A Defense of Bertrand Russell's Theory of Definite Descriptions against Donnellan's Distinction

by

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Abstract

According to Russell's theory of descriptions, a sentence of the form "The *F* is *G*" expresses the general proposition *There is exactly one F and whatever is an F is G.* According to Donnellan, there are two types of uses of a definite description: an attributive use and a referential use. A definite description is said to be used attributively when a speaker intends to assert something about whoever or whatever fits the description "the *F*". In that case "The *F* is *G*" expresses *there is exactly one F and whatever is an F is G.* On the other hand, a definite description, according to him, is said to be used referentially when a speaker uses a sentence containing that definite description to state something about a particular object, *o,* the speaker has already had in mind. In such a case the sentence "The *F* is *G*" expresses the proposition *o is G*. Thus, a sentence of the form "The *F* is *G*" is ambiguous, it has two sorts of meaning: an attributive meaning and a referential meaning. Based on the ambiguity mentioned above Donnellan claims that Russell's theory is incorrect as it fails to accommodate the referential meaning of sentences containing definite descriptions. In this thesis, I defend Russell's theory against the problem arising from Donnellan's distinction. I show that Donnellan's distinction doesn't posit a genuine problem for Russell's theory in either way: (a) neither is a sentence containing a definite description ambiguous, *i.e*. it has always one lexical meaning; (b) nor does Russell's theory deny the pragmatic significance of a sentence containing a definite description. In support of (a), (i) I focus on the distinction between semantics and pragmatics and argue that the existence of convention alone cannot be a sufficient condition for determining the semantic meaning of a sentence, rather the semantic meaning of a sentence is the literal meaning which is defined by a dictionary and the grammar of a language. (ii) I refute Michael Devitt's arguments for the semantic significance of referential definite descriptions based on the

regularity of using referential descriptions, and the similarity between the function and mechanism of determining the referents of "the *F*" and "that *F*". And (iii) I defend Kripke, who claims that Donnellan's distinction can be explained by a general apparatus of speech acts, by showing that the general proposition *There is exactly one F and whatever is an F is G* is the literal meaning or *what is said* by "The *F* is *G",* whereas the singular proposition *o is G*, expressed by "The *F* is *G*", is a generalized conversational implicature which is derived in virtue of the meaning of the words used in the utterance of "The *F* is *G*", though *o is G* is different from the literal meaning of "The *F* is *G*" (*i.e. There is exactly one F and whatever is an F is G*). In support of (b), I focus on the intention and significance of Russell's theory of descriptions. I argue that Russell's theory of definite descriptions is a theory of denotation; and hence it is a theory of semantics, and not of pragmatics, whereas the distinction Donnellan offered is an issue of pragmatics. So, a pragmatically significant theory like Donnellan's cannot posit a genuine problem to a semantic theory like Russell's.

Dedication

To my mother Monwara Begum (1964-)

&

to the memory of my father A. K. M. Nurul Islam (1954-2011)

who brought me into this world and dedicated their whole lives to making my life safe and sound.

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Chapter One

Russell's Theory of Definite Descriptions, Its Background and Uses

1.1 Background to Russell's Theory of Definite Descriptions

A phrase of the form "the *F*" occurring in the subject position of a sentence of the form "The *F* is *G*" is called a definite description. In our ordinary language, we use definite descriptions to talk about a particular object or an individual. And on the basis of that we determine the truth value and meaningfulness of a sentence containing a definite description. For example, consider the following sentence:

(1) The present prime minister of Canada is a wise man.

A speaker, by uttering sentence (1), speaks of a particular individual Justin Trudeau who is presently the prime minister of Canada. On the basis of that we can determine the truth value of the sentence (1) as true, depending on whether he is wise. That means, if the predicate "a wise man" attributed to the present prime minister of Canada is applicable to Justin Trudeau, then sentence (1) is true; otherwise it is false. Thus, in our ordinary language, we use a definite description in a sentence in such a way as if definite descriptions work like proper names. And hence, in our ordinary life we don't face any problem in understanding and determining the truth value of such sentences.

However, sometimes there appear some problems in determining the truth value of a sentence containing a definite description, especially when the definite description contained in a sentence is an empty definite description, *i.e.* there is nothing in the universe that can fit the definite description in question. For example, consider the following sentence:

(2) The present king of France is bald.

Here, the subject of sentence (2) doesn't refer to any existing individual that could satisfy the property of being the present king of France. And hence we can't easily determine the truth value of sentence (2). On the other hand, in the case of sentence (1), the phrase, "the present prime minister of Canada" taking the place of the subject term refers to an existing individual; and hence there is no difficulty in determining the truth-value of the sentence—if what the predicate attributes to the object designated by the phrase taking the place of the subject term is really applicable to it, the sentence is true; and otherwise it is false. But, in the case of sentence (2), it seems that nothing designated by the subject term that can have something attributed to it by the predicate term of the sentence in question. If that is the case, then we can't easily determine the truth value of sentence (2)—we can't easily determine whether the attribute "bald" is really applicable to the individual designated by "the present king of France"; and hence we can't easily determine whether sentence (2) is true or false. Now the question is: if this is the case, if a definite description designates an existing object then we can easily determine the truth value of a sentence containing the definite description in question and if it designates nothing then we can't easily determine the truth value of the sentence containing the definite description in question, then how do definite descriptions work? Do they work like proper names—do they refer to individuals or objects? Or does a definite description refer to any individual or object that can fit the definite description in question?

To address this problem, Gottlob Frege (1848-1925), in his paper "Sense and Reference", claims that definite descriptions work like proper names and both a definite description's and proper name's job is to refer to a definite object and not any concept.[1] In

[1]Frege (1948), p. 210

"Sense and Reference" Frege uses the term "name" to mean any singular noun phrase — including both proper names (*e.g.* "Cicero", "Plato") and definite descriptions (*e.g.* "the most famous Roman orator", "the teacher of Aristotle") etc. He says:

> […] by "sign" and "name" I have here understood any designation representing a proper name, whose referent is thus a definite object…, but no concept and no relation… For brevity, let every such designation be called a proper name.[2]

Thus, for Frege, both definite descriptions and proper names are regarded as singular terms as both refer to a definite object. He distinguishes between an actual object referred to by an expression and the way in which the object is presented or picked out. The actual object which is referred to by an expression, *e.g.* a proper name or a definite description, is called the "referent" of the expression in question; and the way in which the object is presented or picked out is called the "sense" of that expression. He says:

> A proper name (word, sign, sign combination, expression) expresses its sense, refers to or designates its referent. By means of a sign we express its sense and designate its referent.[3]

Thus, according to Frege, a definite description expresses its sense, and denotes or refers to its referent. He gives the example of the definite descriptions "the morning star" and "the evening star". Both "the morning star" and "the evening star" refer to the planet Venus in virtue of different properties Venus has: the morning star refers to Venus in virtue of its property of being the brightest celestial object on the eastern horizon; and "the evening star" refers to Venus in virtue of its property of being the brightest celestial object on western horizon. Since both "the morning star" and "the evening star" refer to the same object Venus, their referents are the same. For Venus is the only object that corresponds to the definite

[2] Ibid, p. 210
[3] Ibid, p. 214

descriptions “the morning star” and “the evening star”. And since they refer to Venus on the basis of different properties of Venus, their senses are different. When Venus is a referent of “the morning star” and Venus is presented or picked out as the brightest celestial object in the eastern horizon, the sense of “the morning star” is *the brightest celestial object in the eastern horizon.* On the other hand, when Venus is a referent of the definite description “the evening star” and presented or picked out as the brightest celestial object in the western horizon, the sense of “the evening star” is *the brightest celestial object in the western horizon.* So, the sense of a definite description (or an expression) is actually the mode of presentation of the object that is referred to by that definite description (or that expression). In Frege’s own words:

> [...] to think of there being connected with a sign (name, combination of words, letter), besides that to which the sign refers, which may be called the referent of the sign, also what I would like to call the *sense* of the sign, wherein the mode of presentation is contained.[4]

So, according to Frege, the sense of a definite description is determined by the mode of presentation of the object referred to by the definite description in question. In other words, the sense of a definite description specifies some conditions an object has to satisfy in order to be the referent of the definite description in question. For example, Venus has to satisfy the condition of being the brightest celestial object in the eastern horizon in order to be the referent of “the morning star”; and any object that satisfies this condition will be the referent of “the morning star”. Thus, the sense of a definite description determines the referent of that definite description. However, Frege maintains that although the sense of a definite description or a proper name determines its referent, it is not the case that every name (or

[4] Ibid, p. 210

every definite description) which has a sense must have a referent too; rather, he claims, there are names or definite descriptions which have senses but do not have referent at all.[5] For example, the definite description "the celestial body most distant from the earth" has a sense but does not have any referent. The same is true of the definite descriptions like "the least rapidly convergent series", "the present king of France", proper names such as "Pegasus", "Odysseus" and so on. Thus, following Frege, a definite description can be meaningful even though it does not have any referent.

Now we come to the point of how a sentence containing an empty definite description can be meaningful. For Frege, the distinction between sense and reference applies not only to expressions (proper names, definite descriptions, etc.) but also to declarative sentences containing those expressions. He claims that the sense of a complete sentence is what is expressed by that sentence. A sentence expresses a thought.[6] Thus, the sense of a declarative sentence is the thought expressed by the sentence in question.[7] For example, the sentence

(3) The morning star is a body illuminated by the sun.

expresses the thought

(3_a) The morning star is a body illuminated by the sun.

So, *the morning star is a body illuminated by the sun* is the sense of the sentence "The morning star is a body illuminated by the sun". Similarly, the sense of the sentence

(4) The evening star is a body illuminated by the sun

is its thought,

[5] Ibid, p. 211
[6] By a thought Frege means an objective content of a sentence, rather than the subjective feeling of an individual. He writes in the footnote, "By a thought I understand not the subjective performance of thinking but its objective content, which is capable of being the common property of several thinkers." (See Frege (1948), p. 214)
[7] Ibid, pp. 214-215

(4_a) *The evening star is a body illuminated by the sun.*

Thus, the sense of the sentence "The morning star is a body illuminated by the sun" differs from the sense of the sentence "The evening star is a body illuminated by the sun" just as the sense of the definite description "the morning star" differs from the sense of the definite description "the evening star". So, the changes in the definite descriptions with different senses in a sentence make the changes in the sense of the sentence in question.[8] Thus the sense of the whole sentence depends on the senses of its parts. Frege says:

> If it were a question only of the sense of the sentence, the thought, it would be unnecessary to bother with the referent of a part of the sentence; only the sense, not the referent, of the part is relevant to the sense of the whole sentence.[9]

These lines indicate that a sentence containing a definite description is meaningful provided that all of its parts are meaningful. It has been mentioned earlier that according to Frege, a definite description that does not have a referent can be meaningful; similarly, a sentence containing such a definite description (which has a sense but does not have a referent) can be meaningful too. He gives the example of the following sentence:

(5) Odysseus was set ashore at Ithaca while sound asleep.

Where the proper name "Odysseus" has a sense, but doesn't have any referent.[10] Since all of the parts of sentence (5) have senses (but do not all have a referent), sentence (5) as a whole has a sense too. On the other hand, Frege claims that since one of the parts of sentence (5), "Odysseus", doesn't have a referent, sentence (5) as a whole doesn't have a referent either.[11] He says:

[8] Ibid, pp. 214-215
[9] Ibid, p. 215
[10] Ibid, p. 215
[11] Ibid, p. 215

> Is it possible that a sentence as a whole has only a sense, but no referent? At any rate, one might expect that such sentences occur, just as there are parts of sentences having sense but no referent. And sentences which contain proper names without referents will be of this kind. The sentence "Odysseus was set ashore at Ithaca while sound asleep" obviously has a sense. But since it is doubtful whether the name "Odysseus," occurring therein, has a referent, it is also doubtful whether the whole sentence has one.[12]

Thus, sentences containing empty definite descriptions or proper names have senses but don't have referents. Now the question is: what is meant by the referent of a sentence? According to Frege, a sentence containing a definite description (or a proper name) in the subject position is true if the predicate of the sentence is applicable to the referent of that definite description (or proper name); similarly, the sentence is false if the predicate is not applicable to the referent of the definite description (proper name) in question. So, when all the parts of a declarative sentences get referents, the sentence as a whole gets a truth value.[13] That means that the truth-value of a sentence depends on the referents of the component parts of the declarative sentence in question. So, according to Frege, the referent of a declarative sentence is its truth-value; and there are only two truth values either of which can be referred to by a declarative sentence: *The true* and *The false*.[14] Since there are only two truth-values- *The true* and *The false*, it follows that all true sentences have the same referent, *The true*; and all false sentences have the same referent, *The false*. So, it seems that Frege goes on to argue that if a definite description doesn't have any referent then the sentence containing that definite description doesn't have any truth-value at all. That means that having referents of all parts of

[12] Ibid, p. 215
[13] Ibid, p. 216
[14] Ibid, p. 216

a declarative sentence is both necessary and sufficient for the sentence in question to be either true or false. Now let us consider sentence (2) again:

(2) The present king of France is bald.

According to Frege, sentence (2) as a whole has a sense, since all of the parts of sentence (2) (including the definite description "The present king of France") have senses.[15] However, since the truth-value of a sentence is determined by the referents of its component parts, and "the present king of France", which is a component part of the sentence, is devoid of a referent, then sentence (2) has no truth-value at all. That means that sentence (2), "The present king of France is bald," is neither true nor false. Similarly, sentences like "Pegasus does not exist", "Santa Claus is a white bearded man" have no truth values—they are neither true nor false. Thus, at any rate, according to Frege, sentences containing empty definite descriptions are devoid of truth-values, though they have senses.

However, Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) doesn't accept Frege's solution to the problem of determining the meaningfulness of a sentence containing a definite description. Russell has two basic objections against Frege's theory. According to the first objection, Frege's theory cannot account for the meaningfulness of a sentence containing an empty definite description. For, according to Russell, if Frege's theory is correct then the sentence

(6) The present king of Thailand is bald.

is about the actual man denoted by "the present king of Thailand", Bhumibol Adulyadej, not about the meaning of "the present king of Thailand". That means that sentence (6) is about the denotation of "the present king of Thailand". For its truth value depends on the actual man Bhumibol Adulydej. Since Bhumibol Adulyadej is bald, the sentence (6) is true; and hence

[15] Because the definite description "the present king of France" has a sense: it specifies the condition an individual would have to satisfy in order to be the referent of "the present king of France". In other words, it expresses the mode of presentations of an individual, who might have been the present king of France.

sentence (6) is meaningful. Similarly, the following sentence of the same form as (6) is supposed to be about the denotation of the definite description "the present king of France", not about the meaning of the definite description in question:

(2) The present king of France is bald.

But "the present king of France" is empty, it denotes nothing; and hence sentence (2) is about nothing. Since sentence (2) is about nothing, it seems to be nonsense, whereas sentence (6) of the same form is meaningful. However, according to Russell, sentence (2) is plainly false and hence it is a meaningful sentence as well.[16] Yet according to Frege's theory, sentence (2) seems to be neither true nor false, and hence meaningless due to the failure of the presupposition that there is an individual who is the present king of France. Thus, Frege's theory faces difficulties in dealing with the meaningfulness of sentences containing empty definite descriptions.

Another objection against Frege's theory is that it violates the Law of the Excluded Middle (LEM). Needless to say that Russell believes in LEM. According to

LEM: every meaningful declarative sentence is either true or false.

Thus, according to LEM, either

(2) The present king of France is bald

is true or its negation

(2N) The present king of France is not bald

is true. That means either (2) or (2N) is true. But, since there is no present king of France, we cannot determine whether baldness is attributed to the person denoted by "the present king of France". Thus, neither (2), nor (2N) is determined as true or false. Thus, according to LEM, both (2) and (2N) cannot be meaningful. But, both (2) and (2N) are meaningful sentences.

[16] Russell (1905), pp. 483-484

Since Frege's theory considers both of (2) and (2N) are meaningful without having any truth value, it seems, according to Russell's objection, to violate LEM.

Alexius Meinong (1853-1920) has an alternative solution to the problem of determining the truth value and meaningfulness of a sentence containing an empty definite description (or an empty term). Meinong claims, "Every object has *being* (or *non-being*)."[17] According to Meinong, there are three types of objects depending on whether they have *being* or *non-being*:[18]

> (a) existing objects which exist in space and time and have *being*, *e.g*. concrete objects like chair, table etc.;
> (b) subsistent objects which do not exist but subsist. According to Meinong, subsistence is a special mode of being; and because of having this type of being an object designated by a term exists *in our thought* or *in our judgment*.[19] This kind of existence in our thought and judgment is called subsistence. Because of having this subsistence, a reference can be made and true or false judgments can be made about them. Thus, according to Meinong, subsistent objects possess a special kind of *being*, *e.g*. abstract objects such as number, the king of France; and
> (c) absistent[20] or *beingless* objects which neither exist, nor subsist but only absist. This type of objects does not possess any kind of *being*, and hence they "are *beyond being and non-being*."[21] For example, the golden mountain, the round square etc. are absistent or beingless objects.

[17] Meinong (1983), p. 50
[18] Smith (1985), "The Russell-Meinong Debate", P. 307
[19] Meinong says, "The concept of the pseudo-existence of objects was formed on another occasion in response to the custom, subserving brevity more than theoretical rigor, of speaking of an object that exists "in my thought of it" *["in meiner Vortellung"]* or again, "in my judgment," and so forth. The applicability of this concept to objectives follows from the mere fact that they can be judged about—or for that matter, just from the fact that they can be judged." (see Meinong (1983), p. 49)
[20] Meinong says, ""there are" ["es gibt"] also objects that do not exist or subsist [die nicht sind], and I have designated this fact as the "absistence of the pure object" [das Aussersein des reinen Gegenstandes"]." Thus, according to Meinong absistent objects are the third kind of objects that neither exist, nor subsist (see Meinong (1983), p. 62)
[21] Smith (1985), "The Russell-Meinong Debate", P. 307

Thus, both existing and subsistent objects have *being*; and an absistent or beingless objects are beyond being or non-being. Meinong's theory is also based on two principles which are called the Characterization Principle (CP) and the Independence Principle (IP) accordingly.[22]

According to

> **CP**: An object has a property or *a Sosein* (or a set of properties) that characterizes the object in question.[23]

And according to

> **IP**: The properties (*Sosein*) of an object are independent of its being (*Sein*) or non-being.[24]

Thus, jointly from

> **IP & CP**: An object has a property (or a set of properties) or *Sosein* regardless of whether it has any being (*Sein*) or non-being.

So, all existent, subsistent and absistent (or beingless) objects have the properties that characterize them as existent, subsistent or absistent objects. For example, the table has the properties of a table; the round square has the property of both a round and square thing, the golden mountain is golden and a mountain and so on. So, the round square is both round and square even though it doesn't have *being (Sein).* Hence, according to Meinong's view, a subject term of a subject predicate sentence can refer to an object regardless of whether the object referred to by the term exists or not. Now, once again consider sentence (2):

> (2) The present king of France is bald.

Here, the present king of France is a subsistent object, it has special kind of being. For according to Meinong, the existent and subsistent objects are determined as having being and non-being.[25] Since the present king of France is subsistent, the present king of France is either

[22] Swanson (2011), p. 10
[23] Ibid, p. 10
[24] Ibid, p. 10
[25] Ibid, p.18

bald or non-bald. On the other hand, IP &CP indicates that the present king of France is the present king of France regardless of whether he has baldness or non-baldness. Hence, the sentences "The present king of France is the present king of France", "The round square is round and square" etc. are true, for according to IP &CP, the round square has the property of both round and square thing. So, according to Meinong's theory, an empty definite description (like, "the present king of France") or an empty proper name (like "Pegasus") designates a subsistent object—though not an existent one—about whom we can think and make our judgments; and hence reference can be made to that. On the basis of this reference, according to Meinong's proposal, sentences containing an empty definite description can be determined as true or false. Thus, Meinong's theory is based on two major theses:

> (i) There are objects that do not exist.
> (ii) Every object that doesn't exist is constituted in some way (it has some sort of being) that it can be the subject of true predication. For, according to CP, an object that doesn't exist can have some properties.

Thus, it seems that Meinong's proposal can avoid the problem of determining meaningfulness of a sentence containing an empty definite description without attributing the truth-valuelessness to the sentence in question. That means, Meinong's theory can avoid the violation of LEM. However, Bertrand Russell doesn't accept Meinong's solution to this problem either. He rejects both of these above mentioned claims and shows that Meinong's theory violates the Law of Non-Contradiction (LNC). Regarding the first claim, Russell states that Meinong's theory "regards any grammatically correct denoting phrase as standing for an object. Thus "the present king of France," "the round square," etc., are supposed to be genuine objects."[26] However, the round square, the present king of France are not genuine

[26] Russell (1905), pp. 482-483

objects. To consider these as real objects is a confusing view. He writes in the Chapter XVI of *Introduction to the Mathematical Philosophy,*

> […] many logicians have been driven to the conclusion that there are unreal objects. It is argued, *e.g*. by Meinong, that we can speak about "the golden mountain," "the round square" and so on; we can make true propositions of which these are the subjects; hence they must have some kind of logical being, … In such theories, it seems to me, there is a failure of that feeling for reality which ought to be preserved even in the most abstract studies. Logic, I should maintain, must no more admit a unicorn than zoology can; for logic is concerned with the real world just as truly as zoology, though with its more abstract and general features. … There is only one world, the "real" world: …The sense of reality is vital in logic, and whoever juggles with it by pretending that Hamlet has another kind of reality is doing a disservice to thought. A robust sense of reality is very necessary in framing a correct analysis of propositions about unicorns, golden mountains, round squares and other such pseudo-objects.[27]

Thus, according to Russell, logic no longer deals with a confusing view of unreal objects that do not exist but do have some kind of being. Logic doesn't consider any unreal world other than the real world either. So, the present king of France, the round square etc. should not be considered as real objects just as the physical objects and abstract objects are considered. So, according to Russell, Meinong's view of the non-existent objects is confusing and illogical.

Regarding the second claim, Russell claims that Meinong's proposal violates the Law of Non-Contradiction (LNC) when it deals with the sentences about impossible objects. According to

> **LNC:** a sentence and its negation cannot be true at the same time. Thus, both "The *F* is *G*" and "The *F* is not *G*" cannot be true at the same time.

[27] Russell (1920), pp. 169-170

In Meinong's theory, CP states that any object has the properties that characterize the object in question. And existence is a property. So, if the round square is both round and square, then

(7) The existent round square is existent, round and square.

That means, something round and square exists, although everything round and square is impossible. For something is both round and square implies that it is round and not round. Now, as Russell mentions, if Meinong's view is correct then we are compelled to admit that the existent present king of France exists, and also doesn't exist; and that the round square is round, and also not round, which violates LNC. And hence there cannot be any object that is both round and square.[28] So, Meinong's theory cannot be accepted. For Meinong's theory cannot succeed in dealing with the problem of the meaningfulness of a sentence containing an empty definite description; rather it admits a huge number of unreal objects. So, a new theory should be introduced that can account for the meaningfulness of a sentence containing an empty definite description as well as can avoid the violation of the Law of Excluded Middle and the Law of Non-Contradiction. In a nutshell, a new theory should solve the following problems:

(a) How can a sentence containing an empty definite description, like sentence (2), be meaningful without attributing being to non-existent or unreal objects?
(b) How can a sentence like (2) be either true or false, *i.e.* how can the Law of Excluded Middle be applicable to a sentence containing an empty definite description?
(c) How can a sentence avoid violation of the Law of Non-Contradiction when it expresses a true negative existential proposition? For example, how can the sentence

(8) The present king of France doesn't exist

express a true negative existential proposition?

[28] Russell (1905), p. 533

Russell accepts these challenges and offers his alternative theory which is called the Theory of Definite Descriptions (and henceforth TDD) in his famous paper "On Denoting", *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism,* and *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*. He claims that his theory, unlike Frege's theory, can account for the truth value and meaningfulness of a sentence containing an empty definite description, like sentence (2) on one hand; and it can explain how a sentence containing a negative existential claim can express a true proposition on the other hand. The next section will be devoted to exploring Russell's Theory of Definite Descriptions (TDD) and the way in which it solves the problems concerning empty definite descriptions.

1.2 Russell's Theory of Definite Descriptions and Its Uses

Russell, in his paper "On Denoting" deals with the problem of the meaningfulness and truth-values of sentences containing empty definite descriptions. Russell argues that neither Meinong nor Frege succeeds in dealing with the problems regarding the meaningfulness and truth-values of sentences containing empty definite descriptions. For, as Russell claims, Meinong's theory violates the Law of Non-Contradiction; and Frege's theory doesn't account for the truth-value of the sentences containing empty definite descriptions. After rejecting Meinong and Frege's theory, Russell gives his own account regarding the issue; and he claims that his theory can solve the puzzles concerning definite descriptions. Before explaining Russell's theory, let me explain the puzzles concerning definite descriptions. The first puzzle is *The Puzzle of Substitutivity*. Russell states the puzzle in the following way:

> If *a* is identical with *b*, whatever is true of the one is true of the other, and either may be substituted for the other in any proposition without altering the truth or falsehood of that proposition. Now George IV. wished to know whether Scott was the author of *Waverley;* and in fact Scott *was* the author of *Waverley.* Hence we may substitute *Scott* for *the author of*

> *"Waverley,"* and thereby prove that George IV. wished to know whether Scott was Scott. Yet an interest in the law of identity can hardly be attributed to the first gentleman of Europe.[29]

The above mentioned puzzle can be interpreted in the following way:

> **The Law of Substitutivity:** for all *a* and *b*, if *[a=b]* is true, then if a sentence *A* containing *a* is true then the sentence *A** containing *b* achieved by replacing *b* for *a* in *A* is true too, and vice versa.

Thus, according to the Law of Substitutivity, if a sentence expresses an identity between two things, we can replace one by the other without altering the truth value of the sentence in question. For example, consider the following sentence:

> (9) Scott is the author of Waverley.

Now suppose sentence (9) is true. So, if we replace "Scott" for "the author of Waverley" then we get:

> (10) Scott is Scott.

which is true. Thus, here the Law of Substitutivity is confirmed as a true law. For since sentence (9) is true, sentence (10), which is achieved by replacing "Scott" for "the author of Waverley", is also true. Now if we ascribe a propositional attitude to both sentences, then the replacement may not bring the same result. That means, if we ascribe a propositional attitude with the content of sentence (9) and (10), we may find that the sentence embedded in (10) is false, even though the sentence embedded in (9) is true. For example:

> (11) George IV. wished to know whether Scott was the author of Waverley.
>
> (12) George IV. wished to know whether Scott was Scott.

Now suppose that George IV. really wished to know whether Scott was the author of Waverley; and in that case sentence (11) is true, which results from ascribing a propositional

[29] Russell (1905), p. 485

attitude to (9). Since Scott is the author of Waverley is true, (and according to the Law of Identity, what is true of the author of Waverley is true of Scott) then from sentence (11) and (9), according to the Law of Substitutivity, sentence (12) is supposed to be true. However, Russell claims that George IV. is not interested to know whether Scott is Scott. That means that sentence (12), which results from ascribing a propositional attitude to the content of sentence (10), is false even though sentence (11) is true. So, the Law of Substitutivity seems to be not applicable to identity statements embedded in propositional attitudes. However, the Law of Substitutivity is regarded as a true law of logic. Now the question is: how can the Law of Substitutivity be applicable to the identity statements containing a definite description embedded in propositional attitudes?

Now consider the second puzzle. The second puzzle is *the Puzzle Concerning the Law of the Excluded Middle.* In the previous section, it was shown that Frege's theory doesn't follow the Law of the Excluded Middle. Russell describes *the Puzzle Concerning the Law of the Excluded Middle* in the following way:

> By the law of excluded middle, either "A is B" or "A is not B" must be true. Hence either "the present King of France is bald" or "the present King of France is not bald" must be true. Yet if we enumerated the things that are bald, and then the things that are not bald, we should not find the present King of France in either list. Hegelians, who love a synthesis, will probably conclude that he wears a wig.[30]

Since this puzzle pertains to the Law of the Excluded Middle (LEM), consider LEM once again:

> **LEM:** for any declarative sentence P, if it is meaningful then either P or ~P is true. In other words, P ∨ ~P is true.

Now consider sentence (2) once again:

[30] Russell (1905), p. 485

(2) The present king of France is bald.

The denial of (2) is

(2N) The present king of France is not bald.

Since (2) is a declarative sentence and it is meaningful, according to LEM, either (2) or (2N) is true. In symbols:

2 ∨ 2N is true; and

~ (2 ∨ 2N) [or ~2 . ~2N] is false.

However, sentence (2) expresses a subject-predicate proposition. In a subject-predicate proposition, a property is attributed by the predicate term to the object that is referred to by the subject term. Here, the subject term of (2), "the present king of France" referred to a null class, for there is no present king of France. Since the subject term fails to refer to any object, the property of being bald or the property of being not bald is attributed by the predicate term to nothing. Thus, it seems that there is nothing that is bald or not bald. In other words, we cannot determine whether (2) is true or not. So, neither (2) nor (2N) is true. In symbols, ~ (2 ∨ 2N) [or ~2. ~2N] is true. However, according to LEM, ~ (2 ∨ 2N) [or ~2. ~2N] is false. So, it seems that either LEM is false or sentence (2) is a meaningless sentence. However, according to Russell, LEM is a true law of logic; and sentence (2) is also a meaningful sentence as it is false. So, the question is: how can a declarative sentence containing an empty definite description follow LEM and be either true or false, and hence be meaningful?

The third issue is *the Puzzle of Denying the Existence of Non-existents*. Russell describes it as follows:

> Consider the proposition "A differs from B". If this is true, there is a difference between A and B, which fact may be expressed in the form "the difference between A and B subsists". But if it is false that A differs from B, then there is no difference between A and B, which fact may be expressed in the form "the difference between A and B doesn't subsist". But how can a non-entity be a subject of a proposition? "I think, therefore

> I am" is no more evident than "I am the subject of a proposition, therefore I am," provided "I am" is taken to assert subsistence or being, not existence. Hence it would appear, it must always be self-contradictory to deny the being of anything; but we have seen, in connexion with Meinong, that to admit being also sometimes leads to contradictions. Thus if A and B do not differ, to suppose either that there is or that there is not, such an object as "the difference between A and B" seems equally impossible.[31]

To explain *the Puzzle of Denying the Existence of Non-existents* consider sentence (8) once again:

(8) The present king of France doesn't exist

Here, sentence (8) expresses a subject-predicate proposition, where the predicate term "doesn't exist" attributes the property of not being existent to the individual referred to by the subject term "the present king of France". So, it seems that there is an individual, who is the present king of France, who doesn't exist. So, sentence (8) is equivalent to

(8a): There is a present king of France who doesn't exist.

Or

(8b): There is an existent present king of France who doesn't exist.

Or,

(8x) There is an x such that x doesn't exist.

In symbols:

$(\exists x) \sim Ex.$

Here it appears that at first the existence of the present king of France has been admitted and then the property of non-existent has been attributed to him, which leads to a self-contradiction. However, sentence (8) is not self-contradictory, rather it expresses a true proposition; and hence it is meaningful. Now the problem is: how is a true proposition

[31] Russell (1905), p. 485

possible that denies the existence of non-existent object without committing self-contradiction?

Russell claims that his theory can solve all of the above mentioned puzzles. According to Russell, definite descriptions are incomplete symbols which do not have any meaning in isolation; but they acquire meaning in context. Thus, they can have only a contextual definition.[32] That means a definite description, unlike a proper name, doesn't mean anything in isolation and hence the proposition in which it occurs doesn't have any constituent corresponding the definite description in question.[33] Russell says, "that denoting phrases never have any meaning in themselves, but that every proposition in whose verbal expression they occur has a meaning."[34] According to Russell, the difficulties concerning an empty definite description result from the wrong analysis of the sentences containing that description. So, these difficulties can be removed by the proper analysis of a sentence containing a definite description regardless of whether the definite description in question is empty or not.[35] Now the question is: what is this proper analysis? According to Russell, a definite description of the form "the *F*" (or in Russellian language, "the so-and-so") "involves uniqueness."[36] Thus, "the *F*" means *one and only one F* or *exactly one F,* even though there are several *F*s in the world. In other words, when "the *F*" is used in a sentence it is used to indicate exactly one *F*. Russell says

> […] propositions about "the so-and-so" always imply the corresponding propositions about "a so-and-so" with the addendum that there is not more than one so-and-so.[37]

[32] By contextual definition, Russell means a definition that is provided by analyzing the sentence containing a definite description, rather than defining the definite description in question.
[33] Russell (1918), p. 122
[34] Russell (1905), p. 480
[35] Ibid, p. 480
[36] Ibid, p. 481
[37] Russell (1920), p. 176

So according to Russell, a sentence of the form "The *F* is *G*" that contains the definite description "the *F*" implies a proposition about a unique *F*. So, the logical form of a sentence containing a definite description is different from the superficial grammatical form of the sentence in question. For the logical form of a sentence containing a definite description is a conjunction of three sentences none of which involves the definite description that occurs in the grammatical form of the sentence in question. So, when a sentence in which a definite description occurs is analyzed into its logical form, the definite description in question disappears. Russell analyzes the following sentence containing the definite description, "the father of Charles II.", into its logical form:[38]

> (13) The father of Charles II. was executed.

According to Russell, if *x* was the father of Charles II., then the definite description "the father of Charles II." in sentence (13) becomes in the logical form of (13) as follows:

> *x* begat Charles II.; and 'if *y* begat Charles II., *y* is identical with *x'* is always true of *y*.[39]

Thus, sentence (13) becomes:

> (13x) It is not always false of *x* that *x* begat Charles II. and that *x* was executed and that 'if *y* begat Charles II., *y* is identical with *x*' is always true of *y*.[40]

According to Russell, sentence (13x) can be analyzed into the conjunction of the following three sentences in our ordinary language:

> (13a) At least one person begat Charles II.
> (13b) At most one person begat Charles II.
> (13c) Whoever begat Charles II. was executed.

[38] Russell (1905), pp. 481-482
[39] Ibid, p. 482
[40] Ibid, p. 482

On the basis of (13a)-(13c), sentence (13) can be translated into ordinary language in the following way:

> (14) Exactly one person begat Charles II. and whoever begat Charles II. was executed.

It can be translated in the language of first order symbolic logic in following way:

> (15) $(\exists x)(x\ begat\ c\ \wedge((\forall y)(y\ begat\ c\ \supset y = x)\wedge x\ was\ executed))$

Here we see that each of (14) and (15) (they are actually the same sentence in a different form) is a conjunction containing three parts that are conjoined with the *and* operator, in which "the father of Charles II." is no longer a constituent part. Thus, a sentence containing a definite description expresses a general proposition where the definite description in question is not a true constituent. Hence the truth value or the meaningfulness of a sentence that contains a definite description doesn't depend on the denotation of the definite description.

So, it seems that by analyzing a sentence containing a definite description into its logical form, where the definite description is not a constituent part, Russell rejects Frege's idea that definite descriptions are singular terms. We have seen in the previous section that according to Frege definite descriptions refer to a particular object, and the truth value of an encompassing sentence depends on whether the definite description has denotation or not. On the other hand, Russell shows that definite descriptions do not refer to any particular individual and the sentence doesn't contain any particular object denoted by the definite description. Hence, the denotation of a definite description doesn't interfere with the truth value of the sentence in question. Stephen Neale calls this property of a sentence containing a definite description object-independentness, whereas a sentence containing a proper name is object dependent; for a

sentence containing a proper name express a singular proposition, whose truth value depends on the denotation of the proper name in question.[41]

Now, the question arises: if a sentence containing a definite description expresses an object-independent general proposition whose truth value doesn't depend on the denotation of the definite description in question, how can a sentence that contains a definite description be either true or false? According to Russell, since sentence (14) and (15) are the logical form of (13), sentence (14) and (15) are implied by sentence (13); and conversely, (14) or (15) implies sentence (13).[42] So, sentence (14) or (15) provides both necessary and sufficient conditions for sentence (13) to be true or false. Since a conjunction is true if and only if all of its conjuncts are true; and a conjunction is false if at least one of its conjuncts is false, (14) or (15) is true if each of (13a)-(13c) is true. Since (14) or (15) implies (13), if (14) or (15) is true, according to *the Modus Ponens*, (13) is true. Conversely, since (13) implies (14) or (15), if (14) or (15) is false, according to *Modus Tollens*, (13) is false. Thus, we can say that (14) and (15) give an account of the conditions under which (13) is either true or false. In other words, (14) and (15) reveal the truth conditions of (13) which was hidden in the superficial grammatical structure of (13). These features indicate that one may understand and determine the truth-value of a descriptive sentence without knowing the particular object denoted by the definite description contained in that sentence (one may determine the truth value without knowing the unique satisfier, if there is any, of the definite description involved in the sentence). For a denotation of a definite description is not required for determining the truth-value of the sentence in

[41] Neale (1990), p. 17

[42] Russell writes, "…the proposition "the author of Waverley was Scotch," … involves: (1) at least one person wrote Waverley; (2) at most one person wrote Waverley; (3) whoever wrote Waverley was Scotch. All these three are implied by "the author of Waverley was Scotch. Conversely, the three together … imply that the author of Waverley was Scotch. Hence the three together may be taken as defining what is meant by the proposition "the author of Waverley was Scotch." (see Russell (1920), p. 177)

question. More specifically, such a sentence may be meaningful even if there is nothing that satisfies the definite description contained in the sentence.

Russell distinguishes between the primary and the secondary occurrences of a definite description in a sentence. Russell gives the example of the following sentence to explain the difference between a primary occurrence and a secondary occurrence of a definite description:

> (11) George IV. wished to know whether Scott was the author of Waverley.

According to Russell's theory, sentence (11) can be analyzed in its logical form as follows:

> (11p) Exactly one person wrote Waverley and George IV. wished to know whether Scott was that man.

However, sentence (11) can also be analyzed in the following way:

> (11s) George IV. wished to know whether exactly one person wrote Waverley and Scott was that man.

Here we see that (11p) expresses a proposition about a man who in fact wrote Waverley and George IV.'s curiosity whether Scott was that man or not. So, the entire sentence is within the scope of the quantifier. This occurrence of the definite description "the author of Waverley" in sentence (11p) is called a primary occurrence of "the author of Waverley". On the other hand, in (11s), the definite description "the author of Waverley" has its secondary occurrence. For here "the author of Waverley" occurs in the subordinate clause of the larger sentence, and hence only the smaller part of the sentence is within the scope of the quantifier. Russell says:

> A description has a "primary" occurrence when the proposition in which it occurs results from substituting the description for "x" in some propositional function ϕx; a description has a "secondary" occurrence when the result of substituting the description for x in ϕx gives only part of the proposition concerned.[43]

[43] Russell (1920), p. 179

Thus, the occurrence of a definite description in a sentence is called the primary occurrence if the larger sentence gets into the scope of the quantifier. On the other hand, an occurrence of a definite description is called the secondary occurrence, if the smaller sentence is in the scope of the quantifier. That means, when a definite description has the whole sentence within its scope the occurrence is a primary occurrence, whereas when the definite description occurs in the subordinate part of the larger sentence and the definite description has its narrow scope, it has its secondary occurrence. Thus, the difference between primary and secondary occurrences reveals the difference in the scope of quantifiers.

Now consider the Russellian solution to the puzzles discussed earlier. *The Puzzle of Substitutivity* is: how is the law of substitutivity applicable to identity statements containing a definite description embedded in a propositional attitude? Consider sentences (9) and (10) once again:

(9) Scott is the author of Waverley.
(10) Scott is Scott.

According to Russell, a proposition expressed by a sentence containing a definite description is not identical with the proposition expressed by a sentence that is obtained by substituting the definite description in question with a proper name.[44] Thus, the proposition expressed by sentence (9) and the proposition expressed by sentence (10) are not identical. For (10) is trivial whereas (9) describes a contingent fact that can be false. Moreover, "Scott is a man" is a sentence of the form "*x* is a man", where "Scott" stands for a particular individual, namely Scott. If another name "Sir Walter" refers to the same individual Scott, then by substituting "Sir Walter" for "Scott" we get the sentence "Scott is Sir Walter", which expresses the same proposition with the same truth value. If "Scott and "Sir Walter" refer to two different

[44] Ibid, p. 175

individuals, then the substitution brings a false result.[45] On the other hand, "the author of Waverley" doesn't stand for a particular individual. For "The author of Waverley is a man" means "Exactly one person wrote Waverley and that one is a man", where "the author of Waverley" is no longer a constituent of the sentence in question. Thus, Russell rejects Frege's idea that definite descriptions are singular terms—that definite descriptions stand for particular objects or individuals. Instead, sentence (9) can be analyzed into its logical form as follows:

(9a) Exactly one person wrote Waverley and Scott is that person.
In symbols:$(\exists x)(Wx \wedge ((\forall y)(Wy \supset y = x) \wedge (x = Scott))$

Here, (9a) is a conjunction of three conjuncts the first conjunct "$(\exists x)(Wx)$" of which can be false, for example it might be the case that the Waverley has never been written. Thus, (9) can be false even though (10) is true, for "Scott is Scott" cannot be false—it is trivial. Thus, we cannot validly substitute "Scott" for "the author of Waverley". So according to Russell a substitution of the term is allowable in an identity statement if both terms are names of the same individual or object. But a substitution of a name for a definite description is not allowable.

Now consider whether we can substitute "Scott" for "the author of Waverley" when "Scott is the author of Waverley" is embedded in a propositional attitude (wishing to know). Consider sentences (11), (9) and (12) once again:

(11) George IV. wished to know whether Scott was the author of Waverley.
(9) Scott is the author of Waverley.
(12) George IV. wished to know whether Scott was Scott.

[45] Ibid, p. 175; Russell (1918), pp. 114-115

Now the question is: how can we validly infer (12) from (11) and (9)? It has already been shown that when "the author of Waverley" has its primary occurrence in sentence (11), sentence (11) implies the following sentence:

> (11p) Exactly one person wrote Waverley and George IV. wished to know whether Scott was that man.

In symbols:

> *(∃x) (Wx ∧ ((∀y) (Wy ⊃ y = x)* ∧ George IV. wished to know whether *x=Scott.))*

When "the author of Waverley" has its secondary occurrence in sentence (11), sentence (11) implies the following sentence:

> (11s) George IV. wished to know whether exactly one person wrote Waverley and Scott was that person.

In symbols:

> George IV. wished to know whether $(\exists x)(Wx \wedge ((\forall y)(Wy \supset y = x) \wedge (x = Scott))$

Here, (11p) states the fact that there is an individual who wrote Waverley and George IV. was curious to know whether Scott was that man. According to Russell, if George IV. knew that Scott was the man who wrote Waverley; and saw Scott at a distance and asked whether the person seen at a distance was Scott, the sentence might become "George IV. wished to know whether Scott was Scott." And in that case the sentence "George IV. wished to know whether Scott was Scott" would be true.[46] That means, in that case the substitution of "Scott" for "the author of Waverley" is valid. For both sentences (11) and (12) have the same truth value—both are true. On the other hand, when "the author of Waverley" has its secondary occurrence in sentence (11), only the smaller part of the larger sentence is within the scope of the definite

[46] Russell (1905), p. 489

description "the author of Waverley". We have already seen that this substitution is not valid. For the logical form of the sentence doesn't contain "the author of Waverley" as its constituent for which we can substitute "Scott". And, the substitution of "Scott" for "the author of Waverley" may result in a false proposition. So, in case of secondary occurrence of "the author of Waverley" (11) is false even though sentence (12) is true. He says:

> The proposition "Scott was the author of *Waverley*," which was written out in its unabbreviated form … does not contain any constituent "the author of *Waverley*" for which we could substitute "Scott". This does not interfere with the truth of inferences resulting from making what is *verbally* the substitution of "Scott" for "the author of *Waverley*," so long as "the author of *Waverley"* has what I call a *primary* occurrence in the proposition considered.[47]

Thus, Russell's theory allows the substitution of a proper name for a definite description in an identity statement when the definite description has a *primary* occurrence in the sentence in question. Thus, both the Law of Identity and the Law of Substitutivity are applicable to the sentences containing definite descriptions when they are embedded in propositional attitudes and *the Puzzle of Substitutivity* is solved.

Now, consider *the Puzzle Concerning the Law of Excluded Middle*. The puzzle is how a declarative sentence containing an empty definite description, such as sentence (2), "The present king of France is bald," is either true or false, where nothing satisfies the definite description that can be attributed as either bald or not bald. Russell claims that his distinction of primary and secondary occurrences of a definite description in a sentence containing an empty definite description enables us to solve the problem of whether the present king of

[47] Ibid, pp. 488-489

France is bald or not bald. According to the contextual definition of a sentence containing a definite description, sentence (2) implies the following sentence:

> (2p) Exactly one person is a present king of France and whoever is a present king of France is bald.

In Symbols:

> (2p) $(\exists x)\ (Kx \wedge ((\forall y)\ (Ky \supset y = x) \wedge Bx))$

Here we see that (2p) is a conjunction that consists of three conjuncts, namely $(\exists x)(Kx),\ (\forall x)(Kx \supset (\forall y)(Ky\ \supset y = x)), and\ (\forall x)(Kx \supset Bx)$, where the first conjunct $(\exists x)(Kx)$ is false—there is no king of France now. Thus the whole conjunction $(\exists x)(Kx \wedge ((\forall x)(Kx \supset (\forall y)(Ky\ \supset y = x)) \wedge Bx))$ is false. Since (2p) is false, according to *Modus Tollens* sentence (2) is false. Thus, the sentence "the present king of France is bald" is a false sentence. Now consider the denial of (2):

> (2N) The present king of France is not bald.

If we analyze the sentence (2N) according to the primary occurrence of the definite description "the present king of France", it implies the following sentence:

> (2Np) Exactly one person is a present king of France and whoever is a present king of France is not bald.

In symbols:

> $(\exists x)(Kx \wedge ((\forall y)(Ky\ \supset y = x) \wedge \sim Bx))$

Here we see that since the first conjunct is false, the entire conjunction is false. Since (2Np) is false, (2N) is plainly false. Thus, when the primary occurrence of an empty definite description is considered the sentence "The present king of France is not bald" expresses a false proposition. However, sentence (2N) can also be analyzed in the following way, where the secondary occurrence of the definite description "the present king of France" is considered:

(2Ns) It is not the case that exactly one person is a present king of France and whoever is a present king of France is bald.

Or

(2Ns) Not (exactly one person is a present king of France and whoever is a present king of France is bald).

In symbols:

$$\sim(\exists x)(Kx \wedge ((\forall y)(Ky \supset y = x) \wedge Bx))$$

We have already seen that conjunction $(\exists x)(Kx \wedge ((\forall y)(Ky \supset y = x) \wedge Bx))$ is false. Since $(\exists x)(Kx \wedge ((\forall y)(Ky \supset y = x) \wedge Bx))$ is false the negation of $(\exists x)(Kx \wedge ((\forall y)(Ky \supset y = x) \wedge Bx))$, *i.e.* $\sim(\exists x)(Kx \wedge ((\forall y)(Ky \supset y = x)) \wedge Bx))$ is true. Since (2Ns) is true, according to *Modus Ponens*, (2N) is true.[48] Thus, it is evident that the denial of any sentence containing an empty definite description is false if the occurrence of that description is primary; and in that case both the sentence and its negation become false and the puzzle seems to be unsolved.[49] However, the denial of any sentence that contains an empty definite description is true, where the occurrence of the definite description is secondary; and in that case the sentence and its negation seem to be compatible with each other. Both are not true or false at the same time. According to according to LEM, either (2) or (2N) is true. In symbols:

2 ∨ 2N is true; and
~ (2 ∨ 2N) [or ~2 . ~2N] is false.

[48] Since Russell claims that the conjunction of the three sentences, namely, "at least one person wrote Waverley", "at most one person wrote Waverley" and "whoever wrote Waverley was Scotch" is implied by the sentence "The author of Waverley was Scotch"; and conversely, the three together imply that the author of Waverley was Scotch. (see Russell (1920), p. 177) So, according to Russell (2N) implies ($2N_s$) and vice versa; and hence we can deduce ($2N_s$) from (2N) following *Modus Ponens*.
[49] Russell (1920), p. 179

So, if we consider the secondary occurrence, the puzzle seems to be removed: sentence (2) is false and (2N) is true. In other words, (~2 . ~2N) is false. Now the question is: why should we consider the secondary occurrence of the definite description in the denial of (2)?

According to Russell, any sentence in which the definite description has its primary occurrence implies that the object described by the definite description in question exists.[50] So, if we consider the primary occurrence of "the present king of France" in the sentence "The present king of France is bald", it will imply that the present king of France exists; if we consider "the present king of France" has its primary occurrence in "The present king of France is not bald", that will also imply that the present king of France exists. Thus, a denial of a sentence containing a definite description should contain the secondary occurrence of the definite description in question. Russell says:

> You can only avoid the hypothesis that he wears a wig by observing that the denial of the proposition 'The present King of France is bald' will not be 'The present King of France is not bald', if you mean by that 'There is such a person as the King of France and that person is not bald'. The reason for this is that when you state that the present King of France is bald you say 'There is a *c* such that *c* is now King of France and *c* is bald' and the denial is not 'There is a *c* such that *c* is now King of France and *c* is not bald'. It is more complicated. It is: 'Either there is not a *c* such that *c* is now King of France, or, if there is such a *c*, then *c* is not bald.' Therefore you see that, if you want to deny the proposition 'The present King of France is bald', you can do it by denying that he exists, instead of by denying that he is bald.[51]

Thus, according to Russell, in order to avoid the existence of the present king of France we should consider ($2N_s$), not ($2N_p$), as the denial of sentence (2). And by considering the

[50] Russell (1918) p. 119
[51] Ibid, p. 120

distinction of primary and secondary occurrences, and considering ($2N_s$) as the denial of (2), we can show that a sentence containing an empty definite description that has a subject predicate form is true and its denial is false (or it is false and its denial is true); and hence according to the *Law of Excluded Middle* it is meaningful. So, Russell's theory can account for the truth value of a sentence containing an empty definite description, whereas Frege's theory fails to account for the truth value of such sentences. In other words, when Frege's theory gives an account of meaningfulness of a sentence that contains a definite description with no denotation at the cost of having truth value, Russell's theory can account for both the meaningfulness and truth value of such a sentence.

Now consider the third puzzle, *i.e. the Puzzle of Denying the Existence of Non-existents.* The puzzle was concerning the issue of explaining how a sentence containing an empty definite description, such as "the present king of France doesn't exist", that denies the existence of a non-entity, expresses a true proposition without committing the fallacy of self-contradiction. In other words, how can the following sentence express a true proposition?

(8) The present king of France doesn't exist.

We have already seen that according to Russell, a definite description of the form "the *F*" is not a constituent of the sentence of the form "The *F* is *G*". For if a definite description were a constituent of a sentence containing that definite description, the sentence in question would be about a particular individual or object referred to by the definite description in question—the sentence would be about the denotation of the definite description in question. And in that case a sentence containing an empty definite description would not be true or false due to the failure of referring to an object or individual. However, we have seen that a sentence containing a definite description has a truth value; and hence it is meaningful, even though the definite description doesn't refer to any individual. For a definite description doesn't denote

anything and hence the denotation of a definite description cannot interfere with the truth value of a sentence containing the definite description in question. That is why sentences containing empty definite descriptions, such as "The present king of France is not bald", have a truth value and hence these are meaningful. Thus, a definite description doesn't need to refer to an existent object, in fact a definite description doesn't refer to any particular object. Since without any denotation a sentence containing a definite description can be either true or false and hence can be meaningful, it is possible for the *F* not to exist; and it is possible for a sentence "The *F* is *G*", in which "the *F*" occurs, to be either true or false. Now the question arises: what is meant by existence? Or what is meant by "The author of Waverley exists?" According to Russell

(13) The author of Waverley exists

means:

(14) There is a person such that he wrote Waverley.

If we use a propositional function, then we get:

(15) There is an x, such that x wrote Waverley.

Thus, the propositional function has two properties:

(15a) It must be true for at least one x.

(15b) It must be true for at most one x.

In symbols: $(\exists x)(Wx \wedge (\forall y)(Wy \supset y = x))$

Thus, it seems that according to Russell, a sentence of the form "The *F* exists" involves a two-clause analysis instead of a three-clause analysis. That means that the logical form of the sentence "The *F* exists" is a conjunction of two conjuncts instead of three conjuncts, which don't contain any predicate of being existent. In other words, when we analyze a sentence containing a definite description, the predicate "exist" along with the definite description disappear. And, on the basis of the truth or falsity of the conjuncts, the truth or falsity of the

original sentence is determined. Now if Waverley had never been written, then $(\exists x)(Wx)$ would be false; if Waverley was written by two persons then $(\exists x)(Wx \wedge (\forall y)(Wy \supset y = x))$ would be false. Thus both (15a) and (15b) construct the necessary and sufficient condition for (13) to be true. Now consider the following sentence:

(16) The present king of France exists.

According to the Russellian analysis, sentence (16) means:

(17) Exactly one person is a present king of France.
In symbols: $(\exists x)$ *(Kx ∧ (∀y) (Ky ⊃ y = x))*

Where existence is no longer a constituent part of "the present king of France exists". Since the sentence $(\exists x)(Kx \wedge (\forall y)(Ky \supset y = x))$ is false (*i.e.* (17) is false), following Modus Tollens, (16) is false. Now consider how the sentence denying the existence of non-existents, for example, 'the present king of France doesn't exist" is true. It was discussed earlier how, according to Russell, a definite description has two types of occurrences in a sentence in which the definite description in question occurs: the primary occurrence and the secondary occurrence. In sentence (17), the definite description "the present king of France" has a primary occurrence. Since (16) is false, the denial of (16), "It is not the case that the present king of France exists" is true, where "the present king of France" has a secondary occurrence. For if "the present king of France" has its secondary occurrence in "The present king of France doesn't exist", the sentence in question means:

(18) It is not the case that exactly one person is a present king of France.
In symbols: ~$(\exists x)$ *(Kx ∧ (∀y) (Ky⊃ y = x))*

Where "exactly one person is a present king of France" is within the scope of "it is not the case", rather than containing the whole sentence within its scope. Thus, it has its secondary occurrence in (18). Since $(\exists x)$ *(Kx ∧ (∀y) (Ky⊃ y = x))* is false, its denial, ~$(\exists x)$ *(Kx ∧ (∀y) (Ky⊃ y = x))* is true. Thus, Russell shows that "existence" is not a predicate that can be

attributed to an object denoted by the subject term. For when we analyze a sentence of the form "The *F* exists" into its logical form, the property of being existent disappears. Russell says:

> […] there is a vast amount of philosophy that rests upon the notion that existence is, … a property that you can attribute to things, and that the things that exist have the property of existence and the things that do not exist do not. That is rubbish, whether you take kinds of things, or individual things described. When I say, *e.g.* 'Homer existed', … I am asserting that those poems were written by one man, which is a very doubtful proposition; but if you could get hold of the actual person who did actually write those poems, … to say of him that he existed would be uttering nonsense, not a falsehood but nonsense, because it is only of persons described that it can be significantly said that they exist … You can assert 'The so-and-so exists', meaning that there is just one *c* which has those properties, but when you get hold of a *c* that has them, you cannot say of this *c* that it exists, because that is nonsense: it is not false, but it has no meaning at all.[52]

Thus, according to Russell, existence is not a property of an individual. And if we utter a proposition by attributing existence to an object we will express a meaningless proposition by this utterance. Since the logical analysis doesn't contain existence as a predicate, there is no contradiction in expressing the true proposition "the present king of France doesn't exist", the round square doesn't exist" and so on. So, it is evident that Russell's theory can solve *the puzzle of denying the existence of non-existents* in a non-Meinongian way where we don't need to accept the existence of unreal objects and the very unintuitive property of being.

From the above discussion, it is evident that by providing a contextual definition of a definite description and by making a distinction between the primary and secondary

[52] Ibid, p. 121

occurrence, Russell avoids the problems arisen from Frege's theory and Meinong's theory of empty definite descriptions. So, Russell's theory is an improved version of "the rival theories of Gottlob Frege and Alexius Meinong."[53] However, Russell's theory faces a number of objections. Donnellan's objection is the most prominent one among the objections to Russell's theory. The next chapter will be devoted to exploring the objections raised by Donnellan to Russell's theory.

[53] Linsky (2014), p. 37

Chapter Two

Donnellan's Objections to Russell's Theory

In the first chapter, we have seen that according to Russell, a sentence containing a definite description expresses a general proposition where the definite description in question is not a constituent part. Since Russell's theory holds that the definite description is not a constituent part of the proposition expressed by the sentence containing the definite description in question, it can deal with the meaningfulness and truth-values of a sentence containing an empty definite description in a better way than Frege and Meinong's theories do. For according to Russell's theory, the denotation of a definite description is not necessary for determinining the truth value and meaningfulness of a sentence containing that definite description. Moreover, Russell's theory can solve the puzzles concerning definite descriptions. However, his theory faces a number of objections. Keith Donnellan (1931-2015) is one of those philosophers who think that Russell's theory is inadequate. Donnellan in his paper "Reference and Definite Descriptions" criticizes Russell's theory and claims that Russell's theory ignores one of the two major uses of definite descriptions, namely the referential use; and hence Russell's theory is incorrect.[54]

According to Donnellan, a definite description has two types of uses: an attributive use and a referential use. A definite description is said to be used in a sentence of the form "The *F* is *G*" attributively when a speaker asserts "The *F* is *G*" to talk about whoever or whatever is the *F*. So, when a definite description is used attributively, the speaker uttering a sentence containing that definite description intends to assert something about whoever or whatever fits that definite description rather than mentioning any particular object or

[54] Donnellan, (1966), pp. 281, 297

individual. On the other hand, a definite description is said to be used in a sentence of the form "the *F* is *G*" referentially when the speaker asserts "The *F* is *G*" to talk about a particular person or object that has already been in his mind. That means that a definite description is used referentially when the speaker uses it to enable his audience to pick out a particular person or object whom he is talking about regardless of whether that person or object fits that definite description or not.[55] In Donnellan's own words:

> A speaker who uses a definite description attributively in an assertion states something about whoever or whatever is the so-and-so. A speaker who uses a definite description referentially in an assertion, on the other hand, uses the description to enable his audience to pick out whom or what he is talking about and states something about that person or thing. In the first case the definite description might be said to occur essentially, for the speaker wishes to assert something about whatever or whoever fits that description; but in the referential use the definite description is merely one tool for doing a certain job—calling attention to a person or thing—and in general any other device for doing the same job, another description or a name, would do as well. In the attributive use, the attribute of being the so-and-so is all important, while it is not in the referential use.[56]

Thus, in the case of the attributive use, the attribute of being the *F* plays an important role. A speaker is able to say something true or false if and only if there is something that fits the definite description in question—there is a person to whom "the *F*" can be attributed. On the other hand, in the case of the referential use, the attribute of being the *F* is not important to talk about a particular person using "the *F*"—the speaker is able to express a proposition by uttering a sentence containing a definite description, even though nothing fits the definite

[55] Ibid, p. 285
[56] Ibid, p. 285

description in question. To illustrate the distinction between the attribute and referential use of a definite description, Donnellan gives the following example:

(19) The murderer of Smith is insane.

Now, suppose that Smith is a very kind and lovable person who is killed brutally. A speaker who comes upon poor Smith severely wounded doesn't know who murdered Smith. Because of the brutal manner of the killing, he utters sentence (19). Since the speaker doesn't know who the murder is, by uttering sentence (19), he states that whoever murdered Smith is insane.[57] Thus, in this case, sentence (19) expresses the following proposition:

(19a) Exactly one person murdered Smith and whoever murdered Smith is insane.

So, it seems that when a definite description is used attributively, the sentence containing that definite description expresses a general proposition where the attribute of being the murderer of an individual is taken into account and then the predicate "insane" is applied to him. Here, by uttering sentence (19) the speaker doesn't talk about any particular individual, rather he talks about any individual who fits the definite description "the murderer of Smith". So, if John fits the definite description "the murderer of Smith", *i.e.* if John murdered Smith, then the speaker is talking about John and saying that John is insane; similarly, if Black fits the definite description "the murderer of Smith", *i.e*. if Black killed Smith, then the speaker expresses something about Black. That means that in the case of the attributive use, by uttering a sentence containing a definite description, a speaker expresses an object-independent general proposition.[58]

[57] Ibid, p. 285

[58] Stephen Neale uses the term "object-independent proposition" to mean the general proposition expressed by "The *F* is *G*", when "the *F*" is used attributively in an utterance. He claims that *There is exactly one F and whatever is an F is G* "is object-independent in the sense that there is no object for which 'the *F*' stands, upon which the existence of the proposition depends." (see Neale (1990), p. 6)

Now suppose that Jones has been accused of killing Smith and is placed on trial. By seeing Jones' odd behavior the speaker utters sentence (19) and states that Jones is insane. Here, by uttering sentence (19) the speaker in fact wishes to talk about a particular person, namely Jones, who has already been in his mind. Thus, here the definite description "the murderer of Smith" is used referentially. For by uttering sentence (19), the speaker enables his audience to pick out Jones, no matter whether Jones actually murdered Smith or not.[59] Thus, when a definite description is used referentially, the speaker is able to make a true assertion even if the person referred to by the definite description doesn't fit the definite description in question. Here, the proposition expressed by sentence (19) will be true if Jones is really insane; and the proposition expressed by sentence (19) will be false if Jones is not insane. Thus, the truth value of the proposition expressed by sentence (19) depends on a particular individual Jones, regardless of whether he fits "the murderer of Smith" or not. So, it appears that in the case of the referential use a sentence containing a definite description expresses an object-dependent singular proposition.[60] Donnellan says:

> If someone asks to whom we are referring, by using this description, the answer is "Jones." This, I shall say, is a referential use of the definite description.[61]

Thus, according to Donnellan, a definite description can be used referentially when it is used to pick out a particular individual, no matter whether that individual fits "the *F*" or not. Moreover, in the case of the referential use, the answer to the question whom you are talking

[59] Donnellan (1966), p. 286
[60] Neale uses the term "object-dependent proposition" to mean a proposition expressed by "The *F* is *G"* that could not be expressed if the object referred to by the term "The *F*" didn't exist. That means, the existence of the proposition *o is G* expressed by "The *F* is *G*" depends on whether there is an object o that is referred to by "the *F*". (see Neale (1990), p. 5)
[61] Donnellan (1966), p. 286

is Jones, whereas in the case of the attributive use, the answer to the question whom you are talking about is anyone who fits the definite description in question.

According to Donnellan, the distinction between the attributive and referential uses also appears in a difference of consequences of presupposition failure. Donnellan points out that in both cases, the speaker presupposes that there is an entity that fits the definite description in question. However, when the presupposition is false, the two uses of the same definite description in the same sentence bring different outcomes. For example, when the speaker uses the definite description "the murderer of Smith" in sentence (19), in both cases (*i.e.* in both attributive and referential uses) the speaker presupposes or implies that there is a murderer who killed Smith.[62] Now suppose that Smith was not in fact murdered, rather he committed suicide or he had an accident and was injured badly. So, in both cases, the hypothesis or presupposition "there is a murderer" is false. Thus, in the case of the attributive use, since there is no murderer of Smith, there is no one of whom the predicate "insane" can be attributed. That means that in the case of the presupposition failure, the speaker fails to express a true or false proposition about something when he uses the definite description attributively in a sentence. On the other hand, since a definite description, in the case of the referential use, is a means of identifying a person whom the speaker intends to talk about, the speaker is able to identify the person (whom he wants to talk about) correctly even though no one fits the definite description in question.[63] So, since the speaker intends to talk about Jones, when he uses the definite description "the murderer of Smith" in sentence (19) referentially, he is able to identify Jones by using "the murderer of Smith" correctly (he is able to refer to Jones) even though no one fits the definite description "the murderer of

[62] Ibid, p. 286
[63] Ibid, p. 286

Smith". That means that when the speaker utters sentence (19) using "the murderer of Smith" referentially, he is quite successful in enabling his audience to pick out Jones, even though Jones is not the murderer of Smith.[64] Moreover, the proposition expressed by sentence (19) is true provided that Jones is in fact insane. Donnellan says:

> Generalizing from this case, we can say, I think, that there are two uses of sentences of the form, "The ϕ is ψ." In the first, if nothing is the ϕ then nothing has been said to be ψ. In the second, the fact that nothing is the ϕ does not have this consequence.[65]

Thus, according to Donnellan, the referential uses of a definite description do not depend on the assumption that there is exactly one individual or object that satisfies the definite description in question. For the speaker is able to express a true proposition by uttering a sentence, namely sentence (19), even though the presupposition is false. On the other hand, the attributive uses of a definite description depend on the assumption that there is exactly one individual or object that satisfies the definite description in question—when the assumption is false the speaker is unable to express a true or false proposition about anything by uttering a sentence containing that definite description. Donnellan illustrates this difference between the attributive and referential use using the following example:

> Suppose one is at a party and, seeing an interesting-looking person holding a martini glass, one asks, "Who is the man drinking a martini?" If it should turn out that there is only water in the glass, one has nevertheless asked a question about a particular person, a question that it is possible for someone to answer. Contrast this with the use of the same question by the chairman of the local Teetotalers Union. He has just been informed that a man is drinking a martini at their annual party. He responds by asking his informant, "Who is the man drinking a martini?" In asking the question the chairman does not have some particular person

[64] Ibid, p. 286
[65] Ibid, p. 287

> in mind about whom he asks the question; if no one is drinking a martini, if the information is wrong, no person can be singled out as the person about whom the question was asked.[66]

Here in the first case, the definite description "the man drinking a martini" contained in the sentence "Who is the man drinking a martini?" is used referentially by the speaker. For since the man referred to by the definite description "the man drinking a martini" is actually drinking water, the definite description "the man drinking a martini" is empty. Nevertheless, the question asked by the speaker can enable a hearer to pick out the man whom the speaker intends to talk about. Now suppose Jim is the man drinking water in a martini glass. So, the hearer can answer whether Jim is drinking a martini, even though Jim does not fit the definite description "the man drinking a martini". So, in the case of the referential use, the question is asked about a particular person or object, where the answer doesn't depend on the fact that that particular person fits the definite description in question[67], rather it depends on speaker's intention and the fact that the hearer is able to understand the speaker's intention. On the other hand, in the second case, the chairman of the local Teetotalers Union does not have any particular person in his mind. Rather he asks about whoever is drinking a martini, where the answer depends on the fact that exactly one person is drinking a martini. If no one is drinking a martini, *i.e.* if the definite description is empty, the hearer will not be able to pick out a person and answer that "*x* is drinking a martini." Donnellan says:

> In the referential use of a definite description we may succeed in picking out a person or thing to ask a question about even though he or it does not really fit the description; but in the attributive use if nothing fits the description, no straight-forward answer to the question can be given.[68]

[66] Ibid, p. 287
[67] Ibid, p. 287
[68] Ibid, p. 287

Although, Donnellan points out, in both the attributive and referential use a speaker presupposes that there is someone or something that fits the definite description, the presupposition involved in the attributive use is quite different from the presupposition involved in the referential use. For in the case of an attributive use, the speaker doesn't presuppose a particular someone or something that fits the description, rather, he presupposes that someone or something fits the description in question. For example, in Smith's murderer case, the speaker doesn't presuppose that Jones, Black or Jim is the murderer of Smith, rather he presupposes that someone (anyone who fits the description) murdered Smith. Thus, in the case of the attributive use, sentence (19) expresses the following proposition:

> (19a) *Exactly one person murdered Smith and whoever murdered Smith is insane.*
> In symbols: (19a) $(\exists x)\ (Mx \wedge ((\forall y)\ (My \supset y = x)) \wedge Ix))$

Here, we see that (19a) is a general proposition that contains an existential quantifier: here the attribute of being the murderer is taken into account at first and then the predicate "insane" has been applied to him. Thus, according to Donnellan, when a definite description is used attributively the sentence containing that definite description expresses a general proposition, which is parallel to Russell's three clause analysis of the sentence containing a definite description.[69] For it is shown in the first chapter that according to Russell, a sentence containing a definite description expresses a general proposition. On the other hand, in the referential use, "the speaker presupposes of *a particular someone* or *something* that he or it fits the description in question."[70] For example, in the case of the man drinking a martini, the

[69] Donnellan doesn't claim that when a definite description is used attributively, the sentence containing that definite description expresses a general proposition. However, on the basis of his claim that the attributive use of a definite description presupposes that *someone* fits the definite description we can claim that it expresses a general proposition. For a general proposition doesn't refer specifically to a particular individual (see Copi & Cohen (2002), p.388)

[70] Donnellan (1966), p. 288

speaker presupposes that that man (say Jim) over there is drinking a martini; in the Smith's murderer case, the speaker presupposes that particularly Jones is the murderer of Smith, when he uses "the murderer of Smith" in sentence (19) referentially. Thus, when the definite description "the murderer of Smith" is used referentially, sentence (19) may express the following proposition:

(19r) Jones is insane.

Here we see that proposition (19r) is a singular proposition that asserts that a particular individual, Jones, has the attribute of insanity. Thus, when a definite description is used referentially, the sentence containing that definite description expresses a singular proposition.[71] So, it is evident that, according to Donnellan, a sentence containing a definite description can express two different propositions depending on the context in which it is used and the intention of the speaker to talk about something. Now, if this is the case then a sentence containing a definite description must be ambiguous: a sentence containing a definite description has two sorts of meaning, an attributive meaning and a referential meaning.[72] When a sentence containing a definite description is used to talk about whoever fits the description in question (and hence the sentence in question expresses a general proposition), the attributive meaning is salient; when the sentence is used to talk about an intended person regardless of the fact that that person fits the description (and hence the sentence in question expresses a singular proposition), the referential meaning is salient.

[71] "An (affirmative) singular proposition asserts that a particular individual has a specified attribute." (see Copi and Cohen (2002), p. 386

[72] Michael Devitt, in his paper "The case for Referential Descriptions", mentions that definite descriptions are ambiguous on the basis of two types of use: it has an attributive meaning and a referential meaning. Devitt says, "… many now think that definites are 'ambiguous', having not only the attributive meaning captured by Russell but also a 'referential' meaning like that of a name or demonstrative… Despite agreement that descriptions have these two uses, there is no agreement that they have two meanings." (see Devitt (2004), p. 280)

Now, if a definite description is ambiguous, *i.e.* it has two sorts of meaning then Russell's theory of definite descriptions is *incomplete.*[73] For, Donnellan claims, Russell's theory ignores the second sort of meaning (*i.e.* the referential meaning) of sentences containing definite descriptions, and thereby it fails to capture the ambiguity mentioned above. Now the question is: how does Russell's theory fail to capture the ambiguity mentioned above? In the first chapter, it has been shown that according to Russell's theory, the sentence "The *F* is *G*" entails that *there is exactly one F.* If there is nothing that fits "the *F*", "The *F* is *G*" is false. In other words, a proposition expressed by a sentence of the form "The *F* is *G*" is true if and only if there exists an individual or object *o* such that *o* uniquely fits "the *F*". So, if the speaker misdescribes an object or individual *o* by using the definite description "the *F*", the result of his misdescription makes his assertion false. For example, consider sentence (19) once again:

(19) The murderer of Smith is insane.

According to Russell's theory, sentence (19) entails the following proposition:

(19i) *There is exactly one murderer of Smith and whoever murdered Smith is insane.*

Here (19i) is not about a particular person or object. Rather it is about a person who fits the definite description "the murderer of Smith". If Smith committed suicide, *i.e.* there is no one who murdered Smith, then according to Russell's theory (19) is false. Similarly, if a speaker utters that "Her husband is kind to her" seeing an unmarried woman with a gentleman in a party, he misdescribes the man with the woman and expresses a false proposition—his utterance is not about the boyfriend, rather his utterance is about whoever is her husband.

[73] According to the interpretation of some proponents of the semantic significance of Donnellan's distinction, namely Marga Reimer, Donnellan has suggested that Russell's theory is incomplete based on the fact that it fails to accommodate the referential use of the definite description. (see Reimer (1998), p. 89)

Thus, according to Russell's theory, the attribute of being the *F* plays an important role in determining the truth value of a sentence that contains "the *F*". However, we have already seen that according to Donnellan, when the speaker intends to talk about a particular individual or object, he can utter a true assertion even though he misdescribes the intended individual or object. In other words, when a definite description "the *F*" in a sentence of the form "The *F* is *G*" is used referentially, the speaker of the sentence "The *F* is *G*" can refer to a particular individual or object *o* and the speaker can say something true of *o*, even though *o* does not uniquely fit "the *F*" (even though nothing fits "the *F*"). For example, a speaker can make a true assertion by uttering (19) when he intends to talk about Jones, provided that Jones is insane. A speaker can make a true assertion by uttering "Her husband is kind to her" when he intends to talk about the boyfriend of the lady provided that he is really kind to the lady. So, according to Donnellan, Russell's theory fails to prove that what is being referred to by "the *F*" is the *F*. Donnellan says:

> The "implication" that something is the ϕ, as I have argued, does not amount to an entailment; it is more like a presumption based on what is *usually* true of the use of a definite description to refer. In any case, of course, Russell's theory does not show—what is true of the referential use—that the implication that *something* is the ϕ comes from the more specific implication that *what is being referred to* is the ϕ. Hence, as a theory of definite descriptions, Russell's view seems to apply, if at all, to the attributive use only.[74]

Thus, there are cases, in the referential uses, where the speaker doesn't imply that there is something that fits the definite description he uses; and Russell's theory fails to prove that *something is referred to by the definite description* entails that *there is something that fits that definite description*. For, in Russell's theory, a sentence containing a definite description

[74] Keith Donnellan, "Reference and Definite Descriptions", pp. 292-293

expresses a general proposition where no particular individual is the constituent part of that proposition. In other words, since a general sentence does not refer to any particular individual, according to Russell's theory, the speaker does not intend to talk about a particular person when he uses a sentence containing a definite description. Moreover, since a sentence that contains a definite description is not about a particular parson, there is no way of making a true assertion by misdescribing any individual or object with that definite description. Thus, Donnellan claims that Russell's theory ignores the referential use of a definite description. Hence, Russell's theory is incomplete. For a complete theory is one that can capture the both uses of definite descriptions. So according to Donnellan, Russell's theory of definite descriptions is incorrect.[75] He says:

> I conclude, then, that neither Russell's nor Strawson's theory represents a correct account of the use of definite descriptions—Russell's because it ignores altogether the referential use, Strawson's because it fails to make the distinction between the referential and the attributive and mixes together truths about each (together with some things that are false).[76]

So, a correct theory is one that recognizes both uses of a definite description. Since Russell's theory ignores the referential use, and recognizes that definite descriptions are used only attributively, Russell's theory of descriptions is incomplete, and hence it is incorrect.

Now the question is: how is it determined whether on a particular occasion a definite description is used referentially or attributively? One may argue that it is speaker's belief about whether a particular entity fits the definite description that makes a particular use of that

[75] Please note that Donnellan himself claims that Russell's theory is not a correct theory as it cannot account for the referential use of a definite description. On the other hand, some defenders of Donnellan suggest that according to Donnellan's distinction Russell's theory is incomplete. In this thesis, I will use the terms "incomplete" and "incorrect" synonymously. For an incomplete theory cannot be counted as a correct theory. Nor can an incorrect theory be counted as a complete theory.
[76] Ibid, p. 297

definite description on a particular occasion referential or attributive.[77] For example, in Smith's murderer case, in the attributive use the speaker does not have any belief that a particular one (*e.g.* Jones or Black) murdered Smith, whereas in the referential use he has the belief that Jones is the murderer of Smith. Similarly, in the case of the man drinking a martini, in the referential use, the speaker has a belief that the man over there holding a martini glass is drinking a martini. However, Donnellan rejects this idea. For there are cases where a speaker believes that a particular person satisfies the definite description in question and he uses it attributively; there are cases where he believes that someone other than the intended person fits the definite description but he uses it referentially to talk *about* the intended person. So, the speaker's belief does not make any difference in the uses of a definite description. Categorically, according to Donnellan, it is not possible to determine whether a definite description used in a particular sentence is referential or attributive either.[78] Rather, it is the speaker's intention on a particular occasion that determines whether the definite description he uses is referential or attributive.[79] For example, the definite description "the murderer of Smith" in sentence (19), *i.e.* in the sentence "The murderer of Smith is insane", can be used in either way based on the speaker's intention on a given occasion: when it is used to talk about whoever murdered Smith, it is attributive; when it is used to talk about a particular person Jones, Robinson and so on, it is referential. Thus, the grammatical structure of a sentence containing a definite description doesn't interfere with whether the definite description in question is attributive or referential in its use.[80] It does not seem that his distinction reveals

[77] Ibid, pp. 289-290
[78] Ibid, p. 297
[79] Ibid, p. 297
[80] Ibid, p. 297

two different meanings—the distinction does not reveal a semantic ambiguity of a sentence containing a definite description. Donnellan says:

> In general, whether or not a definite description is used referentially or attributively is a function of the speaker's intensions in a particular case. […] It does not appear plausible to account for this, either, as an ambiguity in the sentence. The grammatical structure of the sentence seems to me to be the same whether the description is used referentially or attributively: that is, it is not syntactically ambiguous. Nor does it seem at all attractive to suppose an ambiguity in the meaning of the words; it does not appear to be semantically ambiguous. (Perhaps we could say that the sentence is pragmatically ambiguous: the distinction between roles that the description plays is a function of the speaker's intentions.) These, of course, are intuitions; I do not have an argument for these conclusions.[81]

So, it seems that Donnellan is not talking about the semantic ambiguity of a definite description—a definite description is ambiguous in just the way the word "bachelor" is. Moreover, he emphasizes that the ambiguity lies in two different ways in which the same definite description can be used by the speaker based on his intention on a particular occasion. That means it is the speaker's intention that determines whether a particular use of a definite description is attributive or referential. Thus, it seems to be plausible to think that a definite description is pragmatically ambiguous—the proposition expressed by the sentence containing a definite description has one meaning even though the sentence can be used to talk about two different individuals based on the speaker's intention on a given occasion. That means that Donnellan's distinction is not semantically encoded; rather it is a pragmatically encoded one. Now if a definite description is pragmatically ambiguous, *i.e.* it has only one lexical meaning but it can be used to talk about two different entity based on the speaker's

[81] Ibid, p. 297

intention on a particular occasion, then Russell's theory is *incomplete* in the sense that it ignores the two different uses of a definite description on two different occasions based on the speaker's intention.

So, the following seems to be a very important question the answer to which has a significant impact on any evaluation of Russell's theory of definite descriptions: does the phenomenon (*i.e.* the phenomenon that a definite description contained in a sentence may be used attributively and referentially as well) arising from Donnellan's distinction posit a genuine problem for Russell's theory? In order to respond to this question, it is important to determine whether Donnellan's distinction has any semantic significance or pragmatic significance. If we consider the above mentioned passage from Donnellan, it is plausible to think that he suggests that his distinction has a pragmatic significance rather than a semantic significance. And this is what I will argue in this thesis. First, however, in the next chapter, I will consider two major responses to Donnellan's distinction, namely Kripke's response and Devitt's response, which will also lead to the same conclusion.

Chapter Three

Responses to Donnellan's Distinction

3.1 Introduction

As discussed in the first two chapters, according to Russell's theory, a sentence of the form *"*The *F* is *G"* that contains the definite description "the *F*" expresses a general proposition: *There is exactly one F and whatever is an F is G.* However, according to Donnellan, the sentence *"*The *F* is *G"* can express two different types of proposition depending on the intention of the speaker on a given occasion: "The *F* is *G"* expresses a general proposition when "the *F*" is used attributively; "The *F* is *G*" expresses a singular proposition when "the *F*" is used referentially. When "the *F*" is used attributively, "The *F* is *G*" expresses the proposition, *There is exactly one F and whatever is an F is G,* which is captured by Russell as an analysis of the sentence "The *F* is *G*". On the other hand, when "the *F*" is used referentially, "The *F* is *G*" expresses the proposition, *o is G,* where *o* is a particular object or person in speaker's mind on a given occasion. Thus, according to Russell's theory a sentence that contains a definite description has only one meaning, *i.e.* it expresses only a general proposition, whereas, according to Donnellan, a sentence that contains a definite description is ambiguous, *i.e.* it has two types of meaning, the attributive meaning and the referential meaning, depending on the intention of the speaker on a given occasion it is uttered. Moreover, according to Russell's theory, the truth condition of "The *F* is *G*" depends on whether the predicate designated by "*G*" is applicable to the actual object that satisfies "the *F*". On the other hand, according to Donnellan's theory, when the definite description is used referentially, the truth condition of "The *F* is *G*" depends on whether the attribute designated by "*G*" is applicable to the object *o* that the speaker has in his mind regardless of whether *o* satisfies "the *F*" or not. Now the question arises, whether the distinction between the

attributive and the referential meaning of the sentence containing the definite description mentioned by Donnellan has any semantic significance, which is also my concern in this thesis. In this chapter, I will try to explore this issue by taking a closer look at two major rival responses to Donnellan's distinction: Saul A. Kripke's response, who claims that Donnellan's distinction doesn't have any semantic significance; and Michael Devitt's response who believes, in contrast to Kripke's view, that Donnellan's distinction has a semantic significance.

3.2 Saul A. Kripke's Response

Saul A. Kripke, in his paper "Speaker's Reference and Semantic Reference", claims that Donnellan's distinction can't undermine Russell's theory since Donnellan's distinction doesn't have any semantic significance. Following Grice's distinction between a sentence's meaning and an utterer's meaning, in his paper "Speaker's Reference and Semantic Reference" Kripke distinguishes between what a designator itself refers to and what a speaker refers to by using this designator. He calls the former the semantic referent and the later the speaker's referent of the designator. Kripke defines "the semantic referent" as follows:

> If a speaker has a designator in his idiolect, certain conventions of his idiolect (given various facts about the world) determine the referent in the idiolect: that I call the *semantic referent* of the designator. (If the designator is ambiguous, or contains indexicals, demonstratives, or the like, we must speak of the semantic referent on a given occasion. The referent will be determined by the conventions of the language plus the speaker's intentions and various contextual features.)[82]

So, by the semantic referent of a designator he means the referent which is determined by certain conventions of the idiolect of the speaker. Consider the example Donnellan takes from

[82]Kripke (1977), p. 263

Leonard Linsky once again: a speaker observes a lady in a party with her boyfriend and utters the following sentence to talk about the boyfriend of the lady:

(20) Her husband is kind to her.

Suppose, the lady got married to Black. However, in this party she came with her boyfriend John. So, the semantic referent of the designator "her husband" (and henceforth the definite description "the husband of the lady") in sentence (20) is Black, to whom the lady got married rather than the person the speaker is talking about, namely John. On the other hand, the speaker's referent of a designator is a person or an object that the speaker wishes to talk about on a given occasion, and believes that the person or object in question fulfills the conditions for being the semantic referent of that designator.[83] Kripke defines "the speaker's referent" as follows:

> […] we may tentatively define the speaker's referent of a designator to be that object which the speaker wishes to talk about, on a given occasion, and believes fulfills the conditions for being the semantic referent of the designator. He uses the designator with the intention of making an assertion about the object in question (which may not really be the semantic referent, if the speaker's belief that it fulfills the appropriate semantic conditions is in error). The speaker's referent is the thing the speaker referred to by the designator, though it may not be the referent of the designator, in his idiolect.[84]

Thus, the speaker's referent is determined by the intention of the speaker of making an assertion about a particular individual or object. In the above example, by using the designator "her husband" the speaker's intention is to talk about John who is the boyfriend of the lady rather than about Black, the actual husband of the lady and he believes that John fulfills all of the conditions for being the semantic referent, her husband, of the definite description "her

[83] Ibid, p. 264
[84] Ibid, p. 264

husband". Thus, in sentence (20), the speaker's referent of "her husband" is the boyfriend of the lady, namely John, rather than the actual husband, Black. This example shows that sometimes the semantic referent of a definite description differs from the speaker's referent of that definite description. Now the question is: what is the nature of the difference between the semantic referent and the speaker's referent of a definite description?

According to Kripke, the semantic referent of a definite description is determined by a general intention of the speaker whereas the speaker's referent of the definite description in question, on a given occasion, is determined by a particular intention of the speaker on that specific occasion. Kripke says:

> In a general idiolect, the semantic referent of a designator (without indexicals) is given by a *general* intention of the speaker to refer to a certain object whenever the designator is used. The speaker's referent is given by a *specific* intention, on a given occasion, to refer to a certain object.[85]

Since the speaker's referent of a definite description is determined by a particular intention of the speaker on a particular occasion, the speaker's referent may differ from the semantic referent of the definite description in question on that particular occasion. Similarly, the speaker's referent may vary from occasion to occasion based on the intention of the speaker of that sentence. However, since the semantic referent is determined by the conventions of a particular language, the semantic referent of a definite description remains unchanged, no matter what the occasion and the intention of the speaker are. That means that on every occasion, the semantic referent of "the *F*" is the *F* whereas the speaker's referent of "the *F*" are different on different occasions, depending on the speaker's particular intentions on these very occasions.

[85] Ibid, p. 264

According to Kripke, the apparatus of speaker's reference and semantic reference can also be applicable to proper names where no semantic ambiguity is plausible.[86] Suppose two people see Smith in the distance raking the leaves and both mistakenly believe that Smith (the boy raking the leaves over there) is Jones. Now suppose, seeing Smith raking the leaves the speakers utter the following assertions:

Speaker 1: What is Jones doing?
Speaker 2: He is raking the leaves.

Here, we see that both speakers refer to Smith by using the proper name "Jones" and the second speaker says something true of Smith, whom he referred to by "Jones", if Smith is raking the leaves at the time of his assertion, no matter whether Jones is raking the leaves or not. So, in this case, Smith is the speaker's referent of the proper name "Jones". For both speakers are talking about Smith by using "Jones" and they believe that Smith fulfills the conditions for being Jones. On the other hand, since in the common language, "Jones" refers to only Jones not Smith or someone else, the semantic referent of "Jones" is Jones, not Smith.[87]

Now go back to Donnellan's example once again. According to Donnellan, when the speaker uses the definite description "Smith's murderer" attributively he refers to whoever murdered Smith. On this occasion, the semantic referent and the speaker's referent are the same—whoever murdered Smith. On the other hand, when the speaker uses the definite description referentially, he talks about a particular person, Jones. That means, on that particular occasion, the speaker's referent is different from the semantic referent of "Smith's murderer". Since the semantic referent remains the same on every occasion, according to

[86] Kripke says, "… why are the phenomena regarding proper names so similar to those for definite descriptions, if the one case involves no semantic ambiguity while the other does?" (Ibid, p. 267)
[87] Ibid, p. 263

Kripke, there is no semantic ambiguity posited by the distinction between the attributive and referential uses of a definite description. The ambiguity is merely pragmatic and is based on the speech act of the sentence containing a definite description.

Thus, Kripke claims that the distinction between the attributive and referential use made by Donnellan cannot threaten Russell's theory of descriptions. For Russell's theory is a theory of semantics whereas the phenomenon arising from the distinction between the attributive and referential use of a definite description is merely pragmatic.[88] So, the pragmatically significant referential use of a definite description, as suggested by Donnellan, is irrelevant to a semantic theory like Russell's. So, according to Kripke, Donnellan's distinction cannot undermine Russell's theory of descriptions.

In favor of his opinion, Kripke proposes a test for any alleged counterexample to a linguistic analysis by which he proves that the phenomenon arising from Donnellan's distinction between the attributive and referential use of a definite description is not a counterexample to Russell's account of definite descriptions. In his test, he considers an English-like hypothetical language and follows a principle to determine whether a certain phenomenon in English is a counterexample to a given analysis.[89] Kripke states the principle as follows:

> If someone alleges that a certain linguistic phenomenon in English is a counterexample to a given analysis, consider a hypothetical language which (as much as possible) is like English except that the analysis is stipulated to be correct. Imagine such a hypothetical language introduced into a community and spoken by it. *If the phenomenon in question would still arise in a community that spoke such a hypothetical language (which*

[88] Ibid, p. 265
[89] Ibid, p. 265

> *may not be English), then the fact it arises in English cannot disprove the hypothesis that the analysis is correct for English.*[90]

Thus, according to Kripke's test, if the phenomenon arising from Donnellan's distinction between the attributive and referential use of a definite description arises in the English-like hypothetical language, where Russell's theory of description is stipulated to be correct, then the phenomenon in question, the phenomenon arising from Donnellan's distinction, cannot be counted as a counterexample to Russell's analysis in English.

After proposing his test, Kripke applies "it to Donnellan's claim that the phenomenon of the referential use threatens Russell's Theory."[91] Then he proves that the phenomenon would arise in the English-like language where Russell's theory of definite descriptions is stipulated as true; and hence the referential use of definite descriptions does not threaten Russell's theory. In his test, Kripke considers three types of language: the weak Russell language, the intermediate Russell language and the strong Russell language.

> L_1. The weak Russell language which is like English except that the truth conditions of a sentence containing a definite description are stipulated to coincide with that of Russell. For example, consider sentence (2) once again:
>
> 2. The present king of France is bald.
>
> Since in the weak Russell language, the truth conditions of a sentence containing a definite description are stipulated to coincide with that of Russell, the truth conditions of sentence (2) in the weak Russell language depends on the truth conditions of the following sentence:
>
> (2a) Exactly one person is king of France and that person is bald.
>
> That means that sentence (2) will be true *iff* sentence (2a) is true. It is discussed earlier that according to Kripke's distinction between the

[90] Ibid, p. 265
[91] Reimer (1998), P. 91

semantic referent and the speaker's referent, a semantic referent of a definite description is a unique object that satisfies the definite description in question. Since in the weak Russell language, sentence (2) is true *iff* (2a) is true, *i.e*. there is a unique person who is a present king of France and he is bald, the truth conditions of (2) depend on the semantic referent of the definite description "the present king of France". So, the truth conditions of the weak Russell language depend exclusively whether there is any semantic referent of the definite description in question and whether the predicate is true or not of the semantic referent, if any, of the subject.[92]

L_2: By the intermediate Russell language, he means a language in which a sentence containing a definite description involves the Russellian analysis: a sentence containing a definite description expresses a general proposition where the definite description in question is no longer a constituent part of the sentence in question. For example, sentence (2) expresses the following general proposition:

> (2a) Exactly one person is present king of France and he is bald.

which is the Russellian analysis of the sentence containing a definite description.[93] So, in the intermediate Russellian language, the definite description is not a referring term and hence it does not have any meaning in isolation either.

L_3: By the strong Russell language he means a language in which the definite descriptions are banned and speakers of that language use Russellian paraphrases in place of definite descriptions.[94] For example, instead of saying

> 2. The present king of France is bald

the speaker of the strong Russellian language must say:

> (2a) Exactly one person is present king of France and that person is bald.

[92] Ibid, p. 265
[93] Ibid, p. 265
[94] Ibid, p. 265

Now the question is: would that phenomenon, the phenomenon arising from Donnellan's distinction between the attributive and referential use arise in the communities that spoke the above-mentioned languages? For example, would the speakers of the weak and intermediate Russell language, in a party, mistakenly refer to someone by the definite description "the man drinking a martini" who is in fact drinking a sparkling water? Kripke claims that the phenomenon would arise in such communities as well. For example, consider sentence (19) that Donnellan uses in his paper "Reference and Definite Descriptions" once again:

(19) The murderer of Smith is insane.

According to Donnellan's distinction, as was shown in the second chapter, a speaker of English may mistakenly think of someone, suppose it is Jones, is the murderer of Smith even when Smith has committed suicide and Jones is in fact innocent. Based on his assumption, the speaker may refer to Jones by the definite description "the murderer of Smith". Similarly, as Kripke claims, speakers of the English-like languages, *i.e*. the weak Russell language, the intermediate Russell language and the strong Russell language, may find themselves in court and mistakenly think of someone, suppose Tony, that he is the murderer of Smith even though Smith has not been murdered. If they are the speakers of the weak and intermediate Russell language, seeing Tony's abnormality, they will utter the sentence "The murderer of Smith is insane." So, in that case, the speaker will be able to use the definite description "the murderer of Smith" to refer to a person who is not the actual murderer of Smith. For they believe, though mistakenly, that *the Russellian truth conditions are satisfied* by his utterance of "The murderer of Smith is insane". If Tony is insane then by uttering sentence (19), the speaker will say something *true* of the man, namely Tony, *referred to by the definite description "the murderer of Smith.*" Thus, according to Kripke, a speaker of the English-like language may refer to a person by a definite description who doesn't satisfy the definite description in

question, and may express a true proposition about that person by uttering a subject-predicate sentence that contains the definite description, provided that the predicate is applicable to the person referred to by that definite description.[95]

Under these circumstances, Kripke claims that, in the case of the weak Russell language, the general apparatus of speaker's reference and semantic reference is fully applicable to account for the phenomenon arising from the distinction between the attributive and the referential use of a definite description.[96] For the semantic referent of the definite description is determined by the specific conventions of the weak Russell language: the semantic referent of the definite description is the unique object that satisfies the definite description in question. On the other hand, the speaker's referent is the object or individual which the speaker wishes to refer to and which he believes fulfills the Russellian conditions for being the semantic referent of the definite description in question. So, in the case of the weak Russell language, the speaker's referent is determined by the specific intention of the speaker on a given occasion—the speaker's referent is determined by the general principles of speech acts.[97] When a speaker utters sentence (19) to talk about a particular individual Tony, he means that the predicate "insane" is applicable to the speaker's referent of the definite description "the murderer of Smith", Tony. Thus, the apparatus developed by Kripke can account for the phenomenon in the case of the weak Russell language.

Just as the apparatus can account for the phenomenon in the weak Russell language, it can account for the phenomenon in the case of the intermediate Russell language and the strong Russell language too. We have seen that in the intermediate Russell language, a

[95] Mansur (2012), p. 107
[96] Kripke (1977), p. 266
[97] Ibid, p. 266

sentence containing a definite description involves the Russellian analysis, *i.e*. a sentence containing a definite description expresses a general proposition. So, seeing the abnormality on an accused person's face (suppose, Jones, Tony or someone) when a speaker of the intermediate Russell language utters "The murderer of Smith is insane" he may refer to that person (Jones, Tony or someone else) by using the definite description "the murderer of Smith", and mean that *exactly one man murdered Smith and that man is insane.* Moreover, his utterance can be true of his intended person (Jones, Tony or someone else), even though he misdescribes his intended person by referring to the intended person with the definite description. Thus, it is evident that the phenomenon arising from Donnellan's distinction will arise in the community that speaks the intermediate Russell language: when a definite description of the form "the *F*" in a sentence of the form "The *F* is *G*" is used referentially, the sentence "The *F* is *G*" can refer to a particular individual or object *o* and a speaker can assert something true of *o*, even though *o* doesn't uniquely fit "the *F*"; at the same time, by uttering "The *F* is *G*" the speaker can mean that *exactly one object is F and that object is G*. Thus, Kripke's apparatus accounts for the phenomenon arising from Donnellan's distinction in the case of the intermediate Russell language. Kripke adds that even in the strong Russell language in which definite descriptions are banned, a speaker uses the Russellian paraphrases of definite descriptions instead of definite descriptions, the phenomenon from Donnellan's distinction can occur.[98] Instead of uttering sentence (19), a speaker of the strong Russell language will say, "Exactly one person murdered Smith and that person is insane". However, in that case, the speaker may mistakenly refer to Jones or Tony (when Jones or Tony were not the murderer of Smith, rather Smith committed suicide) by using "exactly one person

[98] Ibid, p. 266

murdered Smith" which is the Russellian paraphrase of the definite description "the murderer of Smith"; and he may succeed in uttering a true proposition provided that Jones is really insane. Thus, in the strong Russellian language, the speaker can use the Russellian paraphrase of the definite description referentially even when he expresses a general proposition by uttering the sentence containing the definite description in question. Kripke says:

> Even in the strong Russell language, where explicit descriptions are outlawed, the same phenomenon can occur. In fact, they occur in English in "arch" uses of existential quantification: "Exactly *one person* (or: *some* person or other) is drinking champagne in that corner, and I hear he is romantically linked with Jane Smith." The circumlocution, in English, expresses the delicacy of the topic, but the speaker's reference (in quite an ordinary sense) may well be clear, even if he in fact is drinking sparkling water. In English such circumlocutions are common only when the speaker wishes to achieve a rather arch and prissy effect, but in the strong Russell language (which of course isn't English), they would be made more common because the definite article is prohibited.[99]

So, according to Kripke, the circumlocution in the strong Russell language is more common than in English. For the speaker in English can use the definite descriptions whereas the speaker of the strong Russell language is only allowed to use the Russellian paraphrases of the definite descriptions. However, in both cases, the speaker's referent is the intended person whom the speaker wants to talk about and enables his audience to pick out that intended person; at the same time, he can make a true assertion of his speaker's referent. For example, in both cases, the speaker's referent of the Smith's murderer example is Jones or Tony whom the speaker believes to fulfill the conditions for being the semantic referent of "Exactly one person who murdered Smith". On the other hand, in both cases, the semantic referent is the person who fits the Russellian paraphrases of the definite description. For example, in the

[99] Ibid, p. 266

hypothetical languages, the semantic referent is the person who really murdered (if any) Smith in the Smith's murderer example. So, according to Kripke, the phenomenon Donnellan claims arises in the strong Russell language as well and Kripke's apparatus can account for the phenomenon in the case of the Strong Russell language.

So far, we have discussed that it is evident that the phenomenon arising from Donnellan's distinction arises in the hypothetical languages, *i.e.* the weak Russell language, the intermediate Russell language, the strong Russell language, just as it arises in English. It is shown earlier that in his test Kripke uses a principle to evaluate whether a phenomenon can be counted as a counter example to a given analysis or not. According to his principle, if a phenomenon (for example, the phenomenon arising from the distinction between the attributive and referential use of a definite description) that arises in English would still arise in a hypothetical language (for example, the weak, intermediate and strong Russell language) where the given analysis (for example, Russell's analysis of definite description) is stipulated as true, then the fact that that phenomenon arises in English cannot disprove that the given analysis (Russell's analysis of definite description) is correct. Kripke says:

> Since the phenomenon Donnellan cites *would* arise in all Russell languages, if they *were* spoken, the fact that they *do* arise in English, as *actually* spoken, can be no argument that English is not a Russell language.[100]

Thus, according to Kripke, Donnellan's distinction between the attributive and referential use of a definite description cannot be counted as a counter example to Russell's analysis of definite descriptions; and hence Donnellan's claim that Russell's analysis is incorrect cannot be accepted.

[100] Ibid, p. 266

After rejecting Donnellan's phenomenon as a counterexample to Russell's analysis of definite descriptions, Kripke offers some methodological considerations that prove that Russell's unitary account (which postulates no semantic ambiguity) is preferable to Donnellan's account (which does postulate a semantic ambiguity).[101] He considers another type of hypothetical languages that he calls *D-languages* in contrast to the Russell language.[102] In the D-languages, the attributive and the referential use are stipulated to have two semantic meanings that affect their truth conditions. Thus, the apparent ambiguity between the attributive and the referential use of a definite description is built into the semantics, not the pragmatics, of the language.[103] Kripke adds that the *unambiguous D-language* contains two distinct words, "the" and "ze" whereas the ambiguous D-language is like the unambiguous D-language except that in the *ambiguous D-language*, "the" can be interpreted according to the semantics either of "the" or of "ze". In the unambiguous D-language, a statement of the form "The *F* is *G*" is true if and only if the attribute referred to by the predicate term "*G*" is true of the unique object that satisfies *F*. Thus, when the speaker utters "The *F* is *G*" he uses the definite description "the *F*" attributively. On the other hand, a statement of the form "Ze *F* is *G*" is true if and only if the attribute referred to by the predicate term "*G*" is true of the unique object the speaker thinks *F* is true of. Thus, when the speaker utters "Ze *F* is *G*", he uses the definite description "Ze *F*" referentially. Kripke claims that if Donnellan is right then according to Donnellan's distinction, English is an ambiguous

[101] Ibid, p. 267
[102] Here Kripke uses D-language for Donnellan, but since Donnellan himself is confused of whether definite descriptions are semantically ambiguous or not, Kripke doesn't intend to call D-language for Donnellan languages. Kripke write in the parenthesis, "The D-languages are meant to suggest "Donnellan" but are not called the "Donnellan languages," since Donnellan, as we have seen, is "ambiguous" as to whether he posits a semantic ambiguity" (See Kripke (1977), p. 266)
[103] Ibid, p. 266

D-language. Thus, in English the statement of the form "The *F* is *G*" can be interpreted in two ways:[104]

> (i) in one way, "The *F* is *G*" can be interpreted according to the semantics of "the", *i.e.* "The *F* is *G*" is true if and only if the attribute designated by the predicate term "*G*" is true of the unique object *o* that satisfies *F*;
> (ii) in other way, "The *F* is *G*" can be interpreted according to the semantics of "ze", *i.e.* "The *F* is *G*" is true if and only if the attribute referred to by "*G*" is true of the unique object *p* the speaker thinks *F* is true of.

On the other hand, in the Russell languages, "The *F* is *G*" has only one meaning: "The *F* is *G*" is true if and only if the attribute designated by the predicate term "*G*" is true of the unique object *o* that satisfies *F*. That means that the truth conditions of sentences containing "ze", and henceforth the second meaning of "The *F* is *G*" in the ambiguous D-language, are incompatible with Russell's theory. Hence, according to Donnellan's phenomenon, as Kripke argues, if English is an ambiguous D-language, English cannot be a Russell language. Now the question is whether English is an ambiguous D-language or a Russell language. Kripke answers to this question in the following way:

> We have two hypotheses: one says that English is a Russell language, while the other says that English is the ambiguous D-language. Which hypothesis is preferable? Since, as we have argued, the phenomenon Donnellan adduces would arise in a hypothetical society that spoke any of the Russell languages, the existence in English of such phenomena provides no argument against the hypothesis that English is a Russell language. If Donnellan had possessed a clear intuition that "Her husband is kind to her" uttered in reference to the kind lover of a woman married to a cruel husband, expressed the literal truth, then he *would* have adduced a phenomenon that conforms to the ambiguous D-language but is incompatible with any Russell language. But Donnellan makes no such

[104] Mansur (2012), p. 109

> assertion: he cautiously, and correctly, confines himself to the weaker claim that the speaker spoke truly of the man to whom he referred. This weaker claim, we have seen, *would* hold for a speaker of a Russell language.[105]

Thus, according to Kripke, since Donnellan himself doesn't claim that the speaker's utterance of a sentence containing a definite description conveys a *literal truth*[106] when he utters something about the unique person who he believes fulfills the definite description, *i.e.* the speaker's referent, rather than about the unique person who fits the definite description in question, *i.e.* the semantic referent, he cannot adduce a phenomenon that confirms that English is an ambiguous D-language and is incompatible with the Russell language. Rather, in Donnellan's phenomenon the speaker speaks truly of the speaker's referent, which is different from the semantic referent, which is compatible with Russell's theory. For the speakers of the Russell languages can make such a true assertion of his speaker's referent. Thus, Kripke claims, "Donnellan's examples provide, in themselves, no evidence that English is the ambiguous D-language rather than a Russell language."[107] Moreover, Kripke adds, there are several reasons that can lead us to favor a unitary account like the Russell language hypothesis over the ambiguity account like the D-language hypothesis:[108]

> **First,** the Russell language theory can account for the phenomenon arising from Donnellan's distinction by *a general pragmatic theory of speech acts* (for example, the theory of the speaker's reference and the semantic reference), which is applicable to a wide range of languages*;*

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[105] Kripke (1977), p. 267
[106] By "literal truth", Kripke seems to mean the truth of the sentence *Exactly one person is an F and whoever is an F is G,* rather than the truth of *o is G.* For the utterance of the sentence "Her husband is kind to her" in reference to the kind lover doesn't literally (or semantically) refers to the kind lover. Thus, the truth condition that depends on the speaker's referent (the kind lover) rather than the semantic referent (the real lover), is not the semantic or literal truth in Kripke's theory. So, the sentence "Her husband is kind to her" in reference to the kind lover doesn't express a literal truth. However, it would express a literal truth if the sentence was uttered in reference to the real lover and he was in fact kind to the lady.
[107] Kripke (1977), p. 267
[108] Ibid, p. 267

whereas, the D-language hypothesis accounts for this phenomenon by positing a semantic ambiguity. Thus, the Russell language hypothesis, as a unitary account, conforms to *considerations of economy* in the sense that it doesn't multiply senses, such as referential sense, beyond what is necessary (the attributive sense).[109]

Second, the unitary account appeals to a general apparatus (for example, Grice's apparatus of the sentence meaning and utterer meaning, or Kripke's apparatus of the speaker's referent and semantic referent) that can be applied to some special cases other than definite descriptions, for example "Smith-Jones" proper name cases, where semantic ambiguity is completely implausible. In other words, according to the unitary theory account, the distinction between the referential and attributive use is applicable to both definite descriptions and proper names.[110] However, Donnellan's phenomenon deals with such problems by positing the same ambiguity (the semantic ambiguity) where it is simply implausible. Thus, the separate referential meaning of definite descriptions postulated by Donnellan doesn't work for Proper names.[111]

Third, if a term is ambiguous in our language, suppose "bank" is ambiguous in English: it has two different meanings (riverside and financial institution), it is expected that the ambiguity is disambiguated by introducing two separate and unrelated words in other languages. Similarly, if "the" were an ambiguous word in English then it would be expected that the ambiguity of "the", *i.e*. two different meanings of "the", to be disambiguated by two different words, like "the" and "ze" in other languages, such as the unambiguous D-language. But Kripke believes that it is quite surprising to find such a language where the speakers use

[109] Ibid, pp. 267, 269

[110] We have seen earlier that according to Kripke's apparatus of speaker's reference and semantic reference a proper name can have a speaker's referent different from the semantic referent. Since in common languages, "Jones" is a name of Jones, not someone other than Jones, no semantic ambiguity is plausible here. (See Kripke (1977), pp. 263, 267)

[111] One may argue why is the proper name case relevant to the definite description cases? Kripke claims that "…the resemblance between the descriptions and that of proper names (where presumably no one would be tempted to postulate an ambiguity) is so close that any attempt to explain the cases differently is automatically suspect." (see Kripke (1977), p. 269)

two different words “the” and ze” for the attributive and referential use of “the”.[112]

From these above mentioned general methodological considerations, Kripke claims that the Russell language is preferable to the ambiguous D-language as a model for English. Aside from these methodological considerations, as Kripke claims, there is direct evidence that leads Kripke to favor Russell’s theory over Donnellan’s. To explain Kripke’s substantial evidence, let us consider sentence (20) once again:

(20) Her husband is kind to her.

According to Donnellan, when the speaker utters sentence (20) using the definite description “her husband” referentially, he can say something true of his intended person, the boyfriend of the lady, even when her actual husband is a cruel person. However, semantically sentence (20) is true if and only if the unique person to whom the lady got married is kind to her. Kripke considers two dialogues, between two speakers A and B, both of which consist of sentence (20):[113]

Dialogue I: A. “Her husband is kind to her.”
B. “No, he isn’t. The man you are referring to isn’t her husband.”

Dialogue II: A. “Her husband is kind to her.”
B. “He is kind to her, but he isn’t her husband.”

Here, we see that in the first dialogue, the second speaker, B, uses “he” to refer to the semantic referent, the unique person to whom the lady got married, of the term “her husband” used by the first speaker, A; whereas, in the second dialogue, the respondent, B, uses “he” to refer to the speaker’s referent, the unique person whom the speakers are talking about and the first speaker believes that he fulfills the conditions for being the husband of the lady, the

[112] Ibid, p. 268
[113] Ibid, p. 270

boyfriend of the lady. Kripke claims that in this case, both dialogues are proper and the unitary account like Russell's can account for this fact. On the other hand, the ambiguous account like Donnellan's can only account for the properness of the second dialogue. Since, in dialogue II, by using "he" the second speaker refers to the speaker's referent of the term "her husband", the boyfriend of the lady, not the unique person to whom she got married, in this case the semantic referent and the speaker's referent are the same. So, D-language can explain the properness of dialogue II. On the other hand, since D-language is an ambiguous language, when the first speaker A, in the first dialogue, used "her husband" referentially to refer to the boyfriend of the lady, both the semantic referent and the speaker's referent of "her husband" would be the kind boyfriend of the lady. However, the semantic referent of "her husband" is the person to whom the lady got married, not the boyfriend of the lady. And, B refers to the semantic referent by using "he" and the speaker's referent is the boyfriend of the lady. Thus, Kripke claims, the properness of the first dialogue seems hard to fit into the ambiguous D-language model.[114] Since Russell's theory can account for both dialogues and Donnellan's account fails to account for Dialogue I, Russell's theory is favorable to that of Donnellan.

So far, we have discussed how according to Kripke, the distinction between the attributive and referential use made by Donnellan cannot threaten Russell's theory of descriptions. For Russell's theory is a theory of semantics whereas the phenomenon arising from the distinction between the attributive and referential use of a definite description is merely pragmatic, that can be dealt by a general apparatus of speech acts, such as the notions of speaker's reference and semantic reference. He says:

> […] the argument Donnellan actually presents in his original paper shows nothing against a Russellian or other unitary account, and they make it

[114] Ibid, p. 270

> highly probable to me that the problems Donnellan handles by semantic ambiguity should instead be treated by a general theory of speech acts.[115]

So, the pragmatically significant referential use of a definite description, as suggested by Donnellan, is irrelevant to a semantic theory like Russell's. Hence, according to Kripke, Donnellan's distinction cannot undermine Russell's theory of descriptions.

3.3 Michael Devitt's Response

Michael Devitt, in his paper "The Case for Referential Descriptions", as opposed to Kripke, claims that the referential use of a definite description is semantically significant as the referential use affects the truth conditions of the sentence containing a definite description in question.[116] That means definite descriptions are ambiguous in the way the word "bank" or "bachelor" are. Devitt, in his paper "the case for Referential Description", claims that there are semantically referential descriptions which he calls Referential Descriptions and henceforth RD (sometimes, he uses the term "definite" to mean "definite description"). In this paper, he offers his argument of regularity in defense of the existence of RD. According to Devitt, there is a regularity of a speaker's using definite descriptions in our language to express a singular thought about a particular individual or object the speaker has in mind. More specifically, in English, there is a regularity of using the definite description "the *F*" in the sentence "The *F* is *G*" to express a singular thought about a particular *F* the speaker has in mind.[117] And the hearer can understand immediately and directly which object or person (*F*) the speaker means to refer to by using "the *F*". Devitt says:

> The basis for RD is not simply that we can use a definite referentially, it is that we regularly do so. When a person has a thought with a particular *F* object in mind, there is a regularity of her using 'the *F*' to express that

[115] Ibid, p. 271
[116] Devitt (2004), pp. 281, 282
[117] Ibid, p. 283

> thought. And there need be no special stage setting enabling her to conversationally imply what she has not literally said, nor any sign that her audience needs to use a Gricean derivation to understand what she means. This regularity is strong evidence that there is a convention of using 'the *F*' to express a thought about a particular *F*, that this is a standard use. This convention is semantic, as semantic as the one for an attributive use. In each case, there is a convention of using 'the *F*' to express a thought with a certain sort of meaning/content.[118]

The above mentioned lines indicate that Devitt emphasizes the semantic significance of RD on the basis of the convention of using a definite description to express a singular thought. That means that a speaker uses an RD to express a thought that has a certain sort of meaning or content just as the speaker uses the definite description attributively to express a thought that has a certain meaning or content. For example, consider the lady and her husband case once again: a speaker observes a lady in a party with her boyfriend. Taking the man as her husband the speaker utters the following sentence to talk about the boyfriend of the lady:

> (20) Her husband is kind to her.

If we take that here the definite description "her husband" is used attributively then the content or the meaning of the proposition expressed by the sentence "Her husband is kind to her" is:

> (20a) There is exactly one husband of the lady and whoever is her husband is kind to her.

That means that the truth conditions of (20) depend on whether there is any husband of the lady and that husband is kind. So, in this case the truth condition is dependent on the husband, not the boyfriend of the lady. On the other hand, if we take the definite description

[118] Ibid, 283

referentially, *i.e*. the speaker is talking about the boyfriend (suppose he is Jones), the content or the meaning of the proposition expressed by the sentence (20) is:

(20r) Jones is kind to her.

Since the speaker is talking about Jones, in this case the truth condition of (20) depends on whether Jones is kind to her, not on whether the actual person to whom the lady got married is kind to her. That means that the fact that the lady has a husband and he is kind to her is irrelevant to the truth conditions of (20), when the definite description "the husband of the lady" is used referentially.[119] On the contrary, since the truth conditions of the sentence "Her husband is kind to her" depends on Jones, not the actual husband, the referential use of "her husband" is semantically significant. That means that the convention of using a definite referentially is semantically significant just as the convention of using a definite attributively is semantic. When a definite is used attributively, it has an attributive meaning; when a definite is used referentially, it has a referential meaning; and in both cases, the meaning is semantic or literal.

After claiming the semantic significance of an RD, Devitt refutes the possible arguments a critic may make against his thesis. According to Devitt, there are two possible ways that a critic of RD can respond to his argument:[120]

> (1) a critic may deny the fact that definites are regularly used referentially; or
> (2) the critic may accept that definites are regularly used referentially, but may explain this regularity of using a definite referentially using the Gricean apparatus of conversational implicature. So, each referential use of a definite can be explained as a pragmatic conversational convention

[119] Ibid, p. 283
[120] Ibid, pp. 283-284

> of using the definite in question. Thus, the convention is not semantic: it doesn't literally have a referential meaning.

However, Devitt claims that (1) is implausible as there are so many examples, produced by Donnellan and others, that show that definites are used to express singular thoughts in our conversation.[121] On the other hand, Devitt claims, "there is something deeply wrong with (2)."[122] For, according to Devitt, (2) is based on the following view:

> […] where an utterance has a conventional meaning and we can derive a different speaker meaning (implicature) from this conventional meaning with the help of appropriate assumptions about the context and mind of the speaker, there is no need to suppose that this derived meaning is another conventional meaning.[123]

Here we see that the above-mentioned lines of thought are based on the difference between two things: the conventional meaning of a term and an implicature (or a speaker's meaning which is different from the conventional meaning) which is derived from the conventional meaning with the help of an appropriate assumptions about the context and the mind of the speaker. However, Devitt claims that the speaker's meaning of a term may become the conventional meaning of the term in question over time. For example, he considers metaphors. "A metaphor is a Gricean paradigm: a derivation from the conventional meaning yields an implicature that is the metaphorical speaker meaning."[124] Thus, a metaphor has a speaker's meaning which is different from the conventional meaning. However, as Devitt claims, a metaphorical meaning of an expression may become the conventional meaning of the expression in question over time. That means that a metaphor often dies in time and it becomes a conventional term in a society: "an expression comes to mean literally what it once

[121] Ibid, p. 283
[122] Ibid, p. 284
[123] Ibid, p. 284
[124] Ibid, p. 284

meant metaphorically."[125] However, since (2) explains each referential use of a definite (or definite description) as a pragmatic conversational meaning, not as a literal referential meaning, according to (2), this death of metaphor seems to be impossible. He considers a nice example of the verb "incense" from Marga Reimer.[126] The verb "incense" had one literal meaning: it meant *to make fragrant with incense*. In fact, it was used metaphorically to mean *to make very angry*. However, in the course of time, because of frequent uses of the term to mean *to make very angry*, the metaphorical meaning, *i.e. to make very angry,* has become the literal meaning of the term in question.[127] However, as Devitt suggests, if (2) is correct, then there is no need to see that the verb "incense" literally means *to make very angry,* rather than it is used only *metaphorically.* So, there are examples that show that people, in the end, cease to be able to derive an expression's previous metaphorical meaning and get used to use the term literally (and hence the metaphor dies and it becomes the conventional term).[128] Thus, according to Devitt, (2) is a mistaken view in two senses:[129]

> (a) first, the proponents of (2) suggest that the speaker's ability to give a Gricean derivation of a meaning (implicature) conveyed makes that meaning (implicature) a matter of pragmatics, not a matter of semantics.
> (b) second, this view doesn't give attention to what makes a convention semantic.

According to Devitt, if (2) were right about (a), people could make any semantic meaning pragmatic simply by removing the ignorance of the semantic meaning's original derivation; people can eliminate the semantic meaning by studying a dictionary. The view that a conveyed meaning is a matter of pragmatics, not a matter of semantics, would be accepted if a

[125] Ibid, p. 284
[126] Reimer (1998), pp. 97-98
[127] Ibid, p. 97
[128] Devitt (2004), p. 285
[129] Ibid, p. 285

speaker of English *not only could but also did* use a Gricean derivation to grasp the conveyed meaning of an expression used.[130] It has been shown earlier that in the case of the verb "incense", the speaker nowadays grasp the meaning of "incense" as *to make very angry* and is able to use it literally (to mean *to make very angry*) without the help of the Gricean derivation as *to make very angry* is now one of the two literal meanings of "incense". Similarly, a hearer doesn't grasp the common meaning (*i.e. to make very angry*, which is now a conventional meaning but once was a metaphorical meaning of "incense") of "incense" that the speaker conveys in the Gricean way. Rather, a hearer can grasp the meaning conveyed by the speaker immediately and directly as this meaning is a part of the conventional use of the term "incense". Similarly, as Devitt claims, people do not grasp the referential meaning of a definite description in a Gricean way: to grasp the conveyed meaning when a definite description is used referentially people do not need the help of the Gricean derivation. Rather, they can grasp the referential meaning of a definite description immediately and directly as it is the meaning the definite description conventionally has.[131]

Regarding (b), Devitt claims that Grice's discussion deals much with the issue of pragmatics, *i.e.* what makes a convention pragmatic, as it deals with the meaning which is determined based on the occasion the sentence is used or uttered. However, it doesn't say much about semantic conventions, *i.e.* what makes a convention semantic. Since it doesn't say much about what makes a convention semantic, as Devitt claims, it is hard to find a ground for claiming that the referential use of a definite description is not a semantic convention.[132] Devitt adds, to undermine the view that the referential use of definites (RDs) is semantic, it is

[130] Ibid, p. 285
[131] Ibid, p. 285
[132] Ibid, p. 285

not enough to show that the use could be explained pragmatically.[133] Rather, a proponent of (2) should have an argument to show that the referential use of a definite should be explained pragmatically.[134] However, so far, the proponent of (2) have not offered such a convincing argument. On the contrary, the regular use of definites to express a singular thought provides a proper ground for the semantic convention of the referential use of definite descriptions.[135] Thus, according to Devitt, the regularity of using definite descriptions to express singular thoughts provides a strong ground for the claim that a sentence containing a definite description is semantically significant, *i.e*. the sentence has a referential meaning when it expresses a singular thought.

To illustrate the semantic significance of all referentially used definites (and henceforth sentences containing definite descriptions), Devitt gives an analogy between a definite description "the *F*" and a (complex) demonstrative "that *F*" in its deictic (non-anaphoric) use. Devitt claims that the obvious and uncontroversial way of expressing a singular thought is using a demonstrative. Thus, conventionally demonstratives express singular thoughts.[136] According to Devitt, the definite description (or the definite in Devitt's word) "the *F*" is like the deictic complex demonstrative "that *F*" in two ways: first, both expressions have a similar conventional use: both of "the *F*" and "that *F*" are used to express singular thoughts. The usual change of "one for the other without apparent cost to our goal of communicating a singular thought" is possible.[137] When a demonstration is needed, "that *F*" seems to be more appropriate; when a demonstration is not needed, "the *F*" seems to be more

[133] Ibid, p. 285
[134] Ibid, pp. 285-286
[135] Ibid, p. 286
[136] Ibid, p. 288
[137] Ibid, p. 288

appropriate. But, in each case, we can use the other expression without any apparent cost of communicating the same thought: When the demonstrative "that *F*" is more appropriate, the definite "the *F*" does fine; when the definite "the *F*" is more appropriate, the demonstrative "that *F*" does fine. Thus, the function of definites is as conventional as that of demonstratives. Since the convention of expressing singular thoughts for demonstratives is semantic, not pragmatic, and definites function like demonstratives, the convention of expressing singular thoughts for definites is semantic too.[138] Since the convention of expressing singular thoughts is semantic, a sentence containing a definite description has a referential meaning when it expresses a singular thought.

Second, in the referential meaning, a definite and a deictic complex demonstrative have similar mechanism that determines the referent of the expression that the speaker uses: the mechanism that determines which object is in the speaker's mind when he uses the definite referentially is similar to the mechanism that determines which object is in the speaker's mind when he uses the demonstrative.[139] Thus, based on the function and mechanism of determining the referent of a referential definite (RD) like those of a deictic demonstrative, Devitt proves that the referential meaning of a definite is much the same as the referential meaning of a complex demonstrative. The referential meaning of definites is semantically significant just as the referential meaning of complex demonstratives is. Since the mechanism of determining which object is in the speaker's mind when he uses a definite description referentially is like the mechanism of determining which object is in the speaker's mind when he uses a demonstrative, it requires a detailed exposition of what he means by this mechanism.

[138] Ibid, p. 289
[139] Mansur (2012), p. 144

Devitt gives a causal analysis of how reference is made in using a definite description: an analysis of having an object in the speaker's mind when he uses a definite description.[140] He claims that in both uses of definite descriptions, *i.e.* the attributive and the designational definite descriptions, there is a causal link between the speaker and the object referred to in virtue of which we use the definite description to talk about the object in question. However, the nature of the causal link in two cases is different. In the case of the referential use (in Devitt's words, designational use), there is a perceptual causal link between the speaker and the intended object. For, as Devitt suggests, both complex demonstratives and referential descriptions express singular thoughts. And this singular thought is expressed in virtue of a perceptual causal link to an object in the speaker's mind.[141] He writes:

> This link between a singular thought and an object provides the core of the meaning of any token complex demonstrative or referential description produced by the thought. For the link is central in explaining the fact that the token designates that object.[142]

Thus, the perceptual causal link plays an important role in determining the referential meaning of definites (or definite descriptions). By the perceptual causal link, he seems to mean our direct perception and our belief about an object. However, it doesn't mean that the speaker must have a direct acquaintance of her intended object. Rather, there may be a causal connection, between the speaker and her intended object, that runs through others, who has the experience of the object in question, back to the speaker. For example, we can have

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[140] Devitt claims that a reference is made following the causal chain theory when a speaker uses a definite description just as a reference is made following the causal chain theory when she uses a proper name. Thus, both a proper name and a definite description designate an object based on causally linked to the object designated. Thus, according to Devitt, a name token "Jones" designates an individual Jones if and only if the speaker has Jones in mind and Jones is causally linked to the speaker in uttering "Jones"; similarly, a definite description token "the murderer of Smith" designates an individual Jones if and only if Jones is in the speaker's mind and Jones is causally linked to the speaker in uttering the token "the murderer of Smith". It should be noted that Devitt uses the term "designational" to mean "referential" (see Devitt (1974), pp. 189-193)

[141] Devitt (2004), p. 290

[142] Ibid, p. 290

Aristotle in mind when we use the definite description "the teacher of Alexander";[143] someone can have my daughter in mind who hasn't met my daughter yet, but has heard about her from me, when she uses "the daughter of Nasrin". Devitt writes:

> It was *because* of our experience of Jones during his trial, and our beliefs about him, that we used 'Smith's murderer' in that utterance. Similarly, it was *because* of my experience of Nana, and my belief about her, that I used 'our cat' in those earlier remarks aimed at passing on her name,… In a sense, *the object itself* leads us to use the particular definite description in such cases. On the other hand, Goldwater had (near enough) no role at all in bringing about the use of 'The Republican candidate for president in 1964'. There was no causal link between the speaker and Goldwater in virtue of which the speaker uttered what he did.[144]

So, in the case of the referential use, a speaker needs to have an experience (either direct or indirect) and a belief about the intended object that enables her to use the definite description referentially and her audience can pick out whom the speaker is talking about.[145] On the other hand, in the case of the attributive use, there is a causal link, but this link does not require the experience of the object to use a definite description to talk about the object in question. For in the case of the attributive use, the speaker does not have any particular object in mind. Thus, the object does not play any role in using the definite description. For example, Goldwater does not play any role in using the definite description "The Republican candidate for president in 1964" by the speaker; the real murderer (if any) does not play any role in using "the murderer of Smith" by the speaker seeing Smith's wounded body. So, according to Devitt, to make a reference or to have a particular object in mind, a speaker must have a

[143] Devitt (1974), p. 191
[144] Ibid, p. 191
[145] Ibid, pp. 191-192

perception (direct or indirect) of the object in question, on the basis of that perception the speaker can use the definite description to refer to the object in question. He says:

> It would seem that, for a speaker to have the object in mind, his use of the description must be based on perception of it. (He need not have perceived the object *himself,* of course. Those who have perceived it can pass on the ability to others.) Further, it is *preferable* that this perception be of the face-to-face variety. Consider the other extreme. Suppose that, at the time we come upon Smith foully murdered, we see a man fleeing in the distance whom we take to be the murderer. Many would doubt that this is sufficient for us to have a person in mind in using 'Smith's murderer'. We would not have a *sufficient* "fix" on the object. The indubitable cases of having an object in mind are based on face-to-face perception of it. It is, indeed, appropriate enough that having an object *in mind* should be based on face-to-face perception of it.[146]

Thus, in the case of the referential use of the definite description, *i.e*. when the speaker has a particular object in mind, if the speaker has a *face-to-face* perception of the object, the reference of the definite description used is made undoubtedly. On the other hand, in the case of the attributive use, no *face-to-face* perception is required to make the reference of the definite description used. Nevertheless, the reference is made based on the causal link between the speaker and the object designated by the definite description in question. That means that when a speaker expresses a singular thought there is a perceptual causal link between the object and the speaker in virtue of what the speaker refers to her intended object using the definite description in question. Now the question is: what about demonstratives? How can a reference be made when a speaker uses a demonstrative to refer to her intended object?

[146] Ibid, p. 192

According to Devitt, since a demonstrative is used to refer to an object that the speaker has in mind, in the case of using a demonstrative, there is also a causal link between the speaker and her intended object that leads her to use the demonstrative in question. He says:

> When a demonstrative is used "out of the blue" to designate an object, it is clear that there is some causal link between the speaker and the object in virtue of which he uses the demonstrative. He is *perceiving* the object, or has just perceived it. It is the causal action of the object on him that led him (in part) to do what he did. Because of this we can truly say that he had that object in mind in using the demonstrative.[147]

So, in the case of the complex demonstratives, the reference is made in virtue of a causal link between the speaker and her intended object which requires a direct perception (present or past experience) of the object. This perception of the object performs a causal action on the speaker that leads her to refer to the object in question by using the demonstrative. So, according to Devitt, both a referential definite description "the *F*", and a deictic complex demonstrative "that *F*", are used to express a singular thought about an object *F,* based on the perceptual causal link between the speaker *S* and the object *F.* That is in both cases, there is the perceptual causal link in virtue of what the speaker refers to her intended object using a complex demonstrative or a definite description. Thus, the mechanism that determines which object is in the speaker's mind when she uses the definite description referentially is similar to the mechanism that determines which object is in the speaker's mind when she uses a deictic complex demonstrative—in both cases, the perceptual causal link determines which object is in the speaker's mind. Since both the referential definite description and the deictic complex demonstrative express singular thoughts, and both follow the same mechanism in determining

[147] Devitt (1974), pp. 196-197

which object is in the speaker's mind, the referential meaning of a definite description is semantically significant just as the referential meaning of a deictic complex demonstrative is. That means that based on the analogy between the function and mechanism of determining the reference of a referential definite description and that of a complex demonstrative, Devitt claims that the definite description has a semantic referential meaning.

Moreover, to strengthen his argument for the claim that a referential definite description has a semantic significance, Devitt shows that the referential-attributive distinction of definite descriptions bears on truth conditions.[148] To show that the referential-attributive distinction bears on truth conditions, he gives an *Argument from Exportation from Opaque Context.* Devitt believes that an exportation is "appropriate only from an opaque ascription that requires the believer to be en rapport with the object of belief, to have a singular thought about the object."[149] That means that the exportation of a singular term in an inference is in order when the exported singular term (*e.g.* a proper name, demonstrative, pronoun or a definite description etc.) is referential. For example, the exportation of Ortcutt in the inference from the sentence

(21) Ralph believes that Ortcutt is a spy

to the sentence

(22) Ortcutt is such that Ralph believes him to be a spy

seems to be in order as the proper name "Ortcutt" is here referential. On the other hand, the exportation of the definite description "the shortest spy" in the inference from the sentence

(23) Ralph believes that the shortest spy is a spy

to the sentence

(24) The shortest spy is such that Ralph believes him to be a spy

[148] Devitt (2004), p. 304
[149] Ibid, p. 304

seems to be not in order. For the definite description "the shortest spy" is used here attributively, not referentially.[150] Ralph doesn't have any singular thought, any perception, about the man who is the shortest spy. Rather he believes that whoever is the shortest spy is a spy. So, the exportation is not in order. Similarly, when the definite description "the murderer of Smith" is used attributively, the exportation of "the murderer of Smith" in the inference from

(25) Ralph believes that the murderer of Smith is insane

to

(26) The murderer of Smith is such that Ralph believes that he is insane

seems to be not in order. On the other hand, if Ralph observes Jones in the courtroom and observes Jones' abnormal behavior and then utters the sentence (25) using the definite description "the murderer of Smith" referentially, the exportation of the definite description "the murderer of Smith" in the inference from (25) to (26) seems to be valid.[151] Thus, according to Devitt, the exportation is valid when the speaker is en rapport with her intended object, *i.e.* the speaker is *perceptually-causally linked* to her intended object, and hence she uses the definite description referentially. Based on the valid exportation of a referential definite description, Devitt proves that the distinction between the attributive and referential definite description bears on the truth conditions which in turn confirms the semantic significance of referential descriptions (RD).[152]

3.4 Semantic Significance vs Pragmatic Significance

In the previous two sections, we have discussed two rival theories: Kripke's theory which defends Russell's theory against Donnellan's claiming that Donnellan's distinction doesn't

[150] Ibid, pp. 303-304
[151] Ibid, p. 304
[152] Ibid, p. 304

have any semantic significance, based on the distinction between the semantic referent and the speaker's referent, and Devitt's theory which defends the semantic significance of Donnellan's distinction based on the regularity of using definite descriptions referentially, an analogy between referential descriptions, such as "the *F"* and deictic complex demonstratives, such as "that *F"* and so on. According to Devitt, as opposed to Kripke's view, (i) there is a convention in our language to use definite descriptions referentially to express singular thoughts; (ii) there is a similarity between a definite description and a demonstrative concerning the function of expressing singular thoughts and the mechanism of determining which object is in the speaker's mind that provides us with another evidence for the semantic significance of the referential description; (iii) the referential uses of a definite description affects the truth conditions of a sentence containing the definite description in question. Thus, referential definite descriptions are semantically significant: a sentence containing a definite description has a referential meaning, when the description is used referentially to refer to a particular object, which is different from the attributive meaning of the sentence in question. Thus, if Devitt is correct, then Donnellan's distinction between the attributive and referential use of definite descriptions is semantically significant. A sentence containing a definite description is ambiguous: it has two sorts of meaning based on the use of the definite description contained. When the definite description is used attributively, the sentence has the attributive meaning; when the definite description is used referentially, the sentence has the referential meaning.

However, Kripke considers Donnellan's distinction as a pragmatically encoded theory which does not have any semantic significance at all. Kripke claims that Donnellan's distinction between the attributive and referential use of definite descriptions can be explained

in terms of speech acts. Thus, if Kripke is correct then the distinction made by Donnellan doesn't posit any genuine problem for Russell's theory. For Russell's theory is a theory of semantics whereas Donnellan's theory is a theory of pragmatics. The distinction between the attributive and referential use of definite descriptions can be explained in terms of an apparatus of speech acts: the general proposition, *i.e. There is exactly one F and whatever is an F is G,* expressed by "The *F* is *G*" is the semantic content of the sentence in question, whereas the singular proposition, *i.e. o is G,* expressed by "The *F is G*" is something that the speaker conveys by uttering "The *F is G*" which is more than the semantic content of "The *F* is *G*".

On the basis of different interpretations of Donnellan's distinction, it may be claimed that a sentence containing a definite description, "The *F* is *G*" is either

> (a) ambiguous: "The *F* is *G*" has two sorts of meaning: an attributive meaning and a referential meaning. When the definite description "the *F*" contained in the sentence "The *F* is *G*" is used attributively, the attributive meaning is salient, and it expresses a general proposition *There is exactly one F and whatever is an F is G;* when the definite description "the *F*" contained in the sentence "The *F* is *G*" is used referentially, the referential meaning is salient, and "The *F* is *G*" expresses a singular proposition *o is G*, where "the *F*" is used to refer to the object *o* that is in the speaker's mind.

Or

> (b) it has no ambiguity in meaning but it has two different types of use: its semantic meaning is same though it can be used or uttered by the utterer to express different propositions (or to talk about different objects) in different contexts, *i.e.* the distinction is a matter of pragmatics that can be dealt with by a general apparatus of speech acts.

Now, if a definite description is ambiguous, *i.e.* it has two sorts of meaning then Russell's theory of definite descriptions is *incomplete.*[153] For it can be said that Russell's theory fails to accommodate the second sort of meaning (*i.e.* the referential meaning) of sentences containing definite descriptions, and thereby it fails to capture the ambiguity mentioned above. On the other hand, if a definite description is not ambiguous, *i.e.* a sentence containing a definite description semantically or literally expresses a general proposition, but the sentence can be uttered to express a singular proposition to talk about an individual that the speaker has in her mind, and in general, that individual does not interfere with the truth conditions of the sentence uttered, then Donnellan's distinction is irrelevant to Russell's theory. For Russell's theory is a theory of semantics whereas Donnellan's theory is a theory of pragmatics. Thus, the question arises: does the phenomenon arising from Donnellan's distinction pose a real problem for Russell's theory? I want to give a negative answer to this question. That means that in the remainder of this thesis I will defend Russell's theory against the problem arising from Donnellan's distinction; I will show that Donnellan's distinction doesn't posit any genuine problem for Russell's theory in either way: (a) neither is a sentence containing a definite description ambiguous, *i.e*. it has always one lexical meaning; (b) nor does Russell's theory deny the pragmatic significance of a sentence containing a definite description. In the next chapter, for supporting (a) I will focus on the distinction between semantics and pragmatics, and will try to refute Michael Devitt's arguments for the semantic significance of referential definite descriptions; and in support of (b) I will show that a person conveys a singular proposition when he uses a definite description referentially in uttering a sentence

[153] Some proponents of the semantic significance of Donnellan's distinction, such as Marga Reimer, mentions that according to Donnellan's distinction, if a definite description has two types of meaning then Russell's theory is *incomplete*. (see Reimer (1998), p. 89)

that express a general proposition. Since a sentence containing a definite description always literally expresses a general proposition, it is non-ambiguous: it has one and only one lexical meaning and that meaning is what Russell shows in his analysis. So, Donnellan fails to undermine Russell's theory.

Chapter Four

An Evaluation of Donnellan's Objections to Russell's Theory: Semantics vs Pragmatics

4.1 Introduction

In order to evaluate whether Donnellan's distinction posits any genuine threat to Russell's theory or not, let us take a look at the problem arising from Donnellan's distinction once again. According to Russell's theory of definite descriptions, the sentence "The murderer of Smith is insane", which contains the definite description "the murderer of Smith", expresses the following proposition: *exactly one person murdered Smith, and whoever murdered Smith is insane*. According to Donnellan, "The murderer of Smith is insane" expresses the proposition *exactly one person murdered Smith, and whoever murdered Smith is insane,* when the definite description "the murderer of Smith" is used attributively in the utterance of "The murderer of Smith is insane" to talk about whoever murdered Smith without mentioning any particular person. However, "the murderer of Smith" has another sort of use: it can be used referentially. "The murderer of Smith" is said to be used referentially when the speaker uses "The murderer of Smith is insane" to state something about a particular object (*e.g.* Jones) who is already in the speaker's mind. Here the speaker intends her hearers to pick out the person she has in mind based on the definite description she uses. In such a case the sentence "The murderer of Smith is insane" may express the following proposition: *Jones (or Black or Williams or any other particular person who is in the speaker's mind) is insane*. Since the publication of his paper, there have been a number of contributions to the debate concerning whether Donnellan's distinction has any semantic significance or not. One defender of Donnellan, namely Devitt, claims that Donnellan's distinction is semantically significant: a sentence containing a definite description has two types of meaning, the attributive meaning and the

referential meaning. So, a sentence of the form "The *F* is *G"* is ambiguous. On the other hand, some defenders of Russell, such as Kripke, believe that the distinction between the attributive and referential use of definite descriptions is pragmatically significant. Thus, on the basis of different interpretations of Donnellan's distinction it may be claimed that a sentence containing a definite description, "The *F* is *G*" is either

> (i) ambiguous: "The *F* is *G*" has two sorts of meaning: an attributive meaning and a referential meaning. When "The *F* is *G*" expresses the general proposition, *There is exactly one F and whatever is an F is G,* it has the attributive meaning; when "The *F* is *G*" expresses the singular proposition, *o is G*, it has the referential meaning.

Or

> (ii) "The *F* is *G"* is not semantically ambiguous: its literal meaning always remains the same though it can be used or uttered by the speaker to express different propositions (or to talk about different objects) in different contexts, *i.e.* the distinction between the attributive and referential use is a matter of pragmatics that can be dealt with by the general apparatus of speech acts.

Now, if (i) is the case, then Russell's theory of definite descriptions is *incorrect.* For it can be said that Russell's theory fails to account for the referential meaning of sentences containing definite descriptions, and thereby it fails to capture the ambiguity mentioned in (i). On the other hand, if (ii) is correct, then Donnellan's distinction is irrelevant to Russell's theory.

So, the following seems to be a very important question the answer to which has a significant impact on any evaluation of Russell's theory of definite descriptions: does the phenomenon (*i.e.* the phenomenon that a definite description contained in a sentence may be used attributively and referentially as well) arising from Donnellan's distinction posit a genuine problem for Russell's theory? In order to give a negative answer, a Russellian has to give a

satisfactory theory that can accommodate the referential use of definite descriptions without postulating any ambiguity. That means a Russellian should prove that:

> **R_1.** The general proposition expressed by the sentence of the form "The *F* is *G*" is the semantic meaning or literal meaning (or lexical meaning), whereas the singular proposition expressed by "The *F* is *G*" is an outcome of speech acts in a given context.
> **R_2.** It is possible pragmatically to express a true proposition by uttering a sentence whose semantic content is false.
> **R_3.** The truth condition of the singular proposition doesn't affect the truth condition of the general proposition. And,
> **R_4.** Russell's theory is a theory of semantics that deals with the literal meaning of sentences containing definite descriptions, whereas Donnellan's theory is a theory of pragmatics which does not pre-empt a semantic theory, like Russell's.
> **R_5.** Russell himself doesn't deny the pragmatic significance of the referential use of definite descriptions.

As a Russellian, I am accepting these challenges. That means that in this thesis I will defend Russell's theory against the problem arising from Donnellan's distinction; I will show, by focusing on the above mentioned criteria of defending Russell's theory, that Donnellan's distinction doesn't posit any genuine problem for Russell's theory in either of these ways: (a) neither is a sentence containing a definite description ambiguous, *i.e.* it always has one lexical meaning; (b) nor does Russell's theory deny the pragmatic significance of a sentence containing a definite description. For supporting (a) I will focus on the distinction between semantics and pragmatics, and will try to refute Michael Devitt's arguments for the semantic significance of referential definite descriptions; and in support of (b) I will show that a person conveys a singular proposition when he uses a definite description referentially in uttering a sentence that expresses a general proposition. But the proposition conveyed by him is not merely

governed by his intentions, rather it is governed by some rules concerning various facts about the assertion. And Russell's theory doesn't deny these facts.

4.2 Semantics vs Pragmatics

According to Charles Morris, "Semantics is the study of meaning, construed primarily (though we know not uncontroversially) as a matter of the relations that linguistic expressions bear to the world in virtue of which they are meaningful."[154]

To distinguish between semantics and pragmatics, Francois Recanati primarily distinguishes between *the linguistic meaning of a sentence type* and *what is said* by an utterance of the sentence in question. By a linguistic meaning of a sentence type he means a meaning which is not affected by changes in the context of utterance. Thus, a sentence type meaning is a *context independent* meaning. On the other hand, by *what is said* by an utterance of a sentence he means the proposition expressed by the sentence in question with respect to a particular context.[155] Thus, the proposition expressed by a particular utterance is always *context dependent*. For example, the sentence "I am a Canadian" has a certain meaning which, qua meaning of a sentence type, is not affected by changes in the context of utterance: this meaning remains the same regardless of whether it is uttered or not. On the other hand, if I utter "I am a Canadian", my utterance will express the proposition that is equivalent to the proposition expressed by the sentence "Nasrin is a Canadian"; if Black utters the sentence "I am a Canadian", his utterance will express the proposition equivalent to the proposition expressed by "Black is a Canadian". Thus, the context of an utterance affects *what is said* (or the proposition expressed) by the utterance of a sentence in question: the same sentence may

[154] Lycan (2008), p. 137
[155] Recanati (2004), p. 5

express different propositions in different contexts. So, the proposition is *context dependent* whereas the sentence type meaning is *context independent* in Recanati's account.

Recanati also distinguishes between *what is actually said* and *what is conveyed* by an utterance of a sentence. For example, suppose someone asks me whether I understand cricket, and I reply, "Bangladesh is my favorite cricket team." Clearly my utterance of "Bangladesh is my favorite cricket team" provides an affirmative answer to the question. Moreover, it includes more than *what is literally said*: literally my utterance expresses the proposition that *Bangladesh is my favorite cricket team*; but it also implies that *I understand how to play cricket*. Thus, my utterance conveys the proposition that *I understand cricket*. This proposition, *i.e. I understand cricket,* which is not literally said but is conveyed by my utterance of the sentence "Bangladesh is my favorite cricket team" is called implicature.[156] Thus, the sentence meaning (or the linguistic meaning of a sentence type) is conventional and *context independent*. On the other hand, both *what is said* and *what is conveyed* are *context dependent*. Moreover, *what is said* is constrained by the sentence meaning or the linguistic meaning of the sentence type. For *what is said* "results from fleshing out the meaning of the sentence (which is like a semantic 'skeleton') so as to make it propositional."[157] For example, the sentence "I am a Canadian" may express a number of propositions in different contexts. But, all of the propositions that are expressed by the sentence "I am a Canadian" should be compatible with the semantic content of the sentence "I am a Canadian"; and it cannot express the proposition *the sky is blue*.[158] On the other hand, *what is conveyed* is not constrained by

[156] Paul Grice introduces this term "implicature" as a noun and "implicate" as a verb (see footnote of Recanati (2004), p. 5)
[157] Recanati (2004), p. 6
[158] For example, *what is said* by an utterance of "I am a Canadian" should be incompatible with semantic content of the sentence "Grass is green" or Socrates is a human" and so on.

the sentence meaning in the way in which *what is said* is. Thus, there is no constraint of expressing *the sky is blue* by the utterance of the sentence "I am a Canadian": through the mechanism of implicature, the sentence "I am a Canadian" can implicate the proposition *the sky is blue* or *grass is green*, depending on enough background. For what is implicated or conveyed is implicated in virtue of an inference rather than the semantic content of the sentence uttered in question.[159] So, there is a close connection between the sentence meaning and *what is said*: the sentence meaning and *what is said* together constitute the literal meaning of an utterance of a sentence as opposed to what the speaker implicates or conveys by the utterance in question.[160]

However, there is another interpretation, the non-minimalist interpretation, that holds that *what is said* is a subject matter of pragmatics because *what is said* is determined in a particular context. The proponents of a non-minimalist interpretation believe that even though *what is said* is constrained by the meaning of the sentence type, this constraint is not as tight as traditionally thought and hence it does not follow the minimalist's notion of constraint.[161] So, they think that w*hat is said* and *what is conveyed* together constitute the pragmatic meaning of a sentence uttered by a speaker in a particular context.

At any rate, pragmatics deals with the context based utterance of a sentence as uttered as Lycan suggests that pragmatics deals with the function of a language in a particular context: pragmatics reveals a meaning of a sentence based on *the context of utterance* of the sentence uttered by a particular speaker. On the other hand, semantics deals with the sentence meaning, "the meaning of a sentence type in abstraction from any particular use to which the

[159] Recanati (2004), p. 6
[160] This view is called the minimalist interpretation of the difference among the sentence meaning, *what is said* and *what is conveyed*. (see Recanati (2004), p. 6)
[161] Ibid, p. 6

sentence might be put."[162] Thus, according to the distinction made by Lycan, it can be said that semantics deals with the sentence type irrespective of whether it is used or not. On the other hand, pragmatics deals with the sentence token or utterance in a particular context. So, pragmatics is always concerned with a particular context and the pragmatic meaning of a sentence is determined by that very particular context in which the sentence in question is uttered. Thus, what is conveyed or implicated can be regarded as a standard model of the subject matter of pragmatics.

H. P. Grice discusses two types of implicature: conventional implicature and conversational implicature. According to Grice, when a speaker implicates something conventionally by uttering a certain word or a sentence, he implicates by virtue of the conventional meaning of the word(s) or sentence(s) she has used in her utterance.[163] That means that the conventional meaning of the words used determines what is implicated by uttering the words in question.[164] On the other hand, when the speaker implicates something non-conventionally, by uttering a word(s) or a sentence(s), his "implicature falls outside the specification of the conventional meaning of the word used."[165] To illustrate what is meant by a conventional and non-conventional implicature, let us consider the following three examples given by Grice. Suppose a speaker utters the following sentences:

(31a) Jones is an Englishman; therefore, Jones is brave.

(31b) Jones is an Englishman; and he is brave.

(31c) Jones' being brave follows from his being an Englishman.

[162] Lycan (2008), p. 138
[163] Grice (1968), p. 225
[164] It should be noted that the conventional meaning of the words used also determine what is said by a sentence uttered.
[165] Grice (1968), p. 225

According to the conventional meaning, the word "therefore" indicates that the sentence used after the word "therefore" follows from the sentence used before "therefore". Semantically, "therefore" means a consequence. Thus, when the speaker utters sentence (31a) he implicates, but doesn't literally say, that Jones' being brave follows from his being an Englishman. On the other hand, if the speaker utters, "Jones is an Englishman; and he is brave", his utterance, according to the conventional meaning of "and", will not implicate that his being brave follows from his being an Englishman. Rather, "and" means that *Jones' being brave* is an extra quality of Jones in addition to *his being an Englishman*. However, by uttering (31b) the speaker may implicate or mean that "Jones' being brave follows from his being an Englishman"; but this meaning or implicature is not determined by the virtue of the conventional meaning of "and".[166] Rather, here the speaker implicates something different from the conventional or literal meaning of the words used. Thus, by uttering (31b) the speaker may perform a non-conventional implicature of (31c); whereas, by uttering (31a), he performs a conventional implicature of (31c). Let us consider another example. Suppose, one of my colleagues asks me whether I have any kids or not; and I reply, "I have a daughter." Our conversation can be restated as follows:

My colleague: Do you have any kids?

I: I have a daughter.

Here by uttering "I have a daughter" I am giving a positive answer to the question of whether I have any kids or not. That means that I am implicating that I have a kid. However, the sentence I am uttering itself has a meaning that is slightly different from "I have a daughter. Semantically, "I have a daughter" has the propositional content, "Nasrin has a daughter." But, "I have a daughter" implies or indicates that I have a kid. So, here my implicature is

[166] Grice (1975), pp. 44-45

determined by the conventional meaning of "daughter". Thus, the implicature conveyed by my utterance of "I have a daughter" is a conventional implicature. Now suppose I reply to the question asked by my colleague if I have a kid or not by uttering "I am single". So, our conversation can be restated as follows:

My colleague: Do you have any kids?

I: I am single.

Here by uttering "I am single" I am conveying that I do not have any kid. But I am not literally saying that I do not have kids. Rather, my utterance literally means that I do not have any partner or husband. Thus, what I implicate by uttering "I am single" is considerably different from the literal meaning of the sentence uttered. This implicature is a conversational implicature. So, in the case of conversational implicature, what the speaker conveys or implicates goes beyond *what is said*. At any rate, implicature is the act of implying something different from *what is said* by the sentence uttered by the speaker. Thus, *what is said*, the conventional implicature and the conversational implicature can be restated as follows:

> ***What is said:*** in a language *L*, a proposition *p* is *what is said* by an utterance of a sentence *p iff* a speaker *S*'s utterance of the sentence *p* means *p*.
>
> **Conventional Implicature:** in a language *L*, a proposition *q* is the conventional implicature of the sentence *p iff* the speaker *S*'s utterance of *p* implicates or indicates *q* by virtue of the conventional meaning of the linguistic content of *p* in a given context *C*.
>
> **Conversational Implicature:** in a language *L*, in a given context *C*, proposition *q* is the conversational implicature of the sentence *p iff* the speaker *S*'s utterance of *p* implicates or indicates *q*, where *q* is determined not by virtue of the literal meaning of *p*, but *q* goes beyond *what is literally said* or *meant* by *p*.

From the above definition, it is worth noting that "inference" plays an important role in the case of conventional implicature. However, it should not be mistakenly thought that

implicating is inferring: the speaker implies the conventional implicature by uttering a sentence in question. Rather, it is the hearer who infers what the speaker implicates from sufficient contextual evidence, including *what is said* by the utterance of the sentence and the sentence uttered by the speaker in a given context. A hearer will infer which person or object the speaker refers to by using a referring expression in a given context.[167] For example, in the case of sentences (31a), (31b) and (31c), the hearer infers (31c) from (31a) when she hears the utterance of (31a) by the speaker. Thus, *what is said* by an utterance of a sentence is given to us directly or literally, whereas, when someone implicates something, this implicature happens in terms of an inference by the hearer from enough evidence at hand. So, when I reply to the question of whether I have any kids or not by uttering "I have a daughter", it is the hearer's duty to infer that I have a kid from *what is said* by my utterance of "I have a daughter", what is asked, and the assumption that I respond to this question asked.[168] Moreover, since a conventional implicature is different from *what is said* by an utterance of a sentence, the conventional implicature does not affect the truth condition of *what is said* by an utterance of a sentence: *what is said* can be true even if the conventional implicature is false; *what is said* can be false even if what is implicated is true. In other words, the truth or falsity of a conventional implicature is compatible with the falsity or truth of the utterance of a sentence. Nevertheless, by virtue of *what is said* a particular utterance of a sentence can generate a conventional implicature.[169]

Kent Bach argues against classifying this implicature as a conventional implicature based on the claim that *saying that Jones is English and therefore he is brave* is more

[167] Davis (2004), 1
[168] Ibid, 1
[169] Bach (1999), pp. 329, 331

than *saying that Jones is English and brave*.[170] According to Bach, the conventional implicature is not detachable from *what is said* by the utterance of a sentence. Thus, (31c) is not detachable form the literal content of (31a). Rather, the implicature of (31a), *i.e.* (31c), is the part of the literal content of (31a).[171] However, in my opinion, there is a certain difference between *what is said* and what is conventionally implicated by a locution of a sentence. For example, consider the conversation between my colleague and me once again:

My colleague: Do you have any kids?

I: I have a daughter.

Here by uttering "I have a daughter", I implicate that *I have a kid*. However, literally my utterance does not exactly mean *I have a kid.* Rather, literally "I have a daughter" means *I have a female child.* Literally, "I have a daughter" can be also expressed as *I have a child and it is female,* which is clearly different from the proposition *I have a child.* If the literal content of "I have a daughter", *i.e. I have a female child*, was not different from the proposition conventionally implicated, *i.e. I have a child*, we could substitute one for another and this substitution would not affect the truth condition of the sentence uttered. However, we cannot substitute *I have a female child* for *I have a child.* For I could have a son and in that case "I have a daughter" and "I have a son" would have the same literal meaning. However, a speaker can utter "I have a son" and can implicate that *she has a child*, which is different from the literal meaning of her utterance, *she has a male child*, just as my utterance of "I have a daughter" conveys a proposition which is different from the literal content of the sentence uttered. Thus, conventional implicature is more than what is said by a locution of a sentence in a given context.

[170] Davis (2014), 2
[171] Bach (1999), pp. 339-340

From the above discussion, the basic characteristics of conventional implicature can be summarized as follows:

> **CON_1:** A conventional implicature is a proposition which is conveyed by the speaker to mean something different from the literal content of the words used in the sentence in question.
> **CON_2:** The proposition expressed as conventional implicature is determined by the literal meaning or *what is said* by uttering the sentence in question.
> **CON_3:** The truth conditions of conventional implicature doesn't affect the truth conditions of *what is said* by the utterance of the sentence in question. Thus, it is possible to implicate a false proposition by uttering a true sentence.
> **CON_4:** The hearer has to infer what the speaker implicates by her utterance from sufficient contextual evidence, including *what is said* (or the literal meaning) by the utterance of the sentence and the sentence uttered by the speaker in a given context.

On the other hand, a conversational implicature, as mentioned earlier, goes beyond the literal meaning of the sentence uttered by the speaker, and hence the content of the conversational implicature is not determined by virtue of the literal meaning of the words used in the sentence uttered. Grice holds that a conversational implicature is associated with certain general features of discourse: "the existence of some rational principles and maxims governing conversation."[172] He calls this principle the *Cooperative Principle*.

> ***Cooperative Principle (CP)***: Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.[173]

[172] Korta Kepa & Perry, John (2015), (Winter edition), 2.1.2
[173] Grice (1975), p. 45

So, conversational implicature is involved in the principles governing discourse. The maxims of quantity, quality, relation and manner come under this *cooperative principle*. These maxims are as follows:[174]

> ***Maxim of Quantity*:** Make your contribution as informative as is required. So, do not make it more informative than is required.
>
> ***Maxim of Quality*:** Make your contribution true; so, do not say what you believe to be false; do not say that for which you are unjustified.
>
> ***Maxim of Relation*:** Be relevant.
>
> ***Maxim of Manner*:** Be perspicuous; so, avoid obscurity of expressions; and avoid ambiguity, and be brief and orderly.

According Grice, these rules are not arbitrary conventions; rather these are instances of more general rules governing rational, cooperative behavior. For example, if Jane is helping Kelly build a house, she will hand in Kelly a hammer and nails rather than a cricket bat and ball (relevance); she will hand in four nails when Kelly needs four (quantity), straight nails rather than bent ones (quality), and she will do all this quickly and efficiently (manner).[175]

Moreover, according to Grice, a conversational implicature of an utterance of a sentence is calculable: a conversational implicature can be calculated using the *Cooperative Principle*. He says:

> The presence of a conversational implicature must be capable of being worked out; for even if it can in fact be intuitively grasped, unless the intuition is replaceable by an argument, the implicature (if present at all) will not count as a CONVERSATIONAL implicature; it will be a CONVENTIONAL implicature.[176]

[174] Ibid, pp. 45-46
[175] Davis (2014), 5
[176] Grice (1975), p. 50

Thus, a conversational implicature differs from a conventional implicature in the ability of being worked out. Grice holds that to *work out* an implicature is to infer it from the *Cooperative Principle* in a specific way using particular facts about the literal meaning or *what is said* by the utterance of the sentence uttered and the context of the utterance.[177] Thus, to work out that a particular conversational implicature is present, the hearer needs to rely on the following data:[178]

> (1) what is said by words used (or the conventional meaning of the words used) in the sentence uttered, "together with the identity of any references that may be involved;"[179]
> (2) the *Cooperative Principle* and its maxims;[180]
> (3) "the context, linguistic or otherwise, of the utterance;"
> (4) "other items of background knowledge;"[181] and
> (5) "the fact (or supposed fact) that all relevant items falling under the previous headings are available to both participants and both participants know or assume this to be the case."[182]

So, a general pattern for the working-out of a conversational implicature on the part of the hearer might be given as follows:

> He has said that *p*; there is no reason to suppose that he is not observing the maxims, or at least the CP; he could not be doing this unless he thought that *q*; he knows (and knows that I know that he knows) that I can see that the supposition that he thinks that *q* is required; he has done nothing to stop me thinking that *q*; he intends me to think, or is at least willing to allow me to think, that *q*; and so he has implicated that *q*.[183]

[177] Davis (2014), 5
[178] Grice (1975), p. 50
[179] Ibid, p. 50
[180] Ibid, p. 50
[181] Ibid, p. 50
[182] Ibid, p. 50
[183] Grice (1975), p. 50

Now let us consider Grice's initial example of conversational implicature. Grice describes the example in the following way:

> Suppose that A and B are talking about a mutual friend, C, who is now working in a bank. A asks B how C is getting on in his job, and B replies, *Oh quite well, I think; he likes his colleagues, and he hasn't been to prison yet*. At this point A might well inquire what B was implying, what he was suggesting, or even what he meant by saying that C had not yet been to prison. The answer might be any one of such things as that C is the sort of person likely to yield to the very unpleasant and treacherous people, and so forth.[184]

Here, by uttering "he hasn't been to prison yet", B literally says that *C hasn't been to the prison up to the time of his utterance of "he hasn't been to prison yet"*. However, by uttering "he hasn't been to prison yet" B implicates that *"C is the sort of person likely to yield to the temptation provided by his occupation."*[185] If we apply the general pattern to this example, to calculate the conversational implicature, A will reason in the following way:

> *B* says that *C* hasn't been to prison yet (*p*); he is apparently flouting the maxim of manner, but I have no reason to suppose that he is opting out CP; his violation of the maxim would only be apparent if he is thinking that *C* is potentially dishonest (*q*); *B* knows (and knows that I know that he knows) that I can figure out he is thinking that *q*; … so he has implicated that *q*.[186]

In addition to postulating that the conversationality of an implicature depends on the cooperative presumption, determinacy, and mutual knowledge conditions, and that the implicature can be recognized on the basis of those conditions, Grice claimed that they *give*

[184] Ibid, p. 43
[185] Korta, Kepa & Perry, John (2015), 2.1.2
[186] Ibid, 2.1.2

rise to or *generate* the implicatures. The implicatures exist *because* first three conditions are satisfied.

At the end of his paper, "Logic and Conversation", Grice mentions the basic features of a conversational implicature. According to him, a conversational implicature, being a conversational implicature, must possess certain features:

> 1. Since the observance of *the cooperative principle* is necessary and since it is possible to opt out of the observation of the cooperative principle, a generalized conversational implicature can be canceled in a particular case. It can be canceled in two ways: either it can be canceled explicitly by the addition of a clause that states or implies that the speaker has opted out, or it can be canceled contextually "if the form of utterance that usually carries it is used in a context that makes it clear that the speaker is opting out."[187] Thus, a conversational implicature *q* by uttering *p* is explicitly cancelable either by adding phrase *but not q,* or *I didn't mean to imply that q*. On the other hand, *q* is contextually cancelable if an agent *A* finds a context *C* where *p* doesn't carry *q*.
> 2. Since the calculation of the presence of the conversational implicature requires only the contextual information, the background information, and the knowledge of *what is said*, the manner of expression plays no role in the calculation. There will be no other possible way of saying *what is said*, that doesn't have the implicature in question.[188] Grice calls this feature of conversational implicature NONDETACHABILITY. "Since a generalized conversational implicature is fairly insensitive to context and background information, it should have a high degree of nondetachability."[189]
> 3. Since the calculation of the presence of the conversational implicature presupposes the initial knowledge of the literal meaning or *what is said* by the utterance of a sentence, the conversational implicature is not the

[187] Grice (1975), p. 57
[188] Ibid, pp. 57-58
[189] Bach, Kent and Harnish, Robert M. (1979), p. 170

> part of the literal meaning or *what is said* by the utterance of the sentence in question.[190]
>
> 4. Since the truth or falsity of a conversational implicature cannot affect the truth or falsity of *what is said*, the conversational implicature "is not carried by what is said but only by the saying of what is said, or by 'putting it that way'."[191]
>
> 5. Since the calculation of a conversational implicature requires the calculation of "what has to be supposed in order to preserve the supposition that the Cooperative Principle is being observed, and since there may be various possible specific explanations, … a conversational implicature … will be disjunction of such specific explanations…."[192]

Thus, according to Grice a conversational implicature is cancelable, nondetachable and calculable; and it is not the part of the content of the literal meaning of the utterance of a sentence; its truth value doesn't affect the truth value of *what is said*, and in some cases, conversational implicature may be a disjunction.

From Grice's distinction between *what is said* and what is implicated, we have argued that the implicature doesn't contribute to the conventional meaning of the sentence uttered by a speaker in a particular context, no matter whether it is a conventional or conversational implicature. Since the implicature doesn't contribute to the conventional meaning of a sentence uttered, implicature doesn't belong to the discourse of semantics; rather implicature belongs to the domain of pragmatics.

However, I am not willing to use the term "conventional meaning" to mean *the literal meaning* of a sentence or word used in an utterance. For there are number of instances in our language that prove that while a literal meaning is a conventional meaning, yet a conventionally used meaning doesn't always contribute to the literal meaning of a sentence or

[190] Ibid, 170
[191] Grice (1975), p. 58
[192] Ibid, p. 58

a word uttered. For example, suppose one of my students didn't do well in his final exam. He came to me and uttered the following sentence:

(32) I didn't do well in the exam.

And I replied to him as follows:

(33) Very good; I think you should continue spending a lot of time on Facebook.

The literal meaning of my utterance of sentence (33) is that *it is a very good sign not to do well in the exam; and my student should spend a lot of time on Facebook as he is doing now.* However, what I conveyed by uttering (33) is that *it is not a good sign at all; and he shouldn't spend a lot of time on Facebook as I think his spending much time on Facebook is one of the major culprits for his not doing well in the exam.* That means, what I conveyed is totally different from the literal meaning of the sentence uttered. However, there is a regularity or convention of using "good" with the opposite meaning of "good", though this regularity or convention doesn't contribute to the literal meaning of the word "good". So, a convention alone cannot be the sufficient condition for being the semantic content of a word or sentence. On the contrary, there are words which are used in a different sense over time because of conventions, nevertheless, the first meaning in which sense it was used earlier is not removed from the dictionary. Rather, both meanings stay simultaneously. It depends on the context and rule of the language in which sense the word is used. For example, consider Devitt's example of the verb "incense" taken from Marga Reimer. According to Devitt and Reimer, the verb "incense" literally means *to make one fragrant with incense*, however, through the course of time because of conventions it begins to literally mean *to make one very angry*. Now the question is: when *to make one very angry* became the literal meaning of "incense", did we remove the first meaning, *i.e. to make one fragrant with incense,* from the

dictionary as a meaning of "incense"? Still both meanings stay in the dictionary, although people very rarely use "incense" to mean *to make one fragrant with incense.* If convention alone was a sufficient condition for being the semantic content of a word or sentence, the literal meaning would vary by the course of time only because of changes of conventions. Thus, not all conventional meanings can be the literal meaning, though literal meaning is conventional. So, convention is a necessary condition, but not sufficient, for being the semantic content of a sentence or word in a language. Later, on the basis of the distinction between the literal meaning and the conventional use, I will show why Devitt's argument based on the regularity of using referential definite descriptions (RD) is flawed. However, for the present purpose, it is enough to discuss why I am not comfortable to use the term "conventional meaning" to mean the semantic meaning of a sentence. Rather I want to use "literal meaning" in its strict sense to mean the semantic content of a sentence uttered. Wayne Davis seems to make the similar argument. He says:

> Speakers conventionally use sentences of the form "Some *S* are *P*" to implicate "Not all *S* are *P*," but not to implicate "Not more than half of all *S* are *P*." Consequently "Some athletes smoke" implicates "Not all athletes smoke" but not "Not more than half of all athletes smoke." Even though this implicature is conversational, all the signs of conventionality are present. There is a regularity in usage and interpretation. English speakers commonly use sentences of the form "Some *S* are *P*" to implicate "Not all *S* are *P*," but they rarely if ever use them to implicate "Not more than half of all *S* are *P*." Speakers are commonly understood accordingly. These regularities are socially useful, serving, among other things, the purpose of communication. They are as self-perpetuating as other conventional practices. People use "Some *S* are *P*" to implicate "Not all *S* are *P*," and are so understood, in part because people have regularly done so in the past. Speakers pick up sentence implicatures

> from other speakers as they learn their language. And finally, the regularities are arbitrary to some extent.[193]

Thus, following Davis, sometimes the regularity of using a sentence *p* to implicate *q* is arbitrary, and is constructed by people to serve the purpose of their communication. So, the conventional meaning or the regularly used meaning which is merely arbitrary, and not rule governed, cannot be accepted as a part of the semantic content of the sentence or word uttered. Only the literal meaning is the semantic meaning of a sentence. By "a literal meaning" I mean the lexical meaning of the words in a sentence that is defined by a dictionary. So, a conventional meaning or regularly used meaning of a sentence cannot be accepted as a literal meaning until and unless it has a space in the dictionary in a language. Hence, the distinction between the semantics and pragmatics can be restated as follows:

> **SP_1:** Semantics deals with the literal meaning of a sentence or a word, no matter whether the sentence or the word in question is uttered by any speaker or not; whereas, pragmatics deals with various forms of speech acts, namely, conventional or conversational implicatures in a given context, including the conventional meaning (which is not included in the dictionary) of a sentence uttered.
>
> **SP_2:** the semantic meaning of a sentence or word is the literal meaning of the sentence or the word, regardless of whether the sentence or the word in question is regularly used or not. On the hand, the pragmatic meaning of a sentence is determined by the various facts concerning the utterance of the sentence or the word in question, such as, the speaker's intention, various contextual features, the understanding of the hearer and so on.

4.3 Problems with Kripke's Picture

Saul Kripke distinguishes between a semantic referent and a speaker's referent. On the basis of that he claims that when the speaker utters a sentence containing a definite description using the

[193] Davis (2014), "Implicature", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall edition),

definite description to talk about her intended person or object, that intended person or object is the speaker's referent of the definite description in question, whereas whoever or whatever fits the definite description is the semantic referent of the definite description in question. For example, according to Kripke, when a speaker seeing the wounded body of Smith utters the following sentence to talk about Jones, who is on trial being accused of killing Smith,

(19) The murderer of Smith is insane.

the semantic referent of the definite description "the murderer of Smith" is whoever killed Jones, it may be Black, or Tony or someone else; and the speaker's referent of "the murderer of Smith" is Jones who has already been in the speaker's mind and the speaker intended to talk about Jones. Let me recall the definition, provided by Kripke, of the semantic referent and the speaker's referent of an expression, stated in the third chapter:

> If a speaker has a designator in his idiolect, certain conventions of his idiolect (given various facts about the world) determine the referent in the idiolect: that I call the *semantic referent* of the designator. (If the designator is ambiguous, or contains indexicals, demonstratives, or the like, we must speak of the semantic referent on a given occasion. The referent will be determined by the conventions of the language plus the speaker's intentions and various contextual features.)[194]
> […] we may tentatively define the speaker's referent of a designator to be that object which the speaker wishes to talk about, on a given occasion, and believes fulfills the conditions for being the semantic referent of the designator. He uses the designator with the intention of making an assertion about the object in question (which may not really be the semantic referent, if the speaker's belief that it fulfills the appropriate semantic conditions is in error). The speaker's referent is the thing the speaker referred to by the designator, though it may not be the referent of the designator, in his idiolect.[195]

[194] Kripke (1977), p. 263
[195] Ibid, p. 264

Moreover, according to Kripke, "the semantic referent of a definite description is determined by the general intention of the speaker whereas the speaker's referent of the definite description in question, on a given occasion, is determined by the particular intention of the speaker on that specific occasion."[196] From the above definition of the semantic referent and speaker's referent, provided by Kripke, it is evident that:

> (i) In a language *L,* the semantic referent of an expression *e* is an object *o* that *e* stands for in virtue of its meaning. On the other hand, in a language *L* the speaker's referent of an expression *e* is an object o_2 that *e* stands for in virtue of the intention of the speaker *S,* who believes that o_2 fulfills the conditions for being *o* in a context *c.*
> (ii) the semantic referent of a definite description is determined by certain conventions of a given idiolect; whereas, the speaker's referent may not be the semantic referent of the definite description in that idiolect.
> (iii) the semantic referent is determined by the general intention of the speaker, whereas the speaker's referent is determined by the particular intention on a given occasion.

I do not think that Kripke does justice to Russell's theory. First, from the above definition, according to Kripke, it seems that a definite description when it is uttered has a semantic referent as well as a speaker's referent. However, Russell clearly states that a definite description is a non-referring expression that doesn't refer to any object or individual in isolation; and hence a definite description does not have a meaning in isolation in virtue of which it can stand for the object in question.[197] However, if we accept *whoever fits the F* as the semantic referent of "the *F*", we have to accept that there is an object *o,* such that *o* is the meaning of "the *F*". In that case, a sentence containing a definite description will be either true or false, *i.e.*, it has a truth value, if and only if the definite description has a semantic

[196] See chapter Three & Kripke (1977), p. 264
[197] Russell (1918), p. 122; Russell (1905), p. 480

referent. However, as we have seen in the first chapter, as a denoting expression, there is no need for an object corresponding to the definite description in question, in order for the sentence to be either true or false. Moreover, if we explain Kripke's semantic content in terms of Kaplan's notion of *content*, in the Smith's murderer example, when Black is the real murderer, the *content* of sentence (19) is:

($19k_1$) <Black, the property of being insane>

However, according to Russell, definite descriptions acquire meaning only in context. A definite description, "the *F*, unlike a proper name, such as "Jones", doesn't mean anything in isolation; and hence the proposition in which "the *F*" occurs doesn't have any constituent individual corresponding to "the *F"*.[198] That is why "The *F* is *G"* expresses a general proposition; and "the *F"* is a denoting phrase which denotes *x* when *x* is the one and only one *F.* Thus, according to Russell, "the *F"* doesn't have any semantic meaning. Nor does it have any semantic referent. However, any object may fit "the *F"*. Now, if we translate sentence (19) in terms of Kaplan's notion of *content*, sentence (19) expresses the proposition that contains the following *content:*

($19k_2$) <The murderer of Smith, the property of being insane>[199]

Clearly ($19k_1$) and ($19k_2$) are not equivalent. If a definite description had a semantic referent, ($19k_1$) and ($19k_2$) would have the same *content*. But, we have seen that ($19k_1$) is not a general proposition, rather it is a singular proposition which is object-dependent in Neale's words.[200] For, here, the content is a singular proposition which Kaplan reifies as the ordered pair of the subject—the individual, Black—and the predicated property of being insane. However, ($19k_2$)

[198] Russell (1918), p. 122
[199] Kaplan (1979), pp. 387-392
[200] According to Neale, "object-dependent proposition" expressed by "The *F* is *G"* could not be expressed if the object referred to by the term "The *F*" didn't exist. That means, the existence of the proposition *o is G* expressed by "The *F* is *G*" depends on whether there is an object o that is referred to by "the *F*" (see Neale (1990), p. 5).

is a general proposition which is object-independent, though any individual may fit the definite description "the murderer of Smith", who will be the denotation of "the murderer of Smith". For the content of ($19k_2$) seems to be some more complicated construct, one involving the property of being a murderer of Smith and not involving the individual (by hypothesis Black) who is the murderer of Smith. Thus, it is evident that semantically a definite description does not have any referent at all, but an object may fit the definite description, and in that case that object is the denotation of the definite description in question; and semantically it expresses an object-independent general proposition.

Donnellan himself also seems to recognize the fact that a definite description is a denoting expression, though it can be used as a referring expression too.[201] He distinguishes between a denoting expression and a referring expression. He claims that "denoting" and "referring" are not the same thing, although the same expression can be used in either way. According to Donnellan, a definite description denotes an individual or object if that individual or object fits the definite description in question. On the other hand, a definite description refers to an individual or object if the speaker, who uses that definite description, intends to enable his audience to pick out that individual or object, no matter whether that individual or object fits the definite description or not. Thus, a denotation of a definite description is an entity that uniquely fits the definite description in question.[202] On the other hand, a referent of a definite description is an entity whom the speaker wishes to pick out, regardless of whether that entity uniquely fits that definite description or not. Donnellan illustrates the difference in the following way:

[201] Donnellan (1966), p. 293
[202] Ibid, p. 293

> If someone said, for example, in 1960 before he had any idea that Mr. Goldwater would be the Republican nominee in 1964, "The Republican candidate for president in 1964 will be a conservative," (perhaps on the basis of an analysis of the views of party leaders) the definite description here would *denote* Mr. Goldwater. But would we wish to say that the speaker had referred to, mentioned, or talked about Mr. Goldwater? I feel these terms would be out of place. Yet if we identify referring and denoting, it ought to be possible for it to turn out (after the Republican Convention) that the speaker had, unknown to himself, referred in 1960 to Mr. Goldwater. On my view, however, while the definite description used did *denote* Mr. Goldwater (using Russell's definition), the speaker used it *attributively* and did not *refer* to Mr. Goldwater.[203]

In this passage, Donnellan tells us that the denotation of the definite description "the Republican candidate for president in 1964" is Mr. Goldwater. For here the speaker does not intend to talk about Mr. Goldwater, rather he talks about whoever fits "the Republican candidate for president in 1964". Incidentally, Mr. Goldwater uniquely fits the definite description "the Republican candidate for president in 1964"; and hence "the Republican candidate for president in 1964" denotes Mr. Goldwater. If the speaker knew that Mr. Goldwater would be the Republican candidate for president in 1964 and uttered "The Republican candidate for president in 1964 will be a conservative" to talk about Mr. Goldwater, then the definite description "the Republican candidate for president in 1964" would refer to Mr. Goldwater. Nevertheless, "the Republican candidate for president in 1964" denoted Mr. Goldwater. Thus, according to Donnellan, a definite description may have a denotation regardless of whether it is used attributively or referentially. However, Russell's theory does not recognize this fact. Russell's theory only recognizes the denoting aspect of a definite description. For when a speaker utters "The Republican candidate for president in

[203] Ibid, p. 293

1964 will be a conservative" to talk about Mr. Goldwater (*i.e.* when a speaker uses the definite description "the Republican candidate for president in 1964" referentially), Russell's theory considers that his utterance is not about a particular person, namely Mr. Goldwater, rather his utterance is about whoever uniquely fits "the Republican candidate for president in 1964". Thus, Russell's theory ignores the fact that Mr. Goldwater can be the referent of "the Republican candidate for president in 1964". And that is why, according to Donnellan, Russell's theory of definite descriptions is incorrect.[204] Thus, according to Donnellan, a definite description may have a denotation, but does not have any referent, when it is used attributively; and a definite description has a referent when it is used referentially.

However, in my opinion, the mere fact that Russell's theory considers the fact that an utterance of a sentence containing a definite description is not about a particular person, but about whoever fits the definite description in question doesn't prove that Russell's theory is incorrect. Russell's theory would be incorrect if Russell was concerned about referring, not about denoting, and denied the fact that a definite description could refer to an object who was in the speaker's mind. However, isn't Russell concerned about *denoting*? Is *referring* a part of Russell's concern? Does Russell not give a theory of denoting, and not a theory of referring? I believe that Russell is not concerned about whether a definite description can be used referentially or not. Rather, he is concerned only about whether a definite description is denoting or not; in which conditions a definite description denotes; who or what is the denotation of the definite description of the form "the *F"*. Recall that Russell's primary

[204] Please note that Donnellan himself claims that Russell's theory is not a correct theory as it cannot account for the referential use of a definite description. On the other hand, some defenders of Donnellan suggest that according to Donnellan's distinction Russell's theory is incomplete. In this thesis, I will use the terms "incomplete" and "incorrect" synonymously. For an incomplete theory cannot be counted as a correct theory. Nor can an incorrect theory be counted as a complete theory.

intention was to give a theory that can account for the meaningfulness and truth values of sentences containing empty definite descriptions without violating LEM and the Law of Non-Contradiction that Meinong's and Frege's theory fail to account for. For Meinong's theory violates the Law of Non-Contradiction and introduces an entity that does not exist but subsist; and by claiming a sentence containing an empty definite description is neither true nor false, Frege's theory violates LEM—a meaningful sentence is either true or false. We have seen that by claiming that a definite description denotes if there is exactly one individual that satisfies the definite description in question, Russell solves the puzzles concerning empty definite descriptions. So, Russell gives a theory of denotation, not a theory of reference. Since, according to Donnellan, Russell's theory can explain why the definite description "the Republican candidate for president in 1964" denotes Mr. Goldwater—Mr. Goldwater is the one and only person who fits the definite description "the Republican candidate for president in 1964", Russell's theory cannot be accused of being an incorrect theory. Rather, it is successful as a theory of denotation. So, the possibility that a definite description is used referentially, which is not Russell's concern, cannot be used to evaluate Russell's theory, as according to Russell, a definite description in isolation is a non-referring expression.

If a definite description had a semantic referent, another problem would arise: we could not account for the meaningfulness of the sentence containing empty definite descriptions. For the sentence containing an empty definite description, such as "The present king of France is bald" would express a proposition in which the subject term was empty. In that case, we could not determine whether "the present king of France is bald" is true or false. And *the Puzzle Concerning the Law of the Excluded Middle* would emerge once again. However, we have seen in the first chapter that Russell solves this puzzle by considering

definite descriptions as non-referring, but denoting expressions. Since definite descriptions are non- referring, neither do they have semantic referents; nor do they have a speaker's referent. However, a speaker may use definite descriptions to refer to an object or individual. It cannot be the part of the semantic meaning of the definite description used.

Second, according to Kripke, a semantic referent of an expression is determined by certain conventions of an idiolect. However, in section 4.2, I have shown that convention alone does not always contribute to the semantic meaning of an expression. Sometimes, there is a convention of using some words with an opposite meaning. For example, "very good" is sometimes used to mean "not good". For example, suppose we, five friends, plan to go for a long drive. Suppose, we haven't seen the weather forecast and go out. However, when we go out we discover that the weather is gloomy and not perfect for outing at all. Now, one of my friends utters, "What a nice weather! By uttering "What a nice weather!" he certainly does not mean that the gloomy weather is very good for a long drive. Rather, he means that it is not good for long drive at all. However, in our language, conventionally we utter such sentences to overreact to some situations. Thus, the referent cannot be determined by only the convention of an idiolect. Rather, the convention along with some certain rules governing the semantic meaning determines the semantic referent of an expression.

Furthermore, according to Kripke, the speaker's referent is determined by the particular intention of the speaker in a particular context and by the belief of the speaker that the intended object fulfills the conditions for being the semantic referent of the definite description used. So, the speaker's particular intention and belief play a vital role in determining the referential meaning of the sentence that contains the definite description. The singular proposition expressed by the utterance of a sentence to talk about the speaker's

reference cannot threaten Russell's theory as Russell's theory is a theory of semantics, whereas the referential use of definite descriptions can be explained in terms of the Gricean apparatus of speech acts. I agree with Kripke on his remark that Donnellan's distinction between the attributive and referential use cannot threaten Russell's theory as Russell's theory is a semantic theory, whereas Donnellan's theory is pragmatically significant. However, this pragmatic significance doesn't merely depend on the speaker's intention and speaker's belief. Rather, other facts concerning the utterance of sentences, such as how the hearer understands what the speaker intended to refer to, whether the hearer is able to infer what is implicated by the utterance of the sentence containing a definite description, are also involved in the utterance of sentences. For, according to CON_4 discussed in the previous section, in the case of the conventional implicature, it is the duty of the hearer to infer what is implicated by the utterance of the speaker from sufficient contextual evidence, including *what is said* (the literal meaning) by the utterance of the sentence and which sentence is uttered by the speaker in a given context. On the other hand, in the case of the conversational implicature, certain general features of discourse, *i.e.* "the existence of some rational principles and maxims governing conversation" play the vital role in determining what is implicated.[205] So in both cases, the pragmatically enriched utterance, which is different from the semantic content of the sentence uttered, is governed by not only the speaker's intentions and beliefs but also certain rules. These rules are also important in determining how a speaker can make a true assertion by uttering a sentence which is semantically false. However, Kripke must be credited for claiming that Gricean apparatus can handle the issue of referential uses of definite descriptions.

[205] Korta, Kepa & Perry, John (2015), 2.1.2

Kripke, in his paper substantially claims that Russell's theory is preferable to that of Donnellan. However, I do not believe that Russell's theory is comparable to Donnellan's theory as a rival account of the same issue. For each of these two theories belongs to two different domains: Russell's theory belongs to the domain of semantics, whereas Donnellan's theory belongs to the domain of pragmatics; Russell's theory is a theory of denotation, whereas Donnellan's theory is a theory of reference: how reference is made when a definite description is used referentially or attributively. It has been discussed earlier that Russell believes that a definite description is a non-referential term that does not refer to anything in isolation. However, any object can, incidentally or accidentally, fit the definite description in question. On the other hand, an individual can use a definite description to refer to an intended person using that definite description. In that case, the reference is determined based on the intentions of the speaker, not the fact that the definite description describes the individual in question. Thus, Donnellan's theory cannot be counted as a competitor of Russell's theory.

4.4 Problems with Devitt's Theory

In the third chapter, we have seen that Michael Devitt gives his argument of the semantic significance of the referential uses of definite descriptions. He gives his argument based on the regularity of using referential descriptions (RD), and the analogy between referential definite descriptions (RDs), such as "the *F"* and deictic complex demonstratives like "that *F"*. In this section, I will show that Devitt's argument based on the regularity of using RDs is flawed, and the analogy between the function of "the *F*" and "that *F*" doesn't prove that RDs are semantically significant.

Devitt, in his argument based on the regularity of using RDs, claims that speakers of English regularly or conventionally use RDs to talk about a particular person or object that they have in mind; and hence it is a convention to express a singular proposition uttering a sentence containing the definite description of the form "the *F*". Since, using RDs is a convention, RDs are semantically significant.[206] However, I have shown in section 4.2 that being a convention alone cannot be a sufficient condition for being a semantic meaning of a sentence or expression. There are two reasons behind my position. First, there are number of instances which prove that a mere convention cannot make something a semantic meaning. On the contrary, sometimes it happens that we regularly use a sentence to mean something which is not the part of the literal meaning of the sentence uttered. That means that the convention or regularity is arbitrary. Second, when we conventionally use a sentence or an expression in a new sense, the old meaning does not disappear from the dictionary. Rather, we keep both simultaneously. For example, the verb "incense", that Devitt takes from Reimer, is now used to mean *to make one very angry*, but once it was used to mean *to make someone fragrant with incense.* Devitt claims that "incense" gets its semantic meaning *to make one very angry* because of the convention of using it to mean *to make one very angry*. But Devitt doesn't claim or prove that "incense" has lost its old meaning *to make someone fragrant with incense*. Rather, both are kept in the dictionary, though *to make someone fragrant with incense* is used very rarely. So, if a mere convention contributed to the semantic meaning of a sentence or an expression used, then "incense" would have only one semantic meaning, and that one is *to make one very angry*; and *to make someone fragrant* would not be the semantic meaning of "incense" even in a single instance. However, sometimes we can still use

[206] Devitt (2004), p. 283

"incense" to mean *to make someone fragrant with incense* and we find this meaning in the dictionary. Similar, the fact that regularly or conventionally we use a definite description referentially cannot prove that this use contributes to the literal meaning of the sentence containing that definite description. Rather, this convention may be arbitrary as much as other conventions are. Let me give another example: suppose I met a friend after a long interval. He asked me,

> How are you?

And I replied,

> As you wished.

Literally my utterance means the condition of my physical and mental health depends on whether he wished for my good physical and mental health or not. But, certainly, my condition does not depend on his wish. I could be good even though he wished for my worst; I could be bad even though he wished for my good health. So, I know that literally my utterance doesn't mean my condition depends on his wish. However, what I conveyed by my utterance of "As you wished" is that I am in a good condition as he is my friend and he is supposed to be my well-wisher. Now consider another situation. I am running a business of exporting ready-made garments. So, in the foreign market I have many competitors. All of them want to be the top exporter. So, it is very usual that other exporters do not want me to be the top exporter. Now, we meet at a party and one of my competitors asks me, "How is it going with your business?" And I reply to his question by uttering "As you wished." Here by uttering "As you wished", I convey that my business is in a good condition, but I am not willing to tell him the exact situation. However, literally, my utterance means that if he wished for good condition, then my business is being run well, otherwise it is not being run well. So, convention does not always contribute to the literal meaning of the sentence uttered.

Rather, sometimes conventional use has a pragmatic meaning that depends on the speaker, the hearer, the context in which it is used and so on. Similarly, the fact that a definite description is conventionally or regularly used referentially cannot prove that this use reveals the semantic meaning of the sentence containing the definite description in question. Thus, Devitt's argument for the semantic significance of RDs based on the regularity of using RDs is flawed.

Let me give an example of some artifacts. Suppose I need to repair my laptop. I do not have a screw driver to open the screw. But I badly need to fix the laptop. I have an idea. I can use my hairclip that has an open end like a screw driver to open the screw. And I have been able to open the laptop successfully as I wanted. Several times, when I needed to tighten the screw of my sauce pan I used a knife to tighten it. My point is that my using a knife to tighten my sauce pan-screw does not prove that the knife is a screw driver. Anyone, who knows what a knife is and what a screw driver is, is able to differentiate which one is the knife and which one is the screw driver. Similarly, I can collect a bird nest and decorate my house with it; I can make a small boat and decorate my living room. But at any rate the boat is a boat, the bird's nest is a bird's nest—no matter whether it is used to decorate my house or not. Similarly, a definite description is a denoting term which denotes if and only if there is a unique object that satisfies the definite description in question, no matter whether it is used referentially or not. It depends entirely on the speaker's intention and the relevant circumstances in which she uses it. Thus, the referential description is pragmatically significant, not semantically significant.

Devitt argues for the semantic significance of the referential definite descriptions (RD) by comparing them with deictic complex demonstratives. According to Devitt there is

an analogy between the definite description "the *F"* and the deictic complex demonstrative "that *F*" in the function and mechanism of determining their referents. For both play a very similar conventional role in communicating singular thoughts. We can change one for the other without the apparent cost to our goal of communicating a singular thought. So, the convention of expressing singular thoughts using a definite description is semantic just as the convention of expressing the singular thought using a deictic complex demonstrative is.[207] On the other hand, he claims that "F" plays an important role in determining the referent of the referential "the *F*" and the demonstrative "that *F*".[208]

I have earlier shown that mere convention does not always contribute to the semantic meaning of an expression. Thus, the argument based on the conventional use of "the *F*" like the conventional use of "that *F*" cannot be accepted as a valid argument. For if only convention could make something semantic, the conventional use of the knife or hair clip that have an open end like a screw driver would make that use of a knife or hair clip semantic. However, although a knife and a hair clip can be used conventionally like a screw driver, their semantics are different. Thus, it may be claimed that although "that *F*" and "the *F*" are used in the same way, their semantics may be different.

Now the question is: what is the semantics of a complex deictic demonstrative? I find Thomas Bontly's argument very convincing as he suggests that "'that F' consists of a simple demonstrative 'that' plus a modifying nominal 'F'."[209] For example, when we use "that professor of the department of philosophy" to refer to an individual Jack Zupko, it suggests that there are some other professors of the department of philosophy in addition to the

[207] Ibid, pp. 288-289
[208] Ibid, p. 292
[209] Bontly (2005), p. 13

referenced professor, namely Jack Zupko. However, this notion does not seem to be appropriate for proper definite descriptions. For in the case of proper definite descriptions when there is exactly one person who satisfies "the *F*", and we use "the *F''* to refer to an individual we do not suggest that there are some other *F*s that do not enter the extension of "the *F*". For example, if we use "the husband of the lady" we do not mean that there are two or three husbands of the lady besides the one referred to. Thus, unlike the case of complex deictic demonstrative, "that *F''*, the nominal *F* does not contribute to the meaning of the complete definite description, "the *F''*, when "the *F''* is used referentially.

Moreover, if we grant that the nominal *F* contributes to the meaning of "the *F*" just as the nominal *F* contributes to the semantics of a deictic complex demonstrative, another problem will arise: we cannot claim that the referent of "that *F*" and the referent of "the *F*" will be determined in the same way. For since the nominal *F* contributes to the meaning of "that *F*", we cannot refer to an object *o* if *o* does not satisfy the property of being an *F*. For example, we could not refer to the individual Jack Zupko by using the deictic complex demonstrative "that philosopher", if professor Zupko did not study philosophy or did not propound any philosophical theory. However, we, as Donnellan suggested, can successfully refer to an individual Jones by using the definite description "the murderer of Smith" even though Smith committed suicide and no one murdered Smith. Similarly, we can successfully refer to Jack Zupko by using the definite description "the philosopher" even though he did not study philosophy. Thus, if "the *F*" was semantically similar to "that *F*", we would not be able to succeed in referring to an object *o* when *o* does not satisfy "the *F*". But Donnellan provides several examples that show that we can successfully refer to an object or individual by using a definite description referentially even though the individual referred to does not satisfy the

definite description in question. But, Devitt seems to reject this point when he claims that it is contradictory that the *F* is not an *F*.[210] He says:

> […] the following argument forms, which are obviously valid when the description is attributive, seem so also when it is referential: 'All *F*s are *G*; so, if the/an *F* exists it is *G'*; 'The/an *F* is *G*; so, some *F* is *G*'; 'The/an *F* is *G*; so, something is *F* and *G*'. And statements of the following form seem contradictory: 'The/an *F* is not *F*'. It is hard to see how this could be so if '*F*' were not making a semantic contribution to the referential 'the/an *F*'.[211]

So, according to Devitt the nominal *F* contributes to the semantic meaning of "the *F*"; and it is contradictory to claim that the *F* is not an *F*. However, if we grant that it is contradictory that the *F* is not an *F*, then we cannot explain why a definite description refers to an individual even when the definite description misdescribes that individual. However, Donnellan says:

> A speaker who uses a definite description referentially in an assertion, … uses the description to enable his audience to pick out whom or what he is talking about and states something about that person or thing. … in the referential use the definite description is merely one tool for doing a certain job—calling attention to a person or thing—and in general any other device for doing the same job, another description or a name, would do as well. In the attributive use, the attribute of being the so-and-so is all important, while it is not in the referential use.[212]

So, according to Donnellan, the attribute of being an *F* is all important in the case of the attributive use, but not in the case of the referential use. That is why the speaker can enable his audience to pick out Jones whom he is talking about using the definite description "the murderer of Smith" referentially in the sentence "The murderer of Smith is insane". Thus, according to Donnellan, in the case of the referential use of definite description, "the *F* is not

[210] Devitt (2004), p. 291
[211] Devitt (2004), p. 291
[212] Donnellan (1966), p. 285

an *F*" does not seem to be contradictory. On the other hand, according to Devitt, "the *F* is not an *F*" is contradictory in the case of the referential use. So, it seems that Devitt and Donnellan's views contradict to each other. Either the nominal *F* contributes to the semantics of "the *F*" and in that case, we cannot successfully refer to an object by "the *F*" which is not an *F*; or the nominal *F* does not necessarily contribute to the semantics of "the *F*" and we can successfully refer to an object that is not an *F*. Which view is preferable?

Kripke has a solution to this problem: Kripke claims that the referent of the referential definite description is the speaker's referent not the semantic referent. According to him, a speaker's referent is an object that the speaker believes fulfills the conditions for being the semantic referent of the definite description in question. Thus, to be a referent of the definite description "the *F*" an object *o* does not need to be an *F*. Rather, the speaker's intention and belief are sufficient for the object *o* to be the referent of "the *F*" in its referential use. For *o* does not contribute to the semantics of "the *F*". At any rate, Devitt's claim that in the case of the referential use "the *F* is not *F*" seems to be problematic. And his claim that the nominal *F* does necessarily contribute to the semantic meaning of the referential "the *F*" cannot be accepted. Thus, the argument based on the analogy between the function of determining the referent of "that *F*" and "the *F*" cannot be accepted.

Devitt seems to claim that the nominal *F* contributes to the meaning of "the *F*" in the case of incomplete definite descriptions where there is more than one object that satisfies the definite description "the *F*", but not in the case of complete definite description where there is exactly one *F*.[213] For example, when we say that "the table is covered with books" we mean

[213] For example, "the author of Principia Mathematica" is an incomplete definite description as there are two persons, namely Alfred North Whitehead and Bertrand Russell, who wrote *Principia Mathematica*. Thus, "the author of *Principia Mathematica* refers to both Alfred North Whitehead and Bertrand Russell. In that case, the

that there are some other tables that do not enter the extension of "the table" here. However, according to Donnellan, an object does not necessarily need to have the property of being an *F* when a speaker wishes to talk about it. Suppose, I am having a conversation with my supervisor. We are discussing Russell's theory of descriptions. There are several books written by Russell on the table, and there are several books written by other writers including Saul Kripke. My supervisor says to me pointing to *Naming and Necessity* "Give me the book written by Russell". And I hand him *Naming and Necessity*. In that case, although my supervisor uses the wrong definite description "the book written by Russell" to talk about *Naming and Necessity,* I have been quite able to pick out the right book that he is talking about. In that case, though the definite description "the book written by Russell" is incomplete, there are several books written by Russell (not exactly one), no book written by Russell enters the extension of "the book written by Russell". Thus, in the case of the referential use, a speaker can successfully refer to an object with the definite description used referentially, no matter whether the definite description is a complete or incomplete definite description; no matter whether the object referred to by the definite description satisfies the definite description or not. However, someone may claim that a demonstrative can be used in that way as well. That means "that *F*" can be used successfully to pick out an object that does not satisfy the property of being *F*. I think, surely "that *F*" can be used to refer to an object *o,* even if *o* is not an *F*. However, my point is that when "that *F*" is used to refer to an object *o* which is not an *F*, that *o* cannot contribute to the semantics of the complex demonstrative "that *F*". Rather, it contributes to the pragmatics of "that *F*"—it contributes to which sense "that *F*" is used on that particular occasion.

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definite description is incomplete as it fails to satisfy the conditions that there is exactly one author of *Principia Mathematica.*

Anyway, I am not willing to discuss much about the semantics of complex demonstratives here. For the present purpose, I want to keep it aside. My concern is whether the referential use of "the *F*" contributes to the semantics of "the *F*" or not. Certainly, "the referential *F*" works like a demonstrative and a proper name. However, it does not mean that this referential function of the definite description "the *F*" is its semantic function. Moreover, when "the *F*" is used referentially, the referent of "the *F*" is determined following a perceptual causal link, that does not depend on any condition of fulfilling the condition of being an *F*. Just as the proper name "Jones" refers to the individual Jones without mentioning any property that Jones possesses, "the murderer of Smith" refers to Jones in that very particular occasion where the speaker believes that Jones fulfills the conditions for being the murderer of Smith, no matter whether Jones murdered Smith or not. That means, in the case of the referential use, the property of being an *F* does not interfere with the determination of the referent of "the *F*" and hence the reference is made following purely perceptual causal link. Since the referent is the speaker's referent, it is a purely pragmatic part of "the *F*". Now the question is: what is the semantics of the definite description "the *F*"?

Semantically, a definite description is a denoting expression, a non-referring expression as Russell suggests a definite description does not refer to any individual in isolation and hence a definite description does not have a meaning in isolation. Rather, the sentence that contains "the *F*" has a meaning and that meaning is the general quantificational proposition. A definite description describes and denotes, but does not refer to any object. A definite description "the *F*" denotes an object *o* if *o* satisfies "the *F*". That means the denotation of "the *F*" is determined based on whether an object satisfies "the *F*". If nothing satisfies "the *F*" then "the *F*" does not have any denotation. That means, an *F* contributes to

the determination of the denotation of "the *F*". And this denotation is determined following whether an object satisfies the property of being "the *F*" or not. So, the denotation is not made following the perceptual causal link. If we grant that "*F*" contributes to the semantics of "the *F*" then we have to accept that this semantics is relevant to the attributive use of "the *F*"—when "the *F*" is used attributively "the *F*" denotes but does not refer. And this denotation is not a constituent part of the content of the proposition expressed by "The *F* is *G*" as Kent Bach suggests, "Whereas a (genuine) name introduces its referent into the proposition, a description introduces a certain quantificational structure, not its denotation."[214] So, the referential use of "the *F*" is not semantically significant—it does not contribute to the meaning of "The *F* is *G*" as it introduces the referent, not the property of being "the *F*" into a proposition. Since, semantically, "The *F* is *G*" expresses a general proposition the truth condition of "The *F* is *G*" depends on *There is exactly one F and whatever is an F is G* rather than the fact that *o is G*. However, Devitt claims that the fact that *there is exactly one F and whatever is an F is G* irrelevant to the truth condition of "The *F* is *G*", when "The *F* is *G*" expresses the singular proposition *o is G*. For example, consider sentence (19) once again:

(19) The murderer of Smith is insane.

When the speaker utters (19) to talk about Jones, who is already in his mind, his utterance expresses the following proposition:

(19r) Jones is insane.

According to Devitt, in this case, the truth condition of (19) depends on whether Jones is insane, regardless of whether Jones murdered Smith or not. Since the truth condition of (19) depends on Jones, sentence (19) is true in this context provided that Jones is insane. Now

[214] Bach (2004), p. 194

suppose Smith committed suicide and Jones is innocent. In that case (19) is true provided that Jones is insane, no matter whether he murdered Smith or not. However, we have shown that Jones does not contribute to the semantics of "the *F*". Rather the property of being an *F* contribute to the semantics of the definite description "the *F*". And hence semantically the truth condition should be dependent on the property of being the murderer and the property of being insane. Thus, since the general proposition is the semantic content of sentence (19), the truth conditions of (19) depend on the following proposition:

> *(19a) There is exactly one murderer of Smith and whoever murdered Smith is insane.*

If Smith commits suicide, sentence (19) is false. For if the semantics is relevant to the truth condition, then the truth condition must be the truth condition of the semantic content of the sentence, regardless of whether it is uttered or not by any speaker. However, it may be the case that Jones is insane and in that case the speaker can say something true of Jones uttering "The murderer of Smith is insane". How is this possible?

It has been shown that the fact that a definite description can be used referentially does not prove that this use is the semantic part of the definite description in question, just as the facts that a knife can be used to tighten a screw, or a hair clip can be used to open a lock do not prove that these uses are the semantic parts of the meaning of "knife" or "hair clip". Similarly, when a definite description is used referentially to express a singular proposition, the singular proposition expressed by the sentence containing that definite description is true does not prove that the sentence uttered itself is true. It can be claimed that when a speaker utters a sentence containing a definite description to express a singular proposition the proposition expressed is not a semantic part of the sentence in question uttered. For the singular proposition can be true even though *what is said* by the sentence is false. Since Jones

contributes to the pragmatics of "the murderer of Smith", the speaker's utterance of (19) to express Jones is insane has a pragmatic significance. In other words, the speaker says a general proposition but conveys a singular proposition. That means, *what is said* by the utterance of (19) is false, but what is conveyed or implicated is true in this context. Kent Bach and Thomas Bontly have made some compelling cases that what the speaker *says* by uttering a sentence containing a definite description "The *F* is *G*" is the general proposition and what he *means* is the singular proposition.[215] In the next chapter, a further exposition will be given of how the Gricean apparatus of conversational implicature can explain the singular proposition expressed by a sentence containing a definite description as a conversational implicature enriched of pragmatic significance which is different from the literal meaning or what the sentence itself says enriched of semantic significance.

[215] Bach (2004), pp. 199-201; Bontly (2005), *pp. 4-6*

Chapter Five

Conversational Implicature and the Referential Use of Definite Descriptions

According to Donnellan, when a definite description is used referentially to talk about a particular person, who is in the speaker's mind, the speaker can say something true of that person though that person (whom the person is referring by using the definite description in question) doesn't fit the definite description in question. For example, consider the following example that Donnellan takes from Linsky:

(20) Her husband is kind to her.

When the speaker utters sentence (20) to talk about the boyfriend of the lady, namely John, sentence (20) is true provided that John is kind to the lady, despite the fact that John doesn't satisfy the definite description "the husband of the lady" (or "her husband"). That means that referential definite descriptions work like proper names. For proper names are rigid designators that designate the same individual in all possible worlds irrespective of whether a definite description associated with the name describes the individual or not. For example, the proper name "John" refers to the person John in all possible worlds, where John exists. Similarly, the referential definite description "the husband of the lady" refers to John in all possible worlds, where the speaker is talking about the boyfriend of the lady, namely John, by using the definite description "the husband of the lady", no matter whether John satisfies the property of being the husband of the lady or not. That means that according to Donnellan the definite description "the husband of the lady", in its referential use, is as rigid as the proper name "John" is. Now the question is: is a definite description semantically rigid? In other words, do definite descriptions semantically work like proper names?

In order to evaluate whether a definite description semantically works like a proper name or not, let me discuss the difference between a proper name and a definite description. John Perry claims that a definite description denotes and describes, whereas a proper name names and refers to an individual.[216] Similarly, Russell claims that a definite description is a non-referring term or expression which doesn't refer to any individual in isolation. On the other hand, according to Kripke, a proper name is a rigid designator that designates the same individual in all possible worlds, whereas a definite description is a non-rigid designator that designates different individuals in different possible worlds.[217] Thus, semantically definite descriptions do not work like proper names. For semantically a definite description doesn't refer but denotes. When a definite description "the *F*" denotes an individual *o*, "the *F*" describes *o*'s property of being an *F*. In other words, "the *F"* denotes *o* if and only if *o* uniquely satisfies "the *F"*. So, "the *F"* denotes *o* only in those possible worlds, where *o* uniquely satisfies the property of being an *F;* if there is a possible world, where another individual *I* satisfies the property of being the only *F,* "the *F"* denotes *I* in that possible world. That means that semantically a definite description is a non-rigid designator that denotes different individuals in different possible worlds. On the other hand, a proper name is a rigid designator that refers to the same individual in all possible worlds; a proper name refers, but doesn't describe anything about the individual referred to by the proper name in question. For example, "Aristotle" refers to Aristotle in all possible worlds where Aristotle exists. However, "the author of *Metaphysics*" denotes Aristotle only in those possible worlds where Aristotle is the unique person who wrote *Metaphysics*. Moreover, the proper name "Aristotle" refers to

[216] Perry says, "I'll express this difference by saying "Jim" …names and refers to Jim Perry, but neither denotes nor describes him. "The manager of Kinko's" denotes and describes him, but neither names him nor refers to him." (See Perry (1997/1998), p. 589)
[217] Kripke (1972/1980), pp. 48-49,

Aristotle regardless of whether a sentence containing "Aristotle" is uttered or not. For example, the sentence:

(35) Aristotle is a profound philosopher.

expresses the following proposition

(35e) *Aristotle is a profound philosopher.*

where Aristotle is the constituent part of the proposition expressed by the utterance of (35). However, if sentence (35) was not uttered by any speaker, it would express the same proposition. That means that semantically, when a proper name is used in a subject term of a sentence, the sentence containing the definite description in question expresses the same proposition regardless of whether the sentence is uttered or not. For the semantic meaning of a sentence remains the same in all contexts including the context in which the sentence is not uttered. So, if the referential definite description was semantically significant, then the sentence expressed by the utterance of a sentence containing the definite description would express the same proposition in all contexts, regardless of whether the sentence is uttered or not. For example, consider the following sentence where the definite description "the author of *Metaphysics"* is used in the subject position of the sentence:

(36) The author of *Metaphysics* was a profound philosopher.

When the definite description "the author of *Metaphysics"* is used to talk about Aristotle, sentence (36) expresses the following proposition:

(36r) *Aristotle was a profound philosopher.*

However, when sentence (36) is not uttered by any speaker, sentence (36) expresses the following proposition:

(36e) There is exactly one person who wrote Metaphysics and whoever wrote Metaphysic was a profound philosopher.

Here sentence (36e) is not about an individual Aristotle, rather it is about the unique person who satisfies the property of being an author of *Metaphysics*.[218] If there is a possible world (and incidentally in the actual world) where Aristotle satisfies the property of being an author of *Metaphysics*, the sentence is true in that possible world. However, the general proposition, *i.e.* (36e), itself doesn't contain the individual Aristotle as a constituent part. Thus, the singular proposition containing the individual Aristotle referred to by the definite description as a constituent part, *i.e.* (36r), is expressed only in those possible worlds where the sentence containing that definite description is uttered. However, (36e) as a meaning of (36) doesn't depend on any utterance: (36) expresses (36e) in all possible worlds regardless of whether (36) is uttered or not just as (35) expresses (35e) in all possible worlds regardless of whether (35) is uttered or not. Thus, since the proposition (35e) is the semantic meaning of the sentence (35), *i.e.* (35e) is *what is said* by (35), the proposition (36e), not the proposition (36r), is the semantic meaning of sentence (36). Thus, the fact that referential definite descriptions work like proper names cannot be semantically significant. In other words, semantically definite descriptions do not work like proper names. And hence, definite descriptions cannot semantically be rigid.

However, generally it is accepted that a speaker can use a definite description to talk about a particular person who is in her mind. For example, according to Donnellan's distinction, the speaker can refer to a person, namely Jim, who is drinking water in a martini

[218] Here I am following John Perry's distinction between a sentence containing a proper name and a sentence containing a definite description. Perry claims that the sentence "Jim was born in Lincoln" expresses a singular proposition that is about an individual Jim himself, rather than about any property or attribute of Jim; whereas, the sentence "The manager of Kinko's was born in the capital of Nebraska" expresses a general proposition "that is not specifically about Jim …, but about being the manager of Kinko's, and being the capital of Nebraska. This proposition is true in worlds in which someone—it doesn't have to be Jim—is the manager of Kinko's and some city—it doesn't have to be Lincoln—is the capital of Nebraska, and the someone was born in the city." (see Perry (1997/1998), pp. 587-588)

glass, by using the definite description "the man drinking a martini" in her utterance "The man drinking a martini is happy tonight" and can say something true of Jim, even though Jim is drinking water. Both Kripke and Devitt seem to agree on this point that it is possible to use a definite description like a proper name and say something true of the intended person even though that person indeed does not satisfy the definite description in question. In this sense, a definite description is rigid. For the use of the definite description does not depend on whether the intended person satisfies that definite description or not. However, it has been shown that this use is not the semantic part of the definite description in question. Then the question arises: if the referential use is not the semantic part of a definite description, then how can a speaker say something of her intended person by using a definite description that does not describe the person in question? What kind of significance does a definite description possess in its referential use? What kind of significance does a proposition expressed by a sentence containing a definite description reveal?

The answer lies in the distinction between *what is said* and *what is conveyed* by an utterance of a sentence in a given context. Let us recall the definitions of *what is said* and what is conveyed or implicated (what is conventionally implicated and what is conversationally implicated) stated in chapter four:

> ***What is said:*** in a language *L*, a proposition *q* is *what is said* by an utterance of a sentence *p iff* the speaker *S*'s utterance of the sentence *p* literally means *q*.
> **Conventional Implicature:** in a language *L*, a proposition *q* is the conventional implicature of the sentence *p iff* the speaker *S*'s utterance of *p* implicates or indicates *q* by virtue of the conventional meaning of the linguistic content of *p* in a given context *C*.
> **Conversational Implicature:** in a language *L*, in a given context *C*, proposition *q* is the conversational Implicature of the sentence *p iff* the

> speaker *S*'s utterance of *p* implicates or indicates *q*, where *q* is determined not by virtue of the literal meaning of *p*, but *q* goes beyond *what is literally said* or *meant* by *p*.

We have seen that *what is said* is the semantic meaning of a sentence which is determined by certain rules of language; and this semantic or literal meaning of an utterance of a sentence does not depend on any context or any utterance. When the speaker utters the following sentence to talk about Jones who is on trial being accused of murdering Smith:

> (19) The murderer of Smith is insane.

the definite description "the murderer of Smith" semantically doesn't refer to any individual. Rather, "the murderer of Smith" semantically denotes and describes *the unique individual who murdered Smith*. For "the murderer of Smith" is semantically a non-referring expression. Thus, the literal meaning or *what is said* by the utterance of sentence (19) is the following proposition:

> *(19e) There is exactly one murderer of Smith and whoever murderer Smith is insane.*

Thus, in the English language, the speaker's utterance of sentence (19) literally expresses (19e). So, (19e) is the semantic meaning or *what is said* by the utterance of (19) on any occasion. On the other hand, when the speaker utters (19) to talk about Jones, her utterance expresses the following proposition:

> (19r) Jones is insane.

which is different from *what is said* by the utterance of (19), *i.e.* (19e). Now the question is whether (19r) is a literal meaning of (19) or not. We have seen that Michael Devitt claims that (19) can literally mean (19r) because we regularly utter sentence (19) to express (19r). So, the referential meaning is the semantic convention of our language. However, I have shown such conventions do not contribute to the semantic meaning or literal meaning of a sentence uttered

in a given context in our language. On the contrary, there are conventions of our language to utter some sentences and to mean something different from the literal meaning of the sentence uttered. For example, consider that I am conducting a class. Two students of my class are whispering. Now I come to them and say,

(37) Is it a very interesting topic? Could you please share it with us?

My utterance of (37) literally means that I am requesting that my students share the topic that they are discussing with us. However, by uttering (37), certainly, I do not mean that. Rather by uttering (37) I want to implicate or mean that they should not talk to each other, because it is destructive for the class. However, I want to show be more polite and that is why I choose to utter sentence (37). There is a convention in our language to warn students to behave properly in the classroom using a soft tone and positive language. However, this convention of using (37) does not contribute to the semantic meaning of sentence (37). Similarly, (19r) cannot be accepted as the semantic meaning of sentence (19) based on the convention of expressing (19r) when sentence (19) is uttered.

Some philosophers, and particular, Thomas D. Bontly, argue that if the sentence of the form "The *F* is *G*" was semantically ambiguous, then the syntactic structure of "The *F* is *G*" would be ambiguous too: the syntactical form of "The *F* is *G*" would be either singular or general.[219] However, Donnellan does not claim that the sentence of the form "The *F* is *G*" is syntactically ambiguous: he doesn't claim that "The *F* is *G*" has two different grammatical forms. Rather he claims that the ambiguity of the sentence containing a definite description is not syntactical, as he says "The grammatical structure of the sentence seems to me to be the same whether the description is used referentially or attributively: that is, it is not syntactically

[219] Bontly (2005), p. 3

ambiguous."[220] Nor does he seem to claim that the logical structure of "The *F* is *G*" is ambiguous. Rather he claims that "The *F* is *G*" expresses two different propositions, a general proposition and a singular proposition, based on the intention of the speaker on a given occasion. Thus, it is evident that (19r) is not the semantic meaning of sentence (19).

If (19r) is not the semantic content of the utterance of sentence (19), then the other option left is that it is the pragmatic interpretation of (19r) as a content of the utterance of sentence (19) when "the murderer of Smith" is used referentially to talk about Jones. We have discussed in the previous chapter that the paradigm of pragmatic usage of sentences is Grice's notion of conversational implicature.[221] Thus, if the referential use of "the *F*" can be explained in terms of conversational implicature, *i.e.* the speaker implicates or means something more than *what is said* or the literal meaning of the sentence "The *F* is *G*" on an occasion *o*, then the referential use will be treated as pragmatically significant, rather than semantically significant one, despite the fact that it is the convention of our language to use "the *F"* referentially.

Now let us examine whether the singular proposition expressed by the utterance of (19) when "the murderer of Smith" is used referentially, *i.e.* the proposition (19r), follows the Gricean *Cooperative Principle* or not.

> ***Cooperative Principle (CP)***: Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.[222]

This *Cooperative Principle* is fleshed out in the following series of maxims:[223]

[220] Donnellan (1966), p. 297
[221] Bontly (2005), p. 4
[222] Grice (1975), p. 45
[223] Ibid, pp. 45-46

> ***Maxim of Quantity*:** Make your contribution as informative as is required. So, do not make it more informative than is required.
>
> ***Maxim of Quality*:** Make your contribution true; so, do not say what you believe to be false; do not say that for which you are unjustified.
>
> ***Maxim of Relation*:** Be relevant.
>
> ***Maxim of Manner*:** Be perspicuous; so, avoid obscurity of expressions; and avoid ambiguity, and be brief and orderly.

Now, take Donnellan's example of Smith's murderer. When "the murderer of Smith" is used referentially to talk about Jones, and sentence (19), *i.e.* "The murderer of Smith is insane", expresses:

(19r) Jones is insane.

what goes on the utterance of (19) by the speaker? It can be claimed that there is a common ground between the speaker and the hearer (the common ground may be Smith's wounded body, Jones' being on trial and his unnatural behavior) that leads the speaker to believe that Jones is the one and only one person who murdered Smith and he is insane. That means that here Jones fulfills the conditions for being the speaker's referent of "the murderer of Smith" presented by Kripke. Moreover, if the hearer asked, "Who is insane?" the speaker might reply pointing to Jones, "Smith's murderer is insane". So, she provides the information as much as is required, and hence her utterance clearly follows *the maxim of quantity*. Since the speaker is justified in believing, though she is wrong when Smith committed suicide, that Jones is the murderer of Smith, the speaker is not lying by uttering (19). Her justification is grounded in the fact that Jones is on trial and there is an abnormal appearance on his face which is enough for someone to murder a person insanely. Thus, the speaker does not believe that (19r) is false, and hence his utterance satisfies *the maxim of quality*. Now the question is whether her utterance is relevant or not. We can assume that in the courtroom the hearer, seeing Smith's

wounded body, is interested in knowing the mental condition of the accused, namely Jones. Thus, when the speaker utters sentence (19) and implicates proposition (19r), Jones is insane, her utterance seems to be relevant to that occasion. Thus, by uttering sentence (19) to mean (19r), the speaker provides the right amount of information as is required, and the exchange between the speaker and the hearer is conducted following a truthful, relevant and perspicuous fashion. Thus, the speaker's utterance of sentence (19) to mean that *Jones is insane* is not a mere arbitrary convention. Rather it is governed by general rules governing rational, cooperative behavior. For the speaker can think and intend that the hearer is able to realize whom the speaker is talking about and can understand that the speaker means that *Jones is insane* by uttering "The murderer of Smith is insane".

We have discussed in the fourth chapter that the conversational implicature must be capable of being worked out. Let us recall the general pattern to work-out the conversational implicature on the part of the hearer. The general pattern to work-out of the conversational implicature is:

> He has said that *p*; there is no reason to suppose that he is not observing the maxims, or at least the CP; he could not be doing this unless he thought that *q*; he knows (and knows that I know that he knows) that I can see that the supposition that he thinks that *q* is required; he has done nothing to stop me thinking that *q*; he intends me to think, or is at least willing to allow me to think, that *q*; and so he has implicated that *q*.[224]

Now let us examine whether the implicature of utterance of (19), *i.e. Jones is insane*, is capable of being worked out or not. To calculate the conversational implicature, the hearer may reason in the following way:

> The Speaker says that the murderer of Smith is insane (*p*). I have no reason to suppose that he is not observing the maxims or at least opting

[224] Grice (1975), p. 50

> out the *Cooperative Principle* (CP); he could not be doing this unless he believed that Jones is insane (*q*); the speaker knows (and knows that I know that he knows) that I can figure out he is thinking that Jones is insane (*q*). So, he has implicated that Jones is insane (*q)*.

Thus, it is evident that the implicature of the utterance of "The murderer of Smith is insane", *i.e.* the singular proposition *Jones is insane*, is calculable. Similarly, the conversational implicature, *i.e.* the singular proposition *John is kind to her*, of the utterance of the sentence "Her husband is kind to her" can be calculated by the following way:

> The speaker says that her husband is kind to her. There is no reason to think that the speaker is not following the maxims, or he is opting out *the Cooperative Principle*; the speaker believes that John is kind to the lady; the speaker knows (and knows that I know that he knows) that I can figure out that he is thinking that John is kind to her (the lady). So, the speaker implicates John is kind to her by uttering that her husband is kind to her.

Thus, it seems that the singular proposition expressed by the utterance of the sentence containing a referential definite description satisfies a conversational implicature's condition for the ability of being worked out. Still there are few tests left to pass for the singular proposition to be a conversational implicature. According to Grice, a conversational implicature is cancelable and nondetachable. Consider the cancelability test offered by Grice stated in chapter four:

> a conversational implicature *q* by uttering *p* is explicitly cancelable either by adding phrase *but not q,* or *I didn't mean to imply that q*. On the other hand, *q* is contextually cancelable if an agent *A* find a context *C* where *p* doesn't carry *q.*[225]

Now consider the contextual facts concerning the example of Smith's murderer case between the speaker and the hearer. Suppose that after uttering sentence (19) to mean *Jones is insane*

[225] Grice (1975), p. 57 (also see chapter four of this dissertation)

the speaker is asked whether he is sure that Jones is insane. In that situation, the speaker may reply that he didn't mean that Jones is insane. So, their conversation can be restated as follows:

> **The speaker says:** The murderer of Smith is insane (*p*)
> **The speaker implicates:** Jones is insane.
> **The hearer asks:** Are you sure whether he (Jones) is insane?
> **The speaker replies:** I said that the murderer of Smith is insane but I didn't mean that Jones is insane (or I said that the murderer of Smith is insane but that not Jones is insane).

Thus, it seems that the singular proposition is plainly cancelable by adding the clause *but not q* or *I didn't mean to imply that q*. Similarly, in the case of the husband of the lady the speaker may cancel his implicature by uttering "I said her husband is kind to her but I didn't mean to imply that John is kind to her (or I said her husband is kind to her but not John is kind to her)". Thus, the implicature that *q* (*Jones is insane or John is kind to the lady*) is cancelable because it is allowable to conjoin the clause *but not p* or *I didn't mean to imply q*. Thus, the singular proposition passes the cancelability test as well.

According to Grice, the conversational implicature is non-detachable as the way of expression or the manner of expression does not play any role in the calculation of the conversational implicature. So, the non-detachability means there is no other possible way of saying *what is said*, that doesn't have the implicature in question.[226] Thus, we can restate the non-detachability test as follows:

> An implicature *q* is non-detachable *iff* there is no other way of saying *p* such that *p* doesn't implicate *q*. Similarly, an implicature *q* is detachable *iff* there is at least one way of saying *p* such that *p* does not implicate *q*.

[226] Ibid, p. 58

Consider what could be other ways of uttering "The murderer of Smith's is insane". The speaker might say that the man standing over there is insane, or that man is insane or the one and only murderer of Smith is insane by pointing to Jones with certain gesture. All above utterances would give rise the implicature that *Jones is insane*. So, we can claim that there is no way of saying "The murderer of Smith is insane" such that "The murderer of Smith is insane" doesn't carry the implicature *Jones is insane*. Thus, when the definite description "the murder of Smith" is used referentially, the singular proposition expressed by the utterance is non-detachable and hence it is a conversational implicature.

So far, we have shown that the singular proposition expressed by the utterance of the sentence containing a definite description passes the cancelability test, it is calculable and it passes the non-detachability test which can lead someone to claim that the singular proposition expressed by an utterance of the sentence in question is a conversational implicature which is different from *what is said* or the literal meaning of the sentence in question. Thus, Kripke seems to be right in claiming that the referential use of definite descriptions can be explained in terms of the general apparatus of speech acts. However, things do not seem to be that easy. For according to Grice, conversational implicatures are of two types: particularized conversational implicature (and henceforth PCI) and generalized conversational implicature (and henceforth GCI). Grice defines PCI and GCI as follows:

> I might call particularized conversational implictures—that is to say, cases in which an implicature is carried by saying that *p* on a particular occasion in virtue of special features of the context, cases in which there is no room for the idea that an implicature of this sort is NORMALLY carried by saying that *p.* But there are cases of generalized conversational implicature. Sometimes one can say that the use of a certain form of words in an utterance would normally (in the ABSENCE of special

> circumstances) carry such-and-such an implicature or type of implicature.[227]

Thus, PCI is highly context dependent—it is achieved in virtue of special features of the context, whereas in the case of GCI, the implicature is carried normally by the utterance of *p*. For example, when a speaker utters "Jones met a woman yesterday", her utterance normally implicates that *the woman Jones met yesterday was not his wife, sister, mother, or a close relative or friend*.[228] Thus, the proposition *the woman Jones met yesterday was not his wife, sister, mother, or a close relative or friend* is generalized conversational implicature in this case. So, generalized implicature is derived from general features of the words used rather than the context.

So, if the singular proposition expressed by the utterance of "The *F* is *G*" is a conversational implicature, which is different from the literal meaning of "The *F* is *G*", then there may be further controversy regarding which type of conversational implicature the singular propositions belong to. So far, we have discussed that there is no controversy regarding the fact that we regularly use definite descriptions to talk about an intended individual; we usually use definite descriptions to express singular propositions. It is certain that sometimes we use referential definite descriptions like complex demonstratives and proper names. When a definite description is used in a sentence and the speaker utters the sentence, the hearer can immediately grasp what is meant by the utterance of the sentence, and whom the speaker is talking about. So, when the speaker utters "The *F* is *G*", her utterance seems normally to implicate that *o* is *G* and the hearer does not need to be conscious about various features of the context. For example, when the speaker utters "The murderer of

[227] Grice (1975), p. 56
[228] Ibid, p. 56

Smith is insane", the hearer can understand that the speaker means that *Jones is insane*, even though he says *Exactly one person is the murderer of Smith and whoever murderer Smith is insane*. Now the question is: how does "The murderer of Smith is insane" normally carry the implicature that *Jones is insane*? Recall that according to Kripke, Jones in this context is the speaker's referent, who the speaker believes fulfills the conditions for being the semantic referent (I prefer to say the denotation) of the definite description "the murderer of Smith". At the same time, on the hearer side, the hearer may reason based on the grounds that the speaker could not be doing this unless he believes that Jones is the one and only one person who murdered Smith and Jones is insane; the speaker knows (and knows that the hearer know that he knows) that the hearer can figure out he is thinking that Jones is insane. That means, the hearer can use the fact that Jones is called a murderer to work out that the description is being used to refer to someone the speaker believes to be a murderer. So, the speaker has implicated that Jones is insane. That means that the singular proposition expressed by the sentence containing a definite description, "The *F* is *G*" is a generalized conversational implicature which is derived in virtue of the fact that exactly one person is an *F*, at the same time which is different from the literal meaning of the sentence in question.

Since it is implicature, the referential use is merely pragmatically significant. This proves R_1, *i.e.*, that the general proposition expressed by the sentence of the form "The *F* is *G*" is the semantic meaning or literal meaning (or lexical meaning), whereas the singular proposition expressed by "The *F* is *G*" is an outcome of a speech act in a given context (see Section 4.1). Since the truth value of what is conveyed does not interfere with the truth value of *what is said* by an utterance of a sentence, the singular proposition expressed by the utterance of a sentence can be true even though the general proposition expressed by the

sentence in question is false. That means, R_2-R_3 (it is possible to express a pragmatically true proposition by uttering a sentence whose semantic content is false) are proved.

Now consider whether Russell denies the pragmatic significance of a sentence containing a definite description. I will try to give a negative answer to this issue as well. Let me recall an objection raised by P. F. Strawson against Russell's theory. Strawson, in his paper "On Referring" distinguishes between a sentence and an utterance of a sentence containing a definite description and claims that Russell doesn't understand this distinction.[229] According to Strawson, the same sentence can be used or uttered by different speakers on different occasions to talk about different objects or individuals. More specifically, a sentence is used or uttered to express different propositions on different occasions when the sentence in question involves an egocentric word, e. g. "present", "I" etc. For example, consider the following sentence:

(38) The present king of France is wise.

According to Strawson, the sentence "The present King of France is wise" can be used or uttered by different speakers to express different propositions on different occasions (in different periods of time).[230] Thus, a sentence and the utterance of that sentence should not be confused. However, in Strawson's opinion, Russell's theory overlooks this aspect of a sentence containing a definite description.

Strawson also distinguishes between the meaning and truth values of a sentence. He holds the view that a meaning is a property of a sentence whereas the truth value is the function of the utterance of that sentence on a particular occasion. Thus, the meaning of a sentence depends on how and on which occasion the sentence in question is used or uttered.[231] So, it is

[229] Strawson (1950), p. 325
[230] Ibid, p. 326
[231] Ibid, p. 327

reasonable to think that when Strawson claims that the meaning of a sentence depends on how and on which occasion the sentence in question is used or uttered, he is concerned about the pragmatic significance of the use of that sentence. Similarly, when he claims that Russell ignores the distinction between a sentence and its utterance he claims that Russell ignores the pragmatic significance of a sentence containing a definite description.[232] However, I will show that Russell doesn't deny the pragmatic significance of a sentence containing a definite description.

Now consider Russell's cryptic response to P. F. Strawson in his paper "Mr. Strawson on Referring". Please recall once again that for Strawson meaning is the function of a sentence which depends on how and on which occasion a sentence containing a definite description is used or uttered. That means that meaning of a sentence depends on whether it can be used in a context or not. For example, consider the following sentence:

(38) The present king of France is wise.

If different speakers utter sentence (38) on different occasions, sentence (38) may express different propositions. For example, as Strawson suggests, if a speaker uttered (38) in the reign of Louis XIV, then he would talk about Louis XIV and would say something true of Louis XIV. That means that he would make a true assertion by his utterance. On the other hand, if a speaker uttered sentence (38) in the reign of Louis XV, by uttering (38) he would talk about Louis XV and would make a false assertion. However, if the speaker utters sentence (38) on August 20, 2017, he will not make any true or false assertion (or the sentence he uttered will not express any proposition).[233] That means, according to Strawson, the same sentence can be uttered or used in different contexts to express different propositions; and the meaning of a sentence depends on the

[232] Ibid, p. 328
[233] Strawson (1950), pp. 325-326

context it is uttered. However, in "Mr. Strawson on Referring" Russell defends his theory and shows that Strawson's claim that meaning is the function of a sentence which depends on the occasion a sentence containing a definite description is used or uttered can be refuted by replacing the egocentric word "present" contained in sentence (38) by "in 1905".[234] According to Russell, if we replace the word "Present" by "in 1905" in sentence (38), we get

(39) In 1905, the king of France was wise.

Now, if a speaker uttered sentence (39) in 1910, sentence (39) would express the proposition *In 1905, the king of France was wise*; if another speaker uttered sentence (39) in 1950, sentence (39) would express the proposition *In 1905, the king of France was wise*. That means that on different occasions, the same sentence can be used to express the same proposition, when the sentence uttered does not contain any egocentric word.[235] It indicates that a use of an egocentric word may result in different propositions, provided that a sentence containing that egocentric word is uttered by different speakers on different occasions or by the same speaker on different occasions. That means that Russell himself doesn't deny the context dependency of a sentence (containing an egocentric word).

So, it is plausible to think that Russell acknowledges that a sentence containing a definite description may be used or uttered to express different propositions in different contexts. In other words, Russell doesn't deny the pragmatic significance of a sentence containing a definite description. However, Russell was not concerned about the pragmatic significance of the sentences containing definite descriptions. For example, Russell says, "My theory of descriptions was never intended as an analysis of the state of mind of those who utter

[234] Russell (1957), p. 385
[235] Ibid, p. 385

sentences containing descriptions."[236] So, it seems that Russell does not deny the fact that definite descriptions can be used referentially to talk about an intended person. For Russell mentions that it was not his intention to analyze the intention of the speaker in which she uses definite descriptions.

Thus, the above mentioned words said by Russell implies that definite descriptions can be used in different ways based on the intention of the speaker, but he does not intend to give a theory regarding how definite descriptions are used. Rather, he intends to give a theory that can show: (I) how a sentence containing an empty definite description, such as "The present king of France is bald", is meaningful without ascribing being to such an unreal object (which Meinong's account fails to show); (II) how a sentence like "The present king of France is bald" is either true or false that Frege's theory fails to account for; (III) how a sentence like "The present king of France does not exist" avoids violating the Law of Non-Contradiction, when it expresses a true negative existential proposition. By analyzing a sentence containing a definite description into its logical form that does not contain the definite description as its constituent part, Russell succeeds in showing that if we consider a definite description as a denoting expression, not as a referring one, then we can solve the above mentioned problems. Thus, Russell is concerned about what the sentence literally expresses, regardless of whether it is uttered or not, and his theory is a theory of the semantics of definite descriptions, which does not have any conflict with the theory of the pragmatics of definite descriptions, *i.e*. in which sense a sentence containing a definite description is uttered in a particular context. In other words, Russell does not seem to deny that a definite description can be used to express a singular proposition in a particular context. And, the

[236] Russell (1975), pp. 388

singular proposition expressed by "The *F* is *G*" does not have any conflict with Russell's analysis of the sentence, the general proposition expressed by "The *F* is *G*". That means R_3-R_5 are proved.

Finally, it can be claimed that Donnellan's distinction doesn't posit any problem for Russell's theory in either of these ways: (a) a sentence containing a definite description is not ambiguous, *i.e*. it has always one lexical meaning: it expresses the general proposition; for based on the distinction between the semantics and pragmatics, Devitt's argument based on the regularity of using "the *F*" referentially, the similarity between "the *F*" and "that *F*" cannot prove that the referential use is the part of the semantic meaning of "the *F*"; (b) nor does Russell's theory deny the pragmatic significance of a sentence containing a definite description; for a person can convey a singular proposition when he uses a definite description referentially in uttering a sentence that expresses a general proposition. Since a sentence containing a definite description always literally expresses a general proposition, a sentence containing a definite description is non-ambiguous: it has one and only one lexical meaning and that meaning is what Russell shows in his analysis. So, Donnellan fails to undermine Russell's theory.

However, the fact that referential use is pragmatically significant does not imply that Donnellan's distinction is insignificant. Surely, it is significant in the sense that Donnellan brings the issue in to light that a definite description can be used in a different way from the way Russell mentions. And I do not think that Donnellan is a genuine rival to Russell. For Donnellan's theory deals with the different uses of a definite description based on the intentions of the speaker, whereas Russell is concerned with the literal meaning of definite descriptions. Hence, it may reasonably be claimed that no semantic ambiguity is actually

posited by the distinction noted by Donnellan; and Kripke is correct in claiming that Donnellan's distinction can be explained using a general apparatus of speech acts.

Conclusion

On Russell's theory, a sentence of the form "The *F* is *G*" that contains the definite description "the *F*" expresses the general proposition *There is exactly one F and whatever is an F is G*. Russell's theory of descriptions was criticized by many philosophers. Keith Donnellan is one of them. According to Donnellan, there are two types of uses of a definite description: an attributive use and a referential use. "The *F*" is said to be used attributively when a speaker intends to assert something about whoever or whatever fits "the *F*". That means, a speaker uses "the *F*" attributively when he uses it in an assertion to state something about whoever or whatever is the *F*. In that case "The *F* is *G*" expresses the following proposition: *There is exactly one F and whatever is an F is G.* On the other hand, "*the F*", according to Donnellan, is said to be used referentially when the speaker uses the sentence "The *F* is *G*" to state something about a particular object, *e.g. o*, that the speaker has already had in mind. Here the speaker intends her hearers to pick out the object she has in mind on the basis of the definite description she uses. In such a case the sentence "The *F* is *G*" expresses the following proposition: *o is G*. Thus, on the basis of Donnellan's distinction it may be claimed that a sentence containing a definite description is ambiguous: it has two sorts of meaning: an attributive meaning and a referential meaning. When "The *F* is *G*" expresses that *there is exactly one F and whatever is an F is G*, the attributive meaning is salient; when "The *F* is *G*" expresses that *o is G*., the referential meaning is salient. If a definite description is ambiguous, then Russell's theory is incorrect as it fails to accommodate the ambiguity mentioned by Donnellan.

Since the publication of Donnellan's paper, there has been a controversy among philosophers regarding whether Donnellan's distinction posits a genuine threat to Russell's

theory or not. According to Kripke, Donnellan's distinction can't undermine Russell's theory. Following Grice's distinction between sentence meaning and utterer meaning, Kripke, in his paper "Speaker's Reference and Semantic Reference" distinguishes between the semantic referent and the speaker's referent of a definite description. By "semantic referent" he means a referent that is determined by certain conventions of the idiolect of a speaker, whereas the speaker's referent is a person or object "which a speaker wishes to talk about, on a given occasion, and believes fulfills the conditions for being the semantic referent" of the definite description in question. For example, the speaker's referent of "her husband" is the boyfriend of the lady, suppose Smith, whom the speaker is talking about and believes that Smith fulfills all the conditions for being the semantic referent, her husband, of the definite description "her husband". Thus, the semantic referent of a definite description is determined by general conventions a language whereas the speaker's referent of the definite description in question, on a given occasion, is determined by the intention of the speaker on that specific occasion. Since the speaker's referent of a definite description is determined by the particular intention of the speaker on a particular occasion, a speaker's referent may differ from the semantic referent of the definite description in question on that particular occasion. Similarly, the speaker's referent may vary from occasion to occasion on the basis of the intention of the speaker of that sentence. However, since the semantic referent is determined by the conventions of a particular language, the semantic referent of a definite description remains unchanged, no matter what the occasion and the intention of the speaker are. That means that on every occasion, the semantic referent of "The *F*" is *F* whereas the speaker's referent of "the *F*" is *F*, F_1 or F_2 on different occasions, suppose o, o_1, o_2 respectively, depending on speaker's particular intentions on o, o_1, o_2. Since the semantic referent remains the same on

every occasion, according to Kripke, there is no semantic ambiguity posited by the distinction between the attributive and referential use of a definite description. The ambiguity is merely *pragmatic* and can be accounted for by the general apparatus of speech acts.

On the other hand, Michael Devitt claims that Donnellan's distinction has semantic significance. Devitt, in his paper "The Case for Referential Description", claims that there are semantically referential descriptions which he calls Referential Descriptions. According to Devitt, there is a regularity of using definite descriptions "the *F*" in our language to express a singular thought about a particular individual or object the speaker has in mind. Moreover, "the *F*" works like "that *F*" and that is why the hearer can understand immediately and directly which object or person (*o*) the speaker means to refer to by using "the *F*". Thus, according to Devitt, the regularity of using a definite description, and the similarity between "the *F*" and "that *F*" provide a strong evidence that the convention of using definite descriptions referentially is *semantic.*

In this thesis, I have shown that Devitt's argument based on the conventionality of using "the *F*" referentially is flawed. For in my opinion, a convention alone cannot make something semantically significant. There are a number of instances where we utter a sentence in a conventional way to mean something different from the literal meaning of the sentence uttered. Thus, Devitt's argument based on conventions cannot be accepted. On the other hand, although "the *F*" works in some context like "that *F*", they are semantically non-identical. For semantically "the *F*" is a denoting expression that does not refer to any object whereas semantically "that *F*" is a referring expression that refers to an object provided that *"F"* contributes to the semantics of "that *F"*. However, according to Donnellan, in the case of referential "the *F*", "*F*" does not necessarily contribute to the semantics of "the *F"*. Thus,

based on the similarity between "the *F*" and "that *F*" Devitt's argument cannot be accepted. So, the phenomenon arising from Donnellan's distinction does not have a semantic significance, rather it has merely a pragmatic significance.

Thus, I have defended yet elaborated on Kripke's position by using Grice's apparatus of conversational implicature and showing that a person conveys (implicates) a singular proposition when he uses a definite description referentially in uttering a sentence that literally express a general proposition. For the singular proposition conveyed by the speaker, on a particular occasion is cancellable, calculable and nondetachable. Since a sentence containing a definite description literally expresses a general proposition, a sentence containing a definite description is non-ambiguous: it has one and only one lexical meaning and that meaning is what Russell shows in his analysis. So, Donnellan fails to undermine Russell's theory.

However, this doesn't mean that Donnellan's distinction is insignificant. Obviously, the distinction Donnellan shows has significant impact on philosophy of language. It indicates that there is a pragmatic side of a sentence containing a definite description. It seems to be true that Russell doesn't address this pragmatic side. The reason behind this may be the fact that Russell is concerned with the issue of semantics, the denotation, not with the issue of pragmatics, the referent. Russell clearly mentions that he is not concerned about a speaker's particular intention on a particular occasion. That means that Russell need not deny the fact that definite descriptions can be used referentially. But he was not concerned with this issue. Since Russell's theory deals with the semantics of a sentence containing a definite description and Donnellan's distinction involve the pragmatic issue of a sentence containing a definite description, Donnellan's distinction is irrelevant to Russell's theory as such.

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