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The Theory of Descriptions

Ashwani Kumar Peetush

A Thesis

in

the Department

of

Philosophy

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University

August 1995

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ABSTRACT

The Theory of Descriptions

Ashwani Kumar Peetush

The purpose of this thesis is to argue that Stephen Neale's revision of Russell's Theory of Descriptions constitutes a genuine contribution with respect to semantic theory. In chapter one, Russell's theory is separated from his sense-datum framework. The theory is embedded in a larger structure of natural language quantification and extended to cover a range of nominal constructions. An important assumption in Neale's support of Russell's theory is that there is a viable division between semantic and pragmatic theory. In chapter two, an independent basis is provided for this assumption. Chapter three concludes that Neale's Gricean defence of the Theory of Descriptions, in consideration of a standard objection, is fruitful.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DSAP: Allwood, J. "On the Distinction between Semantics and Pragmatics "

P: Davis, S. "Pragmatics."

RDD: Donnellan, K. "Reference and Definite Descriptions "

ML: Martin, R. The Meaning of Language.

GPL: Neale, S. "Paul Grice and the Philosophy of Language "

D: Neale, S. Descriptions.

GFLF: Neale, S. "Grammatical Form, Logical Form and Incomplete Symbols "

RPO: Pelham J. "Russell on Propositions and Objects."

TDE: Quine, W.V.O. "Two Dogmas of Empiricism."

OD: Russell, B. "On Denoting."

PP: Russell, B. The Problems of Philosophy.

PM: Whitehead, A. N., B. Russell. Principia Mathematica.

Introduction

The crucial feature of a Russellian theory of descriptions, *qua* semantical enquiry, is that it classifies descriptions as belonging to the category of quantified noun phrases, rather than construing them as genuine referring expressions. According to this proposal, the truth conditions of a sentence *S* containing a definite description, <the *F* is *G*>, is given by (the brackets on the sides, '<', '>', indicate that it is *anything of the form* contained inside that is being mentioned, so, <the *F* is *G*> should be read as: any form of 'the *F* is *G*':

$$(1) (\exists x)((\forall y)(Fy \equiv x = y) \ \& \ Gx).$$

which is claimed to be the logical form of *S*. It is important to notice that (1) does not contain any term that corresponds to the grammatical subject of <the *F* is *G*>. Thus, it is suggested, that the logical form of *S* is distinct from its grammatical form; although having a grammatical subject, this sentence type lacks a "logical subject"; there is no object to which the definite description <the *F*> directly refers. As such, the description sentence *S* is argued to be similar to other quantified sentence constructions such as <every *F* is *G*>, <any *F* is *G*>, and <no *F* is *G*>. The key to understanding this analysis of descriptions is that the definite description <the *F*> is purported to be a quantifier phrase, that is, it combines with a predicate *G* to express a general, "object-independent," proposition about the relationship between two properties, *F*-ness and *G*-ness. This is in comparison to a proposition that is singular and about a specific individual. The logical form of a proposition expressed by a definite description sentence, as above, says that there is

exactly one thing that has F-ness and nothing that has F-ness lacks G-ness, <the F>, on further linguistic investigation, is claimed to be a non-referring expression

The aim of this thesis will be to show that Stephen Neale's contemporary version of Russell's Theory of Descriptions ('TD' hereafter) provides an insightful contribution to the semantics of natural language. This task will be accomplished in the following steps

In chapter one, it will be shown that TD may be dislodged from Russell's sense-datum framework, and the formal language of the *Principia Mathematica*. Traditional ideas such as "acquaintance" epistemology, and the descriptivist theory of proper names, will be argued to be inessential ingredients to the main insight of TD. Neale's linguistic data will provide evidence that TD may be extended well beyond the original constructions that Russell had intended (expressions of the form 'the so and so'). And importantly, it will become evident that TD may be embedded in a larger theory of natural language quantification.

An important aspect of Neale's revision is to defend TD against the standard "referentialist" objection (i.e., TD is not able to account for the referential usage of definite descriptions, thus an additional semantic account is needed). Neale's defence is grounded on a key assumption which he pays insufficient attention to: that a semantics-pragmatics distinction is viable. In chapter two, I provide an independent basis from which it may be argued that the aforementioned distinction is indeed viable, any theoretically manageable approach to linguistic competence requires it.

The third chapter provides an analysis of Neale's Gricean response to the referentialist. It is argued that the referential usage of definite descriptions is a

phenomenon that issues with the use of quantifier expressions more generally; this problem will have to be accounted for at the broader level of natural language quantification. Therefore, in so far as methodology is considered, i.e., having a general and economic theory, TD is claimed to be the best candidate. I examine these arguments in detail and conclude that Neale's position is correct. In addition, since descriptions may contain context-sensitive items, TD is "fitted" with a formal theory of indexicals; also, a Gricean semantic framework is analyzed, with particular respect to methodological concerns.

I. The Theory of Descriptions: Russellian Motifs and Neale's Revision

In this chapter, I establish a working framework from which to consider key issues in the analysis of descriptions; (1.1) I examine Russell's theory, and (1.2, 1.3) I give a detailed formulation of Stephen Neale's reconstruction of The Theory of Descriptions

1.1 Russell's Theory, Object-Dependence, and Neale's Primary Revision of TD

In this section, (i) I examine some of the origins of TD in Russell, I endorse, for the most part, Neale's interpretation of Russell's work between 1905 and 1919, (ii) I give a precise formulation of the distinction between object-dependence and -independence and (iii) examine Neale's primary revision of TD.

From the overall structure of his arguments in "On Denoting," it is apparent that Russell held a "realist" theory of meaning. This is a perspective from which every meaningful item of language is thought to be directly representative of something "real" in the world. Accordingly, it is claimed that the meaning of a given expression is the particular entity that it stands for. Thus, the meaning of a genuine referring expression is suggested to be the particular object it refers to, and the meaning of a sentence is believed to be a thought or proposition. This account is the predecessor to what one might now call an "extensionalist" theory of meaning. With this overarching attitude, where 'b' is a genuine referring expression (such as a proper name), Russell held the basic meaning

theory presented above, the thought or proposition expressed by an utterance of '<b is G>' is true just in case the individual referred to by 'b' is in the extension of G.

For Russell, as Neale correctly claims, questions about meaning cannot be separated from questions about understanding: to understand an expression is to know its meaning. According to this theory, since meaning is to be realized in terms of extension, to know the meaning of a phrase is to "know which" individual that phrase stands for. The concept of "knowing which" is defined as the relation of either (a) being directly *acquainted* with the individual in question, or (b) by thinking of the individual as a unique satisfier of such and such a *description*. This categorization of knowledge into two types, Russell says, is necessitated by "the distinction between what we have presentations of and what we reach by means of denoting phrases" (OD 41). The meaning of this remark will become clear as we proceed, as will the fact that (a) and (b) are two quite distinct forms of knowledge.

In (a), *knowledge by acquaintance*, the notion of acquaintance that Russell is relying on is the intuitive sense in which one can be said to be acquainted with, or aware of, oneself and one's immediate perceptual environment (D 16). To possess this kind of knowledge, it is necessary that one have epistemic contact (be it perceptual or otherwise) with the individual that this knowledge happens to be about, e.g., "In perception we have acquaintance [epistemic contact] with the objects of perception" (OD 41). Therefore, the thoughts or propositions expressed by acquaintance claims are singular; they are about a particular individual and *actually* "contain" that individual as a "constituent" (OD 56); although, as will be argued, objectual constituency is not necessary for TD.

The concept of (b) *knowledge by description*, is distinct from this, it does not require any presentation or epistemic contact with any particular object at all. It is sufficient for a knowledge claim of this type that one be able to entertain a *general* proposition, a proposition that is not dependent on the existence of any particular object (OD 42, 56). As such, one may be said to have descriptive knowledge of <the so and so> without being aware of, or being presented with any object x, that in fact happens to satisfy the description. Some examples of things which can only be known through descriptions are: The center of the mass of the solar system at a definite instant Y, the man with the iron mask, the first Chancellor of the German Empire and so forth. We may, as Russell says, "affirm a number of propositions" about <the so and so> without having any direct epistemic contact, or "acquaintance" with what actually satisfies the description in question (OD 41). For instance, we may know that the first Chancellor of the German Empire was a man, without ever having met him or without ever having seen him.

How does acquaintance relate to description? Russell maintains that all knowledge rests on acquaintance (OD 41-42, 56). But since there are many things which one cannot have immediate presentation of (e.g., another's mind), denoting phrases (descriptions) are used. These phrases are, in a manner of speaking, *structural* rather than *constitutive*, they allow one to define the subject of knowledge without having prior acquaintance. That is, they pertain to the form of knowledge rather than the content, they are the "tools" by which we are able to have knowledge about particulars that we have never had immediate contact with. For instance, we do not have immediate contact with another person's mind, although we would like to claim that we have knowledge of it. How do we get this

knowledge? We get it through descriptive phrases, denoting phrases permit thoughts of a purely general form which "do not really contain this thing as a constituent, but contain instead the constituents expressed by the several words of the denoting phrase" (OD 55-56) Or in other words, although denoting phrases express general thoughts, we are acquainted with the meaning of their constituents. And thus, in this sense, knowledge by description is subservient to knowledge by acquaintance, the former is always, in the final analysis, reducible to the latter, this "reductionism" is known as Russell's Principle of Acquaintance. "Every proposition that we can apprehend (i.e., not only in those whose truth or falsehood we can judge of, but in and all that we can think about), all the constituents are really entities with which we have immediate acquaintance." (OD 56).

An apparent interpretive puzzle is thus solved: if sentences containing denoting phrases really express "object-dependent" general propositions that are not about any particular individual at all, then how is it that one ever understands them (since, according to this view, to understand a phrase is to know which individual it refers to)? The response is that even though a descriptive phrase is not about a particular object for Russell, the terms which constitute that phrase must be.

The relationship between thought and meaning presented so far may be construed as follows. On Russell's account, where we have a thought about a particular individual, 'b', concluding that it is G, we entertain a *singular* proposition; a proposition that contains 'b' as a constituent. This kind of thought "arises" from being acquainted with the individual 'b'. In such cases, a genuine referring expression, 'b', and a monadic predicate G combine to express a thought or proposition <b is G> that only depends upon on the identity of the

referent of 'b'. But where we have a thought that the unique satisfier of a description, *which* or *whoever* that may be, is G, we entertain a purely *general* proposition that does not contain the satisfier of that description as a constituent (D 17), thus, this type of thought does not require any epistemic contact with the satisfier of the description

But what happens, in the case of a singular proposition, when 'b' fails to refer? Intuitively, since the expression of such a thought or proposition depends upon the existence of the referent of 'b', such a thought and proposition should not even be able to be entertained. This result is, as Neale recognizes, guaranteed by the Principle of Acquaintance. This principle requires that one be acquainted with every constituent of any proposition that one understands. And if 'b' is an empty referring expression, then there is nothing that constitutes being acquainted with it. Hence, there can be no such thing as understanding the proposition expressed by <b is G>. If that is so, then there is no motivation to claim that a proposition is expressed, in order to entertain a singular proposition (a proposition that "contains the particular" that it is about) one must be acquainted with that particular.

But Russell, in his desire to exclude the possibility of entertaining propositions without actual subjects, came to conclude that only sense-data could be trusted as the content of such propositions (PP 26). The problems with sense-datum epistemology are numerous; this is why Neale's development of TD is important. It dissects TD from this perspective and locates it within a wider general systemic semantic framework for natural language. Another problem with TD is the concept of objectual constituency. As Judy Pelham remarks, Russell held (in the period of concern) that propositions contain, as

constituents, *actual material objects* (RPO 24). This is a fantastic view to hold and presents several difficulties for propositions theory. Nevertheless, TD does not necessitate any such particular account of propositions; it can be ascribed to without holding to this doctrine

The plausibility of this account will inevitably turn on, in part, issues such as the Principle of Acquaintance and the objectual constituency of propositions. A priority, then, is to construe "acquaintance" in an alternative manner, such as to dislodge it from its traditional sense-datum framework. The question that must be asked is: What conditions must be satisfied in order for a person to have an object-dependent thought about a particular object *x*? A part of the answer is apparent: the person must have epistemic contact with *x*, such as being able to perceive *x* in some way or other. This is not enough though, since it might make acquaintance too easy. Neale settles on a rough, although promising, proposal which specifies the conditions of acquaintance further by requiring identification and re-identification of the object in question. Thus, a person is said to be acquainted with *x*, if she at least has (i) frequent epistemic contact with *x*, and (ii) is able to reliably identify and re-identify *x*; when these two conditions obtain, a person is said to have "identified" *x* (D 18).

These conditions need further specification, but the important thing to be aware of is that the notion of "acquaintance" is no longer tied to any sense-datum epistemology. Having provided a manner in which to make this dissection, Neale proposes to ascribe Russell the following principle:

(R1) If '*b*' is a genuine referring expression (singular term), then for a monadic predicate $\langle _ \text{ is } G \rangle$, it is necessary to identify the referent of '*b*' in

order to understand the proposition expressed by an utterance u of $\langle b \text{ is } G \rangle$ is G (D 18).

As with Russell's original proposal, if 'b' were to lack reference, then there would be nothing that could, in principle, constitute identification of the referent of 'b'. And again, if nothing counted as identifying the referent of 'b', then there can be no such thing as understanding the proposition expressed by $\langle b \text{ is } G \rangle$. If so, then there is no motivation to claim that a proposition is expressed. The final result of this adjustment mirrors Russell's traditional analysis in that to entertain an object-dependent proposition one must be "acquainted" with the particular that the proposition is purportedly about; except here, being "acquainted" with x does not require any commitment to the traditional epistemology. Neale expresses this conclusion in the following principle

(R2) If 'b' has no referent, then for a monadic predicate $\langle _ \text{ is } G \rangle$, no proposition is expressed by an utterance u of $\langle b \text{ is } G \rangle$ (D 19).

Thus, according to this revised view, one understands an utterance $\langle b \text{ is } G \rangle$, where 'b' is a genuine referring expression, if and only if one grasps the object-dependent proposition that $\langle b \text{ is } G \rangle$. Moreover, the basic framework is left untouched. $\langle b \text{ is } G \rangle$ expresses a true proposition just in case the referent of 'b' is in the extension of G .

Let us take stock. A Russellian addition to this framework (i.e., $\langle b \text{ is } G \rangle$ is true iff the referent of 'b' is in the extension of G), among others, is the distinction between object-dependent and -independent propositions. But since this distinction is framed in a sense-datum theory, it brings along severe epistemological restrictions. Neale reconstructs the notion of acquaintance so that any sense-datum restrictions are discarded. The two principles R1 and R2, which may be ascribed to a Russellian, attempt to make precise the

notion of object-dependency. Before a further precision is made, it should be remarked that R1 and R2 require no concept of objectual constituency; as Neale says, all that is required here is that the identity of the object referred to by 'b' be somehow a determinant (e.g., causally) of the proposition expressed by <b is G>: "[R1 and R2] require only that the identity of the individual referred to by 'b' be a determinant of the identity of the proposition expressed [by <b is G>]" (D 19)

A summary of this view is thus: a genuine referring expression combines with a monadic predicate to express an object-dependent thought, such a thought is dependent on a particular object in that it is *about* this particular individual. Therefore, it simply would not be available if the object did not exist. Neale's revision fits well with Russell's original ideas of meaning and understanding, the only difference being that "acquaintance" is reconstructed without any appeal to sense-datum concepts.

The further refinement that Neale makes to the notion of object-dependency takes into account Saul Kripke's thesis of rigid designation. According to this view, genuine referring expressions, such as proper names, are "rigid designators"; these phrases pick out the same individual in every possible world. The basic claim is that understanding the proposition expressed by an utterance of a sentence such as:

(1) Aristotle was born in Stagira in Thrace.

involves not only a grasp of the truth conditions by which it is in fact true, but also a grasp of the truth conditions under which a counterfactual course of history would be partially described by (1). Neale encodes this in principle R3:

(R3) If 'b' is a genuine referring expression that refers to x, then 'b' is a rigid designator; i.e., x enters into a specification of the truth conditions of (the

proposition expressed by) an utterance *u* of '*b* is *G*' with respect to actual and counterfactual situations (D 20).

He explains that R3 basically says that if '*b*' is a rigid designator of *x*, then whether <*b* is *G*> is true, is dependent on how things are with *x*. The relevance of R3 is discussed shortly.

The main insight behind TD can now be fully appreciated its purpose is to make available a class of propositions which are, in contrast to the notion of object-dependency above, object-*independent*. According to TD, <the *F*> is not a genuine referring expression; it does not directly pick out or stand for any particular object. A sentence <the *F* is *G*> expresses an object-independent proposition that can be perfectly well understood without any awareness of what, if anything, does in fact satisfy <the *F*>.

Now, Russell argued that definite descriptions belong to the category of quantified noun phrases, in that the logical behavior of a sentence containing a description is similar to those of sentences containing these phrases. He insisted that these phrases were "incomplete symbols," which denoted solely in terms of their form (OD 41). The claim that these expressions are "incomplete symbols" and that they have "no meaning" in isolation is just the claim that these phrases do not, as with genuine referring expressions, stand for any particular object. Consider, for instance, the sentence containing the denoting phrase <all *F*>:

(2) All humans are mortal.

(3) $(\forall x)(Hx \supset Mx)$.

The truth conditions of the proposition expressed by (2) are believed to be given by its logical form (3). The logical sentence (3) is true just in case the 'ALL' relation holds

between humanness and mortalness (GFLF 107). Or, to put it in other terms, (3) is true just in case for all x , if x is human, then x is mortal. According to TD, the logical behavior of sentences containing descriptions is the same:

(4) The King of France is giddy.

(5) $(\exists x)((\forall y)(Fy \equiv x = y) \ \& \ Gx)$.

The truth conditions of the proposition expressed by (4), in light of TD, are claimed to be given by (5). Sentence (5) is true if and only if the 'THE' relation holds between F-ness and G-ness; or more clearly, if the following conditions obtain:

(i) There is at least one F

(ii) There is at most one F.

(iii) Everything that is F is G.

Conditions (i) and (ii) are uniqueness conditions. An important thing to realize is that just as the proposition expressed by (2) lacks a logical subject, so does the proposition expressed by (4). And also, as one can understand the proposition expressed by (2) without knowing who, if anything, satisfies the predicate 'humanness', one can understand a descriptive sentence without being aware of who may satisfy <the F>. Indeed, in (4) there is no entity which satisfies <the F>, but this does not prevent (4) from expressing a perfectly understandable determinate thought. Neale captures and makes precise these above intuitions of object-independency by offering correlate principles to R1, R2 and R3:

(D1) If <the F> is a definite description, then for a monadic predicate phrase ' $_$ is G', the proposition expressed by an utterance of <the F is G> can be perfectly well understood by a person who does not know who or what is denoted by <the F> (even if nothing satisfies <the F>, and even if that person knows that nothing satisfies <the F>).

(D2) If <the F> is a definite description, then for a monadic predicate phrase ' is G', an utterance of <the F is G> expresses a perfectly determinate proposition whether or not there is any individual that satisfies <the F>

(D3) The individual x that actually satisfies a definite description <the F> does not enter into a specification of the truth conditions of <the F is G> in either actual or counterfactual situations (D 21-23)

Principles D1 and D2 basically assert that definite descriptions are not *about* any particular individual at all; they do not genuinely refer to any object. Neale explains D2 by an analogy to the general notion of compositionality: this sort of reasoning suggests that in order to grasp the proposition expressed by <the F is G>, it is sufficient that one be able to grasp the meaning of each part of the description, without knowing who or what happens to satisfy it. Therefore, as D1 advocates, a person may well understand a descriptive proposition without being aware of its denotation.

Principle D3 may be explained by a counterfactual scenario example which Neale provides. Consider the utterance:

(6) The current Honorary Librarian is very interested in questions about identity.

Assume that David Wiggins happens to fulfil the above position, and moreover suppose he happens to be interested in such questions. The proposition expressed by sentence (6) then, is true; but what makes it true? The straight forward reply is that it is facts concerning Wiggins. But this response is usually argued to be misguided. Recall that on a standard Kripkean analysis, understanding the proposition expressed by a sentence such as (6) involves not only a grasp of the truth conditions by which it is in fact true, but also a grasp of the conditions under which a counterfactual situation would partially be described.

by it. Imagine that in a nearby possible world, someone other than Wiggins, Mary, happens to be the Honorary Librarian, and suppose that Mary is also interested in questions concerning identity. In this counterfactual scenario, the proposition expressed by one's utterance of (6) would still come out true. But now, as Neale explains, it is evident that its truth conditions are not in any way dependent on facts concerning Wiggins (since in the counterfactual scenario he is no longer the Honorary Librarian); thus, the individual Wiggins does not enter into a specification of the truth conditions of (6) (D 23). And, again, the specification of truth conditions have nothing to do with Mary either, as is suggested by re-applying the previous sort of reasoning.

The point here is simply that neither Wiggins, nor any other particular individual, enters into a proper specification of the truth *conditions* of <the F is G>. To be clear, it is not claimed that the *truth* of (6), in the actual world, does not depend upon facts concerning Wiggins (they do, since he happens to be the librarian and he is interested in identity), but rather, the specification of the *truth conditions* have nothing to do with facts concerning Wiggins. What makes a proposition in fact true, and the specification of its truth conditions are two different matters. The conditions that have to be satisfied in order for a proposition to be true should not be mistaken for what particular object may indeed satisfy those conditions. The specification of the criterion of truth does not vary (across worlds), whereas the entity which meets that criterion may. Principle D3 is used to capture this Kripkean intuition, it just says that the particular object which in fact is denoted by <the F>, does not enter into the specification of the criterion of truth of <the F is G> (since this object may vary from world to world).

The difference between D3 and R3 may be explained as follows. It is suggested that particular objects (that happen to satisfy descriptive phrases), do not enter into a specification of the truth conditions of a descriptive sentence because (unlike proper names) descriptions do not rigidly designate one specific entity in all possible worlds. A description <the F> is satisfied by whatever entity happens to "fit" the description in *that* world.

This leads to another of Neale's TD revisions. With his Principle of Acquaintance, Russell argued that proper names were really disguised descriptions (PP 29). Now, it is important to realize that there is no necessary connection between TD and a descriptivist theory of proper names, that is, TD simply assumes that some linguistic items *are* genuine proper names. One may be committed to a Russellian view of descriptions, without thinking that proper names are really disguised descriptions, it is by no means required that one extend TD to cover these terms. This is another important overhaul of TD, it is now guaranteed that no *reductio* argument against TD, by way of Russell's views on names, is possible.

To summarize the similarities between descriptions such as, <the F>, and other denoting expressions (quantifiers), <every F>, <an F>, consider the following sentence Neale provides:

(7) Every physicist who attended that conference was arrested immediately afterwards.

Principles D1, D2, D3, apply perfectly (a) D1; the proposition expressed by (7) may be well understood without knowing who is denoted by (satisfies) <every F>, i.e., one does not have to know Mary, Joe and Sally (suppose these were the only physicists at the

conference), but this does not deter one from understanding the proposition expressed by (7) (b) D2, even if nothing is denoted by <every F> (assume that Mary, Joe, and Sally did not attend the conference, and no other physicist did either), sentence (7) still expresses a perfectly determinate proposition, with perfectly determinate truth conditions. (c) D2; Mary, Joe, and Sally do not enter into a specification of the truth conditions. Sentence (7) would still express a true proposition if, in a counterfactual scenario, three other physicists attended the conference, and were arrested.

The quantified expression <every F> in (7) may be replaced by other phrases such as <no F>, <any F>, <some F>, <a F>; and D1, D2, and D3 still apply.

It should now be evident that <the F> is, as Russell and Neale after him, insist: a member of the class of quantified noun phrases rather than a genuine referring expression. A well understood and determinate proposition is expressed by <the F is G>, with determinate truth conditions, even if one does not know what, if anything, is denoted by <the F>.

1.2 Formal Aspects: Restricted Quantifiers and Neale's Extension of TD

Consider the following puzzle: By the law of excluded middle either a proposition or its contradictory is true. So either (8) or (9) is true:

(8) The present King of France is bald.

(9) The present King of France is not bald.

But when the class of all bald people are enumerated, the present King of France is not found; neither is he among those who are not bald. Thus, both (8) and (9) appear to be false and the law of excluded middle seems to be violated (OD 48).

The solution is readily available, one need only wheel in TD. Russell points out that the puzzle arises from an ambiguity in how the logical form of (9) is interpreted (OD 52-53), it is argued that both sentences may certainly be false, yet the law of excluded middle is not violated. Russell ingeniously sees that (8) and (9) are not necessarily contradictories:

$$(8)' (\exists x)((\forall y)(Fy \equiv x = y) \ \& \ Bx).$$

$$(9)' (\exists x)((\forall y)(Fy \equiv x = y) \ \& \ \sim Bx).$$

$$(9)'' \sim(\exists x)((\forall y)(Fy \equiv x = y) \ \& \ Bx).$$

Given the logical form of sentences (8) and (9), the problem becomes transparent it is an ambiguity in whether negation takes (narrow or wide) scope over <the F> in interpreting the logical form of (9). If the negation takes narrow scope, then (9) is not the contradictory of (8), as seen by (9)'. If the negation takes (wide) scope over the description (9)'', then (9) indeed contradicts (8). Accordingly, the proposition expressed by (9)'' is true whenever the proposition expressed by (8) is false; i.e., it is not the case that there is a unique individual denoted by the King of France, who is bald. Thus, the law of contradiction is not breached (OD 53).

The insight again, comes from the idea that descriptions are not genuine referring expressions; the puzzle is only a problem because of the temptation to treat 'the present King of France' as a genuine referring expression. But where genuine referring expressions are concerned, there is no logical difference between narrow and wide scope interpretations:

$$\langle \sim(b \text{ is } F) \rangle = \langle b \text{ is } \sim F \rangle$$

it is not the case that 'b' is F if and only if 'b' is not-F (D 32). Thus, TD, by asserting that descriptions are not referring expressions, provides an excellent solution which shows that such problems are not authentic problems at all.

In *Principia Mathematica*, (*PM* henceforth), Russell and Whitehead, adopt a rather cumbersome notation to represent the scope of a negation in a descriptive formula. First, let us note that a description <the F>, in *PM*, is represented by an "iota-operator";

$$(10) (\iota x)(Fx).$$

which is read as 'the unique x satisfying F'. The iota-operator is a variable binding operator which combines with a term to give a formula; (10) may be prefixed with a one place predicate B to give the formula:

$$(11) B(\iota x)(Fx).$$

which is simply an abbreviation for (12),

$$(12) (\exists x)((\forall y)(Fy \equiv x = y) \& Bx).$$

And since matters of scope are important, a manner has to be found in which to represent wide and narrow scope in (11). The description is recopied into square brackets and placed to the left of the formula within its scope:

$$(13) [(\iota x)(Fx)] \sim \{B(\iota x)(Fx)\}.$$

which is equivalent to:

$$(9)' (\exists x)((\forall y)(Fy \equiv x = y) \& \sim Bx).$$

and

$$(14) \sim \{[(\iota x)(Fx)] B(\iota x)(Fx)\}.$$

is equivalent to

$$(9)'' \sim (\exists x)((\forall y)(Fy \equiv x = y) \& Bx).$$

Hence there are no problems concerning ambiguity in scope; but quite a complicated notational form is used. The main proposition of TD, in *PM* is stated as.

$$*14.01 [(t_x)(F_x)] G(t_x)(F_x) = \text{df } (\exists x)((\forall y)(Fy \equiv x = y) \& Gx).$$

As Neale explains, since there is no possibility of a genuine referring expression failing to refer, there is no predicate symbol assigned for 'exists' in *PM*. But Russell also wants to be able to deal with sentences of the form 'The King of France does not exist', he thus introduces 'E!' to provide existential implication; it is defined as:

$$*14.02 E!(t_x)(F_x) = \text{df } (\exists x)((\forall y)(Fy \equiv x = y)).$$

It should be noted that *14.01 and *14.02 are contextual definitions, that is, they are abbreviatory devices used to eliminate a description occurring in any given formula to an equivalent formula in which no such description occurs. Thus, these definitions do not add any expressive power to the language of *PM*.

A main objection that is lodged against TD is that it cannot be a part of any serious systematic semantic theory because it completely obscures any relation between surface syntax and logical form. Recall the logical form of (8):

(8) The present King of France is bald

$$(8)' (\exists x)((\forall y)(Fy \equiv x = y) \& Bx).$$

This does create difficulties for any theory of the relation between surface syntax and logical form. But as Neale points out, much of this difficulty is circumvented by expressing the first-order predicate calculus in a language other than that of *PM*. Hence, it

is argued that there is simply no logical connection between TD and the language of *PM*, and thus this objection is unfounded.

Moreover, as many theorists recognize, there are independently motivated reasons for adopting a different language for expressing the predicate calculus than those of Fregean origin. Recent work in the subject of quantification in natural language shows that the unary quantifiers \forall and \exists present many difficulties for a semantical theory. It is commonly argued that the standard Fregean quantifiers do not adequately, in certain important aspects, represent the truth conditions of quantified sentences in natural language. Examples of two such problems are: (i) translation accuracy, and (ii) the representation of plurality quantifiers (D 39).

The accuracy of translation problem concerns the binary structure that determiners such as 'all' and 'some' produce. For instance, it is evident that

(15) All men are mortal, i.e., $\langle \text{all } F \text{ are } G \rangle$.

is binary in structure; it expresses the relation between humanness and mortality. In order to capture the binary force of the natural language sentence with the unary \forall quantifier however, a sentential connective has to be introduced;

(16) $(\forall y) (\text{man } y \supset \text{mortal } y)$.

which obscures the relation between the surface syntax of a (natural language) sentence and its logical form. For example, an evident problem is that there is no quantificational formula corresponding to the subject noun phrase in the original sentence (15).

But an insurmountable problem with the standard calculus is that it is unable to represent the truth conditions of certain syntactically simple quantified sentences. Sentences using the quantifier 'most' is the familiar example cited in the literature:

(17) Most men are mortal.

Neale points out that (17) requires something of the form

(18) (most x) (man x \cdot mortal x).

where ' \cdot ' is to be a truth functional connective. The problem is that ' \cdot ' cannot be defined as '&' since this would mean that most things are men and mortal. It cannot be the material implication ' \supset ' for then (18) would say that most things are if-men-then-mortal. Even if attention is restricted to finite domains, it is an accepted result that the plural quantifier 'most' is undefinable in the first-order calculus.

This difficulty is resolved by treating natural language quantification as *restricted*. In the above, the problem arises because the quantifier 'most' ranges over the entire domain of quantification, when it should be only ranging over those things which are men. What is required is something such as:

(19) $\langle \text{most } F\text{s are } G\text{s} \rangle$ is true iff $|F \wedge G| > |F - G|$, where F = the set of things that are F ; $|F \wedge G|$ = the set of both F and G ; and $F - G$ = the set of things that are F and not- G (D 41).

Thus, Neale suggests that 'most' and other determiners such as 'some', 'every' and 'men' be treated as devices that combine two formulae to form a single formula. So, for example, 'most' will combine with 'men' to give the restricted quantifier:

(20) [most x : men x].

The logical form of Sentence (17) may now be given as:

(21) [most x: men x] (mortal x).

Neale calls the resulting system RQ. The semantics of RQ ensures that it handles every sentence that the standard calculus can. (For a formal truth definition, and formation rules for RQ, see (GFLF 102-108) and (D 42).) Now, RQ covers plurality quantifiers such as 'most', and has the added advantage of being architectonically better with respect to the surface syntax of natural language. RQ sentences *mirror* natural language more precisely than sentences of the standard calculus. Note that, for instance, there is always a quantificational formula corresponding to the subject noun phrase of the original sentence. Some sample truth clauses are:

(T1) $\langle [\text{every } x: Fx] (Gx) \rangle$ is true iff $|F-G| = 0$.

(T2) $\langle [\text{some } x: Fx] (Gx) \rangle$ is true iff $|F \wedge G| \geq 1$.

(T3) $\langle [\text{no } x: Fx] (Gx) \rangle$ is true iff $|F \wedge G| = 0$.

(T4) $\langle [\text{most } x: Fx] (Gx) \rangle$ is true iff $|F \wedge G| > |F-G|$.

The system RQ allows a definite description to be represented with ease:

(T5) $\langle [\text{the } x: Fx] (Gx) \rangle$ is true iff $|F-G| = 0$ and $|F| = 1$.

which is truth conditionally equivalent to (1). Notice that matters of wide and narrow scope with regard to negation are handled with ease and clarity:

(22) $\sim [Dx: Fx] (Bx)$.

(23) $[Dx: Fx] \sim (Bx)$.

Also the scope ambiguity in (24) can be clearly represented by (25) and (26):

(24) Every boy loves some girl.

(25) $[\text{Every } x: \text{boy } x] ([\text{some } y: \text{girl } y] (x \text{ loves } y))$.

(26) [some y : girl y] ([every x : boy x] (x loves y)).

Now, another advantage of using RQ is that the relation between the truth conditions of singular descriptions and the truth conditions of other types of descriptions comes into focus. The difference between a plural description, <The F 's are G 's>, and a regular singular description is clearly articulated in RQ:

(T6) <[thes x : Fx] (Gx)> is true iff $|F-G| = 0$ and $F > 1$, where ' F ' is plural and 'thes' indicates this.

"Numberless" descriptions, i.e., '<whoever> shot Kennedy'; may also be represented:

(T7) <[whe x : Fx] (Gx)> is true iff $|F-G| = 0$ and $F \geq 1$, where 'whe' is a number neutral determiner (D 46).

To reiterate: there is no necessity in being committed to the language of *PM* if one wishes to endorse TD. The language of *PM* is as unnecessary to TD as sense-datum epistemology and the descriptivist view of proper names. Furthermore, there is much more to gain, as far as semantic analysis is concerned, by employing a different language than that of a standard Fregean origin; plurality quantifiers, accuracy of translation, and other problems are readily dissolved by a language which contains devices such as restricted quantifiers

Let me turn to Neale's extension of TD. The usual Russellian TD favours analysis of descriptions of the form 'the so and so'. But here is a major aspect of Neale's overhaul of TD: he extends the theory to more complex noun constructions other than just singular phrases beginning with the word 'the'. First, by Russell's own work in *PM*, there is no reason that TD cannot represent "open" complex descriptions such as (27):

(27) Every man loves the woman who raised him.

where 'him' is bound by 'every man.' Sentence (27) is represented in the standard calculus as:

$$(28) (\forall x) (Mx \supset Lx ((\iota y)Wy \ \& \ Ryx)).$$

The description is "open" in the sense it is of the form ' $(\iota y)Fyx$ '; it contains a variable, x , which is not bound by any quantifier in the frame of the description. Neale calls this type of complex description a "relativized definite description."

Neale claims that TD's domain of application may be broadened from that of the usual analysis, i.e., sentences containing phrases of the form 'the so and so'. He points out that Russell himself could not have believed that only phrases of the previous superficial form are valid descriptions (and hence valid territory for TD), since Russell was willing to admit of a TD analysis of 'my son'. Neale takes genitive noun phrases such as 'Smith's lover', 'that man's wife' and 'my saxophone' (D 34) to be descriptions analyzable in terms of TD (as he says, with a little work, these phrases can be made to fit the desired superficial form: 'the lover of smith', 'the wife of that man' and so on).

Before examining Neale's extension of TD, some terminology needs to be clarified. Definite descriptions in English are said to be noun phrases ('NP') of the syntactical form 'Det + N''; where Det is some determiner such as 'the', 'some', 'no'; and where N' ('N-Bar') is a simple or complex nominal construction such as 'man who owns donkey', 'thin man' etc. Expressions such as 'Smith's lover' and 'my saxophone' also count as descriptions; these are formed by manipulating the determiner: (NP + poss) + N', where 'poss' is the genitive or possessive marker. So we have two kinds of definite descriptions:

$$(I) \text{'the' + N'} \quad (\text{e.g., 'The king'}).$$

(II) (NP + poss) + N' (e.g., 'Smith's lover').

There are also complicated combinations of the above, 'the lover of Smith's lover':

(29) $(\lambda y)(\text{Ly}(\lambda x)\text{Sx}))$.

Using the language RQ, here are examples of Neale's extension of TD to more complex nominal constructions:

(a) Description containing relative clauses:

(30) The man who loves Mary is kind.

(30)' [the x: man x & x loves Mary] (is kind).

(b) Relativized Descriptions:

(31) The father of *each girl* loves *her*.

(31)' [each x: girl x]([the y: y father of-x] (y loves x)).

(c) Descriptions of the form (NP + poss) + N'

(32) Smith's lover is insane.

(32)' [the x: x lover-of-Smith] (insane x).

(d) Pronouns bound by descriptions

(33) The president loves himself.

(33)' [the x: President x] (x loves x).

When coupled with RQ, the preceding data suggests that an extension of TD will be profitable in allowing a theorist to articulate the logical form of a wide variety of nominal constructions with clarity and ease. But, as Neale emphasizes, the attempt to couch TD in RQ is *not* the attempt to provide a different analysis of descriptions from Russell's; rather, it is to express Russell's insight in another language. Moreover, architectonically, RQ

provides a far better framework in which to embed a theory of natural language quantification; and this proves to be fruitful when locating TD in such a semantic structure.

II. Ambiguity: Context and the Semantic-Pragmatic Distinction

In this chapter, I examine an underlying assumption that is essential to Neale's support of TD, and which he pays insufficient attention to. I attempt to provide an independent basis for this assumption. In order to frame his response against a standard objection, Neale relies on the Gricean difference between proposition expressed and proposition meant, which in turn is grounded on the *semantic-pragmatic* distinction. My task here is to examine the viability of such an approach. In (2.1), I briefly examine the "referential" objection, its historical development, and I show how Neale's arguments will turn on the idea that semantic inquiry may be abstracted from context. I then (2.2) provide an explanation of the division between semantic and pragmatic theory. Finally (2.2.2) I examine some objections to context-independency as a possible route to supporting the above division. I conclude that the semantic-pragmatic distinction is indeed viable.

2.1 The Referential Objection and its Historical Underpinnings

Donnellan and others have argued that TD fails to provide a complete account of the use of descriptions in natural language. It is suggested that descriptions, on occasion, function as referring expressions and not as quantifier phrases. Donnellan distinguishes between two purportedly distinct functions of descriptions: attributive and referential. How is this distinction made? In the referential case, the description is supposed to function similarly to a demonstrative or proper name, whereas in the attributive case, the description

functions as a quantifier expression; and the truth conditions are correctly given according to TD. For example, consider the following use of the sentence

(1) Smith's murderer is insane.

as uttered in two distinct contexts:

(i) A detective finds Smith's dead body and not knowing who murdered Smith exclaims (1).

Compare this with a situation "in which we expect and intend our audience to realize whom we have in mind when we speak of Smith's murderer and, most importantly, to know that it is this person about whom we are going to say something" (RDD 198):

(ii) Jones has been charged with Smith's murder and placed on trial. Convinced of his guilt, the detective who arrested him exclaims (1).

According to Donnellan, in case (i), the proposition expressed is "attributive" and may correctly be accounted for by a Russellian analysis: (1) amounts to saying that the unique individual who murdered Smith, *whoever it may have been*, is insane. But in case (ii), Donnellan contends that the description 'Smith's murderer' refers directly to Jones and the analysis of the proposition expressed is given by treating the description as a referring expression. In contexts such as (ii), Donnellan urges that a speaker uses the descriptive phrase to draw the attention of the audience to a certain object (perhaps in the immediate surrounding), but it is irrelevant *how* the attention of the audience is directed to the object: the description is "merely a tool for doing a certain job," and in general, other linguistic devices, such as a name or demonstrative, would serve as well (RDD 198). For instance, in case (ii), instead of uttering (1), the detective could have just as well have said:

(2) That man is insane.

pointing to Jones. Before examining the details of this issue, I must make a few preliminary remarks about Donnellan's objection; I also want to gloss over some crucial assumptions that are required in order to support Neale's defence of TD against such an objection.

Now, following Kripke and Grice, Neale argues that there is no disagreement as to what the linguistic data suggests: descriptions may certainly be *used* as referring expressions and to that extent, they may be used to communicate such thoughts accordingly. But referential usage, as Kripke and Grice contend, is not an objection to TD; it is merely an observation concerning the wide variety of uses that language may be put to. For example, upon request for a letter of recommendation from Sam, Alice writes

(3) Sam has good handwriting skills.

Given that Alice should be able to say something more relevant about her student than simply that he has good handwriting skills, one is lead to believe that Alice is attempting to communicate something beyond what was actually said; perhaps to the effect that

(4) Sam is not a good student.

Many have used this Gricean example as evidence that there is an intuitive difference between *semantic* and *pragmatic* theory; it is urged that a distinction needs to be made between genuinely semantic features of an expression (or sentence) and those features that issue from non-semantic facts concerning the context of utterance (D 62). It seems quite evident that sentence (3) has a specifiable linguistic (i.e., conventional, literal) meaning based on the meaning of its parts and their syntactical structure, quite apart from any contextual relation of Alice's assessment of Sam's abilities. If this is correct, and if the

subject area of semantic theory is linguistic or conventional meaning only, then there is no reason that one should expect such a theory to somehow account for (4) as being a possible consequence of (3). This work should be done by what theorists call "pragmatic" theory.

Thus, Neale is quick to conclude, if Donnellan's objection is only that descriptions can be used for this or that purpose, then this does not really threaten a Russellian, since it is always possible for her to account for referential usage in terms of a pragmatic theory. In this manner, the truth conditions, and logical form of a sentence containing descriptions would remain the same. Therefore, in so far as one is to make the strongest possible case for Donnellan, the objection must be framed in terms of a challenge to the truth conditional deliverances of TD; it must be taken as an objection on the semantic level. The referentialist has to argue that there is a distinct semantic function of descriptions which TD cannot account for. But to the extent that one can make such a case for lexical or semantical ambiguity, TD, Neale claims, is still defensible for other reasons. What are these other reasons?

The heart of Neale's defence rests on issues related to theory-construction. Neale acknowledges that even though a referentialist theory may account for the same range of linguistic data, the Russellian theory is to be preferred, it makes for a more general and economic theory: "It is good methodological practice, Grice ... suggests to subscribe to... *Modified Occam's Razor: Senses are not to be multiplied beyond necessity.* Given the viability of a broadly Gricean distinction between the proposition expressed and the proposition(s) meant, if a pragmatic explanation is available of why a particular expression

appears to diverge in meaning in different linguistic environments (or in different conversational settings) then *ceteris paribus* the pragmatic explanation is preferable to the postulation of a semantical ambiguity" (D 80). Thus, Neale's claim that TD can meet the referential challenge will rest on the following crucial assumption:

(NA) An account of the semantic-pragmatic ('SP' hereafter) distinction is viable, which may then be embodied in particular theories, i.e., the Gricean distinction between proposition expressed and proposition(s) meant

Neale requires NA to ground Grice's distinction between proposition expressed and proposition(s) meant; so that he may provide an explanation of when a feature of an expression is semantic and when it is pragmatic. A careful examination of this and other assumptions is necessary in providing an adequate analysis of Neale's defence of TD. I take this to be an important part of my task in this study. Before examining the SP distinction though, I would like to look at some historical background from which the referentialist objection emerges.

In "Paul Grice and the Philosophy of Language," Neale provides an interesting historical development of the referentialist objection, which will help us to locate the debate within a wider framework of issues. The objection is traced back from the later Wittgenstein to the ordinary language philosophies of J L Austin and P F Strawson. Grice, with his theory of conversational implicature (which will be examined in the next chapter) is taken to have brought a resolution to the debate between the so called "Wittgensteinians" and the "Russellians." Neale's interpretation brings out some of the deeper motivations that lie behind the present controversy, let us look at some of these

A major contribution that Wittgenstein made to the study of language was to point out that language is a purposeful activity; it is an instrument or tool that allows its employer to achieve a great variety of things. Wittgenstein's position was inspired partly as a response to the naturalization of the positivists, who were motivated by a desire to construct a systematic theory of meaning in the likes of the empirical sciences. These theorists were inclined to see the nature of language as being something more static. Recall that at one time, Russell sought to provide an analysis of meaning in terms of some sort of direct correlation to sense impressions. On this view, the meaning of a word was thought to be the object that it stood for, it was seen as a permanent label for its referent.

For Wittgenstein, a major difficulty for this "static" view was that it failed to account for the dynamic nature of language. Words are not always permanent labels, there are a multiplicity of uses that a word can be put to. To ask for the exact meaning of a word, at times, is as misguided as the enquiry into the essence of things. Consequently, Wittgenstein saw many philosophical problems as the result of an incorrect analysis of language. It was recommended that, in order to be insightful, one must attend carefully to the variety of language uses and the context that surrounds these.

This approach was later taken to an extreme. Neale notes that certain philosophers under the influence of Wittgenstein, came to hold that the *only* insightful thing that one could say of an expression is that it is used in such and such a way, and in such and such a circumstance. This movement came to be known as "Ordinary Language Philosophy" and was headed by thinkers such as Gilbert Ryle, J.L. Austin, and P.F. Strawson. Neale points out that these philosophers usually sought to eradicate philosophical problems by

attempting to show that an expression playing a prominent role in the function of a philosophical debate had been misused. This might be achieved by showing that a certain position required being insensitive to some characteristic feature of the use of the expression in question. To illustrate, consider the following from Gilbert Ryle

In their most ordinary employment 'voluntary' and 'involuntary' are used, with a few minor elasticities, as adjectives applying to actions which ought not to be done. We discuss whether someone's action was voluntary or not only when the action seems to have been his fault (GPL 512)

And so, according to Ryle, the traditional problem of free will arises for the reason that thinkers have been prone to the misuse of the word 'voluntary', they apply it to actions when there is no question of fault. From this sort of strategy or as Neale says, "[a] general concern of the nuances of natural language" there emerged an objection to the claim that natural language has an exact semantics that can be captured from using the devices of classical logic (GPL 513). It is in this context and tradition that the referentialist objection develops, the idea being that TD imposes a unified rigid structure on the use of descriptions.

It is important to see how the work of Paul Grice may be viewed as a resolution between the two opposing motivations and intuitions concerning a study of language. Grice, being largely sympathetic to the idea that language was a purposeful activity on the other hand, but also realizing the importance of a "static" or regular component in meaning, constructed a theory which attempted to reconcile these two intuitions. Since Grice was sensitive to use, as Neale explains, it was important for Grice that the meaning of an expression be analyzable in terms of what people use it for, this had direct impact on

his theory of meaning (GPL 515). The details of Grice's actual theory are rather complicated and will be examined in the third chapter.

It is within a Gricean framework that Neale argues that one may account for data which purportedly suggests that descriptions are lexically ambiguous. To return to the recommendation letter example, one may explain that although the literal meaning of (3) (or the proposition expressed) is determinate, taking the speaker's intention and the context into account, *what is meant* diverges. We should note for now that while Grice places a heavy emphasis on use, he still requires a central place for literal meaning. As Neale puts it: "to claim that the meaning of an expression is a function of what its users do with it is *not* to claim that we must identify meaning and use... not only will we get ourselves into trouble if we are insensitive to facts about usage, we will also suffer if we fail to distinguish semantic from pragmatic." According to Grice, a distinction must be maintained between "what our words say" and "what *we* in uttering them imply" (GPL 518). And as one may anticipate, the Gricean defence of TD will also be grounded in such a strategy.

2.2 The Semantic-Pragmatic Distinction

As I have tried to show, the debate between the referentialist and the "unitarian" Russellian-Gricean is based on some deeper underlying assumptions and motivations having to do with the study of language in general. The referentialist is more impressed by the diversity of language use and this, in part, leads her to embrace semantical ambiguity (with respect to the lexical function of descriptions). The Russellian-Gricean, more systematic, is motivated by a desire to construct a theory in the likes of the empirical

sciences; she brings a "naturalization" to the inquiry of linguistic competence. Thus, whether the unitarian is successful, in the case of descriptions, will depend upon the plausibility of the structure of the systemization that is offered in order to ground key elements of this debate, i.e. assumption AN. In this section, I propose to look closely at the distinction between semantic and pragmatic theory and how firmly it may be established.

As both Steven Davis (P 4) and Jens Allwood (DSAP 177) explain, the division between syntax, semantics and pragmatics is a familiar way of approaching the inquiry into linguistic competence. It was originally introduced by Charles W. Morris in his *Foundations of the Theory of Signs*:

syntax [is] the study of the syntactical relations of signs to one another in abstraction from the relation of signs to objects or to interpreters, ...semantics deals with the relation of signs to designata and so to objects which they may or do denote [and] 'pragmatics' is designated the science of the relation of signs to their interpreters (P 3).

'Sign' here may be used confusingly since syntax examines the grammatical relation of morphemes (the smallest meaningful syntactic unit of a language) which are not "signs" proper (e.g., the past tense marker in English: 'ed'), it might do better to replace this word with 'linguistic unit'. So, syntax is supposed to be the study of grammatical structure of linguistic units, semantics studies the relation of linguistic units to the world, and pragmatics is supposed to study the relation between linguistic units and their users. This view of pragmatics is rather wide and, in recent years, has been restricted to a smaller domain. It is now usually considered to be a part of a theory of linguistic competence, it is

a part of a psychological theory that attempts to account for the tacit knowledge a speaker requires in order to be said to understand and use the sentences of her language (P 4).

Historically interesting, as Allwood points out, is that Rudolf Carnap used Morris's trichotomy and distinguished between a pure and descriptive method of approaching the three areas of study. A pure study makes use of normative regimentation and stipulative definitions in order to clarify required fundamental concepts (e.g., as in a formal language). A descriptive analysis attempts to capture the fullness of empirical data, and thus has to account for phenomena which may be rather vague (DSAP 177). Since pragmatics is supposed to account for the relation between linguistic units and their users, Carnap believed that it required concepts which were not analyzable from a pure analysis approach (as is the case with syntax and semantics). We should note the influence on theory-construction by the empirical sciences (or, at least the positivist view of science): the idea is to construct theories which are precise and exact. Carnap's perspective of pragmatics was to change, he later believed that concepts such as 'belief' and 'intention' could be given a pure analysis. This work continues with the development of the study of indexicals; indeed Neale himself provides a "pure" pragmatic theory of indexicals.

Why did Morris see the need for his trichotomy? This tripartite distinction was supposed to represent more abstract levels of inquiry (DSAP 178). Syntax differed from semantics in that it abstracts meaning from linguistic units and studies the relation between completely formal phenomena, semantics differs from pragmatics in that it abstracts meaning from context-relevant factors. The crucial difference between the latter and the former then, is that the former is supposed to be concerned with those aspects of meaning

which are *not* dependent on situational factors. In a pure semantics (such as a formal language) context-independence is widely held to be attained through normative, stipulative concepts such as truth, reference and logical form. In a descriptive semantics, context-independence is supposed to be achieved by either claiming that (i) there is no essential difference between a formal language and a natural language or (ii) by holding that, as Neale does, "literal" or "conventional" meaning can be studied independently of context or use. Claim (ii) is important since it is a background assumption in the Gricean distinction between proposition expressed and proposition meant. Both of these routes are supposed to differentiate between the "inherent" meaning of expressions from factors such as vagueness, metaphor, suggestion, emotional and attitude association and implicature.

How successful are these approaches? Allwood argues, along Wittgensteinian lines, that an abstraction or extraction of semantics from context simply cannot be made. He contends that it is wholly artificial and only serves to hinder a genuine study of language. Is this correct? Before I examine some of Allwood's objections, it will be fruitful to look at some key concepts in a little more detail. First, I will make some introductory remarks concerning syntax, semantics and pragmatics; and then I will return to some of Allwood's objections concerning the distinction between semantics and pragmatics.

2.2.1 Linguistic Competence: Syntax, Semantics and Pragmatics

Now, it is a fact that we are able to carry on conversations and understand each other. What does this ability consist in? We are presented with the following data:

(D1) Children acquire linguistic competence on the basis of exposure to a relatively small fragment of natural language that they have competence in. This is the "poverty of stimulus" phenomena discussed by Chomsky.

(D2) We are able to understand arbitrarily many sentences. In most natural languages, we are able to construct an infinite number of sentences.

(D3) We are able to understand novel sentences; that is, sentences that we have never encountered before (ML 7).

Now an intuitive hypothesis to explain the above observations is that natural languages are *compositional* and that speaker's bear appropriate epistemic relation to (a) axioms and (b) recursive rules of the natural language ('NL' hereafter) that they are competent in. "Compositionality," simply put, just says that the meaning of a sentence in a NL is a product of the meaning of the words in the sentence and the way they are arranged; the meaning of the whole is composed of the meaning of its parts. Thus, what a speaker is said to understand when she understands a sentence is the meaning of the words in the sentence (semantics) and the way in which those words are arranged (syntax).

Syntactical rules (grammar), along a Chomskian perspective, are hardwired and a part of our biological makeup. Indeed, Chomsky's work lends much plausibility to the idea that there are only a finite number of forms that a natural language may take. This hardwiring is supposed to account for a speaker's "intuitions" about whether a string of formulas is well-formed, and also her knowledge of the syntactic rules of her language. Consider the familiar examples Davis offers:

(5) Boy down the street ran.

(6) Flying planes can be dangerous.

Our intuitions tell us that (5) is not well-formed while (6) is syntactically ambiguous. As is evident however, knowledge of syntactic rules is not enough in itself to constitute competence. We not only need to know how to put together linguistic units, we also need to know what those linguistic units mean or represent: the semantic component (P 5). A speaker's semantic knowledge may be approached in two (not necessarily incommensurable) ways.

The first approach relies on the idea that the meaning of linguistic units may be given by *definitions*. Being able to provide a definition for a word may be characterized by being able to use the word appropriately in different contexts. Knowledge of definitions, in an important sense, may be seen to be *tacit*: one may not be able to give a "definition" of the definite article but one can be said to have tacit knowledge of its definition, since one is able to use it appropriately in a wide variety of situations. Semantic theory here, is examined via literal or conventional meaning.

This approach to semantic theory has been criticized since it relies on the idea that knowing the meaning of a word consists in knowing its definition. As is familiar, Quine has objected that there is no theoretically manageable route for a theory of meaning which relies on the notion of "definition" (TDE 24). From these objections there emerged the well known second approach, which sought to explain semantic knowledge in terms of truth and reference or "satisfaction" conditions. The idea here is that knowing the meaning of a word consists in knowing what it refers to, and the truth conditions of the sentence in which the word is used. Consider a simple declarative sentence:

(7) Maria is Spanish

By the truth conditional approach to semantic knowledge, what a speaker understands when she understands (7) is (a) that 'Maria' refers to Maria (we might characterize this as a reference axiom of English), (b) 'Spanish' is satisfied by those humans who are of Spanish origin, and (c) that when the proper name Maria is put together with the predicate 'Spanish', this *means that* if we gather up all the Spanish persons in the world Maria will be in that set. But how does the notion of truth come into it? It is evident that this account seems circular up to now, the meaning of (7) is given by the very notion of meaning itself: (7) *means that* Maria is Spanish. The move here is to replace the notion of meaning by the notion of truth, a speaker's utterance of (7) is true if and only if 'Spanish' is true of the person that 'Maria' refers to. Along these lines then,

(i) 'S is P' means that the thing S refers to satisfies P. Let us replace the notion of meaning with the notion of truth:

(ii) 'S is P' is true iff the thing which S refers to satisfies P. This general schema might be called a "connection" axiom of English and it should issue theorems in the form:

(iii) 'Sally is Spanish' is true iff Sally is Spanish; or what are called "T-sentences "

Therefore, what is seen as essential to understanding a sentence here, is the extension of referring expressions and the conditions which make that sentence true. Since it is assumed that a speaker's semantic ability consists in a tacit knowledge of all the T-sentences of her native language, the job of a semantic theory along these lines, is to deliver these sentences

But how is it possible that a speaker can have such knowledge? It is evident that the set of T-sentences would be infinite. This problem is reconciled by supposing that a

speaker's knowledge consists of knowing only a finite set of rules that specify both the referent for each term (reference axioms) in her NL and the truth conditions for each declarative sentence. Of course, truth conditions are unavailable for interrogatives and imperatives, for interrogatives, answer conditions may be given to delimit the set of possible answers that may be given to the questions, for imperatives, compliance conditions may be given to specify the set of actions that may be used to carry out the requests that imperatives can be used to make (P 5).

A semantic theory which approaches meaning through truth, answer, and compliance conditions may be called a *theory of satisfaction*. Again, the epistemic relation that a speaker is supposed to bear to T-sentences does not have to be of a conscious sort, just as with the "definition" approach to meaning, a speaker may be said to have tacit knowledge of the rules that assign satisfaction conditions to the sentences of her language.

Davis claims that there are three important features about the above picture of syntactic and semantic knowledge. First, it is thought to be knowledge regarding linguistic units of a NL; second, it is claimed to be *context-independent*; and third, it is knowledge that is supposed to be independent of a speaker's intentional states. Davis gives the following example: if Alice knows that 'run' is a verb and that 'ball' is a spherical object or a formal dance, then this knowledge is (i) about the natural language English (ii) not dependent on her knowing anything about any particular context of an utterance, and (iii) has no reference made to Alice's intentional states. Davis calls this context-independent linguistic knowledge (P 6). We will also look at the idea of literal meaning as providing context-independent meaning.

Thus, the general upshot of a truth conditional approach to semantic knowledge is that it provides a good theoretical ground from which to account for a speaker's understanding of the sentences of her NL; but, as we will see below, in order to give a complete theory of linguistic competence, the data requires a further division.

A speaker's context-independent linguistic knowledge is only a part of the knowledge that enables her to engage in communicative activity. A speaker must also have the ability to use her language. This knowledge includes rules and maxims that govern conversation, and certain intentional states that a speaker requires in particular contexts of use. This kind of knowledge is supposed to be "pragmatic," it deals broadly with the relation of language and the user; it pertains to those features of language use that are supposed to be contextual and non-semantic. Pragmatics here is intended to be the study of conversational knowledge in general; it is the study of "pragmatic facts." Let us examine some basic examples that Davis provides in order to clarify the distinction between semantic and pragmatic theory, and whether such a distinction can be maintained.

What are pragmatic facts? Here are some examples offered: Suppose Alice is speaking literally and says:

(8) I'll be in New York.

This sentence can be used for a number of purposes: Alice can be declaring her intention, making a promise or the like. These things which Alice can do by uttering (8), promising, declaring etc are called *speech acts*.

Now, one might want to propose that it is a semantic fact about (8) that it can be used to do a variety of things. But this proposal seems theoretically misguided. For

instance, along these lines one might want to claim that (8) is semantically ambiguous between:

(8a) I promise I will be in New York

(8b) I declare that I will be in New York.

The hypothesis then would be that (8) could mean either (8a) or (8b) depending on the intention of the speaker and the context of use. Assume that (8) has the same meaning as (8a). But then (8) and (8a) should have the same satisfaction conditions. But do they? (8) is true just in case Alice is in New York city after she utters (8), while (8a) is true just in case Alice promises to be in New York city sometime after she utters (8a). Thus, Davis argues that (8) and (8a) cannot mean the same thing. In addition, some argue that (8a) can be neither true nor false; this is another reason to reject this proposal. Davis points out that his claim is not that there is no relation between (8) and the range of actions that one may perform with it, but rather the relation may be captured by an appeal to the idea of pragmatic facts. The kinds of things that Alice can do with (8) on a particular occasion of use may be given by a theory of conversation (such as Grice's): it will depend upon Alice's knowledge of what kinds of speech acts can be made with the use of (8), i.e., whether she intends to make a promise or declare her intentions when uttering (8). Thus, pragmatics is seen as having as its domain what a semantic theory is unable to account for: what language users do with their language.

Another familiar example which leads theorists to make the aforementioned distinction is as follows; consider Alice's utterance of:

(9) Sam really had a ball.

Alice's utterance could be used to say two different things: she could be saying that Sam had a spherical object, or that Sam had a formal dance; 'ball' is semantically ambiguous between these meanings. But notice that what Alice means by uttering (9) on a particular occasion is not determined by her language. It depends upon Alice's intentions of what she means by 'ball' pragmatic facts that issue with the context of use of an expression.

Moreover, Alice's intentions need not be transparent; recall Grice's example of Alice's recommendation letter for Sam, saying that he has good handwriting skills. It is evident that Alice's letter implies that Sam is not a very good student, even though there is no direct syntactic or semantic correlation between this implication and the structure or meaning of (3) (i.e., 'Sam has good handwriting skills'). So how does one explain this relation? The data cries out for a distinction to be made between what are genuine semantic features of linguistic items and the things that one may do with those linguistic items. The relation between what Alice wrote and what she implied may be accounted for by an appeal to the idea that Alice is aware of certain maxims of conversation that she takes her audience to be following; a domain which is left open for pragmatic theory.

This explanation of the difference between semantic and pragmatic theory is good; it is mainly based on a methodological principle. If we are willing to grant that (i) a truth conditional semantics provides good grounds to abstract linguistic-independent meaning from context, and/or that literal meaning is also a firm support for this purpose; (ii) and our purpose is to construct a general theory of semantics, then there is a range of data (speech acts) which only a theory of pragmatics can account for. If we attempt to provide a basis for this data in our semantic theory, then we run into certain intractable difficulties,

such as having to concede that (8) and (8a) have the same meaning. In other words, the distinction between semantic and pragmatics is required if we are going to have a simple working theory of communicative activity that explains all the data. Of course, this does not mean that we could not indeed provide a semantic theory to handle the same range of data, but the plausibility of such a theory seems unlikely as it would be riddled with certain undesirable consequences. I will attempt to show that, in essence, Neale's crucial grounding for his defence of a unitarian account of description relies on the same idea (although he underplays this and does not handle the semantic-pragmatic issue head on).

But there are problems for assumption (i). Can a truth-theoretic semantics really abstract context-independent meaning? Let us look at the case of demonstratives and indexical terms. It appears that in cases where these kinds of linguistic terms are used, a truth conditional semantics will have to have recourse to speaker's intentions and thus to a domain which might be thought to be essentially pragmatic. Consider the following sentence, which Alice utters:

(10) He is tired.

Alice may use (10) for a variety of purposes, but it is evident that what is said in uttering (10) will depend on whom Alice intends on referring to by 'he'; she could be saying that Joe is tired or that Mike is tired, depending on which person she intends to refer to on the particular occasion of use. So, a speaker's intentions and her ability to use referring expressions plays a role not only in whether a speaker says something but also on what she has said.

But this is problematic for a semantic theory which is supposed to specify the truth conditions for each declarative sentence in a NL without the use of context. Is it possible to give the truth conditions for (10) without mentioning the speaker's intentions? It does not seem likely, but then we have to have access to "intentions," and these appear to fall in the domain of pragmatic theory. It would seem that the line between semantics and pragmatics is not as clear as one might think.

To look more closely at this problem, Davis notes Kripke's distinction between *speaker referent* and *semantic referent*. The semantic referent of a term is fixed by the conventions of the language, it is the referent of the expression in the NL being used, e.g., in English the term 'dog' refers to dogs. The speaker referent of a term is what the speaker intends to refer to by the use of the term on a given occasion, it is fixed by the speaker's intention and context (a speaker might mistakenly use 'dog' to refer to wolves).

The problem here is that not all terms have a semantic referent: indexical and demonstratives, pronouns like 'he' or 'she'. Their referents are determined not by the conventions of the language but rather by speaker's intentions. But the referent of such terms is a key element in determining the truth conditions of the sentences in which they occur. (10) is true if and only if the person Alice intends to refer to is tired. To clarify, this is *not* to argue that indexical and demonstrative items are "non-semantic," or that they do not have a semantic content, since the linguistic meaning of these items may be identified with the mastery of certain rules of usage. But the fact remains that the specification of this semantic content requires access to particular speaker's intentions, which appear to be in the realm of context. This is problematic, if we think that a semantic theory is supposed

to be completely context-independent. In addition, there is no easy answer to try and work these kinds of terms into a semantic theory *independently* of context. As Davis points out, one might attempt to incorporate these terms in the following manner.

(11) 'He is tired' is true just in case the person 'He' refers to is tired

Since a semantic theory must be able to account for the logical relation between sentences, this will not work:

(12) (i) He is tired; (ii) He is Samuel; (iii) Therefore Samuel is tired.

(12) turns out to be valid only in cases where both occurrences of 'He' refer to the same person. But there is no semantic factor here that can guarantee this result. Moreover, the problem appears to be intractable since there does not seem to be any plausible patch-up jobs available in these instances. Thus, it would appear that the truth conditions of certain sentences require that these conditions have recourse to the speaker's intentions, where these sentences contain expressions whose terms have no fixed semantic referent. Is the line between semantics and pragmatics as blurry as it seems to have become?

There appears to be a way out of this. a Gricean solution is to distinguish between two kinds of speaker's intentions and admit that, although a truth conditional semantics may have to be supplemented by context in certain cases, context can be easily divided between what a semantic theory must deal with and what a pragmatic theory must deal with.

The suggestion is to distinguish between *communicative* and *referential* intentions. The referential intentions of a speaker determine the semantic referents of terms which lack conventional referents, such as demonstratives and indexical expressions (and, as we

will see, a formal theory of these kinds of items is available) Communicative intentions are those intentions that speakers must have in order for their audience to recognize what they intend to communicate. Where referring expressions are concerned, the speaker's communicative intentions are to get the hearer to understand what the speaker is referring to.

Davis provides some examples to illustrate the difference between the referential and communicative intentions of a speaker. The idea is that the two types of intentions may be distinguished in that referential intentions are at the basic level, simply meant for the purpose of reference. Communicative intentions on the other hand, require on the part of the speaker a desire to *communicate* what she is referring to. Thus, communicative intentions include referential intentions but the relationship between speaker and hearer plays a crucial role in determining the former. For instance, in a room full of brown tables, Alice says.

(13) That table is brown.

Suppose Alice's utterance of (13) is intended to refer to the table under the window; her utterance is true just in case the table under the window is brown. Now, if Alice utters this under her breath, she need not intend anyone to understand what she is referring to; no communicative activity need take place. Accordingly, where she mutters this under her breath, it is evident that no one could understand which object was being referred to and what exactly was said. The only connection between what Alice referred to and 'that table' is via her "referential" intentions.

Contrast this with the situation in which she utters (13) to Sam without indicating any information as to what she was referring to. Here we have a defective speech act. Sam will justifiably think that Alice wants to communicate something to him, and therefore she intends him to understand what she is referring to: she has addressed him in a certain manner, thus she must have communicative intentions. So, a part having communicative intentions for a speaker towards her audience is having the intention that the speaker's audience understand what is being talked about; this is not necessarily the case with referential intentions. Sam, as Davis says, has a reason to be puzzled since the assumption that Alice has communicative intentions (she intends him to understand which table she is referring to) is not in agreement with the fact that Alice has not provided Sam with enough information for him to recognize those intentions. In order for Alice's communicative intentions to be recognized she has to do it in such a way as her audience will have a good chance of recognizing what those intentions are. Moreover, certain uses of language require communicative intentions, for instance, making promises and requests. Alice cannot make a promise without the intention that the person whom she makes the promise to accepts it. The example Davis gives is: if Alice promises to take Sam to a party, then she must intend that he accept her offer; if he declines, then no promise has been made.

This distinction provides a way of distinguishing truth conditional semantics from a pragmatic theory: the former is only concerned with satisfaction conditions, including those satisfaction conditions which are relative to a context of use. This means that where context-relevance is a key element in satisfaction conditions, recourse to speaker's

intentions are required where those intentions play a role in determining the referent of expressions which have no fixed semantic referent (provided by convention). Pragmatic theory will deal with a speaker's communicative intentions, the uses of language that require these intentions, and the relationship between a speaker and hearer with respect to these intentions

How good is this approach to establishing the distinction between semantics and pragmatics? If one grants that there is a difference between referential and communicative intentions, then it appears that this will provide us with a workable hypothesis from which to begin. But even then, it is looking as if the line between semantics and pragmatics is starting to get pretty blurry. semantics has to take account of speaker's intentions, which appear to be essentially of a pragmatic nature. The semantic counter-part of context (semantic reference of indexical and demonstrative items) may however, as will be shown, be provided with a formal treatment. But this ends up sounding as though we have somehow "snuck" pragmatics through the back door when the whole point was to provide a basis of clear extraction of semantics from pragmatics.

But then how is one justified in making the SP distinction? Again, since the distinction may not be grounded *solely* in linguistic facts, it will have to be supported by something else. methodology. The distinction may be supported by the need to construct a general manageable theory of linguistic competence. The line between semantics and pragmatics seems blurry; semantics is intimately related to context and therefore an extraction, for the purposes of theory-construction, will have to rely on some idealizations which may not always conform to the richness of the empirical data. This is however, the

case when one attempts to construct any general theory of an empirical nature, one need not be surprised or disappointed by this result in the subject of a theory of meaning

This is not to say that there is no SP distinction to be made or that the distinction is wholly artificial. As we have seen, there are clear cases where the data cries out for such a distinction. The difficulty is in establishing it on a general foundation, the usual basis given is context-independency, but the problem is that even though this seems to work in most cases, it will not do the job when it comes to certain kinds of expressions in NL. Here, I think we have to resort to grounding the distinction for the higher purpose of theory-construction

How does all this relate to the debate between the unitarian and the referentialist view of descriptions? To defend the unitarian view of descriptions one will have to rely on the argument (as does Neale) that certain features of an expression are not genuinely semantic features of that expression but rather, they issue with the context of utterance. This in turn, will be grounded in the assumption that an SP distinction is viable, and that semantic features are distinguishable from pragmatic features (i.e., assumption AN). But, since the line between semantics and pragmatics is not as sharp as one might hope for, and since the features of an expression that one regards as semantic or pragmatic depend on this line, then a unitarian account of descriptions is threatened. The strategy then will be to lobby support for the distinction via additional means; this is in fact the route that Neale appears to take, although he never explicitly comes out and admits that there are some theoretical problems for the SP distinction. Neale seems to take this distinction as a given and proceeds to defend the unitarian camp; but it is evident that he is aware of the

difficulties since he talks much about the methodological advantages of taking certain features of an expression as belonging to the pragmatic component of that expression

2.2.2 *More Objections*

Up to now we have only considered one problem with establishing the SP distinction (via context-independency) I want to briefly look at some other problems that Allwood points out for this route I believe that this will serve to enhance our conviction that the approach of context-independency is in itself insufficient to ground the SP distinction and that other support is needed The objections Allwood offers are generally helpful but I think that the conclusions he attempts to draw from them are too extreme and that only weaker conclusions are warranted. He wants to establish that there is no such thing as context-independent meaning and that semantics as pursued along these lines is completely misguided. Let us examine some of his arguments.

As we said, if we want to draw the SP distinction along the lines of context-independence, there are two ways to proceed: one is to claim there is no essential difference between a formal language and a NL, and to import to NL semantics, formal notions such as truth, reference, logical form and so forth; the second route is to hold that through "literal" or "conventional" meaning we can arrive at context-independent meaning

I believe that both routes are fairly successful and do, *in most cases*, give us "inherent" context-independent meaning But again, as with most theories, the necessary idealizations that make generalizations possible, give rise to cases where data and theory might diverge The overall success of the theory however, does not solely depend on

whether there are exceptions to it but also how useful it is in prediction, in this case, the overall success of a semantic theory will depend upon its predictive power with respect to problems concerning substitutivity, propositional attitude contexts, modalities, non-denoting noun phrases, quantifier scope, etc (D 14).

Allwood is impressed by the exceptional cases where theory and data do not meet, he points to several extreme examples where the SP distinction (via context-dependency) cannot be made. Let us take the truth conditional approach first. Allwood points to the familiar fact that a truth conditional semantic theory cannot rid itself of context completely. as we saw, indexical and demonstrative factors must be taken into account. But this does not appear to be that much of a problem since one may explain these features by using a formal apparatus which accounts for contextual coordinates such as speaker, hearer, time and place: semantics extended with a pure pragmatics. But Allwood objects that this will not do since it relies on the supposedly mistaken assumption that "only certain predicates need contextual determination and that only a finite number of factors [are] involved while other predicates... still belong to the domain of pure semantics having extensions determined for once and for all independently of all context and use" (DSAP 180). This assumption is false, Allwood thinks, because of the phenomena of "predicate indeterminacy," and for the reason that the contextual factors that determine truth conditions are too numerous to account for in a pure pragmatics. Let us look at an example that Allwood gives:

(14) She was hungry.

Here are some problems that Allwood sees with determining the semantics of (14): (i) the reference of 'She' is not given, this objection as we have seen, is manageable; (ii) the supposed predicate indeterminacy of 'hungry' between a phenomenal sense and a physiological sense, the point being that a feeling of hunger is not always accompanied by physiological state of hunger and vice versa. I am not exactly sure what to make of this objection; I assume that the problem Allwood is referring to is that predicates are ambiguous (as with our 'ball' example) and that context is required in order to determine which meaning is required. As we said, most recognize this, and this is why theorists such as Neale and Davis work within a Gricean framework which does not deny that context is to be included, assuming that certain important distinctions are made. Allwood does not take Grice's approach into account but he would probably say that this route is unavailable since the required distinctions are always unclear. I do not believe that the situation is so grave: the Gricean communicative-referential distinction provides a good working proposal from which to begin to extract the semantic from the pragmatic. If this is correct, then instead of concluding that the SP distinction is unviable, I think that one ought to, as I said, consider different ways in which to lobby support for it, rather than claiming that the whole approach is misguided, since the SP distinction is indeed intuitive and there is also a range of data which requires it.

Allwood's other objection (regarding an extension of semantics with a formal pragmatics) is that the contextual coordinates required in order to pin down reference may be too numerous to account for. I think the response to this objection is quite simple; first of all, it is not clear that this is indeed the case; and even if so, as long as the coordinates

are not infinite, what is stopping one from outlining a theory which is able to take twenty or even thirty of these coordinates into account? I am inclined to think there is no theoretical difficulty with this route even though the theory in question might be rather complicated.

As Allwood notes, an alternate route for supporting the SP distinction in terms of context-independency might be to appeal to the idea of logical form. Allwood does not think that this will work since the ordinary idea of logical form is that it is an abstract representation of the truth conditions of a sentence. The logical form of a sentence *S* in a language *L* may be thought of as the structure that is imposed on *S* when providing a systematic and principled mapping from sentences of *L* (as determined by a syntactic theory for *L*) to the *propositions* (types) those sentences express; or, it is the structure imposed on *S* in the course of providing a systematic and principled truth definition for *L* (GFLF 99). And because truth conditions are based on the idea of reference, logical form will also be contextually "infected" for Allwood, since reference itself cannot be determined outside context: "a sentence will have one logical form in one situation and another logical form in another situation (DSAP 180)."

I believe that this position is mistaken. First, if we are willing to accept a Gricean sort of approach and extend a NL semantics with a theory of indexicality, then there do not appear to be any problems. But more importantly, I think that Allwood's position leads to rather undesirable consequences. Consider an example that Neale gives (although for a different purpose) (GFLF 99);

(15) (i) Every farmer is happy; (ii) Pierre is a farmer; (iii) therefore Pierre is happy;

(16) (i) $\forall x (Fx \supset Hx)$; (ii) Fp ; (iii) therefore Hp

Now, I think it is reasonable to claim that it is because we are able to assign sentences in (15) certain logical forms that the argument may be considered to have the logical structure that it does. And as Neale says, this is just a step away from saying that the logical form of sentences in (15) are given by formulas in (16), or something of a similar structure. Now, in cases of simple sentences, which do not contain indexical and demonstrative items, such as (15), I do not see any problems in determining context-independent logical form. But Allwood's remarks apply here also, if logical form cannot establish context-independency *at all*, then we do not have the option of being able to account for the logical relation between sentences, in addition to concepts of implication and validity. It is all well and good to point out that there is really no "pure" context free semantics, but what of it? Does this mean that there are no degrees to "contextivity"? The idea is that even though logical form may be "infected" by context, this infection comes in degrees. As far as simple sentences, as the above concerned, there is no reason to think that the logical form of the propositions expressed by these sentences are not context-independent; indeed, if we do not allow for this possibility, then we have much to lose. Allwood points to clear problems with the idea of context-independency; but he fails to examine those cases which urge that such an approach is greatly needed and fruitful. An appealing case is made by the idea that context-independency allows (although in degrees) the semanticist to explore the logical relation between sentences. Furthermore, in chapter three, we will explore a basic formal approach to pragmatic theory, which will enable us to deal with indexical and demonstrative items.

Before turning to the next chapter, I want to examine one more objection that Allwood offers. A second approach to context-independent meaning is through the idea of literal or conventional meaning. The conventional meaning of a term is supposed to be seen as meaning which is more or less present in most contexts in which the term is used according to linguistic conventions; or as a sort of basic meaning from which all other uses are derivative (DSAP 183). As Allwood notes, the role of this type of meaning can be appreciated when considering words or sentences out of context, e.g., 'chair', 'book', 'table' etc.

The question which Allwood asks himself is: can literal meaning be given without the notion of truth and reference (since this route is assumed to be closed), which does justice to the idea that this type of meaning can achieve context-independence. Allwood considers three approaches to literal meaning:

(a) The union approach.

(b) The basic meaning approach.

(c) The greatest common denominator approach ('GCD' hereafter).

Route (a) says that literal meaning may be arrived at through the union of *all* uses. This has the undesirable consequence of linking *any* information that connects to the use of a term with its literal meaning. This makes the literal meaning of an expression vague and polysemous, it does not allow one to differentiate literal meaning from metaphorical or satirical meaning. Thus, I believe that Allwood is correct in rejecting this strategy.

The basic meaning approach (b) to literal meaning identifies meaning with that which is known to be the essence of something. As Wittgenstein was first to object: it is

very hard to tell the "linguistic essence" of a word from that which is merely accidental; and even if one could pick this out, it is not easy to see what the essences of expressions such as 'ouch' and 'even though' are. I am in agreement with Allwood here, I do not believe that this approach is a good candidate for getting at literal meaning.

The greatest common denominator approach (c) is to identify the meaning of an expression with its most general, or common usage: "the idea is that the literal meaning of an expression is that which is common to all contexts of use" (DSAP 186). This approach has the desirable consequence of being dependent on conventional use, since it is the union of most common uses; it differs from strategy (a), since it is not the union of *all* uses, but only those which appear again and again. As Allwood notes, GCD also has the advantage of suiting all types of meaning: referential, cognitive, attitudinal and emotive. For instance, if we were to examine the use of 'chair', 'book' or 'table', we would indeed arrive at a common denominator of how these words were being used most of the time, in almost all contexts, which we could call the literal meaning of these expressions. We could then consider this meaning to be the "constant" or inherent meaning of these expressions. But this approach will not work according to Allwood.

Allwood thinks that here are two reasons why GCD will not give us inherent meaning: (i) for many items, there is no greatest common usage. To cite Allwood: "this is probably true for the past tense morpheme in English." This leads people to, Allwood thinks, where there is "zero" meaning, to conclude that the expression in question is homonymous and unnecessary multiplication of meanings have to be given.

Allwood's third dissatisfaction has to do with the claim that the meanings arrived through GCD will be so general that they will be hard to distinguish from metaphorical uses. Thus, context will always be required in any analysis of literal meaning through this approach. How good are Allwood's objections here?

I believe that Allwood's argument is weak. In order to argue that GCD is defective, Allwood points to some extreme and exceptional cases where the strategy does not always yield the desired results. But one only need mention that this strategy will and *does* yield fruitful results *in most cases*. I do not believe that anyone will want to argue over the fact that this approach will have to be supplemented in the case of certain *kinds* of expressions; but at the same time, one cannot generalize from exceptional cases to the adequacy of a theory. No one is claiming that this approach is perfect, but most of the time, as theorists are inclined to agree, it is a good way to arrive at a meaning which indeed appears to be inherent. For example, examine the previous words: 'book', 'table', 'boy', 'run', and the like. It is evident that the GCD strategy will give us pretty good account of how these words are conventionally used. As far Allwood's claim that the meaning provided will be too vague (such that it may not be distinguished from satirical or metaphorical uses) is concerned, this is completely off the mark. Again in most cases, this approach will provide quite precise uses.

Although, I agree that literal meaning will have to, in some cases, resort to context. But this is not so problematic; as long as one is willing to recognize the fact that where the SP distinction is concerned, it is a matter of degree to which one can extract the

semantic from the pragmatic. At times, literal meaning or truth conditions will provide context-independence, at other times, a theory of indexicality will have to be brought in.

In conclusion, the SP distinction is indeed viable: the linguistic data suggests that such a distinction has to be made if we are to have a working theory of linguistic competence. A natural approach to ground this distinction is in the idea of context-independency. However, since it is evident that sometimes recourse to context is required, a distinction between referential and communicative intentions can be made (or a similar strategy needs to be employed). In addition, a formal pragmatics may be used to supplement semantic theory, where certain problems arise.

III. In Defence of The Theory of Descriptions: Neale's Gricean Solution

Neale argues that the referential usage of definite descriptions is a more general phenomenon that arises with the use of quantifier expressions across the board, therefore, this difficulty will have to be accounted for at the wider level of a theory of NL quantification. Thus, there is no support for the claim that TD is at fault. In this chapter, I provide an analysis of Neale's arguments; I conclude that his position is indeed correct. Since descriptions may contain context-sensitive expressions, (3.1) TD is "fitted" with a formal theory of indexical items, from here, (3.2) Grice's theory of Conversational Implicature (which is based on the semantics-pragmatics distinction previously discussed) is detailed with particular relevance to methodological considerations. In (3.3), a precise statement of the debate between the Russellian and referentialist is given, and Neale's response to the "basic case" argument is examined. Sections (3.3.1) and (3.3.2) examine some further complications and objections provided by the referentialist.

3.1 The Referential Challenge: Context and Indexicality

Recall that the referential objection against the unitarian consists in the claim that there is a semantically distinct interpretation of definite descriptions, the definite article is supposedly *semantically ambiguous* between a Russellian and a referential account. With respect to the semantic framework presented in chapter one, this objection amounts to the claim that if a speaker uses a definite description <the F> referentially in an utterance *u* of

<the F is G>, then <the F> functions as a referring expression and the proposition expressed by *it* is object-dependent (D 64). Also, remember that no one is disputing the fact that descriptions may be *used* to communicate object-dependent thoughts; the issue is over the *semantic* importance of this fact. Is referential usage a genuine semantic phenomena? In other words, is it a part of the semantic function or meaning of definite descriptions that they can be used this way? Or, does referential usage relate more to general facts about communication that should be accounted for by a pragmatic theory? Neale argues for a unitarian account of descriptions and suggests that referential usage is a non-semantic phenomena. Is his position correct?

In the last chapter, we wanted to divide an analysis of linguistic competence into semantic and pragmatic parts. Why? In the inquiry into linguistic meaning, we came across cases where there is no apparent linguistic relation between what an expression means and the purpose for which it may be used. This data was accounted for by the hypothesis that there is a distinction to be made between the genuinely semantic features of an expression and other contextual or pragmatic features. The SP distinction was supported by certain linguistic arguments, but we ran into several difficulties which, although resolvable, showed that this distinction was not as sharp as one would like. This was for the reason that it was not always possible to make a sharp division between the semantic and the pragmatic. It was then argued that the distinction had to be additionally supported on methodological grounds: it made the enquiry into linguistic competence much more manageable than if there was no such distinction.

Now, whether Neale is correct will depend on the same sort of reasoning (although we will not argue over whether there is a SP distinction to be made, rather this will be taken as given). The facts are: we are presented with certain divergent range of features concerning descriptions. Our job is to decide where those features belong. Are they to be accounted for by a semantic or a pragmatic theory? What we have at our disposal is basically two alternative theories, one which argues that descriptions belong only to the class of quantifier phrases (TD), and a theory which argues that descriptions also belong to the class of referring expressions. The question we have to ask is do both theories account for the same range of linguistic data equally? And if they do, how do we decide between the alternate theories? I will attempt to show that Neale's arguments concerning quantifier expressions show that referential usage is a general phenomenon which affects all quantifier phrases and thus should be accounted for by a theory of communication. These arguments are methodological, as will become clear, and concern theory-construction; it is urged that there is much to profit by keeping a unitarian account of descriptions.

In any discussion concerning context, an essential task will be to provide a theory of context-sensitive expressions, such as indexicals and demonstratives. Moreover, as Neale points out, it is evident that descriptive phrases contain such kinds of items, thus TD will have to be "fitted" onto a theory of indexicality.

In order to construct a theory of indexicality that will fit onto TD, and into a Gricean framework, Neale makes a necessary distinction as was implicit in chapter one, there must be a distinction between the linguistic meaning of an expression and the

semantic value of a particular dated utterance of that expression, expressions are thought to have meaning while dated utterances of those expressions have semantic value. As Neale explains, the semantic value of an utterance of a sentence is a proposition, the semantic value of a subsentential expression is what the utterance of this subsentential expression adds to the identity of the proposition of which it is a part. Moreover, it is evident that Russell's investigations with TD were concerned with the particular dated utterances of expressions rather than the more abstract notion of linguistic meaning of sentence types. (It is important to remark that Neale will adopt Russell's talk of object-dependent propositions "containing" their subjects here, as most theorists who argue for the case for semantic ambiguity also use this terminology; but we should note that nothing substantial turns on this way of speaking and there are no ontological commitments being made)

In accordance with the semantic picture presented so far, the semantic value of a referring expression is the object that the expression picks out. In the case of an indexical expression, the semantic value is systematically determined by the context of utterance. For instance, as we saw in the last chapter, the utterance of a context-sensitive expression like 'I' takes a distinct individual as its semantic value, depending upon whoever is the speaker. This is, however, not to say that the linguistic meaning of this expression changes from one context to another. But rather, the linguistic meaning may be said to remain constant while the semantic value changes. The linguistic meaning of an indexical expression may be identified with the mastery of a certain rule for its use, which takes into account the situation of utterance. For instance, the rule for 'I' may be characterized as the

referent of whoever is the individual speaking (D 68) (To be clear though, this is not to say that 'I' and 'the individual speaking' have the same meaning) Similarly, the distinction between meaning and value may be made for other indexical expressions such as 'this', 'that', 'there' and so forth

These proposals are implemented by taking the linguistic meaning of an expression to be a function from context to a semantic value. A context may be represented as an n -tuple, the elements being the relevant contextual coordinates in determining the semantic value of the expression under investigation. For example, Neale cites a simple Lewisian model; C (context) may be represented as a quadruple $\langle s, a, t, p \rangle$, where s = speaker, a = the addressee, t = the time of utterance, and p = the place of utterance. Some elementary rules are ($[X]$ represents the function that is the linguistic meaning the expression X)

$$[I] (\langle s, a, t, p \rangle) = s.$$

$$[you] (\langle s, a, t, p \rangle) = a.$$

$$[now] (\langle s, a, t, p \rangle) = t.$$

$$[here] (\langle s, a, t, p \rangle) = p.$$

Again, this is just a very simple outline of a "pure" approach to pragmatic theory. In addition, as Neale notes, Kaplan has proposed that demonstrative uses of demonstrative pronouns ('this', 'that'), personal pronouns, and demonstrative descriptions ('this man', 'that table') might require an accompanying demonstration and "that the rule for a genuine demonstrative specifies that the referent is the object of that demonstration" (D 69). This is captured by taking context as an ordered quintuple:

$$\langle s, a, \langle d_1, \dots, d_n \rangle, t, p \rangle$$

where $\langle d_1, \dots, d_n \rangle$ are supposed to be the objects any demonstrations in the utterance.

Recall that genuine referring expressions are subject to (R3).

(R3) If 'b' is a genuine referring expression that refers to x , then 'b' is a rigid designator, i.e., x enters into a specification of the truth conditions of (the proposition expressed by) an utterance u of 'b is G' with respect to actual and counterfactual situations (D 20).

Thus, it should be emphasized that indexical pronouns and demonstrative expressions ('this man', 'that man'), are also subject to R3, since they are genuine referring expressions. Neale points out that this fact is sometimes passed over because of the context-sensitive nature of the expressions in question. The rigid nature of these demonstrative expressions becomes evident once the situation of utterance is distinguished from actual or counterfactual situations at which the truth or falsity of the proposition is to be evaluated. Neale offers the following example, suppose someone says (D 70):

(1) That man is a spy.

The individual referred to by the demonstrative expression 'that man' is the person pointed to in the context of utterance. As with a proper name, the individual referred to enters into a specification of the truth conditions of the proposition expressed; one understands (1) if and only if one grasps the object-dependent proposition that $\langle b \text{ is } G \rangle$. Moreover, to be clear, Neale wants to point out that a sentence of the form 'that F is G' is semantically different from a sentence of the form 'the F is G' since, as shown in chapter one, the latter expresses an object-independent proposition whereas the former expresses an object-dependent proposition. Indeed, one must be aware that the definite description 'the man I am demonstrating' does not and cannot determine the reference of a particular

utterance of 'that man', since the proposition expressed by an utterance of (1) will be true in worlds "where I fail to point to during my lifetime," the truth condition of these expressions are not the same (D 70)

Neale explains that in virtue of compositionality, the distinction between meaning and the value of an expression also applies to sentences and dated utterances of sentences. A distinction is to be made between the meaning of a sentence <b is G>, and the value or the proposition expressed by a particular dated utterance of this sentence. This is brought out by discussing what it is to understand a sentence. Consider the example provided, imagine that I own a vase collection and keep it in a separate room, and suppose that my friend goes into this room and then calls out:

(2) This vase is broken.

Now, I know the meaning of this sentence simply by virtue of the fact that I have knowledge of English; I know the meaning of the words in the sentence and I am familiar with the rules by which these words are put together. Thus, I am able to understand (2) on the basis of the meaning of its parts and its syntactical organization. But, there is an important sense in which I cannot grasp the proposition that is expressed by (2) in this situation; since I am unable to establish the referent of 'this vase'. Neale explains that although I am in a position to grasp what *sort* of proposition is been expressed, I am unable to grasp *which* proposition has been expressed. I know that some vase has been broken, yet I do not know which one; I have failed to identify the particular object that is the constituent of the proposition in question. Neale puts this by saying that "although I do not come to entertain an object-dependent proposition concerning any particular vase, I

come to entertain an object-independent proposition to the effect that one of my vases is broken (D 71)."

What does this talk of context-sensitive expressions have to do with TD? First, it is evident that descriptions may contain such expressions. Thus, one needs to explain how things are going to work in these cases. And second, this account will have the task of thwarting any objection to the effect that TD's implication of uniqueness is threatened by the existence of indexical items. Neale offers some examples of descriptions which contain indexical items:

every *currently* registered Democrat

the *present* king of France

the first person *I* saw this morning

a women who came to see *you*

the men who delivered *your* sofa

my mother

Let us examine an illustration Neale gives to show how indexical terms are to fit with TD. For Russell, what he called the "meaning" of a referring expression (what we have been calling the "semantic value of a dated utterance") is just its referent, the semantic value of an utterance of $\langle b \text{ is } G \rangle$ is an object-dependent proposition; while the semantic value of a sentence $\langle \text{the } F \text{ is } G \rangle$ is a proposition which says that there is only one thing that is F and that one thing is G . Let us note that an utterance of a description will not take an individual as its semantic value since, again, it is not a referring expression, but rather a quantifier phrase. The grammatical subject $\langle \text{the } F \rangle$ does not pick out any particular object

which is constitutive of the identity of the proposition concerned. Neale explains that an utterance of

(3) Stephen Neale's mother is English.

expresses the proposition that may be represented as

(4) [the x : x mother-of Stephen Neale] (x is English).

which expresses the property of *being the mother of Stephen Neale*. If Neale were to say

(5) My mother is English.

The proposition expressed by (5) also contains the same relational property. This however, is not to imply that the description 'Stephen Neale's mother', and the indexical description 'my mother' have the same linguistic meaning. They have different rules for their use: only Neale may use (5) to invoke the property of *being the mother of Stephen Neale*, while someone else, say Jane Smith, may use 'my mother' to invoke the property of *being the mother of Jane Smith*. As Neale points out, just because the denotation of indexical descriptions change with the speaker does not threaten TD's implication of uniqueness; since uniqueness in these cases is relative to the speaker.

How does this talk of uniqueness relate to the distinction between meaning of <the F is G > and its semantic value? It is not the sentence <the F is G > itself that has any particular implication of uniqueness but rather a particular dated utterance of this sentence. The linguistic meaning is, in part, a rule that specifies the correct use of the description; it says that the description is correctly used, relative to a context, only if there is one object which satisfies the description. Neale's explanation is quite persuasive and shows that there

are no difficulties for TD in the case of descriptions containing indexical items; indeed, this gives TD a lot of expressive power (D 72).

Also, it is important to note that Neale makes the standard assumption that there is an intimate relationship between the proposition expressed by an utterance of a sentence and the linguistic meaning of that expression; and, moreover, between understanding a sentence and understanding a dated utterance of that sentence. Although, as has been shown above, there are various ways in which the linguistic meaning of an expression may underdetermine the proposition that is expressed by a particular utterance of that expression, because of contextual factors introduced by indexical expressions. But these contextual factors may be determined by examining the relevant features of the situation.

The connection with truth conditions can be made explicit by looking at what it is to understand a proposition: one may be said to grasp an object-dependent proposition only if one is acquainted with the particular object which the proposition is about, in addition to being familiar with the property that is being ascribed to the individual. So, understanding a proposition consists partly of knowing what is the case if it is true; and, understanding an utterance of a sentence, along similar lines, involves knowing its truth conditions in actual and counterfactual scenarios. Thus, pinning down the semantical value of an expression is partly to specify its truth conditions (D 73).

Neale's strategy with respect to the introduction of a formal theory of indexicality has been partly of a preventive measure. This is not to say that it is not a rather insightful development and "fitting" of Russell's TD into a contemporary theory of linguistic competence. The idea has been that the referentialist may object by pointing out that TD

fails for the simple reason that it does not account for the fact that descriptions do not carry any semantic implication of uniqueness. But this kind of objection will have no bite whatsoever, if we are inclined, as most theorists are, to make the principled distinction between meaning and value.

3.2 Grice's Theory of Conversational Implicature

In this section, I examine Neale's discussion of Grice's theory of conversation. The idea will be to provide a framework within which one may look at the relationship between those features of an expression which are semantical and those features which have to do with context. In particular, Grice's distinction between what a proposition expresses and what it is used to convey, will be examined.

Let us begin with an example Neale provides. Now, it is evident that a hearer may take more information from an utterance than has been communicated by it. Suppose I am in a restaurant, and I speak with a British accent. In placing my order, I tell the waiter:

(6) I would like a club soda, please.

Now, there is a host of information made available by my speech act; some of which is irrelevant to the communicative act performed. For example, it will be implied that I can pay for the soda; also, by my accent, the waiter will be able to tell that I am English. But this has nothing to do with the communicative act I intend to perform in any important way; moreover, the waiter will also be able to entertain other irrelevant propositions with respect to the speech act, such as, that I can use my vocal cords, that I am alive and so forth.

But more important for a theory of conversation, as Grice noted, is information related by a speech act that is relevant to the act but which is not made explicit by it; Grice was interested in "speech acts involving, in some communicatively *relevant* way, propositions other than the proposition strictly and literally expressed" (D 74). A speaker may say one thing but intend to communicate something entirely different from what she has literally said. Recall that this was the case with the recommendation letter. The proposition expressed by:

(7) Sam has good hand writing skills.

diverges completely from what it is being used to convey, or what Grice calls the *proposition meant*. The problem here, as said, is that there is no specifiable method of correlating what is strictly expressed with what is meant or conveyed (even if one plugs in the relevant contextual coordinates of the utterance). Thus, Neale explains, the proposition expressed (which is determined by a semantic theory and a theory of indexicality) may diverge from the proposition meant (the determination of which includes speaker's communicative intentions and constraints governing rational discourse; I examine these below).

Neale makes explicit the familiar Gricean framework: there are at least three important notions of meaning (of a sentence as uttered by a speaker on an occasion) which have to be differentiated: (i) the linguistic meaning of the sentence (ii) the semantical value of the sentence with respect to context, and (iii) the proposition expressed, i.e., what the speaker meant in uttering the sentence. Now it is the relationship between (ii) and (iii)

which is of most interest to us here, since this relation will be key to a unitarian defence of TD.

In most cases, the proposition expressed exhausts the proposition meant. But when this is not the case, how might one provide an analysis of the proposition meant? Grice's analysis is as follows:

(G1) By uttering *u*, *S* means that *p* only if for some audience *H*, *S* utters *u* intending:

(a) *H* to actively entertain the thought that *p*, and

(b) *H* to recognize that *S* intends (a) (D 76).

Neale asks us to consider the restaurant scene again: the waiter can tell that I am English from the acoustic properties of my speech act. But since this is not a part of what I mean, condition (a) blocks such communicatively irrelevant propositions from being passed as a part of what the speaker means, by virtue of the speaker's intentions: It was never my intention to convey that I was English. In addition, Neale points out that even if I intended the waiter to realize that I was English (if I thought that tourists get better attention), but I did not want him to know that this was my intention, then by condition (b) this proposition is prevented as being considered a part of the communicative act. These constraints on when a proposition is meant are for the purpose of fitting in with Grice's larger overall framework, what is called the theory of *conversational implicature*. Neale remarks that, as many other theorists such as Kripke, have recognized, Grice's theory will be important for TD since descriptions are used in a variety of communicative environments (D 76).

Grice describes conversation as a cooperative enterprise governed by his "Cooperative Principle":

(CP) Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged (D 76)

Neale gives Grice's four more specific maxims and submaxims, under the above general principle, which are supposed to capture the idea truthfulness, informativeness, relevance, and clarity:

Maxim of Quantity. Make your contribution as informative as required (for the current purposes of the exchange). Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Maxim of Quality. Try to make your contribution one that is true. Specifically Do not say what you believe to be false; do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Maxim of Relation. Be relevant

Maxim of Manner. Be perspicuous. Specifically be brief and orderly, avoid ambiguity and obscurity (D 76)

For Grice, as Neale points out, a central claim is that there is a direct and systematic relation between the assumptions required to hold on to the idea that CP and its maxims are being observed and a certain class of what are called "conversational implicatures." A speaker is said to have conversationally implicated that which is required to preserve the assumption that the speaker is following CP and its maxims. For instance, if H's car has broken down and he asks a nearby S where he can buy gas, and S replies down the corner, then S has conversationally implicated that the gas station down the corner is open for business. If S did not think so, then her remark would not have been relevant; as Neale points out, "S implicates that which must be assumed to be believed in order to preserve

the assumption that she is adhering to CP, in particular, the maxim enjoining relevance" (D 76).

Again, contrast this with the recommendation letter case, in which CP, and in particular the maxim of relevance has been deliberately violated. The reader is justified in believing that something else is meant, since both the referee and reader know that the referee should be able to say something more relevant about her student. Thus, the reader is justified in believing that the referee is implicitly trying to convey something to another effect, in order to preserve the idea that the referee is indeed attempting to adhere to CP and its maxims (albeit implicitly)

There are two other important features about Grice's theory which Neale examines. The first idea is that a conversational implicature should be cancellable without literal contradiction. Neale points out that in the recommendation letter case, the professor may have continued "and in my opinion he is the brightest student we have here " Note that there is no literal contradiction in this addition to (7). Moreover, it might be the case that only what is implicated is what is meant, the professor may have no idea of what Sam's handwriting is like In this case, the proposition implicated replaces the proposition expressed as to what is truly being communicated And thus, it is natural that the truth values of the two propositions (expressed and meant) may differ.

The second idea is that a conversational implicature should be derivable, Neale calls this the "Justification requirement " According to Grice, one should be able to justify a conversational implicature along the following lines:

(a) S has expressed the proposition that p.

(b) There is no reason to suppose that S is not observing the CP and maxims

(c) S could not be doing this unless he thought that q

(d) S knows (and knows that I know that he knows) that I can see that he thinks the supposition that he thinks that q is required.

(e) S has done nothing to stop me thinking that q

(f) S intends me to think, or is at least willing to allow me to think, that q.

(g) And so, S has implicated that q (D 78).

Both the examples of implicatures examined may be justified along these lines.

Up to now, the forms of implicatures that we have been looking at are called "particularized" conversational implicatures. They are particularized in that these implicatures are easily detected and explained from the context of utterance. Moreover, the line between semantic and pragmatic in these examples is quite sharp and readily agreed upon. But, abstracting away from these cases, Neale (following Grice) is interested in what are called "general" implicatures. These implicatures, it seems, are not as clearly dependent on the details of the particular context of utterance.

Now, Grice has suggested that certain theorists have been inclined to overcharacterize the linguistic meaning of certain expressions when, in fact, these variant meanings are just forms of *general implicatures* that issue with use; they are non-semantic factors that have to do with general conversational implicature rather than linguistic meaning. Grice's work concentrates on intentional verbs and with formal devices such as 'and', 'or' and 'the'. Neale examines what Grice's concerns amount to in examining the

English expression 'and'. The overall strategy used here will prepare us for Neale's defence of the unitarian analysis of descriptions.

It is evident that there appear to be different implications that attach to the use of the word 'and' in English. Some might claim that this is evidence that 'and' in English and & as a formal device have different meanings; the word as used in English and as used as a formal device are lexically different, in English the conjunction has several meanings while as a formal device it only has one. But Grice argues that there is no lexical difference between 'and' and & the apparently different implications that attach to the use of the English expression have to do with general conversational implicature, and can be explained on the basis of a theory of conversation. Consider the following sentences Neale provides:

- (a) The moon goes around the earth and the earth goes around the sun.
- (b) Jack and Jill got married and Jill gave birth to twins.
- (c) The president walked in and the troops jumped to attention.

A logical characteristic of & is that it is communicative; this presents a problem for the English counterpart 'and' in sentence (b): anyone who uttered (b) would be taken to imply that Jack and Jill were married prior to giving birth to twins; if the order of the conjuncts is reversed then what is implied is something different. In sentence (c) there is an implication of temporal and causal connection. the troops jumped to attention *because* the president walked in (D 80).

Now, this might lead a theorist to posit a three way semantical ambiguity concerning 'and'. This, Neale points out is "extravagant" since the truth of 'p and (c)q'

guarantees the truth of 'p and (b)q' which guarantees the truth of 'p and (a)q'. A crucial strategy of a unitary account for 'and' here (as will also be used in the case of descriptions) will be to employ Grice's *Modified Occam's Razor*: meanings are not to be multiplied beyond necessity, if we allow for the principled distinction between proposition expressed and the proposition(s) meant, and if a pragmatic explanation is available of why a particular expression seems to diverge in meaning in different linguistic contexts, then *ceteris paribus* the pragmatic explanation is preferred to postulating semantical ambiguity (D 80)

Pragmatic explanations are available here: temporal implication can be explained on the basis of Maxim of Manner, the idea that a speaker's utterances should be orderly, the causal connection may be explained in terms of the idea that a speaker is adhering to the Maxim of Relevance. The Gricean view here is that these so called lexical ambiguities are really forms of generalized implicature: they issue with the use of an expression rather than being a part of the linguistic meaning of that expression. Neale does not want to go all out for a defence of the view that 'and' has the same meaning as &, but rather he wants to "outline the form a pragmatic explanation of the alleged ambiguity is supposed to take" (D 80)

But why is a pragmatic explanation preferable to the positing of lexical ambiguity in this case? These reasons have to do with theory-construction. A pragmatic explanation will provide a more general and economic theory. There is much generality lost by postulating several lexical functions of 'and'; moreover, the semantic theory which accounts for these readings will be considerably more complex than a theory which does

not. In addition, as Neale says, (i) implications of temporal priority and causal connection with respect to 'and' occur across unrelated languages, (ii) it seems reasonable to assume that even if one was explicitly taught the rules for &, these ambiguities would still arise, and (iii) these ambiguities would also arise for sentence sequences. Thus, on methodological grounds, it would be more than reasonable to argue that "where semantical and pragmatic accounts handle the same range of data, the pragmatic account is preferable" (D 81).

Now we are getting a closer look at the Gricean strategy that Neale will employ to defend TD: theory construction plays a crucial role in determining whether semantic ambiguity is to be postulated or not. If the linguistic facts may be explained by a theory of conversation, then why complicate matters? Indeed, unless our theory runs completely against the data, then it appears that the reasonable thing to do is adopt the theory that is more general and economic. Before I examine Neale's defence of TD, I would like to discuss one more example that Neale provides, with a similar kind of reasoning. This example focuses on the determiner 'some'. Assume that two journalists H and S are discussing a recent demonstration in an oppressive country. Some demonstrators were supposedly killed by the police. Although S did not witness the police brutality (but she fully believes it took place), she saw some demonstrators killed accidentally by a car. In discussing this S says.

(9) Some of the deaths were accidental.

In this context S can be taken to also believe that

(10) Some of the deaths were not accidental

This however does not warrant the claim that <some F's are G's> entails <some F's are not G's>. Moreover, it would be unreasonable to argue that 'some' is semantically ambiguous, that sometimes <Some F's are G's> entails <some F's are not G's> while at other times it does not. Here is how a pragmatic explanation can be employed here in order to show that (9) may be used to convey a proposition that differs from the standard quantificational reading (rather than postulating a semantical ambiguity). In a communicative context, the proposition expressed by (9) is weaker than

(11) All of the deaths were accidental.

Because it would be more appropriate (relevant) to make the stronger claim (11), if the speaker thought it was true, a speaker who makes the weaker claim (9) will conversationally implicate that she does not believe the stronger claim. And if the speaker does not believe that all of the deaths were accidental then she must be willing to entertain the idea that some of the deaths were not accidental.

The general or deeper idea here is that the fact that language may be used for a variety of purposes is best explained by a pragmatic theory. To say that meaning is use is not to conflate the two, indeed, it is this motivation that runs the risk of blocking any informative enquiry into semantic theory. The SP distinction provides a good framework within which one can begin to ground a serious theory of conversation, which then yields fruitful results in providing simple and general explanations in accounting for a range of linguistic data. Let us now turn to the referential debate.

3.3 Neale's Gricean Defence of The Theory of Descriptions

According to the semantic picture presented, the referentialist insists that:

(A1) If a speaker uses a definite description <the F> referentially in an utterance u of 'the F is G', then <the F> functions as a referring expression and the proposition expressed by u is object-dependent (rather than descriptive) (D 64)

Recall that no one doubts that descriptions can be used referentially, that is, they can be used to communicate object-dependent thoughts, rather, the issue is over the semantic importance of this fact. The referentialist contends that this usage (i.e., claim A1 along with some clarifications below) may be taken as grounds to argue that there is a *semantically* distinct interpretation of definite descriptions. The Russellian-Gricean thinks that this usage may be accounted for by general facts about communication, and thus there is no reason to posit lexical ambiguity; it is argued that, as with the 'and' case, one profits significantly, with respect to generality and economy, by explaining referential usage in terms of a pragmatic theory. In this final section, I provide an analysis of Neale's version of the Gricean defence against the referentialist.

Neale defines a "basic case" for when a description should (for the referentialist) count as semantically referential; the following four conditions need to be met.

- (a) There is an object b such that S knows that b is uniquely F
- (b) It is b that S wishes to communicate something about
- (c) <the F> occurs in an extensional context.
- (d) There are no pronouns anaphoric on this occurrence of <the F> (D 65).

I shall only be concerned with conditions (a) and (b) here. According to the referentialist, if an utterance of <the F> meets these four conditions, then the proposition expressed is true if and only if b is G, since <the F> functions as a referring expression. If <the F>

functions as a referring expression, then it expresses an object-dependent proposition. Recall that an object-dependent proposition is roughly a singular proposition; a proposition expressed by a sentence S is singular if the grammatical subject of S refers directly to an object b, and b is used in the specification of the truth conditions of S. Thus, it is necessary to identify the referent of b in order to understand the proposition in question. This is in contrast to the case where the proposition expressed is general; this kind of proposition is object-*in*dependent and does not require one to be acquainted with any object (if any) that satisfies the grammatical subject of the sentence used to express it. Now note that the proposition expressed by an utterance of <the F is G> will be true on the referential account if and only if it is true on the Russellian account.

So, if the significant difference between these two accounts is one of objectual-dependency, and if one accepts that these four conditions constitute a basic case for referential usage, then it needs to be shown that, with respect to these conditions, the proposition expressed by an utterance of <the F is G> is object-dependent. That is, the proposition expressed cannot be grasped without being "acquainted" (as specified in chapter one) with the object that <the F> supposedly *directly* refers to. Unless the referentialist can do this, she must move away from the above conditions as constituting the grounds for a lexically distinct interpretation.

Neale believes that a good argument for the referentialist position with respect to the basic case has yet to be provided; there are two standard arguments, both of which depart from the basic case. The first argument is called the "Argument from Misdescription"; the strategy here is to manipulate conditions (a) and (b) so that TD and

the referential analysis produce propositions with different truth values, and then to argue that our intuitions favour the referential account. The second argument, the "Argument from Incompleteness," relies on taking incomplete descriptions for condition (a), e.g., 'the table', and then arguing that TD cannot account for these types of descriptions since they do not appear to be uniquely denoting. A referentialist interpretation here is supposed to provide the correct analysis. Let us examine these objections, and Neale's response to them in detail.

Now A1 says that if a speaker uses a description referentially, then the description functions as a referring expression. But, to be clear, when exactly does the use of a description warrant being classified as referential? As conditions (a) and (b) suggest, a speaker must be able to identify the purported referent of $\langle F \rangle$, and she must have the intention (towards her audience) of wishing to communicate something about this referent. These conditions may be added up to give the following principle (A2)

(A2) A speaker uses a definite description $\langle \text{the } F \rangle$ referentially in an utterance u of $\langle \text{the } F \text{ is } G \rangle$ iff there is some object b such that S means by u that b is the F and that b is G (D 85).

In so far as the unitarian thinks that she may provide an analysis of referential usage, she can agree with A2 while still holding the position that the referential usage of a description does not threaten TD:

(A3) If a speaker S uses a definite description $\langle \text{the } F \rangle$ referentially in an utterance u of $\langle \text{the } F \text{ is } G \rangle$, $\langle \text{the } F \rangle$ still functions as a quantifier and the proposition expressed by u is the object-independent proposition given by $[\text{the } x:Fx](Gx)$.

Here we have a more precise picture of the ambiguity debate: the unitarian endorses A2 and A3, and she thinks that referential usage can be explained via general facts about communication. The referentialist on the other hand, endorses A1 and A2; she is motivated by a desire to identify meaning with use, and claims that referential use is enough, on its own, to constitute a case for semantical ambiguity.

Here is a summary clarification of the ambiguity debate presented thus far: The Gricean framework that we have been using may be represented as follows, 'NRU' refers to non-referential quantificational usage; 'RU' refers to referential usage:

The Russellian-Gricean Theory (D 111)

Linguistic Meaning (LM): <the F is G>

Semantic value/ proposition expressed (PE): (i) *NRU* [the x: Fx](Gx) or (ii) *RU* [the x: Fx] (Gx)

Proposition(s) meant (PMc): (i) *NRU* [the x: Fx](Gx) or (ii) *RU* Gb, Gc,...Gz

The Referentialist Theory

LM: (i) *NRU* <the F is G> or (ii) *RU* <the F is G>

PE: (i) *NRU* [the x:Fx](Gx) or (ii) *RU* Gb, Gc,...Gz

PMc: (i) *NRU* [the x: Fx](Gx) or (ii) *RU* Gb, Gc, ...Gz

On the unitarian theory, the linguistic meaning of <the F is G> is simple, whereas on the referentialist view the description is lexically ambiguous between *NRU* and *RU*. Consequently, at the level of PE, the referentialist claims that there are two distinct semantical interpretations of <the F is G>: one which TD accounts for and one, *RU*, which

it does not. Accordingly, as far as the P_{ME} is concerned, the ambiguity shows up again. The unitarian however, argues that NRU and RU are both explained by TD at the semantic level (P_E); and importantly, RU may be accounted for at the pragmatic level or P_{ME}, in terms of general implicatures that issue with the use of certain kinds of expressions. This is why, since the referentialist objection has to be framed at the semantic level in order to be convincing (note that both accounts are the same at the P_{ME} level), she must show that one has to entertain an object-dependent proposition in order to grasp the proposition expressed by an utterance of <the F is G>. The job for the unitarian is to show how RU arises from general pragmatic principles concerning conversational implicature.

Let us examine some details now. Taking the work of G. Evans into consideration, Neale points out that there are two ways in which a description may be interpreted as being used referentially. It can be interpreted as functioning either like a demonstrative or a proper name. Here is an illustration Neale gives to show how a description may be used akin to a proper name. Let us say that both Mary and I know that Harry is the Chairman of the Flat Earth Society, and Harry informs me that he will be in town Sunday. I see Mary and say:

(12) The Chairman of the Flat Earth Society is coming into town Sunday.

Now, my intentions are to communicate an object-dependent proposition to the effect that Harry is coming to town, instead of the general or descriptive proposition that the unique satisfier of such and such a description, whoever it may be, will be in town Sunday. Neale fits this into the Gricean view of what it is for a speaker to *mean* that *p* (*the proposition*

meant, see G1): By uttering (12) I intend Mary (a) to actively entertain the object-dependent proposition that Harry is coming to town, and (b) to recognize that I intend her to actively entertain this proposition (D 85). And, as Neale explains, there is no problem with having these intentions satisfied since I believe that Mary is acquainted with Harry, she takes Harry to be the unique satisfier of the description above, and she is aware that by using this description, I wish to convey something about Harry. Along these Gricean lines, a part of what I mean by (12) is the object-dependent proposition that Harry is coming to town; hence this is classified as one of the propositions meant. Now, as Neale says, I might have conveyed the same proposition to Mary by saying

(13) Harry is coming to town Sunday.

In accordance with Evans, one may interpret this RU of the description in (12) as functioning similarly to a proper name.

The second sort of RU of a definite description involves interpreting it as a demonstrative. Consider Donnellan's well known example: Mary and I are at a party, and there is a man, *x*, who is trying to attract Mary's attention. Turning to her, I say:

(14) The man wearing a top hat is trying to attract your attention.

Again, I intend to communicate an object-dependent proposition to the effect that *x* is trying to get her attention, instead of just the descriptive proposition that the unique satisfier of such and such a description, is trying to get her attention. Similarly, the proposition meant is conferred. by uttering (14) I intend Mary (a) to actively entertain the object-dependent proposition that *x* is trying to get her attention, and (b) to recognize that I intend her to actively entertain the previous proposition. These intentions will be satisfied

since I believe that Mary has identifying knowledge of x , she takes x to be the unique satisfier of the description above, and she is aware that by using this description, I wish to convey something about x . Thus, the object-dependent proposition that x is trying to attract Mary's attention is one of the propositions meant. But I might have conveyed the same proposition by saying:

(15) That man is trying to your attention.

Here the use of the description might be interpreted as working as a demonstrative expression.

Neale pins down the question we have been waiting for: do we require a semantically distinct non-Russellian account in order to explain what is going on in cases such as (12) and (14)? He argues, correctly I believe, that there are important methodological reasons that should stop us from the postulation of semantical ambiguity, the basic strategy is to show that "the referential use of definite descriptions is an instance of a more general phenomenon associated with the use of quantified noun phrases" (D 88). In providing the case for generality of RU, Neale uses a host of arguments taken from other theorists, I only examine Neale's take on these. The first example Neale uses originates from G. Wilson, the second and third are from R. M. Sainsbury.

Now, what we want to show is that RU is not peculiar to definite descriptions, it is a general phenomenon that affects all quantifiers. If we can do this, then we may argue that, unless one also wants to complicate the semantics of these other quantifiers, there is no reason that the semantics of definite descriptions should be picked out. If this is

correct, then *ceteris paribus* TD is to be preferred to the referential theory, as it will give a more general and economic account. Let us see how this argument is to proceed.

Assume that Joe, Harris, Mary and myself are at a party, and suppose that Harris is a convicted embezzler. After dinner I see that Harris is flirting with Mary, so I say to Joe

(16) A convicted embezzler is flirting with Mary.

I intend to communicate the object-dependent proposition that Harris is flirting with Mary, I utter (16) intending Joe to (a) actively entertain the object-dependent proposition that Harris is flirting with Mary, and (c) to recognize that I intend Joe to actively entertain this proposition. It is evident, as with the previous cases, that one of the propositions meant by my utterance of (16) is that Harris is flirting with Mary. But I could just as well have conveyed this object-dependent proposition by uttering:

(17) Harris is flirting with Mary.

This use of the indefinite description might be interpreted as akin to a proper name. So, it is evident that RU also occurs with the use of indefinite descriptions.

The quick reply for the referentialist here might be to argue that indefinite descriptions are also semantically ambiguous. But, borrowing from Sainsbury, Neale contends that this route seems less and less plausible, since it may be shown that the other quantifiers also may be used to convey object-dependent propositions. And thus, it is open for the unitarian to argue that the postulation of lexical ambiguity ignores an important communicative generalization.

Consider an example involving the quantifier 'everyone'. Suppose that Jones is the only person in Smith's seminar and Sam knows this. Smith has a party and only Jones comes. Next morning, Sam asks Smith how the party went and Jones responds

(18) Well, everyone taking my seminar turned up

intending to communicate the object-dependent proposition that only Jones came. But this does not lead one to postulate a semantic ambiguity with 'every'. I do not think that we would want to posit semantically distinct quantificational and referential interpretations of 'everyone taking my seminar' (D 88).

As Neale explains, the same may be said of plural quantifiers. Suppose Smith, Jones and I are talking in a room and Smith knows that I know that he has never played cricket. Smith wants to know whether Jones and I know how to play cricket, so I say:

(19) Most people in this room have played cricket.

intending to communicate the object-dependent proposition that Jones and I have played cricket. Again, this does not lead us to postulate semantic ambiguity with respect to 'most', to posit a referentially distinct interpretation of 'most people in this room'. Neale explains that the intuitive explanation of what is going on here is that given the context and the quantificational proposition expressed by (19), Smith is able to infer the truth of the object-dependent proposition in question. Thus, it is evident that one is able to convey, as in the other cases, an object-dependent proposition with the use of a quantifier expression, <most F's are G's>. Other similar examples may be constructed (D 88).

The above cases suggest that, as Neale correctly notes, we should view the RU of definite descriptions as an instance of a general phenomenon that comes with the use of

quantified noun expressions across the board. I think that Neale's argument is quite persuasive. If we do not wish to complicate the semantics of these other quantified noun expressions, then why should definite descriptions be singled out? But the referentialist might point out that definite descriptions seem to be especially conducive to this type of use, and so ambiguity has to be postulated. Here Neale explains that this too may be accounted for by Grice's theory of conversation: if S is observing the Maxim of Quality, S will most likely believe that only one thing satisfies the description being used, and this might be grounded in that she knows some object *b* which is uniquely *F*.

Here we have a good general explanation developing of how object-dependent propositions may be communicated via the use of quantified sentences. This has to do with the fact that "the grounds for a quantificational assertion are very often object-dependent beliefs of one form or another," as seen by the above examples (D 88). Object-dependent beliefs however, are not sufficient for RU. For instance, as Neale explains, I might know that some Britons reside in Canada, since I know that Joe and Sam live in Canada, thus I conclude that:

(20) Some Britons reside in Canada.

But one would not want to argue for any sort of referential interpretation here. Putting the above explanation together with a Gricean theory of conversation, and the distinction between PE and PMe, we have a more than reasonable explanation of what is going on with the RU of quantified noun expressions.

Recall that for Grice, a conversational implicature should be derivable. Using the example of "the Flat Earth Society" Neale shows how this is possible, consider an RU (akin to proper name interpretation) of 'the Chairman of the Flat Earth Society' in (1):

- (a) S has expressed the proposition that $[\text{the } x: Fx](Gx)$.
- (b) there is no reason to suppose that S is not observing the CP and its maxims.
- (c) S could not be doing this unless he thought Gb (where 'b' is a name).
Gloss. On the assumption that S is observing the Maxim of Relation, he must be attempting to convey something beyond the general proposition that whoever is uniquely F is G. On the assumption that S is adhering to the Maxim of Quality, he must have adequate evidence for thinking that the F is G. I know S knows that b is the F, therefore S thinks that Gb.
- (d) S knows (and knows that I know that he knows) that I know that b is the F, that I know that S knows that b is the F, and that I can see that S thinks that the supposition that he thinks that Gb is required.
- (e) S has done nothing to stop me from thinking that Gb.
- (f) S intends me to think, or is at least willing me to allow to think, that Gb.
- (g) And so, S has implicated that Gb.

For the RU akin to a demonstrative, Neale replaces condition (c) above:

(c)' S could not be doing this unless he thought that Gb (where 'b' is a demonstrative.) Gloss. On the assumption that S is observing the Maxim of Relation, he must be attempting to convey something over and above the general proposition that whoever is uniquely F is G. On the assumption that S is adhering the Maxim of Quality, he must have adequate evidence for thinking that the F is G. It is not plausible to suppose that he has just general grounds for his belief, therefore he must have object-dependent grounds. I can see that there is someone b in the perceptual environment who could be taken to satisfy the description 'the F', and I can see that S can see this. Therefore the grounds for his assertion that the F is G are plausibly furnished by the belief that Gb (D 90).

We should note that, in connection with chapter two, the Gricean framework is grounded on a firm conviction that the SP distinction is viable, to make the claim that PE and PMe diverge, one must be willing to argue that there is difference between the "inherent" meaning of an expression and the variety of uses that it may be put to.

Now, Neale's Gricean approach above provides us with a good account of the RU of definite descriptions, without the postulation of lexical ambiguity. The unitarian and referentialist both agree that when a definite description is used referentially that one of the propositions meant is object-dependent. As said, however, they disagree on how to account for this usage at the semantic level. The Russellian-Gricean provides a general, economic theory based on principled distinctions concerning a theory of conversation, while the referentialist insists on lexical ambiguity. Neale thinks that a stalemate appears to have been reached; both accounts appear to explain the linguistic data just as well.

But it is evident that, as with the 'and' case, methodological concerns support the unitarian view. An application of Occam's razor is insightful. If there is a pragmatic explanation available, then why complicate the matter? The answer is apparent: there is no reason to. What more will it get us (to posit ambiguity) in the wider context of linguistic competence? TD is a useful theory which fits quite well into a general theory of NL quantification which regards determiners such as 'every', 'some', 'the', 'most' (and so forth) as a unified semantical and syntactic category. Indeed, there is much to lose in this respect. Moreover, as Neale notes, the resemblance to the 'and' case is apparent: (i) the phenomenon of RU is not specific to Indo-European Languages, (ii) the phenomenon is not even specific to definite descriptions, it occurs with quantifiers generally, (iii) and there

is no reason to assume that even if one was taught explicitly Russellian truth conditions, that RU of definite descriptions (or other quantifier phrases) would not occur. Thus, restricted to the basic case, methodological concerns indeed lead one to conclude that TD is to be preferred to the referentialist theory.

3.3.1 The Argument from Misdescription

Neale provides a good response to what is called the "Argument from Misdescription." The referentialist manipulates conditions (a) and (b) in the basic case scenario so that the proposition expressed by the descriptive sentence will yield different truth values, and then we are urged that our intuitions clearly favour the referentialist account. Neale's response consists in simply pointing out that our intuitions do not clearly favour the non-Russellian. More importantly, the Gricean framework supported throughout actually provides us with a good explanation of what is going on in these cases

The standard objection originates from Donnellan, he asks us to consider a RU (akin to a demonstrative) of

(21) Smith's murderer is insane.

in the case where Smith has not really been murdered but dies of natural causes. According to TD, since the description is not satisfied by any particular, the PE will be false. But, imagine that the person who uttered (21) intended to refer to Jones, and moreover, Jones is insane. So, the referentialist contends, one may use a description referentially to express a true proposition even though the description applies to nothing. And thus it is concluded that it is the particular object that S wants to convey something

about, and not the description, that has any semantical relevance (D 91) How good is this objection?

I think that Neale correctly argues that the above objection is mistaken. It is grounded on the assumption that our intuitions clearly favour the referentialist account, viz. that the proposition expressed by (21) in this context is true, even if nothing satisfies the description. But is this right? Even though S said something true, his speech act failed since nothing fits the description. For instance, not being familiar with English I might say that:

(22) It is raining

to mean that

(23) It is sunny.

just because I thought 'raining' literally means 'sunny'. There is no desire here to conclude that the proposition expressed by (22) in this case is true (say it was sunny) even though what I really meant was (23). My speech act was defective. what I meant may have been true even though what I expressed is indeed false; I just applied the expression inappropriately. In a similar manner, we may argue that even though the P_{Me} by the speaker may be true in the above context (21), the P_E is false. In addition, we must take note of the fact that the Gricean framework provides us with an insightful explanation of what is going on in these cases.

Thus, this objection is mistaken, and we are in a much better position than the referentialist since we may give a plausible account of our intuitions through a principled distinction between P_{Me} and P_E. As Neale says, the "P_E is still descriptive, but the

speaker may exploit the fact that the speaker and hearer are willing to entertain the idea that some particular *b* is uniquely *F* in order to communicate an object-dependent proposition about *b*" (92) *S*'s proposition that *b* is *G* may be a part of the *PMe* but it is not what is expressed. In the most simple cases of course, the *PE* exhausts the *PMe*, but as we have seen, this is not always the case, the two may diverge radically.

In order for Neale's argument to go through, it should be emphasized that the role of establishing the *SP* distinction is crucial. The idea that there is something more being expressed (i.e., *PMe*) than what is actually said (i.e., *PE*) makes sense only if one is willing to accept that expressions may be used for a variety of purposes which might not have any connection to their "inherent" meaning. That is, if one is willing to argue for the *SP* distinction

Moreover, Neale points out that there are some serious counterfactual reasons that argue against descriptions functioning as referring expressions. 'Smith's murderer' as uttered in the above context (10), on the referentialist theory will come out as a rigid designator. So *S*'s utterance of the description rigidly designates Jones, and (10) will come out true in any counterfactual scenario where Jones is insane, even in scenarios where Jones never knew Smith and where Smith does not exist. But this is rather implausible.

Neale examines other examples from misdescription, but there is really no need to provide an analysis of them here: they are all similar and rely on questionable intuitions which are best accounted for by a Gricean theory of conversation. To conclude then, the Argument from Misdescription does not threaten a Russellian analysis in any way, since it is based on questionable assumptions.

3.3.2 *The Argument from Incompleteness*

The argument from incompleteness relies on taking an incomplete description (e.g. 'the table') for condition (a) in the basic case, and then arguing that this poses a difficulty for TD's implication of uniqueness. In addition, any repair proposal based on contextual supplementation as a means to respect the uniqueness condition will not work. The referentialist theory, on the other hand, is supposed to get things right in these types of cases: the incomplete description is to be treated as a demonstrative expression, it is the particular object that makes it into the PE, and not the descriptive condition. Neale's response is similar to his previous rebuttals, he does an excellent job showing that (i) this phenomenon is general and affects other quantifier expressions, and (ii) contextual supplementation is a good way to approach this difficulty, it provides an explanation at a broader level from which then we may consider this problem in relation to NL quantifiers in general. Let us examine this objection in detail.

As we noted in the first part of this chapter, TD had to be fitted with a theory of indexicality, since descriptions may be context-sensitive, i.e. they may contain indexical items. But as the referentialist points out, it is not only indexical items that we have to worry about. Consider an utterance of

(24) The table is covered with books.

Now the problem is, as Strawson was first to point out, according to TD, the description <the so and so> will have an application when and only when there is a unique so and so. But of course, (24) has a use and there is no unique so and so. Thus a description may be used even if it is clear then there is no unique object that satisfies it (in certain

circumstances) By using (24) one is not committed to the existence of one and only one table. The referentialist urges that a way out of this problem is to concede that the "incomplete" description in (24) functions as referring expression. How should one respond on behalf of TD?

The first thing to notice, as Neale shows, is that this phenomenon is not restricted to descriptions; this is the strategy that we employed when discussing how one may communicate object-dependent thoughts via quantified sentences. Consider the scenario in which I was at a party last night and someone asks me how it went. I respond:

(25) Everyone was sick

Now it is evident that the hearer will not take me to be saying that everyone in existence was sick, but rather, she will understand me to be saying that the people at the party were sick; this is supplied by the context. More examples of this sort of incompleteness may be constructed with other quantifiers. Thus, the problem that the referentialist has raised does not only affect descriptions but is a general phenomenon that occurs with the use of quantifiers more broadly. Hence, "what is needed, then, is not just an account of incomplete descriptions, but a quite general account of incomplete quantifiers" (D 95). The problems raised by this issue have to be accounted for by a general theory of NL quantification and not just incomplete descriptions.

Neale offers two proposals on how to deal with this difficulty more generally. The first proposal, the *explicit* approach, solves this problem by treating incomplete quantifiers as *elliptical* for proper quantifiers: the required descriptive material is supplemented by the context. For instance, the occurrence of the quantifier 'everybody' in (25) would be treated

as elliptical for 'everybody at the dinner party last night' or something more restricted. The second strategy is called the "*implicit* approach"; this restricts the domain of quantification, while the descriptive content is left alone. On this approach, the domain of quantification would be restricted to a certain class of individuals or a certain part of the world.

Along these lines, one may admit that a theory of NL quantification will require something like one of the proposals above, and thus one may respond to the referentialist by arguing that a particular utterance of 'the table', as in (24), is either (i) elliptical for 'the table over there', or (ii) the domain of objects may be restricted to the immediate shared perceptual environment (D 95). Therefore, as Neale urges, the existence of incomplete descriptions is not sufficient to demonstrate the falsity of TD.

Again, Neale's response seems to be insightful: in order to object to TD, the referentialist relied on a fact which she thought proved to be an exception. But Neale shows how this "exception" actually encompasses a wider phenomenon that concerns NL quantification more generally; and thus this was not a good reason to abandon TD. The referentialist touched on a phenomenon which will have to be faced on a larger scale.

Nevertheless, as Neale notes, theorists still argue that there are problems concerning the above approaches to incompleteness (*explicit* and *implicit*) with respect to incomplete descriptions, and thus some occurrences of definite descriptions just have to be interpreted referentially. Before I close, let us examine some of these other problems and Neale's response to them.

One such objection is made by Wettstein, although he thinks that there is no problem with contextual supplementation (via the explicit strategy) when the occurrence of the description is quantificational, this approach is not plausible in the case where the description is being used referentially. That is, where it is clear the occurrence of the incomplete description is uniquely denoting and quantificational, the context may be taken to supply the required material. But not in the RU case. To take an example of Donnellan's, suppose that someone says.

(26) The next President will be a dove on Vietnam.

The context may be taken to supply 'of the United States' But when it comes to RU of an incomplete description, when there is more than one thing that satisfies the description (e.g. 'the table') this method will not be fruitful. In these cases, Wettstein thinks that there will be simply no way to specify the complete description from context. It is urged that the description here should be treated as demonstrative, the PE will then be considered object-dependent and the problem of completing the description will be resolved. Let us look at this objection in more detail.

Assume that an occurrence of 'the table' is taken to be elliptical for 'the table in room 209 at time t1'. This will not work, according to Wettstein, since there will be many non-equivalent, codenoting descriptions to complete the elliptical material, and there will be no principled way of choosing which will make it into the PE. The ellipsed material could just as well be 'the table in the room on which Wettstein carved his name on at time t2' and so forth (other descriptive material is also available to uniquely satisfy the object in question). But since, on TD, it is the uniquely denoting descriptive content that makes it

into the PE (not the denotation itself), this presents a difficulty different descriptive material, different proposition expressed

Even worse than this problem (i.e., as hearers we are not able to decide between non-equivalent descriptions) Wettstein argues, is that the speaker herself will be in the same position on trying to decide on the correct elliptical material. If the speaker is asked which one of the descriptions she meant above, she might not know. She may say that she meant to refer to *that* table, but she did not mean to refer to it as 'the table on which Wettstein carved his name' or any of the other descriptions above. Thus, Wettstein concludes, if we cannot, even with the help of the speaker and her intentions, determine which material the incomplete description is elliptical for, then it is useless to think that there is such material (derivable from context). The conclusion we are urged to accept is that the incomplete description functions as a demonstrative referring expression and the PE is object-dependent. Since the PE is object-dependent, the problem of which non-equivalent, non-denoting descriptions to choose is circumvented.

Neale's response to Wettstein is insightful. Neale notes that Wettstein's argument works not just in the case of incomplete descriptions, but also with quantifiers used *non-referentially* in general. Consider again

(27) Everyone was sick.

in the given context. 'Everyone' could be seen as elliptical for 'everyone at my dinner party', or 'everyone at my house last night' or some other non-equivalent codenoting description. And, this is problematic since the descriptive material determines which proposition is expressed. Now, Neale argues that Wettstein has certainly noted an

important difficulty regarding the explicit approach but, as shown with (27), this in no way lends support to the conclusion that incomplete descriptions have to be interpreted referentially. Again the problem is general and occurs with the use of quantifiers across the board. Unless one is willing to argue for a referential interpretation of these quantifiers as well, then there is just no ground from which to contend that TD is at fault.

Moreover, Neale offers a way in which to repair the explicit approach: why not complete the RU of descriptions with referential material? As we have seen, there is no reason that descriptions cannot contain indexical items and referential expressions (but this is not to say that the description is to be interpreted referentially). For instance, Neale considers Davis's following example: suppose we are passing through a town where the roads are bumpy and I say

(28) They ought to impeach the mayor.

I do not intend to identify any particular individual; there are no reasons to think that the occurrence of 'the mayor' is referential here. And importantly, I would be able to complete the description using referential material, instead of descriptive: "it is the town that gets into the descriptive condition and thereby into the proposition expressed"; 'the mayor of *this town*' (D 100). This appears to be a good way to fix the explicit approach. The problem of codenoting descriptions can be solved by using referential expressions to complete the elliptical material. So, 'the table' may then be completed by making a reference to spatial coordinates; for example: 'the table over there', or, 'the table over here'. And again, recall that there are no difficulties that arise with descriptions that contain referential or indexical terms. This route is indeed promising, by incorporating

referring expressions and indexical items within description frames, it gives us a precise method of solving the ellipsed material problem.

In conclusion, Neale provides an excellent response to the referentialist. It is shown that the RU of definite descriptions is a phenomenon that arises with other quantifier expressions more generally. Thus, unless one is willing to argue for a distinct referential interpretation of these cases as well, there is no ground from which to single out TD as incorrect. A complete theory of NL quantification can account for this difficulty by an appeal to a theory of conversation.

Conclusion

My task in this thesis was to show that Neale's version of TD provided an insightful contribution to NL semantics. This was achieved in the following manner.

In chapter one, the overhaul of TD involved dislodging it from Russell's largely positivist epistemological framework, and in addition, grafting it into a contemporary theory of meaning. It was shown that sense-datum epistemology, although intimate to Russell's analysis of meaning and understanding, may be discarded while leaving the main insight of TD untouched. Moreover, objectual constituency of propositions and the descriptivist theory of proper names was explained to be unnecessary to TD. In addition, TD was separated from the language of *PM*, and extended to cover a variety of nominal constructions. It was shown that TD may be located in a larger structure semantic of a theory of NL quantification.

An underlying assumption in Neale's support of TD is the espousal of the division between semantic and pragmatic theory. In chapter two, I provided an independent basis from which one may argue for the SP distinction. The problems with establishing this distinction, by the route of context-independency, is that it is difficult to completely extract the semantic from the pragmatic; the distinction is not as sharp as it might be. It may not however, be argued from this that the distinction is not feasible, since a range of data is shown to require it. It was contended that additional support may be provided by appealing to concerns related to theory-construction. Thus, it was urged that, in order to

have a general theory of linguistic competence, such a distinction must be made. Moreover, it was explained that certain contextual problems may be resolved by implementing a formal theory of indexicality.

In chapter three, Neale's Gricean solution to the referential issue was examined and found to be fruitful. The strategy was methodological in character; a variety of linguistic data lent firm support to the conclusion that RU concerned not only definite descriptions, but was a general phenomenon which occurred with the use of NL quantifiers more broadly. Thus, it was contended that this difficulty had to be resolved with respect to most quantified nominal constructions: there was no reason to place the burden on TD. Accordingly, a theory which attempted to solve the referentialist problem in this manner was argued to be more general and economic than a theory which postulated semantic ambiguity. Thus, framing TD in a general theory of NL quantification was found to be promising.

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