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Seminar on Presupposition  
Heinrich Heine University  
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## Homework 2: Russell's *On Denoting*

1. Russell's interpretation of the sentence "I met a man" is (p. 481): "'I met  $x$ , and  $x$  is human' is not always false". He doesn't say exactly what he means by "always false", but we can assume that it means, "false under all assignments of the variable  $x$  to some individual". Imagine a universe consisting of the individuals Alice, Bob, Carol and Fred. So the possible assignments of  $x$  to some individual are:  $x \mapsto$  Alice,  $x \mapsto$  Bob,  $x \mapsto$  Carol, and  $x \mapsto$  Fred. In one world,  $w_1$ , Alice, Bob, and Carol are human, and Fred is a dog, and I met only Fred. In another world,  $w_2$ , Alice, Bob, and Carol and Fred are humans, and I met Fred and Bob. Is "I met  $x$ , and  $x$  is human" always false in  $w_1$ ? How about  $w_2$ ?
2. What is the meaning of "the present King of France is bald" according to Russell? (You can construct it by analogy to his meaning for "the father of Charles II was executed" on p. 482.)
3. What is Meinong's view? What is Russell's objection to it?
4. What is Frege's view? Russell claims that it makes a wrong prediction with respect to "The King of France is bald." What is that prediction?
5. In your own words, please describe:
  - Russell's first puzzle, concerning identity (p. 485)
  - Russell's second puzzle, concerning the law of the excluded middle
  - Russell's third puzzle, concerning non-existence

Make sure to mention the empirical generalizations (i.e. facts) that must be explained, and what makes these facts puzzling. Feel free to go beyond the text.
6. Russell's distinction between *primary* and *secondary* occurrences of terms (p. 489) can be recast in terms of quantifier *scope*. For example, in *Everybody doesn't like me*, the universal quantifier expressed by *everybody* can take *wide scope* with respect to negation (in which case it describes a very lonely situation) or *narrow scope* with respect to negation (in which case things are just normal). Do primary occurrences have wide or narrow scope? What about secondary occurrences?
7. How does Russell solve the first puzzle (pp. 488-9)?
8. How does Russell solve the second puzzle?
9. How does Russell solve the third puzzle?
10. **Optional:** For each of these puzzles, say whether Frege's theory, described in *Über Sinn und Bedeutung*, is capable of solving it and why.