# WITTGENSTEIN'S NONSENSE OBJECTION
# TO RUSSELL'S THEORY OF JUDGMENT[*]

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## 1. Nonsense judgment

In the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (Wittgenstein 1974), Wittgenstein raises the following

objection to Russell's theory of judgment:

> 5.5422 The correct explanation of the form of the proposition, 'A makes the judgement p', must show that it is impossible for a judgement to be a piece of nonsense. (Russell's theory does not satisfy this requirement.)

The objection has a very early origin. It appears already in the *Notes on Logic*, dictated in

October 1913, where Wittgenstein gives an example of the kind of nonsense that he has in

mind:

> Every right theory of judgment must make it impossible for me to judge that this table penholders the book. Russell's theory does not satisfy this requirement. (Wittgenstein 1979: p. 103)

It can be traced even further back, to a letter to Russell of June of that year:

> I can now express my objection to your theory of judgement exactly: I believe that it is obvious that from the prop[osition] 'A judges that (say) a is in the Rel[ation] R to b', if correctly analysed, the prop[osition] 'aRb.∨.~aRb' must follow directly *without the use of any other premiss*. This condition is not fulfilled by your theory. (Wittgenstein 1979: p. 122)

The connection between judging nonsense and the requirement expressed here can be

established with the help of a passage of *Principia Mathematica*, in which the proposition $\phi a$

$\vee \sim\phi a$ is presented as another way of saying that "$\phi a$" is significant (Whitehead and Russell

1910: 180).[1] I am going to refer to these three texts as the *nonsense passages*.

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[1] See (Griffin 1985; Sommerville 1980; Griffin 1964: 113)

The target of the objection expressed by the nonsense passages can only be Russell's so-called *multiple-relation theory of judgment*, according to which judgment is a relation that the mind bears to a plurality of items in the world—those items that would have to be combined with one another in a certain way in order for the judgment to be true. Thus, on Russell's famous example, the fact that Othello judges that Desdemona loves Cassio is to be analysed as the fact that four items—Othello, Desdemona, Cassio and love—are connected by the judgment relation. This is the theory that is being accused, in the *Tractatus* formulation, of failing to show the impossibility of nonsense judgement.

It is widely accepted that the objection expressed by these passages played a major role in Russell's decision, in June 1913, to abandon a book manuscript that he had started a month earlier, now published as volume 7 of Russell's collected papers under the title *Theory of Knowledge* (Russell 1984).[2] Russell's letters establish conclusively that Wittgenstein's criticisms played a crucial role in his decision to abandon the project.[3] We also know that an objection to his theory of judgement made a particularly strong impression on Russell. In July 1913, in reply to a letter from Russell now lost, Wittgenstein writes: "I am very sorry to hear that my objection to your theory of judgment paralyses you" (Wittgenstein 1979: 122). In light of the chronology, there can be little doubt that the objection that paralysed Russell is the objection expressed by our passages. In what follows I am going to assume that this is the case. I am going to refer to this assumption as *the paralysis assumption*.

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[2] (Griffin 1985: 226; Landini 1991: 62; Stevens 2005: 90; Hanks 2007: 121)

[3] See, for example, a letter of 19 June 1913: "All that has gone wrong with me lately comes from Wittgenstein's attack on my work—I have only just realized this. It was very difficult to be honest about it, as it makes a large part of the book I meant to write impossible for years to come probably" (Griffin 1992: 448).

And in a letter of May 1916, looking back on that period: "Do you remember that at the time when you were seeing Vittoz I wrote a lot of stuff about Theory of Knowledge, which Wittgenstein criticised with the greatest severity? His criticism, tho' I don't think you realised it at the time, was an event of first-rate importance in my life, and affected everything I've done since. I saw he was right, and I saw that I could not hope ever again to do fundamental work in philosophy. My impulse was shattered, like a wave dashed to pieces against a breakwater" (Russell 1998: 282).

The paralysis assumption restricts the range of plausible interpretations of the nonsense passages to those for which they target some central ingredient of Russell's position. However, this is not the only way in which the paralysis assumption can help us interpret the nonsense passages. Suppose we had independent information as to the nature of the problem that led Russell to abandon his theory of judgment. Then it would follow from the paralysis assumption that the nonsense passages would have to be read as raising this problem.

2. Propositions and facts with more than one verb

I want to suggest that this is in fact the situation. We have a very good source of information concerning the nature of the problem that paralysed Russell. It is provided by his own account, in his lectures on *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, delivered less than five years after paralysis set in, of the obstacles that we face when we try to provide a theory of judgment. I am going to argue that, subject to the assumptions with which Russell approaches the task of explaining judgment, these obstacles are insuperable. I will then argue that the nonsense passages should be read as supplying a key ingredient of these obstacles—as blocking what Russell had come to see in 1913 as the only way out of the difficulty.

Russell states very clearly the question that he wants to address in Lecture IV of *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, entitled "Propositions and facts with more than one verb: Beliefs, etc.": "What is the form of the fact which occurs when a person has a belief?" (Russell 1985: 81). Russell doesn't offer an answer to this question. He tells us that here, "one has to be content on many points at present with pointing out difficulties rather than laying down quite clear solutions" (Russell 1985: 92). The bulk of the lecture is devoted to spelling out the difficulties that we face in this area.

He summarises the main difficulty in the following passage:

> There are really two main things that one wants to notice on this matter that I am treating of just now. The *first* is the impossibility of treating the proposition believed as an independent entity, entering as a unit into the occurrence of the belief, and the *other* is the impossibility of putting the subordinate verb on a level with its terms as an object term in the belief. (Russell 1985: 91-92)

Call this *the central passage*. Russell tells us here that there are two moves that we cannot make in our analysis of belief facts. Let's consider each of them in turn.

The first objectionable move is "treating the proposition believed as an independent entity, entering as a unit into the occurrence of the belief". He describes this as "the sort of obvious first notion that one would naturally arrive at" (Russell 1985: 81), and it is the first theory of judgment that Russell defended. According to the so-called *dual-relation theory*, put forward in *The Principles of Mathematics* of 1903 (Russell 1903), belief is a two-place relation that a mind bears to a proposition.

However, by at least 1910 Russell had come to the conclusion that this theory was untenable. In *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism* he gives us a very vivid account of what he regards as the main difficulty with this theory.[4] The problem can be presented as arising from a trivial point:

> Every fact that occurs in the world must be composed entirely of constituents that there are, and not of constituents that there are not. (Russell 1985: 84)

This means that construing belief as a relation between minds and propositions involves a commitment to the existence of every proposition that can be believed. This includes *false* propositions. Hence the dual-relation theory is committed to the existence of false propositions, but Russell now regards this commitment as unacceptable:

> To suppose that in the actual world of nature there is a whole set of false propositions going about is to my mind monstrous. I cannot bring myself to suppose it. I cannot believe that they are there in the sense in which facts are there. (Russell 1985: 88)

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[4] Russell had raised additional difficulties in (Russell 1910, 1912).

Hence false belief can't be construed as a relation between a mind and a proposition. And the problem can't be restricted to false belief:

> The logical form is just the same whether you believe a false or a true proposition. Therefore in all cases you are not to regard belief as a two-term relation between yourself and a proposition, and you have to analyse up the proposition and treat your belief differently. (Russell 1985: 89)

And Russell sees the multiple-relation theory as the only alternative. The passage continues:

> Therefore the belief does not really contain a proposition as a constituent but only contains the constituents of the proposition as constituents. (Russell 1985: 89)

This last passage offers an illuminating perspective on the relationship between the multiple-relation theory and the dual-relation theory. Both theories agree on the items that are ultimately involved in a belief: in addition to the mind, it involves the constituents of the fact that would have to obtain in order for the belief to be true (call them *worldly constituents*). On the dual-relation theory, the worldly constituents are first combined into a propositional unit, and then this unit is combined with the mind to form the belief complex. On the multiple-relation theory, the preliminary propositional combination is dropped, and the worldly constituents and the mind enter as separate items into the belief complex.[5] It follows that both theories abide by the following principle:

R.   The constituents of the fact that would have to obtain in order to make a belief true are direct or indirect constituents of the belief complex (i.e. either constituents or constituents of a constituent).

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[5] The version of the multiple-relation theory presented in the *Theory of Knowledge* manuscript introduces an additional constituent for each belief complex—a logical form. This aspect of the view won't play any role in our discussion. The problem that logical forms are meant to address in Russell's manuscript is not the problem that Wittgenstein raises in the nonsense passages.

I want to suggest that in the period that interests us, Russell assumed that R was true—that our options in explicating belief were restricted to those that abide by R.[6]

Let's consider now the second objectionable move that Russell highlights. It consists in "putting the subordinate verb on a level with its terms as an object term in the belief". What is the subordinate verb, what are its terms, and was is putting the former on a level with the latter as an object term in the belief?

If a fact is a combination of terms, we need to provide an account of how the unity of the fact arises from the manifold of its terms. Russell, throughout the period that interests us, thought that unity was brought about in each case by one of the constituents of the fact, which has to be the kind of item that a verb represents. Sometimes he refers to these items as verbs, and sometimes, assuming that they are all polyadic, he calls them relations.[7]

This was clearly his position in *The Principles of Mathematics*. Here facts are nothing but those propositions that have the property of being true. Hence the unity of facts is a special case of the unity of propositions: the combination of Will, love and Kate that constitutes the fact that Will loves Kate is the same phenomenon as the combination of Desdemona, love and Cassio that figures in the fact that Othello believes that Desdemona loves Cassio. In one respect at least, Russell's 1903 account of the unity of propositions (and, a fortiori, of facts) is perfectly clear: "The verb, when used as a verb, embodies the unity of the proposition" (Russell 1903: 50).

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[6] He gives vivid expression to his commitment to R in a letter to Frege of 1904: 'In spite of all its snowfields Mont Blanc is itself a component part of what is actually asserted in the proposition "Mont Blanc is 4000 metres high"' (Frege 1980: 169).

R is the principle that Christopher Pincock calls (PART). According to Pincock, (PART), a central ingredient of Russell's dual-relation theory, "is such a crucial feature of Russell's conception of judgement that he maintains it even after giving up the dual-relation theory in favour of the multiple-relation theory" (Pincock 2008: 108).

Russell abandoned his commitment to R with the theory of judgment that the put forward in 1919 (Russell 1919: 27-28).

[7] Although he calls them *verbs*, he has in mind objective properties and relations—the items denoted by verbs. See (Russell 1985: 81).

After Russell abandoned the dual-relation theory he no longer saw the combinations of constituents into facts as a special case of combinations that occur as relata of belief complexes. However, with respect to the unity of facts, of actually existing complexes, his position remained constant. Thus in *The Problems of Philosophy*, of 1912, he tells us:

> Wherever there is a relation which relates certain terms, there is a complex object formed of the union of those terms; and conversely, wherever there is a complex object, there is a relation which relates its constituents. (Russell 1912: 127)

And in the *Theory of Knowledge* manuscript he writes:

> In any complex there are at least two kinds of constituents, namely the terms related, and the relation which unites them. (Russell 1984: 80)

It follows that each fact has to have at least one verb among its constituents. It might have more, as in the fact, if it is a fact, that to love is to suffer, but in each case there will be exactly one verb discharging combining duties. Any other verb that might figure in a fact will be playing the same passive role as non-verbal constituents.

We can explain in these terms the second move that Russell presents as objectionable. According to R, the constituents of the fact that would have to obtain in order for the belief to be true have to be constituents of the belief complex. But among these constituents there will have to be a verb that would be responsible for the unity of the fact if it obtained. This is what Russell is calling the *subordinate verb*: it is the verb that would be responsible for the unity of the fact that would have to obtain in order for the belief to be true. The *terms of the subordinate verb* are the remaining constituents of the fact that would have to obtain in order for the belief to be true. According to R, they are also constituents of the belief complex. Thus in the fact that Othello believes that Desdemona loves Cassio, *loves* is the subordinate verb and Desdemona and Cassio its terms.

Now, what we have said about facts in general goes, in particular, for belief facts: their unity will be brought about by the combining powers of a verb—the verb *believes*. On the

dual-relation theory, the subordinate verb was also performing combining duties: it combined its terms into the propositional unit that then figured as a relatum in the belief complex. However, on the multiple-relation theory this is not so: the subordinate verb is just one more term of the belief complex, playing the same passive role as its terms. Assigning this passive, non-combining role to the subordinate verb is what Russell is presenting in the central passage as the second objectionable move.

3. <u>The paradox of judgment</u>

Before we turn to considering why this move might be objectionable, I want to point out that the two approaches that Russell is rejecting in the central passage are not just two of the approaches that we can adopt in the explication of belief facts. Given Russell's background assumptions, they exhaust the range of possibilities: if they are both inadmissible, then Russell can't explain belief facts. For, if the subordinate verb is performing combining duties in the belief complex, the combination that it produces will have to enter the belief complex as a unit.

For a brief period, Russell didn't see this clearly, seeming to assume that the subordinate verb could somehow play a combining role without actually producing a propositional unit. This unclarity is manifested by his explanation in 1910 of the difference between judging that A loves B and judging that B loves A:

> Let us take the judgment 'A loves B'. This consists of a relation of the person judging to A and love and B, i.e. to the two terms A and B and the relation 'love'. But the judgment is not the same as the judgment 'B loves A'; thus the relation must not be abstractly before the mind, but must be before it as proceeding from A to B rather than from B to A. […] We may distinguish two 'senses' of a relation according as it goes from A to B or from B to A. Then the relation as it enters into the judgment must have a 'sense' […]. (Russell 1910: 158)

Since in this paper Russell openly rejects the dual-relation theory, he must be assuming that

love can proceed from A to B without combining them into a unit. G.F. Stout took Russell to

task on this point:

> […] it may be argued, from Mr Russell's own account of the matter, that the manifold items to which the mind is related in judging do have a unity of their own, and are apprehended as having a unity of their own, distinct from that of the whole complex formed by the judging mind and its object. What seems to me decisive on this point is the requirement that not only should one of the items be itself a relation, but that it should have a "sense" or direction with reference to the other terms. The belief that A loves B is different from the belief that B loves A; and the difference, as Mr. Russell himself expressly recognises, can only be accounted by saying that in the first case the relation of loving is apprehended as proceeding from A to B and in the second as proceeding from B to A. This seems fatal to the view that nothing single is before the mind in judgement except the complex formed by the judging mind itself and the manifold of objects to which it is related. (Stout 1911: 202-03)[8]

Stout's point is that there is no third option between the two possibilities that Russell rejects

in the central passage. If the subordinate verb is not assigned a purely passive role, it will

combine its terms into a unit.

In personal communication quoted by Stout, Russell accepts this point:

> As regards the sense of the relation r in judging A r B, you make a point that had already occurred to me. But it is met by a slight re-wording of the account of sense in judgement, and this re-wording is in any case necessary to my theory. There must never, so I now perceive, be any relation having sense in a complex except the relating relation of that complex; hence, in the act of judging A r B, the sense must be confined to judging, and must not appear in the r. But judging being a multiple relation, its sense is not merely twofold like that of a dual relation, and the judging alone may arrange the terms in the order Mind, A, r, B, as opposed to Mind, B, r, A. This has the same effect as if r had a sense in the judgement, and gives all that one wants without being obnoxious to your objections. (Stout 1911: 203)

And in his presentation of the multiple relation theory in *The Problems of Philosophy*

(Russell 1912: 74) he emphasizes the passivity of the subordinate relation.

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[8] See also (Geach 1957: 51).

We are now in a position to present the obstacle to the provision of the satisfactory theory of belief expressed by the central passage. My proposal is that the passage puts forward an argument against the possibility of an adequate account of belief facts with the following structure:

1.    A belief fact has to have among its (direct or indirect) constituents the subordinate verb and its terms.

2.    If the subordinate verb plays a combining role in the belief complex, then the subordinate verb and its terms enter into the belief complex as a unit.

3.    A theory of belief facts according to which the subordinate verb and its terms enter into the belief complex as a unit is not satisfactory.

4.    A theory of belief facts according to which the subordinate verb doesn't play a combining role is not satisfactory.

Therefore:

5.    There can't be a satisfactory theory of belief facts.

I am going to refer to this as the *master argument*. The argument is clearly valid. According to premise 1, a belief fact has to have the subordinate verb among its constituents, but it follows from premises 2, 3 and 4 that this cannot result in a satisfactory theory of belief facts.

I claim that the master argument is what Russell saw as the main obstacle to the provision of an adequate theory of belief facts. We have clear explanations of Russell's commitment to the first three premises. 1 is a direct consequence of R, Russell came to accept 2 as inevitable under pressure from Stout, and we have seen the reason Russell gives in *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism* in favour of 3. We need to consider next his reasons for believing 4.

4.  The replacement argument

*The Philosophy of Logical Atomism* is also of help on this point. I want to turn to another

passage in which Russell presents again the difficulty that we encounter when we try to

analyse belief facts:

> Suppose I take 'A believes that B loves C'. 'Othello believes that
> Desdemona loves Cassio'. There you have a false belief. You have this odd
> state of affairs that the verb 'loves' occurs in that position and seems to
> occur as relating Desdemona to Cassio whereas in fact it does not do so, but
> yet it does occur as a verb, it does occur in the sort of way that a verb should
> do. (Russell 1985: 89-90)

The passage makes it clear that the problem concerns the status of the subordinate verb, and,

in particular, whether or not it relates its terms within the belief complex. What interests us at

this point is his explanation, in the continuation of the passage, of why it would be wrong to

say that the subordinate verb doesn't relate its terms in the belief complex:

> I mean that when A believes that B loves C, you have to have a verb in the
> place where 'loves' occurs. You cannot put a substantive in its place.
> Therefore it is clear that the subordinate verb (i.e. the verb other than
> believing) is functioning as a verb, and seems to be relating two terms, but as
> a matter of fact does not when the judgment happens to be false. That is what
> constitutes the puzzle about the nature of belief. (Russell 1985: 90)

Clearly Russell is putting forward an argument for the claim that the subordinate verb has to

discharge combining duties in the belief complex, from which premise 4 of the master

argument follows directly. This conclusion is presented as following from the premise that

the subordinate-verb position in the belief complex cannot be occupied by anything other

than a verb. Thus the passage presents an argument with the following structure:

> Beliefs in which the subordinate-verb position is occupied by anything other than a
>
> verb (call them *one-verb judgments*) are impossible.

Therefore:

The subordinate verb has to play a combining role in the belief complex.

Call this the *replacement argument*. The replacement argument is the only argument that Russell presents in support of premise 4 of the master argument. We have to conclude it is his main reason for accepting this premise.

When did Russell come to accept the replacement argument? We have conclusive evidence that as late as 1912 he did not accept it. The following passage of *The Problems of Philosophy* makes it clear that he accepts the premise of the replacement argument but rejects its conclusion:

> When an act of believing occurs, there is a complex, in which 'believing' is the uniting relation, and subject and objects are arranged in a certain order by the 'sense' of the relation of believing. Among the objects, as we saw in considering 'Othello believes that Desdemona loves Cassio', one must be a relation—in this instance, the relation 'loving'. But this relation, as it occurs in the act of believing, is not the relation which creates the unity of the complex whole consisting of the subject and the objects. The relation 'loving', as it occurs in the act of believing, is one of the objects—it is a brick in the structure, not the cement. The cement is the relation 'believing'. (Russell 1912: 74)

In 1912, Russell thought that, although one of the objects of the belief complex must be a relation, this relation figures in the belief complex in a purely passive role. In 1918 he thought that these two claims were incompatible. Russell changed his mind between these two dates.[9]

It should be clear that this change of mind would have had a devastating effect on Russell's aspiration to analyse belief facts. We have seen that, throughout the period that interests us, Russell subscribed to R, and hence to premise 1 of the master argument. We also

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[9] We have some evidence for dating Russell's acceptance of the replacement argument more precisely, in T.S. Eliot's notes of Russell's lectures at Harvard in 1914. Speaking on 9 April about the analysis of S judges that x has R to y as a relation between S, x, R and y, Russell comments, according to Eliot, that "if R was a thing you could substitute another thing (z) for it, and if you do, the j[udgment] is meaningless" (cited in (Potter 2009: 123)). This suggests concern with the nonsense judgments that would result if we replaced the subordinate verb in a judgment complex with something other than a verb.

know that he accepted premise 3 at least since 1910, and premise 2 since 1911. Hence from 1911, the only option open to Russell was an analysis of belief in which the subordinate relation didn't play a combining role. Therefore, when he came to the view that it was not possible to treat the subordinate relation in this way he would have realised that he couldn't provide an analysis of judgment facts.

To sum up, some time after 1912 Russell came to the conclusion that it was not possible not to assign combining duties to the subordinate verb in an adequate analysis of belief facts. This realization blocked the only approach to the analysis of belief facts that still remained open to him. And it was brought about by the replacement argument. It follows that, unless he had already come by other means to the conclusion that no satisfactory analysis of belief facts was to be had, appreciation of the replacement argument would have had this effect. Unless paralysis was already established, it would have been brought about by the replacement argument.

5. Wittgenstein and the replacement argument

Now, we know that paralysis was brought about by an objection from Wittgenstein. Hence, if it was brought about by the replacement argument, this was the content of Wittgenstein's paralysing objection. And according to the paralysis assumption, the replacement argument would be the objection expressed by the nonsense passages. I am going to argue that this is correct. The replacement argument is Wittgenstein's paralysing objection to Russell's theory of judgment, and in line with the paralysis assumption, this is the objection expressed by the nonsense passages.

*The Philosophy of Logical Atomism* provides some evidence in support of ascribing the replacement argument to Wittgenstein. In a preface that Russell wrote for the published version, he tells us that the lectures

> […] are very largely concerned with explaining certain ideas which I learnt
> from my friend and former pupil Ludwig Wittgenstein. I have had no
> opportunity of knowing his views since August 1914, and I do not even
> know whether he is alive or dead. (Russell 1985: 35)

More specifically, in Lecture IV he credits Wittgenstein with the discovery that belief facts

are fundamentally different from any other facts:

> […] I say that nothing that occurs in space is of the same form as belief. I
> have got on here to a new sort of thing, a new beast for our zoo, not another
> member of our former species but a new species. The discovery of this fact
> is due to Mr. Wittgenstein. (Russell 1985: 91)

The reason that Russell gives for the recalcitrant character of belief facts is the master

argument. But Russell had embraced all its premises, except for 4, before he came into

contact with Wittgenstein. Hence Wittgenstein's discovery can only be premise 4. And if the

discovery was brought about by the replacement argument, the replacement argument has to

be Wittgenstein's.

  Further indirect evidence comes from the continuation of the central passage, referring to

"the impossibility of putting the subordinate verb on a level with its terms as an object term

in the belief":

> That is a point in which I think that the theory of judgment which I set forth
> once in print some years ago was a little unduly simple, because I did then
> treat the object verb as if one could put it as just an object like the terms, as
> if one could put 'loves' on a level with Desdemona and Cassio as a term for
> the relation 'believe'. (Russell 1985: 91-92)

As Nicholas Griffin has observed (Griffin 1985: 227-28), the expression 'a little unduly

simple' might also point in the direction of a Wittgensteinian origin, as almost the same

expression occurs in a note that he added to "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by

Description" when it was reprinted in *Mysticism and Logic*, in a passage that outlines the

multiple-relation theory: "I have been persuaded by Mr. Wittgenstein that this theory is

somewhat unduly simple" (Russell 1917: 220).

6. <u>Ways of excluding nonsense</u>

If Wittgenstein subscribed to the replacement argument, he had to hold the view that ruling out one-verb judgment requires ascribing combining duties to the subordinate verb. Why would Wittgenstein think this? In this section I want to identify a line of reasoning in support of this view that can be plausibly ascribed to Wittgenstein in the period that interests us. I will then argue that it is reasonable to surmise that this is the line of reasoning underlying the nonsense passages.

The line of reasoning that I am going to attribute to Wittgenstein takes the following form:

E1    There are only two ways in which an analysis of judgment facts can rule out one-verb judgments:

*Stipulation*: By stipulating that the subordinate-verb position in the judgment complex can only be occupied by a verb.

*Job description*: By assigning to the item that occupies the subordinate-verb position a role that only a verb can play, i.e. by assigning to it combining duties.

E2    Stipulation is not a legitimate way of ruling out one-verb judgments.

Therefore:

E3    The only legitimate way of ruling out one-verb judgments is job description— to assign combining duties to the item that occupies the subordinate-verb position.

Call this the *exclusion argument*. Its conclusion, E3, is the principle that is needed to underwrite the inference from the premise to the conclusion of the replacement argument.

The main piece of evidence that I want to adduce in favour of attributing the exclusion argument to Wittgenstein is a letter from January 1913 in which we find the following passage:

> […] every theory of types must be rendered superfluous by a proper theory of symbolism: For instance if I analyse the proposition Socrates is mortal into Socrates, mortality and $(\exists\, x, y) \in_1 (x,y)$ I want a theory of types to tell me that "mortality is Socrates" is nonsensical, because if I treat "mortality" as a proper name (as I did) there is nothing to prevent me to make the substitution the wrong way round. *But* if I analyse (as I do now) into Socrates and $(\exists\, x).\ x$ is mortal or generally into x and $(\exists\, x)\ \phi x$ it becomes impossible to substitute the wrong way round because the two symbols are now of a different *kind* themselves. What I am *most* certain of is not however the correctness of my present way of analysis, but of the fact that all theory of types must be done away with by a theory of symbolism showing that what seemed to be *different kinds of things* are symbolized by different kinds of symbols which *cannot* possibly be substituted in one another's places. I hope I have made this fairly clear! (Wittgenstein 1979: 122)

Here Wittgenstein is comparing two analyses of subject-predicate facts. According to the analysis he used to hold, the copula combines subject and predicate into a unitary complex. On the analysis he holds now, the combining role is transferred to the predicate, which now has the subject as its only term. Wittgenstein is arguing for the superiority of the second approach over the first with respect to their ability to rule out a certain kind of nonsense, exemplified by 'mortality is Socrates'. Notice that the approaches to this task sustained by these analyses are straightforward analogues of the stipulation approach and the job-description approach. On the analysis that he used to hold, ruling out nonsense requires stipulating the types of the terms that can occupy each position in the complex. The analysis he now holds renders these stipulations unnecessary, and this is achieved by assigning combining duties to the predicate. Socrates cannot occupy the predicate position because he is not the kind of thing that can discharge the combining duties that predicates are assigned in the new analysis.[10] The new analysis is being defended on these grounds. Stipulation is

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[10] Notice that the nonsensical character of 'mortality is Socrates' concerns the fact that Socrates occupies the predicate position, not the fact that mortality occupies the subject

illegitimate (every theory of types must be "rendered superfluous", "done away with"), and the advantage of ascribing combining duties to the item that occupies the predicate position is that it enables us to rule out nonsense combinations without resorting to stipulation.

If we translate these considerations from the analysis of subject-predicate facts to the analysis of judgment facts we arrive at the exclusion argument. Once again the issue is how to exclude a certain type of nonsense combinations, exemplified by 'I judge that this table penholders the book'. One possibility would be to exclude it by stipulation—to stipulate that the subordinate-verb position cannot be occupied by anything other than a verb. But this strategy is illegitimate (E2). There is an alternative approach that would enable us to avoid stipulation, namely to ascribe combining duties to the subordinate verb. On the assumption that these are the only possible exclusion methods (E1), we can conclude that job description is the only legitimate way of ruling out one-verb judgments.[11] In sum, the exclusion argument is a straightforward application to judgment facts of the line of reasoning that Wittgenstein advances in the letter of January 1913.

7. <u>Replacement and the nonsense passages</u>

In order to read the nonsense passages as advancing the replacement argument we need to defend two claims:

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position. Verbs can act as subjects as well as predicates, as, e.g., in the fact that mortality is inconvenient.

[11] As Hochberg suggests (Hochberg 2000: 17-18), in the *Theory of Knowledge* manuscript Russell doesn't stipulate explicitly which type of entity must occupy each position in a judgment complex. These type stipulations are encoded in the judgment relation, which excludes logically impossible combinations. Wittgenstein would have been responsible for alerting Russell to the role that these stipulations were playing and to the question of their legitimacy. One could argue that the view that the judgment relation incorporates metaphysically brute type restrictions is not a version of the stipulation approach. However, in light of the January 1913 letter, it seems clear that Wittgenstein does not regard this approach as a separate alternative.

A.  The nonsense judgments that Wittgenstein is accusing Russell's theory of allowing are specifically one-verb judgments—the complexes that would result if the subordinate verb in a bona fide judgment fact were replaced with something other than a verb.

B.  The feature of Russell's theory that Wittgenstein is blaming for allowing one-verb judgments is the fact that it doesn't assign to the subordinate verb combining duties.

A doesn't pose a serious difficulty. The claim receives support from the example that Wittgenstein gives in the *Notes on Logic*. The problem with *this table penholders the book* is precisely that the position that would have to be occupied by a verb in order to produce a meaningful proposition is occupied instead by a term, *penholders,* that isn't a verb. 'I believe that this table penholders the book' is a piece of nonsense because the belief that it purports to represent would be a one-verb belief.

Assessing B is less straightforward, since the nonsense passages give no indication of which feature of Russell's theory renders it incapable of excluding the kind of nonsense that it ought to exclude.[12] I think, however, that this aspect of the reading receives considerable support from our discussion of the January 1913 letter. In that letter, as we have seen, Wittgenstein defends a strategy for avoiding nonsense (job description) which Russell's analysis can't deploy for ruling out one-verb judgments. He also rejects the only alternative (stipulation) that seems available to Russell. This makes it natural to suppose that a few months after this letter, when Wittgenstein attacks Russell's analysis for its inability to

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[12] Other advocates of B include David Pears (Pears 1967: 217), Gregory Landini (Landini 1991: 67) and Graham Stevens (Stevens 2005: 103). Stevens writes: "Wittgenstein's objection shows that the place occupied by the subordinate verb in the judgement-complex can only be occupied by a verb (*a relating relation*) if nonsense is to be avoided and unity maintained" (Stevens 2005: 103 my italics). Notice that this statement expresses support for B, not A. Stevens doesn't seem to ascribe to Wittgenstein an argument from the premise that nothing but a verb can occupy the subordinate-verb position to the conclusion that the verb that occupies that position has to discharge combining duties.

exclude nonsense judgments, he is pinning the blame on its inability to deploy what he sees as the only legitimate strategy—ascribing combining duties to the item that occupies the position from which nonsensical substitutions are to be excluded, as B dictates.

Further evidence for this reading can be obtained from the letter of June 1913, where Wittgenstein says that from 'A judges aRb', it ought to follow that 'aRb' makes sense '*without the use of any other premiss*'. If the kind of nonsense that Russell needs to exclude is, as I am suggesting, one-verb judgments, then the premise that would do the job, if we were allowed to invoke it, is a premise stipulating the kind of term R is, i.e. the proposition that R is a verb. This suggests that Wittgenstein's demand that we shouldn't use any other premise is aimed at blocking the stipulation approach to ruling out one-verb judgments. Hence what condemns Russell's analysis is its inability to deploy what Wirrgenstein sees as the only alternative to the stipulation approach—namely, ascribing combining duties to R.

8. Griffin's reading

I want to consider now how the reading that I am recommending compares to other readings of the nonsense passages. Let's start with the interpretation put forward by Nicholas Griffin (Griffin 1985). We can characterise Griffin's reading as involving three theses:

G1    The nonsense that Wittgenstein is concerned to exclude is "category mistaken judgments" (Griffin 1985: 240)—judgment complexes in which the positions of the subordinate verb and its terms are occupied by items of the wrong logical type.

G2    The problem faced by Russell's theory with respect to category mistaken judgments is that in order to exclude them Russell needs to make stipulations concerning the logical types of the items that can occupy each of the problematic positions in the judgment complex.

G3    The problem with these stipulations is that they generate a vicious circle, owing to the role that the theory of judgment is supposed to play in the theory of types.

Concerning G1, I have argued that Wittgenstein was concerned exclusively with a particular kind of category mistaken judgments—those that result when the subordinate-verb position is occupied by a particular.

With respect to G2, Griffin's reading and mine are closer than they might seem at first. On both readings, Wittgenstein's reasons for rejecting Russell's theory concern the way in which it excludes category mistaken judgments. According to Griffin, Wittgenstein's complaint is that Russell needs to invoke type stipulations, whereas I have argued that Wittgenstein's complaint is that Russell doesn't ascribe combining duties to the subordinate verb.

Hence the argument that Griffin ascribes to Wittgenstein has the following form:

P.    An adequate theory of judgment must exclude category mistaken judgments.

G.    Russell's theory can only achieve exclusion by stipulation.

E2.    Stipulation is an illegitimate way of achieving exclusion.

Therefore

C.    Russell's theory is inadequate

The argument that I am ascribing to Wittgenstein has the following form:

P*.    An adequate theory of judgment must exclude (some) category mistaken judgments.

X.    Russell's theory cannot achieve exclusion by job description.

E3.    Job description is the only legitimate way of achieving exclusion.

Therefore:

### C. Russell's theory is inadequate

Thus, on Griffin's reading, Wittgenstein is focusing on the illegitimacy of the exclusion method that Russell has to employ, whereas on my reading he is focusing on the unavailability to Russell of the only legitimate exclusion method.

The aspects of the problem that the two readings highlight complement one another. We can bring the connection to the surface if we reflect that this representation of the argument that I am attributing to Wittgenstein is incomplete. On my reading, E3 is derived from E1 and E2, i.e. from the claim that stipulation is the only alternative to job description and is illegitimate. Hence on a fuller representation of the argument that I am attributing to Wittgenstein, it derives C from premises P*, E1, E2 and X.

The argument that Griffin ascribes to Wittgenstein also appears incomplete. G is in need of support. Griffin doesn't discuss which form this would take but presumably we would need to argue that the other ways of achieving exclusion are not compatible with Russell's theory. If we focus on the kind of category mistaken judgment that, on my reading, Wittgenstein is worried about, the most plausible way of implementing this strategy would be to derive G from E1 and X, i.e. from the claim that job description is the only alternative to stipulation and is not compatible with Russell's theory. If we completed the reasoning in this way, the resulting argument would derive C from premises P*, E1, E2 and X, just as the argument that my reading attributes to Wittgenstein.

This suggests that the difference between Griffin's reading and mine concerns not so much the structure of the argument that Wittgenstein uses to undermine Russell's analysis as the relative importance that he attaches to each premise. On my reading, Wittgenstein's central complaint against Russell's theory is that it doesn't assign combining duties to the subordinate verb (X). The illegitimacy of stipulating that only verbs can figure in that position in a judgment complex (E2) is a background assumption lending support to the claim

(E3) that assigning combining duties to the subordinate verb is the only legitimate way of achieving exclusion. On Griffin's reading, by contrast, Wittgenstein's central complaint against Russell's theory is that it needs to make type stipulations to achieve exclusion (G). Griffin doesn't ascribe any role in Wittgenstein's argument to the claim that Russell's theory cannot achieve exclusion by assigning combining duties to the subordinate verb (X), but it would figure as a premise in a plausible argument in support of G.

I want to suggest that on this point my interpretation has three main advantages over Griffin's. The first is that what I am presenting as Wittgenstein's main complaint is an ultimate premise of the argument (X), whereas what Griffin treats as the main complaint is a claim in need of support (G). Second, my reading corresponds to Russell's own characterisation in *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism* of the argument (the replacement argument) that I have identified as Wittgenstein's objection. As we have seen, Russell tells us there that the need to exclude nonsense judgements shows that the subordinate verb must be assigned combining duties. He makes no mention, here or elsewhere, of type theory in this connection.[13] The third advantage of my reading is that it explains why the ban on additional premises mentioned in the June 1913 letter is not preserved in the nonsense passages of the *Notes on Logic* or the *Tractatus*. If the need to make type stipulations were Wittgenstein's main complaint, this omission would be very surprising.[14]

Let's turn now to G3. This aspect of Griffin's reading, which he attributes to Sommerville (Sommerville 1980), seems to me to be entirely lacking in support. As Peter Hanks has argued (Hanks 2007: 130-32), it is not clear that the involvement of judgment in the generation of the hierarchy of types would render the involvement of the theory of types in

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[13] The only exception I am aware of occurs in (Russell 1984: 199). For this passage, see (Hanks 2007: 136).
[14] See, in this connection, (Hanks 2007: 139).

Russell's theory of judgment viciously circular.[15] But even if it did, I am not aware of any evidence linking this argument to Wittgenstein or even Russell.

The letter of January 1913 quoted above also casts doubt on G3. This letter provides the only piece of direct evidence for attributing to Wittgenstein the view that we can't use type stipulations for avoiding nonsense. The point that I want to highlight is that if the ban on using type stipulations for ruling out nonsense were grounded in a threat of circularity arising from the role that judgment plays in the generation of the hierarchy of types, the ban would be restricted to the analysis of judgement complexes. However, this letter bans the use of type stipulations in the analysis of atomic subject-predicate complexes, for which circularity should not be an issue. This suggests that Wittgenstein's misgivings about type stipulations have nothing to do with a threat of circularity.[16]

9. Wittgenstein against types

To be clear, what I am rejecting is the idea that Wittgenstein supported his ban on type stipulations by claiming that they lead to vicious circularity. As I have explained in the last two sections, I am not rejecting the idea that a ban on type stipulations played a role in the objection expressed by the nonsense passages. But if the ban was not supported in this way, how was it supported? On what grounds did Wittgenstein claim that type restrictions are illegitimate? We can use the January 1913 letter as our starting point. What Wittgenstein is most certain of, he tells us, is

> the fact that all theory of types must be done away with by a theory of symbolism showing that what seemed to be *different kinds of things* are symbolized by different kinds of symbols which *cannot* possibly be substituted in one another's places. (Wittgenstein 1979: 122)

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[15] See also (Stevens 2005: 101-02).

[16] Griffin reads this letter as concerned with the analysis of judgement complexes (Griffin 1985: 229). I can't see that there is any evidence for this reading.

This is clearly at odds with the idea that Wittgenstein is rejecting the use of type restrictions in the exclusion of nonsense in order to save the theory of types from a threat of circularity. We shouldn't try to save the theory of types: we must do away with it.

In addition to rejecting type stipulations as a strategy for avoiding nonsense, the passage suggests an alternative approach to achieving this goal. The proposal is that nonsense is ruled out by syntax alone, by facts about what combinations of symbols are possible. We shouldn't need to stipulate that Socrates and mortality mustn't be combined the wrong way round. This stipulation will be unnecessary if Socrates and mortality are symbolized by symbols that cannot be combined the wrong way round.[17]

This approach to the exclusion of nonsensical combinations is a central ingredient of Wittgenstein's early philosophy:

> 5.473 Logic must look after itself.
> If a sign is *possible*, then it is also capable of signifying. Whatever is possible in logic is also permitted. […]
> In a certain sense we cannot make mistakes in logic.
>
> 5. 4731 […] language itself prevents every logical mistake.—What makes logic a priori is the *impossibility* of illogical thought.[18]

Type stipulations, from this point of view, would be decrees to the effect that something that's possible is nevertheless not permitted. For this reason they are fundamentally at odds with Wittgenstein's philosophy of logic.

But how could the symbolism exclude nonsense? The alternative approach is rendered possible by another central ingredient of the tractarian picture, already present in the *Notes on Logic*:

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[17] On this point see (Landini 1991: 66).

[18] In the *Notebooks* entry where these passages originate, Wittgenstein adds: "This is an extremely profound and important insight" (Wittgenstein 1979: 2). The thought is also vividly expressed in a letter to Russell of August 1919: "You cannot prescribe to a symbol what it *may* be used to express. All that a symbol CAN express, it MAY express. This is a short answer but it is true!" (Wittgenstein 1979: 130-31)

> Propositions [which are symbols having reference to facts] are themselves
> facts: that this inkpot is on the table may express that I sit in this chair.
> (Wittgenstein 1979: 97)

Suppose that the fact that Socrates is mortal is represented by the fact that an individual a, symbolising Socrates, instantiates a property P, symbolising mortality. Then the stipulation that we shouldn't make the substitution the wrong way round will be entirely superfluous. The fact that we would need to use in order to symbolise the illegitimate combination—the fact that P instantiates a—simply cannot obtain.[19]

## 10.    Hanks' reading

Let me turn now to the reading of Wittgenstein's objection advanced by Peter Hanks in a recent paper (Hanks 2007). According to Hanks, the nonsense that Russell's analysis is supposed to be incapable of excluding has nothing to do with positions in the judgment complex being occupied by terms of the wrong logical type:

> When Wittgenstein says that any correct theory of judgment must show that
> it impossible to judge nonsense, by "nonsense" he does not mean something
> that violates type restrictions. Rather, he means something that is not capable
> of being true or false. (Hanks 2007: 138)

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[19] In a forthcoming paper (Johnston forthcoming), Colin Johnston has presented an interpretation of Wittgenstein's objection that is very close to the one I'm offering here. According to Johnston, Wittgenstein's objection is based on the principle of Substitutivity: "If there is a logically possible complex A in which entity e1 appears in a mode m (e.g. as term, as dual relating relation) and a logically possible complex B in which a second entity e2 appears in that same mode m, then there is a logically possible complex A' which is the result of substituting e2 in for e1 in any position in which it occurs in A in mode m." Thus, e.g., 'the penholder is hollow' is a logically possible complex in which *penholder* appears as a term, and 'I judge that this table is bigger than the book' is a logically possible complex in which, on Russell's theory, *is bigger than* figures as a term. Hence it follows from Russell's theory of judgment and Substitutivity that 'I judge that this table penholders the book' is a logically possible complex. Since this isn't a logically possible complex, Substitutivity entails that *is bigger than* cannot figure as a term in 'I judge that this table is bigger than the book'. It must figure as a relating relation. This sounds like a version of the replacement argument in which the inference is underwritten by Substitutivity, instead of E1 and the 'legitimacy of the possible' thought, as I am suggesting here.

Russell's multiple-relation theory, Hanks tells us, is incapable of excluding this kind of nonsense:

> The collection of a, b, and R is not the sort of thing that can be true or false. Only a proposition can be judged to be true—a collection of items, *even if they are of right number and variety of types*, is not the sort of thing that can be true or false and hence not the sort of thing that can be judged. (Hanks 2007: 138)

Hence Hanks concludes:

> The real point of Wittgenstein's objection is that what is judged must be a unified proposition, not a mere collection of terms. (Hanks 2007: 138)

In one respect, this reading is close to the one I am recommending. I have suggested that Wittgenstein's main complaint against Russell's analysis is that it doesn't assign combining duties to the subordinate verb. According to Hanks, Wittgenstein's main complaint is that on Russell's analysis the subordinate verb and its terms enter the belief complex separately. The two complaints are clearly connected. In one direction, the link is unquestionable. A theory of judgment that satisfied the constraint that I am ascribing to Wittgenstein would satisfy the constraint that Hanks is ascribing to him. This is precisely the point that Stout made Russell accept. In the other direction, however, the connection is not so straightforward. A theory of judgment could satisfy Hanks' constraint, but not mine, if the subordinate verb and its terms entered the belief complex as a unit, but their unity did not result from the combining power of the subordinate verb. Showing that Hanks' constraint and mine are equivalent to one another would require ruling out alternative sources of unity.

With respect to the nature of nonsense, as it figures in the nonsense passages, our interpretations are fundamentally different. I want to mention two reasons for being suspicious of this aspect of Hanks' reading. The first is the example of nonsense judgment that Wittgenstein offers in the *Notes on Logic*—*I judge that this table penholders the book*. I have argued above that the example illustrates the kind of nonsense that we obtain when the

subordinate-verb position is occupied by something other than a verb. In his discussion of this passage, Hanks suggests that the point of Wittgenstein's example is that if two individuals and a binary relation entered the judgment complex separately the result wouldn't be more satisfactory than if three individuals entered it (Hanks 2007: 138). I think this is a much less natural reading of the example.

The second problem concerns a disparity between the form of expression that Wittgenstein uses in the nonsense passages and the form of expression that one would expect him to adopt if he was making the point that Hanks attributes to him. I have in mind the fact that Wittgenstein is accusing Russell of failing to make nonsense judgments impossible. On Russell's theory, according to Wittgenstein, some judgments are nonsense judgements. If nonsense were what Hanks says it is, this would be an extraordinary understatement. Then *all* judgments would be nonsense judgments. Russell would be guilty, not of failing to make nonsense impossible, but of failing to make sense possible, since on Russell's analysis *every* putative judgement complex qualifies as what Wittgenstein would be calling nonsense, on Hanks' interpretation.

11.    Pincock's reading

Let me consider next the interpretation of the nonsense passages offered by Christopher Pincock in a recent paper (Pincock 2008). In *Theory of Knowledge*, Russell sets himself the goal of analysing every judgment complex in such a way that with its worldly constituents only one logically possible complex can be formed. Adapting Russell's terminology (Russell 1984: 144), let's refer to a judgment complex with this feature as *non-permutative*. Russell's goal is then to show that every judgment complex is non-permutative. In some cases, no analysis is needed to achieve this goal. Take, for example, S's judgment that a is similar to b. According to Russell, *a is similar to b* is the same complex as *b is similar to a*, and no other

logically possible complex can be formed with a, similarity and b (Russell 1984: 112). But other cases do require work. Take, for example, S's judgment that a precedes b. We can form two different logically possible complexes with the objective constituents of this judgment: *a precedes b* and *b precedes a*. Analysis is needed to show that this judgment complex is in fact non-permutative. In the *Theory of Knowledge* manuscript, Russell presented an ingenious strategy for achieving this goal. If we concentrate on judgments of the form 'S judges aRb', he argued that these could be analysed as being of the form 'S judges that $(\exists x)$ $(aC_1x$ & $bC_2x)$' where $C_1$ and $C_2$ are such that a cannot figure as the second relatum in a logically possible $C_1$-complex and b cannot figure as the second relatum in a logically possible $C_2$-complex (Russell 1984: 147).

Initially Russell seemed to think that this analysis might succeed in showing that all complexes of the form 'S judges aRb' are non-permutative, since no rearrangement of the terms of each conjunct in $(\exists x)$ $(aC_1x$ & $bC_2x)$ results in different logically possible complex (Russell 1984: 111-12). However, Chapter 5 of Part II of the manuscript shows a growing awareness of the importance of a difficulty faced by the proposal. As Russell puts it: "the molecular complex is still permutative with respect to the constituents of its atomic constituents" (Russell 1984: 147). The problem is clear: $(\exists x)$ $(xC_1a$ & $bC_2x)$, $(\exists x)$ $(aC_1x$ & $xC_2b)$ and $(\exists x)$ $(xC_1a$ & $xC_2b)$ may not be logically possible complexes, but if bRa is a logically possible complex different from aRb, then $(\exists x)$ $(bC_1x$ & $aC_2x)$ is a logically possible complex different from $(\exists x)$ $(aC_1x$ & $bC_2x)$, and both complexes have the same constituents. The analysis has failed to show that all judgment complexes of the form 'S judges aRb' are non-permutative. Call this the *molecular-permutation problem*.

Pincock argues that the molecular-permutation problem is the most serious challenge faced by Russell's theory. Its importance concerns the project of defining correspondence, i.e. the function that pairs each judgment complex with its *corresponding complex*—the complex

whose existence is necessary and sufficient for the truth of the judgment (Russell 1984: 144). Russell's background theoretical commitments entail that the corresponding complex of a judgment J has to be defined as the unique complex whose constituents are the worldly constituents of J. Clearly, this definition works only for non-permutative judgments. Hence Russell can define correspondence only if he can show that all judgments are non-permutative. Therefore, the molecular-permutation problem blocks Russell's strategy for defining correspondence.

By collating the dates when Russell wrote the relevant passages of the *Theory of Knowledge* manuscript with the dates of his meeetings with Wittgenstein, Pincock also argues that Wittgenstein must have been responsible for raising the molecular-permutation problem. Could this be Wittgenstein's paralysing objection? If it is, then it will follow from the paralysis assumption that the nonsense passages ought to be read as expressing the molecular-permutation problem. I want to argue that this reading is highly implausible.

Let's consider how Pincock proposes to read the nonsense passages. Concerning the June 1913 letter he writes:

> On my reading, when Wittgenstein writes that 'A judges that a is in the Rel[ation] R to b' must entail 'aRb.∨.~aRb', what he is saying is that judgment presupposes that the judgment is either true or false. Given that Russell is not able to define correspondence relations for his belief complexes, this objection is conclusive if he retains (T/F). (Pincock 2008: 132)

(T/F) is a principle of bivalence:

> Each judgment has exactly one of the following two properties: truth, falsity (Pincock 2008: 108)

In the passage under discussion, Wittgenstein's objection to Russell's theory of judgment arises from two separate claims:

I.      There is a condition that any adequate theory of judgment must fulfil.

II.    Russell's theory doesn't fulfil this condition.

On Pincock's reading, the condition that plays this role in Wittgenstein's objection is, in effect, (T/F). The molecular-permutation problem is the reason why Russell's theory doesn't satisfy (T/F).

Now, in the letter Wittgenstein announces that he is now able to express his objection to Russell's theory of judgment exactly. This suggests previous unsuccessful attempts to make Russell understand or accept the objection.[20] What the passage explains is the nature of the condition that every adequate theory of judgment must fulfil. It says nothing about why Russell's theory doesn't fulfil it. Hence, on Pincock's reading, the point that Wittgenstein now feels able to express exactly, probably after unsuccessful attempts, is (T/F).

But how can this be? Pincock himself tells us that (T/F) is one of Russell's 'core commitments' ever since his dual-relation period (Pincock 2008: 108). It is hard to believe that Wittgenstein would have had any trouble making Russell understand or accept this condition. Wittgenstein might have had trouble making Russell understand or accept the molecular-permutation problem, but in the letter Wittgenstein makes no attempt to explain or defend this. I conclude that Pincock's reading of this passage is highly implausible, since, if it were correct, the point that Wittgenstein says he can now express precisely is, by Pincock's own admission, one of Russell's long-held basic principles.

We find an additional reason for rejecting Pincock's reading of this passage if we reflect that the three passages have the structure that I have attributed to the passage from the June

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[20] Griffin connects this remark with a letter from Russell to Ottoline Morrell of the previous month in which Russell recounts a meeting with Wittgenstein: "I showed him a crucial part of what I had been writing. He said it was all wrong, not realizing the difficulties—that he had tried my view and knew it wouldn't work. I couldn't understand his objection—in fact he was very inarticulate—but I feel in my bones that he must be right, and that he has seen something that I have missed" (Griffin 1992: 446). Griffin's suggestion is that the objection that Wittgenstein is expressing exactly in June is the objection that Russell couldn't understand in May (Griffin 1985: 238).

1913 letter: There is a condition that every theory of judgment must satisfy, but Russell's theory doesn't satisfy it. I think that there has to be a very strong presumption in favour of reading the three passages as dealing with the same condition. However, Pincock's reading of the passage from the letter doesn't allow us to do this. Neither making it 'impossible for me to judge that this table penholders the book', nor having to 'show that it is impossible for a judgement to be a piece of nonsense' can conceivably be read as expressing (T/F).

Let's turn now to Pincock's reading of the nonsense passage in the *Notes on Logic*. Concerning 'I judge that this table penholders the book', he claims that Wittgenstein's point is this:

> This sort of nonsensical judgment must be ruled out because that is the only plausible way to guarantee that every judgment is either true or false. Other alternatives run afoul of other principles that Russell is unwilling to give up. For example, stipulating that all nonsensical judgments are false entails that the judgment expressed by 'this table penholders the book or this table does not penholder the book' is false, thus undermining the unrestricted scope of the law of excluded middle. (Pincock 2008: 133)

An interpretation of the nonsense passages needs to answer two questions: (a) What condition is Wittgenstein setting on any adequate theory of judgment? And (b) What aspect of Russell's theory is Wittgenstein blaming for its inability to meet this condition?[21] With respect to (a), Pincock seems to be tacitly accepting Griffin's reading: an adequate theory of judgment must exclude category mistaken judgments. With respect to (b), Pincock is entirely silent. Notice, in particular, that given his answer to (a), the molecular-permutation problem doesn't have any role to play in his answer to (b): whether Russell can solve this problem is entirely irrelevant to whether he can exclude category mistaken judgments. Hence, since what he treats as the paralysing objection doesn't play any role in his reading of the passage, the reading can receive no support from the paralysis assumption. What Pincock offers in the passage I've quoted is a justification for requiring that category mistaken judgments should

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[21] My own answers to these questions re claims A and B, in section 6, above.

be excluded. This might have its merits, but it doesn't offer an alternative to other readings, as it doesn't offer novel answers to (a) or (b).

12.    Wittgenstein and the dual-relation theory

On the reading of the nonsense passages that I have defended, Wittgenstein is criticising Russell for failing to ascribe combining duties to the subordinate verb. If my reading is correct, we should expect Wittgenstein to endorse the view that the subordinate verb plays a combining role and hence that the subordinate verb and its terms enter the judgment complex as a unit. This would suggest that Wittgenstein was advocating a version of the dual relation theory. Can this view be plausibly attributed to Wittgenstein?

I want to suggest, in closing, that, at the time, Wittgenstein did think that the subordinate verb and its terms entered the judgment complex as a unit. This seems to be the message of the following passage of the *Notes on Logic*:

> When we say A judges that etc., then we have to mention a whole
> proposition which A judges. It will not do either to mention only its
> constituents, or its constituents and form, but not in the proper order.
> (Wittgenstein 1979: 94)

However, Wittgenstein didn't think that this view forced him to embrace the dual relation theory. It might seem hard to see how Wittgenstein could hope to avoid this outcome: if the subordinate verb and its terms enter the judgment complex as a unit, then judgment will have to consist in a relation between the subject and this unit. But Wittgenstein didn't accept this thought. The thought might be compulsory if we assumed that every fact consists in the exemplification of an n-place relation by n terms. Then any plausible analysis of judgment according to which the subordinate verb and its terms enter into the judgment complex as a unit would be a version of the dual-relation theory. But Wittgenstein rejects this assumption:

> Just as people used to struggle to bring all propositions into the subject-predicate form, so now it is natural to conceive every proposition as expressing a relation, which is just as incorrect. (Wittgenstein 1979: 107)

What he sees as the alternative is an analysis of judgment based on his bi-polar account of propositions:

> The proposition "a judges p" consists of the proper name a, the proposition p with its 2 poles, and a being related to both of these poles in a certain way. This is obviously not a relation in the ordinary sense. (Wittgenstein 1979: 95)

By 1914 he had abandoned this approach. The following passage of the notes he dictated to Moore in April 1914 presents his new point of view:

> The relation of "I believe p" to "p" can be compared to the relation of '"p" says (besagt) p' to p: it is just as impossible that *I* should be simple as that "p" should be. (Wittgenstein 1979: 119)[22]

The new approach that this passage adumbrates is the analysis of judgment presented in the *Tractatus*, in the proposition on which 5.5422 immediately depends in the numerical hierarchy:

> 5.542 It is clear, however, that '*A* believes that *p*', '*A* has the thought *p*', and '*A* says *p*' are of the form "*p*' says *p*': and this does not involve a correlation of a fact with an object, but rather the correlation of facts by means of the correlation of their objects.

This passage presents an analysis on which the proposition believed enters the judgment complex as a unit ('a correlation of a fact with an object') as the closest rival to the new approach. This is confirmed by the preceding proposition, discussing a possible exception to the principle that "propositions occur in other propositions only as bases of truth-operations" (5.54):

> 5.541 At first sight it looks as if it were also possible for one proposition to occur in another in a different way.
> Particularly with certain forms of proposition in psychology, such as '*A* believes that *p* is the case' and ' *A* has the thought *p*', etc.
> For if these are considered superficially, it looks as if the proposition *p* stood

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[22] On this development, see (Sullivan 2005: 58-59).

     in some kind of relation to an object *A*.
     (And in modern theory of knowledge (Russell, Moore, etc.) these
     propositions have actually been construed in this way.)

In sum, in 1913, when Wittgenstein was delivering his objections to Russell's multiple-relation theory of judgment, he thought that the proposition believed would enter the judgment complex as a unit. He held this view until the following year, when it was replaced by the new approach defended in the *Tractatus*. This adds plausibility to my contention that the target of the paralysing objection is Russell's failure to ascribe combining duties to the subordinate verb.

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