

THE RELATIONS OF RUSSELL AND BRADLEY

"The question of relations is one of the most important questions that arises in philosophy, as most other issues turn on it."

Bertrand Russell, Logical Atomism

"We all, I think, are agreed that the question as to relations, their nature, truth, and reality, is both central and difficult."

F.H.Bradley, Collected Essays

THE RELATIONS OF RUSSELL AND BRADLEY

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## PREFACE

It has been found necessary in this thesis to use a not insubstantial number of quotations from the writings of Russell and Bradley. This may not have improved the style, but has been found necessary because their views have been found to be very often by no means those views usually attributed to them, and the author wishes to avoid the charge of mendacity.

Thanks are due to Dr. M. Radner for drawing my interest to this subject, and to Dr. C. Georgiadis for encouragement and help. Dr. J. Simpson is to be thanked for his searching criticisms which led to the removal of some confusions and increased precision.

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## INTRODUCTION

It is curious that though the philosophers of the early twentieth century hailed Bradley as the greatest philosopher of the age, calling him the greatest metaphysician Britain had ever produced, contemporary philosophers take very little interest in him indeed. It might be expected, considering the laudations once received, that his influence upon twentieth century philosophy would be recognised as considerable, but in courses and commentaries on twentieth century philosophy, he is often mentioned only in passing, when Russell's early development is being discussed. Russell, it is said, could only begin his philosophical career in earnest when he had shaken off the stifling Hegelianism of Bradley, this being refuted when a logical error concerning the underlying theory of relations was displayed. We are given the impression, first, that Bradley's significance to Russell goes no further than providing him with an exercise for his genius, and secondly, that Russell's denial of the doctrine of relations brought down Bradley's whole system.

This paper is to be concerned primarily with the justice of this viewpoint. It will be basically concerned with the evaluation of the Russell-Bradley controversy concerning the nature of relations, since this is certainly the key dispute between them, and the one of the most interest; but it will also be concerned with a more



strictly historical question: with the extent of the Russell-Bradley interaction, particularly considering the degree to which Bradley influenced Russell. It will be argued that Bradley was far more significant to Russell than as a mere Aunt-Sally to be knocked down before getting down to work in earnest.

It is worth while mentioning, in passing, that the commonplace beliefs that Bradley's importance in Russell's development was thus limited, and that his system was defeated through Russell's discussion of relations, may be very largely a result of Russell's own teachings. Russell tells us often that Bradley's system is based on a false logic,\* a logic which was mistaken concerning relations, and respect both for Russell and his new logic has led people to take him at his word. The fact that Russell usually only referred to Bradley when discussing the 'mistaken' theory of relations also reinforces the belief that it was only in this matter that Bradley was significant in Russell's development. This is further reinforced by the fact that Russell is known to be very free in acknowledging intellectual debts, and yet he almost never admits any debts to Bradley.† That Russell did not think very highly of Bradley's system can also be derived easily

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\*E.g. My Philosophical Development, p.54; Philosophy of Leibniz, p.12; Principles of Mathematics, p.221; An Outline of Philosophy, p.265, among very many others.

†A rare exception is to be found in "Logical Atomism" (Logic and Knowledge, ed. R.C.Marsh, p.324): "At Cambridge I read Mr. Bradley's Logic, which influenced me profoundly."

from his general histories of philosophy. Though Wisdom of the West and An Outline of Philosophy afford a few (highly critical) paragraphs to Bradley, the better known, and supposedly more comprehensive History of Western Philosophy does not expound his system at all, but only refers to him once or twice in passing, when discussing the works of other philosophers.

## I. THE EXTENT OF THE BRADLEY-RUSSELL INTERACTION.

That Russell should not have thought it worth while avowing any significant intellectual debt to Bradley may come as a surprise to readers of their correspondence. In a letter of 1907, for instance, we find Russell saying to Bradley:

Will you pardon me if I say that I learnt more from your works than from those of any other philosopher of our time, and that in ceasing to agree with your system I have not lost any portion of the high respect which I have always felt for your thought? 1

It is true that Russell was replying to a letter in which Bradley had addressed similar pleasantries to Russell, and thus we may say that the above was only a product of Russell's good manners. It would, indeed, seem that Russell was not entirely serious, since he also claims to have learnt more from G.E. Moore than from anybody else, and he was willing to make this claim public. But if he was not entirely serious, a brief look at the various ways in which Bradley's doctrines came out in Russell's work will prove that he should have meant every word:

### Positive Influences

#### (i) Bradley's Rejection of Psychologism

Before Bradley's time, empiricists did not carefully distinguish philosophy and psychology, as modern students of philosophy are urged to do. The basic tenet of empiricism was that, as a matter of contingent fact, all the ideas

which a man can have are derived, ultimately, from his experience. Now this led them to consider the core of philosophy to be a descriptive science; the study of the contents of the mind. Bradley would have none of this; he produced a bitter renunciation of 'psychologism', a rejection which has had a profound and lasting effect upon philosophy in general. It is Russell, moreover, perhaps more than any other philosopher, that has reaped the benefits of the attack on traditional empiricism.

Bradley argued, extremely successfully, that philosophy is not concerned with ideas qua psychological entities, but only with ideas inasmuch as they have 'signification', or meaning. But meaning, he argued, is not to be equated with the actual contents of the mind. This, it may be noticed, has led to the fixation of contemporary philosophers with meanings; it was Bradley that first drew the attention of contemporary philosophers to the importance of meaning,\* and he deserves much credit for the fact. But the influence of this upon Russell was also profound. His work centred around meanings; logical atomism was the working-out of a particular theory of meaning, and the theory of descriptions was concerned with meanings. And

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\* Note that Frege shared Bradley's honour of originally emphasising meaning; but Frege was not read until the direction of philosophy had already been changed, whereas Bradley was read widely.

Russell also benefited from Bradley's teachings on this point by using the positive aspects of his work concerning meanings to rebuild the tarnished empiricism. D.F.Pears has argued <sup>2</sup> that Russell's greatest achievement was the reconstruction of empiricism within a logical, not a psychological, framework. In so doing, he was heavily dependent upon Bradley. First, he had to absorb Bradley's complaints concerning the psychological approach, these complaints being founded on its lack of interest in meaning, and then he made use of the new involvement with meaning to reconstruct empiricism. This was achieved simply by arguing that, regardless of what the contents of the mind may as a matter of fact be, meaning can only be attached to them by reference to that with which we can be acquainted. Meaning is only attached by reference to the world; a person can only understand the meaning of a word via this reference. This produced an empiricism which has been highly fecund, and is also more defensible than its psychological predecessor. Whereas the latter was based merely on an alleged contingent fact, which though probably true, is not at all easy to substantiate, the former was based solely on meanings of terms, and thus on a logical basis.

But a few words would not be out of place at this point concerning Bradley's attitude to 'psychological' empiricism, since it is very easy to misinterpret him on this point, a point which, moreover, turns out to be quite

crucial in his work. Bradley was by no means a rationalist. His opposition to the empiricists was not an opposition to their fundamental belief concerning the sources of knowledge, but rather an opposition to their whole approach to philosophy. It will be argued later that Bradley's whole system was heavily dependent upon the basic assumption of psychological empiricism: that all our knowledge is derived from experience. On this point, he was probably more empiricist than the professed empiricists.

#### (ii) Particular Logical Influences

Bradley showed himself, in his Principles of Logic to be a great opponent of traditional logic. He was certainly not prepared to accept that the logic of his day was a finished science, and he expressed his views on the subject very strongly indeed. A delightful example of the tone of his rejection of the traditional logic is the following, which was concerned with the assumption that all inference depends on a major premiss:

Begotten by an old metaphysical blunder, nourished by a senseless choice of examples, fostered by the stupid conservatism of logicians, and protected by the impotence of younger rivals, this chimaera has had a good deal more than its day. Really dead long since, I can hardly believe that it stands out for more than decent burial. 3

Bradley's abnegation of traditional logic was not concerned solely with its details. His consideration of the view that all deductive inference is of the syllogistic form is full of the bitterest scorn, and we find him arguing

successfully that it could cover only a few types of inference, and does not possibly cover relational inferences. This is certainly of historical interest in the development of Russell's views. Russell tells Bradley, in a letter of 1922: "Your Logic was very nearly the first philosophical book I read carefully, nearly thirty years ago, and the admiration which I felt for it has never diminished." We also know that Russell did read the Logic with great care, since extensive notes on it are to be found in the Russell Archives. The coruscating attack on traditional logic could not have failed to have had an effect on him. But we know that Russell played a vital part in the reconstruction of logic. Bradley does not deserve to be overlooked in this.

One aspect of the invective against traditional logic, a particularly significant one for this paper, was Bradley's rejection of the assumption that all propositions are of the subject-predicate form. What, he asks us, can this analysis make of such propositions as "A and B are equal" or "there is a sea-serpent"? Now Russell made a very great deal of this point. Not only did he base a very fruitful logic of relations on it, but he also grounded a rejection of the bulk of preceding metaphysical systems on it, including, ironically, Bradley's own system. It may well be that Bradley reintroduced the assumption that all propositions are of the subject-predicate form into his

system in a new form,\* but the significant reasons for the rejection of it in its standard form, the form which really concerned Russell, can virtually all be found in Bradley's work.†

Another important doctrine of the Principles of Logic was that the best way of analysing universal statements, i.e. such statements as "all men are mortal", is in terms of a hypothetical. Now Russell tells us in his My Philosophical Development (M.P.D) that he only made progress in logic when he realised that statements such as "Socrates is mortal" are very different from statements such as "all men are mortal", and that the latter is really a disguised hypothetical: This becomes fundamental in Russell's new logic. In M.P.D., however, he claims his source of this to be the Italian school of mathematics, in spite of the fact that it had been clearly stated in Bradley's Logic. Notes on it had been made by Russell in 1894, far before he had come across the Italian school.

Allied to this point is the point that the logical form of a statement may be very different from its grammatical form, and may be disguised by it. It is this realization which is essential to the theory of descriptions, and which set the tone of analysis for Russell and his successors. But this very important point can be found

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\*The assumption that all propositions are of the subject-predicate form will hereafter be referred to as "the S-P assumption".

†This will be further discussed in sections 3 and 4.



clearly in Bradley's Logic. In the first chapter, he clearly differentiates the two, saying:

By the subject I mean here not the ultimate subject, to which the whole ideal content is referred, but the subject which lies within that content, in other words, the grammatical subject.<sup>2</sup>

The above-mentioned point, that all statements are "really" disguised hypotheticals is a demonstration of the fact that Bradley differentiated between the logical and grammatical form of propositions and so does his point that all propositions are elliptical, that "grass is green" is really a proposition of the form "the world is such that grass is green". It is finally emphasised, most clearly, in his discussion of the negative judgement. Having argued that all judgements are of the world as a whole, all attribute something to the world as a whole, Bradley had some problems concerning negative judgements, because they do not seem to fit his analysis at all. "There is no round square" does not seem to be about the world taken as a whole at all. Now in dealing with this, Bradley simply states that we are misled by the grammatical form of the proposition. The logical form, he tells us is: "The world is such that it excludes the possibility of roundness and squareness being conjoined."

Now again, it may be argued that Russell derived the point about the grammatical form being very different from the logical form by reading Frege, but it can once more be replied that Russell read, and seems to have understood, Bradley's point on it long before he read Frege.

The fact that he absorbed the point is shown luminously by his notes on the Logic.

(iii) Constructions

Bradley had taught, in the Logic, that many of the so-called entities of common sense and science are nothing more than constructions of the intellect. Russell took this over and made a great deal of it. The theory of descriptions saw the start of his approach to "logical constructions"; here, he showed that if we can analyse phrases such as "the golden mountain" in such a way that it is unnecessary to postulate an entity for the phrase to denote in order to be meaningful, it is unnecessary to assume that it does exist; it can be treated, rather, as a construction. Thus, in accordance with Ockham's razor, Russell refuses to accept the existence (or subsistence) of such 'entities'. In following years, Russell used the approach frequently to economise ontologically. He tried to show, for instance, that substances, the self, points in space, and instants in time, need not be treated as existents, but can be adequately analysed as logical constructions out of other, already known entities. Fairly late in his career, he also argues that many of the 'entities' which science makes use of, such as atoms, neutrons, and so on, are themselves logical constructions, and not actual existents. Interestingly enough, it was exactly on this

question that Bradley made most of the notion of logical construction. In the Logic, he had argued that the world of science is by no means the real world, atoms, etc. being no more than usefully introduced notions. He ends his discussion of them with the unforgettable passage:

That the glory of this world in the end is appearance leaves the world more glorious, if we feel it is a show of some fuller splendour; but the sensuous curtain is a deception and a cheat, if it hides some colourless movement of atoms, some spectral woe of impalpable abstractions, or unearthly ballet of bloodless categories. <sup>6</sup>

#### The Negative Influences

Not only is Bradley of importance to Russell in providing him with philosophical tools, and in positively influencing his philosophy, but he is also of importance inasmuch as it was the rebellion against Bradley which gave direction to Russell's work. Professor Passmore has argued in a recent paper <sup>7</sup> that Logical Atomism is almost a direct product of Russell's reactions to Bradley. Now we know, from Russell's autobiographical works, that he detested monism; that he felt it to be intellectually suffocating. His early work has been presented, by Russell himself, as set up in conscious opposition to monism. Passmore explores the relations between the two philosophers briefly, and comes to the conclusion that "Logical Atomism ends up by being a kind of diffracted image of Bradley." <sup>8</sup> He uses the analogy of the conversion of a communist to make his point:

A former communist is not uncommonly converted into an anti-communist of quite exceptional virulence, who continues to deploy in the interests of his new cause the controversial recklessness, the paranoid suspiciousness, which he learnt from his earlier teachers. He may become a convert to a more bigoted sort of Roman Catholicism, but he will seldom end his days as a model of tolerance and liberality. 9

Now in spite of the injection of personal prejudices, Passmore makes his point perfectly clear. The idea is that though Russell may have adopted a view which is prima facie at the opposite extreme to Bradley's monism, he nevertheless remained, in some respects, very close to Bradley. Passmore supports the view that Russell and Bradley are really closely allied, partially by mentioning a few of the shared logical insights, which have already been mentioned in this section. But his point is made more strongly when, in showing that Russell's viewpoint was ostensibly the polar opposite to that of Bradley, he shows that they have similar problems. That the positions were polar opposites was well supported in Passmore's paper. For instance, in Bradley's system, we find that the most general of judgements are the most satisfactory, since they are more comprehensive, are less of "abstractions" than particular judgements. Particular judgements commit the great sin according to Bradley's system, since such judgements, more than any other, mutilate the unity of the whole. Russell provides the complete antithesis of this view. For him, an atomic judgement, such as "this is red" is the most satisfactory; the more general the

judgement, the less satisfactory it is considered. An allied contrast between their views is that for Bradley, a judgement is most true when it points towards the whole cohering system into which it enters, when it is presented as closely knit with the whole. For Russell, on the other hand, the more atomic the judgement, the more isolated the state of affairs to which it points, the better.

Now Bradley soon reached the conclusion that no judgements are ever quite general enough to adequately represent the absolute. All judgements, he believed, must be guilty of abstraction, since even the most general of judgements must attribute something to the absolute, and yet in so doing, they cannot fail to mutilate the unity of the whole, since they differentiate the predicate from the subject. On the other hand, Russell had the problem that no judgement ever seemed to be quite atomic enough, since they always seemed to imply other propositions. For example, rejection of an apparently entirely atomic proposition such as "this is red" will involve the rejection of other propositions, such as "this is the same colour as that object", which shows that it really is not so independent as was thought. Their views being both extremes on this question, both met with the problems of extremity.

Passmore included in his paper an attempt to

understand why Russell should have required such a strange position as that of logical atomism. His conclusion is that Russell was so much in fear of monism that he only felt safe from it when he could point to absolutely independent particulars. If he could do this, then the world cannot be the type of unity which monism demands. Now if Passmore is right, then Bradley's system must have had a very strong influence on Russell indeed, inspiring, as it did, such a decisive reaction. Passmore's thesis would have been made a great deal stronger, also, had he provided Russell's motive for this reaction. The motive is not hard to find. Russell spent his life in the search for certainty; he seemed to want certainty above all else. His love of mathematics was one product of this desire. But monism denies this quest. To completely understand any element of the world, we must completely understand the whole world, and our failure to achieve this means that we fail to achieve any complete truths. Again, it has already been shown that for Bradley, even the most true of judgements is still not finally true, since it involves the abstraction of the predicate from the subject. It is no wonder that monism was poison to Russell!

Now an expansion of Passmore's thesis could easily fill the pages of a dissertation considering the interaction of Russell and Bradley. Indeed, a concentrated

study of just the positive influences of Bradley on Russell could provide many rewarding sections. There is also material for a substantial discussion of the Bradley-Russell controversy concerning the nature of truth. But the present author has decided not to dwell on any of these aspects of the interaction, interesting though they may be, but rather to give prominence to the dispute concerning the question of relations. This decision is to be supported in the next section.

## 2. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE QUESTION OF RELATIONS

One reason for wishing to consider the controversy concerning relations in depth is that it is the most famous aspect of the Russell-Bradley interaction, and it seems to be generally believed that the outcome of the dispute was the defeat of Bradley's system. This belief, however, does not seem to be entirely due to an acquaintance with the details of the dispute, but rather to the fact that after the dispute, Bradley's reputation gradually declined, whereas Russell's reputation soared. That fact, together with the fact that the dispute is apparently one concerning logic, a study which Russell greatly improved, inevitably gives the impression that Russell must have scored a serious blow against Bradley. Indeed, Russell has often claimed that it was his 'discovery of the error' concerning relations that made him reject the whole idealist school. If we find that his claims are well founded, then a consideration of his discussion of relations will have been extremely rewarding.

It is well known that the controversy concerning relations involved a dispute about whether relations are "internal" or "external", but it is not at all well known what this dispute actually is. One of the most confusing aspects of the whole discussion of the doctrine of internal relations is the fact that the combatants never agreed



upon a clear-cut definition of it. As we proceed in this paper, the question of definition will often be reconsidered; much depends upon it. At this point, a working definition of the doctrine shall be produced, the relevance of which will become clearer as we continue. "The doctrine of internal relations" is defined as "the view that all relations are properties of, or dependent for their existence on properties of, their relata.\* To put it another way, "all relations are a part of, or grounded in, the nature of the relata" (where "nature" is used as a blanket term to cover the sum total of properties of a thing at any one time). What I have in mind in this definition can be explained by means of an example. Consider the relation of similarity which holds between cricket ball A and cricket ball B. Some will say that this relation is "internal" inasmuch as cricket ball A simply has the property of being similar to B, just as it has the property of roundness. Thus, the relation can be seen as "part of the nature of", or a property of, cricket ball A. Others, however, will say that the relationship is internal, not because relations themselves are actually properties of the relata, but because their existence is entirely dependent upon properties of the relata. The relationship of similarity, they will say, is purely a product of the fact that both balls are

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\*The "doctrine of external relations" simply denies the doctrine of internal relations, and thus needs no separate definition.

spherical, red, hard to the touch, stitched, and so forth.

Now this definition of the doctrine of internal relations may be surprising to some. The actual nature of the internality-externality dispute between Russell and Bradley is little known, and some may find it hard to believe that they were concerned with the question of whether relations are part of, or are grounded in, the nature of the relata. But Russell makes it perfectly clear that this is the case in his paper "On the Nature of Truth", particularly in its reprinted and altered version, published in an anthology of essays and entitled: "The Monistic Theory of Truth". Quotations should make this evident:

The doctrines we have been considering may all be deduced from one central logical doctrine, which may be expressed thus: 'every relation is grounded in the nature of the related terms.' Let us call this the axiom of internal relations. If this axiom holds, the fact that two terms have a certain relation implies complexity in each of the two objects, i.e. it implies something in the natures\* of the two objects, in virtue of which they have the relation in question. According to the opposite view, which is the one I advocate, there are such facts as that one object has a certain relation to another, and such facts cannot in general be reduced to, or inferred from, a fact about the one object only together with a fact about the other object only: They do not imply that the two objects have any complexity, or any intrinsic property distinguishing them from two objects which do not have the relation. 10

The next quotation shows that Russell took some care to differentiate the two disjuncts of the definition:

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\*Russell uses the word 'nature' in the same way in which I use it, as is shown by his discussion of the word which shortly follows this quotation. V. Philosophical Essays, p.144.

Let us now reconsider more closely the meaning of the axiom of internal relations... We have, to begin with, two possible meanings, according as it is held that every relation is really constituted by the natures of the terms or the whole which they compose, or merely that every relation has a ground in these natures. 11

Bradley, also, was concerned with the doctrine of internal relations as it has been defined, but we shall have to wait until we consider his texts to be assured of this.

Having indicated the nature of the internal-external dispute, it should be pointed out immediately that the dispute concerning it by no means immediately includes all the ramifications of the Russell-Bradley controversy concerning relations. There is discussion not just about whether relations are "internal" or "external" but also about whether any relational scheme can be satisfactory. There is also a debate concerning whether relations are real\*, actual elements of the external world, or whether they are merely products of our organising faculties. The dispute between Russell and Bradley certainly does stray to these levels, but the fact is not always entirely explicit, nor is the reason why it should stray to these levels. Russell always thought that the real dispute, the central dispute, concerned just the internality or externality

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\* The word "real" is at present being used to refer to that which is an element of the universe independently of a perceiver. Whether this is an adequate definition is one of the points at issue, and it is thus only a working definition, subject to alteration as we continue.

of relations. In a letter of 1910, when the discussion of relations had been continuing for some time between them, Russell wrote to Bradley:

It seems to me that the question of external relations is the one which dominates all others. Much of what you say appears to me to assume that there are no external relations... 12

Bradley, on the other hand, was by no means convinced that this was the real issue. For him, more important questions were whether any relational scheme can be satisfactory, and whether relations can be accepted as real. In a letter replying to Russell, he expresses his viewpoint thus:

"In the first place you seem to me to assume that it is a question between internal and external relations. You do not ask whether a relational scheme is satisfactory. You appear to assume that it is. But is this not a very large assumption? I have been forced to the conclusion that any relational scheme breaks down even in itself... 13

But Russell was not entirely insensitive to Bradley's opinion. In his reply to Bradley's letter, he showed that he thought that he could meet the points about relations being unreal, and any relational scheme being unsatisfactory, basically by rejecting the doctrine of internal relations. First, he noted that it was the view that any relational scheme is unsatisfactory, because they are all self-contradictory, which led Bradley to the view that relations are unreal, since nothing self-contradictory can exist in reality. But he also felt that the arguments for the self-contradictory nature of relations were based on the

doctrine of internal relations, and would not follow if this were refuted. Russell therefore thought that he could profitably discuss the whole problem by considering only the question of the internality of relations.

Russell also did not often explicitly attack the view that relations are unreal, simply because he felt that he could not take it seriously. The author believes Russell to have made a mistake here, that the question of the "reality" of relations is the central one, and should not be passed over lightly. But this does not by any means mean that the internality-externality conflict is unimportant. For one thing, the doctrine of internal relations which Bradley held was intimately tied up with his doctrine of the unreality of relations. Not only might the latter depend on the former, but they were also two aspects of one positive theory of relations which Bradley held.\* But even ignoring this point, the question of the internality or externality of relations is very important in its own right; some of the apparent consequences of a decision are the following:

First, if there are such things as external relations, if some entities enter into relationships which demand nothing from them, which are not founded in their own

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\*This will be substantiated as we continue.

natures, then it seemed to Russell's contemporaries that Hegelianism must be rejected. Hegel's system demands that reality is through-and through a rational system. But if relations are external, it seems the universe is impenetrable to reason, since there would be "brute facts".\* On the other hand, if we accept the doctrine of internal relations in the form of the first element of the disjunctive definition, that relations are a part of the relata, then a degree of monism must be accepted. All the relations of an entity would be part of its nature, and thus, to really understand that entity, all its relations would have to be recognised. But of course, every entity is related to every other entity, even if only by the relations of similarity and difference. Thus, fully understanding the nature of any one thing would necessitate an understanding of its relations to the entire universe. If relations are all part of the nature of the relata, then the elements of the world all fit together into a coherent system; each entity fills that place in it which is determined by its nature; the world could be seen as something of a vast jigsaw puzzle, inasmuch as each element interlocks completely, by its very nature, to make up the whole.

But furthermore, if relations are internal, then Russell's "piecemeal" approach to philosophy could not

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\*This will be considered on page 61.

possibly succeed. We could not advance in philosophy by discussing a small problem first, solving that, and moving on, building up our knowledge in easy steps, by adding one new fact to those already gained. If the world is an interconnected whole, complete knowledge of any part requiring knowledge of the whole, then the piecemeal approach would be out of line. Analysis, also, would falsify. When we break down complex wholes into their elements, and consider the elements in isolation, we must, if relations are internal,\* necessarily give an account which is less than adequate. We would be choosing to ignore part of the nature of the terms.

We can see, then, why Russell felt the discussion of relations to be important; why he felt it vital to deny the doctrine of internal relations. We can also see why, when he had satisfied himself that he could falsify it, this was of such moment in his philosophical career. And yet Russell believed, in fact, that a great deal more than even this was at stake; to understand this, however, we must first digress a little to understand that Russell equated the doctrine of internal relations with the assumption that all propositions are of the subject-predicate

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\*Again, this is with reference to the first disjunct of the disjunctive definition of "internal".

form.

In his M.P.D. 14 he states:

The axiom of internal relations is...equivalent to the assumption that every proposition has one subject and one predicate.

Similarly, in "Logical Atomism" 15 he states:

What, then, can we mean by the doctrine of external relations? Primarily this, that a relational proposition is not, in general, logically equivalent formally to one or more subject-predicate propositions... this, and only this, is what I mean to affirm when I assert the doctrine of external relations.

This equation may strike the reader as odd. Why should Russell equate the doctrine of internal relations with what I shall refer to as "the S-P assumption"? The reason would seem to be this: One of the two meanings so far given to "the doctrine of internal relations" is that relations are part of the nature of their terms; a corollary of this is that we only need to look at the terms in isolation to discover the relation, if we are sufficiently adept. But if we make the S-P assumption, then relational propositions must be reducible to propositions which assert a predicate of a subject. Thus, relation-words are said to be logically similar, or reducible to, quality-words. Then, making the assumption that the "ultimate" structure of language corresponds to the structure of the world, it follows that relations are ontologically similar to qualities, or are equivalent to qualities. This would mean that they "inhere" in their relata. But if



this is so, then they are part of the nature of the relata; those with sufficient competence would only have to look at the relata in isolation to see the relation. Note carefully that at this point, when Russell equates the doctrine of internal relations with the S-P assumption, he acts as though he is working under the impression that the doctrine says that relations are part of the nature of their relata.

Having equated the doctrine of internal relations with the S-P assumption, Russell went on to attribute to it a colossal number of erroneous conclusions. He believed that the S-P assumption was quite mistaken, since some relational propositions are not reducible to the S-P form. Thus, he felt, at the same time, that the doctrine of internal relations was mistaken, since he equated the two views, and also that it was this doctrine which underlay a vast number of fallacious systems. Using the asymmetric-al relation as his banner, he went on to make truly stupendous claims about the destruction which he could wreak. He claimed, in fact, that monadism, monism, all philosophies of substance, all philosophies of the absolute, and Kantianism to boot, are all brought to ruins by the realization that the S-P assumption, i.e. the doctrine of internal relations, is false. To avoid dispute about whether the present commentator is overstating his case,

a few of Russell's remarks on the matter will be presented.

In The Philosophy of Leibniz he states:

The question of whether all propositions are reducible to the subject-predicate form is one of fundamental importance to all philosophy, and especially to a philosophy which uses the notion of substance. For this notion, as we shall see, is derivative from the logical notion of subject and predicate. 16

Again:

In the belief that propositions must, in the last analysis, have a subject and a predicate, Leibniz did not differ from his predecessors or from his successors. Any philosophy which uses either substance or the Absolute will be found, on inspection, to depend on this belief. Kant's belief in an unknowable thing-in-itself was largely due to the same theory. 17

These contentions are to be found repeated, also,

in M.P.D.:

I found... that (Leibniz's) metaphysic was explicitly based on the doctrine that every proposition attributes a predicate to a subject and... that every fact consists of a substance having an attribute. I found that the same doctrine underlies the systems of Spinoza, Bradley, and Hegel. 18

We can see, then, why Russell thought that the question of relations is "one of the most important in philosophy". Russell's vast claims may perhaps be misguided, but it is nevertheless apparent that the discussion of relations is very worthy of an extended study. The present author believes, however, that Russell's stressing of the importance of relations was perfectly fair, and even that his discussion by no means made explicit all its important ramifications. When we turn to a direct

consideration of whether relations are real, it will be argued that an enormous amount depends on a decision concerning the matter. It will be argued that if we accept the view that relations are real elements of the world, then we must inevitably end up with a very strange ontology, an ontology which must necessarily include the "subsistent" entities of the Plato-Meinong tradition. On the other hand, it will be argued that if relations are a product of our organising faculties, then we must move to a strange system such as that of T.H.Green, to a monism, or a Kantian-type theory of the uncharacterisable noumena. When Russell said "the question of relations is one of the most important in philosophy, as most other issues turn on it" he was speaking very wisely.

### 3. SOME DETAILS OF THE RUSSELL-BRADLEY DISPUTE CONCERNING THE NATURE OF RELATIONS.

The debate on relations between Bradley and Russell is seriously complicated by the fact that neither really seemed to fully understand the views of the other, so that their attacks on one another tended to be examples of ignoratio elenchi. That Bradley did not always follow Russell's train of thought is shown in one of his letters, in which he assumes that Russell thought that all relations are external; this viewpoint Russell hastily disclaimed. Again, Russell thought, in a letter of 1907, that Bradley really did not follow his line of argument at all, since he thought it necessary to tell Bradley that he did not think that only relations exist, a very odd standpoint that Russell certainly never accepted. To be fair to Bradley, however, there is no evidence in any of his extant letters to show that he laboured under the impression that this was Russell's view. It is Russell's confusions concerning Bradley's point of view, though, which really do present difficulties to the commentator, since to really understand the point of his writings on relations, we need to understand the view that Russell is supposed to be refuting, and yet it is far from clear that Bradley held those views which Russell attributed to him. To overcome this problem, I shall

first present "Bradley according to Russell", and Russell's attack on this character, and then when this has been completed, return to Bradley's writings on the matter to find his true position.

(i) Bradley According to Russell

In Russell's writings, Bradley appears to be somewhat schizophrenic. Much of the time, he was a very simple soul; the basis of his entire system was the assumption that all propositions are of the subject-predicate form, an assumption which is, Russell has told us, equivalent to the doctrine of internal relations. At other times, Bradley was presented as a much more subtle character. At the basis of his system was not simply the S-P assumption, but rather a belief that all relations are founded in their terms, that whenever a relational state of affairs is said to exist, the relationship is dependent upon some complexity in the relata, some properties which "anchor" it. This "subtle" Bradley was a much more chary character in Russell's writings; scarcely noticed at most times, he occasionally appears to rout the reader's nice neat theories about the character under attack. The author believes that the rare representation of the "subtle" Bradley was accurate, whereas the common representation of him as a simple-souled adherent of the S-P assumption was a result only of Russell's misinterpretations. I

shall refer to this latter character, then, as "Russell's Bradley", and shall consider him and Russell's objections to him, in this section.

Now Russell's Bradley was an adherent of the S-P assumption, and this assumption very soon led him to monism, as Russell has explained in his paper "On the Nature of Truth", which is his primary presentation of the objections to Bradley: If all relations are of the subject-predicate form, then the proposition "A is different from B" must be an illegitimate proposition, because the relation of diversity cannot possibly be reduced to the subject-predicate form.\* This means that diversity does not exist in the external world at all, and thus a very strong form of monism appears to follow. We do not simply have a monism which says that all elements of the world are related as they are to the rest of the world by their very natures, but we have a monism which says that really, the universe can only be adequately conceived as a complete unity, since differentiation cannot exist in reality. There would not even, in this unity, be a differentiation in terms of subject and object, or in temporal terms, since this would involve the existence of the relation of difference in the

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\*The argument which proves this is virtually identical to the argument which follows on p. 44, concerning the irreducibility of asymmetrical relations, and so it will not be reiterated here.

world.\* This is interesting. Russell has noted that Bradley at times spoke of relations as unreal, and has formed a hypothesis about why he should do so. Thus, Russell thinks that he can see why Bradley should have held a doctrine of internal relations, and at the same time, a doctrine of the unreality of relations.

Anyway, having supposedly isolated the heart of Bradley's system, Russell went on to reject it. This began by showing what supports are possible for the doctrine, and showing that they are not really good supports at all. He decided, in fact, that there are only two supports for the doctrine, other than that of logical inertia, due to blind acceptance of the traditional logic, which was supposed to make the assumption. These two "supports" for the doctrine were said to be the law of sufficient reason, and a logical mistake. Having found only these supports for the doctrine, it was not surprising that Russell concluded that it was false!

The law of sufficient reason is held to support the doctrine of internal relations, on the grounds that it cannot be just a brute fact about a thing that it has

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\*This gave rise to the ode:

"If it should be that all relations are internal,  
 We should have a situation infernal;  
 All people you see, including you and me,  
 Would unite in a totality eternal." 19

a particular relation. There must be, it is said, a sufficient reason why it has the relation, there must be something about the thing which accounts for it. Now Russell is right in ascribing this defense to Bradley, even if the other "defense" cannot be attributed to him. In note B of the appendix to Appearance and Reality (A.&R.) the principle is clearly to be found, stated as follows:

Why this thing is here and not there, what the connection is in the end between spatial position and the quality that holds it and is determined by it remains unknown... But any such irrationality and externality cannot be the last truth about things. Somehow there must be a reason why this and that appear together... The merely external is, in short, our ignorance set up as reality. 20

Again, there is Bradley's sentence which was quoted by Russell:

If the terms from their inner nature do not enter into the relationship, then, so far as they are concerned, they seem related for no reason at all, and as far as they are concerned, the relation seems arbitrarily made. 21

Russell does not go into the principle extensively in "On the Nature of Truth", though he does consider it in some detail in his Philosophy of Leibniz. This may not worry us; the principle of sufficient reason is not widely respected today anyway. But it should also be noted that it is far from clear that even if the principle is accepted, it lends any support to the doctrine of internal relations. Even if there must be a sufficient reason for everything being what it is, this sufficient reason surely need not



be found in properties of the relata. Why could the sufficient reason not be found elsewhere: in the purpose of God, for instance, or in the nature of the whole? Thus Russell was right to have paid little heed to the argument involving sufficient reasons.

Though Russell could not show that Bradley ever used the argument based on the "logical mistake", the argument is more interesting than that concerning sufficient reason, because of the light it sheds on the nature of the internality-externality dispute. The argument is expressed by Russell as follows:

"If A and B are related in a certain way", it may be said, "you must admit that if they were not so related they would be other than they are, and that consequently there must be something in them which is essential to their being related as they are".<sup>22</sup>

Now Russell's brief discussion of this argument has caused John Watling, who spent many pages of his Bertrand Russell on it,<sup>23</sup> a great deal of confusion. Watling is one of the many commentators to have been befuddled by the fact that the expression "internal relations" is very far from univocal. It is essential that some of the ambiguities of meaning are recognised before we can continue with Russell's (and Watling's) discussion of the "logical mistake". It is worth remembering that A.C. Ewing, in his Idealism: A Critical Survey, went so far as to say that there are ten different doctrines, all of which have

been referred to, at one time or other, by the definite descriptive phrase "the doctrine of internal relations".<sup>24</sup> Thus it is perhaps not surprising that commentators have frequently been confused when discussing "the" doctrine.

We have already noted one significant ambiguity in the expression "the doctrine of internal relations". This is due to the fact that some of the time, the phrase is used to signify the view that relations are "part of the nature of" their terms, and sometimes that relations are merely a result of some properties of their terms. These views, nevertheless, were sufficiently close to enable the phrase to be defined disjunctively. But over and against these versions of the doctrine is another, which states that all the relations of a thing are essential to it. We shall refer to this as "the doctrine of internal relations (number 2)". This is a very different doctrine. If we say that relations are properties of their relata, or dependent for their existence on properties of their relata, we are by no means committed to the view that they are essential. The truth of the matter is that the expression "internal relations" has been used to cover a vague insight which we might express precisely in a multitude of ways. The insight is fairly accurately indicated by the term "internal": it is that somehow, things are never indifferent to the relations in which they stand.

Now this insight can be expressed in the ways that we have previously considered, i.e. by seeing relations just as part of, or grounded in, the nature of their terms, but it can also be expressed in a much stronger fashion than this, by saying that relations are actually essential to the relata; if all relations are essential, then certainly, things are not indifferent to their relations!

It is this latter dispute which has been of chief interest in recent years. It is really a dispute about whether the Aristotelian essence-accident dichotomy is to be accepted. It is significant that in The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, the only article on relations, but which is entitled "Relations, Internal and External", is solely concerned with the essence-accident distinction. That article never bothers itself with the question of whether relations are like qualities, inasmuch as they inhere, or do not inhere, are grounded, or are not grounded, in their relata; it is concerned solely with the question of whether the Aristotelian essence-accident distinction is acceptable. Thus its author, R.M.Rorty, can state:

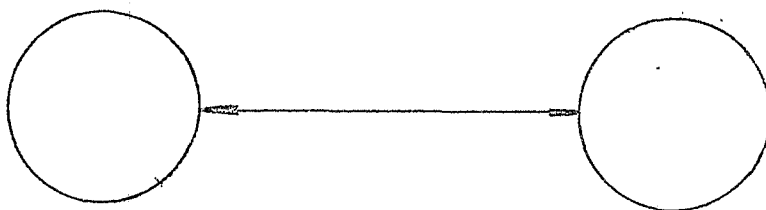
We shall not always trouble to distinguish between discussions of internal properties and internal relations, since whatever doctrine a philosopher holds about the former will apply, mutatis mutandis, to the latter. <sup>25</sup>

But it is vital to observe that it was not the latter dispute which Russell was concerned with. He was

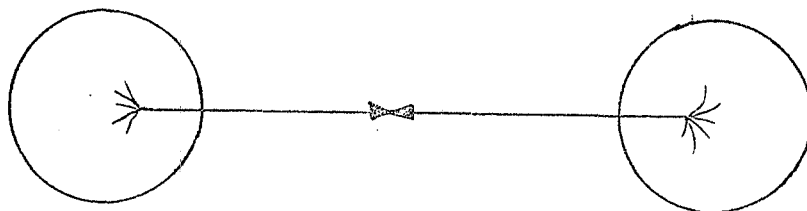
concerned with the doctrine as it has been previously (disjunctively) defined. This is shown often, and perhaps most clearly in the quotations produced on page 18 of this thesis. It is also shown by the fact that when Bradley asked him to define the doctrine of internal relations, he did so as follows:

The question as to what I mean by "external" is not altogether easy. Perhaps the best way to state the point is, that I do not think that relatedness implies complexity. <sup>26</sup>

This is a very neat way of expressing the meaning of the doctrine as it was defined in the first part of the disjunctive definition. If a relation is part of the nature of a term, then when a term has a certain relation, it must be complex; it cannot be ultimately a simple. This could be expressed diagrammatically, using circles to represent terms, and arrows for relations. Russell's view can be represented fairly adequately as follows:



The terms, in other words, do not have to be complex to be related; the relation simply conjoins the two without being a part of the terms, or involving a part of the terms. On the other hand, the internal relations view would be represented in the following manner:



Here, the relation actually springs from something within the nature of the terms; the terms are not indifferent to the relationship. To put it another way, relationship implies complexity.

The definition does not so neatly cover the second part of the original (disjunctive) definition, that relations are grounded in the nature of their relata. It is quite alright if we accept a substance theory: then, relationship must imply complexity if relations are a result of some properties of the relata, since the relata must have at least one property. If, however, we reject the substance viewpoint, and advocate, for instance, logical atomism, it will not always work. Though it may work in many cases, it would not work for the actual logical atoms: the relation of similarity which holds between two logical atoms of yellowness, for instance, could not be a result of any complexity within their natures, since they are themselves simples.

Now Watling believed that when Russell considered

the "logical mistake", he was concerned not with the question of whether relations are properties of, or functions of properties of, their relata, but with the view that relations are essential to their terms. We must remember, first, that this question is what is generally today referred to as the question of internal relations, and thus it is easy to see why Watling should have assumed that it was an argument to that end. But the "logical mistake" argument also appears to be very similar to the argument for the internality of relations (second sense) which Moore considered, and which R. Rorty has referred to as the "argument from the nature of self-identity".<sup>27</sup> That argument could be very crudely expressed as follows:

"If A and B are related in a certain way, then they must be related in that way. If they were not related in that way, they would not be A and B. Therefore A and B must be related in that way; in other words, it is essential to A and B that they bear that relationship."

Now consider again the argument which Russell is concerned with:

'If A and B are related in a certain way', it may be said, 'you must admit that if they were not so related they would be other than they are, and that consequently there must be something in them which is essential to their being related as they are.'

There is certainly an ostensible similarity.

between the two arguments, and it does make Watling's interpretation of the matter specious. But note that the conclusion of the argument which Russell considers is "consequently there must be something in them which is essential to their being related as they are." (my underlining). This can be interpreted in Watling's manner; it may be read as speaking about whether relations are actually essential; but it can also be interpreted as being an argument for the view that the relation is based on some property of the relata. If we should look at Russell's other formulation of the argument, and at his brief reply to it, however, it becomes clear that it is the latter interpretation which is correct. Russell's other formulation of the argument is:

There is the fact that, if two terms have a certain relation, they cannot but have it, which seems to show that there is something in the terms themselves which leads to their being related as they are. <sup>28</sup>

Now this is clearly concerned with the question of whether relatedness involves properties of the relata, not with whether relations are essential to their terms.

Russell's brief reply to the argument is:

This only proves that what is not related as A and B are must be numerically diverse from A or B; it will not prove difference of adjectives, unless we assume the axiom of internal relations. <sup>29</sup>

Now Watling could not understand how this could be presented as a reply to the argument at all, and

labelled it as quite irrelevant. What does it matter if it does not prove difference of adjectives? he asks. The argument is not concerned with the properties of the relata, he tells us, but with the question of whether relations are essential to their relata! But if Watling had not assumed this, but had interpreted the argument as I have done, he would have had no problems whatever about Russell's reply to it. If Watling had looked with sufficient care at the argument, he would have realized that though it involved an argument similar to the "argument from the nature of self-identity" it went beyond this, to the conclusion that relatedness involves properties of the relata. It first reached the conclusion that if two things have a relation they necessarily have it, and then went on to the further conclusion, based on this, that therefore the relation is based on properties of the relata. Now when Russell considered this argument, he had not yet found his reply to the first part of it, which is to the effect that every state of affairs is a necessary state of affairs,\* but this did not worry him, because he could still refute the argument as a whole by simply pointing out that even if a thing could not but have a relation,

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\*Russell did finally get to grips with this aspect of the argument, though it worried him for some years. In his Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy he finally got around the problem by saying that necessity and contingency simply do not apply to actual states of affairs, being properties only of propositional functions.



this gives us no reason at all for saying that this relation must therefore be due to properties of the relata. Here, he is surely right. As he says, "the argument has only a rhetorical force", and his conclusion that the argument is unacceptable cannot be disputed. The only curious point remaining is why Russell should have bothered to discuss the argument, since it is clearly invalid, and he could not point to its use by any of his opponents.

At the end of this lengthy consideration of Russell's discussion of the supports which he thought possible for the doctrine of internal relations, we can say that he was right, at least, in pronouncing these unacceptable. Let us now go on, then, to consider the grounds he gives for denying the doctrine.

Russell produces a number of objections to the details of Bradley's arguments, but these will be considered in the next section; his general objections are of interest to us here. The first resounding objection that is produced is that it is quite simply impossible to reduce all relational propositions to the subject-predicate form. If this is so, then it would seem that the S-P assumption would have to be false, and therefore, since Russell equated the S-P assumption with the doctrine of internal relations, it would seem that the doctrine of internal relations would have to be false.

The demonstration of the falsity of the S-P assumption really amounts to a matter of showing that any attempt to effect a reduction of propositions including asymmetrical relation-words to subject-predicate propositions does not work. The most obvious attempt to 'reduce' relational propositions to the subject-predicate form is to say that propositions such as "A is larger than B" are analyzable as A-subject; is-copular; larger than B-predicate. But this analysis is grossly artificial. It seems highly inadequate to treat "is larger than B" in exactly the same way as "white", i.e. as a term for a property which is said to inhere in a thing. Treating them as referring to a similar kind of entity seems to make overmuch use of a procrustean bed. A much better attempt to reduce the relational phrase is to say that "A is larger than B" can be expressed adequately as a complex proposition comprised of two simple propositions such as "A is two inches long" and "B is one inch long". It would seem that this is the reduction which philosophers have in mind generally when they speak of the reducibility of relational propositions to the subject-predicate form. If this reduction were adequate, then relational states of affairs are really just compounds of subject-predicate states of affairs, and so the subject-predicate outlook is not marred. But Russell has shown, very successfully, that this attempted

reduction does not work. If it did work, then "A is two inches long and B is one inch long" would have to express all that is expressed by "A is larger than B". But this simply is not the case. Though the former may appear to be an adequate expression of the latter, including all that is involved in the relational expression, the complex proposition only appears to be adequate because we tend to read into it the further proposition "two inches is longer than one inch". If this is not added to the complex proposition, then it does not convey all that the original proposition conveys. But if we do add it to the complex proposition, then the latter is no longer of the subject-predicate form. It will be comprised, rather, of two subject-predicate propositions, plus one relational proposition. This attempt at reduction, then, fails.

A further attempt to effect the reduction is to say that the relation is a property of the two related entities taken as a pair. When we try to express this where asymmetrical relations are concerned, however, we find that the product of the so-called reduction must inevitably remain relational. The nearest we could get to expressing the state of affairs in terms of a property of a pair would be: "the ordered pair AB has the property ...is larger than...". Now not only does this need to assume that "...is larger than..." can be treated as a property, which seems to be a very large assumption, but

the relation of order also is needed, since without this, the retention of the original meaning is quite impossible. Thus, seen as a reduction of a relational proposition to a subject-predicate proposition, this attempt is unquestionably a failure. We must also bear in mind the fact that the logical discussion is only a preliminary to ontology; saying that relational propositions are reducible to the S-P form is simply a gambit in subject-predicate philosophy, the intention being to show that relations are just like qualities, ontologically, or actually are qualities. But if we just try to show that relational propositions are reducible to certain subject-predicate propositions in the above tortuous manner, then we do not effect this at all. Though we would, if the reduction were successful, have to look upon relations as similar to qualities inasmuch as they "inhere" in a subject, the manner of this inherence would still be so radically different that the ontological nature of relations could not be seen as similar to that of qualities at all. Qualities are such that they inhere in just one subject, but, if the above reduction were successful, relations would be such that they inhere in a subject which is comprised of two or more disparate things. Their nature would have to be very different from that of the quality to allow for this.

It would seem as though Russell's Bradley has been quite shattered. But Russell does realize that this

character has one more gambit: he could argue that the fact that relational propositions are irreducible to the S-P form does not count against the S-P assumption, only against relational propositions! It simply shows that they are illegitimate propositions. Now Russell had no trouble with such a crude suggestion. He simply stated that such a suggestion is ludicrous: we constantly use irreducibly relational propositions; mathematics is based on them, and natural science uses them a great deal. We cannot simply reject them out of hand just in order to support a particular thesis. Thus, Russell felt that he could finally reject the Bradley that he presents us with, "Russell's Bradley".\*

(ii) Bradley's Writings

That Russell should have lampooned Bradley for making the S-P assumption may strike those who are only marginally acquainted, even, with Bradley's work as odd. After all, R. Wollheim, Bradley's chief contemporary commentator, spoke of Bradley's rejection of the S-P assumption as the most famous aspect of his work! <sup>30</sup> The rejection of it can be found almost at the very beginning of the Principles of Logic. In chapter I he says "In their ordinary acceptation, the traditional subject, predicate, and copula are mere superstitions."

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\*We will return to a detailed discussion of the point of view found in this paragraph later.

Then he goes on to say that the subject-predicate analysis is quite useless where propositions such as "A is equal to B", "B is to the right of C", and existential statements are concerned:

Judgement is not inclusion in, or exclusion from, the subject... In "A is simultaneous with B", "C is to east of D", "E is equal to F", it is unnatural to consider A, C, and E as sole subjects, and the rest as attributive... The ideal complex, asserted or denied, no doubt in most cases will fall into the arrangement of a subject with adjectival qualities, but in certain instances, and those not a few, the content takes the form of two or more subjects with adjectival relations existing between them. 31

Bradley also argued, very forcibly, that it is absurd to treat judgements as connecting two ideas. Take, he tells us, the judgement "the wolf eats the lamb". Why, he asks, should we treat "wolf" and "lamb" as the elements of the judgement with "eats" as the copula? Why should we think of the wolf as one idea, when it is obviously complex? Really, he says, whatever the mind grasps as a whole is one idea; when we grasp the state of affairs corresponding to "the wolf eats the lamb", we are grasping just one idea.

How on earth, then, can Russell besmirch Bradley's name so, by saying that he makes the S-P assumption? It may seem that there is a simple answer to this; that though Bradley may reject the S-P assumption on the ordinary level, he brings it back on another. Note, for instance, that when rejecting the traditional analysis as "mere

superstition", Bradley says "In the ordinary acceptance the traditional subject, predicate, and copula are mere superstition" (my underlining). This makes it look as though Bradley may well accept this analysis, as long as it is not on the "ordinary acceptance". This, indeed, is the case. Bradley argues that all judgements are of the subject-predicate form, but in a new guise: all judgements assert an ideal content of reality taken as a whole. Thus, the judgement "A is equal to B" is really of the form "the world is such that A is equal to B". Therefore, the subject-predicate analysis is reintroduced, and it would appear that Russell is, after all, quite right to have attacked Bradley for his adhering to the S-P assumption.

But we should pause to remember Why Russell wished to reject the S-P assumption in the present context. It was to refute the doctrine of internal relations; it was to show that we cannot treat relations as similar to, or reducible to, qualities such as whiteness. What, however, has Bradley's new-fangled S-P assumption got to do with this? Surely very little. It leaves the question of whether relations are like, or reducible to, qualities completely untouched. Russell may not like the analysis, because it retains the "thing-property outlook", but this is a different story; the point is that it does not offend against the logical points made by Russell

concerning the sui generis nature of relations. Thus, we cannot defend Russell's lampooning of Bradley's acceptance of "the" subject-predicate assumption\* simply because he held a very unusual form of it.

We are back at the point, then, of wondering how it could be that Russell rejected Bradley for his adherence to the S-P assumption, when he clearly repudiated it in the Principles of Logic. One possibility immediately arises: the principal discussion of relations was found in Appearance and Reality, which was written ten years after the Logic; perhaps Bradley changed his mind when writing the later book, or merely forgot his earlier works? This, however, is simply not so. We find in a footnote to the second chapter the comment:

The relation is not the adjective of one term, for, if so, it does not relate. Nor for the same reason is it the adjective of each term taken apart, for then again there is no relation between them. Nor is the relation their common property, for what keeps them apart? They are not now two terms at all, because not separate. 32

What on earth, then, is going on? It begins to look as though Russell has perpetrated a fraud; that he is referring to, and abusing, a non-existent character. Our only recourse is to turn to Bradley's works, and consider them in some detail. The chief sources of his

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\* In spite of the new-found ambiguities, the expression "the S-P assumption" will in future be used, unless otherwise stated, to refer to the traditional analysis of propositions.



remarks on relations are to be found in chapters 2 and 3 of A.&R., appendix B of that work, and a posthumously published essay entitled "Relations". There is also some very illuminating material in his letters to Russell. But when these sources are delved into, it soon becomes clear that Bradley's position on relations is going to be hard to unravel; he very rarely seems to do what Russell leads us to expect, and the viewpoint is very far indeed from one of pristine simplicity. In the following paragraphs I shall endeavour to relate the general trends of Bradley's thought, leaving detailed arguments and criticisms until later.

In appendix B of A.&R., Russell's interpretation of Bradley seems to be by and large sound. For instance, Bradley starts off by saying:

I do not admit that any relation whatever can be merely external and make no difference to its terms, and I will now proceed to discuss this important point.

Following this, he supports this avowed doctrine of internal relations, first, as Russell said he did, by an appeal to the principle of sufficient reason, and secondly by an interesting argument which will be considered shortly. So Russell is not entirely mistaken. There is some basis for his interpretation in Bradley's work. Is Bradley simply inconsistent? We shall see. Returning to chapters 2 and 3, however, we find that

Bradley's chief concern does not seem to be with supporting the doctrine of internal relations at all. Now the whole purpose of Appearance and Reality needs to be borne in mind at this point. It seeks to show that the manner in which we can understand individuals of the world is always necessarily defective, so that the world, as we perceive it, is only a world of appearance, not reality. To prove this, he first argues that a subject-predicate analysis of things must fail, but so must its alternative, the "bundle theory". It is in the discussion of the latter that the matter of relations is brought into question. Bradley's arguments which seek to prove that the "bundle theory", the theory that things are simply qualities in relation, is unacceptable, is based on a critique of the whole notion of relation. Chapters 2 and 3 are primarily concerned with a proof that relations cannot exist in the real world, since the whole notion of relations is self-contradictory.

Thus, Appearance and Reality is chiefly concerned, not with showing that relations are internal, but rather that the whole notion of relation is self-contradictory, and thus that relations are unreal. Bradley, then, was not primarily concerned with the internality-externality dispute at all. As far as he was concerned, "relations do not in the end as such possess truth and reality." 33

Now we can understand what Bradley meant, when he wrote to Russell saying:

In the first place, you seem to me to assume that it is a question between internal and external relations. You do not ask whether a relational scheme is satisfactory. You appear to assume that it is... I have been forced to the conclusion that any relational scheme breaks down even in itself. 34

We can also understand, now, why Bradley refused to really go into the question of whether relations are internal or external. This is only a really live question if we accept that a coherent account of relations is possible. But it is certainly true that Bradley takes some interest in this dispute; in chapters 2 and 3 of A.&R. there are arguments which appear to be in favour of the doctrine of internal relations, and we have already seen that appendix B explicitly argues against the doctrine of external relations. Nevertheless, Bradley announces: "The idea... that I myself accept any such doctrine as the above(internal relations) seems to myself as even ludicrous." 35

This whole riddle of what is going on is at last solved when we realize that though Bradley's real position was that the notion of relation is contradictory, and thus relations are unreal, he was very sympathetic to the doctrine of internal relations; and that though he largely argued for the former, he also argued for the latter at times. This may seem very odd and mysterious, but its oddness is assuaged when we understand that Bradley holds

a view concerning the relative adequacy of ideas. In truth, he says, no relational scheme will work. However we may try to interpret the world relationally, we will not succeed. Nevertheless, there is still one account of relations which is far better than the others. This is that relations are a product of our organising faculties; they do not exist in the external world, but are manufactured by us, based on qualities of the relata. There are two elements in this: that relations are unreal, and that they are based on qualities of the relata; the latter was Bradley's form of the doctrine of internal relations. But this analysis of relations, Bradley argued, was still not a finally acceptable one; it is simply nearer to the truth than any theory which makes them real and external to their terms. Bradley made this clear when he wrote to Russell saying:

Internal relations are nearer the truth than "external", and therefore true as against these. <sup>36</sup>

He makes the point clear in other places, also, saying, for instance:

Mere internal relations... like relations that are merely external, are untenable if they make a claim to ultimate and absolute truth. But taken otherwise, and viewed as helpful makeshifts... [they] can be relatively real and true. <sup>37</sup>

Bradley would not accept the doctrine of external relations at all; he certainly preferred the doctrine of internal relations, though he did not think that it was

ultimately true. Thus, when Russell argued against him that certain relations cannot be adequately accounted for within a doctrine of internal relations, he tended to shrug his philosophical shoulders, and say that this did not surprise him, the whole notion of relation being self-contradictory anyway. He said, nevertheless, that we would be better off to think in terms of internal relations, and in fact, even where we cannot see any way in which a relation could be treated as internal, we should pretend that it is, even inventing a property of the relata if necessary!

At this point, unfortunately, it is necessary for us to return, yet again, to the question of the meaning of "internal relations", both in order to more fully understand Bradley's system, and to understand why Russell should have thought that his rejection of the S-P assumption could shatter not only Bradley's system, but monism in general.

On the latter point, Russell may have thought that his rejection of the S-P assumption shattered Bradley's metaphysics, because, for one thing, he thought that Bradley's rejection of the "bundle theory" was based on the S-P assumption, and thus that his rejection of it was inadequate. But if this were so, we would not be obliged to accept Bradley's argument that no account of individual

things can be adequate, so the whole purpose of Appearance and Reality would be confounded. Russell also had shown that monism will follow once we make the S-P assumption, and so he may well have thought that it was the direct source of Bradley's monism. But it is noticeable that Russell thought that his rejection of the S-P assumption was very powerful indeed; that it was the main tool in finally shattering, not only Bradley's system, but monism as a whole.\* Why should he have thought this? It may be that he thought that as a matter of fact, all monists had made the S-P assumption. Thus, he perhaps felt that he was able to shatter all actual monistic systems. This, however, does not seem to necessarily rid us of monism forever. It would seem quite possible for somebody to invent a monistic system without recourse to the S-P assumption at any point. If Russell thought that he had finally refuted monism by rejecting the S-P assumption, it would seem that he may have committed the fallacy of denying the antecedent:

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\* We must remember that Russell's claims concerning the S-P assumption's significance are very great; the quotations of page 19 will serve to remind us of this. But Russell not only claims that an enormous number of philosophies are based on the S-P assumption, but claims also that if we should reject it, then all substance philosophies (including, of course, monism) will be rejected. This is made clear on page 59 of his Philosophy of Leibniz, where he says that not only is the logic which makes the S-P assumption false, but "a different logic destroys substance". (My underlining.)

- 1) The S-P assumption implies monism.
- 2) The S-P assumption is false.
- 3) Therefore, monism is false.

But of course Russell was a great logician; it is perhaps rather naive to charge him with such an error. There is, moreover, an interesting alternative; that Russell believed that the S-P assumption is implied by monism, so that his rejection of it must certainly refute monism. The argument could be as follows:

- 1) If monism is true, then relations must be internal.
- 2) The S-P assumption is false, therefore the doctrine of internal relations, which is its equivalent, must be false.
- 3) Therefore, by modus tollens, monism is false.\*

In this however, Russell would be making the mistake which constantly appears throughout his work, of assuming that the doctrine of internal relations is equivalent to the S-P assumption. This assumption underlay nearly all of Russell's discourse on relations, though not all of it, and yet it would seem that a careful study of Bradley's work shows it to be totally unacceptable. Now it is at this point that we must return to the meaning of "internal

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\* Russell seems to have this argument in mind when he wrote "On the Nature of Truth", since in that paper he wrote "the axiom of internal relations is equivalent to the assumption of ontological monism". Thus, since he goes on to deny the axiom, he clearly thinks that he must deny monism.

relations", and remember that it has been disjunctively defined. One definition is that it states that relations are part of the nature of the relata, and the other is that relations are grounded in the nature of the relata. The two are certainly not equivalent. There is nothing at all incoherent about saying that relations are always grounded in the nature of the relata, and at the same time deny that they are equivalent to that something in the nature of the relata. We can quite intelligibly argue that the relation of similarity which exists between two blades of grass results from their properties without saying that the relation is equivalent to, or ontologically at all similar to, these properties. Russell's equation of the two doctrines, then, is quite unacceptable; but Bradley did not accept the doctrine in its first form, as previous comments have shown sufficiently, but did accept the doctrine in its second form.

That Bradley did accept the view that relations must be grounded in properties of the relata is shown frequently in his work. Much of the argument of chapters two and three of Appearance and Reality was concerned either with proving that relations must be grounded in properties of the relata, or with arguments based on this. In chapter two he states:

We are forced to see, when we reflect, that a relation standing alongside its terms is a delusion. If it is



to be real, it must be so somehow at the expense of its terms, or, at least, must be something in them or to which they belong. A relation between A and B implies really a substantial foundation within them. <sup>40</sup>

One of the arguments of chapter three was also devised to show precisely that relations must involve properties of the relata: "Our conclusion briefly will be this: relation presupposes quality..." One of Bradley's central arguments of chapter three, also, was based on the view that relations must be grounded in the properties of the relata. This will be considered on page 68 of this paper. It should not be doubted, then, that Bradley did adhere to that which is asserted by the second disjunct of the disjunctive definition. Furthermore, Bradley did think of it as the doctrine of internal relations. This is shown in Essays on Truth and Reality, for example, where he wrote:

I am still in doubt as to the sense in which according to Mr. Russell relations are external. The terms are to contribute nothing, and so much I understand... <sup>41</sup>  
(My underlining).

Again, in Collected Essays, Bradley wrote:

Relations would be merely internal if, the terms being taken as real independently, each in itself, the relations between them in fact arose or were merely due to the character of the terms, as so far taken. <sup>42</sup>

What should we mean by a relation asserted as simply and barely external? We must assume that relations and relata ...coming or being together in fact, and as somehow in one, is due in no way to the particular character of either the relations or the terms...

What (I ask next) should, on the other hand be meant by a relation viewed as absolutely and merely internal? ... you would attribute to the particular characters of the terms, as so far taken, some actual relation or relations which you find...<sup>43</sup>

Realizing, as we now do, that Bradley did accept the doctrine of internal relations in its second form, but did not accept it in its first form, it becomes clear that Russell's objections to Bradley's so-called acceptance of the doctrine in its first form are totally misguided. Only in the first form can the doctrine of internal relations be at all equatable with the S-P assumption, and thus we find that Bradley was quite mystified when he found Russell equating his view with it. He was by no means so naive as to assume that relations could be at all similar to properties. It is interesting to note that when he wrote to Russell shortly after the publication of "On the Nature of Truth", in which Russell made the equation, he expressed complete bafflement about why this should have been done:

Do you think that "internal relation" must mean that relations are adjectives of their terms? I fail to see why this follows. <sup>44</sup>

It is significant that though Russell replies very fully to the other points raised in Bradley's letter, he said not a word about this particular comment.

It would be useful to end this section with a brief reiteration of the main points concerning the Russell-Bradley dispute:

1) According to Russell, Bradley made the mistake of assuming that all propositions are of the subject-predicate form, a mistake which led him to treat relations as ontologically similar to, or reducible to, qualities.

2) Russell proves that the S-P assumption is false, since it is incapable of accounting for certain propositions, particularly those which use asymmetrical relation-words.

3) However, Russell misinterpreted Bradley. His real position was that the whole notion of relations is self-contradictory, so that they can neither be real, nor can an adequate account of them ever be formulated.

4) Though Bradley may at times have argued for the doctrine of internal relations, this was only because he thought it preferable to its alternative, not ultimately true.

5) Even to the extent to which Bradley was a proponent of the doctrine of internal relations, he was still not an adherent of the S-P assumption. He realized that adoption of the former need not imply adoption of the latter.

But we need to consider why Bradley should have adopted these views. The next section will be concerned with his reasons for adopting them, the section after the next will be concerned with a critique of them.

#### 4. BRADLEY'S SUBSTANTIATION OF HIS POSITION

##### (i) Why Bradley Preferred the Doctrine of Internal Relations to that of External Relations

Bradley often offered, as a reason for rejecting the doctrine of internal relations, the supposed fact that if relations were external, there would have to be "bare conjunction" in nature, and this is said to offend both against the Hegelian tradition, and against the principle of sufficient reason. Of course, most contemporary philosophers would ignore these reasons, since they are usually not impressed by the law of sufficient reason, and do not work within the Hegelian tradition. But it is uncertain, further, why Bradley should have argued that the doctrine of external relations offends against them. The idea is supposed to be that if a relation does not spring from complexity in the relata, it could only be a random, purposeless fact. But why should this be so? As we noted earlier, there could surely be a sufficient reason for the relational state of affairs, without this being found within the nature of the relata; it could surely be found elsewhere— in the nature of the whole, of which the relata are parts, or even within the purposes of a deity.

A much more interesting reason for Bradley's preference of the doctrine of internal relations can be

found in appendix B of Appearance and Reality. This involves Bradley's doctrine of abstraction, and presents us with his insight about how we can most adequately conceive of the world within a system of relations. Bradley explains his point by reference to a number of billiard balls on a table in a certain arrangement. Every ball, of course, has a certain spatial relation to every other ball. Now we move one ball. Thus the relations of the ball to the others is changed. A pluralist such as Russell will say that the ball is not changed in itself; its nature is not altered in any way. The relations involved, he will say, are purely "external" to the nature of the ball, are not part of what constitutes the ball at all: being a billiard ball does not entail having any one particular set of spatial relations.

Now Bradley is happy enough to accept the statement as it stands, but his point is that when we treat billiard balls in this manner, we look upon them just as "characters", and not as "existents". Inasmuch as we see the billiard ball as a type of thing, that is, as an instance of the universal billiard ball, the particular spatial location is entirely irrelevant. It is not part of the universal billiard ball that it has a particular set of spatial relations. Thus, seen as a type of thing, the particular spatial relations are external, are not part

of the ball qua character. But if we look upon the ball not as a type of thing, but as a thing itself, the situation changes. The spatial relations are then said to be by no means irrelevant. Bradley expresses this point of view eloquently as follows:

Take them [billiard balls] as existing things, and take them without mutilation, and you must regard them as determined by their places and qualified by the whole material system into which they enter... the billiard ball, to repeat, if taken apart from its place and its position in the whole is not an existence but a character, and that character remains unchanged, though the existing thing is altered with its changed existence. Everything other than this identical character may be called relatively external. It may, or it may not, be in comparison unimportant, but absolutely external it cannot be. <sup>45</sup>

Now Russell may remain quite unimpressed by this. He may say, first, that he sees no reason why we should look upon things as existents rather than characters, and may not accept Bradley's viewpoint that the ultimate philosophical sin is "abstraction". Though I do not intend to enter into a discussion of Bradley's doctrine concerning the adequacy of abstraction, it does seem as though he would have the edge on this particular point. Bradley could well say that it is virtually self-evident that if we really want to understand a thing as a whole, to see whether a relation is the result of some complexity, however subtle, in it, it is absurd to pick on only certain aspects of it. Though certain aspects may be more interesting than others, it is not defensible to pretend

that the others do not exist. Even though Russell may be forced to admit this, however, he could still argue that when we look upon a thing even as an existent, there are still some relations which are not founded in its nature in any way; the existent/character dichotomy has by no means defeated this view finally. In fact, probably the chief value of Bradley's dichotomy is that it defeats the most immediate of the prima facie objections to the doctrine of internal relations, based on simple claims of the form: "it is obvious that the relation R cannot be founded in the nature of the relata". In certain cases, we may want to uphold this; it is certainly not obvious, even when we take things as existents, that a specific spatial relation is based on any predicates of them; but such examples are much rarer where "things qua existents" are concerned, than where "things qua characters" are concerned. Before Bradley produced the dichotomy, it may have seemed absurd to say that particular spatial relations, and other relations, are a result of the nature of their relata, but after it is made, the standpoint is much more plausible.

R. Wollheim tells us, in his F.H. Bradley, p.111-112, that the chief arguments for the doctrine of internal relations are to be found in chapters 2 and 3 of A.&R. He argues that part of the time, in these chapters,

Bradley is trying to prove that relations are internally self-contradictory, and thus unreal, and also that Bradley's arguments are directed at times in favour of the doctrine of internal relations. Wollheim's statement bears some truth, but not in the form in which he states it. He argues that the central argument, which is repeated in chapters 2 and 3, and which is meant to prove that relations are unintelligible taken with their relata, only counts against external relations, and is thus an argument against that doctrine. His interpretation does not seem at all acceptable at this point. The argument, which will be considered in the next subsection, is wholly based on an explicit assumption that relations are grounded in the nature of the relata, and so, unless Bradley is taken to be an idiot, the argument can hardly be aimed against the doctrine of external relations. This is one point at which Russell's interpretation can be upheld. As we saw earlier, Russell believed that Bradley's arguments for the unreality of relations were based on the assumption that all relations are internal. In this particular case, Bradley certainly does base his argument for the unreality of relations on the doctrine of internal relations; whether all Bradley's arguments for the unreality of relations were based on it is a quite different matter, which will be considered shortly.



But Wollheim's interpretation does hold fairly well against another argument found in chapter 3, and particularly against the same argument as it was expressed in chapter 2. This argument is that relations themselves must require relations to relate them to their terms. In chapter 3, this argument is urged against all relations, but in chapter 2, it is pointed only against external relations. The argument is that if a relation is purely external, then it cannot relate its terms—relations cannot relate without leaving nail-holes, as one of the commentators put it— and thus it must require a further relation to bind it to the relata. If these are external, they, too, do not relate, and further relations still are required, etc.etc. Thus, Bradley concludes

We are forced to see, when we reflect, that a relation standing alongside its terms is a delusion. If it is to be real, it must be so somehow at the expense of the term, or, at least, must be something which appears in them, or to which they belong. A relation between A and B implies really a substantial foundation within them. 46

This argument, however, is by no means persuasive on its own. Why should a relation "require nail holes" in its terms? Why must it be founded in them? This is the point at issue, and it is far from clear that an external relation is totally incapable of relating. It seems that Bradley rests his case on the point that he just can see no way in which a relation, which is not based

on the nature of the relata, can possibly relate them. Now this may look very flimsy, but it is, I suspect, his chief objection to the externality viewpoint. He stresses, time and time again, that he makes a very significant assumption: that he will only accept something as real and true if it satisfies the intellect. Now this is applied wholeheartedly in the matter of relations. Bradley finds himself totally unable to understand how a relation can relate without the relation being based on the nature of the term in any way. Now this may look like no argument at all, like a simple means of evading the problem. What if Russell should come along and say that he finds the notion of an entirely external relation perfectly satisfying? Bradley sensed this, summing up the whole position in a letter to Russell:

I postulate that truth has to satisfy the intellect, (though not in detail) and that external relations can't do this, and therefore where we can't show that they are internal we must assume it. I don't say that I think this entirely satisfactory but this is how I hold it. I presume that you would say on the other hand that external relations can give the intellect all the satisfaction to which it has any claim. 47

But Bradley's bafflement does not seem unreasonable; it does seem that he can issue a worthy challenge to Russell here. His position is that to the extent to which relations are founded in the relata; to the extent that they are based on predicates of the relata, they are quite comprehensible. Bradley felt that the subject-

predicate relation was really quite digestible intellectually, even though not ultimately so. But relations, we know, are not equatable with the predicates of the relata on which they may be based. Something extra must be involved, but what could this "something extra" be? If we say that it is the organization of the organising faculties, Bradley is again not too disturbed. But he could not conceive of something in the external world corresponding to this "something extra". This bafflement is intensified where external relations are concerned. We cannot begin to understand them by offering the above account at all; the relation cannot be the product of the organising faculties, since there is nothing in the relata on which it can work; thus, the relation has to be something in the external world. But Bradley could not begin to see any way of grasping their nature. Russell, however, thought an account possible. The case, perhaps, really rests on whether Russell can give a respectable account of what the relation could be. This will comprise the content of section 6.

(ii) Why Bradley Thought Relations to be Unreal

The most famous aspect of Bradley's arguments for the unreality of relations is the argument that the whole notion of relation is self-contradictory. Bradley made a great deal of use of the contradiction; it is the

argument that the notion of relation is self-contradictory, found in chapters 2 and 3 of A.&R. which has been chiefly concentrated upon by those who do not wish to accept Bradley's conclusions. The outline of the demonstration is somewhat artificial: Bradley seeks to show that relations cannot exist without terms, but also cannot exist with terms, and this is said to be contradictory. Of course, the onus of his proof lies in showing that relations cannot exist with terms.

The central argument to this end is as follows: First, a relation must be founded upon some complexity in the nature of its relata; some predicate of the relata. Also, a relation must affect its relata, must change them. Thus, "each relation has a double character, as both supporting and as being made by the relation." Let us call a term "A", the aspect of A which founds the relation in question "a", and the aspect of A which is the result of the relation "@". a and @, then, must somehow be combined in A, as A(a—@). But a and @ must somehow be related. But how are they related? @, if it is to be related to a, must be altered by the relation, and must have some aspect which founds the relation. Thus, there must be some complexity within @, some aspect of it, which is the foundation of the relation, let us call it "@<sup>1</sup>". The case is similar with a. But an endless

generation of complexity within A is thus set into progress! For A to be related, an infinite number of qualities must be required, which is an absurdity. Thus, Bradley concluded that the notion of a term taken in relation is ultimately unsatisfactory.

Wollheim's immediate reply to this is that it presupposes that the aspect of A which supports the relation is not the same as the aspect of A which results from the relation. This, he quite reasonably points out, need not be the case; they can be one and the same. Wollheim's reply here seems to be perfectly sound. But Russell, on the other hand, could safely choose to ignore this point, and simply say that the basic assumption of the whole argument, that relatedness must be based on predicates of the relata, is false! It was this point that was at issue between Bradley and himself, and he could with a degree of justice urge that Bradley's belief that relations are internally contradictory was based on the doctrine of internal relations! Indeed, he tended to take the argument as a reductio ad absurdum of the internality viewpoint, although, since there were other errors in the argument, this is not really defensible.

Another of Bradley's arguments can be interpreted as follows: A and B are related by  $R^1$ . But the relation  $R^1$  is thus related to A and B by a further relation, call it " $R^2$ ", since they are different, and difference is a

relation. But  $R^2$ , of course, is different from  $R^1$ , and so there is a relation between them, which we may call " $R^3$ ". This process can clearly go on indefinitely. Thus, an infinite number of relations is generated by any relational state of affairs. Russell, however, could not see anything wrong with this.<sup>48</sup> Though there may be an infinite generation of relations, he could not see in this any criticism of relations. Russell carefully distinguished between two types of infinite generation: "one proceeding merely to perpetually new implied propositions, the other in the meaning of a proposition itself."<sup>49</sup> But only the latter is a vicious generation; the one involved in the above argument is of the former kind. Thus, Russell does not admit it as a criticism of the notion of relation. He argues that Bradley only thought of it as a criticism of the notion, because he falsely looked upon relations as being the same types of things as the relata, and not as something substantially different. Having noticed that the words which denote relations are just as substantial as the words which denote things, Russell tells us, Bradley assumed that relations are just as substantial as things.<sup>50</sup> Once assuming this, it is understandable that Bradley thought an infinite generation to be vicious. If relations were like things, then if any relational state of affairs generated an infinite number of further relations, then we would have a grossly overpopulated

universe. But Russell says that this by no means shows that there is something wrong with the notion of relation, only that there is something wrong with looking upon relations as being ontologically similar to things.\*

Having disposed of the central arguments of chapters 2 and 3 for the unreality of relations, Bradley's detractors tend to think that his position has been quite defeated. This, however, is not so: There are many more arguments within his works concerned with the unreality of relations. One of the chief of these is a highly empiricist argument, an argument which features prominently in later passages of Appearance and Reality, in the posthumous essay on relations, and in the correspondence of Bradley and Russell.

The basic argument is simply that immediate experience is non-relational, but it is immediate experience which is the foundation of all articulatable forms of knowledge. Man's knowledge of the real world, he says, is entirely dependent upon this immediate experience; there is no other gateway to reality. But since relations cannot be found within this, they cannot exist in reality; they can only be products of our organising faculties.

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\*The discussion will be reopened on page 102.

It is at this point that we must bear in mind the earlier cautionary note, to the effect that Bradley was by no means a rationalist. He is often portrayed as a great opponent of empiricism, but it is important to note that his opposition to the "empiricist school" was only concerned with an opposition to the methods and superstructure of this school. As far as Bradley was concerned, there is no mysterious source of knowledge of reality; the basic empiricist assumption he took over with fervour, particularly in the defense of the unreality of relations, at which point he argued that empiricism and pluralism are incompatible. It is strange that he never spoke of the irony of this, since his pluralist opponents were themselves mostly empiricists.

The reference to immediate experience was a commonplace in Bradley's letters to Russell, although there was surprisingly little direct reference to any substantiation of his doctrine. For instance, when arguing that if we look upon the world as comprised of independent things, we inevitably "abstract", break up the unity of reality, he simply used his viewpoint about immediate experience, and did not back it up:

The given fact, to be dealt with ideally, is a non-relational whole. Now in going on to find ideas which satisfy us, if we assume independent terms, one side of the "sensible" given is lost. In a sensible fact you have the whole and the parts in one. But if you break this entity up, and set down any part as



independent,-- then, starting with this point, there is no getting beyond it except arbitrarily. For you have suppressed the aspect of totality or identity which in the sensible whole took you from point to point. 51

Russell, however, seems to have thought that relations are not just added by the mind, but are implicit, at least, in immediate experience. Thus, he replied to Bradley saying:

I can only gather that I am expected to admit that the vaguer or less reflective view of anything is always truer than the more precise and reflective view. This seems like arguing for some political institution on the ground that it existed among our savage ancestors. 52

This, of course, does not answer Bradley in any way; it just shows that Russell worked on the assumption that immediate experience contains relations, at least implicitly. Bradley very soon wrote back to Russell indicating that he could not accept this assumption, urging, simply, that immediate experience of the "this" is non-relational. But Russell, still, was only able to reply:

Presumably the difficulty for me arises when the this... does not in the first instance appear to be an arrangement of interrelated parts. In such a case I should merely say that the first unreflective apprehension of the object does not get so true or complete a picture as can be got by reflection. And I do not see why this is not a satisfactory answer. 53

In other words, Russell could not see why he should not assume that immediate experience is implicitly relational; that relations are there, if only we know

where to look. Bradley and Russell had simply reached an impasse at this point. One thought that immediate experience is non-relational, the other that it is implicitly, at least, relational, but they found no way of getting down to discussing one another's assumptions. Neither can I.

Although it was the arguments of chapters 2 and 3, and the arguments which concerned immediate experience, which were overtly Bradley's main reasons for accepting the unreality of relations, it seems nevertheless that his real reason was just that he could not make any sense of the notion of an existent relation, as something quite apart from its terms. Bradley makes this point in his Essays on Truth and Reality, p.247, and elsewhere. What on earth could it be? he asks. He made comparatively little of this point, but it is presented at times as the most important point, and this may well be so. There is nothing in Bradley's work which allows me to discuss the point in this section; I shall attempt, rather, to give some depth to the standpoint in section 6.

(iii) Why Bradley Held Thought to be Necessarily Relational

Bradley states, at the beginning of chapter 3 of A.&R. that thought is inevitably relational, a view which is amply supported in that chapter and its predecessor. Early in the third chapter, he states that the fact that

We cannot speak in terms of things or qualities, the material of thought, without bringing in relations, is a well known fact in psychology. What he seems to have in mind are the cases where something only takes on a specific meaning within a relational complex.

For example, the illustration to the right can appear as a duck or a rabbit, depending on how we look at it. But in the framework of diagram ll, the illustration is seen as a rabbit, whereas in diagram lll, it is seen as a duck.

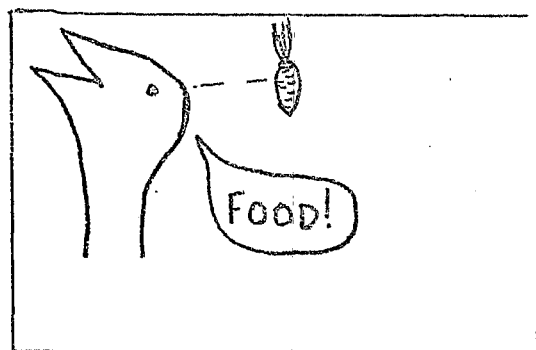
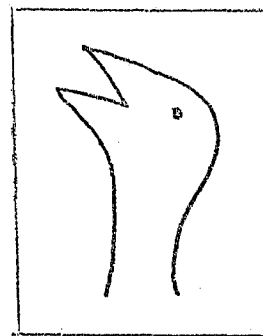


Diagram ll

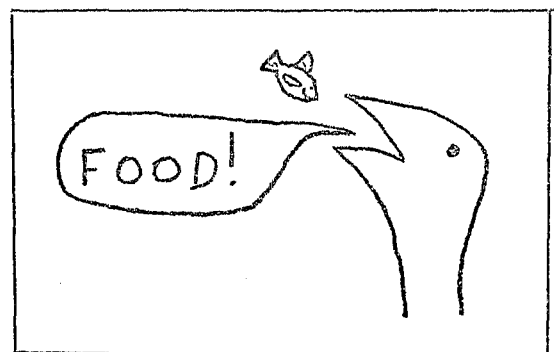


Diagram lll

This would make his point quite nicely, but Bradley will "lay no weight on a considerable mass of evidence... furnished by psychology," since he has lampooned philosophers for being "too long in the psychological attitude". Besides, he believes that he can make his point perfectly satisfactorily on purely philosophical grounds.

In chapter 2, he argues that if we wish to speak

of such things as entities or properties, then we require relations to avoid contradictions. For example, redness and greenness, taken together, without relational organization, are incompatible. But if arranged relationally, for instance by being attributed to different parts of space, they are compatible again. This was Bradley's meaning when he said:

Qualities are found some to be incompatible...it is only where they come together distinctly by the help of a relation, that they cease to conflict. On the other hand, where a thing fails to set up a relation between its properties, they are contrary at once... colour collides with colour... if the identity becomes relational by help of space, they are outside one another, and are peaceful once more.<sup>54</sup>

The argument that thought is inevitably relational is completed elegantly in chapter 3, where Bradley uses a form of the "polar contrasts argument", which has seen extensive use in the work of Wittgenstein. He rests his case on the point that if we wish to speak of any one quality, or term, then we have to presuppose the existence of that which it is not. We can never speak of one element of reality as itself an element unless we at least accept that it has a difference from other elements. "If not distinct, then not different, and therefore not qualities", as Bradley quaintly puts it. This is certainly a polar contrasts argument: one thing can only be said to be a thing if it is contrasted to that which it is not.

This may seem strange to those just partly versed in

Bradley's writings. Does he not say that thought is cured if we go beyond the level of relational thinking to the absolute, where there are no distinctions, just an undivided whole? Does he not say that thought would be adequate if we could grasp everything at once? This is not quite so. Bradley could reply to this on one level by saying that even if this were true, it does not show that thought could be non-relational, simply because man is quite incapable of grasping everything at once, and thus has to remain at the relational level. But his central reply to it is that if we succeeded in transcending the level of relational thought, then thought would destroy itself. There would be no such thing as thought grasping the absolute, because once this level is reached, there is no such thing as thinking. Thinking involves a thinker; there must be differentiation of thinking self from thought object for there to be thought. But this differentiation must involve relations, if only the relation of difference between self and non-self. Relations can only finally disappear when this relation is lost; but when it is lost, thought itself disappears; a level of feeling where all merges is reached. Thus Bradley could say:

Thought is relational and discursive, and if it ceases to be this, it commits suicide. 55

In conclusion to this section, it can be noted that we can now understand why Bradley should say "A relational way of thought... must give appearance and not truth... it is a makeshift, a mere practical compromise, most necessary, but in the end most indefensible." 56 It is "most indefensible" since it is self-contradictory, and relations are only a product of our organising faculties. For the same reason, it must "give appearance and not reality". As we have just seen, the relational way of thought is "most necessary", since thought is inevitably relational. One feature we have not discussed previously is that the relational way of thought is "a makeshift, a mere practical compromise". But we do not have to look hard to find Bradley's meaning. He is making the point that though the relational way of thought ultimately breaks up reality into segments, thus committing the sin of "abstraction", it nevertheless makes some attempt to retain the unity, via a relational nexus.

## 5. RUSSELL'S OBJECTION TO BRADLEY'S DOCTRINE OF RELATIONS

### RECONSIDERED

In this section, I shall attempt to sum up the immediate results of Russell's attacks on Bradley's doctrine. First, it is to be noted that Russell chiefly attacked the doctrine of internal relations, and this attack was also primarily aimed against the S-P assumption. As we have seen, however, Russell was quite wrong to have equated the doctrine of internal relations with the S-P assumption, and Bradley also very carefully rejected the S-P assumption. Thus, it would seem that the core of Russell's attack was lacking in significance as far as Bradley was concerned. Nevertheless, the indirect result of this attack seems to have been quite substantial. Russell's concentration upon the S-P assumption, and his successful and lucid rejection of it had a considerable effect on the contemporaries of the debate, who had not really noticed its falsity previously. Many of them had assumed that relations are like, or reducible to qualities, because of a blind adherence to the S-P assumption; they simply had not noticed that there was an alternative way of looking upon relations. But when Russell demonstrated its falsity irrefragibly, with so much more clarity than Bradley, they realized the error of their ways, and saw that the doctrine of internal relations, which would have

followed from the S-P assumption, was no longer obvious. Thus, though Russell had not affected Bradley directly, in the eyes of some members of the philosophical public he had put Bradley on the defensive, so that the doctrine of internal relations had to be supported. Russell, however, followed up his initial attack with attacks on the details of Bradley's arguments, as they were found in chapters 2 and 3 of A.&R.. These attacks, moreover, were damaging ones. Thus contemporary philosophers, who were becoming bored with idealism anyway, were willing to accredit Russell with victory in the debate. The opinion soon spread that Bradley, and idealism in general, were refuted. But subtleties of the debate had been ignored by them in this judgement. They had not noticed, for instance, other, less publicised reasons given by Bradley for the doctrine of internal relations.\*

The first of these reasons was the basic empiricist argument that immediate experience is non-relational. But though Russell did not actually refute this, he did provide at least a viable alternative to it: that immediate experience is at least implicitly relational. So, even if some members of the philosophical community had noticed this subtlety, it need not have affected their decision. Yet there is the further, far more important reason which Bradley had for defending the doctrine of

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\* Reference to the vagaries of "the philosophical public" is based chiefly on general histories of philosophy such as



internal relations: he simply could not see how it was possible to give any intellectually satisfying account of external relations. He could not begin to offer an account of them. Thus, finding them quite incomprehensible, he refused to admit their existence. A decision as to whether Bradley's liking for the doctrine of internal relations was acceptable, then, really depends upon the adequacy of Russell's account of external relations. Nevertheless, this was not demanded by his contemporaries during the dispute with Bradley. Only Bradley saw its vital importance.

The second subtlety of the situation is that Bradley did not think that the doctrine of internal relations was ultimately defensible, and it was not his central theory of relations. Thus, even if Russell had succeeded in defeating his doctrine of internal relations, Bradley would not have been worried too much; he thought it indefensible, anyway. Bradley's central position was that no relational account could ever succeed, since the notion of relation is self-contradictory. But this means that he was fairly sure of his doctrine that relations are unreal, since nothing contradictory can be real. Even if contemporary philosophers had noticed this subtlety, however, they would still, probably, have said that Bradley was a beaten man, since the most celebrated of his arguments for the unreality of relations were those of  
The Revolution in Philosophy, and that of G. Warnock.

chapters 2 and 3 of A.&R. which Russell had shattered. Also, although Russell refused to take the idea that relations are unreal particularly seriously, he nevertheless mounted a fairly worthy attack on it.

Russell first attacked the view that relations should be considered unreal in his Philosophy of Leibniz, largely reiterating this in his "On the Nature of Truth". He uses the traditional approach of presenting us with those relations which we should refuse to admit as being merely a product of our organising faculties. John of St. Thomas had used this technique in replying to William of Ockham and his disciples. He had urged that we cannot possibly make all relations subjective, since if we do this, then we are forced to admit that there are not, in reality, three related aspects of the Holy Trinity. Since this would require heresy, John put the whole notion out of his mind. Nevertheless, not all of us live in fear of the Inquisition, and an argument like this really will not do. Let us see if the examples of relations which "cannot possibly be merely subjective" which Russell provides are any more valuable.

Russell's prime examples of relations which must exist in reality, as given in his early writings, are mathematical relations. Mathematics, he had proven, was heavily dependent upon asymmetrical relations; these are essential to number series. But this being so, if

relations are all unreal, then he realized that numbers could not be real things. Russell felt this to be final proof of the reality of relations, but to most modern students, it is very hard to see why. The fact is that Russell was highly impressed by Meinong's work. When he was writing this defense of the reality of relations, he was quite convinced that numbers subsist in some sort of Meinongian universe. But few today would share his enthusiasm for Meinongian universes; indeed, it would often be held that if any relations are purely constructs of the intellect, then the relations of mathematics are among them.

But Russell also tries a more defensible line. The relations of space and time, he assures us, are irreducibly relational, and thus, if we wish to support Bradley's doctrine, we must say that these are unreal, and also that the physical sciences which make so much use of them cannot be finally truthful. Now Bradley was somewhat bemused that such an argument could be brought against him. He had clearly argued that such relations are unreal, that sciences which used them as given facts about the world were not finally true, and he did not see anything so odd in holding this position. Kant, after all, had argued that space and time are not real, so it is not such an obviously absurd doctrine. Nevertheless, the philosophical public would have felt this to be a blow against him. It was generally thought that spatial and

temporal relations must be real; realism was the rising movement at the time, and such a substantial denial of it went strongly against the current of opinion.

The same public also tended to side with Russell because of the respect which was felt for his newly-introduced philosophical tool—the new, vastly improved, mathematical logic. At the core of this new logic was a logic of relations which was seen to be highly fecund. Russell shifted the foundations of mathematics with it. All in all, then, it is not really surprising that Russell carried the day, in the eyes of contemporary observers.

Nevertheless, the only time that Russell really hurt Bradley's system was when he rejected the "proofs" of chapters 2 and 3 of the contradictory nature of relations. The other objections did not affect him, and he was certainly not overawed by Russell's new logic, since he had helped it on its way, and he could have felt that however useful the logic of relations may have been, it still did not mean that relations have to be looked upon as elements of the real world. Russell had also not, as yet, met one of Bradley's objections to treating relations as real: that no account of such entities appears possible. The whole outcome of the dispute between Bradley and Russell is once again seen to turn on the question of whether Russell could give a respectable

account of relations taken as real. A discussion of this point must at last be produced; it will form the content of the final section.

## 6. RUSSELL'S POSITIVE ACCOUNT OF RELATIONS

Russell often stressed the importance of giving relations a place in any satisfactory ontology, but he was rather slow in letting people know what exactly he thought them to be. Bradley had pestered him for years in his letters to explain his point of view, but he never replied with clarity or directness. In a letter of 1910, he was willing to go no further than say that he thought relational states of affairs to exist, and these are really complex entities. He repeated this quite often: in M.P.D., he speaks of the relational state of affairs  $ARB$  as being perceived as one object, and in The Problems of Philosophy he says "whenever there is a relation which relates certain terms, there is a complex object formed of the union of these terms." 57 But obviously this is by no means a complete account: there are two or more relata in the state of affairs comprising the relational complex, but what else is there? There must be something else involved which makes up the relational state of affairs, and it is this extra element which we want to know about. We want to know what it could conceivably be. Fortunately, Russell was not always coy about discussing the matter:

It is in The Principles of Mathematics that Russell first lets us know what analysis he intends to offer. When he wrote that book, he was strongly influenced by Meinong,

and accordingly, his ontological scheme saw a major dichotomy: everything was divided into "existents" and "subsistents". The "existents" include the commonplace spatio-temporal objects, and the temporal, non-spatial entities such as thoughts. "Subsistents" are said to be those elements of reality which are neither spatial nor temporal. Relations were then said to be included in the latter section, to "have being" in some Meinongian universe. Now if this is to be the core of Russell's account, it is understandable that he should not have mentioned it too freely. Meinongian entities are very often only referred to by philosophers in facetious moods. Those who labour under the impression that Russell always worked with a "robust sense of reality", and was a philosopher of the common sense persuasion tend to think that such a strange view could only have been short lived, that, when Russell discovered Ockham's razor, he would do away with the whole class of Meinongian entities, and that subsistent relations would share the fate of geometrical points. But this is not so. It seems that after Russell had rebelled against idealism, he always looked upon relations as subsistent entities.

The fact that Russell never repudiated this doctrine publicly is shown in his M.P.D.. He stated quite clearly that he adhered to a subsisting world of universals,

and did so precisely because he was driven to it to account for relations. This viewpoint is explained in most detail in The Problems of Philosophy. Even there, however, the characterization of the "subsistents" is a very meagre one, mostly formed by simply negating the properties of everyday objects. We are told, for instance, that relations, like other subsistents, cannot exist in the way that ordinary things exist, since it does not make sense to ask where or when they are. "Hence", he says, "the relation 'north of' is radically different from such things [as ideas, or material objects]. It is neither in space, nor in time, neither material nor mental, yet it is something." Shortly after this, Russell continues the characterization by telling us "the world of being is unchangeable, rigid, exact". It is also "delightful to the mathematician, the logician, the builder of metaphysical systems, and all those who love perfection more than life." Relations are not sharply differentiated by Russell from traditional Platonic universals— they are simply said to be universals, indeed unparticularized universals. Whereas the green of a particular blade of grass may be seen as a particularized universal, the relations which that blade of grass has to other things are said to be not particularized. In an article called "Meinong's Theory of Complexes and Assumptions", Russell states clearly "there are no such entities as particularized relations" 58,



and in The Principles of Mathematics he states "relations do not have instances but are strictly the same in all propositions in which they occur." 59 The reason given for this strange view is that if relations were particularized, then relations such as "is larger than" are different in each manifestation, but Russell felt it vital that the relation should be the same in "four is larger than one" as in "three is larger than two".

Now why should Russell have espoused the whole Meinongian viewpoint? The answer may be that once he had accepted the view that relations are real, he simply had no choice. He is quite right to say that relations are not spatial or temporal, and thus if we continue to treat them as real, they become completely different in kind from things and events. We simply cannot take account of something which is neither spatial nor temporal in any ordinary manner. Everything inhabiting the world which we are acquainted with is one or the other or both; even thoughts, though they are non-spatial, are at least temporal. Thus Russell felt that he had to speak of another world to accommodate these strange entities.

It cannot be denied that the whole characterization of relations is very odd. One suspects that Bradley would have treated the whole account as a reductio ad absurdum of the view that relations are real. Russell, note, used

to scold Bradley for failing to think of relations as being totally different in kind from ordinary entities or events. Bradley, however, could well turn around and say that he never could conceive of any way of thinking about them, and furthermore, that even after hearing Russell's account, he could not do so. This is not indefensible. Russell's account does smack of absurdity. Do we really even have any idea of what is being talked about when we discuss things that are neither spatial nor temporal? A.D. Woozley has argued <sup>60</sup> that we only think that we do. He argues that we think that we do, because we mistakenly think that there is an analogy with discussions of far-off places: we can quite well imagine what a strange land over the seas could be like; we can even imagine what a strange land in another solar system could be like. Thus, we come to think that we can understand what a Meinongian universe would be like. But, he continues, we really cannot; this supposed universe would be totally unlike any world that we know, and it is simply absurd to pretend that we can understand what such things could be.

This is not by any means a final objection to the view, but it certainly gives us a right to ask for very good reasons to adopt it. Russell himself admitted that the view was very odd, both in The Problems of Philosophy and M.P.D., but in spite of discomfort on the matter, he seems to have thought that he had good enough reasons to

accept it. The arguments for it really depend on arguments for the reality of relations, since, given their reality, and the proven fact that they are not equatable with properties, it seems to be the only type of account possible. Russell's arguments in favour of the reality of relations are not, however, entirely convincing. We have already seen how he insisted that relations must be real by pointing to mathematical, and spatio-temporal relations, but we have also seen that this argument is far from irrefragible. In The Problems of Philosophy,<sup>61</sup> Russell tries to argue for the reality of relations in a different manner, the argument being as follows:

Edinburgh is north of London. This is a fact which would be true even if there were no thinking beings to appreciate it. Therefore, the relation "north of" must be non-mental, and therefore must be real. Now this argument, of course, begs many of the questions at issue. Many idealists would deny that "Edinburgh is north of London" is a truth independent of thinking beings; a correspondence theory of truth is being assumed by Russell, but this is by no means an indisputable theory. We may perhaps say that Russell's argument is valuable in showing that if we accept a correspondence theory of truth, then we have to accept that relations are real, but it is doubtful if even this follows. Though we may say that the

truth of the proposition is dependent on an actual, objective state of affairs, which corresponds to it, it does not seem vital that this state of affairs is itself relational. It is not unarguable that there is some state of affairs in the "real world" which corresponds to our expression "ARB", but that this is not itself actually relational; it is just that we are only capable of expressing it in relational terms.

Another, more important argument offered by Russell for the reality of relations is that it is essential for our language to have meaning:

Suppose, for instance, that I am in my room. I exist, and my room exists, but does 'in' exist? Yet obviously the word 'in' has a meaning; it denotes a relation which holds between me and my room. The relation is something, although we cannot say that it exists in the same sense in which I and my room exist. The relation 'in' is something which we can think about and understand, for, if we could not understand it, we could not understand the sentence "I am in my room". 62

It is Russell's "referential" theory of meaning which appears to underly much of the ontology of logical atomism, and it certainly seems to have played a vital part in his doctrine concerning relations. But this theory of meaning is today generally considered to be false! Perhaps the most significant advance in recent philosophy has been Wittgenstein's demonstration of the falsity of this view; this, however, undermines one of the main foundations for Russell's belief that relations are real.

Another reason which Russell had for believing that relations are real was also based on a similar basic assumption that he worked with: the assumption that the structure of sentences must correspond to the structure of the world in at least those cases where the structure is unavoidable. Russell tells us in his M.P.D. that though he could not demonstrate the truth of this presupposition, he could never bring himself to doubt it. But Russell also believed relation-words necessary to any language, an acceptable belief, since preceding arguments have shown that thought is inevitably relational. Thus, he concluded that relations must be real. But why should we accept Russell's presupposition? It is the very point in question, it cannot be simply assumed. Since Russell himself admitted that he could not demonstrate it, we are by no means obliged to accept it.

Russell's case is beginning to look a little shaky; we need to look around for more positive support for it. When W. Winslade wrote about it in his article "Russell's Theory of Relations" (in Klemke's Essays on Bertrand Russell) he admitted that the theory was very strange, but nevertheless he wanted to lend it support. But the only support that he could come up with was:

Russell's claim that relations are real does have an appeal, however; for it is difficult to imagine a world—such as a Leibnizian or Bradleyan world—in which there are no real relations. 63

But this argument is really no argument at all. Bradley had already argued that thought is inevitably relational, and so of course we have difficulty in imagining a world without relations. But this is simply not significant in aiding Russell's thesis.

The main remaining support which Russell could give for his viewpoint was the indirect one of arguing that the alternative account, that relations are a product of our organising faculties, does not succeed. It would be wise to make sure, first, that we really understand this view, so that we can judge Russell's rejection of it. Note that it is not just the crude view that we add to immediate sensation a relational organisation which is not based in anything within the sensations. This would be obviously absurd: the relational organisation could then be nothing but chimerical. Russell attacks this view when he considers Kantian philosophy, but it is by no means this crude view which is being offered as an alternative to realism. This view, advocated whole-heartedly by Ockham, and half-heartedly by Bradley is that there are some properties of the relata which provide sufficient grounds for the relations which our organising faculties construct. For instance, when we say that one cigarette is similar to another particular cigarette, this relation can be said to be constructed by our organising faculties, using

certain properties of the two cigarettes, such as pungency, size, and colour, as a foundation for it. Now to defeat this view, it is worthless for Russell to argue that relational propositions cannot be reduced to subject-predicate propositions; this is admitted by the adherents of the view in question; they say that something over and above subject-predicate states of affairs is involved: the addition of the organization which we provide. Russell is obliged, if he wants to defeat this view, to provide us with certain relational propositions which cannot be adequately accounted for in this manner. He must provide us with cases where sufficient conditions of relationship cannot be found within the nature of the relata. If he can prove that relatedness is sometimes not dependent upon any properties of the relata, then he will certainly achieve this. Thus, his rejection of the doctrine of internal relations is still vitally relevant in this context.

At first sight, it does not seem that Russell should have too difficult a task. To paraphrase an argument of A.C. Ewing,<sup>64</sup> it does not seem as though the relation of juxtaposition on my bookshelf which holds between G.B. Keene's Language and Reasoning, and W.V. Quine's From a Logical Point of View is due in the least to their nature; it does not seem dependent upon the properties of the relata at all. But this is not the case. The fact that they are both logic books is at least partially responsible for their being found on the same shelf, and they could not be

juxtaposed if they did not come within the narrow range of size and weight which allows them to be found on a bookshelf. Again, it is a necessary condition of their being spatially juxtaposed that they be both spatial! This, note, is a necessary condition of any spatial relationship, so even the relationship which holds between myself and a particular fly in Outer Mongolia is not one to which the nature of both myself and the fly are indifferent. Ewing argues that it is a general truth that the nature of all related terms must provide at least necessary conditions of the relationship. Arithmetical relations can only arise, for instance, when both the related terms are numbers; love must presuppose the capacity for emotional involvement; causal relations, the membership of a causal system, and so on. Since Ewing has shown that the paradigm example of relations which are meant to be indifferent to properties of the relata, the spatial relation, is not indifferent to predicates of the relata, we may tend to conclude that he has carried his case. We may say that this very simple argument should make Russell moderate substantially his expression of the doctrine of external relations. Remember that his manner of arguing against the internal relations theory, and at the same time the Ockham theory, was to say that some relations are not dependent upon any of the relata at all. This, however, now appears questionable. Ewing



believes that relatedness does involve certain properties as necessary conditions of its existence. But even if this is the case, all that it really shows us is that Russell did not express the difference between himself and Bradley with sufficient subtlety; he is by no means defeated yet. Though he would not be able to defeat the Ockhamist account of relations on the ground that some relations do not require any properties of the relata as support, he can still argue that there are not always properties which provide the sufficient condition of relatedness. The point is that, for the Ockhamist account to work, there must be sufficient properties of the relata on which the organising faculties can work, to produce the relational complex; otherwise, the relation is still a chimerical one. For example, in such cases as "A is taller than B", we can find sufficient conditions for the relationship within the properties of A and B. If A is two feet high, and B is one foot high, then we have a sufficient condition for the relation. But is this always so? Is it, for instance, so with the relation of juxtaposition which holds between the two previously mentioned logic books? It is hard to see how this could be so.

It must be admitted that Bradley would have to go

on the defensive here. He simply cannot point to any properties of the relata from which the specific spatial relation must follow. His initial reaction would probably be that though he cannot point to any, this does not mean that there are none; he would repeat that assuming that the relation is not founded on properties of the relata is merely projecting our ignorance upon reality. This is by no means a satisfying answer. But it must be remembered that the Ockhamist account does appear quite satisfactory for very many relations. It can be argued that space and time are notions which have always been fraught with difficulties; that man has never understood their nature, and thus it is not surprising that the account runs into difficulties where they are concerned. Bradley could also use his further point, which is that he knows the account of relations to be ultimately unsatisfactory, since he believed that any account of them must fail. Though Russell has scored a point against his account of relations, he can still hold that his account is much better than Russell's realist account. To decide on this point, we need to return to Russell's account, and consider those objections which can be brought against it.

The main objections to Russell's account have already been noted: The main supports for it have been rejected, and it was pointed out that the whole account smacks of absurdity. Indeed, the account is so very

strange that it is tempting to say that Russell could only continue to make use of it because he had such a great love for the Meinongian universe; he could indulge his passion for exactness and certainty in the contemplation of it. But sounder arguments than the purely ad hominem can yet be brought against Russell's theory.

A useful argument, and an ironical one, is that Russell made insufficient use of Ockham's razor. Ockham made a great deal of use of his principle of economy in the matter of relations. He argued that when (say) Mr. Brown is similar to Mr. White, this is quite adequately accounted for by saying that Brown and White are both men, or are both bald; there is just no need to postulate some third entity "likeness" as an actual existent. Now though Russell may argue that there are cases where Ockham's account does not work, he must accept that it does work for the relation of similarity and the relation of difference. Thus, if he was in earnest in his acceptance of Ockham's razor, as he insisted he was, he should have admitted that there is no need to treat these relations entitatively. Russell, however, particularly wanted to make the relation of difference an objective entity, quite independent of thinking beings, since he felt that if difference is only mind-dependent, then monism must follow.

There is also a charge against Russell, filed by W. Winslade, that his account is not consistent. Winslade

argues that we cannot both say that relations are elements of relational states of affairs and unparticularized. How can an unparticularized universal be a constituent of a relational state of affairs? This does not seem to make sense. Now this objection may not seem at all serious; it may seem that Russell was simply mistaken in describing relations as unparticularized universals, and that his account would not be greatly altered if he admitted that relations are particularized in relational complexes. But not only did Russell insist, in "Replies to Criticism" <sup>65</sup> that he had continuously believed relations to be unparticularized since 1902, but there also seems to be reasons why, given his realism, he has to accept that relations are unparticularized universals. This is because it is the only apparent way out of an argument set up to show that relations cannot be real. That argument runs as follows:

    If relations are real, there must be an infinite number of them. That there are at least a very large number of relations is obvious, since, just to begin with, every spatial entity has a spatial relation with every other spatial entity, and every entity of whatever kind must have a relation of similarity or difference, or both, with every other entity. The largeness of this number need not worry the realist, but the fact that an infinite

number of relations would have to exist must. There can be no such thing as an actual infinity of entities. Infinities can only be inventions of the intellect. But an infinite number of relations can be generated very easily, for instance in the following manner:

Call the proposition "A is similar to B" "E", and the proposition "C is similar to D" "F". Now E is similar to F inasmuch as they are both similarity propositions. But E is different from A, inasmuch as E is a relational proposition, and A is an entity. Now call the proposition asserting the similarity of E to F "G", and the proposition asserting the difference of E to A "H". H is different to G, since one is a proposition asserting similarity, the other is a proposition asserting difference. Clearly this process can go on indefinitely, producing an infinite number of relations by alternating similarity and difference.

This argument would defeat those realist theories which treat each relation of similarity or difference as a particular. But if it is said that each of the relations of similarity which holds between A and B, C and D, and E and F is the same, and the same is said of the relations of difference, then there is no infinite generation. Though we may generate an infinite number of relational propositions, only two relations would be produced: the relations of similarity and difference, which are unaltered throughout the process. Thus, Russell's approach of treating relations as unparticularized universals avoids

what seemed to be a fatal flaw in any realist theory of relations. This part of Russell's account, then, is by no means superfluous, but a necessary part of it. But it does seem to produce a contradiction within the account. As we have already seen, it appears absurd to say that a relation is both unparticularized and an element of a relational state of affairs. But there is a further problem still. Any known realist account of relations, Russell's included, accepts that relations could not be other than ontologically dependent upon their relata. Russell said that it is quite absurd to speak of a relation without relata, and this is surely so. But if relations are unparticularized universals, they do not seem at all ontologically dependent on relata. Whichever way we turn, then, Russell's account seems to break down.

Now when we bear in mind all the objections which have been raised against Russell's doctrine of relations, and the paucity of support, it does seem as though Bradley has him beaten. Bradley's main challenge to Russell, and the main support of his view that relations are not real, was that he could not see how any account of relations, taken as real, could possibly succeed. Having considered Russell's account of relations, it seems that Bradley's judgement can be upheld. But do we need to therefore accept Bradley's conclusion, that since

relations are only a product of our organising faculties, and cannot be said to exist in reality, the universe must be a unity, and monism must be true? It does not really seem necessary. We may take T.H.Green's way out, and say that reality is manufactured by the mind. Another alternative, perhaps a greatly preferable one, would be to say that we simply must stop trying to speak of the "real" world, and must speak only of the world as it appears to us. We would be quite incapable of adequately talking about the "real" world, the non-relational objective reality, since thought is inevitably relational, always organising its materials in relational terms. We have here a familiar conclusion of critical philosophy. It is not insignificant that in places, even Russell, who was notorious for having nothing to do with critical philosophy, questioned whether we can really speak about what relations are. On page 173 of M.P.D. he expresses doubts about whether we can do so, and in "Logical Atomism", he again briefly showed doubts about the whole enterprise. He argued that something seems to go wrong when we make relation-words the subjects of our sentences. He stated that everything works perfectly well as long as relation-words are used within relational propositions, but as soon as we try to get at what the word means, we meet very grave troubles. This not only shows that at times Russell

himself had serious doubts about his Meinongian analysis, but it also appears to show that he at times took critical philosophy seriously. It may be just an illusion, but Russell almost seems to be saying that when we make relation-words subjects of our sentences, we are going beyond the limits of language.



## NOTES

1. Found in a letter from Russell to Bradley dated 29th. Oct. 1907.
2. D.F.Pears: Bertrand Russell and the British Tradition in Philosophy.
3. F.H.Bradley: The Principles of Logic, vol.1, pp.247-248.
4. "The universal judgement is thus always hypothetical."  
see Logic, p.47ff.
5. Op.cit. p.22.
6. Op.cit. p.591.
7. John Passmore: "Russell and Bradley", in Contemporary Philosophy in Australia.
8. Op.cit.p.29.
9. Op.cit.p.21.
10. V. Philosophical Essays, pp.140-141.
11. " " " " " p.141.
12. Letter: Russell to Bradley, April 9th. 1910.
13. Letter: Bradley to Russell, Oct. 21st. 1907.
14. Op.cit. p.12.
15. V. R.C.Marsh (ed.) Logic and Knowledge, p.335.
16. Op.cit. p.12.
17. Op.cit. p.15.
18. Op.cit. p.61.
19. The poet wishes to remain anonymous.
20. Op.cit.p.517.

21. V.: M.P.D. p.58.
22. M.P.D. pp.58-59.
23. Op.cit. pp.44-54.
24. Op.cit. pp.151-170.
25. Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol 7, p.127.
26. Letter: Russell to Bradley, 29th. Oct. 1907.
27. R.Rorty: Loc.cit. p.126.
28. M.P.D. p.58.
29. " " "
30. Vide: R.Wollheim: F.H.Bradley, p.69.
31. Op.cit. p.22.
32. Op.cit. p.27n.
33. F.H.Bradley: Collected Essays, vol.11, p.630.
34. Letter: Bradley to Russell, 21st. Oct. 1907
35. Collected Essays, vol.11, p.642.
36. Letter: Bradley to Russell, 21st. Oct. 1907.
37. Collected Essays, Vol.11, p.645.
38. Philosophy of Leibniz, p.15.
39. " " " " " p.12.
40. Appearance and Reality, p.18.
41. Op.cit. p.291.
42. Op.cit. p.665.
43. Op.cit. p.642.
44. Letter: Bradley to Russell, 21st. Oct.1907.
45. Appearance and Reality, pp.516-517.

46. Appearance and Reality, p.18.
47. Letter: Bradley to Russell, Jan. 28th. 1901.
48. V: The Principles of Mathematics, p.99.
49. " " " " " " " p.99.
50. See, for instance, Russell's Outline of Philosophy, p.275.
51. Letter: Bradley to Russell, 21st. Oct. 1907.
52. Letter: Russell to Bradley, 29th. Oct. 1907.
53. Letter: Russell to Bradley, 12th. Nov. 1907.
54. Appearance and Reality, p.19.
55. " " " " " " p.150.
56. " " " " " " p.28.
57. Op.cit. p.127.
58. Mind, New series, 13 (1904), p.45.
59. Op.cit. p.52.
60. A.D.Woozley, Theory of Knowledge.
61. Op.cit. pp.97-98.
62. The Problems of Philosophy, p.90.
63. Op.Cit. p.84.
64. V: Idealism: A Critical Survey, p.127ff.
65. The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell, p. 684.

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