

ON “PROPS”, WITTGENSTEIN’S JUNE 1913 LETTER, AND RUSSELL’S “PARALYSIS”

JAMES CONNELLY
Philosophy / Trent U.
Peterborough, ON, Canada K9L 1Z6
JAMESCONNELLY@TRENTU.CA

Recent years have seen a resurgence of scholarly interest in the precise nature of Wittgenstein’s fateful but notoriously obscure criticisms of Russell’s multiple relation theory of judgment, levelled as Russell was furiously composing *Theory of Knowledge* in May–June 1913. In this paper, I place special expository focus on two controversial documents from the relevant period, whose nature and inter-relationships to this point have been inadequately understood in the literature. The first document is a set of working notes composed by Russell under the title “Props” —which I date as on or shortly after 26 May—while the second is a June 1913 letter from Wittgenstein to Russell, often thought to contain a “paralyzing”, if mysterious, objection to Russell’s theory. On the basis of a new interpretation of these two documents and their relationship, I revise the “standard reading” of Wittgenstein’s criticisms. The revision renders that reading invulnerable to certain seemingly devastating criticisms developed by Stevens in 2003. I defend my revised reading against various “non-standard” alternatives which have flourished in the recent literature, in part as the result of Stevens’ criticisms.

“I am very sorry to hear that my objection to your theory of judgment paralyzes you.” (Wittgenstein to Russell, 22 July 1913)

The publication of Graham Stevens’ paper, “Re-examining Russell’s Paralysis”, in 2003 reignited a long-standing scholarly controversy amongst historians of analytic philosophy attempting to address one of the more especially problematical points of interpretation concerning that tradition and its development. Specifically, the controversy surrounds the precise nature of Wittgenstein’s fateful but notoriously obscure criticisms of Russell’s “multiple relation” theory of judgment, levelled as Russell was furiously composing the *Theory of*

Knowledge manuscript in May–June of 1913. Despite the wealth of new literature on the topic to emerge over the past decade, however, a perspicuous understanding of the precise meaning of the specific objection contained in Wittgenstein’s “paralyzing” June letter to Russell, along with the role it played within those broader criticisms, has remained elusive. In this paper, I will address this lacuna by providing an interpretation of this specific objection, situated within a broader and generally “standard” reading¹ of Wittgenstein’s criticisms, and of the demise of the manuscript. Doing so will necessitate first exploring some key theoretical concepts and distinctions concerning Russell’s developing philosophy in section I, before also undertaking some critical reflection, in section II, upon recent and historical expositions of Wittgenstein’s criticisms within the literature, including those proffered by Stevens, Nicholas Griffin, Stephen Sommerville, Christopher Pincock, and Peter Hanks.

Moreover, in the interest of more carefully scrutinizing the objection in the June letter, along with its relationship to some highly relevant but oft-overlooked historical documentation concerning Wittgenstein’s criticisms, I will pay special attention, in section III, to Rosalind Carey’s recent claim² that the target of this specific objection to Russell’s theory lies in its invocation of neutral facts, as is evident from working notes under the title “Props” (*Papers* 7: Appendix B.1), composed by Russell on or shortly after 26 May 1913. On my view, by contrast, these notes represent a failed alternative proposal, developed by Russell in response to Wittgenstein’s somewhat earlier, and less articulate, critique of logical forms (subsequently crystallized in the June letter).

This critique, moreover, deals specifically with Russell’s attempt to invoke a significance constraint on judgments, in consort with an appeal to logical forms, in an effort to avert what is commonly referred to in the literature as the “direction problem”, and more specifically the so-called “wide” and “narrow” versions of this problem.³ Wittgenstein has both

¹ This term originates in Peter W. Hanks, “How Wittgenstein Defeated Russell’s Multiple Relation Theory of Judgment”, *Synthese* 154 (2007): 121–46 (at 130), and will be explained in more detail below.

² *Russell and Wittgenstein on the Nature of Judgement* (London and New York: Continuum International, 2007).

³ Griffin, “Russell’s Multiple Relation Theory of Judgment”, *Philosophical Studies* 47 (1985): 213–47, and “Wittgenstein’s Criticism of Russell’s Theory of Judgment”, *Russell* 5 (1985): 132–45, where the terms “wide” and “narrow” are first explicitly introduced in the literature as names for “versions” of the broader “direction problem”, initially

versions of the direction problem in mind when he asserts, in his “Notes on Logic”, that Russell’s theory fails to exclude nonsensical judgments such as “this table penholders the book”.⁴ Wittgenstein means the reader to see this garbled example as the result of two problematical substitutions performed upon the initial, perfectly intelligible proposition “the book is on the table”, one substitution each corresponding to the wide and narrow versions of the direction problem.⁵ Moreover, the “premiss” identified by Wittgenstein is, as surmised by Sommerville⁶ and Griffin,⁷ something more or less like the dyadic analogue of *Principia* *13.3, employed in this context as a significance constraint on judgments, and designed to resolve the direction problem by specifying the correct positions and types of a judgment’s constituents, within its logical form. Russell’s invocation of this premiss is problematic, however, for reasons other than those surmised by Griffin and Sommerville. Specifically, the supplemental premiss is problematic not, as they suggest, because it poses an incompatibility with the theory of types, but rather because it runs afoul of certain basic intuitions about logical inference. After developing and defending this reading of the objection in section III below, I will conclude the paper, in section IV, by stressing the advantages of my reading over its remaining competitors.

I. THE MULTIPLE RELATION THEORY

The nature and import of Russell’s “multiple” relation theory of judgment is perhaps best understood by contrast to his earlier, “dual” relation theory of propositional attitudes. At the time of authoring *The Principles of Mathematics* in 1903, Russell had supposed propositional attitudes, such as judgment or understanding, to involve a “dual” relation between a judging subject and a structured, mind-independent unity, namely a proposition. Such propositions were supposed by Russell to constitute

discussed and debated by Russell, Wittgenstein, and Stout.

⁴ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Notebooks 1914–1916*, 2nd edn., ed. G. H. von Wright and G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979), p. 103.

⁵ I.e., first reversing the order of “book” and “table”, and then replacing the prepositional verb “is on”, with the substantive “penholder”.

⁶ “Types, Categories, and Significance” (unpublished PhD thesis, McMaster U., 1979).

⁷ See Griffin, “Wittgenstein’s Criticism of Russell’s Theory of Judgment”, pp. 213–47.

the meanings of sentences. He thought of them as composed, moreover, *of* the very things indicated by the words in the sentences of which they were the meanings; amongst such propositional constituents were included both “things” (e.g., Brutus, Caesar) and “concepts” (e.g., death, murder) (*PoM*, p. 44). According to Russell, “things” are distinct from “concepts” in that the former are the constituents of propositions indicated by proper names, while concepts, by contrast, are what is indicated by any other word or phrase (e.g., verbs, predicates) (*ibid.*). A proposition, on this view, is then characterized by an essential unity amongst the constituents of propositions, a unity forged by the relation indicated by the verb in a sentence whenever that verb is employed *as a verb* and not merely as a verbal noun (compare “to murder” as it occurs in “Brutus murdered Caesar” (where it occurs as a verb and indicates a relating relation) versus “The murder of Caesar was carefully planned” (where it occurs as a verbal noun and indicates a non-relating relation). When a verb occurs within a sentence *qua* verb, as opposed to occurring as a verbal noun, it denotes a relation which relates the constituents of the proposition such that the result is possessed of a property which Russell refers to as that of being “asserted”, and which in this context is characterized as a logical as opposed to psychological notion (*PoM*, pp. 48–9). What it means for a proposition to be “asserted” in this sense is thus *not* for it to be affirmed as true by a subject, but rather for it to be unified by the relating relation corresponding to a verb *qua* verb, e.g., “murdered”.

For various reasons, as Russell’s philosophy progressed through the first decade of the twentieth century, he became dissatisfied with this analysis. One notable problem with it which Russell can later be found invoking in an effort to motivate his shift from a “dual” to a “multiple” relation theory, is something called the “problem of false propositions”.⁸

⁸ However, this problem does not appear to have been the prime motivation for Russell’s abandonment of Russellian propositions, which seems rather to come about in and through an attempt to provide a philosophically acceptable justification of the order stratification characteristic of *Principia Mathematica*’s “ramified” type theory (see Stevens, “Re-examining Russell’s Paralysis: Ramified Type-Theory and Wittgenstein’s Objection to Russell’s Theory of Judgment”, *Russell* 23 [2003]: 5–26; and “From Russell’s Paradox to the Theory of Judgment: Wittgenstein and Russell on the Unity of the Proposition”, *Theoria* 70 [2004]: 28–60). Alternative views can be found in: Bernard Linsky, “Why Russell Abandoned Russellian Propositions”, in *Russell and Analytic Philosophy*, ed. A. D. Irvine and G. A. Wedeking (Toronto: U. of Toronto P., 1993), pp. 193–209; Stewart Candlish, “The Unity of Propositions and Russell’s Theories of Judgment”, in *Bertrand*

Given his earlier conception of the unity of the proposition, more specifically, and in consort with the view that a proposition is composed of the very things indicated by the words which make up the corresponding sentence, Russell came to wonder how it was that a proposition could possess the requisite unity without thereby being itself a fact.⁹ And while this does not present an obvious problem in the case of true propositions, it is clearly a problem in the case of false propositions. As Russell explains in *Theory of Knowledge*:

We might be induced to admit that *true* propositions are entities, but it is very difficult, except under the lash of a tyrannous theory, to admit that *false* propositions are entities. "Charles I dying in his bed" or "that Charles I died in his bed" does not seem to stand for any entity. (Papers 7: 109)

Russell attempts to circumvent this difficulty in a 1910 paper, "On the Nature of Truth and Falsehood". The attempt involves two moves. The first is to shift the locus of truth and falsehood from propositions to judgments, and to deny the existence of propositions as previously conceived: "Broadly speaking, the things that are true or false, in the sense with which we are concerned, are statements, and beliefs or judgments."¹⁰ Second, and more importantly, Russell goes on to characterize judgment in terms of a multiple relation between the agent making the judgment and the various constituents of the judgment made:

The difficulty of the view we have been hitherto considering was that it compelled us ... to admit objective falsehoods.... The way out of the difficulty consists in maintaining that, whether we judge truly or whether we judge falsely, there is no one thing that we are judging. When we judge that Charles I died on the scaffold, we have before us, not one object, but several objects, namely Charles I and dying and the scaffold. Similarly when we judge that Charles I died in his bed, we have before us the objects Charles I, dying, and his bed.... We therefore escape the necessity of admitting objective falsehoods.... Thus in this view judgment is a relation of the mind to several other terms: when these

Russell and the Origins of Analytic Philosophy, ed. Ray Monk and Anthony Palmer (Bristol: Thoemmes P., 1996), pp. 103–35; and Michael Hymers, *Wittgenstein and the Practice of Philosophy* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview P., 2010), p. 60.

⁹ Linsky, "Why Russell Abandoned Russellian Propositions", p. 200.

¹⁰ In *Philosophical Essays*, new edn. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967; 1st edn., 1910), pp. 147–59 (at 148); *Papers* 6: 117.

other terms have *inter se* a “corresponding” relation, the judgment is true; when not, it is false. (*Ibid.*, p. 153; *Papers* 6: 120)

Within the multiple relation theory, what previously was characterized as a “relating relation” became a “subordinate relation”, which, whilst distinct in being an abstract universal as opposed to a concrete particular, was nonetheless simply another term of the judging relation on a logical and ontological par with the other terms of the relation. This was also true of predicates, which Russell likewise conceived of as abstract universals. The unity formerly provided by the relating relation corresponding to the main verb was now provided by the judging relation itself.

In the lead-up to the composition and ultimate demise of the *Theory of Knowledge* manuscript, Russell continued to hone this multiple relation theory in response to emergent problems. Many of these problems, along with Russell’s attempts to address them, will be discussed in more detail below. In the interest of rendering my explication of these developments more readily accessible, however, it will be helpful at the outset briefly to explain three key theoretical concepts.

The first of these concepts is that of logical form. Logical forms make a conspicuous appearance within the version of the multiple relation theory developed and defended in *Theory of Knowledge*. According to this instantiation of the theory, making a judgment such as “that Charles I died in his bed” involves being acquainted with pure logical forms (*TK*, in *Papers* 7: 98) resulting from “a process of generalization which has been carried to its utmost limit” (7: 97). In other words, logical forms are what is intuitively left over once we abstract all particularity from any particular complex. Logical knowledge itself then involves acquaintance with logical objects (though Russell nevertheless insists that these objects are not “entities” [*ibid.*]), which are the pure, logical forms of facts in which more ordinary objects, properties, and relations are concatenated. Such forms are symbolized by replacing any singular or general terms standing for the constituents of a complex (within a propositional expression such as “Socrates taught Plato”) by variables. However, since “it would be convenient to take as the form something which is not a mere incomplete symbol” (p. 114), these real variables are then bound by existential quantifiers. The logical form is thus equivalent to “the fact that there are entities that make up complexes having the form in question” (*ibid.*). In the case of “Socrates taught Plato”, the result of such replacement and subsequent binding is a name for the pure form of dual

complexes, i.e., “ $(\exists R)(\exists x)(\exists y)(xRy)$ ”, expressed colloquially as “something is somehow related to something”. As we shall see in more detail below, Russell gave pride of place to logical forms in his 1913 theory of judgment, in an effort to provide the requisite unity and ordering to propositional contents which he thought could not plausibly be achieved by appealing (as he had in the context of the 1912 *Problems of Philosophy* incarnation of the theory) to the judging relation.

The second key theoretical concept to understand before moving forward is that of a “neutral fact”. The concept of a neutral fact figures prominently within the version of the multiple relation theory explored in “Props”. According to Russell, when two objects either are or are not related by a particular relating relation, there is in any case some relation which relates the objects. So take the complex “ a is to the left of b ”. Now either a is to the left of b or it is not. But in either case, *some* relation must exist between a , left, and b . Call the complex in which we know they must be related, even if we do not know for sure whether it is positive or negative, the “neutral fact”. According to the version of the multiple relation theory explored in “Props”, such a neutral fact will be a constituent of either the positive fact (a is to the left of b) or the negative fact (a is not to the left of b), whichever of these, in fact, exists. Though judgment (in this case psychologically) *asserts* either a positive or a negative fact, it *contains* or *involves* only the neutral fact, and so is not committed to the existence of either the positive or the negative fact. Hence it cannot be committed to the existence of a “false fact”.

The final important concept to explicate before moving forward is that of “bipolarity”. “Bipolarity” refers to a theoretically desirable feature of truth bearers (whether they be judgments, propositions, or sentences). Specifically, this feature is that of admitting the logical possibility of falsehood in addition to the logical possibility of truth. In other words, a truth-bearer is bipolar if it can be either true or false. Though the concept of bipolarity is most often associated with Wittgenstein’s “picture” theory of propositions as developed in the *Tractatus*, in fact it was an important concern of Russell’s prior to his philosophical interaction with Wittgenstein, and in the lead-up to the 1913 multiple relation theory. In his *Problems of Philosophy*, for instance, Russell outlines conditions which he thinks any adequate theory of truth must, intuitively, fulfill (*PP*₂, pp. 120–1). One condition is that “Our theory of truth must be such as to admit of its opposite, falsehood.” In the context of his earlier, dual relation theory of propositional attitudes, as we have seen, Russell had en-

countered something called the “problem of false propositions”. Part of the motivation he offers for making the transition from a dual to a multiple relation theory is that the later can intuitively account for the existence of false truth-bearers while the former cannot. One of the key advantages of the multiple relation theory, then, in Russell’s eyes, was its facilitating the characterization of truth-bearers, in this case judgments, as being bipolar, i.e., as capable of being either true or false.

II. THE STANDARD READING AND ITS DEMISE

The present controversy, amongst leading contributors to the literature concerning Wittgenstein’s critique of this “multiple relation” theory offered by Russell, is best understood against the background of the reading of that critique offered by Griffin and Sommerville. According to the so-called “standard reading”, Wittgenstein’s critique revolves around what is called the “direction problem”, and more specifically the “wide”, in contrast to the “narrow”, version of that problem. Any reader of the *Problems of Philosophy* will be familiar with the “narrow” version of the direction problem as that concerning the need to distinguish adequately between Othello’s belief that “Cassio loves Desdemona” from his belief that “Desdemona loves Cassio” (*PP*₂, p. 124). The charge is then that Russell’s theory lacks the resources to distinguish between judgments containing relations which are, in Russell’s parlance, permutative (that is, judgments in the context of which changing the order of the *relata* yields both a significant judgment, but also a change of meaning). The “wide direction problem”, by contrast, involves the failure of Russell’s theory to exclude judgments in which a constituent corresponding to a substantive (e.g., “penholder”) occupies the position where a verb corresponding to (e.g.) a relation should go (contrast “the book is on the table” with “the book penholders the table”).

While many expositors (myself included) have found Griffin and Sommerville’s reading to be convincing in broad outline, it has recently come to founder on its interpretation of the role played by a specific element therein, with the consequence being the emergence of a rash of novel and competing interpretations in the literature. More specifically, Stevens has shown Griffin and Sommerville’s interpretation of the following objection in Wittgenstein’s June letter (received by Russell a week after he sets aside the manuscript for good on 8 June) to be highly problematical:

I can now express my objection to your theory of judgment exactly: I believe 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* . *v* . $\sim aRb$ ” must follow directly *without the use of any other premiss*. This condition is not fulfilled by your theory. (Quoted in *Papers* 7: xxvii¹¹)

According to Griffin and Sommerville, the problem alluded to here by Wittgenstein concerns Russell’s attempt to block the wide version of the direction problem by introducing a “significance constraint” on judgments, which (for the exemplary case of dyadic, first-order judgments) they identify as being the following dyadic analogue of *I3.3 of *Principia Mathematica*:

$$*I3.3a \quad aRb \vee \sim aRb \rightarrow . (xRy \vee \sim xRy) \leftrightarrow [(x=a \ \& \ y=b) \vee (x \neq a \ \& \ y=b) \vee (x=a \ \& \ y \neq b) \vee (x \neq a \ \& \ y=b)]$$

According to the standard reading, this significance constraint on judgments is the “premiss” alluded to in Wittgenstein’s mid-June letter to Russell. The thought is that Russell had hoped to defuse the wide direction problem by introducing a constraint on the admissible constituents of judgments, such that if a judgment were significant (that is, if either it or its negation were true), then its constituents would be of the right types. The claim, then, is that Wittgenstein will not allow introduction of this significance constraint on judgments, since to do so would create an incompatibility between the multiple relation theory and the theory of types. In a word, the problem is that to allow such stipulations “would require further judgments. We are trying to analyze what is supposed to be the simplest kind of elementary judgment. But to do so would seem to involve us in yet further judgments.”¹² But according to Stevens this objection misconstrues the true nature of the relationship between the multiple relation theory and ramified type theory. Specifically, Stevens convincingly argues that

the type part of the ramified hierarchy has no significant connection with the multiple-relation theory of judgment (which was shown to be responsible purely

¹¹ The full letter is in Wittgenstein, *Letters to Russell, Keynes, and Moore*, ed. G. H. von Wright *et al.* (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1974), p. 23; *Wittgenstein in Cambridge: Letters and Documents 1911–1951*, ed. Brian McGuinness (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), p. 40.

¹² Griffin, “Wittgenstein’s Criticism of Russell’s Theory of Judgment”, p. 144.

for the order part of the hierarchy). The kinds of type distinctions that Wittgenstein suggests are called for in order to prohibit nonsensical pseudo-judgments such as Othello's belief that Love desdemonas Cassio, do not require the multiple-relation theory for their generation.¹³

Thus, as opposed to seeing Wittgenstein's critique as "being aimed at a very specific element of the formal system of *Principia*",¹⁴ it should instead be understood, according to Stevens, as targeting "the failure of the theory to account for the division of propositional content into parts which will reflect and preserve its unity and hence debar nonsensical pseudo-judgments" (*ibid.*). More specifically, on this viewpoint the critique concerns the wide version of the direction problem which emerges as a direct consequence of Russell's characterizing the subordinate verb of the judgment complex as a mere term as opposed to a relating relation.¹⁵ Stevens therefore sees Wittgenstein's critique (as do I) as involving two interrelated problems: a unity problem, and a direction problem. Once Russell gave up the idea that propositions are structured unities, and so in effect divided propositional content into parts, he was left without any ability to explain how those parts can hold together in a way which mirrors propositional structure. In his earlier theory, the relating relation (e.g., "loves") did the work of unifying and ordering the constituents (e.g., Desdemona, Cassio) of the proposition, but in the new theory the subordinate relation does not relate and so it cannot do this work. This makes it hard to see why Othello cannot judge that Desdemona Cassio's Iago, since, though Cassio is not a relating relation corresponding to a verb, on Russell's new theory, neither is "loves".

Though Stevens' reading seems to me correct as far as it goes, it is nevertheless characterized by two basic and interrelated shortcomings. The first is that no specific insight is provided into the "premiss" alluded to in the June letter. Why does Wittgenstein insist that Russell's account problematically relies upon a supplemental premiss, if the objection focuses merely on the altered status of the subordinate relation? The second is that Stevens fails to account for the unifying role that logical form was supposed to play, in lieu of the subordinate verb and the judging

¹³ Stevens, "Re-Examining Russell's Paralysis", p. 23.

¹⁴ Stevens, "From Russell's Paradox to the Theory of Judgment", p. 55.

¹⁵ Stevens, *The Russellian Origins of Analytical Philosophy: Bertrand Russell and the Unity of the Proposition* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 103.

relation. As we shall see, the problem, ultimately, is not simply that in playing the role of term as opposed to relating relation, the subordinate verb cannot debar the formation of nonsensical pseudo-judgments. This problem was supposedly resolved by Russell via the incorporation of logical forms into judgments. The deeper objection developed by Wittgenstein rather targets the fact that, in transferring this unifying function from the subordinate verb to the judging relation, and then ultimately to the logical form of judgments, Russell is finally forced illicitly to introduce a significance constraint on judgments in order, amongst other things, to block the substitution of a substantive, such as "penholder", in the position where (e.g.) a prepositional verb denoting a relation (e.g. "is on") should go.

From the perspective of a recent reading of the critique offered by Hanks (n.1 above), Stevens is correct to regard the Griffin/Sommerville reading as flawed in pointing to an apparent incompatibility between the multiple relation theory and the theory of types. But it is likewise a mistake, according to Hanks, to characterize the criticisms which so devastated Russell as being motivated by either version of the direction problem. Hanks' claim is that if Wittgenstein's objection concerned the introduction of an additional premiss invoked to place type restrictions on the constituents of judgments, Russell would have had an obvious strategy to evade the objection, repair the multiple relation theory, and so proceed with the manuscript. Specifically, he could have appealed to the judging relation itself to exclude nonsensical combinations of judgment constituents. According to Hanks, "The ease and obviousness of this reply casts doubt on the standard reading of the objection—it is inconceivable that Russell would not have thought of it" (p. 130). If Hanks is right, then, it cannot be correct to claim, as I will do below (sec. III), that Wittgenstein's objection concerned the introduction of supplemental premisses in an effort to impose order and type restrictions and so exclude nonsensical judgments, since if this were Wittgenstein's objection, Russell could have easily evaded it and so avoided subsequent paralysis. Hanks thus sees Wittgenstein's criticism as focussing on the unity of the proposition, and more specifically on the problem that whatever is judged to be true or false must be the sort of thing which is capable of being true or false; but a mere collection of terms, in contrast to a unified propositional complex, is precisely not the sort of thing which is capable of being either true or false.

Even more recently, Christopher Pincock has also suggested¹⁶ that it is a mistake to think of Wittgenstein's critique as concerning the wide version of the direction problem since, like Hanks, he thinks that Russell could easily have evaded it by appealing to the judgment complex to exclude illicit substitutions. Tackling the narrow version of the direction problem is then a simple matter of extending this approach via the sort of "position in a complex" analysis described below (p. 153). Pincock nevertheless rejects Hanks' focus on the unity problem, on the grounds that one of the many merits of Russell's last (and best), 1913 version of the multiple relation theory is that it characterizes truth and falsity as belonging to judgments themselves, rather than to their content clauses. Thus the fact that the contents judged do not themselves form a unified propositional complex capable of being true or false poses no problem for the multiple relation theory, since the theory does not require the content clauses of judgments to be truth-apt; only judgments themselves need be truth-apt (p. 123).

Pincock thus claims that Russell's 1913 theory itself contains the resources to overcome the standard reading and all the alternative criticisms proffered in the literature, including that of Hanks.¹⁷ He nevertheless sees Russell's theory as foundering on what he calls the "correspondence problem" in contrast to the "proposition problem". The "proposition problem" is an umbrella term used by Pincock to refer to the various purported problems for Russell's theory surrounding the unity, specificity, and well-formedness of judgments (e.g., the wide and narrow versions of the direction problem). The correspondence problem, by contrast, focuses on difficulties inherent in Russell's characterization of the truth conditions of judgments, in terms of a defined relation between those judgments and associated complexes. Specifically, the problem has to do with Russell's attempt to disambiguate the relevant associated complexes by means of specifying "position in a complex" relations. If Russell is to define correspondence successfully, his theory

¹⁶ "Russell's Last (and Best) Multiple Relation Theory of Judgment", *Mind* 117 (Jan. 2008): 107–40 (at 119).

¹⁷ Additional critical consideration of Russell's multiple relation theory can be found in Candlish; Gregory Landini, "A New Interpretation of Russell's Multiple-Relation Theory of Judgment", *History and Philosophy of Logic* 21 (1991): 37–69; and Alexander Miller, "Russell, Multiple Relations, and the Correspondence Theory of Truth", *The Monist* 89 (2006): 85–101.

must clearly disambiguate between distinct associated complexes in the case of permutative judgments. For instance, Russell's theory of correspondence must be capable of disambiguating between the associated complexes that "*a* is before *b*" and "*b* is before *a*". He claims to achieve this via a somewhat involved "position in a complex" analysis, according to which what we mean when we say "*a* is before *b*" is that "there is an associated complex γ in which *a* precedes and *b* succeeds". By contrast, what we mean when we say that "*b* is before *a*" is that "there is an associated complex γ in which *b* precedes and *a* succeeds".

According to Pincock, although this "position in a complex" analysis does disambiguate between the relevant associated complexes, it only does so in a way which reintroduces false propositions as independently (and potentially) existent complexes (p. 127). Because the ultimate constituents of "there is an associated complex γ in which *a* precedes and *b* succeeds" are identical to the ultimate constituents of "there is an associated complex γ in which *b* precedes and *a* succeeds", these two distinct associated complexes cannot be distinguished in virtue of their ultimate constituents alone. But then in the absence of supplemental disambiguation, Russell's definition of correspondence will be unable to make the all-important distinction between the associated complexes "*a* precedes *b*" and "*b* precedes *a*", and so between the truth-conditions of the relevant judgment complexes. One natural suggestion is to appeal to the atomic constituents of "there is an associated complex γ in which *a* precedes and *b* succeeds", namely "*A* is earlier in γ " and "*B* is later in γ ", in an effort to disambiguate it clearly from "there is an associated complex γ in which *b* precedes and *a* succeeds", and its completely different atomic constituents, "*B* is earlier in γ " and "*A* is later in γ ". From Russell's point of view, a notable advantage of this approach is that these atomic constituents are non-permutative, and thus invulnerable to the narrow version of the direction problem. More specifically, these complexes are non-permutative since their constituents are "heterogeneous" with respect to one another, in the sense that the substitution of *A* for γ (and vice versa) fails to yield a logically possible complex (*Papers* 7: 123). As Russell eventually recognizes in the work (7: 154), however, this analysis requires us to suppose it possible for judgments to contain false propositional unities. This is because, on the analysis in question, judging falsely that "there is an associated complex γ in which *b* precedes and *a* succeeds" commits us to the existence of the atomic constituent—a unified propositional complex—that, e.g., "*B* is earlier in γ ". But in at

least one case in which the judgment is false, *B* is not earlier in γ and thus cannot figure in the judgment as a unified propositional complex. For Pincock, then, it is “this objection, raised only 21 pages before the manuscript ends”, which “is the decisive one” (p. 128).

III. ON “PROPS” AND THE JUNE LETTER

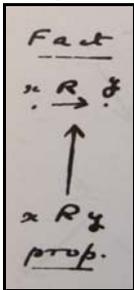
A common failing amongst each of these alternative interpretations of Wittgenstein’s criticisms is that, in contrast to the standard Griffin/Sommerville reading, none pay particularly close attention to, and nor do they convincingly explain, the precise wording of Wittgenstein’s objection as expressed in the June letter. Although Carey, in *Russell and Wittgenstein on the Nature of Judgement*, also tends to downplay the significance of the objection, and to skirt over its details somewhat, she nevertheless provocatively suggests that the key to understanding this specific objection lies in its reference to a relatively obscure alternative theory of Russell’s which can be found developed in a set of working notes and diagrams under the title “Props”, composed on or shortly after 26 May 1913. The “premiss” alluded to in the June letter is then understood to reference the claim that a so-called “neutral fact” (which, according to this alternative theory, undergirds the sense of a proposition) exists (pp. 101, 112). Though it drives a crucial final nail in the coffin of the text, according to Carey, by the time Russell receives Wittgenstein’s correspondence, he has already come to appreciate that his various attempts to analyse belief (one of which involved the incorporation of a “neutral fact” as the content of a judgment) are incapable of accommodating bipolarity. Bipolarity could be accommodated *if*, following Wittgenstein, one were willing to eliminate belief states and so accept an extensionalist analysis of propositional attitude ascriptions, but Russell, as is evident from the marginalia on his copy of “Notes on Logic”, as well as his later book *Our Knowledge of the External World*, is unwilling to do this (Carey, pp. 108–9). Careful analysis of the notes and diagrams contained in “Props”, moreover, reveals Russell hard at work in attempting to accommodate bipolarity in and through incorporation of a neutral fact as the content of a judgment, as well as in considering the more austere, extensionalist approach of eliminating all reference to belief or subjectivity. Russell then arrives at the following dilemma: bipolarity can be accommodated, but only by accepting extensionalism. Since he is unwilling to accept Wittgenstein’s austere extensionalism, he is left with no

ready analysis of the form of belief that will accommodate bipolarity.

Further inspection of "Props", however, reveals that Carey is incorrect to regard Russell as here considering a purely extensionalist alternative to his multiple relation theory of judgment, one involving the invocation of neutral facts. Russell should instead be seen as considering a multiple relation theory of judgment in which neutral facts, in lieu of logical forms, are prominent. On this point, Carey rests much of her case on interpretations of the diagrams in "Props". These interpretations, upon closer inspection of the textual environment, are clearly at odds with Russell's intentions. For instance, of the diagram on the first page of "Props" (fig. 1, *Papers* 7: 194) she writes that

In his illustration of understanding ... a proposition of the form xRy points directly to a fact relating x and y . Note that the proposition contains as a term what occurs in the fact as a relation between terms, indicated by an arrow. ... Russell's diagram presents understanding in a way strikingly at odds with his view in the *Theory of Knowledge*. There, however simple it is—abstract or logically neutral—compared to other cognitive acts, the mental relation *understanding* is unequivocally a multiple relation holding between a subject and the various objects comprising her understanding. Here *understanding* is depicted as a dual relation. (P. 103)

Figure 1



In other words, according to Carey the proposal on offer replaces the multiple relation theory of understanding with a dual relation theory in the context of which a proposition, now unfettered by the requirement of being embedded within a psychological attitude, instead confronts reality in the manner of a bipolar, Tractarian proposition.

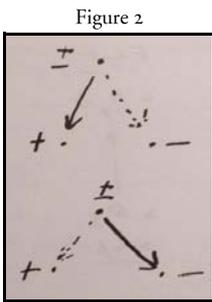
Examination of the notes themselves, however, reveals this to be a highly suspect interpretation. Russell goes on, for instance, to write that:

Judgment involves the *neutral* fact, not the positive or negative fact. The neutral fact has a relation to a positive fact, or to a negative fact. Judgment asserts *one* of these. It will still be a multiple relation, but its terms will not be the same as in my old theory. The neutral fact replaces the *form*. (*Papers* 7: 197)

Here, clearly, Russell characterizes the proposal on offer as a multiple relation theory in which the neutral fact replaces the form, not a dual

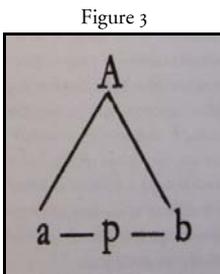
relation theory in which a proposition can be characterized purely extensionally, as a mind-independent, bipolar unity. Interestingly, on page 98 of her book, Carey misquotes the passage above from “Props” by omitting the term “multiple”, and replacing it by the term “neutral”. Although the misquotation is fortuitous to her reading, it is inaccurate to the text itself.

So what, then, is depicted in the aforementioned diagram? Upon further reflection, we see that Russell is clearly attempting to characterize the relation, not between a proposition and the fact to which it corresponds, but rather between the neutral fact, *as it occurs in the understood proposition*, and the positive fact, *as it occurs in the world*. Hence he goes on to refine this basic picture in a diagram on the next page (fig. 2, *Papers* 7: 196) which depicts the nature of the relation first between the neutral



fact and the positive fact, and then between the neutral fact and the negative fact. His idea here is that, by the law of excluded middle, either the positive or the negative fact must obtain. Thus in either case there will exist a neutral fact in which the constituents of the judgment are arranged in either one way or the other (i.e., corresponding either to the positive or the negative fact). Whether or not the positive fact exists to provide content for a judgment, the neutral fact in any case will.

Carey, however, misinterprets the second diagram as providing evidence that Russell is here leaning towards a thoroughly extensionalist approach. In so doing, she points to an observed similarity between the diagram and a distinct diagram of Wittgenstein’s



(fig. 3), from “Notes on Logic”, in which is depicted the *ab*-function for the most basic case of “*p*”. Carey writes:

The depiction of judging shown in figure (2)¹⁸ is also strikingly different from his [Russell’s] diagrams of judgment in the *Theory of Knowledge*. In the new sketch he abstracts entirely from the content of belief

¹⁸ Revised from “(6)” for continuity’s sake in this paper.

and shows what is essential to judging to be its bipolarity, indicated at the top of the sketch by the combined $+/-$ signs. The sketch depicts judging as potentially corresponding to either a negative or a positive fact; that is, a broken line, common to the two cases, indicates that it is possible for a judgement to possess the opposite polarity and mean the opposite kind of fact. Wittgenstein surely influences Russell's diagram.... Wittgenstein appears intent on persuading Russell to adopt an extensionalist account of proposition's meaning. (Pp. 103–4)

First of all, it is odd that Carey cites (p. 104) the supposed resemblance between Russell's diagram in "Props" (fig. 2) and Wittgenstein's diagram in the "Notes" (fig. 3), as evidence of Wittgenstein more or less successfully applying pressure, upon Russell, to accede to extensionalism. This is because in Wittgenstein's diagram—and as is evident from the textual context—far from being eliminated, the subject (represented by the letter "A") figures prominently. Wittgenstein, moreover, offers the diagram as a representation, in *ab*-notation, of the proposition "A believes that P".¹⁹ This suggests, perhaps, either that Wittgenstein had hoped to incorporate intensional operators into his account of linguistic meaning, or that, if he planned to eliminate them, he was not at this stage clear about how.

In any case, the combined \pm sign at the top of the second sketch (fig. 2) represents, not the essential bipolarity of propositions, but rather the neutrality of the neutral fact which in turn bears a relation to the positive or negative fact (whichever of these, that is, which exists). Again, the second diagram is an expansion on and refinement of the first diagram, which purports to represent the relation between the neutral fact as it occurs within an understood proposition, with the positive fact as it occurs in the world. So, then, what after all is the nature of this relation? Russell characterizes it as follows: in the understanding, the neutral fact "provides meaning for *possibility*" (*Papers* 7: 195). That is, it is the meaning of what is understood, though neither yet affirmed nor denied, in an act of understanding. It provides the content for a subsequent judgment, either affirmative or negative. Moreover, according to Russell, the neutral fact then does double duty in the world as "a constituent of the positive or negative fact" (*ibid.*), whichever of these exists.

In light of the problems with Carey's reading which emerge upon closer inspection of the relevant textual evidence, I want to suggest an

¹⁹ Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, p. 106.

alternative reading of the nature of the relation between the mid-June letter and the “Props” working notes. Specifically, I suggest that the allusion to a supplemental “premiss” therein refers not to the asserted existence of neutral facts as discussed in “Props”, but rather to a significance constraint on judgments of more or less the sort identified by Griffin²⁰ and Sommerville. On this reconstruction, the objection itself would then concern an incompatibility, not between the multiple relation theory and the theory of types, but rather of Russell’s invocation of a supplemental significance constraint on judgments with certain basic intuitions about logical inference. Wittgenstein’s point is thus that Russell’s theory cannot account for the fact that $aRb \cdot v \cdot \sim aRb$ follows logically from the judgment that aRb , and so that aRb is significant, without the invocation of an additional premiss, i.e., the significance constraint.

On Russell’s theory, that is, the significance constraint is required in order to ensure that each of a judgment’s constituents is in the correct position and of the right type. Failure to make these specifications will leave Russell’s theory vulnerable to the narrow version of the direction problem—that, for instance, distinct judgments may have both their constituents and logical form in common, in spite of the fact that their constituents are differently ordered (e.g., Toronto is to the north of Buffalo, Buffalo is to the north of Toronto). Appeal to logical form alone, then, will not afford any means of distinguishing between these two distinct judgments. Given the unrestricted character of the variables occurring within the logical form, moreover, the form itself does not in any way restrict the types of the judgment’s constituents, and thus the incorporation of form will, taken on its own, fail to block the wide version of the direction problem as well. That is, if the variables are unrestricted, why can we not plug a substantive like “penholder” into the position where a verb indicating a relating relation should be? Each version of the direction problem will thus linger even after the incorporation of logical form, and they thus together indicated to Russell the need to incorporate a supplemental significance constraint on judgments, in order to ensure both the proper ordering of, and relevant type restrictions upon, its constituents.

According to Wittgenstein, however, the inference from aRb to $aRb \cdot v \cdot \sim aRb$ should *not* require any supplemental premisses whatsoever, let

²⁰ “Russell’s Multiple Relation Theory of Judgment”, p. 144.

alone a significance constraint on judgments. If aRb is well formed, which surely at least some of the complexes which result from the arbitrary substitution of terms into each of the three positions within its logical form are, it should follow *directly* from the judgment that aRb , without having to resort to any additional premisses of any kind, that $aRb \cdot v \cdot \sim aRb$. "The book is on the table", for example, classically implies "The book is on the table or it is not on the table" (or any tautology, for that matter) independently and regardless of the presence or absence of any supplemental premisses. But it is a condition upon any adequate theory of judgment that it entail that this implication follows,²¹ and as Wittgenstein tersely puts the point: this condition is *not* fulfilled by Russell's theory.

Note that how Russell invokes these forms in the manuscript as pre-suppositions of sense fits in quite nicely with the way in which, on my reading, Wittgenstein's objection is ultimately crystallized in the June letter. For instance, in Part II, Chapter I, Russell writes:

What is the proof that we must understand the "form" before we can understand the proposition? I held formerly that the objects alone sufficed, and that the "sense" of the relation of understanding would put them in the right order; this, however, no longer seems to me to be the case.... The process of "uniting" which we *can* effect in thought is the process of bringing them into relation with the general form of dual complexes. The form being "something and something have a certain relation", our understanding of the proposition might be expressed in the words, "something, namely *A*, and something, namely *B*, have a certain relation, namely similarity". (Papers 7: 116)

As Griffin²² has noted, that $aRb \cdot v \cdot \sim aRb$ follows from a judgment imposes a significance constraint on judgments. In other words, in order for $aRb \cdot v \cdot \sim aRb$ to follow from a judgment that aRb , aRb must be a well-formed proposition with sense. Another way of looking at this is to say that $aRb \cdot v \cdot \sim aRb$'s following from the judgment that aRb , is a sufficient condition for aRb 's having sense. Russell's claim in the above quotation is that it is also a necessary condition of sense that the constituents of the judgment aRb be correctly ordered by being brought into relation to the relevant logical form. And this is precisely what the sig-

²¹ After all, the implication itself is a classical tautology and so must follow from any well-formed proposition or body of propositions, including any theory of judgment.

²² "Wittgenstein's Criticism of Russell's Theory of Judgment", p. 144.

nificance constraint, the premiss alluded to in Wittgenstein's letter, is supposed to do.

Further support for this interpretation can be found in the following gloss on the usefulness and purport of *13.3, which Russell provides in *Principia Mathematica*:

The following proposition is useful in the theory of types. Its purpose is to show that, if a is any argument for which " ϕa " is significant, i.e., for which we have $\phi a \vee \sim \phi a$, then " ϕx " is significant when, and only when, x is either identical with a or not identical with a . It follows (as will be proved in *20.81) that, if " ϕa " and " ψa " are both significant, the class of values of x for which " ϕx " is significant is the same as the class of those for which " ψx " is significant, i.e. two types which have a common member are identical. (PM I: 171–2)

Here Russell explicitly identifies *13.3 as embodying a significance constraint upon the allowable arguments to a monadic, first-order, function. It works to delimit the type of objects which, when taken as arguments to such a function, will yield a value which implies the disjunction of itself with its own negation (i.e., yields a significant proposition capable of being either true or false). *13.3a above, then, is simply the dyadic analogue of *13.3, and was implicitly referenced by Russell when he spoke of "bringing them [the various constituents] into relation with the general form of dual complexes" in *Theory of Knowledge* (7: 116). By bringing the various judgment constituents into relation with the logical form of dual complexes, moreover, Russell, as we saw, means to be providing a solution to the direction problem.

Now, if it was this attack on logical forms which was the subject of the June letter, and in which Wittgenstein's earlier, less articulate objection of the 26th was subsequently crystallized, then perhaps the "Props" working notes represent, not the subject of Wittgenstein's critique, but an attempt to salvage the theory and manuscript whilst eliminating the invocation of logical forms therein. Hence Russell says in the proposal offered in "Props": "The neutral fact replaces the *form*" (*Papers* 7: 197). This would be consistent with the fact that, when Wittgenstein offers his "inarticulate" objection to Russell during a tense conversation on 26 May (reported to Ottoline Morrell, 27 May, *SLBR* 1: 446), it is offered in response to a crucial portion of the manuscript, which, as Carey herself suggests, corresponds to Chapter I of Part II (on "Understanding a Proposition") and in which the notion and role of logical form are

explicitly developed and defended. Given that Wittgenstein’s correspondence with Russell over the previous year reveals him to have tried various versions of a theory in which logical forms, not neutral facts, featured prominently, it would also be consistent with Russell’s record of Wittgenstein’s report, in the context of their tense conversation on 26 May, that he “had tried my view and knew it wouldn’t work” (*ibid.*). We find the explicit introduction of logical forms, for instance—looking very much like the existentially quantified schema later invoked by Russell in the relevant portion of the *Theory of Knowledge* manuscript (the “crucial part” alluded to in the letter of 27 May)—being invoked by Wittgenstein in the context of a letter addressed to Russell and dated January 1913,²³ in an effort to copulate complexes and so provide the requisite propositional unity.

As noted by Elizabeth R. Eames, the first page of “Props” appears “on the verso of a rejected folio 197 of the book manuscript” (*Papers* 7: 195, 197). The conjecture is that “the rejected folio 197 and ‘Props’ both belong to the third week of May.” It seems possible, however, to date the rejected folio more precisely to 24 May, since on 23 May Russell completed Part I of the book, up to folio 190 of the manuscript,^{24,25} and on

²³ *Letters to Russell, Keynes, and Moore*, pp. 19–20; *Wittgenstein in Cambridge*, p. 38. Despite the evident similarity, however, there exist crucial differences between the proposal developed in Wittgenstein’s January 1913 letter and that developed by Russell in Chapter I of Part II of *Theory of Knowledge* (the “crucial part” alluded to in the 27 May letter to Morrell). Notably, the proposal developed in the January 1913 letter contains a key theoretical revision or correction to Wittgenstein’s theory, a correction that was designed to circumvent the wide form of the direction problem, and which involved incorporating predicates and relations as unsaturated parts of logical forms, where the latter are construed as copulating or unifying atomic complexes. Russell would have rejected the theoretical correction proposed by Wittgenstein in the January letter, because it involved denying the independent reality of relations, a view which Russell dismissed out of hand from roughly 1898 onwards. I maintain that, given the lack of philosophical palatability, to Russell, of this theoretical revision, when he began in May 1913 to work out the details of a similar approach to logical form in the context of his theory of judgment, he instead proposed to resolve the direction problems by invoking a significance constraint on judgments. Moreover, it is this significance constraint on judgments which is both the “not very serious” correction alluded to by Russell in a 20 May letter to Morrell (Russell to Morrell, #782), and also the “premiss” alluded to in Wittgenstein’s June 1913 letter to Russell. These are claims I plan on developing and defending in much greater detail in a future paper.

²⁴ Russell to Morrell, #784. Unpublished letter, Russell Archives, McMaster U.

²⁵ Russell to Morrell, #784a, *Papers* 7: xxv.

the 24th reports that he “embarked on judgment”,²⁶ that is, on Part II (“Atomic Propositional Thought”) of the manuscript. Since the rejected leaf contains a discussion of Meinong which was replaced by what is published in *Papers* 7 as pages 107: 37–108: 12 (see 7: 195), and given that folio 197 places the leaf within the ten leaves per day which Russell endeavoured to write (7: xxiv), it is safe to assume that the rejected leaf belongs amongst materials written on the day following the completion of Part I—that is, on 24 May. Upon showing the draft of Part II, Chapter 1, to Wittgenstein on 26 May, then, Russell may very well have composed “Props” shortly afterwards on the back of this rejected leaf, as an attempt to accommodate Wittgenstein’s objection to his invocation of forms with an alternative proposal that invokes a neutral fact to preserve order and type. The notes are unlikely to have originated prior to the 26th, since on the 24th and 25th Russell was furiously composing portions of the manuscript which develop a theory of judgment that, as we have seen, incorporates logical forms, not neutral complexes. Moreover, it is this “crucial part of what I have been writing” (*SLBR* 1: 446), and not “Props”, which Russell showed Wittgenstein on 26 May.

But could not “Props” nevertheless be the target of the objection in the June letter? After all, the correspondence shows that Wittgenstein and Russell met on several occasions between 26 May and 13 June; might not Russell have shown “Props” to Wittgenstein at one of these meetings, leading to Wittgenstein’s subsequent critique? We can be confident that this was not the case, since when Wittgenstein formulates his objection to Russell’s theory in the June letter, he states that he can now express that objection “exactly”. This is a clear reference to his “inarticulate” expression of the objection, as reported by Russell (*SLBR* 1: 446), during the tense confrontation on 26 May. This suggests that the objection offered in the letter concerns the “crucial part” of the manuscript which Russell showed Wittgenstein on the 26th, namely, the early portions of Part II where Russell develops a theory of judgment in which logical forms, not neutral facts, figure prominently. Since we can with confidence claim that “Props” was composed on or shortly after the 26th, and given that Russell was not in the habit of recycling manuscript leaves long after their rejection (Carey, p. 96), it seems most plausible that these notes represent an attempt to circumvent Wittgenstein’s criticisms

²⁶ Russell to Morrell, #785, *Papers* 7: xxv.

through the provision of an alternative, multiple relation theory of judgment, one invoking neutral facts in lieu of logical forms in an effort to ensure sense.

IV. ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATIONS

It remains only to examine how my interpretation stands relative to the two other recent alternative proposals considered earlier. We can surmise that both Hanks and Pincock would reject my suggestion that the "premiss" alluded to in the June letter consists of a significance constraint on judgments, since, according to each, Russell's 1913 theory contained the resources required to circumvent the direction problem, absent appeal to any supplemental premisses. More specifically, they each thought that Russell could appeal to the judgment complex itself to make the required distinctions of type and position. Examination of the text, however, reveals that Russell did consider (and reject) a strategy of the very sort identified by Hanks and Pincock. Indeed, Russell uses the perceived implausibility of this strategy as a means of motivating his introduction of logical forms into the proper analysis of understanding. In a passage which I quoted partially above, Russell writes:

What is the proof that we must understand the "form" before we can understand the proposition? I held formerly that the objects alone sufficed, and that the "sense" of *the relation of understanding would put them in the right order; this, however, no longer seems to me to be the case*. Suppose we wish to understand "A and B are similar". It is essential that our thought should, as is said, "unite" or "synthesize" the two terms and the relation; but we cannot *actually* "unite" them, since either A and B are similar, in which case they are already united, or they are dissimilar, in which case no amount of thinking can force them to become united.

(My italics; *Papers* 7: 116)

Here Russell clearly considers and rejects any proposal in which the cognitive relation of understanding (or, presumably, judging) itself unites and correctly orders the constituents of judgments. His reasoning is that, if the cognitive relation itself united the various constituents of the judgment, then they would form a complex unity even in the case in which the judgment was false and hence there existed no such unity. In other words, the strategy of relying on the cognitive relation of judging (or understanding) to unite and order the constituents reproduces a version of the problem of false propositions which Russell took to undermine his

earlier, *Principles of Mathematics* theory of propositions. But since Russell clearly considered and rejected this approach prior to Wittgenstein's objection, Hanks cannot appeal to its subsequent availability as a reason to think that Wittgenstein's objection did not concern the introduction of an additional premiss to exclude nonsensical judgments.

Hanks makes much of the following quote from "Notes on Logic" which seems to support his reading of Wittgenstein's objection as concerning not types, but the unity of the proposition. Wittgenstein writes:

When we say A judges that etc., then we have to mention a whole proposition which A judges. It will not do either to mention only its constituents, or its constituents and form, but not in the proper order. This shows that a proposition itself must occur in the statement that it is judged. However, for instance, "not- p " may be explained, the question what is negated must have a meaning.

(*Notebooks*, p. 94)

Hanks sees Wittgenstein as here focussed, not on the types and positions of the judgment's constituents, but merely on the fact that, regardless of such considerations, whatever is judged must be a propositional unity, not a mere collection of terms. But note that, just as Russell does in the quotation above, Wittgenstein here clearly references the direction problem as being implicated in that very problem. In order to produce a unified propositional complex it will not do, he insists, "to mention only its constituents, or its constituents and form *but not in the proper order.*" An important part of his objection to Russell's theory here is thus its failure not only to produce a unified complex, but more specifically both to differentiate between two distinct, permutative complexes, as well as to exclude nonsensical pseudo-judgments. It is thus dubious to attempt, as Hanks does, to separate the unity problem from the direction problem. The problem of the unity of the proposition is a problem about unity, but it is also a problem about propositions. A unified complex is not a unique propositional complex unless its constituents are specifically ordered and of the right types. Though Wittgenstein does not use the word "types" specifically in this passage, an interest in them is clearly implied in his allusion to logical form, and is subsequently confirmed in his remark that "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.”²⁷ Here, specifically, the point is obviously that over and above failing to resolve the issue of correctly ordering the constituents of permutative judgments, Russell’s theory does not ensure that a sensible judgment cannot consist of three substantives only. A correct theory of judgment must exclude such judgments by guaranteeing that, in addition to being properly ordered, the various constituents are also of the right types. Wittgenstein thus has both versions of the direction problem in mind when he insists that Russell’s theory cannot exclude the nonsensical pseudo-judgment “this table penholders the book”, which is supposed to be seen as resulting from two problematical substitutions performed on the initial, perfectly intelligible judgment that “the book is on the table”, one each corresponding to the two distinct versions of the direction problem.

As for Pincock’s reading of the objection, finally, it is hard to see how the supposedly distinct and devastating “correspondence problem”, amounts to anything more than an especially involved version of the bundle of problems surrounding unity, specificity, and well-formedness, to which Pincock has assigned the umbrella term “proposition problem”. Putting the details of Russell’s “position in a complex” analysis aside for the moment, the basic difficulty motivating the analysis is that of disambiguating the complex “*a* precedes *b*” from “*b* precedes *a*”, i.e., the narrow direction problem. Russell surely frames this problem as one concerning his definition of truth in terms of correspondence with associated complexes, but notice that the analysis ultimately falters, according to Pincock, on the problematical commitment to the possibility of (false) atomic propositions figuring as self-unified constituents of judgments. In this somewhat unique and involved guise, then, the problem is that in the attempt to resolve the narrow direction problem for associated complexes, we end up reproducing the problem of false propositions. Obviously, any attempt to evade this particular version of the problem by abandoning a commitment to unified and therefore false propositions, will lead directly back to the narrow version of the direction problem. In other words, whether we call it a “correspondence problem” or a “proposition problem”, we are still stuck between the very same rock and hard

²⁷ Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, p. 103; cf. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. by D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities P. International, 1961), p. 65 (TLP 5.5422).

place. It may be that this particular configuration of the problem was, as is suggested by the late appearance in the manuscript noted by Pincock, the “last straw”, psychologically speaking, which brought an end to Russell’s “work fit”²⁸ on 6 June.²⁹ Indeed, we know that Russell’s resolve was already fragile by this time, since on 1 June he reports that “I have only superficially and by an act of will got over Wittgenstein’s attack”.³⁰ But none of this speaks to the claim that the correspondence problem is itself in any fundamental respect distinct from the direction/unity problems, which, as we have seen, were at the crux of that attack.

V. SUMMARY

In this paper I have attempted to focus on and explicate the precise meaning and specific role played by the objection contained in Wittgenstein’s “paralyzing” June letter to Russell, within a broader and more generally standard reading of his criticisms of Russell’s multiple relation theory of judgment. In addition to revising that reading so as more convincingly to account for the specific meaning of that objection in light of Stevens’ critique, I defended that reading against several new and “non-standard” readings within the recent literature, including those by Hanks and Pincock. In the interest of more carefully scrutinizing the objection and its relationship to working notes under the title “Props”, moreover, I probed an alternative interpretation of the June letter developed by Carey. In contrast to her claim that when Wittgenstein refers to a “premiss” therein he is making an implicit allusion to neutral facts, I insisted that Wittgenstein’s focus remained, as it had been during the tense encounter on 26 May 1913, on the manner in which Russell had attempted to employ logical forms to circumvent the direction problem and so ensure the sense of a judgment. Wittgenstein’s more specific objection to the inclusion of logical forms, finally, was that they illicitly required the introduction of a supplemental significance constraint on judgments, which basic intuitions about logical validity tell us should not be required in order to infer a tautology (e.g., $aRb \cdot v \cdot \sim aRb$) from any well-formed proposition (e.g., aRb).

²⁸ Russell to Morrell, #798. Unpublished letter, Russell Archives, McMaster U.

²⁹ Russell to Morrell, #799. *Ibid.*

³⁰ Russell to Morrell, #793. Griffin, “Wittgenstein’s Criticism of Russell’s Theory of Judgment”, p. 143.
