Philosophical and Mathematical Correspondence between Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell in the Years 1902-1904. Some Uninvestigated Topics
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Although the connections between Frege’s and Russell’s investigations are commonly known (Hylton 2010), however, there are some topics in the letters which do not seem to have been analysed until now: 1. Paradoxes formulated by Russell on the basis of Frege’s rules: a) “ξ can never take the place of a proper name” I false proposition when ξ is a proposition; b) “A function never takes the place of a subject”. A solution of this problem was based on reference/sense theory and on distinction between the first- and second-level names (Frege). 2. The inconsistency in Frege’s system may be avoided by introduction of: a) a new kind of objects called quasi-objects (Frege); b) logical types (Frege and Russell); c) mathematics without classes (Russell); d) some restrictions on domain of function (Frege). 3. Since an inconsistency is connected with a class what is class? In one of the letters Frege compared a class to a chair which is composed of atoms. It seems to be similar to collective understanding of a set (Stanislaw Lesniewski). 4. Russell doubted that the difference between sense and reference of expressions is essential. Hence, Frege found some additional reasons to distinguish them: semiotic, epistemological, from identity, from mathematical practice. This discussion can be seen as a starting point to Russell’s theory of description.


A Puzzle About Frege’s Singular Senses
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My purpose in this paper is both exegetical and critical: I want to discuss Frege’s view on the senses (“Sinn”) of singular terms (which I also call singular senses), i.e., how they are formed and what is their structure. It is exegetical because I will stay as close as possible to Frege’s writings in extracting his exact view from them. And it is critical because, as I will argue, a surprising incoherence appears along the way. I start by reviewing some well known elements of Frege’s doctrine of sense and reference. As I intent to show, when these well known elements are brought together in a non-standard way, a puzzle seems to emerge regarding singular senses: where does their saturation come from? There are some proposals in the literature and I shall review the most important of them, but each one seems either to be directly incompatible with other things that Frege says or to betray the spirit of the Fregean notion of sense. Frege says remarkably little about the senses of singular terms; one can find only few scattered remarks about this topic in his writings. But
some things that he does say suggest an approach to singular senses that is blatantly incompatible with the rest of his semantics. So, my conclusion will be that, for all the elegance and epistemic advantages of the Fregean notion of sense, he has no coherent view on the senses of singular terms. This might be alarming, for these are supposed to be the most simple and basic senses from an epistemic point of view. And, given the complementarity of senses of singular terms and of predicates, the incoherence might infect the latter notion as well (and, a fortiori, the notion of sense as a whole).