato. So the sentence says that Plato is mortal. In the theory of copulas, the sentence \( \varepsilon_1 \{ \text{Plato, Mortality} \} \) is thus the fully analyzed version of the colloquial English sentence “Plato is mortal”. For Wittgenstein, as for Russell, an unanalyzed (or less than fully analyzed) sentence expresses the same sense as its fully analyzed version expresses. The fully analyzed sentence just expresses that sense more perspicuously than the unanalyzed (or less than fully analyzed) sentence expresses it. For the fully analyzed sentence makes absolutely clear the underlying structure of the corresponding reality. So given that the colloquial English sentence “Plato is mortal” is obviously significant, it follows immediately that its fully analyzed version, the sentence \( \varepsilon_1 \{ \text{Plato, Mortality} \} \), is significant too. The proper names “Socrates” and “Plato” are thus intersubstitutable salva significatione in sentences. So for Wittgenstein the actual men Socrates and Plato (the entities to which these names refer) are objects of precisely the same logical type.

Given Wittgenstein’s standard for type-theoretic equivalence, however, the actual man Socrates and the property of mortality must be taken as objects of distinct logical types. If we were to interchange the words “Socrates” and “mortality” in the meaningful sentence \( \varepsilon_1 \{ \text{Socrates, Mortality} \} \), we would produce the (putative) sentence \( \varepsilon_1 \{ \text{Mortality, Socrates} \} \). Given the rules of designation that project the expressions “Socrates”, “mortality”, and \( \{ \exists x \{ \exists y \varepsilon_1 \{ x, y \} \} \) onto reality, we must treat the array of meaningful words \( \varepsilon_1 \{ \text{Mortality, Socrates} \} \) as representing Socrates, mortality, and the copula \( \{ \exists x \{ \exists y \varepsilon_1 \{ x, y \} \) \( \varepsilon_1 \{ x, y \} \) as combined into a complex in which mortality occupies the first (or \( x \)) argument place of the copula, and Socrates occupies its second (or \( y \)) argument place. So the separate rules of projection for the three expressions “Socrates”, “mortality”, and \( \{ \exists x \{ \exists y \varepsilon_1 \{ x, y \} \) dictate that we treat the sentence \( \varepsilon_1 \{ \text{Mortality, Socrates} \} \) as representing a complex in which the individual Socrates is predicated of (or attributed to) the universal mortality. If, then, the sentence \( \varepsilon_1 \{ \text{Mortality, Socrates} \} \) is to be regarded as meaningful, it must be regarded as saying that mortality is Socrates (or that Socrates holds of mortality). Clearly, however, the (putative) sentence “mortality is Socrates” is a piece of nonsense. This sentence is plain gibberish: no thought, true or false, is expressed by its utterance. So when we interchange the meaningful words “Socrates” and “mortality” in a meaningful sentence, we produce a sentence which is obviously nonsensical. It follows from this that the ordinary proper name “Socrates” and the unary predicate “mortality” are not intersubstitutable salva significatione in sentences. So by Wittgenstein’s standard for type-theoretic equivalence, Socrates and mortality must be objects of distinct logical types.

Arguments with the same basic structure as the one just outlined can be produced to show that in Wittgenstein’s theory of copulas the properties of mortality and of humanity are regarded as objects of the same logical type, and that the relations of loving and of killing are so regarded by the theory as well.
Hence there are ultimate distinctions of ontological category among the various entities which Wittgenstein's 1912 theory [of copulas] treats as things. And, as a corollary of this point, there are such categorial distinctions among the entities that are designated by the expressions which the theory characterizes as proper names. In this respect, then, Wittgenstein's notion of a thing in 1912 differs fundamentally from Russell's notion of a thing in 1903.

As I have described it, then, Wittgenstein’s theory of copulas explains the existence of type-theoretic distinctions among the fundamental entities of its ontology in terms of the phenomenon of meaningful language. On Wittgenstein’s approach, two objects belong to the same logical type if, but only if, the expressions by which we designate them respectively are intersubstitutable *salva significatione* in sentences. Wittgenstein’s approach to distinctions of logical type thus takes as its starting point the idea that certain sentences, or combinations of meaningful words, are obviously meaningful, while other sentences, or combinations of meaningful words, are obviously meaningless. Wittgenstein then goes on to claim that when an obviously meaningless sentence is obtained from an obviously meaningful one by replacing a meaningful word in the meaningful sentence with a different meaningful word, the entities which are the meanings of the two words are of different logical types. On my reading, then, Wittgenstein takes it to be an obvious and undeniable fact that the alleged sentence “mortality is Socrates” is a piece of nonsense, that this [putative] sentence is plain gibberish. This point is fundamental for him: it represents a rock-bottom assumption from which his reasoning about type-theoretic distinctions proceeds. In Wittgenstein's eyes, then, the meaninglessness of “mortality is Socrates” serves a datum for which any adequate theory of judgment, i.e. analysis of sentences, must successfully account.

While Wittgenstein takes the various type-theoretic distinctions among entities to be reflected in language, he does not think of the distinctions themselves as being linguistic in nature. On the contrary: Wittgenstein, following Russell’s lead, takes distinctions of logical type to be genuine features of reality, that is, features of the objects which our words and sentences are about. Let us, then, consider more closely the basic ontological vision that underlies the standard for type-theoretic equivalence that Wittgenstein establishes.

According to Wittgenstein’s metaphysics, all objects can be constituents of facts; and any given object is a constituent of some fact or other [see *Tractatus*, 2s]. Clearly, however, not just any group of objects can combine to form a fact. Some groups of objects can, while other groups of objects cannot, combine to form a fact. Each individual object thus has certain possibilities of combination with other objects [see *Tractatus*, 2.014]. An object’s possibilities of combination with other objects can be thought of as its logical type [see *Tractatus*, 2.0141]. The theory of types, then, tells us which
groups of objects can, and which groups of objects cannot, combine to form a fact. According to this theory when two objects belong to the same logical type they have exactly the same possibilities of combination with other objects. But when two objects belong to different logical types they have different possibilities of combination with other objects. Each individual constituent of a given fact occupies a determinate position in that fact. The various possible positions that an object can occupy in a fact are determined by its logical type: all and only objects of the same logical type can occupy the same positions in a fact. Hence all and only objects of the same logical type can be permuted within facts.

On Wittgenstein’s analysis of language, an individual sentence represents a certain group of objects as combined into a single complex whole. The sentence itself consists of certain independently meaningful names in a certain, definite arrangement. It thus represents the objects designated by these names as combined in reality in a corresponding, definite arrangement. If the objects in question can be combined in reality in the way that the sentence merely represents them as being combined, then the sentence itself represents a possible combination of objects. For Wittgenstein a possible combination of objects just is a possible fact. So the sentence in question represents a possible fact. In the theory of copulas, a sentence that represents a (possible) fact is said to make sense. Hence the sentence that we are considering is one which makes sense. For Wittgenstein, then, a sentence is significant [i.e. makes sense, has content, or is meaningful] just in case it represents some genuine fact in the world either correctly or incorrectly.

Those constituents of the sentence’s corresponding fact which happen to belong to different logical types cannot be permuted within the fact itself. Yet if we were to interchange a pair of words in the sentence that refer to two such constituents of the corresponding fact, we would produce a sentence that represents the entire group of objects making up that particular fact as forming a new complex in which the constituents in question have been interchanged. This new sentence would thus represent the objects themselves as combined in a way that they cannot be combined in reality. So the new sentence would not represent a possible combination of objects. It would therefore fail to represent a possible fact. For Wittgenstein the sentence in question would thus count as nonsensical. So by interchanging the words in a meaningful sentence that refer to objects of different logical types, we produce a sentence that is not meaningful. Hence expressions that refer to objects that belong to different logical types are not intersubstitutable salva significatione in sentences.

In his January 1913 letter to Russell, Wittgenstein explicitly rejects the notion that there are any ultimate distinctions of logical type among things. He thus equates the denial of such distinctions with the view that all proper names refer to objects of a single type:
I have changed my views on “atomic” complexes: I now think that Qualities, Relations [like Love], etc., are all copulae! … The reason for this, is a very fundamental one: I think that there cannot be different Types of things! In other words whatever can be symbolized by a simple proper name must belong to one type. (CL, 24)

So the fundamental change is that Wittgenstein no longer accepts that there are type-distinctions among things. And a consequence of that is that ordinary properties and ordinary relations cannot be things. The crucial point in this regard is that, in the context of the theory of copulas, the absence of any fundamental type-theoretic distinctions among the entities which the theory treats as things, coupled with the assumption that ordinary properties and relations are themselves things (i.e. subjects of facts), has the consequence that the theory itself cannot explain why it is impossible to judge nonsense. Let us attempt to flesh out this argument.

To begin with, if all things (i.e. all subjects of facts) are entities of precisely the same logical type, as Wittgenstein now maintains, then given his 1912 doctrine that (so-called) individuals, properties of individuals, and relations of individuals are things, it follows immediately that individuals, their properties, and their relations all belong to the same logical type. So for Wittgenstein the actual man Socrates and the property of mortality should be objects of the same logical type. In that case, however, they ought to be mutually permutable in a fact. But then of course the proper names that we use to designate Socrates and mortality respectively should be intersubstitutable salva significatione in sentences. When we interchange these names in a sentence that represents a possible fact (i.e. a possible combination of objects) we should obtain a new sentence that also represents some possible fact. So given that the sentence “ε₁[Socrates, Mortality]” makes sense, it ought to follow that the sentence “ε₁[Mortality, Socrates]”, which results from “ε₁[Socrates, Mortality]” by interchanging the proper names “Socrates” and “mortality”, makes sense too. In the theory of copulas, the sentence “ε₁[Mortality, Socrates]” is the fully analyzed version (or analogue) of the colloquial English sentence “mortality is Socrates”. According to Wittgenstein, however, this colloquial English sentence is a piece of nonsense. So its fully analyzed version ought to be nonsensical too. Hence in the absence of fundamental type-theoretic distinctions among things, the theory of copulas treats as meaningful (i.e. as representing a possible fact or combination of objects) a sentence that is quite clearly nonsensical. So without these necessary categorial distinctions, the theory is unable to show that it is impossible to judge nonsense. In Wittgenstein’s eyes, this point constitutes a refutation of the theory itself. So on the strength of the objection in question, he abandons the theory of copulas altogether.

As I have presented it, then, Wittgenstein’s argument against the theory of copulas hinges largely on the claim that there can be no fundamental categorial distinctions among things, that all subjects of
facts (i.e. all their intrinsically non-predicative components) must belong to precisely the same logical type. The question thus arises: why does Wittgenstein now take this position?

There are, I believe, a number of factors that contribute to this change in his view. Ultimately, however, his reasons for abandoning the view that there are fundamental categorial distinctions among things have to do with our ability—or lack thereof—to state these distinctions effectively. If there really are distinctions of ontological category among things, then we must be able to state these distinctions and the restrictions to which they give rise. The statements that set forth the distinctions and the resulting restrictions must be included in the body of sentences that expresses our theory as a whole; these statements must form part of our analysis of the notion of judgment. Wittgenstein claims, however, that the attempt to articulate distinctions of logical type is self-defeating: we cannot state type theory within a theory that is itself subject to type-theoretic distinctions.

According to Wittgenstein, then, the difficulty arises not from the mere fact that there are type-theoretic distinctions; it arises from the fact that these distinctions have to be explicitly stated within the theory of copulas itself. Perhaps here we see the direct influence of Frege upon Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein’s January 1913 letter to Russell is preceded by his visit to Frege in Jena in December 1912. In a letter to Russell, dated 26 December 1912, Wittgenstein writes:

I had a long discussion with Frege about our Theory of Symbolism of which, I think, he roughly understood the general outline. He said he would think the matter over. The complex problem is now clearer to me and I hope very much that I may solve it. (CL, 21)

In Russellian terms, Frege’s distinction between concept and object is a distinction between entities that can play only the predicate role in propositions and entities that can play only the subject role. As thus understood, however, we cannot state the distinction between concepts and objects without effacing that very distinction, for we cannot say of a given entity that it is not capable of being the subject in a proposition without expressing a proposition in which that entity occurs as subject (for further discussion of this problem, see Chapter 2, Section 2.2, p. 17, above). For closely related reasons we cannot state the ontological distinctions between things of different logical types without running counter to those distinctions.

If we treat the actual man Socrates and the property of mortality as occurring as logical subjects in the fact that Socrates is mortal, then we need—or “want”, as Wittgenstein himself puts it (CL, 24)—a theory of types to tell us that these two things cannot be permuted in that (or any other) fact. If they are not mutually permutable in a fact, then their names are not interchangeable salva significatione in sentences. So if there is a type-theoretic distinction between Socrates and mortality, and a corresponding set of type-theoretic restrictions on the argument places of the binary copula
∃x (∃y) e₁(x, y), then when we decompose the meaningful sentence “Socrates is mortal” into the three meaningful expressions “Socrates”, “mortality”, and “(∃x) (∃y) e₁(x, y)”, we can show that in recombining these expressions into the [putative] sentence “e₁(Mortality, Socrates)”, we produce a phrase that does not represent a possible combination of objects. In this way, then, the theory of copulas would seem to show that it is impossible to judge nonsense.

In order to express these necessary type-theoretic distinctions, let us say that Socrates is a thing of type 0, and that mortality is a thing of type 1, where no two logical types have any common members. Let us also say that in the two-place copula (∃x) (∃y) e₁(x, y), the possible values of the first (or x) existentially quantified variable are all and only things of type 0, and that the possible values of the second (or y) existentially quantified variable are all and only things of type 1. In other words: the first (or x) variable in the copula ranges over things of type 0, while the second (or y) variable ranges over things of type 1.

The theory of copulas identifies the fact that Socrates is a thing of type 0 with the complex whose existence is asserted by the sentence “e₁(Socrates, Type 0)”. But then the theory should identify the fact that mortality is not a thing of type 0 with the complex whose existence is asserted by the sentence “¬ e₁(Mortality, Type 0)”. Here then the theory of copulas attempts to distinguish an object of one logical type from an object of another logical type by attributing a property to the first object that it denies to the second object.

Wittgenstein insists, however, that we cannot successfully distinguish objects of one type from those of another type in this fashion:

We can never distinguish one logical type from another by attributing a property to members of the one which we deny to members of the other. [NL, 98]

And, again, he states:

Types can never be distinguished from each other by saying [as is often done] that one has these but the other has those properties, for this presupposes that there is a meaning in asserting all these properties of both types. [NL, 101; cf. Tractatus, 4.1241]

The problem with the strategy in question here is that it implies that Socrates and mortality are possible arguments to [i.e. possible values of the variable in] the same propositional function, namely that expressed by “e₁(∀x, Type 0)”. If we can truly, and thus significantly, deny that mortality is a thing of type 0, then we can also significantly, though in this case falsely, assert that it is a thing of type 0. But now consider the definition of the notion of being of the same type as that PM puts forward: “If ‘φx’ is significant, then if a is of the same type as x, ‘φa’ is significant, and vice versa” (PM, i. 140; cf. PM, i. 133). As Russell observes: “It follows from this proposition that two arguments to the same propositional function must be of the same type; for if x and a are arguments to φx, ‘φa’
and ‘φα’ are significant, and therefore x and a are of the same type” (PM, i. 140). So given that Socrates and mortality are both possible arguments to [i.e. possible values of the variable in] the propositional function expressed by “ε₁(φ, Type 0)”, it follows that these two objects belong to the same logical type. But then they should be mutually permutable in a fact. So when we interchange their names in the meaningful sentence “ε₁(φ₁, Mortality)”, the sentence that we produce, namely “ε₁(Mortality, Socrates)”, should be meaningful too. Thus it seems that even with the addition of type-theoretic distinctions among things to its analysis of judgment, the theory of copulas does not show that it is impossible to judge nonsense.

In his January 1913 letter to Russell, Wittgenstein suggests that we can avoid the difficulty in question by adopting a view of atomic complexes according to which the property of mortality plays the ontological role of the copula in the fact that corresponds to the sentence “Socrates is mortal” (see CL, 24). According to Wittgenstein’s new view, then, the fact that Socrates is mortal is an atomic complex that consists of the individual Socrates united with the property of mortality. In the context of this atomic fact, then, Socrates and mortality occur in fundamentally different ways: Socrates occurs non-predicatively, as a term or logical subject, whereas mortality occurs predicatively, as the ontological glue or logical cement that holds the constituents of the fact together.¹⁴

In the Tractatus Wittgenstein maintains that objects can have different logical forms, that is, different possibilities of combination with each other [see Tractatus, 2.014, 2.0141]. In the view that Wittgenstein advances in his January 1913 letter to Russell as an alternative to the theory of copulas, this idea is expressed by his twofold claim that Socrates and mortality play essentially different ontological roles in the facts of which they are constituents, and that, by virtue of their ability to play these two roles, they can unite to form the fact that Socrates is mortal.

A crucial point, however, is that, according to Wittgenstein’s new view, the distinction between the roles that these two objects play in the fact in question is not itself given ontologically but rather emerges from the logical analysis of the sentence “Socrates is mortal”. In his letter to Russell, Wittgenstein maintains that this sentence consists of the simple proper name “Socrates”, which designates the actual man Socrates, who is a thing, joined with the expression “(∃x) (x is mortal)”, which designates the universal mortality, a property which is at the same time a copula.¹⁵ In this

¹⁴ In this way, then, Wittgenstein’s new view is more like Frege’s view: it sharply distinguishes the essentially predicative character of, and role played in judgment by, ordinary properties and relations [concepts for Frege, copulas for Wittgenstein] from the essentially non-predicative character of, and role played in judgment by, the entities [objects for Frege, things for Wittgenstein] which they are said to property or relate.

¹⁵ In TK Russell presents an objection [or at least he describes the basis for one] to the view that properties and relations are really copulas. After arguing that our knowledge of relations is based on direct acquaintance with the relations themselves, he remarks: “There are, it is true, other theories which would also account for the data. It
way the signs that Wittgenstein now uses to symbolize Socrates and mortality respectively possess different logical powers. Clearly these two signs have different grammatical functions in sentences: the two play contrasting roles in forming complete declarative sentences. The distinctive function of each sign in the sentence is perspicuously displayed by its logico-syntactical structure. In particular: that the sign “∃x [x is mortal]” combines with a single proper name to form a complete declarative sentence is expressed by its containing a single existentially quantified variable for which a proper name is a syntactically admissible filler. Likewise: that the sign “Socrates” combines with a unary predicate to form a subject-predicate sentence is expressed, in part, by its lacking any sort of argument place into which another expression could be inserted to produce a sentence. Thus the sentence “∃x [x is mortal & x = Socrates]” says the same thing as the sentence “Socrates is mortal” [see *Tractatus*, 5.47; cf. MN, 117].

A crucial feature of Wittgenstein’s new account of the structure of the sentence “Socrates is mortal” is that it is based on a notation that automatically enforces type-theoretic distinctions. As we have already seen, Wittgenstein’s objection to the theory of types is that the restrictions cannot be stated. In the *Tractatus* he claims that a correct understanding of language would make it clear that there is nothing that needs to be stated: “The rules of logical syntax must go without saying, once we know how each individual sign signifies” [Tractatus, 3.334]. According to Wittgenstein’s new view, then, an object’s logical type, i.e. its possibilities of combination with other objects, is expressed, not by a property of the object, but rather by the way in which the object gets represented in language. In the proper theory of symbolism, the method of representation will reflect the object’s logical type: it will show what the object’s possibilities of combination with other objects are. The method of representation will display these possibilities of combination by reflecting exactly the logical powers of the expression that we use to symbolize the object. So, on this view, the putative ontological fact that the actual man Socrates and the property of mortality have the capacity to combine to form the atomic fact that Socrates is mortal is now expressed by the linguistic fact that the symbols “Socrates” and “(∃x) [x is mortal]”, which we use to represent Socrates and mortality respectively, have the capacity to combine to form the atomic sentence “Socrates is mortal”. The proper theory of symbolism thus renders the theory of types superfluous by symbolizing entities of distinct ontological kinds by signs of

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may be said, for example, that what we are acquainted with is the fact ‘something has the relation in question to something’. Such facts have a one-one correlation with the relations with which they are concerned, except when the relation is one which never holds between any pair of terms. If it could be shown that we have the most direct knowledge possible of relations of which there is no instance, or even of which no instance is known to us, that would decide against the theory we are considering” [TK, 89].
distinct logico-syntactical kinds “which cannot possibly be substituted in one another’s places” [CL, 25].

Given Wittgenstein’s new method of representation, we cannot form nonsensical sentences. When we analyze the sentence “Socrates is mortal” into the simple proper name “Socrates” and the simple copula-expression “(∃x) (x is mortal)”, there is no way of putting these two meaningful symbols together to form the nonsensical sentence “mortality is Socrates”. The nature of the symbols themselves excludes this alleged sentence’s construction. Thus, in describing his new analysis of judgment, Wittgenstein says:

if I analyze the proposition Socrates is mortal ... into Socrates and (∃x) x is mortal or generally into x and (∃x) ϕ(x) it becomes impossible to substitute the wrong way round, because the two symbols are now of a different kind themselves. [CL, 24–25]

In the theory of copulas, by contrast, the words “Socrates” and “mortality” are both treated as proper names, for they are taken to be expressions with equivalent logical powers, that is, expressions that play precisely the same role in forming complete declarative sentences. Consequently there is nothing in the theory of symbolism that the theory of copulas includes that prevents the formation of nonsensical sentences. If we decompose the meaningful sentence “Socrates is mortal” into the three meaningful words “Socrates”, “mortality”, and “(∃x) (∃y) ε₁(x, y)”, then we can recombine them into the meaningless sentence “ε₁[Mortality, Socrates]”. Clearly there is such a symbol. 16

6.3 The Analogous Objection to the 1912 Multiple Relation Theory of Judgment

My primary concern in this section is with Wittgenstein’s critique of the version of the multiple relation theory of judgment that Russell produces in 1912 and sets out in Problems. I shall argue that this version of the multiple relation theory forms the focus of the criticism that Wittgenstein presents in his January 1913 letter to Russell. My chief claim shall be that Wittgenstein sees, and is saying to Russell in the letter, that owing to the various fundamental similarities between the theory of copulas and the 1912 multiple relation theory of judgment, the problem for the theory of copulas that he

16 We saw in the last section that in one of his early letters to Russell, written during the summer of 1912, Wittgenstein proposes a contextual definition of the symbol for disjunction (see CL, 17–18). The definition that he proposes shows how the disjunction of two atomic subject-predicate sentences manages to be meaningful, i.e. to represent some complex, without the logical connective “∨” actually signifying some constituent of the corresponding fact. Wittgenstein’s theory of copulas uses a single style of linguistic variable to express generalization over individuals and their properties [and relations]. When Wittgenstein, in constructing his contextual definition of the symbol “∨”, comes to reproduce the analyzed subject-predicate sentence constituting the second disjunct of the definiendum, in the definiens, he mistakenly interchanges the variable in that analyzed subject-predicate sentence that represents an arbitrary individual with the variable in it that represents an arbitrary property of individuals. In doing so, he obtains a nonsensical sentence from a meaningful one. Here then we have irrefutable evidence that the theory of copulas’ attendant theory of symbolism does not in fact rule out the possibility of substituting meaningful symbols the wrong way around in meaningful sentences to produce nonsensical sentences.
exposes in the letter infects Russell's theory as well. Wittgenstein thus charges that the 1912 multiple relation theory does not show that it is impossible to judge nonsense. More specifically his claim is that nothing in the 1912 theory taken by itself has the consequence that, in judgment, Aristotle can attribute mortality to Socrates, but cannot attribute Socrates to mortality. And this is fatal. In constructing an argument for the objection in question, Wittgenstein exploits both the conception of representation that the 1912 multiple relation theory involves as well as a crucial tension between certain features of Russell's type theory on the one hand and his universalist conception of logic on the other.

In its contention that the 1912 version of Russell's multiple relation theory of judgment forms the focus of the criticism presented by Wittgenstein in his January 1913 letter to Russell, my interpretation of the significance of Wittgenstein's letter contrasts with the view which Griffin takes of this issue. Griffin argues that the principal target of the objection that Wittgenstein raises in the letter is actually an early version of the particular version of the multiple relation theory of judgment that Russell expounds in TK. It seems to me, however, that Griffin's view depends upon a mistaken understanding of the role that the notion of the copula plays in the theory of judgment that Wittgenstein develops in 1912. In particular, Griffin seems to understand the copula as being something akin to a Russellian logical form, so that its presence in the theory of judgment criticized in the letter prefigures the appearance of logical forms in the analysis of judgments in TK. As we have already seen, the theory of judgment that appears in Wittgenstein's January 1913 letter to Russell makes essential use of the notion of the copula in its analysis of judgment. To represent copulas, Wittgenstein uses certain multiply existentially generalized sentences. So with respect to their symbolic representations at least, Wittgensteinian copulas and Russellian logical forms are in some ways akin. Perhaps it is on the basis of their shared or at least somewhat similar linguistic appearance that Griffin identifies these entities. In any case, my claim is that he errs in doing so. The crucial point here is that, in Wittgenstein's early analysis of judgment, the notion of the copula serves a very different function from that which the notion of logical form serves in the 1913 version of the multiple relation theory. It seems indeed that many of the properties that Russell insists that his logical forms lack—including but not limited to the ability to order the constituents of facts, the ability to occur as a constituent of the ordinary facts to which our judgments correspond, and the ability to unite objects so that a

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17 See Griffin, “Russell's Multiple Relation Theory”, 229–30. There is, however, no independent evidence of the existence of an early version of the 1913 multiple relation theory of judgment.


fact is formed—not only are possessed by Wittgenstein’s copulas; they are also definitive of them. Thus it seems that in Wittgenstein’s 1912 account of judgment the copula performs a function that is much more analogous to the function performed by the multiple relation of judging in Russell’s 1912 theory of judgment, for it is where the unity comes from. Clearly then it is inappropriate to identify Wittgensteinian copulas with Russellian logical forms, and to think of the theory of copulas as simply being an early version of the 1913 multiple relation theory. Accordingly the objection raised by Wittgenstein in his January 1913 letter to Russell should not be seen as having Russell’s 1913 theory of judgment as its ultimate target.

The theory of judgment that Wittgenstein explicitly criticizes in his letter to Russell includes crucial features that are also found in the 1912 multiple relation theory but that are not found in the 1913 theory. Moreover, the criticism exploits these features in its reasoning. Recall that the chief differences between the 1912 and 1913 versions of the multiple relation theory are twofold. First: according to the former but not the latter the argument places of relations, cognitive and ordinary ones alike, have an intrinsic order. Second: according to the 1913 theory but not the 1912 theory the logical form of a judgment’s would-be corresponding fact is one of the objects of that judgment.

There are a number of crucial similarities between Wittgenstein’s theory of copulas on the one hand, and the 1912 version of Russell’s multiple relation theory of judgment on the other. To begin with, both theories take the unifying element in a complex to impose an order upon the other constituents. In the theory of copulas this element is the copula. In the 1912 multiple relation theory, on the other hand, the sense of the judging relation is said to put the judging mind and the objects of the judgment in the right order in the judgment-fact, while the sense of the subordinate relation is said to put these objects in the same relative order in the judgment’s would-be corresponding fact. 20 A second similarity between the two theories is that both accept that ordinary properties and relations can occur non-predicatively in facts, as terms or logical subjects. And, finally, both theories, in their respective analyses of judgment, treat the apparent predicability of ordinary properties and relations (as these entities figure in the contents that we judge true or false) as a constructed notion, as something which needs to be simulated by the analysis. And both theories attempt to carry out this construction by appealing to the ordinal position of the property or relation in the relevant complex.

Recall that Wittgenstein identifies the particular complex (or configuration) of elements that is represented by the sentence “ε₁(Socrates, Mortality)” with the fact that Socrates is mortal in part because he holds that the binary copula (∃x)(∃y)ε₁(x,y), which forms the complex in question, combines

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20 Speaking loosely, we may say that in Wittgenstein’s theory of copulas the unity of the proposition comes from the copula, whereas in Russell’s multiple relation theory of judgment it comes from the judging relation.
its terms so as to predicate the object that occupies its second or $y$ argument place of the object that occupies its first or $x$ argument place. Notice that it is the copula that does the predicating here, rather than the object that occupies the second or $y$ argument place. This feature of Wittgenstein’s analysis of facts is at odds with ordinary or colloquial language, whose superficial grammatical form suggests that mortality is the predicating element in the fact that Socrates is mortal. So in the theory of copulas the apparent predicability of the property of mortality is simply an illusion of ordinary language and must be simulated by the theory. The theory thus seeks to explain the phenomenon of predicability in terms of the notion of the copula, rather than in terms of any features of the objects that correspond to the predicates of sentences.

Russell’s 1912 multiple relation theory is similarly at odds with the apparent form of the sentences that we use to express our judgments. In these unanalyzed sentences the subordinate linguistic verb joins together some group of proper names to form a complex symbol. (In an unanalyzed judgment ascription the word “judges” has the syntactic role of joining a judger’s name to a complete declarative sentence.) This feature of our ordinary discourse creates the appearance that the objects of our judgments are complete propositions—complex abstract entities, capable of truth or falsehood, that contain the very things which they are about. According to the multiple relation theory of judgment, however, the objects of a judgment are actually the several constituents of the putative proposition judged, and in the judgment itself these various entities all occur as terms. Hence in the light of the fact that our judgments appear to express attitudes towards propositions, it follows that the apparent predicational occurrence of the subordinate relation in a judgment is in fact a constructed phenomenon for Russell. The multiple relation theory is supposed to explain how this phenomenon comes about.

Due to the various points of striking agreement between Wittgenstein’s theory of copulas and Russell’s 1912 multiple relation theory of judgment, the latter theory is also vulnerable to the objection that Wittgenstein raises to the former theory in his January 1913 letter to Russell. That is: there seems to be nothing in the 1912 multiple relation theory of judgment taken by itself that has the result that, in judgment, Aristotle can predicate mortality of Socrates, but cannot predicate Socrates of mortality. In this way, Wittgenstein argues, the 1912 multiple relation theory does not show that it is impossible to judge nonsense. Let us, then, set out and examine Wittgenstein’s argument for this objection in a more detailed and systematic fashion, beginning with a discussion of Russell’s 1912 analysis of Aristotle’s judgment that Socrates is mortal.

Recall that according to the 1912 version of Russell’s multiple relation theory of judgment, for Aristotle to judge that Socrates is mortal is for a certain ternary relation of judging to relate Aristotle’s mind, the actual man Socrates, and the property of mortality. On the 1912 multiple relation analysis,
this judgment is thus ascribed by the sentence “Judges (Aristotle, Socrates, Mortality)”. Aristotle's judgment is true, for there is a corresponding fact, Socrates' being mortal. Russell conceives of this fact as a complex in which the universal mortality joins with the individual Socrates to form a whole. Aristotle's judgment is similarly a complex that consists of a three-place judging relation holding among Aristotle, Socrates, and mortality. The constituents of this judgment-complex are thus Aristotle's mind, the actual man Socrates, the property of mortality, and a certain three-place judging relation. The objects of Aristotle's judgment, on the other hand, are simply Socrates and mortality—for this particular man and this particular property are the entities that his judgment is directly about. According to Russell's direct realism, then, Aristotle himself must be separately acquainted with Socrates and with mortality in order to make the judgment that Socrates is mortal. In making this judgment, Aristotle unites these two objects of acquaintance in thought so as to represent them as united in reality into the [putative] proposition that Socrates is mortal.

Let us consider more closely Russell's account of the nature, structure, and function of the judging relation involved in subject-predicate judgments. A subject-predicate judgment is one which asserts the existence of a subject-predicate fact, or appears to express an attitude towards a putative subject-predicate proposition. Aristotle's judgment that Socrates is mortal is a judgment of this sort. Given Russell's paraphrase of the sentence that expresses Aristotle's judgment, we can use the three-place predicate “Judges (x, y, F)” to symbolize the particular three-place judging relation by which this judgment is formed. In *Problems* Russell implicitly assumes that the argument places of this judging relation are intrinsically ordered. In this regard, then, the judging relation is similar to the copula that serves in Wittgenstein's 1912 theory as the unifying element in the fact that corresponds to the sentence “Socrates is mortal”. For Russell the judging relation involved in subject-predicate judgments is a three-place relation. So the predicate which he uses to symbolize this judging relation contains three separate free variables, namely “x”, “y”, and “F”, which correspond respectively to the relation's three separate argument places. For Russell, then, these three letters function as names of the relation's three argument places. Russell thus uses a grammatical predicate containing the corresponding number of distinct variables in order to indicate the polyadicity of the underlying relation. In similar fashion he takes the syntactic order of the variables in the predicate to indicate the ontological order of the corresponding argument places in the relation. According to his view, then, in the predicate “Judges (x, y, F)”, the letter “x” designates the judging relation's first argument place, the letter “y” designates its second argument place, and the letter “F” designates its third argument place. So when it is regimented in terms of the logical notation of *PM*, the sign by which we symbolize
a judging relation manages to convey salient information concerning the individuality, number, and intrinsic ordering of the relation’s argument places.

In *Problems* Russell deploys the doctrine that the individual argument places of relations have an intrinsic order to characterize the correspondence between judgment-facts and ordinary facts in the world that constitutes truth [see Chapter 4, Section 4.2, pp. 81–82, above, where this issue is discussed in some detail]. According to his 1912 multiple relation theory, a judgment-fact formed by the judging relation \( \text{Judges}(\hat{x}, \hat{y}, \hat{F}) \) is true, if the universal occupying the third (or \( \hat{F} \)) argument place is predicated of the individual occupying the second (or \( \hat{y} \)) argument place. That is: there is a fact in which the object occupying the second argument place occupies the first (and only) argument place of the universal occupying the third argument place. In general, then, a judgment-fact is true, if its objects combine to form an independent fact in which they occur in the same relative order as they do in the judgment-fact [see *Problems*, 91–93]. This latter idea is in turn the basis for Russell’s 1912 account of representation. He uses the idea to explain how the combination of certain objects of acquaintance into a judgment-fact manages to *represent* the combination of those objects into a would-be corresponding fact [for further discussion of this point, see Chapter 4, Section 4.2, pp. 82–83, above].

In connection with this point (as we have seen) Russell holds that in any given judging relation each individual argument place *expresses* (or indeed *defines*) the distinctive role played by the various objects that happen to occupy the argument place in the judgments formed by that relation. For Russell a judgment appears to express an attitude towards a proposition because the cognitive-fact which is the judgment combines its various constituents so that it *represents* only its objects as combined into a single complex whole. This merely represented complex whole just is the putative proposition towards which the judgment appears to express an attitude. (A proposition is thus a “false abstraction” \( \text{PM}, \text{i. 44} \).) In the 1912 multiple relation theory, then, the particular way in which a given object of a given judgment gets *represented* by that judgment as occurring in the putative proposition towards which it appears to express an attitude is taken to be a *function* of the particular argument place which the object in question occupies of the judgment’s relating relation. (Here again the similarity between Russell’s conception of judging relations and Wittgenstein’s conception of copulas should be evident.) In the judging relation designated by the predicate “\( \text{Judges}(\hat{x}, \hat{y}, \hat{F}) \)” in particular, the first argument place will be occupied by the entity that makes the corresponding judgment; the second argument place will be occupied by the entity of which that judging entity judges some other entity to be predicated; and the third argument place will be occupied by the entity which the judger judges to be predicated of the entity occupying the second argument place. For Russell, then, the analyzed predicate “\( \text{Judges}(\hat{x}, \hat{y}, \hat{F}) \)” abbreviates the ordinary predicate “\( x \) judges that \( y \) is \( F \)”.
One upshot of Russell’s view here is that in the context of a subject-predicate judgment the notion of predication (or of attribution) is taken to be part of the content of the judging relation itself. The mental act of judgment introduces the element of predication that enables the judging mind to unite the objects in thought, thus creating the illusion that these objects figure in the judgment as already united in reality into an independent proposition.

A crucial point, then, is that in this context the subordinate universal’s intrinsic capacity for occurring predicatively in a fact plays no role at all. It seems indeed that in any given judgment the various objects will all have essentially the same manner of occurrence. In a subject-predicate judgment, in particular, the object that happens to occupy the second (or y hat) argument place of the judging relation will occur in precisely the same way as the object that happens to occupy the relation’s third (or F hat) argument place. Both of these objects will occur non-predicatively in the judgment, as terms of the judging relation, and as logical subjects of the fact which is the judgment. Crucially, however, the judgment itself will (or at least needs to) represent these two objects as occurring in fundamentally different ways in the putative proposition towards which it appears to express an attitude, for it will (or needs to) represent the object that happens to occupy the judging relation’s third argument place as occurring predicatively in the proposition in question, and as actually holding of the object that happens to occupy the judging relation’s second argument place.21 For Russell, indeed, this feature of the judging relation in question is what makes the sentence “Judges (Aristotle, Socrates, Mortality)” an appropriate paraphrase of the judgment ascription “Aristotle judges that Socrates is mortal”.

According to Russell’s view, then, when the argument places of the judging relation Judges (x hat, y hat, F hat) are filled by objects (of the appropriate kinds) the complex that results just is the fact that the object that occupies the x hat argument place judges that the object that occupies the F hat argument place is predicated of the object that occupies the y hat argument place. So when we instantiate the free variables in the predicate “Judges [x hat, y hat, F hat]” with meaningful names (of objects of the appropriate kinds) we produce a sentence that expresses a fact in which the object designated by the name replacing the “x” variable judges the object designated by the name replacing the “F” variable to be predicated of the object designated by the name replacing the “y” variable.

Thus on the 1912 version of the multiple relation analysis, when a person asserts some genuine subject-predicate sentence, the person’s act of assertion is correctly represented by a judgment

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21 I say that the judgment will represent the objects as occurring in fundamentally differs ways in the proposition towards which it appears to express an attitude. It is certainly correct to say that the judgment needs to represent them as occurring in fundamentally different ways in this putative proposition [if the judgment is to be properly accounted a judgment at all]. There is, however, a serious question about whether it does in fact do so. I shall return to this issue in the next chapter [see Chapter 7, Section 7.2, pp. 236–246, 248, below].
ascription involving the predicate “Judges \( x, y, F \)”. In that judgment ascription, the person’s name will replace the “x” variable of this relational predicate, the word occupying the subject-place in the asserted subject-predicate sentence will replace its “y” variable, and the word occupying the predicate-place in the asserted sentence will replace its “F” variable. According to the multiple relation theory, the asserted subject-predicate sentence is an incomplete symbol. This sentence has content or meaning, not because it expresses a subject-predicate proposition, but rather because it expresses a judgment which could be made; that is, the cognitive fact which is the sentence's being asserted (by some mind) is itself a genuine, possible act of judgment. Both the content and the truth-value of the asserted subject-predicate sentence are derived from the content and the truth-value of the underlying subject-predicate judgment. Of course, the asserted subject-predicate sentence may be false. So the object designated by the name replacing the “F” variable need not in fact be predicated of the object designated by the name replacing the “y” variable in order for the subject-predicate sentence itself to make sense or be meaningful. The objects of a judgment need not form any independent fact in order for the judging itself to be carried out. The judgment merely represents them as doing so.

According to the 1912 version of the multiple relation theory of judgment, we must have direct acquaintance with the objects themselves that figure in our judgments (see Problems, 40; cf. KAKD, 154–55). And in any given judgment at least one of the objects must be an abstract universal (see Problems, 92; cf. KAKD, 161). But these are the only constraints that Russell imposes on the relation of judgment. Consequently they represent the only constraints that his theory imposes on the mental act of unification which is involved in judgment. It seems, however, that these limits or conditions on the mental act of judgment do not suffice to show that it is impossible to judge nonsense, for they do not prevent a judging mind from bringing a group of objects into relation with one another to create a judgment-fact that represents these objects as combined in a way that they cannot be combined in reality. Thus, to take an example, there is nothing in Russell’s specification of the identity of the judging relation involved in subject-predicate judgments that has the result that, via this particular relation, Aristotle cannot unite Socrates and mortality in thought so as to attribute Socrates to mortality. It is implicit in Russell’s account of the judging relation involved in subject-predicate judgments that for an object to be represented as playing the predicate role in such a judgment is for the object to occupy this relation’s third argument place. And it is likewise implicit in his account that for an object to be represented as playing the subject role in a subject-predicate judgment is for the object to occupy the second argument place of the judging relation in question. But there is nothing in Russell’s account of the judging relation involved in subject-predicate judgments that has the consequence that a given object can occupy its third argument place only if that object actually has the capacity to play
the predicate role in a subject-predicate fact. Nor is there anything in the account that requires that any object which is capable of occupying the relation’s second argument place must also have the capacity to play the subject role in such a fact. So there is nothing in Russell’s account of the judging relation involved in subject-predicate judgments that rules out our filling its first argument place with Aristotle’s mind, its second argument place with mortality, and its third argument place with Socrates. The judgment-fact that we would obtain from these substitutions would represent Socrates as predicated of mortality. Hence there is nothing in the 1912 version of the multiple relation analysis that makes it impossible to judge that mortality is Socrates.

For Russell the putative judgment that mortality is Socrates is nonsensical because it represents its two objects, the individual Socrates and the universal mortality, as combined in a way that they simply cannot be combined in reality. According to Russell’s metaphysics, the individual Socrates is inherently incapable of playing the predicate role in a fact. Consequently there is no fact in the world that predicates him of mortality. Nor is there any fact in the world which is the ontological negation of a fact in which he is predicated of mortality. The sentence “Judges (Aristotle, Mortality, Socrates)” thus expresses a judgment-fact to which in principle no genuine fact in the world could correspond. The judgment that mortality is Socrates is therefore neither true nor false. So this putative judgment is a piece of nonsense.

At least in part the problem here is that the 1912 multiple relation theory of judgment treats the various objects of a judgment as on a level with each other. According to this theory, the actual man Socrates and the property of mortality are simply entities with which Aristotle is directly acquainted. In any judgment that can be made about these two entities they will occur in exactly the same way—namely as terms of a judging relation, and as logical subjects of a judgment-fact. In this account of judgment, then, the essentially predicative character of mortality plays no significant role. In general, then, Russell’s account of judgment does not adequately explain how the objects of a judgment differ from one another.

In his January 1913 letter to Russell, Wittgenstein points out that the 1912 multiple relation theory’s twofold failure to observe type-theoretic distinctions among the objects of our judgments, and to impose the corresponding type-theoretic restrictions on the argument places of the judging relations by which our judgments are formed, has the consequence that we can combine groups of objects with which we are acquainted to form judgment-facts that represent these objects as combined in a way that they cannot be combined in reality:

I have changed my views on “atomic” complexes: I now think that Qualities, Relations [like Love], etc., are all copulae! … The reason for this, is a very fundamental one: I think that there cannot be different Types of things!
In other words whatever can be symbolized by a simple proper name must belong to one type. ... For instance if I analyze the proposition Socrates is mortal into Socrates, Mortality and \( \exists x, y \in \{ x, y \} \) I want a theory of types to tell me that “Mortality is Socrates” is nonsensical, because if I treat “Mortality” as a proper name [as I did] there is nothing to prevent me to make [sic] the substitution the wrong way round. \( \text{[CL, 24]} \)

In this way, Wittgenstein argues, Russell’s 1912 theory of judgment does not show that it is impossible to judge nonsense.

The obvious response to Wittgenstein’s objection is thus to modify the theory of judgment so as to build in the relevant, necessary type-theoretic distinctions and restrictions. Thus in specifying the identity of a judging relation, the theory of judgment needs to specify not only the number and order of its particular argument places but also their respective logical types (i.e. their respective ranges of significance; see \( \text{ML, 72–73, 75} \)). To specify the identity of the judging relation involved in elementary subject-predicate judgments, in particular, the theory needs to state that it is that three-place judging relation, \( \text{Judges} (\hat{x}, \hat{y}, \hat{F}) \), whose first or \( \hat{x} \) argument place can be occupied by, or has as its possible values, minds (and anything of the same type), whose second or \( \hat{y} \) argument place can be occupied by all and only individuals (i.e. has all and only individuals as its possible values), and whose third or \( \hat{F} \) argument place can be occupied by all and only unary properties of individuals (i.e. has all and only such properties as its possible values). On this approach, then, the fact that the sentence “Judges [Aristotle, Mortality, Socrates]” is nonsensical or meaningless (i.e. the fact that this sentence does not represent a possible combination of objects, that it does not correspond to a judgment which could be made) would be guaranteed by the fact that mortality is not a possible value of \( \hat{y} \) in \( \text{Judges} (\hat{x}, \hat{y}, \hat{F}) \), and by the fact that Socrates is not a possible value of \( \hat{F} \) in \( \text{Judges} (\hat{x}, \hat{y}, \hat{F}) \). It follows directly from either of these two facts that there is no such thing as a value for the propositional function \( \text{Judges} (\hat{x}, \hat{y}, \hat{F}) \) with the arguments Aristotle, mortality, and Socrates, respectively (i.e. taken in that particular order). On the other hand, the fact that the sentence “Judges [Aristotle, Socrates, Mortality]” makes sense or is meaningful would follow directly from the facts that Socrates is a possible value of \( \hat{y} \) in \( \text{Judges} (\hat{x}, \hat{y}, \hat{F}) \), that mortality is a possible value of \( \hat{F} \) in \( \text{Judges} (\hat{x}, \hat{y}, \hat{F}) \), and that Aristotle’s mind is a possible value of \( \hat{x} \) in \( \text{Judges} (\hat{x}, \hat{y}, \hat{F}) \).

We have already seen how Wittgenstein responds to the attempt to impose type-theoretic restrictions on the argument places of judging relations in order to obtain the result that what can be judged must make sense. He argues that statements of the limitations imposed by restrictions of logical type are liable to be in violation of type theory itself. Thus it would seem that if Socrates is, but mortality is not, a possible value of \( \hat{y} \) in \( \text{Judges} (\hat{x}, \hat{y}, \hat{F}) \), then there is one propositional function, that expressed by “... is a possible value of \( \hat{y} \) in \( \text{Judges} (\hat{x}, \hat{y}, \hat{F}) \)”, which can be significantly applied both to Socrates and to mortality [truly in one case, falsely in the other]. But by a crucial tenet of Russell’s
type theory itself (expressed in the “vice versa” clause of axiom *9.14 of PM) any two objects to which the same propositional function can be significantly applied belong to precisely the same logical type (see PM, i. 133, i. 140). So it ought to follow that the actual man Socrates and the property of mortality are objects of the same logical type. But then the two should be mutually permutable in a fact; and the expressions by which we designate them respectively should be interchangeable within any meaningful sentence salva significatione. So when we interchange “Socrates” and “mortality” in the meaningful sentence “Judges [Aristotle, Socrates, Mortality]”, it ought to follow that the sentence that we produce, namely “Judges [Aristotle, Mortality, Socrates]”, is meaningful too. That is: this sentence should express a judgment that could be made. But given Russell’s account of the judging relation involved in subject-predicate judgments, it would seem that the judgment-fact expressed by the sentence “Judges [Aristotle, Mortality, Socrates]” combines its constituents so as to represent the actual man Socrates and the property of mortality as combined into a complex in which Socrates is predicated of mortality. Hence we can still form the nonsensical judgment that mortality is Socrates.

So it seems that in the absence of type-theoretic distinctions among the objects of a judgment and corresponding type-theoretic restrictions on the argument places of its judging relation, the 1912 theory does not explain why it is impossible to judge nonsense. Yet if we incorporate the necessary distinctions into the judgment itself, our attempt to impose the corresponding restrictions on the judging relation has exactly the same result: the theory makes it possible to judge nonsense. On my reading, then, this is the objection to the 1912 multiple relation theory that Wittgenstein raises in his January 1913 letter to Russell.

Now it might be thought that one way to avoid this situation would be to appeal to the notion of typical ambiguity: what is asserted by an axiom that imposes type-theoretic restrictions is itself supposed to be ambiguous as to logical type. On this approach, the predicate “... is a possible value of $\hat{F}$ in Judges ($\hat{x}, \hat{y}, \hat{F}$)”, for example, would correspond to infinitely many propositional functions, one at each level of the type-hierarchy (after the first). Then when we say truly that mortality is a possible value of $\hat{F}$ in Judges ($\hat{x}, \hat{y}, \hat{F}$), but say falsely that Socrates is a possible value of $\hat{F}$ in Judges ($\hat{x}, \hat{y}, \hat{F}$), we are actually using two different propositional functions, one that can be significantly applied to one-place properties of individuals like mortality, and one that can be significantly applied to individuals like Socrates. This approach thus treats the property of mortality and the actual man Socrates, not as possible values of the same variable in a single propositional function, but rather as possible values of two separate variables in two different propositional functions (that in some sense express the very same notion). In this way, then, it appears that, through the use of the notion of typical ambiguity, we can effectively state type-theoretic restrictions, that is, state them in a way that is not self-defeating.
The strategy just outlined, however, faces considerable difficulties. Chief among them is that it appears that one propositional function can effectively impose type-theoretic restrictions on a given argument place of a second propositional function only if the first propositional function is applicable to objects of different logical types. Consider, again, the true statement that mortality is a possible value of \( \hat{F} \) in \textit{Judges} \((\hat{x}, \hat{y}, \hat{F})\). This statement follows from the general statement that all and only unary properties of individuals are possible values of \( \hat{F} \) in \textit{Judges} \((\hat{x}, \hat{y}, \hat{F})\).

The point of this second, general statement is to delimit the range of objects that have the ontological capacity to occupy the third argument place of the judging relation involved in elementary subject-predicate judgments. If the statement is to be effective in performing this function, however, it must separate those objects that can occupy the argument place in question from those objects that cannot occupy it. That is: if the statement is to do what we want, it must imply that Socrates (and anything else that is not a unary property of individuals) is \textit{not} a possible value of \( \hat{F} \) in \textit{Judges} \((\hat{x}, \hat{y}, \hat{F})\). In order for the statement to have this implication, however, the propositional function corresponding to the predicate of the true sentence “mortality is a possible value of \( \hat{F} \) in \textit{Judges} \((\hat{x}, \hat{y}, \hat{F})\)” must be applicable to objects of different logical types. We need a single propositional function here that applies across types, rather than a plurality of propositional functions that are each restricted to a separate and distinct type, because we want to say that a certain status that one kind of object has another kind of object does not have. But if the propositional function in question can be significantly applied only to objects of the same logical type as mortality then it is \textit{true} of everything to which it can be applied. Indeed the attempt to apply this propositional function to Socrates would result in nonsense.\(^{23}\) In this case, however, the statement that mortality is a possible value of \( \hat{F} \) in \textit{Judges} \((\hat{x}, \hat{y}, \hat{F})\) does not imply the statement that Socrates is \textit{not} a possible value of \( \hat{F} \) in \textit{Judges} \((\hat{x}, \hat{y}, \hat{F})\). So the statement does not perform the function that Russell needs it to perform. In general, then, in order to be effective, the axioms of (Russellian) logic that impose type-theoretic restrictions cannot themselves be subject to the restrictions of type theory. Yet the existence of propositional functions which are not subject to type theory is something that Russell could not accept, for it directly conflicts with his universalist conception of logic, according to which \textit{every} statement, including statements which are intended to limit the scope of the variable in other statements, falls within the scope of logic (for further discussion of Russell’s conception of logic as universal and all-inclusive, see Chapter 3, Section 3.4, pp. 50–54, above).

\(^{22}\) Of course, we need to add to it the statement that mortality is a unary property of individuals.

\(^{23}\) According to Russell, the sentence “Socrates is a possible value of \( \hat{F} \) in \textit{Judges} \((\hat{x}, \hat{y}, \hat{F})\)” where the phrase “... is a possible value of \( \hat{F} \) in \textit{Judges} \((\hat{x}, \hat{y}, \hat{F})\)” signifies a propositional function which can be significantly applied to mortality, is not false but simply nonsensical (see \textit{PM}, i. 40–41).
Wittgenstein suggests that we can resolve the difficulties generated by the attempt to state type-theoretic restrictions within type theory itself, not by abandoning the idea that there are ultimate distinctions of logical type among the constituents of facts, but rather by finding a way to communicate these distinctions, i.e. to show that they are present in the analysis of judgment, without our having to state them explicitly.²⁴ To this end, he argues, in his January 1913 letter to Russell, that the correct analysis of the notion of judgment, i.e. the correct account of the sentences that we use to express our thoughts, must be based on a notation that automatically enforces type-theoretic distinctions:

every theory of types must be rendered superfluous by a proper theory of the symbolism. ... What I am most certain of is ... the fact that all theory of types must be done away with by a theory of symbolism showing that what seem to be different kinds of things are symbolized by different kinds of symbols which cannot possibly be substituted in one another's places. (CL, 24–25)

In Wittgenstein's 1913 view, then, an object's possibilities of combination with other objects should be made manifest by the way that we represent the object in language. In the proper theory of symbolism, the fact that two objects can combine in a certain way to form a certain fact will be shown by the fact that the symbols by which we represent the two can combine in a certain way to form a certain sentence; that two objects cannot combine to form a fact will be shown by the fact that the symbols that represent them cannot combine to form a well-formed sentence. Of course, this idea goes through much development in Wittgenstein's writing. For example, in MN, dictated in April 1914, it is transformed into a thesis concerning the notion of tautology. Here Wittgenstein begins to formulate the view that logic consists of tautologies. The statements of the language that show—but do not say—how meaningful words may combine to form meaningful sentences are among those statements that he calls tautologies [see MN, 108–10]. In the next chapter we shall consider in some detail the view of language that Wittgenstein develops from 1913 onwards [see Chapter 7, Section 7.2, pp. 218–238, 246–247, below]. The present point, however, is simply that, from Wittgenstein's perspective, an account of judgment that is based on a notation that automatically enforces the various categorial distinctions and restrictions that Russell's theory of types seeks to impose will be one that makes it

²⁴ Wittgenstein claims that since statements of the limitations imposed by type theory are liable to be in violation of type theory, these limitations need to make themselves manifest without their having to be explicitly stated. The idea of something which does not need to be stated is all right. The idea of something which cannot be stated—but is true nonetheless—is altogether more paradoxical. What is it that is true? How can it be true that there are type-theoretic distinctions among entities but impossible to say that this is so? This is a difficulty of the general view put forward in the Tractatus, which seems to require that there be such ineffable truths. Russell's early theory of propositions, with its notion of a term and its conception of facts as true propositions, completely rejects the view that certain things cannot be said, or cannot be said with full and literal accuracy. Even in the face of Wittgenstein's criticisms of his theory of judgment, Russell's philosophical instincts continue to pull him towards this early idea. Thus in his introduction to the Tractatus, Russell remarks that what "causes some hesitation in accepting Mr. Wittgenstein's position" that the "inexpressible contains ... the whole of logic and philosophy" is "the fact that, after all, Mr. Wittgenstein manages to say a good deal about what cannot be said" ["Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus", 111].
impossible to judge nonsense, not because it will simply reject those distinctions and restrictions, denying that they are genuine features of the world, but rather because it will accept them as correct while making it unnecessary to state them explicitly (see e.g. NB, 2).²⁵

²⁵ But cf. n. 24, above.
In Chapter 5 I discussed relevant aspects of the version of the multiple relation theory of judgment that Russell develops in 1913 and puts forward in *TK*. My primary aim in this final chapter is to give an account of Wittgenstein’s criticisms of that version of Russell’s theory of judgment, and of the impact upon Russell of those criticisms. Let me briefly outline my discussion in this chapter of some of the relevant issues.

In Section 7.1, I consider Russell’s response in *TK* to Wittgenstein’s objection to the 1912 version of the multiple relation theory of judgment. I argue that Russell incorporates both the notion of logical form and the theory of position into his analysis of judgments in *TK* in order to protect the analysis from the objection raised by Wittgenstein in his January 1913 letter to Russell. And I explain how these two doctrines are supposed to provide Russell with a defense against the charge that his multiple relation theory does not explain why it is impossible to judge nonsense. According to the interpretation that I develop, the purpose of the notion of logical form is to enable the theory of judgment to capture the categorial distinctions among the objects of a judgment in virtue of which these objects can form a judgment at all. More specifically, the logical form that figures in a given judgment is responsible for marking the fundamental ontological difference between the predicative and the non-predicative constituents of the fact whose existence is asserted by that judgment. Thus when a person judges that Socrates is mortal, for example, the fact which is his act of judgment represents the universal mortality as predicated of the individual Socrates, by bringing mortality and Socrates into relation in the relevant ways with the logical form of subject-predicate facts. I claim, however, that the appeal to the notion of logical form taken by itself does not suffice to protect the 1913 multiple relation theory against Wittgenstein’s earlier objection to the 1912 theory, for it does not effectively impose the relevant sorts of constraints on the act of judging. In short: the requirement that, when I judge, I must always judge objects to be combined in accordance with some logical form does not on its own rule out the possibility of my judging nonsense, because it does not on its own rule out the possibility of my bringing a group of objects [with which I am acquainted] into relation with a logical form [with which I am acquainted] so as to produce a judgment-fact which represents those objects as combined in a way that they cannot be combined in reality. I argue that, in order to overcome this problem, Russell in *TK* sets forth a complex array of type-theoretic restrictions on the argument places of judging relations, in
the form of the theory of position. These restrictions then have the result that a judgment can bring
a given object into relation with a given logical form so as to represent the object as occurring in a
certain way (e.g. predicatively) in its would-be corresponding fact only if that object actually has the
ability to occur in that particular way in a fact.

In Section 7.2, I conclude the chapter, and the dissertation itself, with a detailed examination of
Wittgenstein’s criticisms of the version of the multiple relation theory of judgment which Russell
produces in 1913 and sets out in TK. I argue that these criticisms lead Russell to abandon the theory
and to stop work on the book early in June 1913. On its face, Wittgenstein’s objection to the 1913
multiple relation theory is quite similar to his objection to the 1912 theory. He charges that the
1913 theory, like the 1912 theory, cannot show why it is impossible to judge nonsense. Wittgenstein
thus finds Russell’s modifications to the theory of judgment in TK to be inadequate for addressing
his earlier criticisms. Here again Wittgenstein’s objection to Russell’s theory of judgment centers on
the issue of type-theoretic restrictions. Wittgenstein’s objection to these restrictions, however, is not
the same as the objection which he previously raised to them in his January 1913 letter to Russell
(namely, that any attempt to state them is ultimately self-defeating). Instead, in his critique of the
1913 multiple relation theory, Wittgenstein focuses on a different though related problem facing the
attempt to impose type-theoretic restrictions on judging relations. In Wittgenstein’s eyes, Russell’s
method of imposing restrictions of logical type on judging relations makes the having of sense an
extrinsic feature of judgment. Yet Wittgenstein now maintains that the proper analysis of judgment
must show that it is intrinsic to the notion of judgment that what can be judged must make sense.
In NL Wittgenstein proposes an account of judgment that is designed to satisfy this requirement. To
elucidate the nature of the requirement itself, and to bring out the difficulty which it generates for
Russell’s multiple relation theory, I examine Wittgenstein’s new account of judgment. Like his old
account of judgment, Wittgenstein’s new account of judgment focuses on the sentences themselves.
His new account, however, involves a shift from a conception of sentences as collections of names to
a conception of sentences as facts, i.e. as names standing in relations to one another. I argue, in part,
that the conception of sentences as facts enables Wittgenstein’s account of judgment to capture the
distinctive role that is played in a judgment by the relating relation of the (would-be) corresponding
fact, and that this feature of the account is crucial to its success both in explaining how our judgments
manage to represent an outside reality either correctly or incorrectly and in showing that the sense
of a judgment is intrinsic to it. The conclusion that I draw is that it is precisely the failure of the
multiple relation theory to account for the distinctive role of the subordinate relation in a judgment
that convinces Russell that the theory is unsatisfactory, and that leads him, ultimately, to abandon the view of judgment as a multiple relation altogether.

7.1 The Notion of Logical Form and the Theory of Position Revisited

In the last chapter I elaborated and explained the objection to the 1912 version of the multiple relation theory of judgment raised by Wittgenstein in his January 1913 letter to Russell. In this section I shall discuss Russell’s response to that objection in *TK*.

According to the interpretation that I proposed in the last chapter, Wittgenstein objects to Russell’s 1912 multiple relation theory by asserting that its failure to impose (relevant) type-theoretic restrictions on the argument places of judging relations has the consequence that we can use these relations to produce combinations of constituents that constitute nonsensical judgments. Wittgenstein argues further, however, that the statements that record the necessary restrictions on the argument places of judging relations are themselves self-defeating: they yield the same nonsensical judgments. There are thus two fundamental parts to Wittgenstein’s objection to Russell’s 1912 theory of judgment. Regarding the objection’s first part, the problem arises for Russell’s theory because, while that theory distinguishes the various roles played by the objects of a given judgment on the basis of their positions in that judgment alone, it does not build into these positions the type-theoretic character of the objects which occupy them. In the form that the multiple relation theory takes in *Problems*, then, the potentiality, or lack of potentiality, which an object has for combining into an ordinary fact with other objects is not present, in some decisive way, in the act of judging. In its absence, the 1912 theory of judgment does not explain why it is impossible to judge nonsense. With regard to the second part of Wittgenstein’s objection, the problem arises for the 1912 multiple relation theory from its attempt to state type theory within type theory. Statements of the limitations imposed by type theory are liable to be in violation of type theory. These statements thus engender the very nonsensical assertions whose existence they are meant to preclude. In response to these difficulties with the 1912 multiple relation theory Wittgenstein suggests that Russell’s analysis of judgment needs a way of indicating the logical features of the various objects of a judgment—that is, the features in virtue of which these objects can be judged (with sense) to play this or that role in the would-be corresponding fact—that does not require that the associated distinctions among the objects be stated explicitly. In a later terminology, these distinctions need to be shown by the analysis rather than said by it.

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1 To put this point in slightly different words: in the form that the multiple relation theory takes in *Problems*, the potentiality, or lack of potentiality, which the objects of a judgment have for combining into the fact (if any) which corresponds to that judgment is not necessarily present, in some decisive way, in the act of judging.
As we have already seen, there are a number of crucial differences between the 1912 and 1913 versions of the multiple relation theory of judgment. These differences are the result of certain changes that Russell makes to the theory of judgment in the course of planning and writing *TK*. I believe that some of these changes are prompted, at least in part, by Wittgenstein’s objection to the 1912 version of the multiple relation theory. In particular, I think that both the admission of the logical form of the would-be corresponding fact as a new object of the judgment, and the attempt to impose restrictions of logical type on the positions in judgment-facts, and other facts, by means of the theory of position, are modifications which Russell makes to the theory of judgment in *TK* in an effort to protect it from Wittgenstein’s earlier criticisms.

That Russell, at least at one point, thought that he had been successful in this endeavor is suggested by his correspondence with Lady Ottoline Morrell. In a letter to Lady Ottoline, dated 21 May 1913, Russell reports that Wittgenstein had come to him the day before with a refutation of the theory of judgment which I used to hold. He was right, but I think the correction required is not very serious. I shall have to make up my mind within a week, as I shall soon reach judgment [in the writing of *TK*]. (#782)

What I should like to suggest, then, is that Wittgenstein reiterates the objection from his January 1913 letter in conversation with Russell on 20 May 1913. By this time, Russell is of course already quite familiar with that objection, having first received it from Wittgenstein in writing several months earlier. I think, moreover, that Russell has by 20 May (and almost certainly at some time well before this date) already come to accept the objection as being decisive against his 1912 theory of judgment, and that he has, accordingly, already rejected that version of the theory by the time that Wittgenstein attempts to explain the objection to him in person. Thus on 20 May 1913 Wittgenstein presents Russell with a refutation of the theory of judgment which he [Russell] “used to hold”. Russell’s remark here also suggests that he does not consider his current theory of judgment to be vulnerable to Wittgenstein’s objection. That is to say, Russell on 20 May 1913 thinks that the changes that he has already decided to make to the multiple relation theory of judgment in *TK*—changes that he has yet to set out in the book—serve to protect the theory in its new form from the objection. The relevant changes here are, I believe, the doctrine of logical form and the theory of position. Now Russell does say, in his letter of 21 May 1913 to Ottoline Morrell, that some “not very serious” correction to the theory of judgment is still required, which suggests that his defense against Wittgenstein’s objection is not yet complete. But whatever may be the minor change to the theory of judgment that Russell has in mind here, it is clear that it cannot be either the introduction of logical form as a new term of the judging relation or the use

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The need to modify the multiple relation theory of judgment in order to protect it from Wittgenstein’s January 1913 objection may then serve as an unstated motivation for Russell’s writing *TK* in the first place.
of the theory of position to impose type-theoretic distinctions and restrictions on (the constituents of
and positions in) judgment-facts. Each of these two doctrines represents a major addition to the theory
of judgment, so neither one of them could be properly described as a “not very serious” correction to
that theory.\(^3\) Let us, then, examine these two additions to the theory of judgment in a more systematic
fashion, beginning with a discussion of the doctrine of logical form.

In *TK* Russell takes the logical form of a judgment’s would-be corresponding fact to be among that
judgment’s objects. So on the 1913 version of his multiple relation analysis, the relation of judging
relates the mind which judges not merely to the separate constituents of the fact which obtains if the
judgment is true but also to the logical form of that fact [see *TK*, 99, 101, 111–12, 114–18, 129, 133,
176–77]. According to Russell’s account, the logical form of a given fact just is *the way in which* the
objects which make up that fact are combined in it:

It is obvious, in fact, that when *all* the constituents of a complex have been enumerated, there remains something
which may be called the “form” of the complex, which is the way in which the constituents are combined in the
complex. (*TK*, 98)

Russell also says that the logical form of a fact “represents … the way in which the constituents are
put together” (*TK*, 98).\(^4\) In *TK* Russell maintains that a judgment *represents* its objects as combined
in the same way that they are actually combined in the corresponding fact [if there is one] not by so
combining them but by bringing them into relation with the logical form of that fact [see *TK*, 116; see
also Chapter 5, Section 5.1, pp. 96–100, above, where this issue is discussed in some detail]. Russell
takes the logical form of an ordinary fact to be another fact, of a peculiarly abstract kind: namely
the fact that there are facts of the given form. The general statement here sounds circular, but this
difficulty is only apparent, as becomes clear when we consider a particular case. The logical form of
the atomic fact that Socrates is mortal, for example, is the existentially quantified, wholly abstract
fact that some individual has some first-level property, i.e. the fact that something has some predicate
[see *TK*, 114]. The logical form in question can be represented in the notation of *PM* as: “((∃x) (∃Φ) Φx)”.
Accordingly Russell now identifies Aristotle’s judgment that Socrates is mortal with the judgment-
fact expressed by the sentence “Judges (Aristotle, Socrates, Mortality, (∃x) (∃Φ) Φx)”.

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\(^3\) It is possible, however, that the “not very serious” correction in question was some minor change to the
theory of position, for there are a number of places in *TK* where Russell puts forward revisions to this theory.

\(^4\) Why does Russell say both that the logical form *is* and that it *represents* the way in which the constituents
are combined in a fact? If a certain group of objects actually combines to form a certain fact, then the logical
form of that fact is the way in which those objects are combined in it. If, however, a certain group of objects can
combine to form a certain fact but happens not to do so, then the logical form of that putative fact is the way in
which the objects would be combined in that fact, if they were to unite to form it. In this case, then, the logical
form of the fact merely *represents* the way in which the constituents are combined.
Wittgenstein's objection to Russell's 1912 multiple relation theory shows the need for observing and capturing the type-theoretic distinctions among the various objects of judgment, in particular between universals, which combine or unify objects, and (other) objects which lack this capacity. In the 1913 version of Russell's theory, the notion of logical form is intended to fulfill this need, for it provides a medium by which to express the relevant distinction between the predicative and the non-predicative constituents of the judgment's [would-be] corresponding fact. Acquaintance with logical form is then the basis of the judge's grasp of that distinction. The notion of logical form thus enables the analysis of judgment to convey to the judging mind the relevant information about the type-theoretic distinctions among the objects of its judgment. Let us attempt to flesh out these ideas.

In *TK* Russell clearly recognizes that there are ultimate distinctions of ontological category [or logical type] among the constituents of facts. To begin with, he offers the following purely logical definition of the notion of a particular:

A particular is defined as an entity which can only enter into complexes as the subject of a predicate or as one of the terms of a relation, never as itself a predicate or a relation. This definition is purely logical. [*TK*, 55–56]

For Russell, then, there is a fundamental ontological distinction between the predicative and the non-predicative components of an elementary fact: “subject and predicate obviously differ logically, and not merely as two particulars differ” [*TK*, 90; cf. *TK*, 92]. And similarly Russell claims that “the difference between a relation and its terms is a logical difference” [*TK*, 98].

As I have said more than once, when viewed from within the metaphysical framework which Russell establishes, the logical type of an object is most naturally thought of as its possibilities of combination with other objects [see Chapter 3, Section 3.3, p. 47, above, for further discussion of this point]. Thus individuals, for example, may be thought of as those entities that have the ontological capability to

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5 In *Problems*, by contrast, Russell shows little or no concern with this issue. I think that his focus in *TK* on the issue of type-theoretic distinctions is due in part to the influence of Wittgenstein upon him.

6 The part–whole metaphor which dominates Russell's conception of facts supports the idea that, at the most fundamental level, there are no different kinds of entity (see Hylton, “Frege and Russell”, 182). As Hylton points out: “a whole is not naturally thought of as being of a different ontological kind from its parts—a wall is not of an ontologically distinct category from the bricks which compose it” [Hylton, “Frege and Russell”, 176]. In *TK* Russell persists with the part–whole metaphor. But he tries, within its framework, to accommodate the fundamental ontological distinctions which he is forced to acknowledge, in the first instance, by the need to escape the paradox which bears his name. Thus although Russell continues to think of a relational fact as a complex whole whose simple parts are a certain relation and its relata, yet he now maintains that “it is probably a mistake” to treat the terms of a complex and its relating relation “as on a level”, and that when we say that the relating relation is a part of the complex it “may be doubted whether ‘part’ has quite the same meaning” as it does when we say that the terms are part of a complex [*TK*, 83]. Since “[r]elations to objects differing in logical character must themselves differ in logical character” [*TK*, 100], it follows, from Russell’s claim that “the difference between a relation and its terms is a logical difference” [*TK*, 98], that the part relation that holds between a fact and its relating relation is a distinct relation from the part relation that holds between the fact and its relating relation's relata. Thus although we use the same word, “part”, to speak of these two relations, yet the fact that the word stands for two different relations implies that the word itself has two different meanings.
unite with first-level properties and with first-level relations to form atomic or elementary facts (e.g. that Socrates is mortal, that Brutus killed Caesar, etc.). First-level properties and first-level relations may be thought of in turn as those entities that are ontologically capable of uniting with individuals to form elementary subject-predicate facts and elementary relational facts, and with second-level properties and with second-level relations to form first-level singular facts (e.g. that patience is a virtue, that before is the converse of after, etc.) and first-level general facts (e.g. that there are elephants, that all whales are mammals, etc.); and so on.

For Russell, then, a crucial aspect of the notion of logical type is the idea that entities of different logical types play different ontological roles in the process of uniting to form facts:

In any complex, there are at least two kinds of constituents, namely the terms related, and the relation which unites them. What precisely the difference is between these two kinds of constituents, is a difficult logical question, which need not now concern us. All that now concerns us is to observe that the difference between the two sorts of constituents is unmistakable. In [say] “A precedes B”, A and B occur differently from the way in which “precedes” occurs. On the other hand, in “preceding is the converse of succeeding”, “preceding” occurs, prima facie, in the same way in which A and B occur in “A precedes B”. The difference in the manner of occurrence is indicated by the use of the verbal noun “preceding” instead of the indicative “precedes”. An entity which can occur in a complex as “precedes” occurs in “A precedes B” will be called a relation. When it does occur in this way in a given complex, it will be called a “relating relation” in that complex. …

Atomic complexes may be classified according to the number of terms other than the relating relation that they contain, we will call them dual complexes if they contain two terms, and so on. Relations may be similarly classified: relations which can be relating in dual complexes will be called dual relations, and so on. Many problems in philosophy require the consideration of triple, quadruple, … relations, which have in general been unduly neglected.

It may be that there are complexes in which there is only one term and one predicate, where the predicate occurs as relations occur in other complexes. In that case, predicates will be defined as entities occurring in this manner in complexes containing only one other entity. …

Relations and predicates together will be called “universals”. All the constituents of a complex are either particular or universal, and at least one must be universal. [TK, 80–81; cf. TK, 90]

Individuals, on Russell’s conception, are entities that can only occur non-predicatively in facts, as logical subjects (see TK, 55–56). First-level properties and first-level relations, on the other hand, are entities that can occur either predicatively or non-predicatively in facts. These entities occur predicatively in atomic facts, as the ontological glue which holds the constituents together, but occur non-predicatively in first-level facts, as the terms of second-level properties and of second-level relations. For Russell, then, the ontological role (or roles) that an object can play in a fact is (are) partly constitutive of its logical type.

Russell frequently equates the two closely connected ideas that entities of a given type have certain possibilities of combination and lack others, and that entities of a given type can play certain roles in forming facts but not others, with a third idea—namely that entities of a given type can occupy certain positions in facts but not others. Thus he says:

Subjects and predicates belong to different logical divisions, and cannot properly be said to be either like or unlike, because that would give them similar “positions” in one complex, whereas, if both occur in one complex, they
must have differences of “position” corresponding to the fact that they can form a subject-predicate complex. [TK, 92]

In Russell’s metaphysics, then, objects that belong to the same logical type can occupy all and only the same positions in facts, whereas any two objects that belong to different logical types must occupy different positions in facts [see also TK, 112, 122–23, 146]. To say of a given entity that it occupies the subject position in a certain atomic fact is to say that the entity occurs non-predicatively in that fact. And similarly to say of a given entity that it occupies the predicate position in a certain atomic fact is to say that the entity occurs predicatively in that fact. So any entity that can occur non-predicatively (i.e. that can play the subject role or occupy the subject position) in an atomic fact cannot occur predicatively (i.e. cannot play the predicate role or occupy the predicate position) in such a fact [and vice versa].

We have just been describing relevant aspects of Russell’s understanding of type-theoretic distinctions. Let us now consider how these aspects are related to his notion of logical form. The logical form of a fact is supposed to represent (and to be) the way in which the objects which make up that fact are combined in it [see TK, 98]. The fact that Socrates is mortal is an elementary subject-predicate complex in which the universal mortality unites with the individual Socrates to form a whole. In this elementary subject-predicate fact, the individual Socrates plays the subject role (or, equivalently, occupies the subject position), while the universal mortality plays the predicate role (or, equivalently, occupies the predicate position). So if the logical form of elementary subject-predicate facts successfully represents the way in which Socrates and mortality are combined in the fact that Socrates is mortal, then it must somehow capture the difference between the ways in which these two entities occur in that fact. That is to say, the logical form of elementary subject-predicate facts must capture the distinction between the way in which individuals occur in elementary subject-predicate facts on the one hand, and the way in which first-level properties (i.e. one-place universals that apply to individuals) occur in such facts on the other. Otherwise, the logical form would have little right to the claim that it “represents … the way in which the constituents are put together” [TK, 98]. In general, then, the logical form of a given fact must capture the ontological difference between the predicative and the non-predicative components of that fact.

How does the logical form manage to perform this function? Unfortunately, the answer to this question is not entirely clear. As we saw two paragraphs back, Russell sometimes seems to understand the difference between the predicative constituent of a subject-predicate fact and its non-predicative constituent as being, at bottom, a difference in the positions occupied respectively by these two constituents in the fact [see TK, 92]. In this one kind of case, moreover, he seems to take the difference
between the positions of the constituents to be explicable in terms of the notion of logical form. In *TK* Russell introduces this notion by saying that “A complex has a property which we may call its ‘form’, and the constituents must have what we call determinate ‘position’ in this form” (*TK*, 81). Later in the book, he goes on to say that, in a relational fact, the relating relation “obviously has a peculiar position” (*TK*, 146, n.), and that its “position ... can be assigned relatively to the form” (*TK*, 146 n.). He concludes that “this is what enables us to speak of it as the relating relation” (*TK*, 146 n.). A similar view of the relationship between *form* and *position* is implicit in the following passage from *TK*:

The natural symbolic expression for the form of a given complex is the expression obtained by replacing the names of the constituents of the complex by letters representing variables, using different kinds of letters for constituents of different logical kinds, or indicating the difference of kind by brackets or some such method. Thus ... we may indicate the general form of a subject-predicate complex by $\alpha(x)$, where $\alpha$ is the predicate and $x$ the subject, or by $\varepsilon x \alpha$, where “$\varepsilon$” merely serves, like a bracket, to indicate relative position. Such symbols as ... $\varepsilon x \alpha$ serve admirably for technical purposes, but they do not tell us what the form actually is, or whether it is anything more than a symbol. It is easy to see when two complexes “have the same form”; this will happen whenever there is some one symbol composed wholly of variables ... from which both can be derived by giving values to the variables. Another way of expressing the same thing is to say that two complexes have the same form if the one becomes the other when the constituents of the other are successively substituted for the constituents of the one. This might be thought to constitute a definition of “having the same form”, but in fact it does not; for it is necessary that the substituted term should be in the same position in the new complex as the old term occupied in the old complex, and the sameness of position thus involved cannot be explained without the notion of form. ...

We require of the form that there shall be one form, and only one, for every group of complexes which “have the same form”; also, if possible, it would be convenient to take as the form something which is not a mere incomplete symbol. We may secure these desiderata by taking as the form the fact that there are entities that make up complexes having the form in question. This sounds circular, but what is intended is not circular. For example, the form of all subject-predicate complexes will be the fact “something has some predicate”. ... The logical nature of this fact is very peculiar. ... [It] contains no constituent at all. ... In a sense, it is simple, since it cannot be analyzed. At first sight, it seems to have a structure, and therefore to be not simple; but it is more correct to say that it is *a* structure. Language is not well adapted for speaking of such objects. (*TK*, 113–14)

The sign that Russell uses to symbolize a given logical form perspicuously displays the general ontological structure of the facts which have that logical form, for the sign has a grammatical structure—it consists of certain linguistic variables of different kinds in a certain, definite arrangement—that corresponds exactly to the general ontological structure of those facts. Just here Russell encounters a difficulty that emerges in his discussions of the notion of logical form. In *TK* Russell says that logical forms are simple entities, that they do not contain constituents or have any complexity of their own [see e.g. *TK*, 114, 129–30]. But this idea is unconvincing, for the use which Russell makes of the forms in *TK* seems to require their containing quantified variables as constituents. So it seems to me hard to deny that logical forms contain variables, even if Russell does not want to say so. Whatever...
may be his reasons for this reluctance, however, if we do take logical forms to consist of existentially quantified nonlinguistic variables, corresponding to the existentially quantified linguistic variables occurring in the sentences which express them, then it becomes somewhat easier to maintain that the forms themselves, and not merely the signs which we use to symbolize them, manage to represent the structure of the facts whose forms they are. On this approach, then, the quantified variables in a logical form lack complete generality, for their ranges are restricted as to logical type. The logical form of elementary subject-predicate facts, in particular, contains two different quantified variables that have different ranges: one ranges over individuals; the other ranges over first-level one-place properties of individuals. The identity of a logical form thus depends quite heavily on what the ranges of its quantified variables are. Each of these variables must carry with it some definite information; it must in some way represent its range of variation. Moreover, in Russell's logic, the range of a quantified variable (i.e. its logical type) is not something which can be stipulated, for it is something which is intrinsic to that variable; its range is thus constitutive of its own identity. So by means of (the type-theoretic character and ontological arrangement of) its component quantified variables, the logical form of elementary subject-predicate facts perspicuously displays the fact that individuals (or subjects) and first-level one-place properties of individuals (or predicates) occupy different positions in elementary subject-predicate facts. Any given elementary subject-predicate fact can be obtained from the general logical form of all elementary subject-predicate facts by instantiating the existentially quantified variable in that logical form that ranges over individuals with the object occupying the subject position in the elementary subject-predicate fact, and by instantiating the existentially quantified variable in the form that ranges over first-level one-place properties of individuals with the object occupying the predicate position in the elementary subject-predicate fact. Thus the facts expressed respectively by the sentences "Socrates is mortal" and "Plato is human" have the same logical form, for both can be derived from the form expressed by the sentence "(∃x) (∃Φ) Φx". Russell claims that we can express the same idea by saying that the two facts, that Socrates is mortal and that Plato is human, have the same form, because the former fact can be obtained from the latter fact by substituting Socrates for Plato and mortality for humanity (and vice versa). This account of the notion of having the same form does not constitute a definition of this notion, however, for the account relies on a conception of the notion of substitution (in facts or complexes) that makes tacit use of the idea that all and only entities of the same logical type can occupy the same positions in facts. And this latter idea of position (in a fact) is, Russell claims, something which is explicable only in terms of the notion of logical form itself. When we substitute Socrates for Plato and mortality for humanity in the fact that Plato is human to obtain the fact that Socrates is mortal, we substitute the object occupying the subject position in one
elementary subject-predicate fact for the object occupying the subject position in another elementary subject-predicate, and we substitute the object occupying the predicate position in the first elementary subject-predicate fact for the object occupying the predicate position in the second elementary subject-predicate fact. So in making these substitutions we rely on the idea that there is something shared by the two facts which allows us to correlate (the object occupying) the subject position in the one fact with (the object occupying) the subject position in the other fact, and to correlate (the object occupying) the predicate position in the one fact with (the object occupying) the predicate position in the other fact. The thing which these two facts share is their logical form: they are both substitution instances of the logical form \( \exists x \, \exists \Phi \, \Phi x \). In this way, then, Russell appears to treat the distinction between the subject position and the predicate position in an elementary subject-predicate fact, and thus to treat the distinction between the predicative and the non-predicative constituents of such a fact, as explicable in terms of the notion of logical form. He thus becomes committed to the view that the logical form of elementary subject-predicate facts captures the ontological difference between the predicative and the non-predicative constituents of such facts.

What is special about Russellian logical forms, what matters, is not simply that they represent—or, perhaps, just are—the way in which the constituents are combined in a fact, but rather that we can be acquainted with them—and thus with the way in which the constituents are to be combined [see TK, 99, 101, 111, 116]. Acquaintance with logical form is, on Russell’s account, the source of our abstract understanding of the distinction between the predicative and the non-predicative constituents of an elementary fact. To be acquainted with the logical form of elementary subject-predicate facts, in particular, is to have direct and immediate knowledge of the distinction between the way in which individuals occur in these sorts of facts on the one hand, and the way in which first-level one-place universals occur in them on the other. According to Russell’s 1913 view, then, I know both what it is for an entity to play the subject role in an elementary subject-predicate fact, and what it is for an entity to play the predicate role in such a fact, by virtue of being acquainted with the logical form of elementary subject-predicate facts. Thus Russell says that to be acquainted with the logical form of elementary binary facts is to “know ... what it is for two terms to have a relation” [TK, 116].

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9 Acquaintance, as Russell designs the notion, is supposed to be direct and immediate knowledge of an object, which need carry with it no knowledge about the object [see Problems, 31]. Yet if acquaintance with logical form is the basis for our grasp of the distinction between the predicative and the non-predicative constituents of a fact, then to have acquaintance with a logical form is to have a quite complex piece of knowledge about the world. So acquaintance with logical form does not fit neatly with the paradigm of knowledge by acquaintance, which sees the most fundamental form of knowledge as being essentially atomistic in nature. It is perhaps in deference to this fact that Russell suggests that acquaintance with logical form is “acquaintance ... possibly in an extended sense of the word ‘acquaintance’” [TK, 99].
Russell holds that when I am separately acquainted with the logical form of certain elementary facts, and with objects of the same logical kinds as the constituents of such facts, sufficient in number and kind to form one such fact, I may then bring these entities together to form a judgment. My judgment asserts that the objects themselves are united in reality, even though they are in my judgment merely abstractly before my mind, by bringing them into relation in the relevant ways with the logical form of the would-be corresponding fact:

Suppose we wish to understand “A and B are similar”. It is essential that our thought should, as is said, “unite” or “synthesize” the two terms and the relation; but we cannot actually “unite” them, since either A and B are similar, in which case they are already united, or they are dissimilar, in which case no amount of thinking can force them to become united. The process of “uniting” which we can effect in thought is the process of bringing them into relation with the general form of dual complexes. The form being “something and something have a certain relation”, our understanding of the proposition might be expressed in the words “something, namely A, and something, namely B, have a certain relation, namely similarity”. … In an actual complex, the general form is not presupposed, but when we are concerned with a proposition which may be false, and where, therefore, the actual complex is not given, we have only, as it were, the “idea” or “suggestion” of the terms being united in such a complex, and this, evidently, requires that the general form of the merely supposed complex should be given. More simply, in order to understand “A and B are similar”, we must know what is supposed to be done with A and B and similarity, i.e. what it is for two terms to have a relation; that is, we must understand the form of the complex which must exist if the proposition is true. [TK, 116; cf. TK, 101]

According to the 1913 version of Russell’s multiple relation analysis, then, I judge that the individual Socrates and the first-level property mortality combine to form an elementary fact in which Socrates plays the subject role (or occupies the subject position) and mortality plays the predicate role (or occupies the predicate position) by bringing Socrates and mortality into relation with the logical form of elementary subject-predicate facts in the relevant ways (see also TK, 117–18). My act of judgment creates a certain unity among my mind, Socrates, mortality, and the logical form of elementary subject-predicate facts. In doing so, it relates Socrates to the subject-variable in that logical form and relates mortality to the form’s predicate-variable. In this way the unity which is my act of judgment represents the objects Socrates and mortality as combined into a certain, independent subordinate unity—namely the fact (or putative proposition) that Socrates is mortal. On this basis, then, the 1913 multiple relation theory seeks to explain how we form the judgment that Socrates is mortal.

Implicit in the 1913 multiple relation theory’s positive account of how we manage to form significant judgments is the basis for an explanation of the impossibility of our judging nonsense. The introduction of logical form is intended, in part, to rule out the idea that the judging mind can simply combine objects with which it is acquainted in any way that it likes to form a judgment. Logical form is thus the source of the constraints on what can be judged. On the 1913 theory, the fact which is the way in which the objects of a given judgment are asserted by that judgment to be combined in reality is itself a constituent of the judgment-complex. So knowledge of this abstract logical fact is required for making the judgment. On the new account, then, we must know how the objects are “meant to be combined”
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[TK, 111]—i.e. “how they are to be put together” [TK, 101]—in order to make the judgment at all. This is the role of logical form. So it would seem that we cannot combine the objects in nonsensical ways if we must always combine them in accordance with the relevant logical form.

There is, however, an obvious problem with this [supposed] explanation of the impossibility of our judging nonsense. The problem is that on its own the stipulation that the judging mind must have direct acquaintance, not only with the objects themselves concerning which it judges, but also with the way in which these objects are said to be combined does not guarantee that the objects can in fact be combined in that particular way, i.e. the way indicated by the logical form. As we have said more than once, for Russell the judgment that Socrates is mortal appears to express an attitude towards the [putative] proposition that Socrates is mortal, an objective complex entity in which the property of mortality is predicated of the actual man Socrates. The logical form that figures in the judgment that Socrates is mortal is the logical form of this [putative] proposition. The 1913 multiple relation analysis deploys the notion of logical form to capture the ontological or type-theoretic distinctions among the various objects of a judgment, and to characterize the way in which a judgment represents its objects as occurring in the [putative] proposition towards which it appears to express an attitude. According to this analysis, then, the judgment that Socrates is mortal represents the individual Socrates as playing the subject role in the proposition that Socrates is mortal, and represents the universal mortality as playing the predicate role in the very same proposition, because the judging mind [or its act of judgment] relates Socrates and mortality in the relevant ways to the logical form of subject-predicate facts. More specifically, the judgment relates Socrates to the existentially quantified variable occupying the subject position in that logical form, and relates mortality to the existentially quantified variable that occupies the predicate position in the same form.

Now the obvious problem with this analysis of judgment—and this is the crucial point—is that there seems to be nothing in it that proscribes our bringing Socrates into relation with the logical form of subject-predicate facts in precisely the same way as we bring mortality into relation with that logical form when we judge that Socrates is mortal. Nor is there anything in the analysis to keep us from bringing mortality into relation with the logical form in question in the way that our judgment that Socrates is mortal brings Socrates into relation with that particular form. Consequently there is nothing in the 1913 multiple relation analysis of judgment—as we have so far articulated it at least—that makes it impossible for a person to judge that mortality is Socrates. The crucial point here is that, even if the analysis is correct in its claim that we form the judgment that Socrates is mortal by relating Socrates to the subject-variable and mortality to the predicate-variable in a subject-predicate form, still that claim does not imply that it is necessary that any judgment that contains all and only
the actual man Socrates, the property of mortality, and the logical form of subject-predicate facts as its objects will relate them in that particular way. Yet if an object’s being represented as having a predicative occurrence in a subject-predicate judgment consists merely in a mind’s bringing the object into relation with the logical form of subject-predicate facts in a certain way, then anything that a judging mind happens to bring into relation with the form in that particular way will be represented as occurring predicatively in its judgment. Hence, to reiterate, if I take the objects of acquaintance Socrates, mortality, and the logical form of subject-predicate facts, and then bring them into relation with one another in the relevant way, I can judge that mortality is Socrates.\(^\text{10}\) It would thus seem that, even with the addition of logical form to its analysis of judgment, the multiple relation theory does not show that it is impossible to judge nonsense. The appeal to the notion of logical form taken by itself does not suffice to protect the theory from Wittgenstein’s objection, because it does not effectively impose the relevant sorts of constraints on what can be judged.

In Russell’s theory, as we have seen, the way in which the constituents are related to each other in a given relational fact is taken to be a function of the \textit{positions} which they occupy in that fact. The sentence “Judges (Aristotle, Socrates, Mortality, (\(\exists x\) \(\exists \Phi\) \(\Phi x\))” is a paraphrase of the judgment ascription “Aristotle judges that Socrates is mortal”, rather than of the \{putative\} judgment ascription “Aristotle judges that mortality is Socrates”, in part because in the judging relation expressed by the four-place predicate “Judges \(\langle x, y, F, p \rangle\)” the object that occupies the \(F\) argument place gets related to the logical form that occupies the \(p\) argument place so that it gets represented as holding of the object that occupies the \(y\) argument place.\(^\text{11}\) Since an object’s position in a judgment-fact is what determines how the judging relation which forms that judgment-fact connects (i.e. relates) the object itself to the logical form that figures in the judgment, it follows that an object’s position in a judgment-fact is also what determines how the judgment-fact represents the object as occurring in the putative proposition towards which it (the judgment) appears to express an attitude. Thus it would seem that in order for the 1913 multiple relation theory to guarantee that on its analysis of the notion of judgment a given entity may be represented as occurring predicatively in an elementary subject-predicate judgment

\(^\text{10}\) To the same end, it would seem that when I am separately acquainted with a particular table, with a particular book, with a particular penholder, and with the logical form of binary facts, nothing in Russell’s theory of judgment prevents me from uniting these objects in thought in exactly the same way that I unite \(a, b, \text{similarity}\), and the logical form in question in thought when I judge that \(a\) and \(b\) are similar. Hence there is nothing in the 1913 multiple relation theory of judgment that makes it impossible for me to judge that this table penholders the book. If an entity’s being represented as having a relational occurrence in a judgment is simply a matter of its being brought into relation with the logical form of binary facts in a certain way, then if I were to bring this penholder into relation with the logical form in that way, my judgment would represent it as occurring relationaly.

\(^\text{11}\) I take it that this relationship among the objects of the judgment that Socrates is mortal is the sort of thing that Russell’s diagram of judgment in \(TK\) is meant to make clear (see \(TK, 118\)).
only if that particular entity actually is a *predicate* (in the Russelian, nonlinguistic sense of the word), it needs to incorporate a theory that imposes type-theoretic restrictions on the argument places of judging relations [or positions in judgment-facts] after all. The introduction of logical form taken by itself does not obviate this need, which was present in the 1912 analysis too.

In *TK* Russell seems to acknowledge this point. Although he does not do so explicitly [or at least as explicitly as one might like], he does make a number of claims in the book that suggest that he is aware of the basic issues involved here. For example, in the chapter of *TK* where Russell first sets out in detail his new version of the multiple relation theory, he says that in the case of a binary relation “where the two related terms are logically different, ... no proposition results from interchanging them” (*TK*, 112). In such a case, Russell claims, there is only one “logically possible complex” (*TK*, 112). So when we interchange the names of the two related terms in the sentence which expresses that complex, we produce a sentence which is “meaningless” (*TK*, 112), i.e. a sentence which does not represent a logically possible complex. The meaningfulness of a sentence is thus to be understood in terms of the idea of a logically possible complex: a sentence is meaningful if, but only if, it asserts the existence of such a complex. For Russell, as we have emphasized, a given group of objects is capable of uniting to form a given complex—i.e. a given putative configuration of objects is a genuine logically possible complex—only if those objects are of the appropriate logical types with respect to one another. Thus Russell says: “It seems plain that ‘aRb’ has ‘meaning’ provided *R* is the right sort of entity, and that the question whether *R* is the right sort of entity depends upon its logical character” (*TK*, 134).

In *TK* Russell explicitly acknowledges that individuals, like Socrates, and properties of individuals, like mortality, “belong to different logical divisions”, and cannot be significantly ascribed or denied the same property, “because that would give them similar ‘positions’ in one complex, whereas, if both occur in one complex, they must have differences of ‘position’ corresponding to the fact that they can form a subject-predicate complex” (*TK*, 92). This suggests that Russell is aware of the fact that the meaningful words “Socrates” and “mortality” cannot be interchanged with *sense* in the fully analyzed sentence which expresses Aristotle’s judgment that Socrates is mortal. It also suggests that Russell would describe the difference between the meaningful sentence “Judges (Aristotle, Socrates, Mortality, (∃x)(∃Φ) Φx)” and the nonsensical phrase “Judges (Aristotle, Mortality, Socrates, (∃x)(∃Φ) Φx)” as a difference in what entity occupies what *position* in the underlying judgment-fact.

So, what part of the 1913 multiple relation theory of judgment rules out the possibility of our interchanging Socrates and mortality in a judgment-complex to produce another judgment-complex? This is one of the roles played by Russell’s theory of position:
The analysis of a complex raises different problems according to the nature of the complex. In particular, it makes a difference whether the complex is one which is determinate as soon as its form and its constituents are given, or whether it is one which even then may be one of several. ... What is relevant to the problem of analysis is whether, with the same constituents and the same form, several complexes are logically possible, not whether several are actual. In general, in a complex of \( n \) terms, there are various “positions” in the complex, corresponding to different relations [generally each of them functions of the relating relation] which the constituents have to the complex. \( \{TK\}, 122 \)

In \textit{TK} Russell deploys the theory of position to impose type-theoretic restrictions on the positions in facts. According to this theory, each genuine relation is uniquely associated with a certain system of positional relations that expresses the various possible positions that the relation’s potential relata can occupy in facts in which the relation serves as the relating relation [see \textit{TK}, 111, 146]. These positional relations hold between the relata and the facts [see \textit{TK}, 88, 111, 146]. The judging relation involved in Aristotle’s judgment that Socrates is mortal is the four-place universal judges \((x, y, \hat{P}, \hat{p})\). Corresponding to this judging relation there is a system consisting of four two-place positional relations: \( C_x, C_y, C_p, \) and \( C_{\hat{p}} \). These positional relations correspond respectively to the \( x \), to the \( y \), to the \( \hat{P} \), and to the \( \hat{p} \) argument places of the judging relation in question. Let us abbreviate Aristotle’s judgment as \( \alpha \). Then the fact expressed by the sentence “\( C_x \{\text{Aristotle, } \alpha\} \)” is the position of Aristotle’s mind in the judgment. The fact expressed by the sentence “\( C_y \{\text{Socrates, } \alpha\} \)” is the position occupied by Socrates in the judgment. The fact expressed by the sentence “\( C_{\hat{p}} \{\text{Mortality, } \alpha\} \)” is mortality’s position in the judgment. And the fact expressed by the sentence “\( C_p \{\exists x \exists \Phi \Phi x, \alpha\} \)” is the position that the logical form occupies in the judgment. Clearly we cannot interchange the words “Socrates” and “mortality” with sense in the sentence which expresses Aristotle’s judgment [see \textit{TK}, 92]. In \textit{TK} Russell expresses this point by saying that the individual Socrates and the universal mortality are \textit{unsymmetrical} and \textit{heterogeneous} with respect to the fact which is that judgment:

A complex is “unsymmetrical” with respect to two of its constituents if the two occupy different positions in the complex. An unsymmetrical complex is called “homogeneous” with respect to the unsymmetrical constituents if a logically possible complex results from interchanging them; otherwise it is called “heterogeneous”. \( \{TK, 122–23\}; \text{cf. } \{TK, 146\} \)

Russell does not, however, take the fact that Socrates and mortality are unsymmetrical and heterogeneous with respect to Aristotle’s judgment as basic. Instead, he seeks to explain this fact in terms of the associated positional relations. The distinct positions occupied respectively by Socrates and by mortality in the judgment that Socrates is mortal are themselves of different logical types. That is: the positional relations \( C_y \) and \( C_{\hat{p}} \) are “incompatible” \( \{TK, 146\} \). Their incompatibility is simply taken as fundamental and unexplained.

Even from this brief sketch, it seems clear that the theory of position that Russell articulates in \textit{TK} is vulnerable to precisely the same sort of objection as that which Wittgenstein, in connection with his critique of the 1912 multiple relation theory, raises to the [earlier] attempt to state type-theoretic
restrictions on the argument places of judging relations: namely that any such attempt is ultimately self-defeating (see Chapter 6, Section 6.2, pp. 172–174, above, and Section 6.3, pp. 185–187, above, for further discussion of this issue). Russell, however, does not seem to appreciate this point. Indeed, he does not seem to understand the force of this aspect of Wittgenstein’s objection at all. He does not see that the inexpressibility of type-theoretic distinctions and restrictions within his theory undermines or threatens the very status of his philosophical theorizing. Perhaps, his failure to recognize this difficulty is a product of the fact that, from his rejection of British idealism onwards, the idea that certain things cannot be said, or cannot be said with full and literal accuracy, is something that Russell regards as an absurdity, and, indeed, utterly rejects.

7.2 Wittgenstein’s Paralyzing Objection

The purpose of this final section is to give an account of Wittgenstein’s objection to Russell’s 1913 multiple relation theory of judgment, and of the impact upon Russell of that objection. Doing this will involve explaining the nature of the objection’s relationship to Wittgenstein’s earlier criticisms of the 1912 multiple relation theory as well as reevaluating the security of the 1913 theory’s defenses against those earlier criticisms. We shall also discuss relevant connections between the objection and the philosophical views, especially the account of judgment, that Wittgenstein evolves in the period from 1913 through 1918, following his rejection of the theory of copulas in January 1913. We shall see that Wittgenstein’s objection to the version of the multiple relation theory of judgment set forth in TK leads Russell to abandon that version of the theory, and eventually the view of judgment as a multiple relation altogether, and to stop work on the book early in June 1913.

7.2.1 Russell’s Abandonment of the Theory of Knowledge Manuscript

After a few days spent sketching out his general plan for the book, Russell begins to write TK on 7 May 1913 (see #770). He records the large-scale progress which he makes in this endeavor in almost daily letters to Lady Ottoline Morrell. As several of these letters indicate, Russell sets for himself the goal of writing ten pages per day (see #768). In practice, however, he often exceeds this already quite ambitious pace.

At first, Russell experiences great success with the writing of the book. Working quickly and with great energy and excitement, he feels encouraged by his initial progress. Russell describes these feelings in the following letter to Ottoline Morrell, dated 8 May 1913:
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I have got on with my writing—I find it all flows out, evenly and smoothly, properly arranged, with masses of detail that I hardly realized were in my thoughts. ... I am delighted with what I have done, and if I can go on so it will be excellent. It is extraordinary the relief of getting it out.

I believe now I can go straight on till it is finished, without pause or obstacle. ... It is all in my head, ready to be written as fast as my pen will go. I feel as happy as a king. (#768)

Ten days later, although now anticipating revisions, Russell is still working at the same feverish pitch and continues to be genuinely excited by what he is producing:

I have more to say than I thought, and ideas that come later make earlier parts want alteration. I am surprised to find how much I have to say, and how clear the problems become. Probably by the time I really finish it it will be a great big book. ... I feel so bursting with work that I hardly know how to wait for the days to roll themselves out—I want to write faster than is physically possible. I haven’t had such a fit for ages—it keeps me happy as a king. It is delicious disentangling a complicated jumble of facts, and laying the separate ingredients side by side. (#779)

Eight days after writing this letter, however, to his great consternation, Russell encounters an obstacle to his progress with the book. It takes the form of an objection to his view raised by Wittgenstein. In the following letter to Ottoline Morrell, dated 27 May 1913, Russell describes the rather tumultuous meeting with Wittgenstein during which he (Wittgenstein) delivers the crucial objection:

Wittgenstein came to see me—we were both cross from the heat—I showed him a crucial part of what I have been writing. He said it was all wrong, not realizing the difficulties—that he had tried my view and knew it wouldn’t work. I couldn’t understand his objection—in fact he was very inarticulate—but I feel in my bones that he must be right, and that he has seen something I have missed. If I could see it too I shouldn’t mind, but as it is, it is worrying, and has rather destroyed the pleasure in my writing—I can only go on with what I see, and yet I feel it is probably all wrong, and that Wittgenstein will think me a dishonest scoundrel for going on with it. Well well—it is the younger generation knocking at the door—I must make room for him when I can, or I shall become an incubus. But at the moment I was rather cross. (#787)

In spite of Wittgenstein’s criticisms of the book, however, Russell continues to work on TK. Indeed, the day after their meeting, he reports recovery from the attack:

I have recovered from the effect of Wittgenstein’s criticisms, though I think in all likelihood they are just. But even if they are they won’t destroy the value of the book. His criticisms have to do with problems I want to leave to him—which makes a complication. (#792)

While Russell maintains his rapid rate of composition, reaching page 300 of the manuscript on 1 June 1913, he remains uneasy as Wittgenstein’s criticisms continue to worry him:

The feeling of writing that must be done is like being in the middle of a mountain and having to tunnel one’s way through before one can reach light and air. And of course I have only superficially and by an act of will got over Wittgenstein’s attack—it has made the work a task rather than a joy. It is all tangled up with the difficulty of not stealing his ideas—there is really more merit in raising a good problem than in solving it. (#793)

Although apparently convinced of its correctness from the outset, Russell, by his own admission, does not understand Wittgenstein’s objection at first.12 By the third week of June, however, having

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12 It ought to be a puzzle to us that so great a thinker as Russell can feel certain of the correctness of an objection which he does not understand. Without a clear understanding of the objection, how could he possibly feel certain that it is correct? Part of the answer to this puzzle no doubt lies in the emotional impact of Wittgenstein on Russell, an impact which was evidently so strong that Russell was sometimes willing to accept Wittgenstein’s philosophical claims without really understanding them.

Another example of this general phenomenon is Russell’s claim in IMP that logic consists of tautologies [see IMP, 203–5]. In this view of logic, he is influenced by his earlier conversations with Wittgenstein, at the time that
received a letter from Wittgenstein earlier in the month that sought to clarify the objection (to be discussed shortly), and following a meeting with Wittgenstein that took place on 18 June, during which the two men almost certainly discussed the issue further, Russell has come to understand and to appreciate the power of Wittgenstein’s objection to his view. While he does not describe the objection itself, Russell does acknowledge the terrible toll which it has taken upon him, in the following letter to Ottoline Morrell, dated 19 June 1913:

All that has gone wrong with me lately comes from Wittgenstein’s attack on my work—I have only just realized this. It was very difficult to be honest about it as it makes a large part of the book I meant to write impossible for years to come probably. I tried to believe it wasn’t so bad as that—then I felt I hadn’t made enough effort over my work and must concentrate more severely. ... And the failure of honesty over my work—which was very slight and subtle, more an attitude than anything definite—spread poison in every direction. ... It is the first time in my life that I have failed in honesty over work. ... Only yesterday I felt ready for suicide. (#811)

It was only now that Russell finally abandoned the book.

In 1916, reflecting on the events surrounding the abandonment of TK, Russell describes Wittgenstein’s criticism dramatically:

Do you remember that at the time when you were seeing Vittoz I wrote a lot of stuff about Theory of Knowledge, which Wittgenstein criticized with the greatest severity? His criticism, tho’ I don’t think you realized it at the time, was an event of first-rate importance in my life, and affected everything I have done since. I saw he was right, and I saw that I could not hope ever again to do fundamental work in philosophy. My impulse was shattered, like a wave dashed to pieces against a breakwater. I became filled with utter despair. (Autobiography, ii. 57)

What Russell’s letters to Ottoline Morrell make clear then is that the proximate cause of the abandonment of TK was criticism by Wittgenstein, delivered late in May 1913 and elaborated on in June of the same year. A letter from Wittgenstein to Russell written in July 1913 at least strongly suggests that the criticism had to do with the multiple relation theory of judgment. Replying to a letter of Russell’s which is lost, Wittgenstein says:

I am very sorry to hear that my objection to your theory of judgment paralyzes you. I think it can only be removed by a correct theory of propositions. (CL, 33)

That the criticism concerned the multiple relation theory is also suggested by the chronological framework for the composition of TK which is established by Russell’s correspondence with Lady

he wrote IMP, however, he had not yet read the Tractatus. In IMP Russell insists upon the view that logic consists of tautologies in spite of the fact that, as he says, he does not know how to define “tautology” [see IMP, 205]. Russell thus insists, in diametrical opposition to his earlier views, that logic has an essential characteristic which he cannot define, and cannot explain in a fashion which is at all illuminating. Without a clear understanding of the notion of tautology, how can he possibly have reason to believe that logic consists of tautologies? Hylton points out that a crucial part of the answer to this puzzle must be Russell’s recognition, in response to the impact of type theory upon his conception of logic, that his thought about the nature of logic was bankrupt: his old view will no longer work, he has nothing to take its place, and yet his work crucially depends on logic having some kind of special philosophical status. But part of the answer also must lie in the impact that Wittgenstein’s personality had on Russell before the First World War, an impact that was evidently not dependent upon Russell’s understanding of Wittgenstein’s views. Under these circumstances Russell clutches at the word “tautology”, hoping, perhaps, that Wittgenstein will emerge from the trenches with a definition of the word which will enable it to play the role that Russell needs it for (see Hylton, “Logic in Russell’s Logicism”, 81, from which my discussion in this paragraph is drawn).
Ottoline Morrell. According to his letter of 25 May 1913, Russell begins to write the chapter of the book in which he first sets out his new (or 1913) version of the multiple relation theory of judgment (i.e. the version of the theory which includes the notion of logical form) on 25 May 1913 (see #786). It is thus reasonable to suppose that this chapter was the “crucial part of what I have been writing” (#787) that Russell showed Wittgenstein during their meeting the very next day, and that Wittgenstein then criticized so severely.

What, then, was the particular objection that had such a devastating and crippling effect on Russell? The basis for an answer to this question is given in a letter from Wittgenstein to Russell written in June 1913, and in certain remarks of Wittgenstein’s in NL and in the Tractatus. In his June 1913 letter to Russell, Wittgenstein writes as follows:

I can now express my objection to your theory of judgment exactly: I believe it is obvious that, from the proposition “A judges that (say) a is in the Relation R to b”, if correctly analyzed, the proposition “aRb ∨ ~aRb” must follow directly without the use of any other premiss. This condition is not fulfilled by your theory. (CL, 29; emphasis in the original)

The objection reappears later in Wittgenstein’s NL, dictated in October 1913: “The proper theory of judgment must make it impossible to judge nonsense” [NL, 95]. And, again, Wittgenstein says:

Every right theory of judgment must make it impossible for me to judge that this table penholders the book. Russell’s theory does not satisfy this requirement. [NL, 103]

In the Tractatus, Wittgenstein puts the objection like this:

The correct explanation of the form of the proposition, “A makes the judgment p”, must show that it is impossible for a judgment to be a piece of nonsense. [Russell’s theory does not satisfy this requirement.] [Tractatus, 5.5422]

Together these passages seem to suggest a single objection to the multiple relation theory of judgment. The objection is that nothing in the theory of judgment taken by itself makes it impossible to judge nonsense. Yet it is surely a legitimate requirement for a theory of judgment that what can be judged must make sense. Indeed, a nonsensical judgment is a judgment in name only. In the remainder of this section, then, I shall set out Wittgenstein’s objection to the 1913 multiple relation theory of judgment, and I shall argue that it is the crucial objection that leads Russell to abandon both the theory itself and the book in which he presents it, early in June 1913.

7.2.2 Wittgenstein’s June 1913 Letter to Russell

Let us begin our main discussion of Wittgenstein’s objection by focusing our attention on his June 1913 letter to Russell. In this letter, Wittgenstein proposes an adequacy condition for a theory of
judgment, and he charges that Russell’s 1913 multiple relation theory does not satisfy this condition. The adequacy condition that Wittgenstein proposes expresses the requirement that the correct analysis of the judgment that \(a\) has the relation \(R\) to \(b\) must imply the disjunctive fact that \(aRb \lor \neg aRb\). Or as Wittgenstein himself puts it: “I believe it is obvious that, from the proposition ‘A judges that (say) \(a\) is in the Relation \(R\) to \(b\)’, if correctly analyzed, the proposition ‘\(aRb \lor \neg aRb\)’ must follow directly without the use of any other premiss” (CL, 29). In failing to satisfy this condition, Wittgenstein claims, Russell’s 1913 theory of judgment fails to rule out the possibility of our judging nonsense.

Now one crucial feature of Wittgenstein’s adequacy condition for a theory of judgment is that it effectively imposes a significance constraint on what can be judged. There are three basic facets to this constraint, i.e. to the idea that only sense can be judged. To begin with, the claim that the analyzed judgment that \(a\) has \(R\) to \(b\) must imply the disjunctive fact that \(aRb \lor \neg aRb\) guarantees that a judgment must make sense because it guarantees that a judgment must assert the existence of a possible fact [or state of affairs]. To put essentially the same point in more Russellian terms: the claim guarantees that any legitimate judgment will combine its various constituents so that it represents just its objects as combined in a way that these entities can be combined in reality.

According to the 1913 version of Russell’s multiple relation analysis, the judgment that \(a\) has \(R\) to \(b\) brings the judging mind \(s\), the objects \(a\), \(R\), and \(b\), and the logical form of a two-place relational fact “into relation with each other, so that all become parts of one complex” (TK, 112). Russell thus identifies the judgment that \(a\) has \(R\) to \(b\) with the judgment-complex expressed by the sentence “Judges \(s\), \(a\), \(R\), \(b\), \((\exists x) \ (\exists y) \ (\exists \Phi) \Phi xy\)” [see TK, 115, 117]. He claims that this judgment-complex represents the objects \(a\), \(R\), and \(b\) as combined into a subordinate complex in which \(R\) relates \(a\) to \(b\) [see TK, 116–18]. So if \(R\) is the kind of thing that can occur as the relating relation in a binary complex, and \(a\) and \(b\) are the kinds of things that can be related by \(R\) to form such a complex, then the judgment that \(a\) has \(R\) to \(b\) represents its objects as combined in a way that they can be combined in reality. That is, the judgment represents its objects as combined into a possible fact. The judgment that \(a\) has \(R\) to \(b\) thus asserts the existence of a possible fact. So if \(R\) is a binary relation, and \(a\) and \(b\) are type-theoretically suitable arguments to \(R\), then the judgment that \(a\) has \(R\) to \(b\) makes sense. As Russell puts it: “It seems plain that ‘\(aRb\)’ has ‘meaning’ provided \(R\) is the right sort of entity, and that the question whether \(R\) is the right sort of entity depends upon its logical character” (TK, 134).

of the two letters and by the fact that Wittgenstein says, “I can now express my objection ... exactly” [CL, 29], which corroborates Russell’s report to Lady Ottoline that Wittgenstein “was very inarticulate” [#787] during their discussion [see Griffin, “Russell’s Multiple Relation Theory”, 238, on which my discussion in this footnote draws].
The existence of the disjunctive fact that $aRb \lor \sim aRb$ guarantees the possibility of the atomic fact that $aRb$. If the disjunctive fact that $aRb \lor \sim aRb$ actually obtains then either the positive atomic fact that $aRb$ actually obtains, in which case it is a possible fact, or its ontological negation, the negative molecular fact that $\sim aRb$, actually obtains instead. According to Russell’s metaphysics, the negative fact that $\sim aRb$ is a molecular complex that consists of the atomic complex in which the relation $R$ joins the object $a$ to the object $b$ combined with the ontological notion (or property) of negation.\footnote{It is not entirely clear, however, that Russell still held this view of negative facts in May 1913. At several places in \textit{TK} he appears to follow Wittgenstein in claiming that the logical constants, including disjunction and negation, are not genuine constituents of facts. In doing so, Russell seems to deny that there are logical constants in the sense in which he earlier advocated them [in \textit{Principles} and in \textit{PM}]. Thus Russell says, for example: “a molecular form is not even the form of any particular: no particular, however complex, has the form ‘this or that’, or the form ‘not-this’” \cite[TK, 132, cf. TK, 97–98]. Elsewhere in the book, however, Russell is much less definite about the matter, and admits that he does not know precisely what objects [if any] underlie our use and understanding of the proprietary vocabulary of the science of logic. For example, he says: “Besides the forms of atomic complexes, there are many other logical objects which are involved in the formation of non-atomic complexes. Such words as \textit{or}, \textit{not}, \textit{all}, \textit{some}, plainly involve logical notions; and since we can use such words intelligently, we must be acquainted with the logical objects involved. But the difficulty of isolation is here very great, and I do not know what the logical objects involved really are” \cite[TK, 99]. Ultimately, the question of the nature and status of the logical constants is not settled in \textit{TK}. Russell abandoned the book before reaching that part which was to have dealt with molecular propositions.} Thus the obtaining of the negative fact that $\sim aRb$ presupposes that $R$ itself is a binary relation, and that the objects $a$ and $b$ are type-theoretically suitable arguments to $R$. From this, it follows that, if the negative fact that $\sim aRb$ actually obtains, the atomic fact that $aRb$ is a possible state of affairs. If, then, the disjunctive fact that $aRb \lor \sim aRb$ actually obtains, the putative fact that $a$ has $R$ to $b$ is a possible fact. So if the analyzed judgment that $a$ has $R$ to $b$ implies the disjunctive fact that $aRb \lor \sim aRb$, then this judgment asserts the existence of a possible fact. In that case, then, the judgment itself makes sense.

We can also see the claim that the analyzed judgment that $a$ has $R$ to $b$ must imply the disjunctive fact that $aRb \lor \sim aRb$ as embodying the requirement that a judgment must have a truth-value, i.e. that it must be either true or false. In a certain sense, the disjunctive fact that $aRb \lor \sim aRb$ just is the fact that either the positive atomic fact that $aRb$ actually obtains or the negative molecular fact that $\sim aRb$ actually obtains. The obtaining of the atomic fact that $aRb$ gives the condition for the \textit{truth} of the judgment that $a$ has $R$ to $b$, while the obtaining of the negative fact that $\sim aRb$ gives the condition for its \textit{falsity}. So the obtaining of the disjunctive fact that $aRb \lor \sim aRb$ gives the condition for the \textit{significance} of the judgment that $a$ has $R$ to $b$, in the precise sense that it guarantees that this judgment has a truth-value. Accordingly the requirement that the correct analysis of the judgment that $a$ has $R$ to $b$ must imply the disjunctive fact that $aRb \lor \sim aRb$ is, in part, the requirement that a judgment must be either true or false.
As we have so far articulated it, then, Wittgenstein's adequacy condition for a theory of judgment expresses the threefold requirement that (i) the objects of a judgment must be of the appropriate logical types with respect to one another to combine to form the putative fact whose existence is asserted by that judgment; that (ii) a judgment must combine its various constituents so as to represent only its objects as combined in the same way that they are actually combined in its (would-be) corresponding fact; and that (iii) a judgment must have a truth-value. Taken together, these three claims constitute the significance constraint which Wittgenstein's adequacy condition for a theory of judgment effectively imposes on judgments.

For Wittgenstein, then, the claim that a judgment must be either true or false, and the claim that a judgment must assert the existence of a possible fact, are equivalent ways of saying that a judgment must make sense. And in his eyes these three claims are closely connected with the law of the excluded middle (for facts). Thus in 1914 Wittgenstein says:

> When I say “p is possible”, does that not mean that “‘p’ makes sense”? Is the former proposition about language, so that the existence of a propositional sign (“p”) is essential for its sense? [In that case it would be quite unimportant.] But does it not rather try to say what “p ∨ ~ p” shows? [NB, 28]

Clearly then Wittgenstein himself makes the connection which I have been attempting to articulate over the last few pages.

In his June 1913 letter to Russell, Wittgenstein charges that Russell's 1913 theory of judgment does not satisfy the condition that, from its analysis of the judgment that \( a \) has \( R \) to \( b \), it follows “directly without the use of any other premiss” that either \( a \) has \( R \) to \( b \) or \( a \) does not have \( R \) to \( b \) \( \) (CL, 29). Now if we take Wittgenstein's entire point here to be simply that the 1913 version of the multiple relation theory does not meet the significance constraint on judgments which we outlined above, then we should conclude that Wittgenstein is claiming in his June 1913 letter to Russell that Russell's 1913 theory of judgment enables the mind to judge that certain objects stand in a certain relation to each other in cases where it is not possible for those objects to stand in that relation to each other, either because the objects are not suitable arguments to the relation or because the putative relation is not really a relation at all. So on this account of Wittgenstein's objection, the trouble with the 1913 version of the multiple relation theory is that the theory itself does not prevent us from judging, for example, that this table penholders the book, or that mortality is Socrates. For these putative judgments are such that their objects (a table, a penholder, and a book, on the one hand; Socrates and mortality, on the other) cannot be combined in reality in the way that the judgments represent them as being combined. Understood in this way, Wittgenstein's objection to the 1913 multiple relation theory is on its face very much like the objection which he previously raised to the 1912 version of that theory; for
his objection to the 1913 theory (or so it appears) is that it, like the 1912 theory, does not rule out the possibility of our uniting objects of acquaintance by means of a mental act of judging into a complex that constitutes a nonsensical judgment, that is, a judgment-complex that represents its objects as combined in a way that they cannot be combined in reality.

It is, however, not at all obvious that the 1913 version of Russell’s multiple relation theory really is vulnerable to this objection, i.e. that the theory does not in fact meet the significance constraint that Wittgenstein’s adequacy condition for a theory of judgment imposes on what can be judged. In Section 7.1, I argued that Russell incorporates both the notion of logical form and the theory of position into his analysis of judgment in TK in order to deal with Wittgenstein’s objection to his 1912 multiple relation theory. And I emphasized how the addition of these two doctrines to that analysis appears to help the multiple relation theory to resolve the problem for it that Wittgenstein exposes in his January 1913 letter to Russell. Now it seems to me that the modifications which Russell makes to the theory of judgment in TK not only serve to protect the theory in its new form from Wittgenstein’s earlier objection, but also enable the multiple relation theory to meet the significance constraint on judgments which is imposed by Wittgenstein’s adequacy condition for a theory of judgment. In order to clarify this point, let us (briefly) review Russell’s (alleged) solution to Wittgenstein’s earlier objection to the 1912 multiple relation theory.

For Russell, let us recall, a nonsensical judgment—if there were such a thing—would be a fact whose relating relation is the same as that of some significant judgment-fact,\(^{16}\) and in which the other constituents (i.e. the judger, the objects, and the form) are actually combined (i.e. related to one another by the relation of judging) so that the objects alone are represented as combined in a way that they cannot be combined in reality. Now we have already seen how the 1913 version of the multiple relation theory seeks to rule out the possibility of there being such nonsensical judgment-facts. Russell begins by introducing the logical form of the judgment’s would-be corresponding fact as a new term of the judging relation. He thus seeks to guarantee that in making a judgment the mind which judges must always judge objects to be combined in a way that they can be combined in reality, by including the way that the objects are to be combined in reality, the logical form of the judgment’s would-be corresponding fact, as a further object of the judgment, an object which the judging mind combines with the others. Recall, however, that the obvious problem with this strategy is that simply including (the fact which is) the way in which the objects are to be combined as a further element

\(^{16}\) If the relation were not one that also forms judgments which do make sense, then it would be open to Russell to claim that the nonsensical complexes formed by the relation are not judgments at all, and thus that they are not nonsensical judgments.
of the judgment does not guarantee that the judgment will assert the existence of a possible fact, because it does not on its own impose the relevant sorts of constraints on the way that the act of judgment is capable of combining the objects with that element, i.e. the logical form. For Russell it is a logical or metaphysical matter that the individual Socrates and the universal mortality can combine into an elementary subject-predicate fact in which Socrates occupies the subject position and mortality occupies the predicate position. And it is equally a logical or metaphysical matter that Socrates and mortality cannot combine into an elementary subject-predicate fact in which Socrates occupies the predicate position and mortality occupies the subject position. Now the crucial problem for Russell is that, on his analysis of judgment, even with the addition of logical form, the fact that Socrates and mortality cannot combine in reality in the way just described does not imply that they cannot be judged to combine in that particular way. If we are to have an explanation of the fact that we can judge that mortality is predicated of Socrates but cannot judge that Socrates is predicated of mortality, then we must have an explanation of the fact that the judging relation can relate the judging mind, Socrates, mortality, and the logical form of elementary subject-predicate facts to produce the fact which would constitute the former judgment but cannot relate these entities to produce the fact which would constitute the latter judgment. The only way to rule out the possibility of there being nonsensical judgments, that is to say, is to claim that the act of judgment itself imposes certain constraints on what can be judged, i.e. that each judging relation is so constituted that it cannot relate objects to produce nonsense. In order for the act of unification which is involved in judgment to impose constraints on what can be judged, it must have restrictions. That is: there must be type restrictions on the argument places of judging relations (or positions in judgment-facts), corresponding to the type distinctions among the objects of judgment. Establishing these distinctions and imposing the corresponding restrictions are among the responsibilities of Russell’s theory of position.

Let us now attempt to express these considerations in terms of the significance constraint that is implicit in Wittgenstein’s adequacy condition for a theory of judgment. In analyzing the judgment ascription “Aristotle judges that Socrates is mortal” as “Judges (Aristotle, Socrates, Mortality, (∃x) (∃Φ) Φx)”, Russell identifies Aristotle’s judgment that Socrates is mortal with the judgment-fact in which Aristotle’s mind, the actual man Socrates, the universal mortality, and the logical form of elementary subject-predicate facts occupy respectively the x, the y, the F, and the p argument places of the judging relation Judges (x, y, F, p). But this analysis of Aristotle’s judgment does not on its own imply the

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17 More exactly: Aristotle, Socrates, mortality, and the logical form (∃x) (∃Φ) Φx occupy respectively the C_y, the C_x, the C_p, and the C_F positions in the judgment-fact expressed by the sentence “Judges [Aristotle, Socrates, Mortality, (∃x) (∃Φ) Φx]” (see Section 7.1, p. 205, above).
Wittgenstein’s Criticisms of Russell’s 1913 Multiple Relation Theory of Judgment

A disjunctive fact that either Socrates is mortal or Socrates is not mortal, for nothing in the analysis taken by itself rules out the possibility of our interchanging Socrates and mortality in Aristotle’s judgment to produce a judgment-fact for which there is no relevant corresponding disjunctive fact. To rule out the latter possibility and thus to secure the former implication, we need to add to the analysis the statements that (i) Aristotle’s mind is an individual; that (ii) the actual man Socrates is an individual; that (iii) the universal mortality is a first-level one-place property of individuals; that (iv) the logical form of elementary subject-predicate facts is a second-level fact; and that (v) the judging relation Judges \((x, y, F, p)\) is a second-level four-place relation whose \(x\) variable takes all and only individuals as its values, whose \(y\) variable also takes all and only individuals as its values, whose \(F\) variable takes all and only first-level one-place properties of individuals as its values, and whose \(p\) variable takes all and only second-level facts as its values. Then, but only then, does Russell’s analysis of Aristotle’s judgment that Socrates is mortal imply the disjunctive fact that either Socrates is mortal or Socrates is not mortal. For then, but only then, does the analysis have the result that the sentence “Judges \(\{\text{Aristotle, Mortality, Socrates, } \exists x \exists \Phi \Phi x\}\)” does not correspond to a judgment that can in fact be made. So it would seem that in modifying the multiple relation theory of judgment in order to protect it from the objection raised by Wittgenstein in his January 1913 letter, Russell produces a theory of judgment which also meets the significance constraint on judgments which Wittgenstein attempts to express in his June 1913 letter.

Why, then, does Wittgenstein insist that Russell’s 1913 theory of judgment fails to satisfy the adequacy condition for a theory of judgment that he sets forth in that letter? As a first step in answering this question we need to recognize that the adequacy condition in question does not consist solely of the significance constraint on judgments which we have been discussing; the condition goes beyond this significance constraint. Wittgenstein’s adequacy condition for a theory of judgment does effectively impose a significance constraint on what can be judged, but it further requires that that constraint be met by the theory of judgment in a particular way. In what particular way must the significance constraint be met? Wittgenstein’s answer is that the theory of judgment must meet the significance constraint, and thus show that it is impossible to judge nonsense, “without the use of any other premiss” \((CL, 29)\). I take Wittgenstein’s general point here to be that the proper analysis of judgment must, in ruling out the possibility of our judging nonsense, do so in a way that shows that it is intrinsic to the notion of judgment that what can be judged must make sense. So on my reading Wittgenstein’s insistence that, from the analyzed judgment that \(a\) has \(R\) to \(b\), the disjunctive fact that \(aRb \lor \sim aRb\) “must follow directly without the use of any other premiss” \((CL, 29)\) is in part an insistence on the idea that it must follow intrinsically from the analysis of judgment that only sense can be judged. As
thus understood, the adequacy condition for a theory of judgment that Wittgenstein proposes in his June 1913 letter to Russell does not simply rehash his earlier objection to the 1912 multiple relation theory, for it also introduces a new element into his critique of Russell’s approach to the notion of judgment.

As I see the matter, then, a crucial element of Wittgenstein’s requirement in his June 1913 letter to Russell that the proper analysis of the notion of judgment must show that it is impossible to judge nonsense is the idea that the proper analysis of the notion of judgment must make any given judgment’s possession of sense sufficiently \textit{intrinsic} to it. The question thus arises: what feature (or features) of Russell’s 1913 multiple relation analysis causes that analysis to be in conflict with this aspect of Wittgenstein’s adequacy condition for a theory of judgment?

Wittgenstein opposes the strategy that Russell employs to rule out the possibility of our judging nonsense, for he disagrees in principle with Russell’s treatment of (or approach to) type-theoretic distinctions. In his June 1913 letter to Russell, Wittgenstein implicitly criticizes Russell’s use of the theory of position as a tool to impose restrictions of logical type on the positions in judgment-facts. I think that the statements setting forth these restrictions constitute the additional premises with which Wittgenstein takes issue in the letter.\textsuperscript{18} From Wittgenstein’s perspective, the basic problem with these premises is that they seek to \textit{restrict} judgments to such as have sense, and thus to restrict what \textit{prima facie} judgments are to count as \textit{real} judgments, from without, by mere stipulation. Consequently the 1913 multiple relation analysis fails to make a judgment’s possession of sense sufficiently intrinsic to it. That is, the analysis fails to show that it is \textit{intrinsic} to the notion of judgment that only sense can be judged. Let us attempt to elaborate on these ideas.

Russell’s basic view of judgment as a multiple relation that holds among a judging mind and various non-propositional objects with which the mind is acquainted does not on its own suggest that there are any fundamental differences among the objects that figure in our judgments. Indeed it runs directly counter to that idea by treating the objects of a judgment as on a level with each other: they are simply entities with which a mind is acquainted, terms of a judging relation, and logical subjects of a judgment-fact. So given this feature of the multiple relation theory, it would seem that the idea of Socrates’ being interchanged with mortality in a judgment-complex to yield another judgment-complex is not one that is obviously ruled out by Russell’s basic view of judgment. To rule out this idea, we

\textsuperscript{18} Recall that in his January 1913 letter to Russell, Wittgenstein also criticizes Russell’s attempt to impose type-theoretic distinctions and restrictions on the objects and act of judgment. In that letter, however, his critique centers on the inability of the theory of judgment to state these distinctions and restrictions effectively, that is, to state them in a way that is not self-defeating. In his June 1913 letter to Russell, on the other hand, Wittgenstein focuses on a different (though related) problem facing the attempt to impose restrictions of logical type on our judgments.
Wittgenstein’s Criticsisms of Russell’s 1913 Multiple Relation Theory of Judgment

need to supplement that view with the theory of position. But then the theory of position seems to impose type-theoretic distinctions upon an underlying structure to which such distinctions are not intrinsic, i.e. a structure in which they do not really exist. The theory imposes these distinctions, and the corresponding restrictions, for the sake of avoiding certain unpleasant consequences. More specifically, it imposes them to enable the theory of judgment to rule out the possibility of our forming nonsensical judgments, that is, judgments which represent their objects as combined in a way that they cannot be combined in reality. In order to obtain the result that a judgment must make sense, then, the multiple relation theory of judgment requires the additional premises that record the type-theoretic restrictions. But without these premises the theory would permit us to judge nonsense. Thus the obvious and undeniable fact that one can judge that a certain group of objects combines to form a certain fact only if that group of objects is in principle capable of combining to form that fact is not something which is internal or intrinsic to Russell’s analysis of the notion of judgment. It is, to the contrary, something which is imposed on the act of judgment from without, by means of the additional premises that establish both the type-theoretic distinctions among the objects of judgment and the type-theoretic restrictions on the argument places of judging relations (or positions in judgment-facts). Russell’s approach to judgment thus appears to treat the distinctions among the objects of a judgment as external to the theory of judgment, and thus as extrinsic to the notion of judgment. In this way, then, sense is not intrinsic to judgment—it is, rather, extrinsic or external to this notion. Indeed, if we were to abandon the type-theoretic restrictions imposed by the theory of position, the notions of judgment and of sense would come apart: without these restrictions it would be possible to judge nonsense. But if, by contrast, a theory of judgment were to make the possessing of sense intrinsic to the notion of judgment, then that theory would have to treat the various ontological distinctions among the objects of a judgment as internal to the act of judgment. That is, these distinctions would have to be part of the analysis of judgment taken by itself. The distinctions among the objects of a judgment should emerge from the analysis of the notion of judgment. In giving an account of the nature of judgment, the analysis itself must explain the type-theoretic differences among the objects of our judgments.

According to the interpretation that I am proposing, then, a crucial element of Wittgenstein’s June 1913 adequacy condition for a theory of judgment is the requirement that such a theory must somehow make a judgment’s possession of sense intrinsic to it. For Wittgenstein, that is to say, the correct analysis of judgment should show that it is intrinsic to the notion of judgment that what can be judged must make sense. Judgments, for Wittgenstein, are representations of reality that are true or false in virtue of their agreement or disagreement with reality. In Wittgenstein’s view, then, the fact that a judgment must make sense must somehow be rooted in its nature as a representation of reality.
In his June 1913 letter to Russell, Wittgenstein charges that, in its attempt to secure that the objects of a judgment will be of the right multiplicity and variety of logical types to form a corresponding fact, and in the representationally appropriate positions in the judgment itself, Russell’s theory of judgment fails to make the sense of a judgment sufficiently intrinsic to it. On my reading, then, it is this latter idea which Wittgenstein seeks to express when he charges in the letter that the 1913 multiple relation analysis does not show that it is impossible to judge nonsense “without the use of any other premiss” ([CL, 29]).

7.2.3 Wittgenstein’s Solution to the Problem: The Conception of Sentences as Facts

We can clarify the nature of this objection by seeing what sort of account of judgment Wittgenstein thought would not be vulnerable to it. To begin with, it is an account which takes the theory of symbolism as its focal point. As the basis for the theory of judgment, Wittgenstein attempts to develop a systematic account of the nature of the linguistic representations that we use to express our thoughts. So on his account of judgment, the notion of a complete declarative sentence is paramount: it is, as it were, the real object of investigation.¹⁹ In the last chapter I referred to this feature of Wittgenstein’s account as the sentence-based approach to the notion of judgment, and I argued that central to the sentence-based approach is the idea that to explain the nature and possibility of judgment it suffices to explain how sentences manage to represent facts in the world either correctly or incorrectly (see Chapter 6, Section 6.1, pp. 150–160, above). Like his erstwhile theory of copulas, then, the account of judgment that Wittgenstein attempts to work out in detail in NL approaches the theory of judgment through the theory of symbolism. His new account, however, takes the idea that issues having to do with language constitute the real subject-matter of the theory of judgment even more seriously than his old account takes this idea, for his new account provides a much more sophisticated explanation than his old account provides of how sentences manage to represent facts. A crucial idea that stands behind Wittgenstein’s sentence-based approach to the notion of judgment is the claim that for the theory of judgment to show that it is impossible for a person to judge nonsense it must show that it is impossible for a sentence to be a piece of nonsense. In NL Wittgenstein articulates a conception of sentences that seeks to show that a sentence’s making sense must be rooted in its fundamental nature as a representation of reality. He thus attempts to show that it is intrinsic to sentences that they must

¹⁹ In his July 1913 letter to Russell, Wittgenstein expresses this point as follows: “I am very sorry to hear that my objection to your theory of judgment paralyzes you. I think it can only be removed by a correct theory of propositions” ([CL, 33], emphasis added). Recall that a proposition, for Wittgenstein, is a meaningful declarative sentence that is either true or false, that is, a sentence with a sense.
make sense by developing a view of representation that accords well with his conception of truth as correspondence.

The account of linguistic representation that Wittgenstein proposes in *NL* is motivated, in part, by his opposition to the view of language that implicitly accompanies Russell’s multiple relation theory of judgment. According to that view of language, as Ricketts observes, atomic sentences at the bottom level of analysis are combinations of names of ontological atoms of different types—individuals, properties of individuals, dyadic relations of individuals, et cetera. Names are merely labels for ontological atoms with which we are acquainted. Somehow combinations of names of the atoms into sentences (express judgments that) are rendered true or false by the subsistence of facts involving the named atoms.\(^{20}\)

In his January 1913 letter to Russell, Wittgenstein breaks with this sort of approach to language by ceasing to treat unary and relational predicates as names of ontological atoms combined by a linguistic copula with names of individuals.\(^{21}\) In *NL* Wittgenstein presents his alternative to Russell’s approach in some detail.

In *NL*, then, Wittgenstein explicitly rejects the Russellian conception of atomic sentences as collections or mixtures of names [see *NL*, 97–98, 107]. In doing so, he sharply contrasts names with sentences [see *NL*, 95, 98, 101–2].\(^{22}\) Wittgenstein claims that, unlike names, sentences are true or false because they agree or disagree with the facts, because they have sense:

Names are points, propositions arrows—they have *sense*. The sense of a proposition is determined by the two poles *true* and *false*. [*NL*, 101–2; cf. *Tractatus*, 3.144]

And, again, he says:

A proposition is a standard to which facts behave, with names it is otherwise; it is thus bi-polarity and sense comes in; just as one arrow behaves to another arrow by being in the same sense or the opposite, so a fact behaves to a proposition. [*NL*, 95]

On Wittgenstein’s conception of truth, then, a given sentence agrees with the facts just in case the negation of that sentence disagrees. So for Wittgenstein a sentence and its negation are themselves opposed: they disagree with each other. It is at this point that Wittgenstein’s notion of *sense* comes into play:

In my theory p has the same meaning as not-p but opposite sense. The meaning is the fact. The proper theory of judgment must make it impossible to judge nonsense. [*NL*, 95]

According to Wittgenstein’s view, an atomic sentence and its negation have precisely the same *Bedeutung* [meaning] because they correspond to precisely the same fact [see also *NL*, 94, 103]. Thus

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\(^{20}\) Ricketts, “Pictures”, 69.

\(^{21}\) See Ricketts, “Pictures”, 70.

\(^{22}\) From Wittgenstein’s point of view, Russell’s theory does not adequately distinguish the way that names symbolize objects from the way that sentences symbolize facts. In *TK*, indeed, Russell appears to conflate these two notions, for he speaks there of fully analyzed sentences that represent non-permutative facts as *complex names* for those facts [see *TK*, 128, 147–48, 177].
the same fact in the world that makes true the atomic sentence “Plato is human” also makes false its negation, the molecular sentence “Plato is not human”. The fact in question is, of course, the fact that Plato is human [i.e. the fact that the actual man Plato has the property of humanity]. The sentence “Plato is human” agrees with that particular fact, while the sentence “Plato is not human” disagrees with it. The sentence “Plato is human” asserts the existence of the positive fact that Plato is human [see NL, 97]. The sentence “Plato is not human”, on the other hand, asserts the existence of the negative fact that Plato is not human [see NL, 97]. To assert the existence of the negative fact that Plato is not human just is to assert the non-existence of the positive fact that Plato is human. So the sentence “Plato is human” asserts the existence of the positive fact whose non-existence the sentence “Plato is not human” asserts. Thus although the sentences “Plato is human” and “Plato is not human” correspond to precisely the same fact, yet they make directly opposed assertions. The two sentences thus have the same meaning but opposite senses. For Wittgenstein, then, the sense of a sentence just is the possible fact in logical space whose existence the sentence asserts:

Instead of, “This proposition has such and such a sense”, we can simply say, “This proposition represents such and such a situation”. (Tractatus, 4.031; cf. Tractatus, 2.202)

In specifying the way in which a sentence represents the possible fact in logical space whose obtaining would verify it, we specify its sense. The sense of a sentence is thus given by its fundamental representational relationship to reality.

Wittgenstein’s conception of truth as agreement with reality relies on the idea that sentences, the primary bearers of the two truth-values, are the kinds of things with which reality can be compared [see Tractatus, 4.05]. To specify the way that a given sentence represents the external reality which it is about is to establish a particular method by which to compare that sentence with the facts so that it either agrees or disagrees with them [see NB, 23]. According to Wittgenstein, the possibility of comparing sentences with reality depends upon the idea that sentences have something in common with reality, that they share some feature with it which enables them to depict it at all [see NB, 15; cf. Tractatus, 2.18]. What, then, is this particular feature?

Sentences, for Wittgenstein, are representations of reality that are true or false in virtue of their agreement or disagreement with reality. In NL Wittgenstein maintains that sentences can agree or disagree with facts, because they are themselves facts:

In “aRb” it is not the complex that symbolizes but the fact that the symbol “a” stands in a certain relation to the symbol “b”. Thus facts are symbolized by facts, or more correctly: that a certain thing is the case in the symbol says that a certain thing is the case in the world. [NL, 96; cf. Tractatus, 3.1432]

And, again, he says:
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Not: “The complex sign ‘aRb’” says that a stands in the relation R to b; but that “a” stands in a certain relation to “b” says that aRb. [NL, 106]

For Wittgenstein, then, an atomic sentence is a sentential fact in which certain simple symbols are related to each other in a determinate way [see Tractatus, 3.14].

In NL Wittgenstein tells us that the basic indefinably simple elements of atomic sentences are names and forms (see NL, 96). Thus he says:

A proposition must be understood when all its indefinables are understood. The indefinables in “aRb” are introduced as follows:

“a” is indefinable;
“b” is indefinable;
Whatever “x” and “y” may mean, “xRy” says something indefinable about their meaning. [NL, 99]

From the point of view of logical syntax, names are simple symbols [see NL, 107; cf. Tractatus, 4.24]. Forms, on the other hand, are the ways that names are related in atomic sentences. To clarify this idea, consider the atomic sentence “Matt loves Julie”. On Wittgenstein's analysis this sentence contains two names, “Matt” and “Julie”, and one binary form, “x loves y”. For Wittgenstein sentences are facts. And the sentence “Matt loves Julie”, in particular, is the fact that the word “loves” stands between the names “Matt” and “Julie”. So the binary form “x loves y” is the way that the names “Matt” and “Julie” are related to each other in the sentence “Matt loves Julie” precisely because this particular sentence is a fact in which the name “Matt” is to the left of the word “loves” and the name “Julie” is to the right of it. Thus, following Ricketts, let us say that a sentence of the form “x loves y” is a sentential fact in which a name in the “x”-position “love”-leftstands a name in the “y”-position.24

According to Wittgenstein’s view of language, the meaning of an individual sentence is fixed in part by general rules that determine the form and content of expressions in the language. These general rules are thus of two basic kinds. The first kind of rule concerns the logical syntax of the language. General rules of this kind enable us to decompose whole sentences into their basic indefinably simple elements on the basis of a syntactic characterization [see Tractatus, 3.33]. In the case of atomic sentences, in particular, the rules of logical syntax segment these sentences into proper names on the one hand, and predicates, or sentential forms, of different sorts on the other. The second kind of general rule of the language fixes the meanings of these various simple elements (of sentences). Wittgenstein speaks of general rules of this kind as establishing the content of expressions via arbitrary correlations and arbitrary conventions [see e.g. NL, 101, 102; cf. NB, 25].25 Now a crucial point here is

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23 Forms here are the linguistic correlates of the [new] copulae of Wittgenstein's January 1913 letter to Russell [see Ricketts, “Pictures”, 70].
25 As Ricketts puts it: “That a name labels a particular individual and that one dyadic form symbolizes a particular dyadic relation over objects are both psychological contingencies in the establishment of a particular symbolism” [Ricketts, “Pictures”, 71].
that, for Wittgenstein, just as names and forms play fundamentally different syntactic roles in atomic sentences, so too the rules of the language that project names onto reality have a fundamentally different character from those that project forms onto reality.

For Wittgenstein (as for Russell) names have meaning because they function as labels for objects, because we attach them to objects (with which we are acquainted): “Naming is like pointing. ... I single out a particular thing by a particular name” ([NL, 94–95]. On Wittgenstein's view, then, names symbolize via a rule that associates them with objects (see NL, 97). Thus the proper names “Matt” and “Julie” symbolize or have meaning in that we use the former name to designate the actual man Matt and the latter name to designate the actual woman Julie.

Wittgenstein holds that the forms of atomic sentences have meaning in that they symbolize relations (or properties) of individuals. He insists, however, that a particular form does not symbolize a particular relation (or property) in the same way that a particular name symbolizes a particular thing. For Wittgenstein, that is to say, the forms of atomic sentences are not labels for relations (or properties); they are not names (see NL, 105). Instead, the meaning-connection between forms and relations (or properties) is such that a given form symbolizes a given relation (or property) via a rule for comparing sentences of that form with the facts. In NL Wittgenstein describes the distinctive way in which forms symbolize relations as follows:

But the form of a proposition symbolizes in the following way: Let us consider symbols of the form “xRy”; to these correspond primarily pairs of objects, of which one has the name “x”, the other the name “y”. The x’s and y's stand in various relations to each other, among others the relation R holds between some, but not between others. I now determine the sense of “xRy” by laying down: when the facts behave in regard to “xRy” so that the meaning of “x” stands in the relation R to the meaning of “y”, then I say that the [facts] are “of like sense” [gleichsinnig] with the proposition “xRy”; otherwise, “of opposite sense” [entgegengesetzt]; I correlate the facts to the symbol “xRy” by thus dividing them into those of like sense and those of opposite sense. To this correlation corresponds the correlation of name and meaning. Both are psychological. Thus I understand the form “xRy” when I know that it discriminates the behavior of x and y according as these stand in the relation R or not. In this way I extract from all possible relations the relation R, as, by a name, I extract its meaning from among all possible things. ([NL, 104; cf. NL, 95])

Consider, again, the binary form “x loves y”. The individuals Matt and Julie stand in some relations to each other but not in others. For example, Matt loves Julie, and Matt is taller than Julie; but Matt is not older than Julie, nor does he envy her. According to Wittgenstein's account, the form “x loves y” symbolizes in that we have established under what circumstance two individuals are so related as to agree with the form. Ricketts points out that “[w]e can think of this determination in terms of a general rule for comparing sentences of that form with the facts”.26 Recall that for Wittgenstein the general possibility of comparing sentences with facts is based on the idea that sentences are themselves facts. A sentence of the form “x loves y” is a fact in which a name in the “x”-position “love”-leftstands a

26 Ricketts, “Pictures”, 71.
name in the “y”-position. Such a sentence agrees with the facts [or is true] just in case the individual
designated by the name in the “x”-position loves the individual designated by the name in the “y”-
position. Otherwise, the sentence disagrees with the facts [or is false]. In this way, then, the sentential
fact that “Matt” stands to the left of “loves” and “Julie” stands to the right of it says that Matt loves
Julie.

Wittgenstein’s treatment of subject-predicate sentences is analogous to his treatment of relational
ones. Consider, for example, the subject-predicate sentence “Socrates is mortal”. According to
Wittgenstein, this sentence consists of the proper name “Socrates” and the unary form “x is mortal”.
For him these two expressions are its basic indefinably simple elements. Just as pairs of individuals
may or may not stand in various relations to each other, so single individuals may or may not have
various properties. Thus one individual may be mortal or not, may be tall or not, may be angry or
not. On Wittgenstein’s account, the unary form “x is mortal” symbolizes in that it is fixed when an
individual is so propertied as to agree with the form. Here again we can think of this determination in
terms of a general rule for comparing sentences of the form in question with the facts. For Wittgenstein
a sentence itself is a fact, and a sentence of the form “x is mortal” is a fact in which a name in the
“x”-position stands to the left of the word “mortality”. Such a sentence agrees with the facts just
in case the individual designated by the name in the “x”-position is mortal. Otherwise, the sentence
disagrees with the facts. That is: that “Socrates” stands to the left of “mortality” says that Socrates is
mortal (see MN, 110–11).

The Russellian view of language operates with a single idea of linguistic meaning, based on the
single idea of acquaintance, which it uses to cover both proper names and [unary and relational]
predicates: expressions of both kinds are treated simply as labels for ontological atoms with which we
are acquainted. For Russell, then, there is no fundamental difference between the way that unary and
relational predicates symbolize universals on the one hand, and the way that proper names symbolize
particulars on the other. For all such expressions meaning is “the mere relation of a name to the thing
named” (KAKD, 158). Thus Russell says: “The relation of ‘Scott’ to Scott is that ‘Scott’ means Scott,

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27 That is, a sentence of the form “x is mortal” is a sentential fact in which a proper name has the syntactic
property of standing to the left of “mortality”.

28 For Russell, our knowledge of, and contact with, the objects that we speak or think about has a uniform
character. Whether the object of knowledge is abstract or concrete, our contact with it is direct and unmediated
by any mental representation. Given this feature of his view, Russell is bound to see the relation between our
words and the entities that they are about (in virtue of which they are about those entities) as having a uniform
character too. If my knowledge of an abstract universal is, in its chief features, exactly the same as my knowledge
of a concrete object to which it applies, then there is no reason to think that the relation of meaning that holds
between the word that I use to talk about the universal and the universal itself should be fundamentally different
from the relation of meaning that holds between the word that I use to refer to the concrete object and the
concrete object itself.
just as the relation of ‘author’ to the concept which is so called is that ‘author’ means this concept” \[\textit{KAKD}, 158\]. And, again, he remarks:

in any sense in which the meaning of a word is a constituent of a proposition in whose verbal expression the word occurs, “Scott” means the actual man Scott, in the same sense [so far as concerns our present discussion] in which “author” means a certain universal. \[\textit{KAKD}, 160\]

In Russell’s view, then, the whole semantic story about any meaningful proper name or grammatical predicate is that it contributes its referent to the judgments expressed by the sentences in which it occurs.

In \textit{NL} Wittgenstein proposes an alternative to the Russellian view of the way that relational predicates manage to symbolize relations. According to that alternative view, forms of sentences—the Wittgensteinian analogues of relational predicates—symbolize \textit{via} a general rule that sets forth when sentences of that form agree and disagree with the facts. Ricketts observes that “\[t\]he general rule depends on a structural similarity between sentences and the facts that verify them if they are true”.\[29\]

In the case of sentences of the form “\(x\) loves \(y\)”, the rule in question depends on these sentences’ being themselves facts in which a name bears a binary relation to another name. The relational sentence “\(\text{Matt loves Julie}\)” is a fact in which the proper name “\(\text{Matt}\)” bears the syntactic relation of “\(\text{love}\)”-leftstanding to the proper name “\(\text{Julie}\)”.

In the case of sentences of the form “\(x\) is mortal”, on the other hand, the rule depends on these sentences’ being themselves facts in which a name has a property. The subject-predicate sentence “\(\text{Socrates is mortal}\)” is a fact in which the proper name “\(\text{Socrates}\)” has the syntactic property of standing to the left of “\(\text{mortality}\)”.

A crucial consequence of Wittgenstein’s conception of atomic sentences as facts is that the forms of these sentences are not proper names; they do not simply stand for the properties and relations which they happen to symbolize. Thus in \textit{NL} Wittgenstein says:

Symbols are not what they seem to be. In “\(a\text{R}b\)”, “\(R\)” looks like a substantive, but is not one. What symbolizes in “\(a\text{R}b\)” is that \(R\) occurs between \(a\) and \(b\). Hence “\(R\)” is not the indefinable in “\(a\text{R}b\)”. Similarly in “\(\phi x\)”, “\(\phi\)” looks like a substantive but is not one. \[\textit{NL}, 98\]

In \textit{MN} he puts the point like this:

in “\(a\text{R}b\)” “\(R\)” is not a symbol, but that “\(R\)” is between one name and another symbolizes. ... The true analysis is: “\(R\)” is no proper name, and, that “\(R\)” stands between “\(a\)” and “\(b\)” expresses a relation. \[\textit{MN}, 109–10\]

If we want to say that Matt loves Julie, then we need to be able to refer to Matt and to Julie; we need to use expressions that pick them out. If we want to say that Matt \textit{loves} Julie, expressing that that relation holds is a very different matter from naming anything. In fixing how our symbolism works, we need to “extract from” all the relations that we might mean the relation \textit{loves}, “as, by a name,
[we] extract” the object that it means from all other things [NL, 104]. For Wittgenstein there is a vital contrast between the extracting of an object from objects and the extracting of a relation from relations. According to his view, we use the expression “Matt” to extract the actual man Matt, and the expression “Julie” to extract the actual woman Julie, from all the objects that we might mean. Thus, in the context of the sentence “Matt loves Julie”, the two words “Matt” and “Julie” function as proper names: they directly designate Matt and Julie, respectively. But the word “loves”, as it occurs in the sentence “Matt loves Julie”, does not have the function of a proper name, for it does not simply stand for the relation of loving. For Wittgenstein, indeed, the word “loves” is not even an independently meaningful part of the sentence “Matt loves Julie”; it does not symbolize or mean anything on its own account. What symbolizes in this sentence is rather the word “love”’s standing between the names “Matt” and “Julie”. In general, then, one name’s “love”-leftstanding another name is what represents that one thing loves another thing. According to Wittgenstein’s view, then, we use the holding of a binary relation between names to symbolize the holding of a binary relation between the named objects. (And similarly we use a unary property’s holding of a name to symbolize a unary property’s holding of the named object.) So the crucial idea here is that the fact that names are related thus and so in a sentence is what represents that the objects designated by those names are related thus and so in reality. The form of the sentence is the way that the names are related to each other in the sentence. The form is therefore not a proper name.

In NL Wittgenstein seeks to account for the sense of atomic sentences in terms of the different ways in which names and forms symbolize, in terms of rules of designation for names and rules of agreement for forms. On his approach, as Ricketts describes it, “[t]he sense of an atomic sentence is fixed by rules that specify the object each name labels and by a general rule that specifies what sentences of that form say, that is, when sentences of that form agree with the facts”. Ricketts continues: “This view thus makes the possession of true–false poles intrinsic to atomic sentences in the context of a view of truth as agreement with the facts”.

Wittgenstein’s conception of atomic sentences as facts makes their possession of sense—of true–false poles—intrinsic to them, for it makes their agreement or disagreement with reality intrinsic to them. For Wittgenstein, as we have emphasized, sentences can agree or disagree with facts, because they are themselves facts. Wittgenstein embraces a relation-relata conception of the syntactic structure of atomic sentences. From the point of view of logical syntax, an atomic sentence counts as a [sentential]

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30 See Ricketts, “Pictures”, 74.
31 Ricketts, “Pictures”, 73.
32 Ricketts, “Pictures”, 73.
fact, because it consists of certain simple signs standing in a certain syntactic relation to one another. The syntactically simple signs in atomic sentences are *names*. The syntactic relation that binds the names in a given atomic sentence together to constitute that atomic sentence as a fact is its *form*. The names in atomic sentences are projected onto reality via a rule of designation that associates them with particular objects. The forms of atomic sentences are projected onto reality via a general rule that sets forth when sentences of that form agree and disagree with the facts. A sentence, or sentential fact, thus consists of certain meaningful names standing in a certain meaningful syntactic relation to one another. The names in a sentence designate the individuals which the sentence is about. The way that these names are related to each other to form the fact which is the sentence is formally analogous, or isomorphic, to the way that the named individuals are related to each other to form the fact whose obtaining would verify the sentence. So by means of rules of designation that project names onto reality and general rules of agreement that project forms onto reality, sentential facts are *coordinated* with facts in the world so that a sentence either agrees or disagrees with the facts. This, then, is the sentence’s fundamental representational relationship to reality which Wittgenstein calls *sense* [see e.g. NL, 95].

In MN he comments on the nature of this representational relationship as follows:

The *Bedeutung* of a proposition is the fact that corresponds to it, e.g., if our proposition be “aRb”, if it’s true, the corresponding fact would be the fact aRb, if false, the fact ~ aRb. But both “the fact aRb” and “the fact ~ aRb” are incomplete symbols, which must be analyzed.

That a proposition has a relation (in wide sense) to Reality, other than that of *Bedeutung*, is shown by the fact that you can understand it when you don’t know the *Bedeutung*, i.e. don’t know whether it is true or false. Let us express this by saying “It has *sense*” ([Sinn]).

In analyzing *Bedeutung*, you come upon *Sinn* as follows:

We want to explain the relation of propositions to reality.

The relation is as follows: Its *simples* have meaning = are names of simples; and its relations have a quite different relation to relations; and these two facts already establish a sort of correspondence between a proposition which contains these and only these, and reality: i.e. if all the simples of a proposition are known, we already know that we can describe reality by saying that it *behaves* in a certain way to the whole proposition. (This amounts to saying that we can *compare* reality with the proposition. In the case of two lines we can *compare* them in respect of their length without any convention: the comparison is automatic. But in our case the possibility of comparison depends upon the conventions by which we have given meanings to our simples [names and relations].)

It only remains to fix the method of comparison by saying what about our simples is to *say* what about reality. E.g., suppose we take two lines of unequal length; and say that the fact that the shorter is of the length it is to mean that the longer is of the length it is. We should then have established a convention as to the meaning of the shorter, of the sort we are now to give.

From this it results that “true” and “false” are not accidental properties of a proposition, such that, when it has meaning, we can say it is also true or false: on the contrary, to have meaning *means* to be true or false: the being true or false actually constitutes the relation of the proposition to reality, which we mean by saying that it has meaning ([Sinn]).

There seems at first sight to be a certain ambiguity in what is meant by saying that a proposition is “true”, owing to the fact that it seems as if, in the case of different propositions, the way in which they correspond to the facts to which they correspond is quite different. But what is really common to all cases is that they must have the general *form* of a proposition. In giving the general form of a proposition you are explaining what kind of ways of putting together the symbols of things and relations will correspond to [be analogous to] the things having those relations in reality. In doing thus you are saying what is meant by saying that a proposition is true; and you must
do it once for all. To say “This proposition has sense” means “This proposition is true’ means …”. (“p” is true = “p”. p. Def.: only instead of “p” we must here introduce the general form of a proposition.) [MN, 112–13]

A sentence’s status as a fact is the feature that it shares with the reality to which it corresponds that enables us to compare it with that reality. A sentence has a syntactic complexity, or structure, that mirrors the ontological complexity, or structure, of its would-be corresponding fact: both the sentence and the fact consist of certain objects standing in a certain relation to one another. For Wittgenstein a sentence—a sentential sign in its projective relation to the world—shows its sense [see Tractatus, 3.12, 4.022]. That is: the sentence “shows how things stand if it is true. And it says that they do so stand” [Tractatus, 4.022]. In the Tractatus, Wittgenstein tells us that the general form shared by the sentences of any language, by sentences expressing any possible sense, is: “This is how things stand” (Tractatus, 4.5). That names of things are related in a determinate way in a sentence is what represents how things are related in reality [see Tractatus, 2.14]. That sentences are facts is thus what enables us to compare them with reality: “The general concept of the proposition carries with it a quite general concept of the coordination of proposition and situation” [NB, 7].

We have been discussing relevant features of the view of sentences and representation that Wittgenstein puts forward in NL [and elsewhere]. There is, however, one very important feature of this view which we have not to this point considered directly. In the rejection of the view of sentences as collections of names for the view of sentences as facts, Wittgenstein relies upon Frege’s celebrated context principle: for him [as for Frege] words are meaningful only in the context of a sentence. Thus in MN Wittgenstein says, for example:

The reason why, e.g., it seems as if “Plato Socrates” might have a meaning, while “Abracadabra Socrates” will never be suspected to have one, is because we know that “Plato” has one, and do not observe that in order that the whole phrase should have one, what is necessary is not that “Plato” should have one, but that the fact that “Plato” is to the left of a name should.

The reason why “The property of not being green is not green” is nonsense, is because we have only given meaning to the fact that “green” stands to the right of a name; and “the property of not being green” is obviously not that. [MN, 116]

Wittgenstein is responding here to Russell’s atomistic view of language. According to that view, we confer independent meanings on individual symbols via isolated acts of acquaintance: we simply fasten the symbols to objects with which we are acquainted. We then bring these symbols together to form sentences, i.e. we assemble them into sentences. According to Russell’s view, then, the three separate words “Socrates”, “mortality”, and “is” are independently meaningful symbols that stand for independently existing objects with which we are acquainted. The word “Socrates” has an

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34 Frege states the context principle in Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik as follows: “it is only in the context of a Satzes that words have any meaning” [Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik, 73; cf. Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik, x, 71, 116].
independent meaning because we use it to label the actual man Socrates, an individual with whom we are acquainted. The word “mortality” has a meaning in isolation due to the fact that we use it to label the property of mortality, a first-level monadic universal with which we are acquainted. And, finally, the word “is” has a meaning taken by itself in that we use it to label the logical form of elementary subject-predicate complexes, an abstract logical fact with which we are acquainted. So given that “Socrates” means what it does in isolation, that “mortality” means what it does in isolation, and that “is” means what it does in isolation, it would seem that when we bring these three independently meaningful words together to form the phrase “mortality is Socrates”, we produce a (putative) sentence that represents the individual Socrates and the universal mortality as combined into an elementary subject-predicate fact in which Socrates occupies the predicate position (or plays the predicate role) and mortality occupies the subject position (or plays the subject role). For precisely the same reasons, when we bring the words “Socrates”, “mortality”, and “is” together to form the phrase “Socrates is mortal”, we produce a sentence that represents Socrates and mortality as combined into an elementary subject-predicate fact in which Socrates occupies the subject position and mortality occupies the predicate position. According to Russell’s metaphysics, the object designated by the word “Socrates”, i.e. the individual Socrates, is the kind of thing that can occupy the subject position in an elementary subject-predicate fact but is not the kind of thing that can occupy the predicate position in such a fact (or indeed in any other kind of fact). The object (first-level monadic universal) designated by the word “mortality”, on the other hand, is the kind of entity that can occupy the predicate position in an elementary subject-predicate fact but is not the kind of entity that can occupy the subject position in such a fact (although it can occupy the subject position in certain non-elementary facts). So the phrase “mortality is Socrates” represents the objects Socrates and mortality as combined in a way that they simply cannot be combined in reality, while the phrase “Socrates is mortal” represents the same two objects as combined in a way that they can be combined in reality. Hence the phrase “mortality is Socrates” is nonsensical or meaningless, while the phrase “Socrates is mortal” makes sense or has meaning. So, on Russell’s atomistic view of language, sentential nonsense (i.e. nonsense that is only apparently sentential) arises from combining expressions with certain logical powers that do not fit each other, while sentential sense (i.e. sense that is genuinely sentential) arises from combining expressions with certain logical powers that do fit each other.35

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35 Russell’s view of the notion of nonsense thus has a somewhat paradoxical result. In claiming that a (putative) sentence is nonsensical if it represents a certain group of objects as combined in a way that they simply cannot be combined in reality, the view appears to treat phrases (putative sentences) which are in fact nonsensical as if they were actually saying something; it is just that what they happen to say is something nonsensical—something which Russell regards as an impossibility and which he denies is really sayable at all.
Wittgenstein, however, rejects the Russellian idea that we form sentences with sense by bringing together independently meaningful words with logical powers of the appropriate kinds. Instead, to reiterate, he embraces the context principle: “Only propositions have sense; only in the nexus of a proposition does a name have meaning” (*Tractatus*, 3.3). Wittgenstein thus rejects the Russellian notion that we can simply grasp the identity of an object detached from the use of an expression for the object in sentences. For he holds, to the contrary, that our grasp of an object's identity involves our grasping the logical features of any expression for it. For Wittgenstein, then, the meaning of an expression is tied to the role that the expression plays in sentences (see *Tractatus*, 3.314).

Wittgenstein claims that for a given word to have a meaning in a given linguistic setting is for that word to be at that moment *playing* (in that context) a role in a sentence with sense. For a word to play a role in a sentence with sense is for the word to characterize the sense of that sentence (see *Tractatus*, 3.31). Thus the word “Socrates”, for example, counts as a meaningful proper name that designates the individual Socrates when, but only when, it occurs in a meaningful sentence that is rendered true or false by the subsistence of a fact that involves Socrates, the man himself. The sentence “Socrates is mortal” *shows* that the individual Socrates occurs in its sense (see *Tractatus*, 4.1211). That is: that the proper name “Socrates” occurs in this meaningful sentence indicates that the circumstance under which the sentence would be true involves the actual man Socrates.

A crucial point, however, is that, for Wittgenstein, the occurrence of the word “Socrates” in a given sentence does not, in isolation from, or independently of, the logical functions of the various other words occurring in that sentence, indicate that the corresponding fact involves the actual man Socrates. On the contrary: Wittgenstein holds that the logical function (i.e. the meaning together with the syntactical role) of any expression in a given sentence depends upon the logical functions of the other expressions in that particular sentence (see *MN*, 111). Recall that in *NL* Wittgenstein seeks to account for the sense of atomic sentences in terms of rules of designation for names and rules of agreement for forms. These rules presuppose each other in the following fashion. Rules of agreement for forms presuppose the possibility of correlating names with objects: that a given name stands to the left of “mortality” says that the bearer of that name is mortal. Thus Wittgenstein says:

What symbolizes in $\phi \xi$ is that $\phi$ stands to the left of a proper name. ... What is common to all propositions in which the name of a property (to speak loosely) occurs is that this name stands to the left of a *name-form*. (*MN*, 116)

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36 Here I follow Ricketts, “Pictures”, 74-75.
Rules of designation for names, on the other hand, presuppose the possibility of the erection of rules of agreement for forms: it is only in the context of a meaningful sentence, i.e. a sentence which agrees with reality or disagrees with it, that a name manages to designate an object at all.

So in saying that the atomic sentence “Socrates is mortal” contains the proper name “Socrates”, understood here as an expression that refers in this context to the actual man Socrates, we are, in Wittgenstein’s view, implicitly relying on the idea that the sentence contains some unary form [or predicate] too:

Every proposition which says something indefinable about a thing is a subject-predicate proposition; every proposition which says something indefinable about two things expresses a dual relation between these things, and so on. Thus every proposition which contains only one name and one indefinable form is a subject-predicate proposition, and so on. An indefinable simple symbol can only be a name, and therefore we can know, by the symbol of an atomic proposition, whether it is a subject-predicate proposition. [NL, 107; cf. NL, 96]

The underlying issue here is that of the interdependence of the expressions in a sentence. This issue has both syntactic and semantic dimensions.

According to Wittgenstein’s view of language, we cannot identify the sign “Socrates” as having the logical function of a proper name in the sentence “Socrates is mortal” without at the same time identifying the sign “x is mortal” as having the logical function of a unary form in that sentence, in part because we cannot see the sentence in question as expressing a fact that involves [or is about] the actual man Socrates, unless we can see the sign “x is mortal” as symbolizing a property that can be significantly [i.e. truly or falsely] applied to Socrates. To put essentially the same point a different way: we cannot maintain that, on account of its containing the name “Socrates” as a constituent, the entire sentence “Socrates is mortal” expresses a fact about the actual man Socrates, unless we can take a name’s having the syntactic property of standing to the left of “mortality” to represent a first-level property’s holding of the named object. For it is only in the context of a sentence with sense that a word has any meaning. So in order to see the word “Socrates” as having the function of a proper name in the sentence “Socrates is mortal”, i.e. as doing the work there of standing for Socrates, we need to see the sentential fact in which this sentence consists, namely “Socrates”’s standing to the left of “mortality”, as saying something that can be said with sense about Socrates, that is, something that is either true or false of him. Thus we cannot identify the parts of a sentence independently of each other as expressions with certain logical powers. And we cannot see an atomic sentence as consisting of certain expressions with certain logical powers without fixing the way that the sentence is to be compared with reality.

Since we cannot identify the parts of a sentence independently of each other as expressions with certain logical powers, it follows that, for Wittgenstein, a word does not have a category assigned to it
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which it brings with it into whatever context. This is not to say that the rules of the language do not assign words to categories; of course they do. However, as Diamond points out, “the identification of a word in a particular sentence as playing a certain role there, as meaning a certain kind of thing, cannot be read directly of the rules”. Rather, the general rules that establish the logical categories of the indefinables of the language apply, as it were, only conditionally to any individual (putative) sentence that contains (or that appears to contain) a certain selection of those indefinables. For these rules will apply to a particular sentence only if the whole sentence makes sense. It is not that the sentence makes sense independently of the rules. On the contrary: the application of the rules to the sentence is what fixes its sense. Thus Wittgenstein says: “The ways by which we introduce our indefinables must permit us to construct all propositions that have sense from these indefinables alone” (NL, 99).

So a sentence gets its meaning through the meanings fixed for its parts by the general rules of the language. That being said, from Wittgenstein’s point of view, taking the rules which fix the meaning of expressions in the language to apply to the particular sentence is not separable from making sense of the whole sentence. On Wittgenstein’s account, then, a particular rule of the language that projects a certain sub-sentential expression onto reality applies only conditionally to some (putative) sentence which contains that expression, for the rule in question applies to the sentence only if the language also contains relevant rules of projection for the other sub-sentential expressions occurring in that sentence. Thus, to take an example, the particular rule of designation that associates the word “Socrates” with the individual Socrates can be taken to apply to the occurrence of “Socrates” in the sentence “Socrates is mortal” only if some rule of the language assigns a meaning of the appropriate kind to the word “mortality”, that is, only if the general rule (of agreement) that specifies what sentences of the form “x is mortal” say (i.e. that specifies when sentences of that form agree with the facts) takes such sentences to say something that it makes sense to say about a person. And likewise the rule of agreement for sentences of the form “x is mortal” can be taken to apply to the occurrence of “mortality” in the sentence “Socrates is mortal” only if some rule of the language associates “Socrates” with an entity of the right kind, that is, an entity of which it makes sense to say that it is mortal.

On the basis of these ideas, then, Wittgenstein denies that the two phrases “Socrates is mortal” and “mortality is Socrates” consist of the same (three) meaningful words. The crucial point here is that, on his view of nonsense, as Diamond observes, “if a sentence makes no sense, no part of it can be said to mean what it does in some other sentence which does make sense—any more than a word can be said

to mean something in isolation”. So given that the phrase “mortality is Socrates” is nonsensical, it follows immediately that neither “Socrates” nor “mortality” means what it does when it is in use in the meaningful sentence “Socrates is mortal”. For Wittgenstein, then, the phrase “mortality is Socrates” does not consist of the same group of meaningful words as the phrase “Socrates is mortal”. According to his view these two phrases contain the same signs but not the same symbols.

The sign–symbol distinction is elaborated by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*. Here Wittgenstein claims that a symbol (or an expression) is “the mark of a form and a content” (*Tractatus*, 3.31), and that a sign is “what can be perceived of a symbol” (*Tractatus*, 3.32). The sign “Socrates” is thus a certain set of marks (i.e. a certain configuration of letters). But the symbol “Socrates” is that particular set of marks, only now assigned to a certain logico-syntactical category and given a certain content or meaning.

The form and content of an expression are fixed by the rules of the language. In ordinary or colloquial English, these rules treat the symbol “Socrates” as a proper name, for they take “Socrates” to be an expression that, when it occurs in the context of a meaningful sentence, that is, a sentence which makes sense, does the work there of standing for a particular person. A proper name is thus a kind of symbol, an expression to which the rules of the language assign a certain kind of meaning, that is, a certain possibility of contributing in a fixed way to any sentence in which it occurs.

Wittgenstein maintains that in order to assign the individual Socrates to the sign “Socrates” as its meaning we have to fix the contribution that the symbol “Socrates” makes to the meaningful sentences which contain it: “In order to recognize a symbol by its sign we must observe how it is used with a sense” (*Tractatus*, 3.326). Thus to identify an occurrence of the sign “Socrates” in a given sentence as an occurrence of the proper name [i.e. symbol] “Socrates” in that sentence, we have to make sense of the whole sentence.

A crucial point here is that, in Wittgenstein’s view, it is not possible to give a sign a wrong sort of meaning or a wrong sort of sense [see *Tractatus*, 5.4732]. This point is clear from an exchange between Wittgenstein and Russell. In a letter to Wittgenstein, dated 13 August 1919, Russell comments on remark 3.331 of the *Tractatus*, saying:

The theory of types, in my view, is a theory of correct symbolism: [a] a simple symbol must not be used to express anything complex; [b] more generally, a symbol must have the same structure as its meaning. *(CL, 122)*

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41 I think, however, that the distinction is implicit in NL.
In his reply to Russell, dated 19 August 1919, Wittgenstein admonishes Russell for this view: “That’s exactly what one can’t say. You cannot prescribe to a symbol what it *may* be used to express. All that a symbol *can* express, it *may* express. This is a short answer but it is true!” ([CL, 125]).

Accordingly it is not intrinsic to the sign “Socrates” that it is used to symbolize the individual Socrates, for we can use this sign in various other ways; i.e. we can confer on it various other meanings. What changes in such cases is thus not the sign “Socrates” but rather the symbol “Socrates”, for what changes is the meaning of the sign, or perhaps even its meaning and its mode of signification: “In the proposition, ‘Green is green’—where the first word is the proper name of a person and the last an adjective—these words do not merely have different meanings: they are different symbols” ([Tractatus, 3.323; cf. Tractatus, 3.321]).

In *NB* as in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein says that there is nothing wrong with any possible combination of signs into a sentence. He says that *any* possible sentence is, as far as its construction goes, legitimately put together, and that, if it has no sense, this can only be because we have failed to give a meaning to some of its constituents, even if we think that we have done so [see NB, 2; cf. *Tractatus*, 5.4733]. On this basis, he concludes:

Thus the reason why “Socrates is identical” says nothing is that we have not given *any adjectival* meaning to the word “identical”. For when it appears as a sign for identity, it symbolizes in an entirely different *way*—the signifying relation is a different one—therefore the symbols also are entirely different in the two cases: the two symbols have only the sign in common, and that is an accident. ([Tractatus, 5.4733])

When they occur in the phrase “mortality is Socrates”, the two words “Socrates” and “mortality” do not have the same function as they have when they occur in the sentence “Socrates is mortal”. The proper name “Socrates” refers to the actual man Socrates only in the context of a sentence with sense, that is, only when it appears as argument to a form which can be significantly [i.e. truly or falsely] applied to Socrates. In the phrase “mortality is Socrates”, however, the word “Socrates” is syntactically a form. So it does not function as it does in the sentence “Socrates is mortal”. The word “Socrates” as it occurs in the sentence “Socrates is mortal” is, syntactically, a completely different symbol from what we have in the phrase “mortality is Socrates”. In Wittgenstein’s view, the phrase “mortality is Socrates” is legitimately put together, in the sense in which the sentence “Socrates is mortal” is, as far as its structure goes, legitimately put together. The problem with the phrase “mortality is Socrates”—the reason why this phrase says nothing or is nonsensical—is that we have given no adjectival meaning to the sign “Socrates” [and no substantival meaning to the sign “mortality”]. So the phrase “mortality is Socrates” is nonsensical, not because we have illegitimately combined in it
independently meaningful expressions with certain logical powers that simply do not fit together. Rather, the phrase is nonsensical because it contains signs to which in their use in the phrase no meaning has been given [see Tractatus, 5.473].

Now given this view of what ails the phrase “mortality is Socrates”, there is nothing that prevents us from curing “mortality is Socrates” of nonsensicality, for there is nothing that prevents us from giving an adjectival meaning to the word “Socrates” and a substantival meaning to the word “mortality”. Clearly we can introduce a general rule that specifies what a sentence of the form “x is Socrates” says, that is, a rule that specifies when a sentence of that form agrees with the facts. And we can, in like manner, introduce a rule of designation that specifies the object that “mortality” labels, that is, a rule that arbitrarily associates “mortality” with some individual. Thus, for example, “mortality” might have been used instead of “Matt” as a name for Matt, and a name’s standing to the left of “Socrates” might have been used to say that the named object is human. Under this interpretation of our symbolism, then, the fact or sequence of words “mortality is Socrates” would say that Matt is human. Clearly, then, we can, by making certain determinations of meaning that we had originally failed to make, transform “mortality is Socrates” from a nonsensical phrase into a meaningful sentence, i.e. a sentence with sense.

But then the sentences “Socrates is mortal” and “mortality is Socrates” do not consist of the same symbols in different arrangements. They consist, rather, of different symbols in the same arrangement. In this case, that is to say, the word “Socrates”, like the word “mortality”, symbolizes differently in the two sentences. Wittgenstein maintains, however, that we can interchange two expressions in a sentence only when those expressions symbolize in the same way:

What symbolizes in a symbol, is that which is common to all the symbols which could in accordance with the rules of logic = syntactical rules for manipulation of symbols, be substituted for it. [MN, 117; cf. Tractatus, 3.344]

Thus from “Socrates is mortal” we can obtain “Plato is mortal” because “Socrates” and “Plato” are both proper names, that is, syntactically simple symbols that in the context of a meaningful sentence directly designate individuals. Likewise we can obtain “Socrates is human” from “Socrates is mortal” because the unary forms “x is human” and “x is mortal” symbolize in the same way. A sentence of the form “x is human” is a fact in which a name in the “x”-position stands to the left of “humanity”. Such a sentence says that the named object is human. A sentence of the form “x is mortal” is similarly a fact in which a name in the “x”-position stands to the left of “mortality”. Such a sentence says that the named object is mortal. Thus we cannot put together the meaningful proper name and the meaningful

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42 That is, it is not that in this phrase we have attempted to predicate (in the grammatical sense of the term) the proper name “Socrates” of the unary form “mortality”.
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7.2.4 Representation, the Subordinate Relation, and the Unity of the Content Judged

After his break with British idealism in 1899, Russell attempts to develop a comprehensive theory of propositions to serve as a metaphysical foundation for logic and logicism. Propositions here are objective, non-mental and nonlinguistic, abstract entities which are capable of truth or falsehood, and quite literally made up of the very things which they are about. For Russell, in the early years following his rejection of idealism, the idea that our judgments and beliefs express attitudes towards propositions, in the sense just described, represents a brute, basic fact, a fundamental assumption, indeed a starting point for philosophy itself. As time passes, however, Russell comes to hold that this idea is ultimately quite misleading, for he becomes convinced that there are no such things as propositions in the sense in which he earlier advocated them. In spite of its misleading character, however, Russell continues to be influenced by the idea in question, for he continues to think that our acts of judgment and of understanding appear to express psychological attitudes towards propositions (see e.g. TK, 107; see also Chapter 4, Section 4.3, pp. 83–93, above, for further discussion of this issue). A central aim of the multiple relation theory of judgment is to explain this appearance without assuming the existence of propositions as independent entities. Rather than taking judgment to be a two-place relation that holds between a judging mind and a single complete proposition, the 1913 version of Russell’s multiple relation theory takes judgment to be a many-place relation that holds among the mind and the putative proposition’s separate constituents and logical form. When a person forms a belief or judgment, his mind unites these various entities in thought so that his judgment represents the constituents as united into an independent proposition of the relevant form. In Russell’s post-1910 philosophy, then, propositions are no longer seen as genuine entities; instead they are taken to be logical constructions. The constituents and logical forms of propositions, on the other hand, continue to be seen as real and objective. For Russell these entities are out there; they exist independently of us and of one another. We stand in a direct epistemic relation to them: we are acquainted with them.
In *NL* Wittgenstein explicitly criticizes Russell’s 1913 multiple relation theory of judgment. He charges that, by breaking up the putative proposition judged into its separate pieces and logical form, the 1913 theory treats a judgment as a mere list of its objects, and thus fails to explain how a judgment manages to represent its would-be corresponding fact:

When we say A judges that etc., then we have to mention a whole proposition which A judges. It will not do either to mention only its constituents, or its constituents and form, but not in the proper order. This shows that a proposition itself must occur in the statement that it is judged; however, for instance, “not-p” may be explained, the question what is negated must have a meaning.

To understand a proposition p it is not enough to know that p implies “p’ is true”, but we must also know that ~ p implies “p is false”. This shows the bi-polarity of the proposition. (*NL*, 94)

According to Wittgenstein, then, the multiple relation theory treats a judgment as a *collection* of objects, so it does not satisfactorily explain the nature of the (merely apparent) unity among the objects of a judgment. In this way, he argues, the multiple relation theory fails to account for the essentially propositional nature of our beliefs and judgments.

On Wittgenstein’s account, then, the multiple relation theory’s analysis of a given judgment gives no meaning to the question of what is negated (or what is denied; see *NL*, 101) not simply because it provides no propositional unity to which the notion of negation can be applied. Rather the theory gives no meaning to this question because it does not explain how a judgment manages to make any assertion at all. Since the theory can give no account of how a judgment manages to assert that such and so is the case, it can give no account of how a judgment manages to deny that such and so is the case; that is, the theory can give no account of how a judgment manages to assert that such and so is not the case.

Wittgenstein’s reasons for singling out the issue of negation in connection with his criticisms of the multiple relation analysis in *NL* have to do with his conception of atomic sentences as essentially bipolar. For this conception makes the sense of an atomic sentence dependent upon the sense of its negation, and thus makes our grasp of the sense of such a sentence dependent upon our grasp of the sense of that sentence’s negation. Thus Wittgenstein holds that to grasp the sense of a sentence is to know both what must be the case if the sentence is true and what must be the case if it is false (see *NL*, 94–95, 98–99, 101–6; cf. *MN*, 112–13). The circumstance under which an atomic sentence would be *false* just is the circumstance under which its negation would be *true*. So to judge that an atomic sentence is true just is to judge that its negation is false.

In *NL* Wittgenstein describes the manner in which the proposition (i.e. the sentence with sense) judged actually figures in the judgment in the following terms:

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43 The notion of negation could simply be included among the objects of the given judgment, and then taken to be combined by the judging mind with these objects to form a negative judgment.
In “a judges p” p cannot be replaced by a proper name. This appears if we substitute “a judges that p is true and not p is false”. The proposition “a judges p” consists of the proper name a, the proposition p with its 2 poles, and a being related to both of these poles in a certain way. This is obviously not a relation in the ordinary sense. [NL, 95]

And, again, he says:

When we say “A believes p”, this sounds, it is true, as if here we could substitute a proper name for “p”; but we can see that here a sense, not a meaning, is concerned, if we say “A believes that ‘p’ is true”; and in order to make the direction of p even more explicit, we might say “A believes that ‘p’ is true and ‘not-p’ is false”. Here the bipolarity of p is expressed, and it seems that we shall only be able to express the proposition “A believes p” correctly by the ab-notation, say by making “A” have a relation to the poles “a” and “b” of a-p-b. The epistemological questions concerning the nature of judgment and belief cannot be solved without a correct apprehension of the form of the proposition. [NL, 106]

So Wittgenstein argues that to make a judgment one must grasp both the circumstance under which the corresponding sentence would be true and the circumstance under which it would be false [see also CL, 47]. The sentence must therefore show what situation obtains if it is true and what situation obtains if it is false [see NB, 55–56]. Wittgenstein thus singles out negation in criticizing the multiple relation theory of judgment because he takes a sentence’s possession of sense, i.e. its representing a possible situation, to consist in its possession of true–false poles. Seen from this perspective, then, the multiple relation theory’s failure to explain how a judgment manages to assert that a certain situation obtains just is a failure to explain how a judgment manages to deny that a certain situation obtains, i.e. to assert that a certain situation does not obtain.

As we have said more than once, for Wittgenstein sentences can represent facts in the world either correctly or incorrectly because they are themselves facts. In a sentence the holding of a syntactic relation between (or among) meaningful names symbolizes the holding of the corresponding ordinary relation between (or among) the named objects in the fact that obtains if the sentence is true. Here, then, we have isolated a crucial point: namely, the fact that on Wittgenstein’s approach to sentences (and thus to the notion of judgment) there is an actively relational element in the content that is judged true or false. Among other things, this actively relational element serves to distinguish a sentence that is said to represent some fact from a mere list of labels (or Russellian names) for the various entities that figure in that fact. The sentence “Matt loves Julie” is thus not a list or class consisting of the three separate words “Matt”, “loving”, “Julie”. It is, rather, a unity in which the name “Matt” is joined to the name “Julie” by the relation of “love”-leftstanding: the sentence “Matt loves Julie” is the sentential fact “Matt”’s “love”-leftstanding “Julie”. This sentential fact agrees with reality just in case the individual designated by the name “Matt” loves the individual designated by the name
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“Julie”. Otherwise, the sentence disagrees with reality. So conceived, the sentence “Matt loves Julie” is a model of reality: it represents how things might be related in the world. Thus Wittgenstein says:

Not: “The complex sign ‘aRb’” says that a stands in the relation R to b, but that “a” stands in a certain relation to “b” says that aRb. (NL, 106; cf. Tractatus, 3.1432)

Taken as a complex unity formed of its various simple sub-sentential elements, an atomic sentence has representationally relevant structure. Wittgenstein thus explains how atomic sentences manage to represent facts in part by finding in such sentences the relation-relata structure of the reality that they represent. On this basis, then, he seeks to explain “how propositions hang together internally. How the propositional bond comes into existence” (NB, 5).

Wittgenstein’s account of judgment implies that our judgments can asserts facts in part because in the context of a given judgment the basic elements of that judgment comprise an independent unity that mirrors the unity of the corresponding elements in the would-be corresponding fact. The unity formed of the sub-sentential expressions in a sentence is what represents the unity of the corresponding objects in the fact that obtains if the sentence is true: “The configuration of objects in a situation corresponds to the configuration of simple signs in the propositional sign” (Tractatus, 3.21). In general, then, the way in which an expression occurs in a sentence will mirror the way in which the corresponding object occurs in the fact whose existence is asserted by the sentence [see NB, 26]. So by identifying an actively relational element in the sentences that we use to represent facts, Wittgenstein’s approach to judgment makes the sense of an atomic sentence sufficiently intrinsic to it.

A crucial point here is that Russell’s multiple relation analysis of judgment does not include any such actively relational element in the content of a judgment. Russell does of course take a judgment to involve a relation as one of its objects; he refers to this relation as the judgment’s subordinate relation. But he insists that a judgment’s subordinate relation will always occur non-predicatively in the context of the judgment itself; it will occur as a term of the judging relation, and as a logical subject of the fact which is the judgment. In like manner the expression by which we designate the subordinate relation will always occur as a proper name or verbal noun in the fully analyzed sentence that is said to express the act of judgment. Thus the sentence “Judges (Dolnick, Matt, Loving, Julie, (∃x) (∃y) (∃Φ) Φxy)” is said to express the fact which is my judging that Matt loves Julie. Russell’s


45 Here I have ignored the fact, discussed at length in Chapter 5, that Russell in TK holds that judgments, like the judgment that Matt loves Julie, which appear to be atomic judgments involving non-symmetrical binary relations whose relata are of a single logical type [the loving relation, in this case] are really existentially quantified molecular judgments asserting the existence of atomic complexes with certain features [see Chapter 5, Section 5.2, pp. 113–115, 119, above, and Section 5.3, pp. 126–130, above, for further discussion of this issue].
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multiple relation theory thus treats the content that is judged as an ordered list of objects, and treats the sentence that is said to express that content as an ordered list of names of objects of acquaintance. Clearly, however, a list of terms, say Matt, Julie, loving, does not form a judgment; nor does it appear to help to say, as the 1913 multiple relation theory does, that the judgment is the terms united in accordance with some logical form, say \( (\exists x)(\exists y)(\exists \Phi) \Phi xy \)—for it needs to be explained why this does not just give us the longer list: Matt, Julie, loving, \( (\exists x)(\exists y)(\exists \Phi) \Phi xy \), which is no more a judgment than is the previous list. To the same end, a list composed of names that label objects with which a speaker is acquainted, even if those objects are of the right number and variety of logical types to form a fact, is not itself a sentence. Such a list cannot represent a fact because it lacks the representationally relevant structure required to do so. Thus Wittgenstein says: “Only facts can express sense, a class of names cannot” \( NL, 105 \); cf. \( NL, 96 \).

The chief problem here is that Russell’s multiple relation theory treats the various objects of a judgment as on a level with each other. According to the theory these objects are simply entities with which a judging mind is acquainted, terms of a judging relation, and logical subjects of a judgment-fact. As a consequence of its account of the objects that figure in a judgment, the multiple relation theory cannot effectively distinguish among the various roles which these objects are said to play in a judgment. Most notably, the theory does not successfully capture the distinctive role that is played by the subordinate relation in a judgment. Because the theory treats the subordinate relation in a given judgment as a term of the judging relation which forms that judgment, and as a logical subject of the fact which is the judgment itself, it fails to capture the subordinate relation’s essentially predicative nature. Clearly, however, the subordinate relation’s intrinsic capacity for occurring predicatively in an ordinary fact is crucial to the judgment in which it figures [as the subordinate relation], for its capacity to unite objects into an ordinary fact is an essential element in the particular fact whose existence is asserted by that judgment. In the context of a judgment’s would-be corresponding fact, the subordinate relation actually relates the other objects of the given judgment, which are also the constituents of that judgment’s would-be corresponding fact. But since the multiple relation theory does not successfully capture the distinctive role which the subordinate relation plays in the fact (if any) that corresponds to a judgment, it follows that the theory fails to explain how a judgment manages to represent that putative fact at all. That is, the multiple relation theory fails to explain how a judgment manages to represent its objects as united into the particular complex whole whose obtaining would verify it. Wittgenstein claims that, in failing to explain how a judgment manages to represent its objects as forming an independent unity, the multiple relation theory fails to explain why a judgment constitutes a genuine complex discursive thought, rather than a number of unconnected items with which a mind
is separately acquainted. In this way, he argues, Russell’s multiple relation analysis of judgment fails to account for the essentially propositional nature of our beliefs and judgments.

In Wittgenstein’s view, then, the failure of the multiple relation theory to make a judgment’s possession of sense sufficiently intrinsic to it is a failure to show that it is somehow rooted in the nature of a judgment as a representation of reality that it must make sense. And this failure, broadly construed, constitutes a failure to explain how our beliefs and judgments succeed in representing reality at all. The multiple relation theory’s failure to explain how a judgment represents the reality which it is about stems from its failure to explain how a judgment combines its various constituents so as to represent just its objects as combined into an independent unity. And this failure is really a failure to account for the propositional nature of judgment. Seen from this perspective, then, the multiple relation theory’s failure to make a judgment’s possession of sense sufficiently intrinsic to it is a failure to account for the apparent unity of the content that is judged. The various stipulations that Russell makes to ensure that the objects of a judgment will be of the right types to form a corresponding fact, and in the right places in the judgment to represent that fact, do not show that it is impossible to judge nonsense because these stipulations do not explain why a judgment expresses a complex discursive thought rather than a list of items.

7.2.5 Neutral Facts, Verbs, and the Logical Form of Judgment

To this point our discussion of Wittgenstein’s critique of the 1913 version of Russell’s multiple relation theory of judgment has focused primarily on the way that Wittgenstein sees the issue. In order to establish that the considerations adduced by Wittgenstein against the 1913 theory resonate with Russell himself and ultimately persuade Russell to abandon the theory altogether, we need to consider matters from Russell’s perspective more directly.

According to my reading, Russell understands Wittgenstein’s charge that the multiple relation theory fails to make the sense of a judgment sufficiently intrinsic to it as constituting a critique of the theory’s ability to account for the apparent unity among the objects of a judgment. Russell thus accepts Wittgenstein’s claim that his account of the act of judging as consisting in the holding of a multiple relation among a person’s mind and the various non-propositional entities with which the person’s judgment is concerned treats the judgment itself as a list or collection of its constituents, and thus fails to explain how the judgment succeeds in expressing (or at least in appearing to express) an attitude towards a proposition. Russell thus recognizes that to explain how a judgment differs from a list of objects of acquaintance, his theory of judgment must account for the propositional nature of judgment, and that doing this requires that the theory be able to explain how a judgment comes to
involve a unity formed of its various objects. In other words: Russell comes to see that there needs to be some measure of unity among the objects that figure in a judgment, if the judgment is to be properly accounted a judgment at all.

That this is in fact how Russell understands Wittgenstein’s objection to the multiple relation theory of judgment is suggested by Russell’s discussion of judgment both in “Props”, an undated document whose first page is written on the verso of a rejected folio 197 of the TK manuscript, part of a discussion of Meinong, that seems to be an attempt to take Wittgenstein’s objection into account [see TK, 194–99], and in PLA. The view that Russell sketches in “Props”, in particular, shows his struggling to explain how a judgment comes to involve a unity formed of its objects. Russell begins this undated paper with the following set of remarks:

Three objects \( x, R, y \) form one or other of two complexes \( xRy \) or \( \sim xRy \).
The proposition \( xRy \) points to either indifferently: both contain nothing but \( x \) and \( R \) and \( y \).
When we understand the proposition, what is happening points equally to either of these two complexes—at least it points to whichever there is of the two.
Understanding is simpler than judgment and must be understood first.
It looks as if there actually were always a relation of \( x \) and \( R \) and \( y \) whenever they form either of the two complexes, and as if this were perceived in understanding. If there is such a neutral fact, it ought to be a constituent of the positive or negative fact. It will provide a meaning for possibility. [TK, 195]

On the next folio, he continues:

Judgment involves the neutral fact, not the positive or negative fact.
The neutral fact has a relation to a positive fact, or to a negative fact.
Judgment asserts one of these. It will still be a multiple relation, but its terms will not be the same as in my old theory. The neutral fact replaces the form. [TK, 197]

Russell then concludes the paper by saying: “There will only be a neutral fact when the objects are of the right types. This introduces great difficulties” [TK, 199].

Various points suggest themselves on the basis of Russell’s discussion of the notion of judgment in “Props”. One is that Russell now believes that when a person makes a given judgment not only its objects but also their [alleged] unity should be present to his mind. To explain how this comes about, Russell appeals in “Props” to the idea of a neutral unity formed of the objects themselves: a unity that secures that the given judgment makes sense but does not itself bring about the truth or the falsehood of that judgment. On Russell’s view, then, in the context of a judgment the objects should have enough unity to account for the essentially propositional character of judgment (and of complex discursive thought more generally). Clearly, if a judgment were to involve a unity formed of the various terms that constitute its subject-matter, then this unity would serve to distinguish the judgment from a list of those terms. That is: it would contribute to explaining why my judgment that [say] Matt loves Julie says that the actual man Matt bears the relation of loving to the actual woman Julie, rather than merely enumerates the objects Matt, Julie, and loving. A crucial point, however, is that in the context
of the judgment itself the objects should not have so much unity that in this context they simply form
the judgment’s corresponding fact. For if that were the case then all of our judgments would be true automatically.

In “Props”, then, Russell attempts to satisfy these two apparently conflicting requirements by
introducing the notion of a neutral fact and then taking neutral facts themselves to be objects of our
judgments. According to his new view, the first-level binary relation $R$ and the two individuals $a$ and $b$
unite to form either the positive fact that $a$ has $R$ to $b$, which Russell represents as “$+ \{aRb\}$”, or
the negative fact that $a$ does not have $R$ to $b$, which he represents as “$– \{aRb\}$” (see TK, 195, 197, 199).
In addition to whichever of these two logically possible facts actually obtains, there is the neutral
fact that $aRb$, which Russell represents as “$\pm \{aRb\}$” (see TK, 195, 197, 199). This neutral fact is a
genuine unity that consists of $a$, $R$, and $b$ (see TK, 195, 199). But it is not the unity that constitutes
$a$'s actually bearing $R$ to $b$. Nor is it the unity that constitutes $a$'s not bearing $R$ to $b$. Instead it is the
unity that constitutes the possibility of $a$'s bearing (or not bearing) $R$ to $b$. The neutral fact is thus an
intermediate unity.

A neutral fact is said to be positively directed when the corresponding positive fact actually obtains
but is said to be negatively directed when the corresponding negative fact actually obtains (see TK,
197). The notions of positive and of negative among facts are two comprehensive mutually exclusive
properties or predicates of facts (see TK, 197). Positive and negative facts alike actually contain neutral
facts as constituents (see TK, 195). A positive fact consists of the corresponding neutral fact united
with the property of positiveness. A negative fact is similarly a complex in which the relevant neutral
fact combines with the property of negativeness to form a whole.

A judgment asserts the existence either of a positive fact or of a negative fact. The judgment that
Socrates is mortal, for example, asserts that the positive fact that Socrates is mortal obtains. The
judgment that Plato is not an elephant, on the other hand, asserts that the negative fact of Plato's not
being an elephant obtains. Judgment itself, according to the view expressed in “Props”, is a multiple
relation that relates the judging mind, the relevant neutral fact, and either the property of positiveness,
if the judgment asserts the existence of a positive fact, or the property of negativeness, if the judgment
asserts the existence of a negative fact. The judgment is true, if the positive or negative fact whose
existence it asserts actually obtains. It is false, however, if that asserted fact’s polar opposite actually
obtains (see TK, 197, 199).

On Russell’s new analysis of judgment, the neutral fact replaces the logical form of the corresponding
fact as an object of the judgment (see TK, 197). A crucial difference between the neutral fact and the
logical form is that the former but not the latter contains the objects that make up the judgment’s
corresponding fact. The objects are put together in a *neutral way* in the neutral fact. And since these objects enter into the judgment as already combined in reality (albeit neutrally so), the judgment involves a unity formed of the entities which constitute its subject-matter. When we make a judgment or understand a sentence we are, in Russell’s new view, directly and immediately related to a neutral fact. We thus *perceive* a unity consisting of the objects about which we judge (see *TK*, 195). Here then we appear to have the makings of an account of the notion of judgment that will enable us to explain the essentially propositional character of our beliefs and judgments.

Russell claims that there will be a neutral fact consisting of the objects only if these objects are of the appropriate logical types (see *TK*, 199). Together with his claim that our judgments contain neutral facts as constituents, this proviso seems to rule out the possibility of our producing nonsensical judgments which violate the tenets of type theory. If a given group of objects is not type-theoretically capable of being combined to form a fact, then there will be no neutral fact for that group of objects (that is, there will be no complex consisting of the objects neutrally combined). But in the absence of a neutral fact for a given group of objects, the act of judgment cannot be carried out.

(It is not terribly difficult to imagine why Russell does not endorse, or even seek to develop further, the view of judgment which he sketches in “Props”. Within the context of his object-based metaphysics of facts, the notion of a neutral fact is simply implausible. Russell’s post-1910 metaphysics allows no room for the idea of a genuine complex that consists (say) of two or more objects’ being united by a relation which is somehow distinct from the actual *fact* that those objects stand in that relation to each other.)

There is a crucial connection between the view of judgment that Russell sketches in “Props” on the one hand, and the version of the multiple relation theory of judgment that he produces in 1918 and sets out in *PLA* on the other. Wittgenstein convinces Russell that in order for his multiple relation theory of judgment to show that it is impossible to judge nonsense it needs to account for the (apparent) unity among the objects of a judgment. In “Props”, Russell attempts to account for this unity by introducing the notion of a neutral fact. In *PLA*, on the other hand, the issue of the nature of the unity among the objects of a judgment motivates his discussion of the role of the subordinate verb in a judgment. I shall quote the relevant passage at some length:

*I want to try to get an account of the way that a belief is made up. That is not an easy question at all. You cannot make what I should call a map-in-space of a belief. You can make a map of an atomic fact but not of a belief, for the simple reason that space-relations always are of the atomic sort or complications of the atomic sort. I will try to illustrate what I mean. The point is in connection with there being two verbs in the judgment and with the fact that both verbs have got to occur as verbs, because if a thing is a verb it cannot occur otherwise than as a verb. Suppose I take “A believes that B loves C”. “Othello believes that Desdemona loves Cassio”. There you have a false belief. You have this odd state of affairs that the verb “loves” occurs in that proposition and seems to occur as relating Desdemona to Cassio whereas in fact it does not do so, but yet it does occur as a verb, it does occur in
the sort of way that a verb should do. I mean that when \( A \) believes that \( B \) loves \( C \), you have to have a verb in the place where “loves” occurs. You cannot put a substantive in its place. Therefore it is clear that the subordinate verb (i.e. the verb other than believing) is functioning as a verb, and seems to be relating two terms, but as a matter of fact does not when a judgment happens to be false. That is what constitutes the puzzle about the nature of belief. You will notice that wherever one gets to really close quarters with the theory of error one has the puzzle of how to deal with error without assuming the existence of the non-existent. I mean that every theory of error sooner or later wrecks itself by assuming the existence of the non-existent. As when I say “Desdemona loves Cassio”, it seems as if you have a non-existent love between Desdemona and Cassio, but that is just as wrong as a non-existent unicorn. So you have to explain the whole theory of judgment in some other way. I come now to this question of a map. Suppose you try such a map as this:

```
Othello

believes

Desdemona

loves

Cassio
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This question of making a map is not so strange as you might suppose because it is part of the whole theory of symbolism. It is important to realize where and how a symbolism of that sort would be wrong: where and how it is wrong is that in the symbol you have this relationship relating these two things and in the fact it doesn’t really relate them. You cannot get in space any occurrence which is logically of the same form as belief. When I say “logically of the same form” I mean that one can be obtained from the other by replacing the constituents of the one by the new terms. If I say “Desdemona loves Cassio” that is of the same form as “\( A \) is to the right of \( B \)”. Those are of the same form, and I say that nothing that occurs in space is of the same form as belief. I have got on here to a new sort of thing, a new beast for our Zoo, not another member of our former species but a new species. The discovery of this fact is due to Mr. Wittgenstein. …

There are really two main things that one wants to notice in this matter that I am treating of just now. The first is the impossibility of treating the proposition believed as an independent entity, entering as a unit into the occurrence of the belief, and the other is the impossibility of putting the subordinate verb on a level with its terms as an object term in the belief. That is a point in which I think that the theory of judgment which I set forth once in print some years ago was a little unduly simple, because I did then treat the object verb as if one could put it as just an object like the terms, as if one could put “loves” on a level with Desdemona and Cassio as a term for the relation “believe”. That is why I have been laying such an emphasis in this lecture today on the fact that there are two verbs at least. ([PLA, 198–99])

This passage encapsulates the difficulty confronting Russell’s multiple relation theory of judgment. In response to Wittgenstein’s criticisms of his 1913 theory of judgment, Russell now recognizes that we cannot put the subordinate relation (or subordinate verb) on a level with its terms as an object-term in the judgment.\(^46\) For in doing that we seem to blur the crucial distinctions among the objects occurring in the judgment. In particular, we fail to play the role played by the subordinate relation (or

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\(^{46}\) That Wittgenstein’s criticisms lead Russell to give up the view that the subordinate relation occurs as a term in the judgment is also suggested by modifications which Russell makes to the 1911 essay *KAKD* when he reprints it in 1917 (in the volume entitled *Mysticism and Logic*). In the original version of the essay, Russell writes as follows: “To begin with judgments: a judgment, as an occurrence, I take to be a relation of a mind to several entities, namely the entities which compose what is judged. If, e.g., I judge that \( A \) loves \( B \), the judgment as an event consists in the existence, at a certain moment, of a specific four-term relation, called *judging*, between me and \( A \) and love and \( B \). That is to say, at the time when I judge, there is a certain complex whose terms are myself and \( A \) and love and \( B \), and whose relating relation is *judging*. (The relation *love* enters as one of the terms of the relation, not as a relating relation.) My reasons for this view have been set forth elsewhere, and I shall not repeat them here” (*KAKD*, 154). In reprinting the essay, however, Russell deletes the parenthetical statement: “[The relation *love* enters as one of the terms of the relation, not as a relating relation]”, and he adds the following footnote: “I have been persuaded by Mr. Wittgenstein that this theory is somewhat unduly simple, but the modification which I believe it to require does not affect the above argument” (*KAKD*, 154 n.).
subordinate verb) from the roles played by its terms. So when we treat these various entities as being on a level with one another in a judgment, we fail to capture the distinction between the constituents of a judgment that unify terms and those that do not. And in this way we seem to treat the judgment itself as a mere list of its various constituents—that is, we seem to treat it as a disunited collection of terms. But such a view of judgment does not account for the defining aspect of the notion of judgment: namely its propositional nature. In order to restore the propositional nature of a judgment—i.e. to preserve the integrity of the putative proposition judged—the capacity of the subordinate relation (or subordinate verb) for unifying its terms must be explained by the analysis of judgment. This feature of the subordinate relation must somehow be present in the act of judging and to the mind which judges. Since this feature of the subordinate relation is obscured by taking the relation itself to occur as a term in the judgment, to make the feature conspicuous, Russell proposes that we treat the subordinate verb as a verb, that is, treat it as having a predicative occurrence in the judgment.

Yet if we treat the subordinate verb as a verb, then it seems that we must treat it as a relating relation. So in the judgment that Matt loves Julie, for example, the relation of loving must actually hold between Matt and Julie. But then the judgment that Matt loves Julie would seem to give rise to an independent unity formed of its objects.

Now we are confronted with two equally untenable alternatives. In Russell’s post-1910 metaphysics any unity of objects at all is to be regarded as a fact. So if the loving relation actually relates Matt to Julie in the judgment that Matt loves Julie, then the subordinate unity consisting of Matt’s being joined to Julie by loving must be identified with the fact that Matt loves Julie. This approach thus makes it impossible to explain how we manage to form false judgments. If there is a unity formed of the objects of the given judgment then any such unity will be a fact. And the existence of this particular fact gives the condition for the judgment’s truth.

Alternatively, in order to account for the existence (and thus to allow for the possibility) of false judgments, we would have to take the subordinate unity involved in such a judgment to be a false complex. But this strategy amounts to treating the putative (false) proposition judged as an independent entity, entering into the judgment as a unit. Clearly this position is one which Russell simply could not accept. The multiple relation theory constitutes a direct denial of his old notion of a proposition: the chief function of this theory is to explain how judgment is possible in the absence of propositions.

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The supposition that Russell felt that the status of the subordinate relation was under pressure also helps to explain why he leaves out the subordinate relation as a term of the judging relation in presenting his account of truth and falsity in *TK* [see *TK*, 144].
In *PLA* Russell insists that the correct account of the logical form of judgment will explain how the subordinate verb enters into a judgment occurring as a verb but without giving rise to the corresponding fact or to any independent (false) proposition. He admits, however, that he does not have an account of the form in question that would enable it to perform the desired function. He observes that the need for such an account of the logical form of judgment was discovered by Wittgenstein (see *PLA*, 199). Russell alludes to this point in *TK* as well:

> And in any case, as soon as we reach the theory of judgment, even apart from truth and falsehood, the difficulties encountered are almost entirely logical, and logical discoveries are what are most required for the progress of the subject. It can be shown that a judgment, and generally all thought whose expression involves *propositions*, must be a fact of a different logical form from any of the series: subject-predicate facts, dual relations, triple relations, etc. In this way, a difficult and interesting problem of pure logic arises, namely the problem of enlarging the inventory of logical forms so as to include forms appropriate to the facts of epistemology. (*TK*, 46)

In a footnote attached to this passage, Russell acknowledges that he has come to know that the logical form of judgment has a special status “through unpublished work of my friend Mr. Ludwig Wittgenstein” (*TK*, 46 n.). Obviously, Russell is not here crediting Wittgenstein with the discovery that judgment is a multiple relation. Instead, Russell is crediting Wittgenstein with the discovery that the logical form of judgment is unlike that of ordinary atomic relational facts in that it defies linguistic expression within the fundamental notation of the logical system of *PM*.

This view of the logical form of judgment, as having an anomalous status, is one that seems to be suggested by the passages, and the accompanying diagram of judgment, from *NL* quoted several pages back [see pp. 236–237, above; see also *NL*, 95, 106]. Wittgenstein says in these two passages that judgment “is obviously not a relation in the ordinary sense” (*NL*, 95), and that in order to represent the logical form of judgment correctly we must use the special notation that he has devised for expressing the essential bipolarity of atomic sentences [see *NL*, 95, 106]. It is partly on the basis of these passages, and partly on the basis of the fact that Wittgenstein’s objections to his multiple relation theory have persuaded Russell that his conception of the nature of judgment is simply bankrupt, that Russell attributes to Wittgenstein the discovery of a new beast for the zoo.

Wittgenstein, however, denies that the logical form of judgment is fundamentally different in kind from all other sorts of logical forms. As we have already seen, the leading idea of his sentence-based approach to the notion of judgment is the assumption that to explain the nature and possibility of judgment it suffices to explain how *sentences* manage to represent a reality outside of them either correctly or incorrectly. On this approach, then, questions that, on the face of it, concern the nature and status of the so-called logical form of judgment are reinterpreted as being questions that really concern the nature and status of the fundamental representational relationship between sentences and the external reality that they are about. The crucial point here is that, on Wittgenstein’s conception,
the representing relation at issue is one which holds between two atomic facts: namely the sentence and the reality to which it corresponds. Hence to account for the logical form of judgment we do not require the admission of a new species of logical form. Instead the logical forms of atomic facts will suffice for this purpose. Thus in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein says:

In the general propositional form propositions occur in other propositions only as bases of truth-operations. (*Tractatus*, 5.54)

He continues:

At first sight it looks as if it were also possible for one proposition to occur in another in a different way. Particularly with certain forms of proposition in psychology, such as “A believes that p is the case” and “A has the thought p”, etc.

For if these are considered superficially, it looks as if the proposition p stood in some kind of relation to an object A.

[And in modern theory of knowledge (Russell, Moore, etc.) these propositions have actually been construed in this way. (*Tractatus*, 5.541)]

Wittgenstein then concludes:

It is clear, however, that “A believes that p”, “A has the thought p”, and “A says p” are of the form “p’ says p”: and this does not involve a correlation of a fact with an object, but rather the correlation of facts by means of the correlation of their objects. (*Tractatus*, 5.542; cf. *MN*, 119)

According to Wittgenstein’s analysis of language, the sentence “Matt loves Julie” is the sentential fact “Matt”’s “love”-leftstanding “Julie”. The name “Matt” is projected onto reality via a rule of designation that associates it with the actual man Matt. The name “Julie” is likewise projected onto reality via a rule of designation that associates it with the actual woman Julie. And finally the binary form “x loves y” is projected onto reality via a general rule that specifies that sentences of that form agree with the facts just in case the individual designated by the name in the “x”-position loves the individual designated by the name in the “y”-position. By means of these three separate rules of projection, then, the name “Matt” is correlated with the individual Matt, the name “Julie” is correlated with the individual Julie, and the binary form “x loves y” is correlated with the relation of loving. According to Wittgenstein, the sentence “Dolnick judges that Matt loves Julie” is really of the form “‘Matt loves Julie’ says that Matt loves Julie”. That is, it is really of the form “‘Matt’ ‘love’-leftstands ‘Julie’ says that Matt loves Julie”. So my judgment that Matt loves Julie does not involve the correlation of my mind with a complex entity in which Matt bears the loving relation to Julie, but rather involves the correlation of a sentential fact with its would-be corresponding fact. This latter correlation is effected by means of the correlation of the symbols that make up the sentence with the entities that make up the fact. Thus for Wittgenstein what Russell calls the logical form of judgment involves no coordinations of names and objects or of forms and relations besides those that project atomic sentences onto reality.
Russell’s basic conception of the notion of judgment is of course rather different from Wittgenstein’s. Russell’s analysis of judgment is formulated within the context of his general view of facts. Among other things, this implies that the explanation of judgment that Russell wants is not a linguistic explanation of sentences which express judgments; he seeks, rather, an explanation which functions on the nonlinguistic level. In accordance with this feature of his general view, Russell takes Wittgenstein’s criticisms of the multiple relation theory to show that the subordinate unity consisting of the objects of a judgment is indispensable to explaining how a judgment manages to represent its would-be corresponding fact. But this idea cannot be accommodated by the multiple relation theory of judgment. Russell thus abandons this view of judgment altogether.
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**Vita**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Alexander C. Dolnick</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA, Philosophy, University of Wisconsin at Madison, Madison, Wisconsin, 2000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA, Philosophy, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, 2011</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD, Philosophy, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, 2012</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Experience:</strong></td>
<td>Department of Philosophy, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2003–2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Honors:</strong></td>
<td>University Fellow, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2002–2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University Fellow, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2006–2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Membership:</strong></td>
<td>American Philosophical Association</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>