

RUSSELL ON MIND AND MATTER: 1911 - 1919

BERTRAND RUSSELL'S EARLIER VIEWS  
ON THE NATURE OF MIND AND MATTER

1911 - 1919

.By.

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ABSTRACT: This thesis traces the development in Bertrand  
Russell's thought concerning the nature of mind  
and matter between the years 1911 and 1919. It  
begins by examining the qualified dualism he ad-  
vanced in *The Problems of Philosophy* and, while  
questioning Russell's reasoning and arguments,  
it follows the progression of his thought through  
its evolution until, with the publication of "On  
Propositions: what they are and how they mean",  
it reaches its neutral monistic phase.

## PREFACE

In what follows, I propose to deal on the one hand with the philosophy of Bertrand Russell, and on the other with the mind/body problem. As it seems to me, these two ingredients at least hold the promise of what might be considered an interesting combination of elements. I say this because, concerning the former, it has been suggested that, in philosophy, what we have just gone through is the "age of Russell",<sup>i</sup> and regarding the latter, it has been stated that there are only two main problems in this discipline and one of them is the mind/body problem.<sup>ii</sup> Whether these claims are true or not I shall not argue. They do suggest, however, that in setting out to examine what Russell has to say on the mind/body problem, we have on our plates something of at least some philosophical significance. However, if the proof of the pudding is in the eating, it seems it will have to be left up to the reader to decide just how significant it is.

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i. I have encountered this phrase in two independent sources: in W.V. Quine's "Remarks for a Memorial Symposium" in D.F. Pears ed. *Bertrand Russell: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books; Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1972) p.1; and in Stuart Hampshire's remarks in Bryan Magee's *Modern British Philosophy* (London: Secker & Warbury, 1971) p.29.

ii. See N.L. Wilson "The Two Main Problems of Philosophy", in *Dialogue*, XII No. 2, June, 1973.

Lest we overindulge, there is one restriction I have decided to make at the outset. By consulting the Chronology that follows these introductory words, the reader will see that Russell has had a great deal to say on topics related to the mind/body problem. Therefore, it has been my decision to deal only with what he has written in the 1911-1919 period. It was during that span of time that he made his transition from dualism to neutral monism and it is my belief that even when we limit ourselves to this relatively short section of Russell's long philosophical career we will find more than enough to satiate ourselves.

In the years prior to 1911, Russell's primary philosophical interest lay with the foundations of logic and mathematics. I have decided to begin my examination of his work by picking up the thread of his thought in the year following the publication of the first edition of *Principia Mathematica*. In my opinion, this marks a time in which his interest in mathematics and logic was beginning to ebb, while what he had to say on topics more closely related to the mind/body problem was beginning to flow. I end my inquiry with an examination of the 1919 article "On Propositions: what they are and how they mean"; as we shall see, by this time his theory of mind had changed in a fundamentally important way.

The choice of examining a restricted period has both advantages and disadvantages. While on the one hand we shall enjoy the profit of being able to probe more deeply a limited area, on the other we will have to incur the loss of leaving incomplete the account of the development of his ideas. According to D.F. Pears there are two special advantages in concentrating on roughly the period I have chosen. "First, by the end of 1919 Russell already had most of his more important ideas on his work-bench. Naturally, he had not finished with them, but they were there, and their main outlines were visible. Secondly," he tells us, echoing something we have already suggested, "during those . . . years a considerable part of the history of philosophy was the history of the development of his ideas."<sup>iii</sup>

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iii. Pears, David. *Bertrand Russell and The British Tradition in Philosophy*. (New York: Random House, 1967) p.12.

A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF  
BERTRAND RUSSELL'S PUBLISHED WRITINGS  
RELATED TO THE NATURE OF MIND AND MATTER 1908-1969

- 1908 Review of *Essays Philosophical and Psychological in Honor of William James*, in the *Hibbert Journal*.
- 1910 "The Philosophy of William James" in *The Nation*.
- 1911 "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description" in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*.
- 1911 Review of William James, *Memories and Studies* in the *Cambridge Review*.
- 1912 Review of William James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism* in *Mind*.
- 1912 *The Problems of Philosophy*.
- 1913 "The Nature of Sense-data" in *Mind*.
- 1914 "On the Nature of Acquaintance" in *The Monist*.
- 1914 "The Relation of Sense-data to Physics" in *Scientia*.
- 1914 *Our Knowledge of the External World as a Field for Scientific Method in Philosophy*.
- 1915 "The Ultimate Constituents of Matter" in *The Monist*.
- 1915 [Letter from Bertrand Russell on Sense-data] *Journal of Philosophy*.
- 1918 Review of C.D. Broad, *Perception, Physics, and Reality* in *Mind*.
- 1918 "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism" in *The Monist*.
- 1919 "The Anatomy of Desire" in *The Athenaeum*.
- 1919 "On Propositions: what they are and how the mean," in the *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume*.
- 1921 *The Analysis of Mind*.

- 1922 "Dr. Schiller's Analysis of The Analysis of Mind " in the *Journal of Philosophy*.
- 1922 "Philosophic Idealism at Bay" in *The Nation and the Athenaeum*.
- 1922 "Physics and Perception" in *Mind*.
- 1923 "Science and Metaphysics" in *The Nation and the Athenaeum*.
- 1924 "Materialism, Past & Present" in *Psyche*.
- 1925 "Mind and Matter" in *The Nation and the Athenaeum*.
- 1925 Review of C.D. Broad, *The Mind and its Place in Nature*, in *Mind*.
- 1926 "Knowledge, Theory of" in *Encyclopedia Britannica*.
- 1926 "Perception" in *Journal of Philosophical Studies*
- 1927 *Analysis of Matter*.
- 1927 "Events, Matter and Mind" in *The Referee*.
- 1927 *An Outline of Philosophy*.
- 1928 "Physics and Metaphysics" in the *Saturday Review of Literature*.
- 1929 "Has Man a Soul?" in *The Forward*.
- 1929 "Physics and Theology" in *The Nation*.
- 1940 *An Inquiry Into Meaning and Truth*.
- 1944 "Reply to Criticisms" in *The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell* ed. by P.A. Schilpp.
- 1945 *A History of Western Philosophy*.
- 1948 *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits*.
- 1952 *Dictionary of Mind, Matter and Morals*, ed. Lester E. Dononn.
- 1956 "Mind and Matter" in *Portraits from Memory*.
- 1958 "What is Mind?" in the *Journal of Philosophy*.



- 1959 *My Philosophical Development.*
- 1959 *"Mind" in Encounter.*
- 1967 *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell, 1872-1914.*
- 1969 *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell, 1944-1969*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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When she discovered that I was interested in metaphysics, she told me that the whole subject could be summed up in the saying: "What is mind? No matter. What is matter? Never mind." At the fifteenth or sixteenth repetition of this remark, it ceased to amuse me, ...

*The Autobiography of  
Bertrand Russell  
1872 - 1914*

## CHAPTER ONE

### The Problems of Philosophy

#### I

What is it to be a human being? On one level we can see ourselves as being some sort of animal probably descended from ancestors we share with the apes and monkeys. On this level however, there are those who would like to argue that we seem to be *only* animals - mere material things. Consequently, they would like to maintain that man is something more than this. They believe that no complete account of him can be given in purely physical terms. It is often argued on this account that the thing that sets man off from the beasts and the other things of the material world is his mind. The difficult part of this is in explaining how mind is related to the material world. In short, the mind/body problem.

The doctrine that is most commonly held in regard to the nature of mind and matter runs something as follows. Every human being has both a body and a mind. Although the mind and body are joined in some way during the life of the body, the mind may continue to exist on its own after the death of the body.

The body exists in space and is subject to the physical laws of the universe; it is located in the public domain and is as capable of being observed and studied as is any physical thing. The mind, however, is neither in space nor is it subject to the laws of physics.

What occurs in an individual's mind is, in a very strong sense, private to him: he is the only individual directly aware of the state of his own mind. In addition to this, it is usually thought that although a person may have certain doubts as to what is happening in the physical world around him, he can have no doubt as to what is momentarily occupying his own mind.

Another way in which the mental and the material are contrasted in the common view is by the use of the terms 'internal' and 'external'; this brings in one of the most troublesome aspects of this belief. The words 'internal' and 'external' cannot be intended to be taken in a literal manner because if the mind is to be construed as extensionless, then it is senseless to think of it as being inside something or of something as being inside it. As a result of this, we must take anyone expounding the common sense view as merely using the words 'internal' and 'external' in some metaphorical manner.

This common sense or traditional view can thus be described as one in which there is a polarity: an opposition between matter and mind such that material objects are situated in a spatial field and minds are 'located' in a categorically different realm.

The view described above is so widespread that in <sup>1</sup>*The Concept of Mind*, Gilbert Ryle calls it "The Official Doctrine". The other name that he gives it, "Descartes' Myth", is more suggestive of what it is usually called viz. "Cartesian Dualism.". The term 'Cartesian' of course refers to René Descartes and the views he expounded, especially in the *Second Meditation* and the *Sixth Meditation*. The following passage from *The Sixth Meditation* illustrates the hard distinction he draws between mind and body:

I first take notice here that there is a great difference between the mind and the body, in that the body, from its nature, is always divisible and the mind is completely indivisible. For in reality, when I consider the mind - that is, when I consider myself in so far as I am only a thinking being - I cannot distinguish any parts, but I recognise and conceive very clearly that I am a thing which is absolutely unitary and entire. And although the whole mind seems to be united with the whole body, nevertheless when a foot or an arm or some other part of the body is amputated, I recognise quite well that nothing has been lost to my mind on that account ... but just the contrary is the case with corporal or extended objects, for I cannot imagine any, however small they

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1. (Hutchinson and Co. Ltd. London, 1949).

might be, which my mind does not very easily divide into several parts, and I consequently recognize these objects to be divisible. This alone would suffice to show me that the mind (or soul of man) is altogether different from the body, if I did not already know it sufficiently well for other reasons. <sup>2</sup>

To sum up, we might simply say that mind for Descartes was *in essence* unextended, matter is *in essence* extended. I am not so sure that such a straightforward characterization is available for Bertrand Russell's views on the same subject.

This is the case partly because he changed his metaphysical position more than once over his long philosophical career. For example, in the years following 1894, Russell held what he called a "semi-Kantian, semi-Hegelian metaphysics," <sup>3</sup> but towards the end of 1898 both he and Moore rebelled against the ideas of Kant and Hegel. He tells us that "I think that Moore was most concerned with the rejection of idealism, while I was most interested in the rejection of monism. The two were, however, closely connected." <sup>4</sup> In an exhaustive study of everything Russell

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2. Descartes, René, *Philosophical Essays*, translated by Lawrence J. Lafleur (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co.'s Library of Liberal Arts, 1963) pp. 139-140.

3. Cf. *My Philosophical Development* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1959) p.38.

4. *Ibid.* p.54.



has to say on the subject of mind and matter, this early period could not be ignored. This is clear from the chapter entitled "Excursion into Idealism" in *My Philosophical Development* where Russell offers us some of the more salient passages from the notes that he made during those years. Headings such as "Some Definitions of Matter," "Dynamical Definition of Matter," "Note on Matter and Motion," and "Can we Make a Dialectical Transition From Punctual Matter to the Plenum" suggests that his writing during this period is not entirely removed from our topic. Similarly, it might be argued that in what could be called his realist period, that is in the years following his reaction against idealism up until about 1912 and the publication of *The Problems of Philosophy*, he produced work that is also related to our topic. However, I shall not deal with either of these two stages in his career. I feel that during these early years he was more concerned with providing a reasoned and objective basis for logic and the philosophy of mathematics, and that metaphysical problems were only of secondary interest to him.

Instead of focusing on these earlier years, I intend to concern myself mainly with the reasons why Russell resisted, and then gave in to, neutral monism. I would like to come to an understanding of why he did accept this meta-

physical outlook, and whether or not he was justified in doing so. To do this, I feel that it is necessary first of all, for us to take a close look at the dualism evident in his thought in the period extending from the early 1900's up until about 1918. I have a certain amount of reservation about calling any particular era his 'dualistic period' because I feel that a category such as this is something that we must ascribe to him rather than imagining Russell thinking of himself at a certain time as 'a dualist' or a defender of dualism. This is not only because Russell eschewed labels (and if anything would probably have preferred to be called a 'logical atomist') but also because it is very difficult to find passages where he unequivocally asserts some statement that bears the mark of undeniable, unmistakable dualism. However, I do feel that he did hold a position of implicit dualism for some time. This is the reason why I have sketched an outline of Cartesian dualism above. In examining Russell's pre-1918 writings, it is almost necessary to have before us a model of what Cartesian dualism is in order for us to determine whether or not what we are reading counts as some kind of dualism or not. Russell is not always as explicit in his earlier views as to the nature of mind and matter as would have been most convenient to our enquiry.

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## II

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When Russell wrote the *Problems of Philosophy* in 1912, it could be argued that his metaphysics was not unlike the 'Official Doctrine' described above. There are, however, several points on which his views diverge from that view.

The first thing has to do with Descartes' rather too simple contrasting of mind and matter. Russell does something that may seem odd to anyone holding the traditional view : instead of accepting matter and mind as two radically different substances he shows us that there are similarities between them. In doing this he begins to blur the hard distinction that is supposed to severely separate the two; I will try to explain how he does this.

Descartes and Russell both sought knowledge of the external world. The end of Descartes' search left him with a bifurcated world, half matter, half mind. Russell knew it was possible to go even further. He reminds us that

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5. London: first published in the Home University Library, 1912. Published as an Oxford University Paperback, 1971.

Bishop Berkeley in his *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* attempted to prove that there is no such thing as matter at all - he wanted to maintain that there is nothing in the world but minds and their ideas. Whether or not Berkeley was successful we shall not enter into here. The important point according to Russell is that Berkeley shows us that the existence of matter is clearly capable of being denied and that if there are material objects existing independently of our minds, then they cannot be the immediate objects of our sensations. These immediate objects of sensations Russell preferred to call 'sense-data' after Moore. By using this term he refers to such things as colours, sounds, smells, hardnesses, roughnesses and so on.<sup>6</sup> For the actual experience of being aware of these things he uses the term 'sensation'. Now, how does Russell conceive mind and matter in *The Problems of Philosophy*? "We commonly mean by 'matter' ". Russell tells us in a manner very close to classic Cartesian dualism, "something which is opposed to 'mind', something which we think of as occupying space and as radically incapable of any sort

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6. *Ibid.* p. 4.

of thought or consciousness." <sup>7</sup> This quotation exhibits the uneasiness Russell felt about the traditional view and it is his intention to present us with a better one. The introduction of sense-data into his ontology constitutes a modification of the Cartesian view but it leaves him with the problem of having to explain what is beyond the data of sense. In other words, he must tell us what matter is and what material objects are. What, for example, is a table or a penny ?

For the first time, he gets out the penny that appears in subsequent writings and asks <sup>8</sup> us to judge its shape. He draws our attention to the fact that viewed from different angles the coin assumes different shapes. From this he concludes that when we judge that the coin is circular, we are judging that the coin has a *real* shape that is not its apparent shape. He infers from this that the coin's real shape is in *real* space as opposed to being in a particular person's *apparent* space. "The real space is public, the apparent space is private to the percipient." <sup>9</sup>

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7. *Ibid.* pp. 4-5.

8. *Ibid.* p. 14.

9. *Ibid.*

I think it could be argued that this division of space into public and private realms represents a modest departure from the Cartesian position. As we saw, Cartesianism in essence divided reality into two realms: one of extensionality, the other of non-extensionality. Russell's modification on this is that he distinguishes physical or public space from private or sensory space. I consider this a move away from Cartesianism because, while Descartes may have had an extensionless private realm (i.e., his mind), he did not divide physical space and sensory space in the manner that Russell does. Russell has created his division without bringing in the characteristic feature of Cartesianism: non-extensionality. For Russell, 'private space' is only a term that applies to the appearance of things as viewed from a certain perspective at a certain time. I shall go into the connection he makes between private space and public space later on. As I have indicated, Russell deals with this topic in several different places. I shall also leave until later just what it is he thinks constitutes a material object (as we shall see, physical objects will be identified with the classes of their actual and possible appearances). The only point I wish to make at this stage is that the dualism with which Russell is presenting us is different from the usual Cartesian variety (i.e., the strain described in the opening pages of this chapter) in that he has given us a concept of space that is

a little more sophisticated than is the one to be found in "The Official Doctrine" to which Ryle refers. However, this is only a modest departure from that doctrine.

A more marked departure has to do with Descartes' concept of the ego or the self. It is a well-known Russellian criticism of Descartes' *cogito* that a more certain statement of absolute knowledge than "I think, therefore I am" would be simply "there are thoughts".<sup>10</sup> This suggests that perhaps we may be able to do away with the subject or the self, a dubious entity which Hume had criticized before Russell. But the Russell of 1912 does not want to go all the way and completely abandon the self, he merely wishes to reduce it to something that "might be . . . quite momentary".<sup>11</sup> It can be seen through a quick comparison that Russell's position and language are not unlike those of David Hume.

Russell: The question whether we are also acquainted with our bare selves, as opposed to particular thoughts and feelings, is a very difficult one, upon which it would be rash to speak positively. When we try to look into ourselves we always seem to come upon some particular thought or feeling, and not upon the 'I' which has the thought or feeling. (*The Problems of Philosophy*, p. 27.).

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10. Cf. *The Problems of Philosophy*, p. 8.

11. *Ibid.*

Hume: For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself* I always stumble upon some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but the perception. (*Treatise Bk.I, Part IV, Sec.6*).

This brings me to what D.M. Armstrong in *A*  
*Materialist Theory of The Mind*<sup>12</sup> calls 'Bundle' dualism. The term echoes Hume's description of the mind as a 'bundle of perceptions'. According to Armstrong, this form of dualism characteristically arises out of reflection on the difficulties of Cartesian dualism. So, in the passage cited above, Hume can be seen to be arguing that there is no continuing object in the mental sphere corresponding to the body in the physical sphere. The 'Bundle' dualist takes the mind to be a succession of non-physical particulars or items distinct from, but related to the body. Because of his disinclination to acknowledge the existence of a continuing mental entity, I do not think it would be unfair to classify Russell's writings of this period as those of a 'Bundle' dualist, but if I am correct in doing this, then I must also point out that there are certain problems associated with this species of dualism that Russell may expose himself to by adopting it.

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12. (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1968).



The main problem is that the 'Bundle' dualist must find a uniting principle which will link together the collection of non-physical elements that he takes to constitute the mind. "To use John Stuart Mill's phrase, the 'Bundle' dualist has to point to the 'thread of consciousness' that threads together all those particulars, which make up one mind".<sup>13</sup> If a Cartesian dualist were asked what made his experiences at a certain time part of one and the same mind as those experiences of a different time, the Cartesian could simply reply that all his experiences are states of that one, continuing, non-physical substance constituting his real ego. Although there may be various difficulties associated with this answer, it does have the virtue of simplicity. No similarly simple response is available to the 'Bundle' dualist.

We may now ask how Russell deals with this problem. The answer to this is elusive. According to Armstrong, there are four possible alternative things that can be appealed to when searching for a unifying principle.

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13. *A Materialist Theory of the Mind*, p. 16.

The first two, 'resemblance' and 'causation' were investigated by Hume and in the Appendix to the *Treatise* he confessed that he could not solve the problem of finding such a unifying principle. Armstrong tells us <sup>14</sup> that the other two avenues of inquiry, namely 'memory' and 'continuity of experience', are also blind alleys for fruitful research. I do not wish to enter into any of the arguments against the viability of these various approaches to the problem because Russell does not give us any indication of which, if any, of these alternatives he favoured. In fact, in *The Problems of Philosophy* he does not seem aware that this 'Bundle' type of dualism that I am ascribing to him carries with it this putative flaw. But one thing of which we can be sure is that not only does Russell eventually completely discard the ego but he also totally gives up dualism itself. His reasons for doing so, tacit as they may be, could very well be linked - among other things - to the difficulties he might have in providing a uniting principle of mind. We know that the modified version of dualism advanced by Russell during this period was recognised by him to

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14. *Ibid.* pp. 17 -23.

be an unhappy sort ; this is shown by the fact that he eventually abandoned it. By acknowledging that there are certain difficulties associated with the type of position he seems to have fallen into, we may be close to the truth as to why he abandoned it.

I would now like to return to the topic of sense-data. As I have indicated above, the inclusion of sense-data in his ontology moved Russell another step away from orthodox Cartesianism. In the preface to *The Problems of Philosophy*, Russell tells us that he has "derived valuable assistance from unpublished writings of G.E. Moore and J.M. Keynes : from the former, as regards the relations of sense-data to physical objects, and from the latter as regards probability and induction".<sup>15</sup> It is Anthony Quinton's feeling that this assistance of Moore's that Russell is alluding to may have been considerable. As Quinton says, "Moore's . . . reflections on the nature of the mental are to be found in a paper on 'The Subject-Matter of Psychology' he delivered to a meeting of the Aristotelian Society in December 1909 which Russell attended and took part in. It may well be the main source of Russell's initial views about

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15. *The Problems of Philosophy, op. cit., p. vii.*

the mind".<sup>16</sup> Quinton points out that, in *The Problems of Philosophy* "Russell gives reiterated expression to his loyalty to Moore's distinction between acts of consciousness, which are unquestionably mental, and their objects, which need not be".<sup>17</sup> This Quinton soon begins to refer to as 'Moore's act-object distinction'. He goes on to make a significant point with it : he feels that since Russell (following Moore) sees that the objects of consciousness need not be mental, then the door is open for him to declare that they are neither mental nor material, but neutral. From his comments on *The Problems of Philosophy*, these are Quinton's words : "he does not explicitly develop the conception of them as neutral entities, that his position implies its submerged presence in his theory may have prepared the way for his eventual acceptance of neutral monism".<sup>18</sup> I am inclined to agree with Quinton on this (and I can see how this point is more obvious to us with the advantage of hindsight than it was to Russell in 1912) but I would also like to make a further point. Later, I would like to point out, Russell, after his neutral monistic phase, reaches a metaphysical position with strong tendencies towards materialism. With this in mind, I would like to

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16. Quinton, Anthony. "Russell's Philosophy of Mind" in David F. Pears ed. *Bertrand Russell: A Collection of Critical Essays*. (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books; Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1972). p. 85.

17. *Ibid.* p. 81.

18. *Ibid.* p. 85.

register a minor caveat here.

It has to do with the act-object distinction and the notion that the acts of consciousness are "unquestionably mental". In spite of the almost tautological character of this statement, I think that it can still be queried. Is it not possible for someone to doubt the existence of consciousness as an entity and yet acknowledge something as conscious behaviour? What worries me here is that the non-physical dimension of mind seems to be slipping into the question; thus I want to avoid thinking of acts of consciousness as having something to do with something non-physical. In stating this, I am revealing one of my own philosophical pre-suppositions. Like Russell, I believe that Occam was right to maintain that we ought to avoid multiplying entities. In other words, if we can get along without bringing in the non-physical dimension of mind we should do so. Now, to return to the notion that acts of consciousness are unquestionably mental. If by 'mental' we mean 'non-physical', then I must point out that it easily seems to follow that acts of consciousness are mental. However, there are other ways of using the word 'mental'. If we say that "the head injury impaired his *mental* abilities", what we are referring to is some brain damage that occurred. In this manner, brain processes are being referred to as mental. This means that 'mental' in

this instance, perhaps paradoxically, still means 'physical'. The 'mental' processes that take place in the brain are physical ones. It is in this sense that it does not follow so easily that "all acts of consciousness are unquestionably mental". If, as some people maintain, consciousness is a brain state, then acts of consciousness turn out to be physical.

This leads me into a disagreement with Quinton. It seems that when we distinguish between the act of sensing and the object of sensation, we are committed to a dualism. Well we are in a certain sense, but I do not think that it is of the same type as mind/body dualism. Quinton's position on this comes out most clearly in what he says in the closing portion of his paper (here he is commenting on some of Russell's later writings):

With his insistence on the radical difference between the physical world as it really is in itself and the physical world as we perceive it, which are quite distinct and only causally related, and with the return to the act-object distinction implied by his conception of percepts being events in the brain, Russell, despite his lingering Jamesian protestations, returned in the end to something very little different from the qualified dualism of *The Problems of Philosophy*.<sup>19</sup>

If Russell did later re-introduce the act-object distinction that Quinton says he does, I would like to argue that it does not necessarily follow from this that "he returned in the end to something very little different" than his position of 1912. My reasoning for this is implied in my

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19. *Ibid.* p. 109.

previous paragraph. If, as I have suggested, consciousness may be argued to be a brain state, then any act/object dualism under that interpretation would still be a physical/physical 'dualism'. Now if Russell was gravitating towards an identity theory of mind (and I believe he was) it would then be unfair to say that he "returned in the end to something very little different from the qualified [mind/body] dualism of *The Problems of Philosophy*".

Perhaps this would be a good time to emphasize two points. First, the dualism I am concerned with is of the mind/body kind, but there may very well be other types evident in Russell's philosophy. For example, Ronald Jager in his paper "Russell and Religion" <sup>20</sup> says "Broadly conceived, Russell's dualism coincides with Santayana's distinction of the realm of essence from the realm of matter". I am not exactly sure what Jager means by this although he seems to be referring to some type of appearance/reality distinction. This illustrates the ambiguity in the word 'dualism': it seems a flexible enough word to apply to many different things. The second point is that, when dealing with mind I am concerned mostly with its nature and how it is related to the body. As it seems to me, the most intriguing aspect of the concept of mind is that associated

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20. In the as yet unpublished *Russell in Review*, edited by John Thomas and Ken Blackwell from the papers presented at the McMaster University Russell Centenary Celebrations, Oct. 1972.

with the notion of non-extensionality. Thus, the dualism that interests me is a mind/body, non-extensional/extensional one. If someone claims to have a dualistic theory of reality but at the same time rejects the notion of any non-extensional element in it, then; as it seems to me, he is using the term "dualism" in a peculiar fashion.

Since Russell's philosophy exhibits such a scientific bent, I expect him to tend to offer a more and more scientific concept of a person. Thus I expect that as his philosophy unfolds, we will discover there a more and more materialistic concept of a person.



## CHAPTER TWO

### The Doctrine of Acquaintance

#### I

In *The Problems of Philosophy*, Russell was mainly concerned with the theory of knowledge and only dealt with the philosophy of mind in a secondary manner. However, one of the key issues that is close to the core of his earlier theory of mind does come to the surface in *The Problems of Philosophy*; it has to do with the subject of acquaintance. Actually, Russell deals with this topic in three distinct places: in a paper entitled "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description"<sup>21</sup> (1911), in chapter five of *The Problems of Philosophy* (1912), which also carries the title "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description" and is very close in content to the 1911 article; and, most importantly, in the 1914 article "On the Nature of Acquaintance"<sup>22</sup>.

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21. Published in the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* N.S. 11: 1910-11, pp. 103-128. Read to the Society on 6 March 1911. Reprinted in *Mysticism and Logic* (London: Unwin Books, 1963) pp. 152-167.

22. In *The Monist*, XXIV, No. 1-3: (Jan-Apr-July), 1-16, 160-187, 435-453. Reprinted in *Logic and Knowledge* edited by Robert C. Marsh (New York: Capricorn Books Edition, 1971) pp. 127-174.

The notion of acquaintance was a crucial one in Russell's epistemology in the period beginning with *The Problems of Philosophy* and continuing through to the writing of "On Propositions". According to D.F. Pears, Russell felt that acquaintance was the key that would unlock the prison doors of subjective idealism. As Pears said:

Knowledge by acquaintance was a means of escaping from the claustrophobic world of idealism. For acquaintance was a mental relation, and, though one of the related terms, the subject, or ego, was mental, the other term, the object was, according to Russell, very often something outside of the mind. <sup>23</sup>

If this is the case, then acquaintance, or knowledge by acquaintance, is playing for Russell a rôle somewhat analogous to the rôle the pineal gland played for Descartes. Both of these performed the function of - to put it loosely and perhaps crudely - 'joining' the mental and the physical. But if this is in any sense true, then it behooves us to take a close look at what Russell has to say about acquaintance.

In the 1911 article we get as succinct a characterization of acquaintance as anywhere: "I say that I am acquainted with an object when I have a direct cognitive

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23. From a lecture given by D.F. Pears at McMaster University, Fall 1972.

relation to that object, i.e. when I am directly aware of the object itself".<sup>24</sup> However, he is quick to point out that the type of relationship he intends is not merely one of presentation. 'Presentation' carries with it a certain suppression of the role of the subject, a connotation Russell does not wish to introduce. Rather, it is his intention to emphasize the duality of the rôles played both by the subject and the object in acquaintance. It is important for the development of Russell's thought on the nature of mind and matter to notice here that he does this with the concept of presentation. Later in our discussion of "On the Nature of Acquaintance" we shall see that as the rôle of the subject diminishes the idea of presentation becomes the essence of acquaintance. At the time of the writing of the earlier article, however, as we can see in what follows, Russell is quite clearly wanting to emphasize the duality:

There is, to my mind, a danger that, in speaking of presentation, we may so emphasize the object as to lose sight of the subject. The result of this is either to lead to the view that there is no subject, whence we arrive at materialism; or to lead to the view that what is presented is part of the subject, whence we arrive at idealism, and should arrive at solipsism but for the most desperate contortions.<sup>25</sup>

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24. "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description" was originally published the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, N.S. 11: 1910-11, pp. 108-28. It was read to the Society on 6 March 1911. Reprinted in *Mysticism and Logic* (London: Unwin Books, 1963) p. 152.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

In this passage, Russell expresses his intention of maintaining the duality quite clearly. However, I feel the section carries with it a certain ambiguous suggestion. I refer here to the notion that we are lead to materialism when we embrace the view that there is no subject. The only way I can give meaning to this statement is by assuming that Russell is giving the term 'subject' a non-physical connotation - in other words, much the same meaning that is given to the word 'mind'. Although I see where it *may* be the case that this leads to materialism (certainly the elimination of non-material entities from one's metaphysics cannot help but lead there) but I do not see that it *must* do so. What I am referring to here is perhaps just an ambiguity in the term 'subject'. As it seems to me, a materialistic ontology is as capable of admitting a subject, or 'acting agent' as is a dualistic one.

Thus, in a case such as this, when a person says something like "I am the subject initiating this activity", the "I" or "the subject" can be construed as referring to the entity initiating the activity; many people consider it plausible to regard this entity as being physically constituted. If this is the case, then it would seem the quick inference that we are lead to materialism when we lose sight of the subject does not follow as easily as is suggested in the quoted passage; this is because a materialistic metaphysics may also include the notion of a subject.

But this is only a minor ambiguity in Russell's thought. Aside from this perhaps unfortunate implication, Russell's goal and intention at the time of this early essay is clear: he wishes to stress the subject-object duality existing in the relationship of acquaintance.

His next step is to consider the type of thing with which we can become acquainted. Generally there are two sorts of things: particulars and universals. In the former classification he includes sense-data and certain things found in introspection such as the "momentary self" which is the subject term for all awareness. (He does not have an elaborate and satisfying argument for concluding that the 'I' must be the "subject-term in awareness of which I am aware"<sup>26</sup> and, realizing that this is not a "happy effort", gets over this problem by concluding that this question is not important for his present purposes. As interesting as the question of self-identity is, it only becomes crucial for our purposes if Russell had introduced the concept of a continuing ego of the type Descartes suggested. If Russell had pursued this method to solve the issue we would be forced to follow such an explanation and introduce the appropriate criticisms. However, since he clearly seems reluctant to do this, it would not be suitable for us to suggest criticisms of a position he seems to want to avoid.

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26. *Ibid.* p. 154.

Since Russell does not follow up the issue of personal identity at this point, we need not pursue it here either.

In the case of acquaintance with universals, Russell feels that we are aware of such things as colour universals. Thus, in a judgement such as "this is yellow", the "this" is a particular sense-datum and the universal yellow is what we appeal to in order to make the judgement. In addition to this, he mentions that we are also aware of certain relations. Being aware of a universal he refers to as 'conceiving', and since we can be aware of 'this being before that', for example, then we must be aware of the relationship of 'being before'. (In the 1911 article, Russell tended to use the word 'awareness' rather than 'acquaintance' when referring to direct cognitive relationships with things other than particulars. In re-writing this topic for the chapter in *The Problems of Philosophy* however, he sticks clearly to the word 'acquaintance'). Other universal relations he gives examples of objects of our awareness are: "resemblance, desire, awareness itself" and there are others. In *The Problems of Philosophy* he also introduces a new area of acquaintance: the objects of memory - this is a topic not explicitly dealt with in "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description." So the extended list of things that we can know by acquaintance includes sense-data, certain objects of memory, certain objects of introspection (e.g. the momentary self) and

certain universals. Examples of things Russell says we can not be acquainted with are physical objects and other people's minds. We can only know these things through the second kind of knowledge: 'knowledge by description'. This brings us to one of the better ways of getting clear about what Russell means by 'knowledge by acquaintance', namely by comparing it with what he means by 'knowledge by description'. I would like to digress briefly on to this topic, not because I closely associate it with Russell's philosophy of mind, but merely because it will help us in understanding the doctrine of acquaintance.

Russell tells us that by a 'description' he means any phrase taking the form 'a so-and-so' or 'the so-and-so'. "A phrase in the form 'a so-and-so'", he says, "I shall call an 'ambiguous' description; a phrase of the form 'the so-and so' (in the singular) I shall call a 'definite' description. Thus, 'a man' is an ambiguous description, and 'the man with the iron mask' is a definite description".<sup>27</sup>

Knowledge by description is set forth by Russell as being *merely* knowledge by description. We may know that an object "the so-and-so" exists, but at the same time be unacquainted with that object. So, for example, we know that the candidate who gets the most votes will be elected,

however, we may not know the candidate directly by acquaintance. It is, however, still possible to make certain correct statements about him. This is because we can have descriptive knowledge of an object when we know that it is the object having some property or properties with which we are acquainted.

This brings us to an important point. Knowledge by description is referred to as being *merely* knowledge by description - it is a type of knowledge that holds a somewhat lower position in the epistemological hierarchy than does knowledge by acquaintance. This is borne out by Russell's "fundamental epistemological principle in the analysis of propositions containing descriptions":<sup>28</sup> "Every proposition which we can understand must be composed wholly of constituents with which we are acquainted".<sup>29</sup> (According to D.F. Pears, "This principle may be compared with Hume's principle, that every idea to which a person can attach significance must either be a replica of a sense-impression that he has, or else be analyzable into simpler ideas that are replicas of sense-impressions that he has had".<sup>30</sup> Ronald Jager, while also seeing the similarity with Hume's position, (perhaps misleadingly) suggests

28. Sometimes described as 'the Reducibility thesis' or 'the Empiricist Theory of Meaning'.

29. *Mysticism and Logic*, p. 159.

30. Pears, D.F. 'Russell's Logical Atomism' in *Bertrand Russell's A Collection of Critical Essays* D.F. Pears ed. op. cit., pp. 27-28.



another comparison: "One thinks here of the famous Scholastic maxim: 'nothing in the intellect not antecedently in the senses' ".] <sup>31</sup> From this doctrine we can see that Russell feels that our knowledge by description is really constructed upon a foundation provided by knowledge by acquaintance or simple acquaintance itself. So much for 'knowledge by description'.

I would now like to return more directly to the subject of acquaintance and see how simple 'acquaintance' differs from 'knowledge by acquaintance'.

It can be argued that knowledge of an object requires first, the noticing of that object and secondly, some kind of marking off of that object in the individual's experience: that is, some kind of identification of that object. This involves what Jaakko Hintikka calls placing it in a "perspective". <sup>32</sup> All this means is that upon noticing the object, the subject is able to place it in a meaningful context in either his present or past experience. By doing this, the object itself, by being in association with a meaningful surrounding, acquires meaning. The

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31. Jäger, Ronald. *The Development of Bertrand Russell's Philosophy* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1972). p. 265.

32. Hintikka, Jaakko. "Knowledge by Acquaintance - Individuation by Acquaintance" in *Bertrand Russell; a Collection of Critical Essays*. D.F. Pears ed. Op. cit, p. 66.

following may illustrate this. If a person was just regaining consciousness after coming out of a general anaesthetic and he noticed, say the blur of ceiling lights as he was wheeled along the hospital corridor, then we could say that he was acquainted with the sensation of light coming down from above him, but unless he recognised the fact that these were the lights in a hospital corridor that he was experiencing - in other words, unless he could place this experience he was having into a meaningful context, he would only have 'mere acquaintance' not 'knowledge by acquaintance'.<sup>33</sup> This sets 'knowledge by acquaintance' apart from 'knowledge by description' in that, in the latter case, the individual is not able to place his merely descriptive knowledge in any perspective at all. Immanuel Kant, for example, since it is said that he never travelled more than about a hundred miles from Königsberg, would not have been able to place knowledge he had of Jerusalem in any personal perspective since he had no personal experience of the Holy City; his knowledge of it would thus remain 'merely knowledge by description'.

Our discussion of the topic so far with its recurring use of the term 'experience' leads us to the

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33. This illustration was suggested by Pears, McMaster lectures, Fall 1972.

place where the whole subject of acquaintance as well as the notion of 'experience' is given wider attention. This occurs in Russell's 1914 article "On the Nature of Acquaintance".

## II

"On the Nature of Acquaintance" appeared in *The Monist* <sup>34</sup> in 1914 broken up into three separate sections: "I Preliminary Description of Experience"; "II Neutral Monism"; "III Analysis of Experience".

Although the second of these three parts is more important for our inquiry, I would like to begin what I have to say regarding this article with a few remarks on the first section.

In "Preliminary Description of Experience", Russell gives us a rather valuable philosophical analysis of the notion of 'experience'. Although the precise meaning of words such as this used in common language may be "vague, fluctuating and ambiguous", Russell feels that this is only an unavoidable difficulty associated with all philosophical inquiries. Somewhere in the uncertain "patch of meaning"

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34. 'On the Nature of Experience' op. cit.

there may be a precise and useful concept. In seeking the central ideal embodied in the word 'experience', we shall at the same time be performing the analysis required for a definition of 'mind' and 'mental' ".<sup>35</sup> The following is Russell's statement of the alternative ways in which 'mind' can be described:

Common sense divides human beings into souls and bodies, and Cartesian philosophy generalized this division by classifying everything that exists as either mind or matter. This division is so familiar, and of such respectable antiquity, that it has become part of our habits and seems scarcely to embody a theory. Mind is what we know from within - thoughts and feelings and volitions - while matter is what is in space outside our minds. Nevertheless, almost all the great philosophers since Leibniz have challenged the dualism of mind and matter. Most of them, regarding mind as something immediately given, have assimilated to it what appeared to be 'matter', and have thus achieved the monism of the idealist. We may define an idealist as a man who believes that whatever exists may be called 'mental', in the sense of having a certain character, known to us by introspection as belonging to our minds. On the one hand, men who admitted that we know by introspection things having the character we call 'mental' have urged that we also know other things not having this character. On the other hand, William James and the American realists have urged that there is no specific character of 'mental' things, but that the things which are called mental are identical with the things which are called physical, the difference being merely one of context and arrangement.<sup>36</sup>

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35. *Ibid.* p. 129.

36. *Ibid.*

From this we can see that Russell believes that there are basically three alternatives available to us. As defined by their relation to the mental, they are: a) the 'idealistic monist' position, that is, the one held by those who maintain that everything has the character of being 'mental'; b) the 'dualistic' position that embraces the view that although there is such a character as the 'mental', not all things possess it; c) the position of the 'neutral monists' who reject the notion that the world is divided into the mental and the physical while at the same time holding that reality is not entirely composed of either quality. To adjudicate among these views we must return to the meaning of the word 'mental' and, according to Russell, that in its turn will lead us back to examining the meaning of the term 'experience'.

Not too unexpectedly, the notion of 'experiencing' brings Russell around to something not far removed from the relationship he has been calling 'acquaintance'. For example, in his discussion of experience, he says "The things which a man is said to experience are the things that are given in sensation, his own thoughts and feelings . . ." in fact anything of which he may be considered 'aware'. "There is thus at any given moment a certain assemblage of objects to which I could, if I chose,

give proper names; these are the objects of my 'awareness', the objects 'before my mind', or the objects that are within my present 'experience'<sup>37</sup>. This brings in an important

motif in Russell's distinction between 'knowledge by acquaintance' and 'knowledge by description': as we saw in part one of this chapter, knowledge by description appears in language in statements of the form 'the so-and-so'; knowledge by acquaintance we now discover is expressed by what Russell calls 'logically proper names'.

Unfortunately, Russell was never able to give us an example that would clearly show us what a 'logically proper name' was (nor could anyone else for that matter because it is a part of their nature that they defy exemplification) but he does tell us that 'this' is probably as good an example as we can present.<sup>38</sup> As to the function of logically proper names, we can say that, if a person possesses a large body of knowledge, this knowledge would have to be composed for the most part of the type of knowledge known as 'knowledge by description'. But this knowledge by description is anchored through logically proper names to the only things he can know for sure, namely those things he knows through acquaintance. There are problems associated

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37. *Ibid.* p. 130.

38. Cf. *Logic and Knowledge*, p. 168.

with this but I would prefer to discuss them in the sequel. I would now like to return to Russell's analysis of 'experience'.

In "Preliminary Description of Experience", Russell has undertaken the task of answering six questions on the topic of 'experience'. The most interesting of these for our purposes is the one that asks "Why do we regard our present and past experiences as all parts of one experience, namely the experience which we call 'ours'?" According to Russell, it is obvious that memory is what makes us call past experiences 'ours'. "When we can remember experiencing something, we include the remembered experience with our present experiencing as part of one person's experiences. Thus we are led to include also whatever experience we remembered at that earlier period, and so back, hypothetically to earliest infancy".<sup>39</sup>

Russell even seems to allow for us remembering things that we were not really aware of when they happened. He says that when we hear a clock striking for example, we may suddenly become aware that it has in fact struck several times before we began to notice it. The crucial question here is: What is this knowledge of the past, knowledge by acquaintance or merely knowledge by description? In examining this, there is a

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39. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

distinction to be made between the immediate past and the more distant past. In Russell's terminology, he wishes to differentiate between 'sensational' memory and 'intellectual' memory. There is no hard and clear distinction between the two, in fact he claims that he is not sure himself how to separate them: "in the immediate memory of something which has just happened, the thing itself seems to remain in experience, in spite of the fact that it is known to be no longer present. How long this sort of memory may last", he says "I do not profess to know; but it may certainly last long enough to make us conscious of a lapse of time since the thing remembered was present".<sup>40</sup> Knowledge by acquaintance of the specious present seems an acceptable claim; thus we may very well have knowledge by acquaintance of the earlier chimes of a clock that we were not 'aware' of a moment ago. But it is a much greater claim to say that we have knowledge by acquaintance that extends far into the past. In stating this, as it seems to me, we would be claiming -- among other things -- that we could have a strong and continuing sense of identity. If Russell were to maintain this it would mean that he would have acquaintance with much more than the 'momentary ego' that he claimed acquaintance with in *The Problems of Philosophy*. But whether or not we have acquaintance with

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40. *Ibid.*, p. 133.



the past and whether or not Russell thought we had when he wrote "On the Nature of Acquaintance" is a controversial question.

The view that we do not have such knowledge by acquaintance and the view that Russell also believed that we did not have this type of acquaintance with the past is expressed by J.O. Urnson. He first implies this in his book *Philosophical Analysis*<sup>41</sup> (Cf. pp. 86 and 134.) and then says so more explicitly in an extended argument that appears in his paper "Russell on Acquaintance with the Past".<sup>42</sup> The contrary view is given by D.F. Pears in his *Bertrand Russell and the British Tradition in Philosophy*<sup>43</sup> (see especially the first edition page 71, 181 and 215). It is interesting to note the change in the footnote in the second edition of Pears' book - the change is a direct consequence of the Pears/Urnson debate. The footnote on page 71 of the first edition asks us to:

Notice that Russell allows that a person may now have acquaintance with a thing because he has come across it in the past. See O.N.A.

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41. Urnson, J.O. *Philosophical Analysts* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956) Pp. 203.

42. Urnson, J.O. "Russell on Acquaintance with the Past". This paper is a discussion of Pears' *Bertrand Russell and the British Tradition in Philosophy* and appears in the *Philosophical Review*, Vol. LXXVIII (1969), pp. 510-15.

43. (New York, Randon House, 1967) Pp. 283.

(L.KN. pp. 127-39., and pp. 165-6.). This vital point is often missed by students of Russell's theory of knowledge: e.g. by J.O. Umson, *Philosophical Analysis*, p. 86 and p. 134. The result is a very bizarre interpretation of Russell's analysis of sense-datum propositions. See pp. 181-2.

In the second edition of *Bertrand Russell and the British Tradition in Philosophy*, Pears has toned down the footnote to read:

See O.N.A. (L.KN. pp. 127-39., and pp. 165-6.) and P. of PH. Ch.v. It is questionable how far into the past Russell believed that a person's acquaintance with particulars that he has experienced may extend. J.O. Umson in a review of the first edition of this book (*Philosophical Review*, Vol. LXXVIII) argues that he did not believe that it extends beyond the limit of the specious present.

However, we should not construe this modification to mean that Umson has convinced Pears that he has the correct view in this matter. <sup>44</sup> If Russell were around to be asked who was right, he might very well reply as he had in a similar case, <sup>45</sup> that they were both wrong. But regardless of the conflicting opinions, one thing that does come through clearly is that Russell was unquestionably giving memory a stronger rôle to play in his 1914 version of the philosophy of mind. Just how strong that rôle was, as we have seen, is difficult to say. But by

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44. Even as recently as the Fall of 1972 when Pears was the Visiting Professor at McMaster University he argued for his interpretation over Umson's.

45. Cf. Crawshay-Williams, Rupert. *Russell Remembered*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1970) pp. 145-6.

strengthening the rôle of memory and probably allowing for more acquaintance with the ego than he had supposed in *The Problems of Philosophy*, he is giving us what could be described as the *locus classicus* of his dualistic philosophy of mind. In effect, the rôle he is now giving memory is that of knitting together the thread of consciousness into a continuous entity that would blanket the whole of an individual's mental life. But there may be holes in a blanket of this sort.-

A great deal of our mental experience passes through the net of memory without getting caught. These lost experiences, although they are not remembered later on, are still part of the history of an individual's mind. But what do we appeal to when we say that they are included in the mind? We could, as D.M. Armstrong suggests, try to bring them into the scope of mind by "going back to the relations of similarity and causation"<sup>46</sup> but even this method does not assure us of getting all our unremembered mental states, and no others, within the net.

But leaving the criticism aside, Russell must have believed the dualism he was advancing in the 1914 article to be of a fairly healthy sort. The principal rival to

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46. Armstrong, D.M. *A Materialist Theory of The Mind. Op. cit.* pp. 17-18.

his theory was the neutral monistic one being advanced by Mach and James. It is to Russell's views on that theory, that I would now like to turn my attention.

### III

Neutral monism is somewhat novel in that it advocates that the things we usually regard as being physical and the things we usually think of as being mental are not in any way different because of some intrinsic property possessed by the one group and not by the other, but that they differ only in respect of their arrangement and context. Russell has an illustrative analogy that he uses to elucidate this theory; it involves a postal directory. In a postal directory, everyone's name occurs twice over, once in alphabetical order and once in geographical order. If we compare the geographical order to the physical and the alphabetical to the mental, we can see that the "affinities of a given thing are quite different in the two orders, and its causes and effects obey different laws".<sup>47</sup> Thus a certain pair of object of thought may be strongly related by an association of ideas and, on the other hand, a couple of material things may be

bound up in the physical world by something as 'mental' as the law of gravity. Physical water may put out physical fire, but mental water may or may not put out mental fire. We often seem to have ideas in the mental world of things in the physical but according to the theory of neutral monism, this duplication of things in the physical realm by things in the mental one is simply inaccurate: the idea of a table is identical with the table itself but only considered in its mental context and not its physical context. A quotation from Russell may help to make this clear:

Just as every man in the directory has two kinds of neighbours, namely alphabetical neighbours and geographical neighbours, so every object will lie at the intersection of two causal series with different laws, namely the mental series and the physical series. 'Thoughts' are not different in substance from 'things'; the stream of my thoughts is a stream of things, namely of the things which I should commonly be said to be thinking of; what leads to its being called a stream of *thoughts* is merely that the laws of succession are different from the physical laws. In my mind, Caesar may call up Charlemagne, whereas in the physical world the two were widely assunder. The whole duality of mind and matter, according to this theory is a mistake; there is only one kind of *stuff* out of which the world is made, and this stuff is called mental in one arrangement, physical in the other. 48

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48. *Ibid.* 139-140. [Italics in the original.]

At the time of the writing of "On the Nature of Acquaintance"  
 the main exponents of this theory were Dr. Ernest Mach<sup>49</sup>  
 in Vienna and William James<sup>50</sup>, Ralph Barton Perry<sup>51</sup> and  
 William Pepperrall Montague<sup>52</sup> in the United States.

Although Russell does not yet embrace the view, he sees certain things he approves of in neutral monism. In registering Russell's favourable comments about the theory, the first thing we must note is that Russell regards Occam's razor, '*entis non multiplicanda praeter necessitatem*', as the supreme methodological maxim in philosophizing. Therefore, when he encounters a theory that is attempting to reduce the putative entities in the world by one, his first inclination is to endorse it. Thus it is his feeling that neutral monism has as its most favourable feature the simplification it attempts to introduce; Russell's sense of parsimony is aroused by the thought that the things given in experience should be of two fundamentally different substances when the suggestion is raised that they may merely be two different ways of arranging one neutral substance.

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49. Cf. Mach, Ernst. *The Analysis of Sensations and the Relation of the Physical to the Psychical* (Chicago, The Open Court Publishing Co., 1914) Pp. 380.

50. Cf. James, William. *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (New York, Longmans, 1912) Pp. 282.

51. Cf. Perry, Ralph Barton. *Present Philosophical Tendencies* (New York, Longmans, 1912) Pp. 383.

In his laudatory remarks about neutral monism Russell interjects a theme of his that he re-introduces in other contexts. This concerns his opinion that matter, which in the time of Descartes was supposed to be an obvious datum, has "under the influence of scientific hypotheses, become a remote super-sensuous construction" and although he feels that it is connected with sense through a long chain of intermediate inferences, he wishes to point out that:

What is immediately present in sense, though obviously in some way presupposed in physics, is studied rather in psychology than in physics. Thus we seem to have here, in sense, a neutral ground, a watershed, from which we may pass either to 'matter' or to 'mind' according<sup>53</sup> to the nature of the problems we choose to raise.

In the next chapter I shall examine in greater detail what Russell has to say on this topic of the relations of sense-data to physics. For now, the significant thing in the above passage that I wish to note is simply the closeness of Russell's attitude to that of neutral monists. The only difference seems to be in Russell's hesitancy: he says "Thus we *seem to have here, in sense, a neutral ground, a watershed . . .*" [my italics]; the neutral monists, on the other hand, do not equivocate, but state clearly that we do have

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52. Cf. esp. Montague, W.P. with E.B. Holt, W.T. Marvin, R.B. Perry, and E.G. Spaulding in *The New Realism, Cooperative Studies in Philosophy* (New York, Macmillan, 1912) Pp. 491.

53. *Logic and Knowledge, op. cit.* p. 146.

this neutral ground. -But as we shall see there is sufficient reason behind Russell's hesitancy.

Continuing in his commendation of neutral monism, Russell emphasizes the complexity of space that he had first mentioned in *The Problems of Philosophy*:

It is still sometimes thought that matter may be defined as 'what is in space', but as soon as 'space' is examined, it is found to be incredibly ambiguous, shifting and uncertain ... the space of actual experience is appropriated by psychology, the space of geometry is appropriated by logic, and the space of physics is left halting between them in the humbled garb of a working hypothesis. It is not in 'space', therefore, that we can find a criterion to distinguish the mental and the physical. <sup>54</sup>

However, it is not Russell's intention in this article to give us a solution to the difficulties surrounding the notion of 'space'. He only wishes to bring these difficulties to light for fear that it should seem that space offered us an unambiguous method of distinguishing between the physical and the mental. Nor by any means is it Russell's intention to wholeheartedly endorse neutral monism. His objective in "On the Nature of Acquaintance" is quite the contrary: he wishes to give the reader five strong arguments against the viability of neutral monism. The

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54. *Ibid.* Pp. 146-7.



first four of these arguments are found in the second section of the article while the fifth and most important occurs in the last part. I would now like to examine each of these five arguments.

The first of the problems associated with neutral monism has to do with the nature of erroneous judgment or incorrect belief. How do we describe what is happening when someone has a false belief? Briefly it is Russell's opinion that "it is impossible to account for the occurrence of . . . false belief . . . except by involving something not to be found in the physical world". His argument for this runs something as follows. Usually belief statements are of the existential type. Thus we hear people saying such things as "I believe in God" or "I do not believe there is any such place as Atlantis". What is implied in cases of this type is that there is some entity that answers to the nature of description involved; unfortunately this fact obscures the nature of other types of belief statements. This becomes clear if we ask ourselves, What if we believe that today is Tuesday when in fact it is Wednesday? This is different from an existential belief in that there is no sensation or presentation that will, as

Russell says, "give the same objective content as is involved in the belief". The conclusion to draw from this is that the matter of belief is different in kind from that of sensation or presentation. According to Russell, it is impossible for us to find anywhere in the material world any entity corresponding to such a thing as the mistaken belief that it is Wednesday when we think it Tuesday. In short, the error Russell feels that neutral monists are susceptible to is the so-called 'illusion of sense'. By this he means that they tend to treat error as something analogous to hallucination whereas Russell would see a hallucination as a fact, not an error; what is erroneous is the judgement based upon the hallucination. The general mistake involved in the views advanced by the neutral monists Russell has read is that they seem to expect that belief statements are directly related to the existence or non-existence of some entity in the world that answers to some description expressed in the belief. But the matter of belief, according to Russell, is different in kind from the matter of sensation and presentation and is not in any way analogous to what occurs in hallucination. That is the general error. A more particular one is committed by

W.P. Montague in his explanation of the true and false.

Montague is quoted by Russell as saying that "The true and false are respectively the real and the unreal, considered as objects of a possible belief or judgement"<sup>55</sup> Russell's dismissal of this explanation comes quickly: he simply states that there is no such thing as the 'unreal', so according to Montague's definition, there must be no such thing as 'the false', "yet it is notorious that false beliefs do occur".<sup>56</sup>

Without dwelling on Montague's particular approach to the problem, I would like to conclude that, in general, Russell sees as its first difficulty the fact that neutral monism seems to suggest that the world is full of peculiar entities such as 'the discovery of America in 1066' and other incorrect beliefs. This putative mistake of hypostatizing incorrect beliefs is not wholly unallied with neutral monism's supposed second difficulty, namely the way it deals with the issue of non-temporal entities.

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55. Montague, W.P. *et al* *The New Realism* *op. cit.* p. 252.

56. *Logic and Knowledge*, *op. cit.* p. 149.

If we take some simple abstract fact, let us use for example the fact that ' $2+2=4$ ', then we may say of this fact that there are times when people are thinking of it and believing it and there are other times when this and all other arithmetical computations are completely absent from their thoughts'. If we take the neutral monistic view that there is no specifically mental element in the world, then Russell tells us that we shall have to hold that ' $2+2=4$ ' and other such similar abstract entities exist *only at those moments* when some person or other is believing them. I wonder if Russell's implied worry is justified in this case? Let us return to neutral monism's basic tenet and see if we can follow the reasoning that led Russell to this critical attitude toward it.

The basic hypothesis is that there is only one "stuff" in the world which according to some arrangements is 'mental' and according to others 'physical'. With this in mind we can appreciate Russell's concern regarding entities such as ' $2+2=4$ '. The mental fact ' $2+2=4$ ', according to neutral monism, it would seem, must also be capable of some material interpretation; in other words, if some neutral 'stuff' is arranged such that the mental interpretation of it is ' $2+2=4$ ' then this same neutral stuff must be capable

of some physical interpretation as well. At this point it is a little difficult to imagine what the theory should state, and if this is Russell's worry then it seems a justified one. However, this is *not* exactly what is bothering Russell at this point. Instead he seems to be expressing concern that, in the theory of neutral monism, mental entities exist *only* while they are believed - when they cease to be believed they cease to exist. As it seems to me, this may not be as unpalatable as it first appears. If the neutral elements are not arranged into mental series - in other words if they are not believed in at some point in time - then they must merely exist as neutral 'stuff' and not as mental entities at all. It follows from this that '2+2=4' as a mental fact would jump into existence (as a 'mental entity') while someone was believing it and only during that period of belief. Somehow I do not find this as offensive as Russell seems to. I feel that if we think of 'mental entities' only as concatenations of neutral elements put into some order so as to constitute some 'mental fact', then we should not have too much difficulty in believing that when this ordering element is removed, that is, when this neutral 'stuff' ceases to be arranged as a particular 'mental fact', then the 'mental entity' will no longer exist as such. The alternative to this seems to

be that mental facts such as ' $2+2=4$ ' *always* exist permanently and immutably. If this is what Russell is implying in his disapproval of the idea that mental facts in the neutral monistic view jump in and out of existence, then this alternative too has its difficulties. However, I shall not pursue that point here. Instead I wish to focus on the other part of this problem, namely the difficulty with the temporal and the non-temporal.

Russell's worry here has to do with the fact that the proposition ' $2+2=4$ ' has no temporal particular as a constituent "hence it seems impossible that, except through the intermediacy of some ~~extraneous~~ temporal particular, it should acquire that special relation to certain moments which is involved in its being sometimes thought of and sometimes not".<sup>57</sup> In setting the problem up this way I feel that Russell is somewhat guilty himself of the error he ascribes to neutral monists. The error I am referring to is that of being misled by the existential type of belief. If we assume that there is some temporally independent entity ' $2+2=4$ ' then we do have to deal with the difficulty of how it interacts with propositions that contain temporal constituents. As he says, we would have to attribute some sort of causal efficacy to the abstract

timeless fact at those instances when it is being believed. However, if we refrain from postulating these abstract, timeless entities and instead deal with the problem in a manner similar to that suggested above, then of course this difficulty will not arise. Because of this I am inclined to side with the neutral monists regarding this particular criticism of Russell's against them. However, in a somewhat analogous issue concerning memory I feel that Russell's point is better taken and it becomes much more difficult to escape his criticism there. Perhaps this will be seen in what follows.

Fundamental to both the problem of non-temporal entities and the problem of remembering past events is the issue of dealing with ideas. Neutral monism is a theory that is supposed to belittle opposing theories that rely on 'ideas' as entities for their cogency. However Russell feels that neutral monism itself has a difficult time explaining the past without these entities. He believes that in remembering an event which occurred in the past, the present event of remembering it is certainly not the same event as the one that happened earlier. Therefore the thing that a person may be said to be experiencing in the present is best described as merely an *idea* of that

which occurred in the past. But if we do describe things in this way then we are left with a whole medium of 'ideas' between us and the past event. So if neutral monism intends to liberate us from the web of ideas, how does it propose to do so? How without using the device of ideas can it explain how we have knowledge of the past? We may gain some insight as to how this may be accomplished by examining what William James has to say on 'knowing ideas'.  
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The first thing to note is that James distinguishes between what he calls 'knowing' and mere sensation. 'Knowing', for James is an external relation between two bits of experience: one bit of experience through certain intermediaries leads to the other bit. Thus, for example, I may be said to know which car in the parking lot is mine because I am able to lead you to it and I am able to distinguish it from the other cars on the lot. Also I am able to tell you how long I have owned it, its peculiar deficiencies and various other facts about it. If I was unable to do this, if I claimed I had an idea of my car in my mind but when you led me to the car and asked me "is this what you are thinking of?" I replied that I was not sure, then in what sense would I be said to know which

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58. Cf. James, William *Essays in Radical Empiricism*. Op. cit., Chapter 2.



car is mine? As James says, my mind may have before it only the name of the thing, or it may have a clear image but such *intrinsic* differences in the image make no difference in its cognitive function. It is the *extrinsic* phenomena - the special experiences of conjunction - that impart to the image (whatever that may be) its special cognitive dimension. It is in the "continuing and corroborating, taken in no transcendental sense, but denoting definitely felt transitions, [wherein] lies all that the knowing of a percept by an idea can possibly contain or signify" [italics in the original]. Thus, whenever certain intermediaries are given and they develop towards their terminus there is then an experience from point to point in one direction until finally the process is fulfilled and the result is such that "*their starting-point thereby becomes a knower and their terminus an object meant or known*".<sup>60</sup> [italics in the original].

We may find an account of this type somehow agreeable in nature when we are trying to find some way of explaining how it is that an idea (or to use James' term, a 'percept') we have is related to some physical object in the world, but in relation to the objects of memory this

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59. *Ibid.* p. 56.

60. *Ibid.* p. 57.

description becomes very difficult to deal with. Russell even objected to James's account of 'processes of leading' as constituting knowledge. He felt that since it would be difficult to define the notion of 'leading' without a certain amount of vagueness entering into it, there would therefore be the likelihood of specious cases unjustifiably being admitted as knowledge. To revert to the example of my finding my car in the parking lot, the Russell of 1914 would want to argue that, if the original idea was capable of leading into a chain of other experiences on my part that go from next to next and finally terminate in the object that is my car, then what was meant by the original idea must have somehow 'intended' the car itself. Without this guiding notion of intention, any accidental discovery of mine of my car on the lot would have been *just as cognitive* as if I had set out deliberately to find it. So, in James's account, what is the difference between accidentally coming across the car in the lot and discovering it through intended efforts? In other words, how do we know when an idea is having its intended effect or some other unintended one? The answer seems to be whether or not we get the feeling of 'that's what I was thinking of' when we are confronted by the object. And this feeling, to push the problem back a step,

seems to be bound up in what we desire. This prompts Russell to remark that "at this point, the need of a neutral theory of desire becomes very urgent, but we will not dwell on this difficulty. The purely cognitive aspect of James's view offers sufficient difficulties, and we will consider them only".<sup>61</sup>

Not only does James's theory suffer for neglecting the intentional aspect of the chain of experiences, but Russell feels that it also shows an insufficiently critical attitude towards the notion of causality. In Russell's view, the relations of cause and effect that James would claim I experience between the antecedent knowledge of my car and the actual presence of it in the parking lot require further definition. Russell's argument in this case does not appear to me to be as persuasive as his case against James's omission of the aspect of intention. In this instance, he merely wishes to point out that "unintended sequences of cause and effect even if their final outcome were what was intended, could not be said to show that the original idea was cognitive".<sup>62</sup> Thus, for example, if I wish to go to

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61. *Logic and Knowledge* p. 152.

62. *Ibid.*

my car and I start out towards the place on the lot where I left it and on the way before I ever get to the lot I accidentally discover my car being towed away because I did not pay the parking fee, then, although I find the object I intended to find, it can not be said that I knew where it was. This may prompt us to reflect on the nature of the causal chain that led us to this and James's characterization of it. The history of philosophy tells us that the nature of cause and effect should be regarded with a certain amount of suspicion. But James's account seems to pivot on a kind of naïve description of cause and effect that Russell feels cannot be defended. However, in spite of this - perhaps it is because there is a conspicuous lack of agreement among philosophers as to what exactly is the correct analysis of cause and effect - Russell is content to conclude that he is not sure whether this is a vital objection to James's view. In fact, in regard to this problem he says that "it is not unlikely that it could be avoided by a re-statement".<sup>63</sup>

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63. *Ibid.* p. 153.

This brings us to Russell's third objection to neutral monism. In his *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, William James gives us his theory as to the relationship between the knower and the known. He tells us that:

Throughout the history of philosophy the subject and its object have been treated as absolutely discontinuous entities; and thereupon the presence of the latter to the former, or the 'apprehension' by the former of the latter, has assumed a paradoxical character which all sorts of theories had to be invented to overcome . . . all the while, in the very bosom of the finite experience, every conjunction required to make the relation intelligible is given in full. Either the knower and the known are:

(1) the self-same piece of experience taken twice over in different contexts; or they are

(2) two pieces of *actual* experiences belonging to the same subject, with definite tracts of conjunctive transitional experience between them; or

(3) the known is a *possible* experience either of that subject or another, to which the said conjunctive transitions would lead, if sufficiently prolonged. <sup>64</sup>

Furthermore, James believes that the third type can always be "formally and hypothetically" reduced to the second type which are actual. Russell is very concerned that each connecting bit of experience be *actual* rather than merely *possible*. Thus he objects to the notion that type 3 "can always formally and hypothetically be reduced to type 2". 65

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64. James, William *Essays in Radical Empiricism*  
*Op. cit.* pp. 52-53.

65. *Ibid.* p. 54.

Instead it is his belief that we may lay down the general rule that *possibility* is the mark of the insufficient in analysis - when it enters, the system is vitiated; "when analysis is completed, only the *actual* can be relevant, for the simple reason that there is only the actual, and that the merely possible is nothing".<sup>66</sup> So in allowing for the merely possible, Russell believes that James allows imprecision to creep into his system; but more fundamental than this is Russell's and James's differing opinions on the starting point of knowledge.

It will be recalled that earlier we mentioned Russell's belief in the doctrine that *every proposition which we can understand must be composed wholly of constituents with which we are acquainted*. We may call this his doctrine of acquaintance. If we were to re-state this fundamental epistemological principle so that it applied to judgement or belief we would get the following: "*Whenever a relation of supposing or judging occurs, the terms to which the supposing or judging mind is related by the relation of supposing or judging must be terms with which*

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66. *Logic and Knowledge*, Op. cit. p. 153.

67. *the mind in question is acquainted*". If we keep this in mind I think it will be clearer why Russell believes there are awkward difficulties in the way of introducing precision into the account of James's 'processes of leading'. We may be able to illustrate this by once again reverting to the example of my car in the parking lot.

According to James's view I would 'know' my car if, for example, I know that in order to perceive it I must leave the building in which I am, walk down to Main Street, cross Main at Longwood Road, and walk twenty yards into the parking lot. When we analyse this example of knowledge we find that there are two things that I am supposed to know: first, there is the object 'my car' and second there is the proposition describing how to get to it. The first of these (i.e., 'my car'), although it could occur as a proper name designating my perception of the vehicle if it were in my presence, in this case occurs as a *description* meaning 'the automobile registered in my name'. The second bit of knowledge consists in the proposition stating how to get to the auto and containing within it the description 'my car'. We therefore have

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67. Cf. *Mysticism and Logic*, Op. cit. p. 160.

two descriptions 'applying to the same entity. We know nothing further about the situation other than what is stated in the proposition and this information could be given to some person who had never seen the car. Thus, if we perhaps drew the person a map to illustrate the proposition more clearly and gave him sufficient data to identify the vehicle when he got to it, he could - *without ever having seen the automobile* - have just the same information we were calling 'knowledge' by using James's standards. It is Russell's complaint that this type of 'knowledge' does not measure up to what we should properly be calling knowledge because it does not meet the basic requirements of the fundamental epistemological principle he thinks we should use in the analysis of propositions containing descriptions. (The principle to which I am referring is the one described on page 28 & 58 above.) So, if someone supposed or believed that he knew where my car was without ever having seen it, he would not really know this fact because "*whenever a relation of supposing or judging occurs, the terms to which the supposing or judging mind is related by the relation of supposing or judging must be terms with which the mind in question is acquainted*".<sup>68</sup> The problem is, of course,

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68. Ibid.



that 'my car' is not a constituent in the proposition in the sense required by Russell's doctrine of acquaintance. Thus any person may express the belief that my car is in the aforementioned parking lot, and whether the belief is true or not, he will not have *knowledge* that the car is indeed there. True belief, of course, does not equal knowledge.

To emphasise the difference between Russell's starting point for knowledge and James's we should add that Russell would want to say that when I actually see my car, even if I make no propositions about it, it can be said that I know it in a sense more fundamental than any which can be constituted by the belief in true propositions describing it. This is because Russell's starting point for knowledge is what we described earlier as 'knowledge by acquaintance' whereas James's starting point seems much closer to what we described as merely 'knowledge by description'. Russell claims that what James and his followers call knowledge of an object is really only knowledge of a proposition, in which the object itself does not occur, but is replaced by descriptions. The constituents of these propositions are only images or

other bits of actual present experience, and for Russell this is a vital point.

The fourth major point on which Russell disagrees with the neutral monists concerns an issue we touched upon in the first section of this chapter. This has to do with the question, How is the group of my present experiences distinguished from other things? Russell explains that at any given moment some but not all of the things in the world are somehow collected into a bundle consisting of what now lies within *my* immediate experience. The question is: "Can neutral monism give a tenable account of the bond which unites the parts of this bundle, and the difference which marks them out from the rest of the things in the world?"<sup>69</sup> We may find an answer to this by examining what Ralph Barton Perry has to say in *Present Philosophical Tendencies*.<sup>70</sup> We can see there that it is Perry's belief that when he is thinking of things such as ' $2+2=4$ ' or any abstraction of this sort, the content of the idea is not something that is possessed

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69. *Logic and Knowledge*, p. 155.

70. *Op. cit.* pp. 290-305.

by him alone in any kind of private sense; virtually anyone may think the same thing. "The fact that they are my contents means that they are somehow bound up with the history of my nervous system".<sup>71</sup> The following is a fuller explanation of his position:

A mind is a complex so organised as to act desideratively or interestedly. I mean here to indicate that character which distinguishes the living organism, having originally the instinct of self-preservation, and acquiring in the course of its development a variety of special interests. I use the term *interest* primarily in its biological rather than its physiological sense. Certain natural processes act consistently in such a wise as to isolate, protect, and renew themselves. <sup>72</sup>

The Russell of 1914 makes a strong objection to this characterization which he feels is impossible to reconcile with the obvious facts. Neutral monism, he suggests, cannot be true because it requires such extraneous considerations as the nervous system in order that it explain the difference between what I experience and what I do not experience. Russell's criticism in this: he says that in "order to know that such and such a thing lies within my experience, it is not necessary to know anything about my nervous system: those who have never learned physiology,

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71. *Present Philosophical Tendencies*, *Op. cit.* p. 297 (my emphasis).

72. *Ibid.* p. 303-4.

and are unaware that they possess nerves, are quite competent to know that this or that comes within their experience".<sup>73</sup> But how do they know this? Surely it is not untrue that the central nervous system does play an essential rôle in what we experience and thus cannot be considered an 'extraneous consideration'. It is part of Russell's complaint that what he is presently experiencing is simple and obvious to him. He knows, for example, that he is not experiencing visually that which is occurring behind his back. He feels that he knows this fact immediately and thus rejects complicated explanations of the phenomena such as the one advanced by Perry involving the nervous system. True, we do not normally have visual knowledge of what is occurring behind us. While this may be intuitively obvious, any protracted explanation of why this is so could, as it seems to me, quite legitimately involve an explanation of the rôle played by the nervous system. Why Russell resists the more complicated explanation of the ostensibly simple is difficult to understand. It may be that his desire to use Occam's razor whenever possible disposes him to favour simple explanations over more complicated ones. But at

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73. *Logic and Knowledge* p. 157.

some point, simple economy of explanation may mislead; at this point we may wish to judge which explanation we wish to use not on the basis of which is more simple, but on the basis of which is more accurate. I would thus like to disregard Russell's fourth objection and move on to the argument he considers more fatal than any of the so far mentioned difficulties, namely, the argument that is derived from considerations of 'this' and 'now' and 'I'.

#### IV

In the third section of "On the Nature of Acquaintance", the section carrying the title "Analysis of Experience", Russell, having reached his conclusion that the theory of neutral monism was unsatisfactory, decided that there must be an additional constituent in experience for which neutral monism had not allowed. Therefore it is his intention in the final part of his article to determine the nature of this additional constituent. In that which follows I shall examine what Russell has to say on this.

As we have seen, it is Russell's opinion that the experiences of one mind may overlap those of another; this point was suggested in our earlier discussion of abstractions - virtually any two people, for example, may believe or think of the fact that  $'2+2=4'$ . He believes that this certainly applies to all experiencing of universals and abstractions and it seems a theoretical possibility that it also applies to the things of sense. In addition to this, Russell also believes that there are other things that only *one* mind can experience. Most important among these for him is the fact that although I know immediately that which I am experiencing or noticing, someone else, although he too may experience the same or similar things, cannot know exactly what it is that I am experiencing at the same moment I am having my experience. So, although it is theoretically possible that you and I are looking at the same object, you cannot know by immediate experience that I too am seeing it. In other words, you cannot experience my experiencing of the object. In addition to this, Russell believes that my experiencing of an object is independent of any other experience I may have, so any idea that my experiencing consists in a relation of the object experienced to other objects - as William James believed - must be incorrect. I would like to digress from the

argument for a moment to emphasize this point.

What I have just referred to here is the fundamentally different epistemological beliefs that Russell and James use as their theoretical starting points. This may be emphasized by the following illustration. Russell believes that, for example, if I smell a particularly fragrant scent, and then immediately stop breathing, it is at least possible to suppose that the fragrant scent continues to exist after I have stopped breathing. James would also agree with this. But while breathing, the fragrant scent is one of the contents of my momentary experience, whereas when I am not breathing it is not. According to James, the difference between being and not being one of the contents of my momentary experience consists in experienced relations to the other relations of my experience. It is here that Russell and James part ways. Russell does not think that the difference between my smelling the fragrant scent and the fragrant scent being there unsmelled, consists in the presence or absence of relations between the fragrant scent and other objects of the same kind. To put the point even more strongly, it is possible for Russell, to imagine

a mind existing for only a fraction of a second, having an isolated experience such as the experiencing of a fragrant scent, and then passing out of existence without ever having another experience. While anyone would consider this improbable, James's theory would regard it as meaningless. His theory requires that things become parts of my experience in virtue of certain relations to each other. This means that if there were not a system of interrelated things experienced by me, there could not be one thing experienced by me. The *acquaintance* which Russell believes a momentary mind could have with a momentary experience is for him more deserving to be called 'cognitive' than any of the system of interrelated ideas James would prefer to apply that term to. At the risk of repeating myself, this epistemological issue represents Russell's main grounds for objecting to neutral monism. I shall now return to Russell's argument for there being an additional element in experience.

If A can experience O independently of any other experience as Russell is arguing, <sup>74</sup> then the fact that he does experience O without involving relations with



other objects of experience, leads to the conclusion that "A's experiencing of O is different from O, and is in fact a complex, of which A himself, or some simpler entity bound up with A, is a constituent as well as O. Hence experiencing must be a relation, in which one term is the object experienced, while the other term is that which experiences".<sup>75</sup> This relational aspect of Russell's view is so fundamental and characteristic that I do not think it would be misleading to call his theory in this period a 'relational philosophy of mind'. However, even if this is an accurate description of his position, the word 'relational' I believe carries with it a certain amount of ambiguity; moreover the type of relation involved is one of duality so, in view of the fact that there is little to be gained in terms of revealing insight by suddenly beginning to speak of Russell's 'relational theory of mind', I shall continue to refer to his philosophy of mind of this period as 'qualified dualism'. In doing so, there will not be much lost in that the type of relation involved in his theory is a dualistic one anyway. Thus with this aside, I would like to proceed

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75. *Ibid.*

to examine the subjective side of his dualistic theory.

But there is one thing first. In Russell's criticism of James's philosophy, what he is doing to some extent is introducing rigor and strictness into James's sometimes too loose manner of speaking. If we wished to take James's side in an argument against this type of criticism we could quote A.J. Ayer: "James did have reason to complain that, with few exceptions, the opponents of his pragmatism addressed themselves more to the letter than to the spirit of his writings. He characteristically hit off a pettifogging strain in the Oxford philosophical tradition when he said of one of his critics: 'I feel as if Mr. Joseph almost pounced on my words singly, without giving the sentences time to get out of my mouth' [*Essays in Radical Empiricism* (1912), p. 246.]"<sup>76</sup> However, Russell's polemic against James's use of the term 'experience' is not a pettifogging one, but is instead an extended and reasonable argument focusing on a key expression related to a fundamental issue. Russell believes that the word 'experience' is a non-committal and neutral term which does not sufficiently suggest the true nature of the phenomenon he wishes to emphasize. It is his belief that since he has

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76. Ayer, A.J. *The Origins of Pragmatism* (London, MacMillan, 1968) p. 185.

demonstrated that experience has as its essential constituent a certain relational feature, then it would thus be better to use a term less neutral and more suggestive of the duality he advocates; therefore "we shall employ synonymously the two words 'acquaintance' and 'awareness', generally the former. Thus when A experiences an object O, we shall say that A is acquainted with O".<sup>77</sup> I shall now examine what Russell has to say concerning the subject side of the relationship of acquaintance.

Russell tells us that a 'subject' is anything which is acquainted with something. "A fact will be called 'mental' if it contains either acquaintance or some other relation presupposing acquaintance as a component. Thus any instance of acquaintance is mental since it is a complex in which a subject and an object are united by the relation of acquaintance".<sup>78</sup> There may be room for an old objection here. Before introducing the possible objection however, we must explain that in this complex in which the subject and object are united by the relation of acquaintance Russell makes it clear that the thing on the object side of the relation (as has been his main point in arguing against idealism) need not be mental. Furthermore, the

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77. *Logic and Knowledge* p. 162.

78. *Ibid.*

reason he wishes to use the term 'mental facts' rather than 'mental entities' is that he believes that we reach 'subjects' *only by description*. There are two points I wish to make in connection with this.

The first of these has to do with the possible objection I mentioned. Russell is willing to allow that the object of acquaintance may be non-mental but, in spite of the fact that he now claims that we may now reach subjects 'only by description' he still shows no inclination at all to suppose that they too may be non-mentally constituted. I shall not re-work this point further as I have already mentioned it earlier in the chapter (Cf. p. 24 above).

The second point I wish to make is that Russell's statement here in "On the Nature of Acquaintance" that we reach subjects "only by description" represents a change and a divergence from what he said in "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description".<sup>79</sup> There he maintained that the 'I' was "the subject-term in awareness

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79. This may be an appropriate place to make the following point. C.D. Broad once said "As we all know, Mr. Russell produces a different system of philosophy every few years . . ." (in "Critical and Speculative Philosophy" in *Contemporary British Philosophy*, First Series, p. 79). In response to this Morris Weitz in "Analysis and the Unity of Russell's Philosophy" [in *The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell* Paul A. Shilpp, ed. (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1944) p. 58.] says of Broad's

of which I am aware".<sup>80</sup> He knew then that this was an unhappy definition and in the re-written version of the topic that appeared in *The Problems of Philosophy* he modified it to "although acquaintance with ourselves seems probably to occur, it is not wise to assert that it undoubtedly does"<sup>81</sup> (emphasis in the original).

His 1914 position in which he viewed 'subjects' as something we can know only by description requires much arguing for. We shall look at some of that argument in what follows.

If we do consider the theory that we have acquaintance with the subject, to do so intelligibly involves an analysis of the meaning of the word 'I'. Russell believed that much can be gained here by making clear where universals apply and where the terms we are using are particulars and not universals. If we do this then he claims that there will be less chance of our confusing

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remark "which he may have uttered in jest, but which many philosophers accept as a serious charge, to the effect that Russell is a flighty philosopher because he has published a new system of philosophy every few years, is absolutely untrue. Most of the changes in Russell's philosophy are minor ones and occur in his application of analysis to ontology. It is shown that these changes are due to more rigorous application of his analytical method. Once the primacy of analysis is understood, it will become evident that there is a basic unit in his work, and that this unity revolves around his method".

Judging from the case with which we are dealing wherein Russell modified his views regarding acquaintance with the subject, his reasons for doing so seem to me to be grounded in good argument and are far removed from any kind of consciousness.

(Con.)

the meaning of the word 'I' with the meaning of 'the ego'. According to Russell, what we mean by 'the ego' has a meaning that is common to us all; it does not mean any particular person more than any other, thus it is a *universal* term. It is, in general, that thing which makes each one of us call himself 'I'. In contrast to this but perhaps easily confused with it is Russell's belief that 'I' itself is not a universal but more of an "ambiguous proper name". Each time it is used there is only one person to whom this first person singular pronoun is referring and this person differs as to the speaker. Thus 'I' is a particular term so *while* it is being used it is not ambiguous because it refers specifically to the subject of the experience occurring. With this distinction in mind we can now go on to ask the question of whether we can know this 'subject' by acquaintance.

Russell believed that one of the strongest objections that could be urged against his analysis of

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Thus it is my inclination to conclude with Weitz that Broad's remark must have been in jest.

Furthermore, we can also quote Russell himself on the topic of his changing views:

"I have always thought myself that there is a certain absurdity in criticizing a philosopher for changing his mind as a result of new scientific work. I think this comes of the many centuries of association of philosophy with theology. In theory, it is expected that a man should be willing to be burnt at the stake rather than change his mind. But as philosophy becomes more associated with science than with theology,

experience into the dual relation of subject and object was the simple problem of the elusiveness of the subject in introspection. It was clear to him that this fact appeared to support neutral monism and so demanded close attention. However, when this close examination is provided the apparently damaging fact will be viewed more correctly and be shown not to harm Russell's position. Russell was willing to grant the fact that we do not perceive ourselves in introspection: "Hume's inability to perceive himself was not peculiar, and I think most unprejudiced observers would agree with him".<sup>82</sup> (We might wish to ask ourselves: What is it we would expect to see or experience when we try to perceive ourselves in introspection? Difficulty in providing one answer to this may suggest that the question may be ill-conceived.) If we are unable to catch a glimpse of ourselves, then Russell would like to argue from this that the word 'I' cannot be a logically proper name. Proper names can only be conferred on those things with which we can become

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a philosopher's opinions should have a certain flexibility . . ."  
 from *Dear Bertrand Russell . . . A Selection of His Correspondence with The General Public 1950-1968*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1969) in the letter to Mrs. Eames, p. 96.

80. Cf. *Mysticism and Logic* Op. cit. p. 154.

81. *The Problems of Philosophy* Op. dit. p. 28.

82. *Logic and Knowledge*, Op. cit. p. 164.

acquainted. Russell thus concludes that the word 'I' must stand for a description.

In connection with this it is interesting to notice the foot note added to "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description" in 1917. At that point in time Russell had long since reached the position of wanting to say: "I should now exclude 'I' from proper names in the strict sense, and retain only 'this'".<sup>83</sup> Thus 'I' is not a particular we can be acquainted with and it is not a universal such as 'the ego' (it should even be mentioned in relation to this point that Russell even briefly suggests that 'mind' or 'self' may only be constructions).<sup>84</sup> To further demonstrate that 'I' is not a proper name, Russell offers us a better (perhaps the best) example: 'this'. To see why 'this' must be an exemplary case, consider the following. If I am attending to some object or other I may give it any name I wish but if inventiveness gives out I can quite easily call it 'this'. "By the help of reflection and special experiences, it becomes evident that there is such a relation as 'attention' and that there is always a subject attending to the object

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83. *Mysticism and Logic*, Op. cit. p. 162.

84. Cf. *Logic and Knowledge*, Op. cit. p. 166.



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called 'this'". In this illustration Russell shows us that the word 'this' comes as close as possible to being an example of what he calls a "proper name" and that we realize almost by some kind of inference that there is some subject attending to it. This subject that is attending to the 'this' is what we call 'I'. Therefore we know what the 'I' is without knowing it by acquaintance.

Thus Russell feels that the objection founded on the elusiveness of the 'I' in introspection is capable of being answered even while admitting that anyone who introduces such an objection is initially correct in noticing that we can never be directly aware of the subject in introspection. Furthermore, Russell believes that having refuted this objection he has uncovered a fatal flaw in neutral monism. It would seem that if one embraced a theory such as the one James and his colleagues are advancing, one would accept a view of the world in which all of the objects and events therein would have a certain uniformity that Russell feels is very much unlike the way in which we do in fact view the world. "In a world where there were no specifically mental facts, is it not plain that there would be a complete

unpartiality, an evenly diffused light, not the central illumination fading away into outer darkness, which is characteristic of objects in relation to a mind?"<sup>86</sup>

Russell thus converts the neutral monist's potential objection into a challenge: How can they, without recourse to set of specifically mental facts, explain "that principle of selection which, to a given person at a given moment, makes one object, one subject and one time intimate and near and immediate, as no other object or subject or time can be to that subject at that time . . .";<sup>87</sup> in other words, how does neutral monism explain "this"?

Before greatly changing the topic of our discussion there is one other point we must mention. In discussing the nature of acquaintance at the beginning of this chapter we indicated that at the time of the writing of "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description", Russell had implied that acquaintance was *not* mere presentation. It appeared at that time that describing acquaintance in that manner would have suggested a suppression of the rôle of the subject: something

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86. *Ibid.* p. 169.

87. *Ibid.*

Russell seemed to have resisted in 1911. But once again we have a subtle shift in position. In 1914 he states: "I think the relation of subject and object in presentation may be identified with the relation which I call 'acquaintance'<sup>88</sup>". It would therefore seem that in spite of his remonstrations against neutral monism he seems to be sliding towards a de-emphasization of subject side of the duality he is endorsing.

Our discussion of the topic of acquaintance has given us valuable insight into Russell's earlier views on the nature of mind. To get to the other side of the traditional problem and Russell's earlier views on the subject of matter, we must examine other sources.

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88. *Ibid.*, see footnote on p. 169.

## CHAPTER THREE

### The External World and The Ultimate Constituents of Matter

#### I

To understand more fully Russell's earlier views on the nature of matter and how mind is related to it there are three publications we must consider: "The Relation of Sense-Data to Physics",<sup>89</sup> "The Ultimate Constituents of Matter",<sup>90</sup> and *Our Knowledge of the External World as a Field for Scientific Method in Philosophy*.<sup>91</sup> In this chapter we shall be concerned<sup>92</sup> for the most part with the first two of these three items.

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89. First published in *Scientia*, XVI, No. 36, in 1914; reprinted in *Mysticism and Logic* *op. cit.* pp. 108-131.

90. An Address originally delivered to the Philosophical Society of Manchester in February, 1915. It was published in *The Monist*, XXV, No. 3., July 1915 and reprinted in *Mysticism and Logic*, *op. cit.* pp. 94-107.

91. (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1914).

92. My reason for concentrating on the two essays and not giving *Our Knowledge of The External World* a proportionate amount of coverage, is that the philosophical subject matter of the essays and the book overlap to a large degree. If anyone were to try to discuss either the essays or the book in depth and then try to do the same with the other, he will find it difficult to avoid falling into redundancy.

I will continue to try to deal with Russell's writings in the order in which he wrote them. It is not always easily determined which article or book was written when, but, as it seems to me, the first item with which we should concern ourselves is "The Relation of Sense-Data to Physics".

93. This brings in an interesting but non-philosophical point. Although the subject matter of my discourse is principally philosophical, there is a minor historical dimension to it on which I would like to comment in passing. The historical aspect has to do with the fact that I have been dealing with a certain period of Russell's writings. Thus I have concomitantly been interested in when Russell says something as well as with what he says. The particular issue I wish to comment on at this point has to do with when and how Russell wrote *Our Knowledge of The External World*. As I've already mentioned, this is essentially a non-philosophical point so anyone interested in only philosophical considerations should at this point return to the main body of my text. However, for those with wider interests, a note with historical import follows.

Russell tells us about the writing of the book in at least three different publications. Let us look at first what he has to say in "How I write" [Actually Russell wrote two similarly titled items. The one I am referring to was originally called "Bertrand Russell on "How I Write" in *London Calling* No. 607, 10 May, 1951. This is a BBC mimeo that was reprinted in *Portraits from Memory and Other Essays*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1951) p. 212.] . He tells us there:

"I got back to Cambridge on the last day of 1913, and although my difficulties were still completely unresolved I arranged, because the remaining time was short, to dictate as best I could to a stenographer. Next morning, as she came in at the door, I suddenly saw exactly what I had to say, and proceeded to dictate the whole book [i.e., *Our Knowledge of The External World*] without a moment's hesitation.

I do not want to convey an exaggerated impression. The book was very imperfect, and I now think that it contains serious errors . . ."

Another comment on the same incident occurs in the *Autobiography* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1967, Vol. 1. p. 210.), where he says:

The problem Russell wished to address in that paper is an intriguing and complex one. Physics wishes to say certain things about the empirical world; it wants to discuss atoms, molecules, electrons, etc. To examine these phenomena and the other elements of physics, the scientist must rely on his immediate data

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"I got back to Cambridge from Rome on New Year's Day, 1914, and, thinking that the time had come when I really must get my lectures prepared, I arranged for a shorthand typist to come next day, though I had not the vaguest idea what I should say to her when she came. As she entered the room, my ideas fell into place, and I dictated in a completely orderly sequence from that moment until the work was finished. What I dictated to her was subsequently published as a book with the title *Our Knowledge of The External World*."

I would not be remarking on this incident were it not for Ken Blackwell's paper "The Future of the Bertrand Russell Archives" in the forthcoming *Russell in Review*. op. cit. In his paper, Blackwell indicates that he has spent part of the summer of 1971 at the University of Texas reading Russell's 1900 letters to Lady Ottoline Morrell. From his reading Blackwell concludes that "considerable doubt has been cast upon the way in which Russell says he wrote *Our Knowledge of The External World*. I do not believe" the Russell Archivist tells us, "he dictated that book beginning New Years Day, 1914, when his shorthand secretary walked into the room" (emphasis in the original). Before considering Blackwell's reasons for saying this, there is a minor point involving a trivial error on Russell's part that I must clear out of the way before proceeding.

As can be seen in the passages I have quoted from Russell, he has himself arriving on two different days and consequently beginning work on the book on two other days. When Blackwell says that he does not believe that he started dictating that book on New Year's Day, 1914, this has

of sensation. In order for him to be able to accurately comment on the elements of physics, there must be some correlation between the sense-data he receives and the objects of physics he believes they are related to. The problem involves this correlation. When dealing with any case of correlation, what must be done in order to

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nothing to do with the slip Russell has made (in fact, Blackwell does not even mention the error). But just to clear that point up, it is probable that Russell *did* start dictating (something) on January 1st, 1914. A third place where Russell alludes to this incident corroborates the "How I Write" account. This occurs in *My Philosophical Development* (op. cit. p. 104-5) where he tells us that there "were several novelties in the theory as to our knowledge of the external world which burst upon me on New Year's Day, 1914". Assuming that they burst upon him as he was dictating to the typist, this fixes the date of the starting of his work at Jan. 1st, 1914.

I would like to consider now Blackwell's reasons for doubting Russell. Blackwell's main argument stems from Russell's unpublished writings of that period. In the incredible amount of correspondence which passed from Russell to Lady Ottoline, Blackwell tells us that "There is no mention of a book . . . and as Russell had, from 1911 to 1914, told Lady Ottoline of almost everything we have a record of him writing in that period, he would hardly have failed to mention the writing of a whole book under the circumstances he claims . . ."

I think that Blackwell is mistaken in his judgment and I think that the reason that he is mistaken stems from a failure to notice one of the methods Russell uses to write books. It seems to me that Russell often writes and publishes papers which shortly thereafter turn up somewhat altered as segments in newly published books. Take for example *The Problems of Philosophy*. In 1911 he published "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description" (op. cit.) and one year later the essay occurs with little alteration as Chapter 5 of that book.

establish the correlation involved is that a record must be made of the frequency that the correlated objects being examined together. However, when it comes to the problem of correlation specific sense-data to specific physical phenomena we suppose to be there, we have what seems to be an insurmountable problem: we only have access

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Similarly, he writes "The Anatomy of Desire" for *The Athenaeum* (no. 4676-8: 12-26, Dec. 1919) and this with a few alterations becomes Lecture III in *The Analysis of Mind*. (London: Allen & Unwin; 1921). Russell could publish much the same thing under different titles apparently without compunction. The reader need only refer to the two accounts of his I have quoted concerning the dictating of *Our Knowledge of The External World*, in order to verify this. This brings us to the case in point. Blackwell believes that what Russell was dictating in the early days of January 1914 was not *Our Knowledge of The External World*, but the article "The Relation of Sense-Data to physics." What I wish to argue is that what Russell has done here is much the same thing in other cases: he has created an article and then taken the material in the article, revised it, and then incorporated it into the content of a book he is publishing. The philosophical content of the article "The Relation of Sense-Data to Physics" is very much the same as what is to be found in Lecture III and Lecture IV of *Our Knowledge of the External World*. The Title of Lecture IV is in fact "The World of Physics and The World of Sense".

So, if we realize that what Russell was dictating in the early days in 1914 was much the same material as that of which comprised the core of *Our Knowledge of the External World*, we should not have much reason to doubt his twice repeated claim that that was, in fact, what he was doing. Furthermore, the idea to expand the topic into something in book form may not have occurred to him until sometime later. Thus, if he did not realize that what he was writing in the early part of Jan. 1914. was a potential book, but only regarded it as an article, then he could not very well have made mention of any book in his letters of that period.



to one of the correlates, namely the sense-data portion. So it would seem, as Russell says, that "the correlation with objects of sense by which physics was to be verified, is itself utterly and for ever unverifiable".<sup>94</sup> (The problem thus stated, as it seems to me, has much in common with the problem of solipsism.) However, Russell suggests that there may be ways in which we can avoid this quandary.

One way would be to simply assume *a priori* that we can infer accurately from the sense-data we receive that they are caused by something else and that furthermore, we can infer something of the causes of these sense-data from the effects that they have upon us. However, when we opt for an *a priori* assumption like this we immediately lose something on the empirical side. So, although we may eventually have to resort to some assumption of this nature, when we do it the purely empirical nature of physics will be contaminated. Consequently, we shall eschew this alternative and it should be entirely avoided if at all possible.

There is another way to overcome the problem and

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94. *Mysticism and Logic Op. cit.* p. 108.

it is suggested by Russell: we must try to define the objects of Physics as functions of sense-data. To illustrate what he means by this let us use the example of sound. When certain sound waves strike the ear, we hear certain pitches of sound. But the thing we must notice is that the sound waves are in fact inferred from the raw sounds, not the other way around. So these sound waves must be expressed as functions of the raw sound if we are to regard them as validly based on empirical data. Russell summarizes the problem in this way:

Thus if physics is to be verifiable we are faced with the following problem: Physics exhibits sense-data as functions of physical objects, but verification is only possible if physical objects can be exhibited as functions of sense-data. We have therefore to solve the equations giving sense-data in terms of physical objects, so as to make them instead give physical objects in terms of sense-data. <sup>95</sup>

Having thus stated the problem, Russell turns his attention to the nature of sense-data in order that he may begin to see whether or not this way of approaching the difficulty is feasible. The characteristic which is most important to us in this inquiry concerns the status of these data in regards to the mental and the physical.

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95. *Ibid.* p. 109. Also quoted in *My Philosophical Development*, p. 105.

In this respect Russell accommodates us by giving a brief explanation of what he means by "physical" and "mental". For Russell, "physical" in this case is simply "that which is dealt with by physics". The definition of "mental" he finds more difficult to arrive at and so settles for what seems like a dogmatic definition in the context of "The Relation of Sense-Data to Physics" but was more reasonably arrived at in "On the Nature of Acquaintance"; he tells us that "I shall call a particular 'mental' when it is *aware* of something, and I shall call a fact 'mental' when it contains a mental particular as a constituent" <sup>96</sup> (my emphasis).

In regard to the status of sense-data, he considers these to be *physical* and because his argument for doing so is more elaborate in "The Ultimate Constituents of Matter" I shall not examine this particular point just yet. What I would prefer to investigate now is his argument for the existence of what he refers to as "sensibilia". Russell calls "sensibilia" those objects which have the same meta-physical and physical status as sense-data, but without necessarily being data to any mind. This new term allows Russell to talk about the possibility of un-sensed data. The minor point is that it is necessary for Russell to

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96. *Mysticism and Logic*, Op. cit. p. 112.

introduce the new term "sensibilia" in order to escape certain trivial logical puzzles (e.g., it seems somewhat contradictory to talk about "unsensed sense-data"). But the main point is that the inclusion of the notion of sensibilia allows Russell to say things about certain entities (i.e., the unsensed sensibilia) that he really feels exist and that he wishes to include in his metaphysics. The concept may also be useful in helping Russell to avoid falling into any solipsistic quandaries. We must also add to this that a "sensible" can become a sense-datum by simply entering into a relationship of acquaintance with a mind. Thus we can deduce from this that sense-data are a sub-class of the class of sensibilia; the only difference between a sense-datum and sensibilia is that the datum is the object of acquaintance to some mind.

As defined then, all sense-data are sensibilia. "It is a metaphysical question whether all *sensibilia* are sense-data, and an epistemological question whether there exists means of inferring *sensibilia* which are not data from those that are"<sup>97</sup> (emphasis in the original). Unfortunately, Russell's concept of sensibilia, I shall argue shortly, is somewhat at odds with one of his own

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97. *Ibid.* p. 111.

fundamental rules. Before arguing that however, it is necessary for me to continue my exposition of Russell's ideas in order that my criticisms be more intelligible.

Russell, in "The Relation of Sense-Data to Physics", supports the new theory he had mentioned in *The Problems of Philosophy* with regards to the concept of a "thing". In other metaphysical systems it was noted that the many individual appearances of an object in some way all related to the one "thing". Thus, for example, it was supposed that although a table looked quite different from various positions, there was one "thing" which all the various appearances of it related. Since the "thing" could not be identified with any single appearance of the object it was considered to be something either over and above the object or something underlying it. Russell proposes instead to regard the "thing" as the class of its appearances. It is his feeling that since this theory would be more economical in that it would avoid dealing with any hypothetical entities, it would therefore (accepting Occam's razor as the supreme principle in philosophising) be more acceptable. In connection with this we should also note what Russell has to say regarding constructions.

It is an important feature of Russell's position that he favours construction over inference. He feels that in any theory, the theory is strengthened when it uses constructions as a method and weakened when the method of inference must be relied upon. He feels that this has been amply proven in mathematics. At Whitehead's suggestion, Russell tells us he has decided to make an attempt at applying this method to physics. A complete application of the method would mean that there would be no inference included in it at all. An individual would be able to construct his entire universe from his own sense-data. However, Russell feels that to believe we can construct a system this rigorous is something which, at least at this stage, we must only regard as an ideal or a goal. For the time being he proposes a system which allows two concessions to inference. I will discuss these shortly, but first I would prefer to say more about Russell's constructionalist view of the world and how this view affects his notion of space.

In "The Relation of Sense-Data to Physics" we get a more worked-out exposition of Russell's view in space than we received in *The Problems of Philosophy*. He feels

that it is important for us to realise that there is an ambiguity in the word "place" in relation to sense-data. There are really two places in his opinion which can be associated with each sense-datum: the place where the datum is located and the place from which it is being perceived. This comes straight from the fact that each sense-datum is part of a relationship of awareness involving something being sensed and something doing the sensing. It follows from this, Russell believes, that since there are always these two factors to consider - the percipient and the object of perception - then no single relationship of awareness existing between someone and a datum can be the same for any two people at once. This is because the perceiving portion of the relationship and its accompanying point of view vary with each percipient. So Russell concludes from this that each person lives in his own private world with its own "private space". It is A.J. Ayer's opinion that Russell is mistaken in believing that sense-data had to be located in private spaces and I shall say more about this when I have explained an important related notion: "perspective space".

"Perspective space" is to be contrasted with "private space" in that they are different in kind: each instance of private space is merely a point or constituent spatial unit in perspective space. There are many points of view possible in the universe and perspective space can be thought of as "the space of points of view". What I understand Russell to mean here is that a "perspective" of the universe would be the point of view a person would have if he occupied that position in it. In addition to this, although there are many perspectives possible, there is only one "perspective space". To explain what this means, Russell tells us that, if we take any object or thing and rotate it through a variety of positions, we will experience several perspectives of that object or thing. To illustrate this, Russell returns to his favourite example of the penny. He tells us that we can collect various perspectives or views of the penny and order them. All of these collected views can be arranged in a three-dimensional spatial order. According to Russell, this fact allows us to construct an all-embracing three-dimensional space: the space of physics. Since this space contains whole perspectives as elements, Russell therefore calls it "perspective space".



With this explanation we can see that perspective space, which is the space of physics and has three dimensions, is composed of private spaces which also have three dimensions, so the universe he has constructed is thus a six-dimensional one. The important thing to see now is how perspective space is correlated with private space. To do this we must return to the distinction made earlier between the place where a datum is seen *from* and where it is seen *at*. In Russell's explanation at this point,<sup>98</sup> he does something difficult to understand: he prefers to talk about a "given sensible" rather than a "sense-datum". As I understand his account, a *given sensible* is a sense-datum and a certain amount of ambiguity is introduced into the issue by using the broader term "sensible". However, leaving this aside, the correlation which coordinates private space and perspective space occurs in the following way. As mentioned earlier, there are two parts to the relationship: the place where the datum *is* a member and the place *from* which the apprehension of the datum occurs. Russell says that "the 'sensible' which is a member of one perspective is correlated with another perspective, namely, that which is in the place where the thing is of which the 'sensible' is an appearance".<sup>99</sup> I find this explanation unsatisfactory

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98. *Ibid.* second paragraph, p. 120.

99. *Ibid.* p. 120.

because I tend to think of the problem in terms of the perplexities associated with solipsism. If, in trying to correlate private space with perspective space, what we are doing is, to a certain extent, trying to escape the bounds of a private world and to construct the physical world so that our own private impressions do not give us a distorted picture of it, then Russell's explanation of it seems to me inadequate. I am comforted in this lack of conviction as to Russell's success in this matter by what A.J. Ayer has to say about it.<sup>100</sup>

"[Russell's] theory is highly ingenious," Ayer tells us, "but it seems to me to fail on the count of circularity. The difficulty is that if the physical object is to be constructed out of its appearances it cannot itself be used to collect them". Ayer goes right to the core of the matter and even uses Russell's penny example:

The different appearances of the penny, in Russell's example, have first to be associated purely on the basis of their qualities. But since different pennies may look very much alike, and since they may also be perceived against very similar backgrounds, the only way in which we can make sure of associating just those sensibilia that belong to the same penny is by situating them in wider contexts. We have to take account of

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100. Cf. Ayer. A.J. "Bertrand Russell as a Philosopher" in *Russell in Review*, op. cit. p. 23-24 of Ayer's paper.

perspectives which are adjacent to those in which they occur. But then we are faced with the difficulty that perspectives which contain only sensibilia as opposed to sense-data are not actually perceived: and there seems to be no way of determining when two unperceived perspectives are adjacent without already assuming the perspective-space which we are trying to construct. 101

The main source of Russell's difficulties according to Ayer "is Russell's mistaken assumption that his sensory elements are located in private spaces. But for this assumption, there would be no need for the complicated ordering of so many perspectives". 102 Ayer offers us a more reasonable method of arriving at the universe of sensibilia, 103 all that is needed "is the projection of spatial and temporal relations beyond the sense-fields in which they are originally given. This is justified *inductively*, by our finding that qualitatively similar series of percepts appear sometimes in the same order as a given series . . . By a natural process . . . we come to think of a percept of a given sort as being permanently obtainable at the end of one or other of a set of predominantly stable sensory routes . . ." 104 (my emphasis). Ayer calls these "standardised percepts" and feels that they can do the work that Russell initially

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101. *Ibid.* p. 24.

102. *Ibid.*

103. Cf. Ayer, A.J. *Russell and Moore: The Analytic Heritage.* (London: MacMillan & Co., 1971) p. 65 and Ayer, A.J.

created sensibilia to do. To do this it is only necessary that, in the space that is constructed by the general application of the process of spatial projection which Ayer outlines, there be located these standardised percepts in a fixed position. The reason why his construction can proceed in a relatively simple fashion compared to Russell's highly complex ordering of a multitude of perspective is - and this is Ayer's fundamental improvement on Russell - because Ayer's system is not encumbered with Russell's private spaces. There are no perspectives to be correlated because Ayer's "standardised percept" is that of which anyone can perceive a specimen. Thus it seems to me that if the criterion which we are to follow in philosophizing is guided by the motto "*entia non multiplicanda praeter necessitatem*", then Ayer's system is more elegant in that it can do away with "private spaces" and sensibilia. Ayer, it would seem has out razored Russell and, except for the fact that he uses induction (as emphasised above) he seems to be able to arrive at the same desired results Russell - does without the unnecessary awkwardness. As far as Ayer's introduction of the bugbear of induction into his system, I consider this a venial sin and no more culpable than Russell's; in Russell's case he allows, as I have mentioned above, two concessions to inference in his system of constructions.

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*The Origins of Pragmatism* (San Francisco: Freeman, Cooper & Co.)  
pp. 239-4, 322-3.

Ayer, A.J. *Russell and Moore: The Analytic Heritage*, op. cit. p. 65.

The two concessions which Russell allows himself are: "(a) the sense-data of other people, in favour of which there is the evidence of testimony, resting ultimately upon the analogical argument in favour of minds other than my own; (b) the 'sensibilia' which would appear from places where there happen to be no minds, and which I suppose to be real although they are no one's data".<sup>105</sup>

Russell realizes that these concessions to inference weaken his system and he would rather dispense with them and establish physics upon a solipsistic basis. However, in regard to the first concession, he says "those - and I fear they are the majority - in whom human affections are stronger than the desire for logical economy, will, no doubt, not share my desire to render solipsism scientifically satisfactory".<sup>106</sup>

Russell considers the second type of inferred entities (sensibilia) to be not as monstrous as they may first appear; this is because he wishes to regard "these supposed appearances only in the light of a hypothetical scaffolding, to be used while the edifice of physics is being raised, though possibly capable of being removed as soon as the edifice is completed".<sup>107</sup> Russell's resistance to admitting inference as broadly as Ayer seems to be derived from his desire to always use constructions instead. As D.F. Pears says in *Bertrand Russell and the*

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<sup>105</sup>. "The Relation of Sense-Data to Physics" in *Mysticism and Logic*, *op. cit.* p. 116.

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*British Tradition in Philosophy,* "Russell had his own version of Ockham's maxim: 'Wherever possible, logical constructions are to be substituted for inferred entities'". But the rejoinder to this may be, "Which is worse, inferred entities or hypothetical ones?" It might be argued that the admission of sensibilia by Russell into his ontology is tantamount to populating the universe without a justified immigration policy. If we wish to admit into our metaphysics only those entities of whose existence we are absolutely certain, then any suggestion that there may be things beyond this can be treated with some reasonable scepticism.

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C.D. Broad in an article entitled "Phenomenalism" points out that philosophers usually consider that sense-data only exists when presented to a mind. They do not assume sensibilia of which no one can be aware: for such entities as these (which Kant, for example, referred to as the *Ding an sich* and which are often simply called "objects"), Russell blamed their advocates for assuming. But, of course, Russell's own theory as presented in "The Relation of Sense-

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106. *Mysticism and Logic*, *op. cit.* p. 116 - 117.

107. *Ibid.* p. 117.

108. (New York: Random House) p. 37.

109. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol. XV (1914/15) p. 236.

data to Physics" and *Our Knowledge of the External World* assumes by admission, sensibilia of which no one is aware, because, as he explains, there are supposed to be perspectives where there are no minds. This comes out in his explanation of how we can construct "the penny" from the appearances of it. In his explanation of this he makes it clear that there are perspectives all around the penny whether there are minds there or not. Broad realizes something of significance in this explanation: "But a very important point to notice is that not merely is no one at present aware of these sensibilia if there [be no one at these points], but that no one ever *can become* aware of them. When (as we put it) anyone moves into one of these intermediate positions his brain and nervous systems . . . move into surrounding places in perspective space. So the sense-data of which he becomes aware are not those which were in this perspective, but are the different ones which are determined by this different medium. Mr. Russell may say that their shapes are not affected by this change of medium, but I am sure I cannot see how he knows this".<sup>110</sup> (emphasis in the original). Thus we have in Broad's criticism another reason to balk at Russell's system of perspectives.

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110. *Ibid.*

However, although I consider Russell's method of constructing the material world to be cumbersome and somewhat unwieldy, it is possible to make some argument in favour of his system because of the spirit of it. By this I mean that, although I may disapprove of it, in fact, I feel that I must endorse the general idea which he was advancing. It was Russell's initial aim to break away from the claustrophobic confines of idealism. His first step away from that world was to include sense-data within his. But the physical data of sense in their momentary presence did not do a great deal to enlarge his breathing space. The hypostatization of unsensed sensibilia was an attempt to assert that there was more in the universe than the mere data of sense, but the further effort of tying in unsensed sensibilia with perspectives and the additional "concession to inference", viz. the sense-data of other people, I believe to be problematic and, because of its technical difficulties, it detracts from the correctness of the overall idea. So, what we have in both Russell's and Ayer's systems are attempts to correlate the world of sense and the world of physics. The weak point in each occurs when an effort is made to break away from the solipsistic world of sense and explain the external world of physics. - Russell's shaky point, as can be seen from



the above considerations involve private space, perspectives and sensibilia; Ayer's concerns induction or inference. Because of its elegance, I prefer Ayer's explanation over the one Russell offers us in his 1914 writings. But, of course, Russell did not cease to write on the nature of matter in that year. I would now like to consider another of Russell's attempts to offer a characterisation of the external world in an article he wrote about a year later.

## II

Russell's intention in "The Ultimate Constituents of Matter" is to examine the traditional philosophical question 'What is matter?' He begins by telling us that most of the general public considers it to be rather simple: the distinction between mental entities and physical ones for them is quite clear and there is no possibility of any overlap. However, there is a small minority that wishes to oppose this opinion. It is composed of a group of philosophers that includes Spinoza to some extent and Leibniz to a greater degree. As Russell says "Almost every philosopher of note has criticized and rejected the dualism of common sense".<sup>111</sup> But perhaps

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111. "The Ultimate Constituents of Matter" in *Mysticism and Logic*, op. cit. p. 94.

surprisingly, the author of this 1915 article does not want to count himself among the ranks of those dissenting thinkers. Instead, he explicitly states that he wishes to use this paper as a defense of dualism.

His reason for doing so springs partly from the knowledge he has of two different facets of scientific inquiry. On the one hand, he finds that the physicists are cutting the material world up into ever smaller bits of matter - molecules, atoms, elementary particles, etc. - such that when an individual contemplates these infinitesimal entities, the objects of his contemplation he soon realises, are remarkably different from what he originally considered good and solid matter. As Russell says: "Matter consisting of such elements is as remote from daily life as any meta-<sup>112</sup>physical theory". The supporting argument on the other side - that is the "inner" side - is stated by the psychologists; they emphasise the fact that what we naively believe to be simple and true impressions of reality are actually not as they appear to us because they are influenced by a variety of variables. To use a strong example, our sense-impressions are physiologically affected by any experiences we may have with potent drugs or heavy draughts of alcoholic beverages; in instances such as these when our bodies and

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112. *Ibid.* p. 96.

their sense organs are influenced by such perception-altering chemicals, the brain and its related sense-organs become demonstrably unreliable vehicles for the accurate transmission of a clear picture of the world. It is the psychologist's and physiologist's point that factors of this nature may be in play a great deal of the time. These two opposite sophistications, the one from the outer world and the other from the inner, work against the confidence we may have in things being the way they seem and consequently work against common sense and naïve realism. The argument adumbrates something Russell was to say many years later in *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*; there, in a formulation Ayer tells us greatly impressed Einstein, Russell said: "Naïve realism leads to physics, and physics, if true, shows that naïve realism is false. Therefore, naïve realism, if true, is false; therefore it is false".<sup>114</sup> It is at this point that Russell drives the wedge into what will become an ever widening cleavage between his views and those of naïve realism.

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113. Cf. Ayer, A.J. in "Russell as a Philosopher" in *Russell in Review*, *op. cit.*

114. *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1940) p. 15.

He wishes to contrast his opinions, with those of common sense on other aspects of mind as well. He tells us that although common sense is right in regarding what we see as physical and outside the mind, it is "probably wrong" in supposing that things continue to exist when we are no longer looking at them. <sup>115</sup> His reason for taking this unusual position stems from his conviction that two errors in common sense belief have obscured the discussion of matter.

The first of these two errors concerning the common sense belief that what we see is "merely subjective". What Russell means here is that the usual view of what we are going to regard as among the ultimate constituents of matter, whatever they may be, is that they will be composed of something utterly solid and indestructible. Sense-data, on the other hand, are seen to be just the opposite of this: they appear sometimes phantasm-like and moving about in a state of perpetual flux; thus they tend to be regarded as "merely subjective". The data of sense, according to this common view, therefore can not be considered to be among the ultimate constituents of matter. But it is Russell's view that this common sense view is entirely mistaken. To understand his opposing opinion it is useful to have his concept of a

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115. *Mysticism and Logic*, op. cit. p. 96.

"symbolic fiction" at our finger-tips: "Classes or series of particulars, collected together on account of some property which makes it convenient to be able to speak of them as wholes, are what I call logical constructions or symbolic fictions" <sup>116</sup> he tells us. The persistent particles of mathematical physics are examples of what he considers symbolic fictions, and, in direct opposition to common sense, he regards the actual data in sensation as being extra-mental and among the ultimate constituents of matter. Russell sees the paradox in the fact that "Men of science, for the most part, are willing to condemn immediate data as "merely subjective" while yet maintaining the truth of the physics inferred from those data. But such an attitude, though it may be *capable* of justification, obviously stands in need of it . . . " <sup>117</sup> (emphasis in the original).

The second of the two errors Russell attributes to common sense regarding the nature of matter has to do with the belief that what is physical is persistent. His belief that this is not necessarily so is argued for by borrowing an analogy from Bergson. Just as when we see an actor on

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116. *Ibid.* p. 97.

117. "The World of Sense and The World of Physics", in *Our Knowledge of the External World*, *op. cit.* p. 101.

the screen we realize that what we are seeing is not just one "moving picture" but several still pictures flashed in sequence that give the illusion of movement; so Russell believed that when we see the *real* actor, or any other person or object, what we are actually seeing is not just one man but "really a series of momentary men, each one different from the other and bound together not by numerical identity, but by continuity and certain intrinsic causal <sup>118</sup> links". The reason he says this is that he wants to allow the same kind of division we readily make in spatial matters to apply to the temporal aspect of things as well. Therefore, he would like us to regard something lasting for an hour or so as being made up of several *different* things which last for much shorter periods of time. His reasoning here is that if he has a theory which allows - in fact requires - that matter is to be divided by both space *and* time, then it must be considered superior to a theory that is only capable of dealing with the spatial divisions. From this it can be seen that in Russell's theory, when I look at a chair and then a moment later look at it again, he would like to say that it is a *different* chair. The theory suggests Heraclitus, the believer in universal flux and the holder

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118. *Mysticism and Logic*, *op. cit.* p. 96.

of the view that time builds and destroys all things.  
Is Russell justified in taking this line? Let us  
examine the argument.

We look at an object and then look at it  
again but a few minutes later and claim that it is now  
different than it was a few moments ago. There are two  
ways of looking at a claim such as this: First of all,  
we could say, with our attention focused on the object,  
that all things are slowly but surely decomposing and  
decaying. From this point of view, even the hardest  
diamond and the most solid and indestructible object  
can in some sense be said to be eroding and transforming.  
Thus, although no change may be apparent to the observer,  
no individual thing is physically the same as it was  
a moment ago. The second way of looking at the argument  
shifts the emphasis away from the object and on to the  
element of time. In this form, the argument accentuates  
the idea that the object in front of me is continually  
going through time and, because it is from instant to  
instant occupying a different position in the continuum  
of time, it is in this sense different from what it was  
a moment ago. The second form of the argument is not  
in conflict with the first: both formulations aim at the  
same conclusion, *viz.* the object we are now viewing is not

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the same one we noticed a moment ago. Thus we are led to the same conclusion as was Russell and a further splitting off from common sense: what is physical is not as immutably persistent as we may have naively believed and is in fact composed of a series of momentary objects. The thought behind Russell's attack on persistent and durable objects, is motivated by the desire to urge the same kind of division in time as we easily grant in the case of space.

With these opening differences with the doctrine of naïve realism stated, Russell goes on to try to deal with the question 'Is the object of sense mental or physical?' The trouble with a question such as this is that the person posing it often does not realise that there is a great deal of difficulty in arriving at a sharp definition of the terms involved. Russell confesses his inability to tightly describe 'the mental', but, in the hope that some insight may be gained into its meaning, he offers us a list of "occurrences which are undubitably mental: believing, doubting, wishing, willing, being pleased or pained . . . [these are] certainly mental occurrences; so are what we call experiences, seeing, hearing, smelling, perceiving generally".



But what criterion is he using here? As he says, he is not very sure himself and he is only trying to point the way to some kind of standard. One thing he *is* sure of: it does not follow from the fact that if perceiving in general is mental, then the object of perception must also be mental. Thus he is able to give us this one insight as to why he sees reality being constituted as some sort of duality. He would like to offer us more of an understanding of this, but there are certain roadblocks in his way. For, although people do not always distinguish between seeing and what is seen, this is fairly easily pointed out. A more serious obstacle in the way of Russell's presentation of his dualism is "that the causal dependence of what I see upon my body has made people suppose that what I see cannot be 'outside' me".<sup>120</sup> Notions such as this involve misconceptions, as to the nature of "space" and as to the meaning of "causal dependence". This prompts him to launch into an attempt to clarify these two concepts.

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Russell realises the ambiguity that is involved when we associate terms such as 'inside' and 'outside' with a concept of mind. He makes it clear that the mind is not like a bag or a pie and when we say that something is 'in the mind' we do not mean 'spatially contained in' in the same sense as we might if we said 'the blackbirds were in the pie'. Instead,

We might regard the mind as an assemblage of particulars, namely, what would be called 'states of mind', which would belong together in virtue of some specific common quality. The common quality of all states of mind would be the quality designated by the word 'mental'... 121

Fr. F. Copleston, in referring to this passage, tells us that:

This suggestion is indeed advanced only in the context of a discussion of the theory, rejected by Russell, that sense-data are 'in the mind'. But it is clear that the subject, considered as a single entity, has become a class of particulars. At the same time these particulars possess a quality which marks them off as mental. In other words, an element of dualism is still retained by Russell. He has not yet adopted . . . neutral monism . . . 122

In relation to the problems connected with deciding what is mental, and what is not, Russell's general criteria is that to say that something is in the mind "we mean that it has a certain recognisable intrinsic characteristic such as belongs to thoughts and desires . . ." 123 What happens if

121. *Ibid.*

122. Copleston Fr. Frederick A *History of Philosophy* (Westminster Md: Newman, 1966, Vlll.) p. 442.

123. *Mysticism and Logic op. cit.* pp. 99-100.

we apply this criterion to sensations? Russell actually does reflect on this question and in doing so he exposes still another difference he has with the common way of thinking. Sensation itself is simply the experiencing of a sensible object. Thus, if we have a pain originating from our foot, there is a tendency in the common way of speaking to say that "the pain is in the foot". Now, if pain is a mental quality (and Russell certainly considers it to be one and mentions it in his list), then we would *not* want to say that the pain is in the foot in the same sense a bone is in the foot. But ordinary language misleadingly suggests this; what Russell would like us to think is really happening is this: "When a man says he has a pain in his great toe, what he means is that he has a sensation associated with his great toe and having the quality of painfulness. The sensation itself, like every sensation, consists in experiencing a sensible object, and the experiencing has that quality of painfulness which only mental occurrences can have".<sup>124</sup>

Therefore, it is not the sensible object that Russell feels is painful but it is the sensation itself, i.e., the experience of the sensible object. It would then, of course, be fallacious to argue that a man's hurting great toe must

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124. *Ibid.* p. 99.

be mental on the ground that painfulness can only be attributed to what is mental.

Russell's argument performs three different functions for him: 1) it emphasises the complexity of space and the ambiguity involved in speaking of things as being 'in the mind'; 2) it implicitly restates his dualistic posture; 3) it enforces his point that the object of a perception or sensation need not be mental. I believe it is quite clear that the argument is designed to work against those of an idealist bent. When Russell mentioned that he was writing this paper as a 'defence of dualism' he still seems to have regarded idealism as the principal rival theory; if this is true, then it indicates that, at the time of the writing of "The Ultimate Constituents of Matter", Russell must have believed that the reasons he had offered in "On the Nature of Acquaintance" were adequate enough to dispose of neutral monism. I think that there is a certain amount of irony in his failure even to mention neutral monism in "The Ultimate Constituents of Matter" because, as I shall try to show, his position at the end of the writing of that article was remarkably close to neutral monism. But before doing that, I would like to explain Russell's argument against the common conception of "causal dependence".

What we see is very much dependent upon the state of our bodies. Of course, Russell is very much aware of this and he has no reason to deny it, but he does feel that causal dependence, in a crude sense, can be misleading. The problem is that, stated without qualification, simple causal dependence suggests that there is some simple cause which is the cause of some later event. But this he finds misleading because it implies a uniqueness which does not exist. To take a simple example, let us imagine a person watching a television screen. Some people would not object to saying that his seeing the programme was causally dependent upon something such as the television set working. However, this is just the kind of generalisation Russell wishes to guard against. He feels that it can be misleading to suggest that if the set is working, then the person will see the programme. This is because there are many other factors involved that this one-to-one, 'x produces y' type of impression suppresses; there are variables beyond the mere workability of the particular receiving set involved. There are, for example, such things as the transmission of the programme and the conveyance of power to the set in question to be taken into account; and at the human receiving end, there are many other important factors pertaining to the vision

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of the potential viewer concerned. So really there are two chains of events which hook up when someone is watching a television screen: one is the "inner" and involves the eyes, rods, cones, optic nerves and brain - and the other is "outer" - the television set, transmission facilities, etc. Each of these chains are independent and does not really suggest the other. Thus there is no *unique* cause producing one particular effect as is misleadingly suggested by a simple concept of causal dependence.

We must now explain why Russell considers this an important point. He believes that if the common belief holds sway, then it will be supposed that an event is dependent upon its cause in some way which it is not dependent upon other things.

Thus men will urge that the mind is dependent upon the brain, or with equal plausability, that the brain is dependent upon the mind. It seems not improbable that if we had sufficient knowledge we could infer that state of a man's mind from the state of his brain, or the state of his brain from the state of his mind. So long as the usual conception of causal dependence is retained, this state of affairs can be used by the materialist to urge that our thoughts cause the state of our brain. Either contention is equally valid or equally invalid. 125

I have two objections to make against this. First I would like to explain that I think he is right in emphasising the inadequacy of the one-to-one conception of causal dependence. But in telling us why he is anxious to clear up this misconception, he begins to talk about thoughts and brain states in a manner which seems to me incorrect. As can be seen above, he tells us that a materialist could urge that "the state of our brain causes our thoughts" (notice here the dualistic language: 'brain states' he considers material, while 'thoughts' are mental), and he also tells us that he supposes that the idealists with a simple notion of causal dependence should be able to argue that "our thoughts cause the state of our brain" (with the same dualistic language). But, as it seems to me, both these assertions are founded in error. If we accept the idea that our thoughts are mental (i.e., non-physical) and that brain processes are purely physical (and not in any way mental), then the kind of 'urgings' that Russell attributes to the materialist who claims that 'all is physical' is not about to do as Russell suggests and talk about physical brain processes causing thoughts; this is because, for the materialist there is nothing but the physical. Similarly, the idea of the idealist having anything to say about brain states

is a bit peculiar because for him, there are only thoughts. If the materialist and the idealist were to urge the kind of arguments Russell suggests they would become dualists, and they are not.

I have a second objection to Russell's argument that is not unrelated to the first. Russell's argument on the whole is aimed at idealism on the one hand and materialism on the other, but, by assuming the dualistic vocabulary of thoughts and brain processes, I feel that there is a confusion involved that cripples the attempt. He takes the effort to point out to us that an event may have no unique cause. However, in doing this he is constantly vacillating back and forth between materialistic and idealistic concepts. I find it difficult to understand how the argument is supposed to work against idealism and materialism when the dualism Russell is assuming in the argument is absent in these other two theories. In other words, it does not make sense for a materialist to talk about thoughts and brain states because for him thoughts are brain states. I feel that a seeming failure to notice the point on Russell's part results in a miscarriage in his argument.



In the remainder of "The Ultimate Constituents of Matter", Russell once again deals with the topics of space and time and his opinions on these seem virtually unchanged from the ones he advanced in "The Relation of Sense-data to Physics". He still retains the burdensome system of perspectives mentioned there and, although he does not use the term 'sensibilia', he tells us that "we wish to allow the possibility of perspectives which are not perceived by any one" <sup>126</sup> (i.e., 'sensibilia'). I shall not repeat again Broad's criticism of this part of Russell's theory. Not only had Russell not retreated from this opinion in 1915, it seems as though he did not recant this view even as late as 1959; in speaking of his theory he tells us:

All the puzzles about the differences between different people's perceptions of one thing, and about the causal relation between a physical thing and its appearances at different places, and, finally, (perhaps most important of all), between mind and matter, are cleared away by this theory. The puzzles have all been caused by failure to distinguish the three places associated with any given percept which are (I repeat): (1) the place in physical space where the 'thing' is; (2) the place in physical space where I am; (3) the place in my perspective which my percept occupies in relation to other percepts.

I did not offer the above theory as the only theory which would explain the facts, or as necessarily true. I offered it as a theory which is consistent with all the known facts

and as, so far, the only theory of which this can be said. In this respect it is on the same level as, for example, Einstein's General Theory of Relativity. All such theories go beyond what the facts prove and are acceptable at least *pro tem.*, if they solve puzzles and are not at any point incompatible with known facts. This is what I claim for the above theory, and it is as much as any general scientific theory ought to claim. 127

In retrospect, it seems to me that one of the salient features of "The Ultimate Constituents of Matter" is its total neglect of the theory of neutral monism. Its main thesis is that a sense-datum should not be thought of as an evanescent phantasm, but instead it should be regarded as one of the ultimate constituents of matter. Much of the argument used to produce this conclusion focuses on the reduction of what we normally regard as solid and "bumpable-into" matter into something fairly mysterious in itself. So, when Russell says that the objects of sense are *physical*, it must be stressed that he thus means 'physical' in his sense. The peculiar thing about this is that his sense of 'physical' or 'material' is not in any way radically different from the non-physical. As I have mentioned, his strategy has been to emphasise the similarities between the mental and the material. As

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127. *My Philosophical Development op. cit.*, p. 108.

it seems to me (and there is nothing to indicate that Russell is aware of this), his line of attack should lead eventually to the conclusion that there is only one 'neutral stuff' and that the mental and material are merely different arrangements of it. This must have at least occurred to him for, as we shall soon see, his metaphysical beliefs were about to be fundamentally transformed.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Conversion to Neutral Monism

#### I

In this chapter, I shall, for the most part concern myself with a discussion of the metaphysical aspects of Russell's 1918 article, "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism".<sup>128</sup> Before entering into metaphysical issues however, I feel that at this juncture it would be appropriate to say something about

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128. This article is composed of eight lectures Russell originally delivered from January 22nd to March 12, 1918 at Dr. William's Library, Gordon Square, London. In a letter Russell wrote to Stanley Unwin on March 23, 1919 he says that the material actually consists of "verbatim reports, taken at the time by a short-hand writer . . . They were sent to America [where *The Monist* is published] before I went to prison, and though I believe I kept a duplicate, I have not seen them since". This suggests that there is no manuscript in Russell's hand for the article. The question and answer section that is printed at the end of each lecture in the article supports the account Russell gives of how the essay was created. I also feel that this helps to sustain the thesis that Russell *did* sometimes produce material he directly intended to publish through the medium of a short-hand secretary (Cf. footnote 93). In America, the lectures were published in *The Monist* 28 (4): Oct., 495-527; 29 (1-3) Jan-July 1919, 33-63, 190-222, 344-80. Reprinted in *Logic and Knowledge*, *op. cit.* 175-281. Page numbers refer to the latter.

the source of much of Russell's changing ideas, viz. his relationship with Ludwig Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein arrived at Cambridge in the fall of 1911<sup>129</sup> and began almost immediately to exert an influence on Russell.

(In a letter to Lady Ottoline on October 19, 1911, Russell says "My German friend [Wittgenstein] threatens to be an infliction - he came back with me after my lecture, and argued till dinnertime - obstinate and perverse, but I think not stupid".) This means that during most of the period with which we are concerned, Wittgenstein has

129. In *Logic and Knowledge* R.C. Marsh states without equivocation of Wittgenstein that "in January of 1912 he went to Cambridge as an 'Advanced Student' (p. 175.) while G.H. von Wright in his forthcoming *Wittgenstein and his Cambridge Friends, Letters to Bertrand Russell, J.M. Keynes, and G.E. Moore* (ed. by G.H. von Wright with the assistance of B.F. McGuinness; London. B.H. Blackwell Press, Introduction) a little more hesitantly tells us that "We do not know exactly when Wittgenstein first came to Cambridge; He was registered as present in the University of Manchester in the Autumn of 1911 and admitted a member of Trinity College, Cambridge on 1 February 1912". However, through the medium of Ken Blackwell's notes on Russell's letters to Lady Ottoline I have discovered that there is evidence that suggests that Wittgenstein was at Cambridge (although probably not registered) as early as Oct. 18, 1911. In a letter of that date from Russell to Lady Ottoline, he says:

" - this raised a lot of complicated problems, which we were in the middle of when an unknown German appeared, speaking very little English, but refusing to speak German. He turned out to be a man who had learnt engineering at Charlottenburg, but during his course had acquired, by himself, a passion for the philosophy of mathematics, and has now come to Cambridge on purpose to hear me. This took till 5.15; . . ."

Russell has written (presumably later) "This was Wittgenstein" in the margin of the letter.

played at least some rôle in the formation of Russell's thought. The introduction to *Our Knowledge of the External World (op. cit.)* ("In pure logic", Russell tells us ". . . I have had the benefit of vitally important discoveries, not yet published, by my friend Mr. Ludwig Wittgenstein".) suggests that the influence was quite considerable. The important thing to notice for our purposes is the direction in which the Wittgenstein influence pushed Russell.

Wittgenstein's discoveries were in pure logic and the discussions he had with Russell were probably dominated by topics of that nature. So, to some extent, this meant that Wittgenstein's influence channelled Russell's thought away from the metaphysical concerns that interest us. A demonstration of this is the fact that in 1919 Russell produced a book titled *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* and not only is much of this work unconcerned with metaphysics, a good deal of its subject matter "is not properly to be called 'philosophy'".<sup>130</sup> In addition to Wittgenstein's diversionary influence, an event of a very different nature was to institute a hiatus in *all* of Russell's philosophical thought: "From August 1914 until the end of 1917", Russell tells us, "I was wholly occupied with matters arising out of my opposition to the war, but by the beginning of 1918

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130. From the Introduction, *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1919).

I had become persuaded that there was no further pacifist work that I could usefully do".<sup>131</sup> When he again resumed his philosophical work the influence of Wittgenstein was still strongly there. Russell reminds us of this in his preface to "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism" where he says that his lectures

are very largely concerned with explaining certain ideas which I learnt from my friend and former pupil Ludwig Wittgenstein. I have had no opportunity of knowing his views since 1914, and I do not even know whether he is alive or dead. He has therefore no responsibility for what is said in these lectures beyond that of having originally supplied many of the theories contained in them.<sup>132</sup>

If this statement of acknowledgment were not enough to convince us of Wittgenstein's influence upon Russell, a cursory comparison between some of the topics dealt with in "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism" and Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*<sup>133</sup> would help to persuade us of the fact. There are, for example, evident affinities between Russell's first lecture "Facts and Propositions" and Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* 1.1. ff. (this is only one of many examples that could be drawn upon). Furthermore, in the body of the article we again.

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131. *My Philosophical Development*, op. cit. p. 128.

132. *Logic and Knowledge*, op. cit. p. 177.

133. Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* Translated by D.F. Pears & B.F. McGuinness. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul).

find Russell saying things such as "*propositions are not names for facts*. It is quite obvious as soon as it is pointed out to you, but as a matter of fact I never had realized it until it was pointed out to me by a former pupil of mine, Wittgenstein" (emphasis in the original). 134

I will not extend this line of argument any further because, as I think the reader will agree, the conclusion that Wittgenstein's presence at Cambridge did result in an impact of a certain degree in Russell's philosophical preoccupations is relatively easily achieved. The minor conclusion, however, that Wittgenstein's influence was mostly relegated to the field of philosophical logic and only peripherally important in the metaphysical realm is a great deal more difficult (if not impossible) to argue for. From a technical point of view it would be an arduous undertaking in itself to sort out the problems in philosophical logic that are devoid of metaphysical import (if indeed there are any) from those that do in fact have this feature. To do this and to try to document how Wittgenstein did or did not influence Russell in a straightforward metaphysical manner (assuming for the moment that this is somehow possible without simultaneously dragging in logical perplexities) is something with which I have no desire to involve myself. I also lack the necessary psychological



motivation for such an enterprise because, as it seems to me, it is not unlikely that the minor conclusion is not entirely correct (i.e. I believe Wittgenstein probably did influence his teacher's metaphysics. I certainly would not want to leave the impression that I considered Wittgenstein's utterances metaphysically unimportant). The only thing I wish to establish in this general argument is that, no matter how influential Wittgenstein was during this period, in this paper I am primarily interested in what Russell has to say on the nature of mind and matter, and, as it seems to me, Wittgenstein did not exert a great influence upon Russell with respect to this problem. Consequently, I shall have little more to say concerning the Russell/Wittgenstein relationship. As a parting shot, however, I would like to quote something Ronald Jager depreciatingly says in regard to Wittgenstein's influence on the writing of "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism":

[Logical Atomism] was a metaphysics, [Russell] said, that was suggested to him by thinking about the philosophy of mathematics, and the lectures consist, he tells us, largely of ideas derived from Wittgenstein. This is an inaccurate account of the genesis of the material: the link with mathematics is somewhat indirect; and very little besides the idea of atomic facts and the undeveloped idea of picturing has a direct derivation from Wittgenstein alone. The main themes are already in Russell's previous writings, ... 135

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135. Jager, Ronald. *The Development of Bertrand Russell's Philosophy* *op. cit.*, p. 302.

## II

Russell's major objective in the 1918 article aside from "explaining certain ideas which [he] learnt from [his] friend and former pupil . . ." was to justify the use of analysis in his approach and to explain why he endorsed a philosophy of Logical Atomism. The first of these latter two objectives shall not detain us: the justification of analysis is a methodological debate which, although it undoubtedly has some bearing on the outcome of what Russell had to say on the nature of mind and matter, need not be entered into here. We do not have the time and space to address ourselves to issues involving the question 'How should one go about doing philosophy?' Similarly, what Russell has to say about his philosophy of Logical Atomism *per se* need not occupy much of our attention. What Logical Atomism is, briefly, is a doctrine propounded by Russell and the early Wittgenstein that has as two of its major tenets a picture theory of language and a verification theory of meaning. As we have already suggested, its principal method is analysis - specifically, reductive analysis. Related to this system of reductive analysis is its theory of a logically perfect language: "A language of that sort will be completely analytic, and will show at a glance the logical structure of the facts asserted or denied".

But, if we were to analyse the merits of such a system, this too would lead us away from the topic of this paper. 137

The foregoing preamble brings us to the proper subject of our discourse, viz. how what Russell says in "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism" bears on his evolving philosophy of mind. In this regard, the most important part of his paper is the section entitled "Excursion into Metaphysics: What There Is". Before discussing this, however, we must notice some of the things he has to say on the subject of 'beliefs'.

If we were to examine William James's *Essays in Radical Empiricism* or John Dewey's *Essays on Experimental Logic* we might be surprised to find the type of notion they have therein expressed concerning 'belief'. This is because the views advanced by these men and by other neutral monists have been influenced to a considerable degree by a new doctrine known as 'behaviourism' which was beginning to gain favour in the early part of the

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137. J.O. Urmson attempts to repudiate Logical Atomism in his *Philosophical Analysis: Its Development between the Two Wars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956) while Gustav Bergmann tries to support the theory in "The Revolt Against Logical Atomism" in *Essays on Bertrand Russell*, edited by E.D. Klemke (Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1970) p. 28 ff.

century. We would discover that when the neutral monists assert that a person 'believes' a proposition, what this means, they would claim, is that the person believing the statement will act or behave in a certain way. So, for example, suppose you believe I am a brilliant philosopher. This means, according to the behaviouristic strain in neutral monism that when I propound some view or other, you, if you are an earnest practitioner of the discipline of the cave, will pay very close attention to what it is I am propounding. You may even take notes and discuss my theories with others. When you see me coming you may immediately reach for your pad and pencil, and that behavior would constitute your belief that I am a great philosopher. If, a thousand years from now, people are still debating the sagacity of my cogitations, then your belief was a true one. On the other hand, if you and your colleagues quickly discover that what I am saying is banal nonsense and no one is noting and debating my ideas, then your belief that I am a great philosopher is a false one.

Russell repudiates this account of belief because of certain things having to do with logical considerations in his analysis of belief. In 1918 Russell was still greatly concerned to put forward a particular kind of description of belief which he felt was correct and fundamentally different from the behaviouristic account. The following is a statement of his account. In Russell's

opinion there are several kinds of facts in the world. There are, for example, *particular facts*, e.g., 'this is white'; *general facts*, e.g. 'all men are mortal' (Cf. *Logic and Knowledge*, p. 183); *positive facts*, 'Socrates was alive'; *negative facts*, 'Socrates is not alive' (Cf. p. 211.); and *atomic facts* - the simplest sort of fact; 'this is white' may also be used as an illustration of these Cf. p. 199. The propositions that express atomic facts he calls 'atomic propositions' and they are partially characterized by the fact that they have only one verb. *Molecular* propositions are the type that contain other propositions which are their atoms and, as connecting links contain such words as 'or', 'if', 'and', and so forth. There is another more complicated form of proposition that involves two or more verbs and concerns believing, wishing, willing and other similar types of things. In the former case of molecular propositions there is no clear suggestion that, because there is this new molecular type of proposition there

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138. "When I was lecturing on this subject at Harvard" Russell tells us, "I argued that there were negative facts, and it nearly produced a riot: the class would not hear of there being negative facts at all. I am still inclined to think that there are . . ." (*Logic and Knowledge*, p. 211). The counter argument to Russell's position on this issue on the periphery of our topic is presented by Mr. Ralph Demos in "A Discussion of a certain type of Negative Proposition" (*Mind* XXVI, 1917).

must also be some new kind of fact to which it is related. However, in the latter case, in dealing with propositions involving beliefs, wishes and so on, Russell feels that there is a whole new and different form of fact in the world which corresponds to the proposition.

The facts that occur when one believes or wishes or wills, according to Russell, have a different *logical form* from simple atomic facts (or, for that matter, other facts: there are many forms that facts may have). To illustrate this, suppose we use the example of someone saying "I believe that Nixon is a scoundrel". If this belief actually does occur, then any statement we have of its occurrence is a statement of fact. There are thus two verbs involved in a construction of this variety ["I believe (1) that Nixon is (2) a scoundrel"] but there may be other formulations of beliefs that involve more than two. For example, I may believe (1) that Sam is (2) of the opinion that Nixon is (3) a scoundrel. Thus, we can see that, according to Russell's theory, there may be any number of verbs in belief propositions but not less than two. The important thing, Russell tells us, is that

You will perceive that it is not only the proposition that has two verbs, but also the fact, which is expressed by the proposition, has two constituents corresponding to verbs. I shall call those constituents verbs, for the sake of shortness, as it is very

difficult to find any word to describe all those objects which are denoted by verbs. 139

In reflecting on what Russell has to say about the propositions of belief, it is helpful to keep in mind his characterization of philosophical logic. He tells us that we could describe the philosophical portion of logic as an inventory, "or if you like a more humble word, a 'zoo' containing all the different forms that facts may have". 140 In considering beliefs, Russell said that "I have got on to a new sort of thing, a new beast for our zoo, not another member of our former species but a new species. 141 The discovery of this fact is due to Mr. Wittgenstein".

To emphasize the difference between the Russell/Wittgenstein view and the James/Dewey one it is necessary to say a little more about the latter. In that theory, belief and desire must be explained away because they seem to suggest mental phenomena. To revert to the example of you believing that I am a great philosopher, the logical essence of such a circumstance comes down to a relation between two facts similar in form to a causal relation.

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139. *Logic and Knowledge*, op. cit. p. 217.

140. *Ibid.* p. 216.

141. *Ibid.* p. 226.

On the one hand there will be you taking out your note book when you see me coming and on the other hand there will be me uttering profundities at every opportunity. Out of the relation of these two facts, according to the behaviouristic interpretation, the whole phenomenon of your believing that I am a great philosopher is constituted. As described, this phenomenon has the same logical form as a causal event where you have 'this fact causes that fact'. The significant thing here is that the logical form thus exhibited is quite different from the one displayed by the Russell-Wittgenstein, Logical Atomistic interpretation.

I shall examine the Russell-Wittgenstein version more fully in a moment, but before doing so, I feel that this would be an appropriate point at which to document Russell's mellowing attitude towards neutral monism. In the lectures on Logical Atomism with which we are now concerned, Russell tells his Gordon Square audience that:

I have naturally a bias in favour of the theory of neutral monism because it exemplifies Occam's razor. I always wish to get on in philosophy with the smallest possible apparatus, partly because it diminishes the risk of error, because it is not necessary to deny the entities you do not assert, and therefore you run less risk of error the fewer entities you assume. The other



reason - perhaps a somewhat frivolous one - is that every diminution in the number of entities increases the amount of work for mathematical logic to do in building up things that look like the entities you used to assume. Therefore, the whole theory of neutral monism is pleasing to me, but I do find so far very great difficulty in believing it. You will find a discussion of the whole question in some articles I wrote in *The Monist*, especially in July 1914, and in the two previous numbers also. I should really want to rewrite them rather because I think *some* of the arguments I used against neutral monism are not valid<sup>142</sup> (my emphasis).

The articles in *The Monist* he refers to were of course the subject of our attention in my second chapter. Russell does not explicitly state which of the original arguments he now considers invalid but he does go on to restate some of the opinions he still holds; thus, by deduction we can determine which of the earlier reasoning he now rejects. However, I will not make that deduction just yet. For now, I will merely point out that one of the original arguments that Russell first made in "On the Nature of Acquaintance" he now restates with clear-cut approval in "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism". This is the argument concerning 'emphatic particulars' that he used as his fifth and final one in his earlier article and which he considered at that time his most potent weapon. He tells us that:

You would say that in a purely physical world there would be a complete impartiality. All parts of time and all regions of space would

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142. *Ibid.* pp. 121-2.

seem equally emphatic. But what really happens is that we pick out certain facts, past and future and all that sort of thing: they all radiate out from 'this', and I have not myself seen how one can deal with the notion of 'this' on the basis of neutral monism. I do not lay that down dogmatically, only I do not see how it can be done. 143

In addition to this consideration there is the somewhat less clear-cut matter involving Russell's views on the nature of belief statements. I digressed from my explanation of this and I shall now return to it.

To give an account of the way in which Russell thinks that a belief is made up is not an easy task. It is complicated by the fact that Russell himself obviously had a difficult time getting his own theory straight. 144 In "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism" he

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144. In a thorough examination of what he has to say on the subject of belief and the concomitant issue concerning the theory of judgment we would have to look at the following: 1. *Principia Mathematica* Whitehead, A.N. and Russell, B. (Cambridge University Press, 1925) pp. 42 ff.

2. *Philosophical Essays*, Russell, B. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1910), p. 147 ff.

3. *The Problems of Philosophy*, *op. cit.*, Chap. XII.

4. The unpublished 1913 theory of knowledge book, Chapter I of Part One.

5. "On the Nature of Acquaintance in *Logic and Knowledge*, *op. cit.*, p. 149 ff.

6. "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism" in *Logic and Knowledge*, *op. cit.*: esp. Part IV.

7. "On Propositions ..." in *Logic and Knowledge*, *op. cit.* Part III.

8. *The Analysis of Mind* (London: Allen & Unwin Ltd.) Chapter XII.

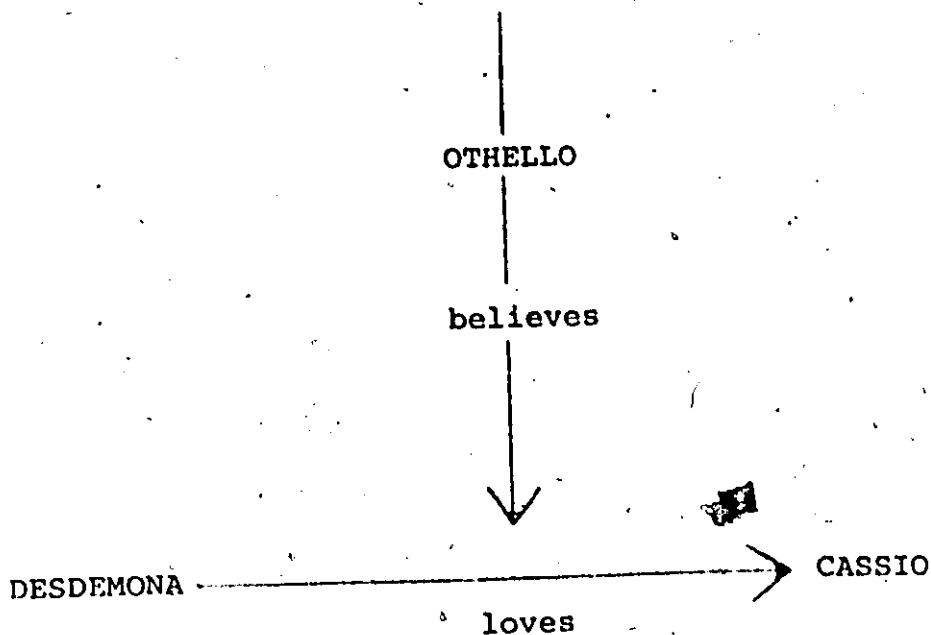
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tells us that we cannot make a 'map-in-space' of a belief. You can make a map of atomic facts because space-relations are of the atomic sort or complications thereof. Russell feels that this may be even more evident if we try to map a false belief. To illustrate this, Russell offers us an attempt to map the false belief 'Othello believes that Desdemona loves Cassio'. In this case there is an occurrence of the verb 'loves' and although it seems to relate to Desdemona and Cassio it does not. However, the word does occur in a way in which a verb usually does but in this case Russell does not wish to count it as a verb (in his sense) because of the falsity of the proposition. To make things some what more clear, we can adopt Russell's method of referring to the verb other than 'believing' in these double-verbed locutions as the 'subordinate verb'. So, in a case where the judgment is false the subordinate verb *seems* to be functioning as a verb and *seems* to be relating two terms but in fact is not doing so. "That is what constitutes the puzzle about the nature of belief. You will notice that whenever one gets to really close quarters with the

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As the reader may suppose, anything receiving such lengthy consideration from Russell is almost sure to develop into a complicated and delicate matter. In this paper, I shall not attempt to spin out all the niceties of the theory but instead I will present it as briefly as possible and only bring in the points relevant to his differences with neutral monism.

theory of error one has the puzzle of how to deal with error without assuming the existence of the non-existent. I mean that every theory of error sooner or later wrecks itself by assuming the existence of the non-existent".<sup>145</sup> To make this even more graphic Russell offers us the following sketch to map out the false belief:<sup>146</sup>



This does not solve the problem because once again the term or the symbol 'loves' occurs in the explanation seeming to relate Desdemona and Cassio when in fact these are not so related. This reinforces the conclusion that you "cannot get in space any occurrence which is logically of the same form as a belief". We are left with the question, if Russell

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145. *Ibid.* Cf. p. 225.

146. *Ibid.*

and Wittgenstein are right about this, if in fact it is true that beliefs are a new kind of beast for our philosophical zoo, how does this relate to the theory of neutral monism and how does it affect Russell's ideas concerning mind and matter?

For the moment, I shall not comment on the truth of the Russell/Wittgenstein claim. Instead, I would like to say something about Russell's differing theory of belief and his further softening attitude toward neutral monism. In Part VIII of "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism" Russell makes what seems to me a rather noteworthy disclosure:

I do not profess to know whether [neutral monism] is true or not. I feel more and more that the difficulties that occur in regard to it are all of the sort that may be solved by ingenuity. But nevertheless there are a number of difficulties [his emphasis]; there are a number of problems . . . One is the question of belief and the other sorts of facts involving two verbs. If there are such facts as this, that, I think, may make neutral monism rather difficult, but as I was pointing out, *there is this theory that one calls behaviourism, which belongs logically with neutral monism, and that theory would altogether dispense with all those facts containing two verbs, and would therefore dispose of that argument against neutral monism. There is, on the other hand, the argument from emphatic particulars . . .*<sup>147</sup> [my emphasis].

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<sup>147</sup>. *Ibid.* , p. 279-80.

I believe that we may say at this point that he is on the brink of conversion. There are only these two matters of 'belief' and 'emphatic particulars' holding him back. The rather startling thing in the above passage concerns the former of these obstacles and consists in the way in which we now find Russell speaking of his version of belief facts. "If there are such facts as this" [my emphasis] he tells us! After spending so much effort arguing for the existence of this new beast for the zoo, it is quite surprising to see him suddenly introduce this feeling of dubiousness. Even more surprising is the candid admission that the theory of behaviourism is capable of dispensing with these putative facts and that, if it can do so, the related argument against neutral monism would also dissolve.

This seems an appropriate time to sum up briefly Russell's position to this point. In Chapter II of this paper we saw that he had five main arguments against neutral monism. By 1918 and the end of "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism" he had abandoned all but two of these; the two remaining arguments involve on the one hand a (half hearted?) conviction that belief facts have a special logical form and on the other the feeling that the theory of neutral monism could not explain the phenomenon of emphatic particulars. By deduction (which I shall now make explicit) we can see that the arguments

which he endorsed in 1914 but relinquished four years later were the following: (1) the one having to do with non-temporal entities, memory and the uncritical acceptance of common sense (Cf. *Logic and Knowledge*, pp. 150-153); (2) the argument maintaining that neutral monism allowed the merely potential as knowledge (Cf. *Logic and Knowledge*, pp. 153-155); (3) the feeling that neutral monism is wrong in being obliged to have recourse to 'extraneous' considerations (Cf. *Logic and Knowledge*, pp. 155-158). The surviving two arguments were about to dissolve and evaporate as well. To see how this came about we must direct our attention to some of the things he says in "On Propositions: what they are and how they mean".

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148. This paper was originally read to the Joint Session of the Aristotelian Society, the British Psychological Society, and the Mind Association in London, 11 July, 1919. G.E. Moore chaired the meeting and about three hundred members and visitors were present. The paper was published in the *Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volume II: Problems of Science and Philosophy*, pp. 1-43. It is reprinted in *Logic and Knowledge*, op. cit. pp. 285-320. Page references refer to the latter.

By 1919, Russell had come to some new opinions on the subject of belief facts. This seems to have evolved from the follow up to his interest in language. It was in 1918 that he had first become interested in meaning and the relation of language to fact,<sup>149</sup> thus in the closing section of "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism" we find him saying, "I have dealt hitherto upon what one may call philosophical grammar . . . I think the importance of philosophical grammar is very much greater than it is generally thought to be. I think that practically all traditional metaphysics is filled with mistakes due to bad grammar, and that almost all the traditional problems of metaphysics and traditional results - supposed results - of metaphysics are due to a failure to make the kind of distinction in what we may call philosophical grammar..."<sup>150</sup> It would seem that it was this concern for advancing a correct analysis of philosophical grammar that at least partially motivated his lengthy inquiry into propositions and facts with more than one verb. However, the analysis he had advanced in 1918 he repudiated in 1919. This resulted in part from his further deliberations on the subject of language. A great deal of what Russell has to say in "On Propositions" involves what he had earlier referred to as "this theory that one calls behaviourism". It is readily apparent in

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149. Cf. *My Philosophical Development*, op. cit. p. 145.

150. *Logic and Knowledge*, op. cit. p. 269.



reading the essay that Russell had become enchanted with this doctrine; the enchantment was perhaps derived in part from his reading of Watson's book on *Behaviour*. This resulted in a new theory of language that embodied a liberal infusion of behaviourism. But Russell did not accept that doctrine without qualification: "I incline to the belief that a theory of language which takes no account of images is incomplete in a vital point". One of the features of his renovated theory involved a new version of meaning: "A word has a meaning, more or less vague; but the meaning is only to be discussed by observing its use: the use comes first, and the meaning is distilled out of it".

Both the point about images and the one concerning meaning are philosophically interesting, but the crucial one for our purposes is the one concerning his new doctrine of belief.

Many analytic psychologists - Meinong, for example - distinguish these elements in a presentation, namely, the act (or subject), the content, and the object. Realists such as Dr. Moore and myself have been in the habit of rejecting the content, while retaining the act and the object. American realists on the other hand, have rejected both the act and the content, and have kept only the object; while idealists, in effect, if not in words, have rejected the object and kept the content . . .

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151. Watson, John B. *Behaviour: An Introduction to Comparative Psychology* (New York, H. Holt & Co. 1914).

152. *Logic and Knowledge*, *op. cit.* p. 291.

153. *Ibid.* p. 300. This, of course, is very sug-

I have to confess that the theory which analyses a presentation into act and object no longer satisfies me. The act, or subject, is schematically convenient, but not empirically discoverable. It seems to serve the same sort of purpose as is served by points and instants, by numbers and particles and the rest of the apparatus of mathematics. All these things have to be *constructed*, not postulated: they are not of the stuff of the world, but assemblages which it is convenient to be able to designate as if they were single things. The same seems to be true of the subject, and I am at a loss to discover any actual phenomenon which could be called an 'act' and could be regarded as a constituent of a presentation. The logical analogies which have led me to this conclusion have been reinforced by the arguments of James and the American realists. It seems to me imperative, therefore, to construct a theory of presentation and belief which makes no use of the 'subject', or of an 'act' as a constituent of a presentation. 154

This confession has several significant implications. The first thing to note is that the decision to regard the subject as, in effect, a 'logical fiction' destroys one whole side of his previously held dualism. Thus it is my decision that, rather than now referring to his theory of mind as modified-beyond-recognition dualism, it would be much more accurate to call it incipient neutral monism. The relinquishing of the subject effectively pulled the rug out from under the two remaining arguments which were used in favour of his earlier theory and opened the door to an acceptance of neutral monism. How could he still

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gestive of the theory of meaning embodied in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953). It is difficult to understand why such similar theories became esteemed in one source and ignored in another.

hope to offer a better explanation of the emphatic particular phenomenon now that he had no subject? Thus that argument is not maintained and the term 'emphatic particular' disappears from his philosophy. Similarly, we no longer find Russell speaking of 'facts with two or more verbs'; this is because his new theory of belief is much more behaviouristic. The only vestige of his former theory involves images; he does not employ one kind of fundamentally neutral stuff as William James did, but suggests three instead:

I think James is right in making the distinction between the causal laws the essential thing. There do seem to be psychological and physical causal laws which are distinct from each other ... But when we come to consider the stuff of the two sciences, it would seem that there are some particulars which obey only physical laws (namely, unperceived material things), some which obey only psychological laws (namely, images, at least), and some which obey both (namely, sensations). 155

I believe the thing we should emphasize in this passage is not the differences in the three kinds of stuff, but rather the fact that they are fairly closely analogous to each other.

The major problems in keeping Russell from accepting neutral monism had been bound up with the subject. Since this had been explained away and the old notions of

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154. *Ibid.* p. 305.

155. *Ibid.* p. 299.

mind and matter could now be given a neutral monistic interpretation, an immense simplification was introduced into his view of the mind/body problem. Thus, forty years later he felt able to say that "I was glad when I realized that abandonment of the 'subject' made it possible to accept this simplification and to regard the traditional problem of the relation of mind and matter as definitively solved".

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We may now wish to ask the question, What was Russell committed to after the writing of "On Propositions . . ." in 1919? - Was he committed to a mind/brain identity theory? I think that it may be misleading to suggest that his 1919 neutral monistic theory of mind committed him to a position of identifying mind and brain. It is somewhat misleading because, as it seems to me, an identity theory allows a greater rôle to internal states than Russell wanted to allow at this time. I believe Russell was more disposed to endorse a modified form of behaviourism than he was to a theory allowing explanatory rôles to inner states. He was not a complete behaviourist though, and he expressed reservations as to Watson's theory of language (Cf. *Logic and Knowledge*, p. 297). So, although he had his reservations, he was more a behaviourist than a mind/brain identity theorist.

The dropping of the ego may have aided Russell in his efforts to supply an answer to the mind/ body problem but it had the perhaps negative and hindering effect of sabotaging his earlier epistemological theory. That earlier doctrine was of course built upon the notion of acquaintance which contained within it at its core a relational theory of mental occurrences. Every sensation, in that view, was itself a cognition which consisted in awareness of the 'sense-datum'. But with the elimination of the subject both the doctrine of acquaintance and the notion of 'sense-datum' had to suffer. "If there is a subject, it can have a relation to [a] patch of colour, namely the sort of relation which we might call awareness. . . The subject, however, appears to be a logical fiction, like mathematical points and instants . . . If we are to avoid a perfectly gratuitous assumption, we must dispense with the subject as one of the actual ingredients of the world. But when we do this, the possibility of distinguishing the sensation from the sense-datum vanishes, at least I see no way of preserving the distinction".<sup>157</sup>

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157. *The Analysis of Mind*. (London: Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1921) pp. 141-2.

If, in addition to the subject, Russell wishes ,  
to abandon sense-data as well, then notions such as  
'awareness', 'acquaintance', and 'experience' would either  
have to be jettisoned or radically redefined. It was his  
decision to attempt the latter and while *The Analysis of  
Mind* represents a beginning in that direction, he made a  
more earnest effort at this in 1940 when he wrote *An  
Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*.

That, however, is another story.

PREFACE TO THE BIBLIOGRAPHY

To compile a bibliography of Russell's writings on mind and matter is a difficult undertaking in itself. Aside from documenting what he has to say in the primary areas of philosophy of mind and the philosophy of physics and matter, there are many related topics to be considered as well: the philosophy of language, epistemology, metaphysics, philosophical psychology and, depending on how widely one construes the subject, others. This difficulty is further compounded by the fact that Russell wrote prolifically in all these areas. To this starting point and touchstone for the topic we must add the fact that, if any one person is to be considered the founding father of modern British philosophy, it is undoubtedly Bertrand Russell. Thus there is a large storehouse of articles and books written by his critics and followers that deals with his work and justifiably falls within the scope of our list of readings.

With the facilities available to me in the Russell Archives, I have managed to create a fairly limited but I believe comprehensive and original bibliography. It is,

however, somewhat wider in scope than the final paper proved to be. To determine which of the following writings directly influenced the composition of the essay, the reader should consult the notes that appear at the bottom of the pages in the body of the text. I have decided against paring the bibliography down to just the works directly cited because, if for no other reason, the list of readings as it now stands indicates the richness in Russell of a topic that some have considered one of his more peripheral interests.



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