

RUSSELL ON TRUTH

(1905-1910)

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## ABSTRACT

Before June 1905, Russell does not treat the problem of truth at length; but in the five subsequent years he devotes a number of important papers to the question: What is Truth? In his attempt to find the answer to this question in the following few years, he criticises and rejects all other prevalent theories of the time. In consequence Russell is able to establish his own view on the nature of truth in 1910.

The aim of this thesis is to present a unified view of the whole period, with its different aspects and their evaluation. This unified view will represent a transition from the initial indecision of 1905 to a definite formulation of the notion of 'truth' in 1910. In the controversies of this transitional period, certain defects of the then prevalent views have been pointed out, apart from those of Russell. Certain defects in Russell's criticisms have also been pointed out. Finally it has been shown that Russell's own positive notion of 'truth' is also not an adequate one.

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To You

I came here once upon a time  
And I had a life, and I lived  
And I lived for You  
And one day  
Shall silently pass away for ever  
And then ... then what ...  
I don't know the truth

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## INTRODUCTION

One important feature of Russell's philosophy is revealed by its transitional nature: Russell continually changes positions and is rarely content for long with any doctrine he arrives at. This Heraclitean nature is more or less present in all phases of his philosophical writings. As A.J. Ayer says, "He is incomparably fertile in ideas and uncommonly flexible in his handling of them".<sup>1</sup> This is equally, perhaps specially, true in regard to his notion of truth.

According to Russell there are two phases in his account of the notion of 'truth'. The earlier one begins in the beginning of this century; the later one begins at the later part of the fourth decade of the same century. As he puts it,

THE QUESTION of the definition of 'truth' is one which I wrote about at two different periods. Four essays on this topic, written in the years 1906-9, were reprinted in Philosophical Essays (1910). I took up the subject again in the late 'thirties ...<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ayer, A.J. Russell and Moore: The Analytical Heritage, Macmillan and Co. Ltd., London, 1971, p. 9

<sup>2</sup>Russell, B. My Philosophical Development, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1959, p. 175



However closer attention reveals at least four phases of Russell's theory of truth between 1900 and 1919 alone, viz., (a) Roses are Red Theory of Truth, 1900-1905; (b) Period of indecision, 1905-1910; (c) Multiple Relation Theory, 1910-1913 and (d) Propositional Theory, 1913 onwards.

In fact Russell ignores the period before 1906. And when James writes to Russell, "One of the first things I am going to do after I get back to my own library is to re-read the Chap. on Truth in your Phil. of M.",<sup>1</sup> Russell replies, "I fear you won't find much about 'Truth' in my Principles of Mathematics [1903]".<sup>2</sup> In fact Russell's serious writings on truth begins with 1905 as will become clear in the following discussion.

Although Russell ignores the period which precedes 1906, scholars and critics have tried to find out the true nature of Russell's view on the nature of truth in that period. The findings are mainly negative, discussions are mainly critical. But whatever the nature of the findings and discussions are, they are based on some foundation. The foundation, sketchy, scattered and unfinished though

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<sup>1</sup>James' letter to Russell, dated, October 4, 1908, printed in William James' The Meaning of Truth, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 1975, pp. 299-300

<sup>2</sup>Russell's reply to James, Ibid., p. 300

it may be, has received different treatments from different critics. The only common aspect in the whole matter is that, whatever view Russell has at that time is, in this way or that, very closely connected with his notion of a proposition.

Something may be said about the extent of the period under discussion. From Russell's own view, this period seems to be that of 1906-1909. But it may fairly be said that this period begins with 1905; and the unpublished paper of June 1905 contains all the distinctive characteristics of the whole period. Moreover, this paper contains certain views on the nature of 'fact' and the nature of 'object' of belief which have bearing on his positive views on the nature of truth. On the other hand, though, all the main papers and discussions appear by the year 1909, yet one brief paper on William James appears in 1910, after the death of James. Moreover, in this period the most important paper on 'truth', which marks the first definite formulation of his view, appears for the first time with the publication of his Philosophical Essays in 1910. For these reasons, the extent of this period can better be defined as between 1905 and 1910.

Russell's notion of truth before the period 1905-1910 is found in The Principles of Mathematics (1903) and in the third of his series of papers "Meinong's Theory of Complexes and Assumptions" (1904). A retrospect of this

time before 1905. may not be unworthwhile. The purpose of this retrospect is not a detailed discussion of Russell's position before 1905, because the extent of this thesis does not require that, and secondly because the retrospect is only to get an idea as to how a new period begins in 1905.

In The Principles of Mathematics, Russell gives only four pages to the problem of 'truth'. The first consideration that Russell gives to 'truth' in this work is connected with the definition of pure mathematics. Russell says,

PURE Mathematics is the class of all propositions of the form "p implies q," where p and q are propositions ... and neither p nor q contains any constants except logical constants. And logical constants are all notions definable in terms of the following: Implication, the relation of a term to a class ..., the notion of such that, ... and such further notions ... In addition to these, mathematics uses a notion which is not a constituent of the propositions which it considers, namely the notion of truth.<sup>1</sup>

It is observable that Russell is mainly concerned with 'proposition' and only least concerned with the notion of truth at this time. When next Russell considers the notion of 'truth', he does not consider it for knowing any criterion for or meaning of 'truth', or for knowing

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<sup>1</sup> Russell, B. The Principles of Mathematics, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1972, p. 5

truth itself' is. His main concern is the notion of proposition in connection with the definition of mathematics and consequently the distinction between true and false propositions. Thus he asks the question, "How does a proposition differ by being actually true from what it would be as an entity if it were not true?"<sup>1</sup> And he holds that truth is the quality of non-psychological assertion of a proposition. This view is not tenable and Russell is aware of it. To put the whole point in his language, "true propositions have a quality not belonging to false ones, a quality which, in a non-psychological sense, may be called being asserted. Yet there are grave difficulties in forming a consistent theory on this point ... ."<sup>2</sup>

Thus admitting the grave difficulties, he goes on to claim that 'truth' or 'falsehood' has either an internal or an external relation with a proposition.<sup>3</sup> To understand Russell's claim it is necessary to understand what Russell means by the nature of internal and external relations in connection with propositions. Here Russell distinguishes between asserted and unasserted propositions, as for

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 35

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 35

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 48

example, between (a) Caesar died and (b) the death of Caesar. In the unasserted proposition, the verb becomes the verbal noun.

In consequence, Dr. Griffin distinguishes them as, " 'verbal propositions' (those whose verb occurs as verb) and 'nominalized propositions' (whose verb occurs as a verbal noun)".<sup>1</sup> Dr. Griffin further continues that, "the distinction between verbal and nominalized propositions is not equivalent to the distinction between asserted and unasserted propositions, for, while all nominalized propositions are unasserted, some unasserted propositions are verbal. Thus being a verbal proposition is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for being an asserted proposition".<sup>2</sup>

In this context Russell holds that "the death of Caesar" has an external relation to truth or falsehood (as the case may be), whereas "Caesar died" in some way or other contains its own truth or falsehood as an element.<sup>3</sup> That is, asserted propositions contain truth or falsehood in itself or as an internal relation; but the unasserted propositions contain truth or falsehood as a relation external to the proposition.

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<sup>1</sup>Griffin, N. "The Roses are Red Theory of Truth", unpublished paper, McMaster University, Canada, 1977, p. 6

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 6-7

<sup>3</sup>Russell, B. The Principles of Mathematics, p. 48

But here also Russell only considers the relations of the propositions with truth or falsehood and does not say (and has of course nothing to say since they are unanalysable) about the nature or meaning of 'truth' or 'falsehood'. In this case also Russell is in great difficulty and holds that "[this difficulty] seems to be inherent in the very nature of truth and falsehood, [and] is one with which I do not know how to deal satisfactorily".<sup>1</sup>

Thus though Russell does not know the nature of truth, and he is aware of grave difficulties in his view, he still maintains that, "It is also almost impossible, at least to me, to divorce assertion from truth".<sup>2</sup> This unsatisfactory, difficult and incomplete view, with which Russell himself does not know what to do, is his view upto 1903.

The situation however, does not improve much with the following year (1904). Russell still retains the view that truth and falsehood are the unanalysable properties of propositions. And in the third paper of the series "Meinong's Theory of Complexes and Assumptions", Russell holds it to be a correct view that there is no problem at all in truth and falsehood.<sup>3</sup> This seems to mean that the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 48

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 504

<sup>3</sup>Russell, B. "Meinong's Theory of Complexes and Assumptions (III)", Mind, 1904, p. 523

solution of the problem of truth and falsehood is so simple that it is not usually recognised as a solution. It is in this utterly simple manner that Russell continues to say, "some propositions are true, and some false, just as some roses are red and some white".<sup>1</sup> In consequence Dr. Griffin describes this view as "The Roses are Red Theory of Truth".

And though Russell says that there is no problem in truth and falsehood, he cannot ignore the concepts, and the result consists (as seen above) in inquiries without any definite and firm result: it is as if a scientist's experiments with new and probable hypotheses. None turns to be satisfactory, and his position seems to swing from one idea to another. But this is how human knowledge develops; and in Russell's case the vacillations are most clearly visible in his paper on "The Nature of Truth" of June 1905. And this paper is what determines the whole character of the period 1905-1910. This is clear when Russell writes,

Two questions, theoretically distinct, but very hard to discuss separately, are included in the subjects which I wish to deal with. The first is: What are truth and falsehood themselves? the second, what kinds of things are true or false? On the first question, I have no positive doctrine to advocate,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 523

but am content to try and refute whatever positive doctrine comes into our discussion.<sup>1</sup>

On the nature of truth this period of 1905-1910 is pre-dominantly characterised by this negative and critical attitude with a later positive development of Russell's own view. Thus, throughout this whole period, all his published and unpublished papers on truth (except one<sup>2</sup>) are the criticisms of this or that theory, or the reviews of this or that book on truth.

It may therefore be argued that the total nature of this period is three-fold in character. First, it is transitional. It makes a transition from the earlier 'uncertainties' to a later positive view. Secondly, the whole period is critical and consists in the criticisms of the other prevalent theories of that time. Thirdly, this period is formative in character. Starting in 1905 without any positive notion of truth, Russell arrives at one at the end of the period.

In the strict sense, the theories which Russell criticises mainly in this period are the pragmatic theory

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<sup>1</sup>Russell, B. "The Nature of Truth", unpublished paper of June 1905, Russell Archives reference no. 220. 010890, McMaster University, Canada, manuscript p. 1, my italics; henceforth referred to as the unpublished paper of June 1905.

<sup>2</sup>The last chapter of Russell's Philosophical Essays



of truth and the coherence theory of truth. Only a very brief review of the correspondence theory of truth is found in the unpublished paper of June 1905. Russell's discussion of the pragmatic theory and coherence will take place in two separate chapters. Russell's sketchy and brief discussion on the correspondence theory may be discussed here.

Though Russell rejects the correspondence theory in his unpublished paper of June 1905, yet a hint of the negative attitude towards this theory is found in the year before, in his paper on Meinong. Since, according to the correspondence theory truth consists in the correspondence of judgment with reality, the judgment is a relatum to be appropriately related with reality. Against such a relation of correspondence, Russell retorts, regarding judgments and propositions, that they "cannot be merely imaginary relata for what appears as a relation of presentation or judgment".<sup>1</sup> Russell considers here the idealistic notion of correspondence as a matter of imagination. From a similar context Russell again affirms that "an erroneous judgment aRb (i.e. "a has the relation R to b") might be composed of the presentations of a and R and b suitably related, and might have no corresponding object".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Russell, B. "Meinong's Theory of Complexes and Assumptions (III.)", p. 509

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 517

However, Russell's explicit attitude towards the correspondence theory of truth is clear from the following quotation.

The definition of truth by correspondence is certainly the one which appeals most to the plain man. "Truth consists, it tells us, in the correspondence of ideas with reality." A muddled form of this definition is to be found in Locke, whose claim to be regarded as a philosopher seems to be derived from his having put together all the mistakes that unphilosophical people are prone to commit. One may often hear such people saying, with an air of profundity, that truth consists in agreement between the order of thought and the order of things.<sup>1</sup>

Russell's criticism of this view is that, sometimes our ideas or the order of our thoughts do not exactly correspond with the reality and we fail to understand that. Russell also raises objection against what is meant by 'correspondence'.<sup>2</sup> Thus if anyone thinks that a Banker's clerk is descending from a bus and after a second look he sees it to be a hippopotamus, the first idea fails to correspond to reality. But for Russell, the first idea is not that of a Banker's clerk, but the whole idea that, "that-a-Banker's-clerk-is-descending-from-that-'bus-at-that-moment".<sup>3</sup> The reason why this idea does not correspond

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<sup>1</sup>Russell, B. The unpublished paper of June 1905, manuscript p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 3

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 4

with reality is that, at that moment a Banker's clerk was not descending from the bus; and hence this is not true because it is not true that a Banker's clerk was descending from the bus at that moment. So, the relation between 'truth' and 'correspondence' is becoming circular; if the idea of the Banker's clerk's descending is 'true', then it corresponds with reality and this idea corresponds with reality if it is true. As Russell puts it:

An idea is to be true when it corresponds with reality, i.e. when it is true that it corresponds with reality, i.e. when the idea that it corresponds with reality corresponds with reality, and so on.<sup>1</sup>

But this criticism does not seem to be a sound one. This may be made clear by taking a predicate  $\underline{T}$  for a proposition  $p$ , such that  $p$  is true if and only if  $\underline{Tp}$ . Then it follows that,

$\underline{Tp} \equiv p$ , and then

$\underline{\underline{Tp}} \equiv \underline{Tp}$ , and so on.

But this does not make the concept of truth absurd, and if it does, what would be absurd is the predicate  $\underline{T}$  which stands for 'it is true that', not this or that account of what this predicate means. This kind of criticism of Russell can be placed against any theory of truth and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 4

Russell uses it against the pragmatic theory of truth.<sup>1</sup>

It may also be mentioned here that though Russell rejects the correspondence theory of truth, by 1910 he adopts some form of this theory as a part of his own view.

In his unpublished paper of June 1905, Russell next explains his own view on the nature of facts and the nature of the objects of belief. This is discussed in the chapter (of this thesis) on Russell's positive views on truth. However, after explaining his views on the nature of facts and the objects of belief, Russell holds that, "The correspondence-theory placed truth and falsehood in a relation between belief and its object; I wish to place them wholly in the object",<sup>2</sup> which indicates that he still maintains the 'roses are red' theory. Russell next proceeds to combat the coherence theory of truth, which has been dealt with in a separate chapter of this thesis.


Last of all, it may be said that the whole discussion of this thesis has been pursued both from historical and critical-analytical perspectives. Historical perspective is due to the demand of the nature of the problem, which extends over a period of a few years and involves certain historical personalities, views and schools. The critical-

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<sup>1</sup>Russell, B. Philosophical Essays, Simon and Schuster, New York, from 1966 © of George Allen and Unwin Ltd., p. 125

<sup>2</sup>Russell, B. The unpublished paper of June 1905, manuscript p. 7

analytical perspective presupposes a certain amount of the exposition of the views and that has been done. The critical-analytical perspective itself is due to the demands of the nature of the views and the argument-instances, upon which the views rest. However, the discussion of chapter one may now be started.



## Chapter I

### RUSSELL'S PROBLEMS WITH THE PRAGMATIC THEORY OF TRUTH

Russell's criticisms of the pragmatic theory of truth consist mainly of the criticisms of James' notion of truth. These criticisms appear in his papers "Transatlantic 'Truth' " and "Pragmatism", both of which were reprinted in his Philosophical Essays. While criticising James' views, Russell also makes brief criticisms or comments on Peirce's, Schiller's and Dewey's views in the above two papers and also in other places in his writings. In this chapter an attempt will be made to discuss Russell's criticisms of the pragmatic theory of truth and to examine how far the criticisms are satisfactory. For this purpose, the pragmatic theory of truth may first be explained. Let us start with C. S. Peirce.

In his paper "How to Make Our Ideas Clear", Peirce says that "we come down to what is tangible and conceivably practical, as the root of every real distinction of thought, ... and there is no distinction of meaning so fine as to consist in anything but a possible difference of practice".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Buchler, J. (ed.) Philosophical Writings of Peirce, Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1955, p. 20

G. Ezorsky considers this view of Peirce as giving the best understanding of the pragmatic theories of truth.<sup>1</sup> This is because the notion of 'practical difference' is the main notion of the whole pragmatic theory of truth and the pragmatic tradition. Another aspect of the pragmatic tradition is clear in Peirce's view when, regarding the beliefs, doubts and disputes in philosophy, he says that "Philosophy ought to imitate the successful sciences in its methods, so far as to proceed only from tangible premisses ...".<sup>2</sup> But though some idea of the nature of the pragmatic theory of truth can be obtained from Peirce's writings, yet he does not develop his theory of truth. Peirce's view prevails in history as a method in philosophy. But primarily as a theory of truth, pragmatism has been revived and reformulated in 1898 by William James and then it has been further developed, expanded and disseminated by John Dewey and F. C. S. Schiller.<sup>3</sup> We may now, therefore, turn to these other authors.

James' treatment of pragmatism is both like and unlike the views of Peirce. James accepts Peirce's

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<sup>1</sup>Ezorsky, G. "Pragmatic Theory of Truth" in Paul Edwards (ed.) The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. & The Free Press, New York, 1972; vol. VI, p. 427

<sup>2</sup>Buchler, J. Philosophical Writings of Peirce, p.229

<sup>3</sup>Thayer, H. S. "Pragmatism", in The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, vol. VI, p. 431

methodological approach of practical consequences. This is clear when James says,

The pragmatic method is primarily a method of settling metaphysical disputes that otherwise might be interminable. Is the world one or many? - fated or free? - material or spiritual? - here are notions either of which may or may not hold good of the world; and disputes over such notions are unending. The pragmatic method in such cases is to try to interpret each notion by tracing its respective practical consequences. What difference would it practically make to any one if this notion rather than that notion were true? If no practical difference whatever can be traced, then the alternatives mean practically the same thing, and all dispute is idle. Whenever a dispute is serious, we ought to be able to show some practical difference that must follow from one side or the other's being right.<sup>1</sup>

It is further said about this method that "It has no dogmas, and no doctrine save its method", and this method is "The attitude of looking away from first things, principles, 'categories,' supposed necessities; and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts".<sup>2</sup> This is a divergence from Peirce, whose method proceeds from the premisses of science and conversely does not

<sup>1</sup> James, W. Pragmatism, A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking, Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1928, pp. 45-46, henceforth referred to as Pragmatism

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 54-55



intend to look away from principles, categories and supposed necessities. But James extends this method to the theory of truth and holds that "Meanwhile the word pragmatism has come to be used in a still wider sense, as meaning also a certain theory of truth",<sup>1</sup> and that pragmatism is "first, a method; and second, a genetic theory of what is meant by truth".<sup>2</sup>

James holds in common with prevailing theories of truth which he calls 'intellectualist', that "Truth ... is a property of certain of our ideas. It means their 'agreement,' as falsity means their disagreement, with 'reality.'" <sup>3</sup> It may be mentioned here that James maintains throughout his career this view that truth represents a property of our ideas.<sup>4</sup> By reality James means "either concrete facts, or abstract kinds of thing and relations perceived intuitively between them. They furthermore and thirdly mean, as things that new ideas of ours must no less take account of, the whole body of other truths already in our possession".<sup>5</sup> As to the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 55

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 65-66

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 198

<sup>4</sup> James, W. The Meaning of Truth, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 1975, p. 8

<sup>5</sup> James, W. Pragmatism, p. 212

agreement, it means, "To 'agree' in the widest sense with a reality can only mean to be guided either straight up to it or into its surroundings, or to be put into such working touch with it as to handle either it or something connected with it better than if we disagreed".<sup>1</sup>

In this way the "True ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate and verify".<sup>2</sup> And truth is made by the process of verification and validation of the idea. All these processes,

again signify certain practical consequences of the verified and validated idea. It is hard to find any one phrase that characterizes these consequences better than the ordinary agreement-formula - just such consequences being what we have in mind whenever we say that our ideas 'agree' with reality. They lead us, namely, through the acts and other ideas which they instigate, into or up to, or towards, other parts of experience with which we feel all the while - such feeling being among our potentialities - that the original ideas remain in agreement. The connexions and transitions come to us from point to point as being progressive, harmonious, satisfactory. This function of agreeable leading is what we mean by an idea's verification.<sup>3</sup>

The whole account can be summarised in a statement

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 212-213

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 201

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 201-202, my italics

that the "account of truth is an account of truths in the plural, of processes of leading, realized in rebus, and having only this quality in common, that they pay".<sup>1</sup> Or that, " 'The true, to put it very briefly, is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as 'the right' is only the expedient in the way of our behaving. Expedient in almost any fashion; and expedient in the long run and on the whole of course ...".<sup>2</sup> Ezorsky comments that, this is a "famous statement that shocked [the general philosophical community]".<sup>3</sup>

From this account of James' views, it is clear that 'truth' is a matter of three aspects, viz.,

(a) First, the truth-process is a process of leading, and "fully verified leadings are certainly the originals and prototypes of the truth-process".<sup>4</sup>

(b) Secondly, the leading must be agreeable, i.e. must be progressive, harmonious and as well as satisfactory. The progressive, harmonious and satisfactory character of agreeableness can be either intellectual or practical and this may only mean the negative fact that

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 218

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 222

<sup>3</sup> Ezorsky, G. The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, vol. VI; p. 425

<sup>4</sup> James, W. Pragmatism, p. 206

there is nothing contradictory.<sup>1</sup>

(c) And thirdly, in the agreeable processes of leadings, the only common quality is that they pay.

Two more aspects of James' views are to be taken into account for dealing with Russell's criticisms of James. The first is that, like Peirce, James also gives much emphasis to the ~~notion of~~ science in formulating his view of truth. He says, " 'truth' in our ideas and beliefs means the same thing that it means in science ... Any idea upon which we can ride, so to speak; any idea that will carry us prosperously from one part of our experience to any other part, linking things satisfactorily, working securely, simplifying, saving labor; is true for just so much, true in so far forth, true instrumentally ... the view that truth in our ideas means their power to 'work,' ...".<sup>2</sup> Thus it is clear that James' notion of truth is connected with that of science. Russell gives much emphasis on this issue in criticising James.

Secondly, at the outset of his discussion, James makes a distinction between the tender-minded and the tough-minded types of philosophy and philosophers and characterise them in the following way.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 215

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 58

## THE TENDER-MINDED.

Rationalistic (going  
by 'principles'),

Intellectualistic

Idealistic,

Optimistic,

Religious,

Free-willist,

Monistic,

Dogmatical<sup>1</sup>

## THE TOUGH-MINDED.

Empiricist (going by  
'facts'),

Sensationalistic,

Materialistic,

Pessimistic,

Irreligious,

Fatalistic,

Pluralistic,

Sceptical.<sup>1</sup>

Russell discusses this distinction in connection with the pragmatic attitude towards the notion of truth. The pragmatic attitude of this distinction is that of the reconciliation of the two types, and it has "a hankering for the good things on both sides of the line".<sup>2</sup> James further holds about pragmatism that, "I have all along been offering it expressly as a mediator between tough-mindedness and tender-mindedness".<sup>3</sup>

Schiller's theory of truth, the next to be considered, may be dealt with under two heads: "(a) the nature of the ground over which the truth-valuation is used,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 12

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 13

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 269

(b) the way in which our bricks cohere, i.e. the 'formal' nature of truth".<sup>1</sup>

The nature of the ground of truth-valuation lies, in Schiller's view, in the nature of 'facts'. The facts can be apprehended, and the objects of contemplation can also become 'fact', when valued as truth. "The system of truth therefore is constructed by an interpretation of 'fact' ".<sup>2</sup> The next attempt is therefore the search for the concepts and postulates of the fundamental principles of thought. Such concepts and postulates are to be sought in the pragmatic principles. And since truth is not a matter of personal monopoly, it is to be found in the social recognition of its common property. "Hence in the fullest sense of Truth its definition must be pragmatic".<sup>3</sup> And instead of other theories of truth, one can "try the alternative adventure of a thoroughly and consistently dependent truth, dependent, that is, on human life and ministering to its needs, made by us and referring to our experience, and involving everything called 'real' and 'absolute' and 'transcendent' ...".<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Schiller, F. C. S. Humanism, Macmillan and Co. Ltd., London, 1912, p: 57

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 57

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 59

<sup>4</sup>Schiller, F. C. S. Studies in Humanism, Macmillan and Co. Ltd., London, 1907, p. 183

In a summary form, this view may be presented  
as,

... the answer to the question - what is Truth? - to which our pragmatism has conducted us, is this. As regards the psychical fact of the truth-valuation, Truth may be called an ultimate attitude and specific function of our intellectual activity. As regards the objects valued as 'true,' Truth is that manipulation of them which has after trial been adopted as useful, primarily for any human end, but ultimately for that perfect harmony of our whole life which forms our final aspiration.<sup>1</sup>

Like its adherents, this view also makes some reflections on the nature of science. But unlike the predecessors, Schiller does not follow the methods of science, but intends to determine the pragmatic purpose of science.

Thus,

In any case ... scientific knowledge is not an ultimate and unanalysable term in the explanation of things: Science subordinates itself to the needs and ends of life alike whether we regard its origin - practical necessity, or its criterion - practical utility.<sup>2</sup>

Or again,

for what we want to know in the science will determine the question we put, and their bearing on the

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<sup>1</sup>Schiller, F. C. S. Humanism, p. 61

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 105

questions put will determine the standing of the answers we attain. If we can take the answers as relevant to our questions and conducive to our ends, they will yield 'truth'; if we cannot, 'falsehood.'<sup>1</sup>

Apart from this scientific aspect of Schiller's humanism, another important aspect is his ethical considerations. He considers "the ethical conception of Good [as the] supreme authority over the logical conception of True ... The Good becomes a determinant both of the True and of the Real ...".<sup>2</sup> And "the predications of 'good' and 'bad,' 'true' and 'false,' etc., may take rank with the experiences of 'Sweet,' 'red,' 'loud,' 'hard,' etc., as ultimate facts which need be analysed no further".<sup>3</sup>

Schiller's view, as is thus evident, is in complete harmony with the basic spirit of James' views. We may now turn to Dewey's views of the nature of truth. His views also are in harmony with those of his predecessors. Like Peirce (of whom Dewey was a student for sometime), he also holds that reflection and knowledge arise because of the incompatible factors in the empirical situations,<sup>4</sup> and that, reflections become dominant

<sup>1</sup> Schiller, F. C. S. Studies in Humanism, p. 152

<sup>2</sup> Schiller, F. C. S. Humanism, p. 8

<sup>3</sup> Schiller, F. C. S. Studies in Humanism, p. 144

<sup>4</sup> Dewey, J. Essays in Experimental Logic, Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1953, pp. 9-10



in a situation when there is some trouble, active discordance and conflicts among the factors of a priori non-intellectual experience.<sup>1</sup> To meet such a situation, "we have (a) to locate the difficulty, and (b) to devise a method of coping with it".<sup>2</sup> The notion of truth follows from an attempt to deal with such situations. Thus it is held that,

If ideas, meanings, conceptions, notions, theories, systems are instrumental to an active reorganization of the given environment, to a removal of some specific trouble and perplexity, then the test of their validity and value lies in accomplishing this work. If they succeed in their office, they are reliable, sound, valid, good, true. If they fail to clear up confusion, to eliminate defects, if they increase confusion, uncertainty and evil when they are acted upon, they are false ... That which guides us truly is true - demonstrated capacity for such guidance is precisely what is meant by truth.<sup>3</sup>

This account of truth is further amplified by the claim that, "The hypothesis that works is the true one; and truth is an abstract noun applied to the collection of cases, actual, foreseen and desired, that receive

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 12, my italic

<sup>3</sup>Dewey, J. Reconstruction in Philosophy, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1920, p. 156

confirmation in their works and consequences".<sup>1</sup> As to the workability of truth, "It includes public and objective conditions. It is not to be manipulated by whim or personal idiosyncrasy",<sup>2</sup> and Dewey continues by saying that if utility is meant for purely personal end, then as a conception of truth it is very repulsive. In this way Dewey emphasises a general notion of truth instead of any personal or private one.

Towards the end of his life, there occurs some changes in Dewey's view, initiated by Russell's criticisms. At this time Dewey considers the mark of truth as some sort of consequences of warranted assertions.<sup>3</sup> And he describes this view as the correspondence theory of truth in the operational sense of correspondence.<sup>4</sup> This later version also retains its pragmatic character by taking the account of the consequences and operational senses. Further discussion of this later version is not, of course, necessary for the extent of Russell's criticisms between 1905-1910.

To look for a unity or a disunity of these views which undergo Russell's criticisms, a brief sketch may be

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 156-57

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 157

<sup>3</sup>Dewey, J. Problems of Men, Philosophical Library Inc., New York, 1946, p. 335

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 343-44

drawn on the basis of the discussions.

The notion of practical consequences and differences are present to all the exponents. This unity of view is not however vitiated by the fact as to what is to be understood by the meaning of 'practical'. But whatever may be the meaning of this word, it is connected with the notion of 'practical life' of man. Secondly, all draw a connection of their view with the notion of science.

Peirce, James and Dewey try to derive their views from the notion of science. But James diverges from Peirce by taking metaphysical views into account as well. Both James and Dewey give values to the working hypothesis of science. On the other hand, Schiller does not connect science and pragmatism in the same way. He attempts to determine the course of science by assigning to it the pragmatic value in the normative way and he considers truth to be a matter of ethical consideration. While Peirce almost exclusively considers pragmatism as a method, James and Dewey consider it both as a method and a theory of truth. They also take it to give a criterion for and the meaning of truth. James on the contrary considers also the concrete and particular aspects of the practical consequences.

Russell's criticisms of the pragmatic theory of truth may now be discussed. Sometimes his criticisms are psychological, sometimes logical, sometimes concerned with science and sometimes of a general type. It is very

difficult to discuss them under a strict classification, because, they are involved with different pragmatists in different ways and different contexts. It may be a convenient way to discuss them as they occur in Russell's writing, maintaining as much consistency as possible.

Russell considers James' "Will to Believe" as an introduction to pragmatism and that this essay is characteristic of James' later views,<sup>1</sup> and further considers it as a transitional doctrine, leading by a natural development to pragmatism.<sup>2</sup> In fact, though the word pragmatism is not explicitly present in this essay, yet the pragmatic spirit is explicitly present and the pragmatic notion of truth is implicitly present here. James considers his "Will to Believe" as an essay in justification of (religious) faith,<sup>3</sup> and briefly states its thesis as the following:

Our passional nature not only lawfully may, but must, decide an option between propositions, whenever it is a genuine option that cannot by its nature be decided on intellectual grounds; for say, under such circumstances, "Do not decide, but leave the question open," is itself a passional decision, - just like deciding yes or

<sup>1</sup>Russell, B. Philosophical Essays, p. 81

<sup>2</sup>Russell, B. History of Western Philosophy, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1961, p. 770

<sup>3</sup>McDermott, J. J. (ed.) The Writings of William James, Random House Inc., New York, 1957, p. 717

no, - and is attended with the same risk of loosing the truth.<sup>1</sup>

"Scepticism, then, is not avoidance of option; it is option of a certain particular kind of risk. Better risk loss of truth than chance of error ...",<sup>2</sup> and "We must know the truth; and we must avoid error, - these are our first and great commandments as would-be knowers ...".<sup>3</sup> And in the case of the absence of any reason in favour of any of two alternatives, one would accept one, if it gives a passional satisfaction. To establish this thesis, James takes the account of religious and moral arguments and examples.

One criticism of this position is that it involves "the confusion between acting on an hypothesis [an option] and believing it".<sup>4</sup> Russell's example is that a scientist may act on an hypothesis but may not believe it. Moreover, in the case of forced option between two rival hypotheses, one may be forced to act on one of them, but one may not believe in either; and the action may be either wrong or right, but the belief since it does not exist can be neither. And the actual belief that a probable hypothesis

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 723

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 732

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 726-27

<sup>4</sup>Russell, B. Philosophical Essays, p. 84

is true is apt to be a hinderance to the progress of knowledge.<sup>1</sup> Again,

if, in the case of an option which we have no rational means of deciding, we believe one alternative at a venture, we cannot be said to know, even if, by good luck, we have chosen the alternative which in fact is true ...the precept 'we must know the truth', which James invokes, is irrelevant to the issue ... The true precept of veracity, which includes both the pursuit of truth and the avoidance of error, is this: 'We ought to give to every proposition which we consider as nearly as possible that degree of credence which is warranted by the probability it acquires from the evidence known to us.'<sup>2</sup>

In this connection Russell criticises James' view that immense numbers of people may hold immense numbers of differing beliefs and they may believe everything in the hope of getting as much truth as possible is to practise a wrong view.<sup>3</sup> Russell argues that if, as James says that knowledge is merely belief in true propositions, then the first task of a knower would be to maximise the number of true beliefs. Thus, if there is a choice between two rival options where there is no evidence for either, then the best policy would be to believe both the options, since in that way one is sure to get the one which is true.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 85

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 86

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 8-37

Before commencing the criticism of the proper pragmatic theory of truth, it may be held that Russell's main front of attack is James' views among all the pragmatists and on the other hand James' main front of attack is all other prevailing theories of truth. James' disquiet is clear from the following quotation.

Common sense, common science, ... or idealistic philosophy, all seem insufficiently true in some regard and leave some dissatisfaction. It is evident that the conflict of these so widely differing systems obliges us to overhaul the very idea of truth, for at present we have no definite notion of what the word may mean.<sup>1</sup>

This is James' attempt at preparing the ground for establishing his own view. This comment of James occurs just before the start of the discussion of his own view of truth. And Russell confronts this at the very beginning and holds that this is a mere non sequitur.<sup>2</sup>

This criticism of Russell is correct and acceptable. Russell makes it clear by the analogous argument that "A damson-tart, a plum-tart, and a gooseberry-tart may all be insufficiently sweet; but does that oblige us to overhaul the very notion of sweetness ...?"<sup>3</sup> In Russell's view, therefore, the insufficiency of the truth of science,

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<sup>1</sup>James, W. Pragmatism, p. 192

<sup>2</sup>Russell, B. Philosophical Essays, p. 113

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 113

philosophy, and common sense does not oblige us to overhaul the prevailing (i.e. non-pragmatist) ideas of truth. This can be made evident by an example. The exponents of the coherence theory of truth consider all human truth and knowledge to be insufficiently true but they do not, on that account, feel the need to adopt the pragmatic theory of truth.

But the analogy which Russell makes here to break through James' claim, itself breaks down. When James cites the examples of science, philosophy and common sense, etc., he covers the main examples or the paradigms of the pursuits of knowledge where we can hope to find truth. But to contradict James' argument, when Russell cites the examples of damson-tart, plum-tart or gooseberry-tart, as the examples of sweetness, he does not cover the main examples or the paradigms or the better examples of sweet things. This is not a fair analogy on Russell's part.

Moreover, Russell holds that if we perceive that damson-tart, plum-tart and gooseberry-tart are all insufficiently sweet, then we do know what 'sweetness' is.<sup>1</sup> This argument is not tenable. This may be made clear by taking two examples. First, the notion of goodness: one may know that something is insufficiently good without knowing what the notion of 'goodness' itself is and if asked to

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 113



define or to explain the notion of goodness, one may not be able to do that adequately. Secondly, without knowing the notion of truth in the true sense of knowing, one can well know or understand the results of some scientific investigation to be insufficiently true or inadequate. From this discussion it can be said that though Russell's claim that James' view is a non sequitur, is correct, yet, the analogy which Russell uses to support his claim is not a good one.

One of the main criticisms of Russell against pragmatic theory of truth is based on his distinction between the criterion and the meaning of truth and to make this distinction clear he takes the example of a library. Russell holds that the catalogue is the criterion by which one can know whether a particular book is in the library or not. But the fact that a book is in the library does not mean that it is mentioned in the catalogue, because there may be uncatalogued books in the library. And again a book may be mentioned in the catalogue, but that does not mean that the book is in the library, because, the book might have been lost. Russell also holds that a criterion may be a useful criterion or may not be a useful criterion. "Speaking abstractly, we may say that a property A is a criterion of a property B when the same objects possess both; and A is a useful criterion of B if it is easier to discover whether an object possesses the property A than whether

it possesses the property B".<sup>1</sup>

On this point of the distinction between criterion and meaning, neither James nor Schiller is very clear, and that if the pragmatist affirms that utility is a criterion of truth then there is much less to be said against their view and there are certainly very few cases, if any, in which it is useful to believe what is false.<sup>2</sup> "The chief criticism one would then have to make on pragmatism would be to deny that utility is a useful criterion, because it is so often harder to determine whether a belief is useful than whether it is true".<sup>3</sup>

But it is worth noting when James says that,

Good consequences are not proposed by us merely as a sure sign, mark, or criterion, by which truth's presence is habitually ascertained, tho they may indeed serve on occasion as such a sign; they are proposed rather as the lurking motive inside of every truth-claim, ... They assign the only intelligible practical meaning to that difference in our beliefs which ~~our habit of calling them true or~~ false comports.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 120, a detailed discussion of this issue will take place at the beginning of the third chapter.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 120, this criticism can be re-criticised by Russell's own examples. If "One gathers (perhaps wrongly) from his instances that a Frenchman ought to believe in Catholicism, an American in the Monroe Doctrine, and an Arab in the Mahdi" (Ibid., p. 115), then that suggests that false beliefs are very useful in certain cases.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 120-21

<sup>4</sup>James, W. The Meaning of Truth, pp. 146-47

It seems, therefore, that for James utility provides a criterion, though not always a useful one, for truth. This shows that Russell's above criticism holds against James' view. As it is evident from this above quotation, by good consequences are not merely meant the sure or useful criterion, but the only intellegible practical meaning of truth.

But Russell can be criticised here from another standpoint when he says that it is harder to determine whether a belief is useful than whether it is true. It may be asked what does Russell mean by truth here. Throughout the whole discussion Russell is criticising the pragmatic view of truth and making statements regarding truth like the above one, but not giving his own view what he thinks the meaning of truth to be. In fact, here he is only begging the question against James.

James seems to be disappointed by such a situation and though he does not raise the objection of begging the question, he expresses his dissatisfaction in one of his letters to Russell,

But until you give some articulate account of your own of what truth in the true sense does mean, you must n't be astonisht if I don't come down. I am "sick and tired" at last of the very name of "truth," ... and I am too lazy to try to go into the detail of showing that your illustrations ... in this article don't work as you mean them to ... & the simplest thing is to challenge you

to give the wonderful true meaning  
which escapes us.<sup>1</sup>

In this controversy regarding the notion of meaning, Russell holds that the word 'meaning' can be taken to have two meanings. "In the first sense, one thing 'means' another when the existence ... of the other can be inferred from the one, i.e. when there is a causal connection between them. In the second sense 'meaning' is confined to symbols, i.e. to words, and whatever other ways may be employed for communicating our thoughts".<sup>2</sup> Russell accuses pragmatism of confusing these two senses of meaning. Thus, in the first sense, pragmatism discovers certain causal connections between true belief and utility and then in the second sense, takes utility to give the meaning of 'truth'.

Thus in Schiller's view, truth is that which furthers our purposes, that is, which causes certain satisfactory changes. For Russell, furthering our purpose or causing certain satisfactory changes is not what we have in our mind when we judge that a certain belief is true.

Schiller also makes a distinction between 'truth as claim' and 'truth as validated', and thereby makes a distinction between two senses of truth. Russell does not

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<sup>1</sup> James' letter to Russell, May 14, 1909, Harvard bMs Am 1902, Russell [1815], printed in The Meaning of Truth, p. 301

<sup>2</sup> Russell, B. Philosophical Essays, p. 97

accept this distinction. Russell argues that, whether something is claimed as truth and whether something has been validated as truth, the sense of 'truth' should be same in both the cases. In this connection Russell makes a distinction between what we continue to think to be true and what is true.<sup>1</sup> Schiller's view that 'truth furthurs our purpose' is due to the fact that we continue to think that to be true.

Another of Russell's criticisms is that the notions of 'practical consequences', 'agreeable leading', and 'paying', are effects of one's beliefs which follow the belief. The determination of the nature of truth by means of these effects is refuted when Russell says, "Suppose I say there was such a person as Columbus, everyone will agree that what I say is true. But why is it true? Because of a certain man of flesh and blood who lived 450 years ago - in short, because of the causes of my belief, not because of its effects".<sup>2</sup>

Arguments of the similar type has also been made against Dewey. The fundamental thesis of Dewey's notion of truth as formulated by Russell is that, "it would have been said that inquiry is distinguished by its purpose,

<sup>1</sup>Russell, B. Philosophical Essays, p. 100

<sup>2</sup>Russell, B. History of Western Philosophy, p. 772,  
my italics

which is to ascertain some truth", and that "The relations of an organism to its environment are sometimes satisfactory to the organism, sometimes unsatisfactory. When they are unsatisfactory, the situation may be improved by mutual adjustment. When the alterations by means of which the situation is improved are mainly on the side of the organism ... the process involved is called 'inquiry'."<sup>1</sup>

Russell holds that the main difference between Dewey and him is that Dewey judges a belief by its effects, whereas he judges it by means of the causes where a past occurrence has occurred.<sup>2</sup> It is evident that Russell's criticism of Dewey is in line with his above criticism on assessing truth-value by reference to the cause or the effect of a belief.

However, Dewey's attitude towards Russell's criticisms is based in the feeling that Russell shuts off from understanding what Dewey means.<sup>3</sup> A similar accusation has also been made by H. C. Brown by saying that Russell is barred by his own predilections in understanding Dewey's

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 778

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 780

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Dewey, J. "Experience, Knowledge and Value: A Rejoinder", in P. A. Schilpp (ed.) The Philosophy of John Dewey, The Library of Living Philosophers Inc., 1939, p. 546

philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

Russell's argument is again directed against Schiller when he considers 'truth' as one species of 'good', and considers 'good' as what satisfies desire. Russell holds that this position becomes connected with psychological notions and psychology becomes paramount over logic, knowledge and ethics and "The facts which fill the imaginations of pragmatists are psychical facts";<sup>2</sup> thus for example, when others may think about the validity of scientific hypotheses and laws, pragmatists will think about the satisfactory consequences of them.

Russell next criticises pragmatists because of "the fact that their theories start very often from such things as the general hypotheses of science",<sup>3</sup> and because "One of the approaches to pragmatism is through the consideration of induction and scientific method".<sup>4</sup>

Russell puts forward three objections against the pragmatic approach through scientific and inductive methods. Russell holds that the pragmatic notion that truth 'works' is derived from the fact that the scientific and inductive

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<sup>1</sup>Brown, H. C. "A Logician in the Field of Psychology", in P. A. Schlipp (ed.) The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell, The Library of Living Philosophers, 1971, p. 451

<sup>2</sup>Russell, B. Philosophical Essays, p. 95

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 121

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 93

methods and the hypotheses 'work'. But "there are truths of facts which are prior to the whole inductive procedure, and that these truths of fact must be 'true' in some other sense"<sup>1</sup> than the pragmatic sense.

Secondly Russell holds that the scientific and inductive methods 'work' in the theoretical sense, but the pragmatic sense of 'work' is the practical sense. And "the kind of 'working' which science desiderates is a very different thing from the kind which pragmatism considers to be the essence of truth".<sup>2</sup> A. O. Lovejoy makes a similar criticism that, "A belief may "work" in two very different senses, either by having its actual predictions fulfilled, or by contributing to increase the energies or efficiency or chance of survival of those who believe it".<sup>3</sup> Lovejoy explains this by taking the example that Jews believed for many centuries that a national Messiah would come to restore the independence and establish the supremacy of Israel. This belief did not work; for the predicted events did not occur. But biologically it worked. It did much to produce the extraordinary persistency of the Jewish racial character

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 94

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 95

<sup>3</sup> Lovejoy, A. O. "The Thirteen Pragmatisms", in Muelder, W. G. and Sears, L. (eds.) The Development of American Philosophy, Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, 1940, p. 405



and the exceptional energy, self-confidence, and tenacity of purpose of the individual Jew.

Russell's third objection to the argument from 'working hypotheses',

is that by men of science these are explicitly contrasted with established truths. An hypothesis, as experience shows, may explain all known relevant facts admirably, and yet at any moment be rendered inadequate by new facts ... Thus the cases from which pragmatism endeavours to discover the nature of truth are the very cases in which we have least assurance that truth is present at all.<sup>1</sup>

And therefore Russell holds that pragmatism derives its notions from a hypothesis to which prudent men will give only a very provisional assent.<sup>2</sup> In this connection Russell further argues that pragmatism has so far shown that the scientific procedure does not contradict pragmatism, but it has not shown that science positively supports it.<sup>3</sup>

Apart from Russell's criticisms, James' view can also be criticised on the ground that, his notion of the word 'practical' is very ambiguous. Sometimes he ties up this word with the verification and validation of an idea

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<sup>1</sup> Russell, B. Philosophical Essays, p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 96

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 95

and sometimes with satisfactory consequences. In the first sense, it becomes virtually the verification principle of the logical empiricists, and pragmatism is further affiliated with this trend by James' claim that his philosophy is radical empiricism. On the other hand when the word 'practical' means satisfactory consequences, pragmatism's tie with the verification principle breaks down and it succumbs to other difficulties already mentioned. James is thus ambiguous on the exact meaning of the word 'practical'.

Though Russell does not make any criticism of the ambiguity of the word 'practical', yet in the controversy of Russell and Schiller, there is a similar hint in Russell's view that there is an ambiguity in the two pragmatic senses, viz., verifying and paying. Russell's interpretation is that, in pragmatic sense, 'A exists' may be true even if A does not exist.<sup>1</sup> In reply to this, Schiller holds that, but "no belief that A exists could have become "true" except by verifying a prior claim that A exists".<sup>2</sup> To this Russell, it seems justly, counter-replies that, "What strikes me as pathetic is the inability of pragmatism to become aware of its own assumptions. My argument, in brief, is this: In order to prove that the belief that

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 123

<sup>2</sup>Schiller, F. C. S. "The Tribulations of Truth", The Albany Review, London, 1908, p. 632

'A exists' is what you call 'true', you establish that ...  
 "the belief that 'A exists' pays".<sup>1</sup>

This makes clear the evidence of the ambiguity of confusing verifying and paying. Russell and Schiller are involved in this case in the verifying of truth with facts.

As to the notion of fact, Schiller seems to misunderstand Russell's position. For Schiller, the old notion of 'fact' crumbles together with the old notion of 'truth'.<sup>2</sup> By the old notion of 'truth', as a pragmatist, Schiller means all the past notions, specially the idealist and the intellectualist ones. By the old notion of 'fact', as belonging to the radical empiricist group, Schiller means the notion of the idealists who think that 'facts' are the ideas of mind. But Russell does not fall in that group and this misunderstanding is stated by Russell by saying that Schiller insists on giving a psychological colour to his notion of 'fact', and otherwise it would appear that Schiller's doctrine assumes 'fact' just as much as Russell's doctrine.<sup>3</sup>

Regarding this controversy a certain synthetic

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<sup>1</sup>Russell, B. "A Reply to Dr. Schiller", unpublished paper, Russell Archives reference no. 220.01124, McMaster University, Canada, manuscript pp. 3-4, my italics

<sup>2</sup>Schiller, F. C. S. "The Tribulations of Truth", p. 630

<sup>3</sup>Russell, B. "A Reply to Dr. Schiller", manuscript pp. 1-2

position can be observed from what Russell says, namely:

The essence of my argument is that pragmatism, like every other philosophy, really presupposes (tho' unconsciously) the objective complexes, such as 'A exists', which I call facts; and that when we realize these complexes, we see that it is beliefs in them that are 'true'. The answer of pragmatism seems to be that we cannot know such complexes if there are any; to which my retort is, that the whole of its account of 'verification' collapses unless it is assumed that we can know them, and that in fact we do know them whenever we believe one of them - a case which arises, at the least, with one of two disputants who each think the other mistaken.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from Russell's criticisms, James also can be criticised regarding the ambiguity of the word 'agreeable' which can be understood in two senses. In the context of James' discussion (Pragmatism, pp. 198, 212-13), 'agreement' means the non-contradictory harmony with reality. But, when James says that truth is agreement and truth pays (Pragmatism, pp. 198, 218), then 'agreement' means paying. These lead to the ambiguity of the word 'agreeable'. These two meanings moreover may conflict with each other. And in contrast to the first meaning, a belief in a contradiction may well pay in the sense of the relief of intellectual discomfort.

James' view also seems to involve another confusion when he says that truth is a process of leading

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 6

and is something which pays. The putting of one's toe on a hot surface is not truth, though it validates the belief that the surface is hot and yields useful consequences causing comfort, and in that sense pays. The leading process to which James refers is the process by which truth is ascertained, but the process itself is not 'truth'. This criticism is in conformity with James' claim that truth is made and that it is a property of our ideas. A machine may be made, but the machine itself is not the process which makes it.

In connection with pragmatic theory of truth, pragmatic attitude towards philosophy can also be discussed. This attitude is the pragmatic attitude of reconciliation between the empiricists and rationalists or the tough-minded and tender-minded types of philosophy. To contradict James' claim of this reconciliation, Russell holds that he himself agrees with the tough-minded half of pragmatism, but does not agree with the other half.<sup>1</sup>

But it is not right on Russell's part to regard himself as representing the whole empiricist tradition. And in this way it is possible that some empiricist may well agree with both the aspects of pragmatism. Berkeley, for example, is tender-minded in the sense that he is idealistic, optimistic, religious, monistic, and dogmatic.

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<sup>1</sup>Russell, B. Philosophical Essays, pp. 113-14

But this example on the other hand proves that, strictly speaking, James is not right to group the empiricist philosophers as tough-minded. James could have said that the empiricists are usually and predominantly tough-minded in type, and it is possible to find tender-minded elements in them. The same also can be said about the tender-minded or the rationalistic group.

Russell also criticises the pragmatist claim that they are open-minded and undogmatic, and holds that this claim is true as regards scientific questions and the less important issues of philosophy, but regarding the nature of truth, pragmatism is quite dogmatic.<sup>1</sup> Schiller retorts to this objection that, "we do not claim to be infallible; it would be inconsistent with our theory to contend that any truth remained irremediably true when a better could be had".<sup>2</sup> James also expresses a similar view when he says that;

The individual [any individual person] has a stock of old opinions already, but he meets new experience that puts them to strain. Somebody contradicts them; or in a reflective moment he discovers that they contradict each other; or he hears of facts with which they are incompatible; or desires arise in him which they cease to satisfy. The result is an inward trouble to which his

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 114-15

<sup>2</sup> Schiller, F. C. S. "The Tribulations of Truth", p. 628

mind till then had been a stranger, and from which he seeks to escape by modifying his previous mass of options ... So he tries to change first the opinion ... until at last some new idea comes up ... This new idea is then adopted as the true one ... New truth is always a go-between, a smoother-over of transitions.<sup>1</sup>

But one important distinction is to be noticed here. In this controversy Russell's criticism (that pragmatism is dogmatic and truly is not open-minded) is about the general nature of truth. But Schiller's reply and James' above quoted view only affirm that pragmatism is undogmatic and open-minded only in the cases of particular instances of truth. It therefore seems that in the true sense Russell's criticism remains unanswered.

Russell next criticises the pragmatic theory of truth in connection with its religious views. In connection with the Absolute, Russell makes a distinction between 'belief in the Absolute' and 'Absolute as a fact'.<sup>2</sup> "But we cannot believe the hypothesis that the Absolute is a fact merely because we perceive that useful consequences flow from this hypothesis".<sup>3</sup> In response to this criticism James holds that,

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<sup>1</sup> James, W. Pragmatism, pp. 59-61

<sup>2</sup> Russell, B. Philosophical Essays, p. 124

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 124

This is all rubbish. And the coincidence of the true with the emotionally satisfactory becomes of importance for determining what may count for true, only when there is no other evidence. Surely, ... in 2 beliefs, Mr. Russell himself would not adopt the less emotionally satisfactory one, solely for that reason.<sup>1</sup>

But in Russell's view the pragmatic view results in the contradiction that it believes as true what is not useful. Russell observes that,

useful consequences flow from the hypothesis that the Absolute is a fact, not from the hypothesis that useful consequences flow from belief in the Absolute ... In other words, the useful belief is that the Absolute is a fact, and pragmatism shows that this belief is what it calls 'true'. Thus pragmatism persuades us that belief in the Absolute is 'true', but does not persuade us that the Absolute is a fact. The belief which it persuades us to adopt is therefore not one which is useful.<sup>2</sup>

Next, when James says that "On pragmatic principles, if the hypothesis of God works satisfactorily in the widest sense of the word, it is true",<sup>3</sup> Russell holds it to be a tautology. It is because, since 'true' means "works satisfactorily in the widest sense of the word",

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<sup>1</sup> James, W. The Meaning of Truth, p. 309; this is James' annotation on Russell's paper "Transatlantic Truth", reprinted as chapter V in Philosophical Essays

<sup>2</sup> Russell, B. Philosophical Essays, pp. 124-25

<sup>3</sup> James, W. Pragmatism, p. 299



the above pragmatic statement becomes, 'On pragmatic principles, if the hypothesis of God works satisfactorily in the widest sense of the word, then it works satisfactorily in the widest sense of the word'.

The strongest argument against pragmatic view of religion seems to be that, "whereas what religion desires is the conclusion that God exists, which pragmatism never even approaches".<sup>1</sup> To this James' reply is that in his account of the problem of God, he simply illustrates the fact that men do and always will use moral satisfactoriness as an ingredient in the truth of a belief.<sup>2</sup>

These pragmatic arguments for the belief in God are somewhat similar to what is known in history as the moral argument for the existence of God. Both the pragmatic and the moral argument for the belief in God are based on some kind of consideration of usefulness, utility, consequences or pragmatic 'leading up' of the belief.

The whole discussion however suggests the idea that there are lot of genuine problems with pragmatic theory of truth. Apart from Russell's and others' criticisms, certain ambiguities of pragmatic view and certain defects or improvements of Russell's criticisms have also

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<sup>1</sup>Russell, B. Philosophical Essays, p. 125

<sup>2</sup>James, W. The Meaning of Truth, p. 309, this is also James' annotation on Russell's paper.

been pointed out in this chapter. For the time being  
Russell's option for the non-pragmatic view may be granted  
to see and follow where it leads to for an account of  
Russell's own view.

## Chapter II

### INCOHERENCE IN THE COHERENCE THEORY

The second theory of truth which Russell discusses and rejects is the coherence theory of truth as expounded by Harold H. Joachim. This controversy between Russell and Joachim, about which Joachim was aware beforehand,<sup>1</sup> represents (through the controversy on a particular issue) a controversy between two philosophical schools. It is a controversy between the idealistic and the realistic approach to the problem of truth, and more generally a controversy between the general philosophical positions of these two schools. Thus, Russell rejects the coherence theory of truth as well as the underlying idealistic theses of the theory. In this chapter, an attempt will be made to make these contentions clear.

At the very beginning, Joachim makes clear the idealistic aspect of his philosophy:

Thus, the reader will see for himself how greatly I have been influenced by Mr. F. H. Bradley and Professor Bosanquet, though I have referred to them but seldom, ... And I am fully

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<sup>1</sup> Joachim, H. H. The Nature of Truth, The Oxford University Press, London, 1939, p. 3

aware that the greater part of my work draws its inspiration from the writings of Hegel . . . .<sup>1</sup>

Long before Joachim writes, Russell rejects Hegelianism and he only repeats his rejection of it in the writings on Joachim. This will be evident from the following discussion.

To explain his view of truth, Joachim holds that,

'Anything is true which can be conceived. It is true because, and in so far as, it can be conceived. Conceivability is the essential nature of truth' . . . . And to be 'conceivable' means to be a 'significant whole', or a whole possessed of meaning for thought. A 'significant whole' is such that all its constituent elements reciprocally involve one another, or reciprocally determine one another's being as contributory features in a single concrete meaning.<sup>2</sup>

And at the end of his book, as the outcome of his whole discussion Joachim arrives at the view that, "the truth itself is one, and whole, and complete, and that all thinking and all experience moves within its recognition and subject to its manifest authority; this I have never doubted".<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 2-3

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 66

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 178

As to the further explanation of his view, Joachim says that the relation of the constituent elements or the parts of this significant whole or the truth must be a relation of systematic coherence<sup>1</sup> and " 'conceivability' means for us systematic coherence, and is the determining characteristic of a 'signifiant whole' ".<sup>2</sup> The conceivability of the significant whole or its systematic coherence is "not of truths, but of [the] truth",<sup>3</sup> and it "must not be confused with the 'consistency' of formal logic".<sup>4</sup> For Joachim, an example can be consistent and valid in the formal logical sense, but may fail to exhibit that systematic coherence which is the truth.

Joachim reformulates this theory as follows:

A 'significant whole' is an organized individual experience, self-fulfilling and self-fulfilled. Its organization is the process of its self-fulfilment, and the concrete manifestation of its individuality ... The whole is not, if 'is' implies that its nature is a finished product prior or posterior to the process, or in any sense apart from it. And the whole has no parts, if 'to have parts' means to consist of fixed and determinate constituents, from

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 67-68

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. pp. 67-68

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 72

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 76

and to which the actions and interactions of its organic life proceed ... Its 'parts' are through and through in the process and constituted by it. They are 'moments' in the self-fulfilling process which is the individuality of the whole.<sup>1</sup>

Joachim also holds that this process is a "living and moving whole",<sup>2</sup> and "there can be one and only one such experience: or only one significant whole",<sup>3</sup> and "human knowledge ... is clearly not a significant whole in this ideally complete sense. Hence the truth, ... is ... an ideal, and an ideal which can never as such, or in its completeness, be actual as human experience".<sup>4</sup> Joachim also distinguishes between the partial whole and the whole and holds that the partial whole cannot adequately express the whole. And according to Joachim human knowledge is always a partial whole in this sense.

Against the charge that this ideal or the significant whole is inconceivable, Joachim maintains that, "it would seem that the significant whole, which is truth, can in the end be most adequately described only in terms of the categories of self-conscious thought", and that "it is the ideal which is solid and substantial

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 76

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 77

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 78

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 79

and fully actual. The finite experiences are rooted in the ideal. They share its actuality, and draw from it whatever being and conceivability they possess".<sup>1</sup> It is further argued that " 'Such an ideal experience is everywhere and at all times; it is the partial possession of finite beings, and they are the incomplete vehicles of it' ".<sup>2</sup> It therefore follows that the significant whole is conceivable, though not wholly or completely.

This gives the fundamental outline of Joachim's notion of truth with its underlying philosophical position. These views, however, remind one of Hegel's Absolute or Bradley's all-inclusive whole or the organic unity, where any single part by itself is merely appearance and unreal. This notion of the 'Whole and part', the 'One and many' or the 'Absolute and particular' are the basic notions of Hegelian idealism. Similarly Joachim also explains his view as that of the 'Whole', the 'One' or the 'Absolute' truth and his view becomes that of the Truth instead of truths. The importance of this theory is also stressed by Russell: "This doctrine, ... is one of the foundation-stones of monistic idealism".<sup>3</sup> Or that, "Mr. Joachim's book is valuable as an attempt to establish some of the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 82

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 84

<sup>3</sup> Russell, B. Philosophical Essays, p. 132

fundamentals of the Hegelian philosophy".<sup>1</sup>

After this outline sketch of the fundamental points of Joachim's views, Russell's criticisms may now be discussed. A brief idea of the nature<sup>2</sup> and purpose of Russell's criticisms may be obtained from the following quotation:

In the first [part] I shall state the monistic theory of truth, sketching the philosophy with which it is bound up [which I have done above], and shall then consider certain internal difficulties of this philosophy, which suggests a doubt as to the axioms upon which the philosophy is based. In the second part I shall consider the chief of these axioms, namely, the axiom that relations are always grounded in the natures of their terms ...<sup>2</sup>

The first argument which Russell puts forward is that, "if [in Joachim's view] no partial truth is quite true, it cannot be quite true that no partial truth is quite true; unless indeed the whole of truth is contained in the proposition 'no partial truth is quite true', which is too sceptical a view ...".<sup>3</sup>

The above criticism can be presented in the following way. It may be said that given:

(A) No partial truth is quite true,

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<sup>1</sup>Russell, B. "What is Truth?", The Independent Review, London, June 1906, p. 349

<sup>2</sup>Russell, B. Philosophical Essays, p. 131

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 133



then either,

(B) (A) is not quite true (i.e. it is partial truth)

or, (C) (A) is not a partial truth (i.e. it is the whole truth).

But the idealists assent to (A) and then, their position is either not quite true or it is the whole truth. But it is clear that the idealists deny that we can know the whole truth. Thus Joachim writes: "human knowledge ... is clearly not a significant whole in this ideally complete sense",<sup>1</sup> or "That nothing in our partial experience answers precisely to the demands of the ideal ...",<sup>2</sup> or that this ideal truth "is [only] the partial possession of all finite beings".<sup>3</sup> Therefore their position is not quite true.

Russell admits<sup>4</sup> that Joachim very candidly faces this objection, but he does not give any reference where Joachim faces it. Before finding this out, it may be noted that in Joachim's discussion, the whole or the truth or the self-fulfilled living experience are all used in the same sense of giving the whole truth. And it is in this context that Joachim says, "we shall be able to face

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<sup>1</sup> Joachim, H. H. The Nature of Truth, p. 79

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 83

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 84

<sup>4</sup> Russell, B. Philosophical Essays, p. 133

[candidly] the difficulties we have raised; but we must not assume that we shall be able to solve or remove them".<sup>1</sup> And he immediately goes on to deal with partial truth on which Russell bases his objection.

It is also clear that, by facing these difficulties, Joachim does not expect to solve them, rather to give a working explanation.

When Russell begins his objection by saying that no partial truth is quite true, Joachim's reply could be:

'partial truth' is a judgment which contains complete and absolute truth, ... [and] a 'partial truth' is the same thing as a true but indeterminate judgment. The determinate judgment is the whole truth about a matter where the indeterminate judgment affirms only part of the truth."<sup>2</sup>

The context from which these difficulties arise is also worth noting in this connection. Regarding the partial whole and the whole, Joachim says:

But because we are not complete, it does not follow that we are divorced from the complete and in sheer opposition to it. We are not absolutely real, but neither are we utterly unreal. And because our apprehension is restricted, and in part confused, it does not follow that it is utterly false and an entire distortion of the nature of things.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Joachim, H. H. The Nature of Truth, p. 84

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 87

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 81

The same can also be said about the whole truth and partial truth. Therefore, one can become a bit sceptical when Russell characterises Joachim's position as sceptical.

Russell also maintains that this criticism "is met [by the idealists] by challenging the distinction between finite minds and Mind".<sup>1</sup> But against Russell, it may be said that in fact Joachim does not challenge this distinction, rather admits it. Joachim not so much denies the distinction as blurs it since any distinction is necessarily a partial truth in Joachim's system. Russell next passes to the distinction of finite knowledge and Absolute knowledge and holds that though we know that we know all truth, the idealists claim that only they know the whole truth.<sup>2</sup> This is again contrary to what Joachim's actual claim is. Joachim clearly claims about human knowledge in general that, "not merely my knowledge or yours, but the best and fullest knowledge in the world at any stage of its development - is clearly not a significant whole ...".<sup>3</sup> But, of course, this distinction between human knowledge and Absolute knowledge is only partially true and it is this point on which Russell (illicitly)

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<sup>1</sup>Russell, B. Philosophical Essays, p. 133

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 133

<sup>3</sup>Joachim, H. H. The Nature of Truth, p. 79

depends to gain his conclusion that we know all truth, but only the idealists know that they know it.

Russell gives a considerable attention to the distinction between finite and Absolute knowledge, though it is not clear that he gets the idealist theory right. For example, he says, "although you and I may not know that I am 5 ft 8 in height, or may sometimes, in the hurry of the moment, forget this weighty fact; yet the absolute knows it, and never forgets it for one moment ...".<sup>1</sup> It is a matter of serious doubt whether this interpretation of idealism is correct. This doubt is further strengthened by the following point.

Russell's main objection against the finite and Absolute knowledge is that, knowledge actually depends upon fact and "it is impossible to see how the fact that I am of such-and-such height can depend upon Absolute's knowledge any more than upon any one else's, since to know it is to recognize it, and therefore the fact must be already there to be recognized".<sup>2</sup> It may be said that Russell's criticisms here are more about his own assumption of philosophy than of Joachim's own exposition.

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<sup>1</sup>Russell, B. "The Nature of Truth", unpublished paper of January-February, 1907, Russell Archives reference no. 220.011250, McMaster University, Canada, 1978, manuscript p. 9

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 10

Russell's view is that all these difficulties are based on the notion of the 'whole', which underlies Joachim's views. But a whole W must consist of parts a, b, c, etc., none of which is real - because, only the whole is real. "Thus W is a whole of parts all of which are not quite real",<sup>1</sup> and thus the whole itself is not real. Russell thinks that this is again a reductio ad absurdum for the coherence theory.

Russell also makes a distinction between two meanings of part and holds that the notion of the organic unity or the whole depends upon an oscillation between these two meanings.<sup>2</sup> In Russell's view, an organic whole is a complex and parts can be distinguished in it. And these are parts in the sense that they are constituents. In the second sense the parts involve the whole and become equally as complex as the whole; and the whole becomes part of the parts, just as parts are parts of the whole. "Here part is used in a different sense: instead of the part which really was a constituent of the whole, we substituted what is called the whole nature of the part, which is a new whole having parts itself".<sup>3</sup> Russell claims

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<sup>1</sup>Russell, B. Philosophical Essays, p. 134

<sup>2</sup>Russell, B. Unpublished paper of June 1905, manuscript p. 16

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 16

that this oscillation between two meanings results in self-contradiction in the organic whole of the idealist philosophy.

A similar argument in Russell's is the following:

In a 'significant whole', each part, since it involves the whole and every other part, is just as complex as the whole; the parts of a part, in turn, are just as complex as the part, and therefore just as complex as the whole. Since, moreover, the whole is constitutive of the nature of each part, just as much as each part is of the whole, we may say that the whole is part of each part. In these circumstances it becomes perfectly arbitrary to say that a is part of W rather than W is part of a.<sup>1</sup>

Russell next raises another kind of difficulty of the coherence theory, and says, "The other objection to this definition of truth is that it assumes the meaning of 'coherence' known, whereas, in fact, 'coherence' presupposes the truth of the laws of logic".<sup>2</sup> Russell's objection is that to understand that something is coherent, one requires to know the truth of the laws of logic like that of the law of contradiction. Thus, two propositions are coherent, if they do not contradict each other. What follows is that, coherence theory cannot give us truth,

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<sup>1</sup>Russell, B. Philosophical Essays, p. 134

<sup>2</sup>Russell, B. The Problems of Philosophy, A Galaxy Book, Oxford University Press, New York, 1959, pp. 122-23

because it requires to be preceded and supplemented by certain laws of logic.

But as mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, Joachim's coherence theory does not necessarily need to be preceded by the notion of the consistency of formal logic. So, Russell's objection in this case is not a sound one. It may be possible for Russell to reply that though Joachim's view is not involved with logic in this way, yet some propositions are required to state the condition for coherence and these statements must be true. To this possible objection, it can be replied that any theory of truth presupposes that there are some true statements - but this does not make the account of truth circular or inadequate. And this is applicable to any theory of truth.

Russell's next objection is against Joachim's view of the nature of error. As it has been evident in the earlier discussions that truth is an Ideal, a whole and the one truth, it would follow that any partial truth is an error. And any partial truth which is unqualified by this fact must be an error. That is, "It is this claim to express truth unqualified ... that constitutes the 'sting' of error".<sup>1</sup> This is clear when Joachim says that, "The erring subjects' confident belief in the truth of

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<sup>1</sup> Joachim, H. H. The Nature of Truth, pp. 143-44, my italics

his knowledge distinctively characterizes error, and converts a partial apprehension of the truth into falsity".<sup>1</sup> Joachim further says, "Error ... is that form of ignorance which poses, to itself and to others, as indubitable knowledge; or that form of false thinking which unhesitatingly claims to be true, and in so claiming substantiates and completes its falsity".<sup>2</sup>

Russell's one interesting criticism of this view is that "it makes error consist wholly and solely in rejection of the monistic theory of truth [of Joachim]. As long as this theory is accepted, no judgment is an error; as soon as it is rejected, every judgment is an error".<sup>3</sup> This must be a very objectionable position for a theory of truth. Moreover, as Russell points out, the truth or falsehood of certain propositions such as "A murdered B" is not to be regarded as partial truth or partial falsehood. Whether somebody murdered somebody else is either true or false, and there is no question whether it is partially true or partially false.

Another criticism of coherence theory, put forward by Russell, is that "there is no explanation, on the coherence theory, of the distinction commonly expressed by

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 162

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 142

<sup>3</sup>Russell, B. Philosophical Essays, p. 135



the words 'true' and 'false', and no evidence that a system of false propositions might not, as in a good novel, be just as coherent as the system which is the whole of truth".<sup>1</sup>

In connection with this criticism, Russell supposes that, the possible reply of Joachim would be an appeal to experience.<sup>2</sup> Russell supposes this, because Joachim speaks of the one organized individual, self-fulfilling and self-fulfilled experience; and because, the coherent systems of novels can not fall under this category of experience.

But the context (The Nature of Truth, p. 78) in which Joachim discusses this notion of experience and which Russell refers to in connection with the above criticism, is quite different from the context of the coherent systems of the novels and fictions. The contexts of Joachim's discussion here is that of the actual (not fictitious) human experience and ideal experience. But Russell's main concern here is about how we could distinguish the coherent fictitious systems of novel from other systems. Obviously Joachim's reply would be the appeal to the ideal experience.

Russell's supposition that the systems of a novel or fiction can be coherent is true in a sense but that is

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 136

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 136

not true in the sense of Joachim's view. Joachim<sup>1</sup> clearly makes a distinction between 'coherence' and 'formal consistency of thought'. This distinction (as discussed in the beginning of this chapter) can be applied in this case, and then the systems of novels and fictions will not be coherent in Joachim's sense. But though Joachim's sense is an appeal to ideal experience, yet it is not unthinkable and is theoretically possible to construct a fictitious system which is like an ideal system in respect of coherence and consistency. And this is the main point of Russell's objection.

Russell however observes<sup>1</sup> that Joachim's notion involves a distinction between two kinds of experience: the ideal experience (which is the coherent whole) and finite experience. And on Joachim's view any body of propositions, short of a complete description of the Absolute, will be only partially true (i.e. partially coherent). Thus a novel can be at least as coherent as any such body of propositions. Thus, e.g., a novel may be partially true in the same way and to the same extent as a history book. But the two may be inconsistent (e.g. a history of the American civil war and a novel about what would have happened if the south had won). Coherence here provides no ground for treating one as partially true to a certain

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 137

degree and the other as partially true to a lesser degree.

Russell again makes a distinction between two aspects of finite experience, i.e. experience as an act of experiencing and experience as the knowledge of something, and "The distinction between knowing something and the something which we know".<sup>1</sup> Such distinctions in experience are not present in Joachim's view. This is clear when Joachim says that,

But if 'experience' tends to suggest the experiencing apart from the experienced, 'significant whole' tends to suggest the experienced apart from the experiencing. We want a term to express the concrete unity of both, and I cannot find one.<sup>2</sup>

Again Russell's view of experiencing something is possible in the sense of apprehending without believing in what is experienced. In this sense, however, Russell argues that one can experience some coherent (not in Joachim's sense of 'coherence') false system in the sense of apprehending without of course believing. In another sense one can also experience something in the sense of believing. In this case it may be said that Russell rightly criticises Joachim for failing to give an adequate explanation of the notion of experience.

Russell next proceeds to examine the main axiom,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 137

<sup>2</sup>Joachim, H. H. The Nature of Truth, pp. 83-84n,  
my italics

the axiom of internal relations, upon which Joachim's view is based. It may be mentioned here that this axiom is not what Joachim explicitly puts forward in his discussion, but rather, as mentioned earlier, is connected with the philosophy with which Joachim's view is intimately connected. This is Russell's own position as is clear when he says about the axiom that,

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 natures of the related terms.' Let us call this the axiom of internal relations.<sup>1</sup>

Russell discusses three aspects of this axiom, viz., (a) the consequences of this axiom, (b) arguments against the axiom and (c) arguments in favour of the axiom. And the conclusion of Russell's discussions in each case of these aspects goes against Joachim's view.

As to the first consequence, Russell holds that,

It follows at once from this axiom that the whole of reality or of truth must be a significant whole in Mr. Joachim's sense. For each part will have a nature which exhibits its relations to every other part and to the whole; hence, if the nature of any one part were completely known, the nature of the whole and of every other part would also be completely known; while conversely, if the nature of the whole were completely known, that would involve

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<sup>1</sup>Russell, B. Philosophical Essays, p. 139.

knowledge of its relations to each part, and therefore of the relations of each part to each other part, and therefore of the nature of each part. It is also evident that, if reality or truth is a significant whole in Mr. Joachim's sense, the axiom of internal relations must be true. Hence the axiom is equivalent to the monistic theory of truth.<sup>1</sup>

Next Russell observes that (as another consequence of the axiom) to understand one thing truly, one has to understand it in its relation to the whole and that would involve the understanding of the whole universe. Russell's impression is that it is not a plausible view.

Before discussing the arguments against the axiom of internal relations, Russell gives two possible interpretations of the axiom, viz., "according as it is held that every relation is really constituted by the natures of the terms or of the whole which they compose, or [as] merely that every relation has a ground in these natures".<sup>2</sup>

But as Russell says, in either meaning, the relation of the related terms becomes impossible to explain. In this connection both Russell's and Bradley's arguments are like the following. If two terms a and b are related by a relation R, then R will have another separate relation either with a or with b, giving rise to a new relation R<sub>1</sub>,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 140

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 141

which will again involve with the terms in the same way giving rise to other new relations, leading to an infinite regress.

Thus Bradley affirms that relations "are nothing intelligible, either with or without their qualities [or terms]".<sup>1</sup> Bradley's view is that, without terms, there cannot be any relation. And with terms, relations are inexplicable in the sense that they lead to infinite regress. The same standpoint is reflected in Russell's writing:

The difficulties which I have urged against the view that relations are, not purely external are largely to be found in Mr. Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*. What he there says against Substance and Attribute, and against Qualities and Relations, seem to me to be a largely valid proof that the doctrine that relations modify their terms is inconsistent with the whole of the rest of our usual beliefs.<sup>2</sup>

In this context Russell observes elsewhere that "It [this axiom] leads straight to the view that nothing is quite real except ~~the~~ the universe as a whole".<sup>3</sup> Thus, if all terms and relations are unintelligible, then "the axiom of internal relations is equivalent to the assumption of ontological monism and to the denial that there are

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<sup>1</sup>Bradley, F. H. *Appearance and Reality*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1962, p. 27

<sup>2</sup>Russell, B. Unpublished paper of June 1905, p. 18a

<sup>3</sup>Russell, B. "What is Truth?", p. 351

any relations".<sup>1</sup> In the same vein is Russell's reference to Bradley's view that reality is one.<sup>2</sup>

However, on this assumption of ontological monism, the one and only truth will involve in a proposition with a subject and a predicate and will again involve the relation of subject to predicate (and the distinction between them).<sup>3</sup>

Russell holds that if the whole is composed of parts, then in the proposition 'the whole is composed of parts', the subject 'whole' would be the sum of the 'parts'; and it would be an error. From this standpoint Russell says that, "there would be no ground for opposing subjects to predicates, if subjects were nothing but collections of predicates. Moreover, if this were the case, predications ... would be just as analytic as those concerning essences ...".<sup>4</sup> Russell devises this subject-predicate contrast to discuss Leibniz's notion of substance and thinks this to be applicable to Joachim's notion of whole.<sup>5</sup> On

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<sup>1</sup>Russell, B. Philosophical Essays, p. 142

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 141n

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 142

<sup>4</sup>Russell, B. A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz, George Allen and Unwin Ltd.; London, 1971, p. 50

<sup>5</sup>Russell, B. Philosophical Essays, p. 145n

an earlier page Russell makes a similar comparison between Joachim and Leibniz and criticises their view by saying that nothing quite true can be said about something short of taking account of the whole of universe. And the 'whole' of Joachim is not such that the parts are the 'essences' of the whole, but rather the extreme opposites and mere unimals.

Another difficulty against the axiom of internal relation is regarding the relation of the nature of a term with the term itself. This again involves the process of infinite regress if the term is supposed to be different from its nature. But if the nature of the term is not different from the term itself, then every proposition regarding the term will be purely analytic. Thus Russell holds that, there are difficulties in the axiom whether it is affirmed or denied that a subject is other than its own nature.

Russell's position can also be presented and contrasted with Joachim's in the following way.

It is a common opinion ... that all propositions, ultimately, consist of a subject and a predicate. When this opinion is confronted by a relational proposition, it has two ways of dealing with it, of which the one may be called monadistic, the other monistic. Given, say, the proposition  $aRb$ , where  $R$  is some relation, the monadistic view will analyse this into two propositions, which we may call  $ar_1$  and  $br_2$ , which give to



a and b respectively adjectives supposed to be together equivalent to R. The monistic view, on the contrary, regards the relation as a property of the whole composed of a and b, and as thus equivalent to a proposition which we may denote by  $(ab)r$ .<sup>1</sup>

Russell holds that the monistic type is held by Bradley (among others); and Joachim, by his confessed adherence to Bradley, also belongs to this group. "The monistic theory holds that every relational proposition  $aRb$  is to be resolved into a proposition concerning the whole which a and b compose".<sup>2</sup> For Russell, if this proposition is not about the whole and part, then it would be false. But if it is about the whole and part, then it would require a new one for its meaning.<sup>3</sup> Thus Russell shows the inner contradiction of the axiom of internal relations.

Russell further thinks that it is actually difficult to use the axiom of internal relations as it has been already seen in the cases of the terms with diversity, which involve the relation of endless regress. Regarding the difficulties of this axiom, Russell's conclusion would be "Arguments [against this monistic view] of a more general nature might

<sup>1</sup>Russell, B. The Principles of Mathematics, p. 221

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 224

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 225

be multiplied almost indefinitely".<sup>1</sup>

Russell next discusses two grounds in favour of the axiom of internal relations and shows that neither of them is satisfactory.

The first ground is based on the law of sufficient reason, by which Russell means that every proposition can be deduced from simpler propositions. Russell thinks that this view does not work on Joachim's account, because on Joachim's view, the axiom of internal relations would consider the propositions to be less and less true, the simpler they are. Moreover, the law of sufficient reason thus interpreted, must be false anyway - because there must be a limit to the simplicity of propositions.

The second ground is the fact that if two terms have a certain relation, they cannot but have it, and if they did not have it, they would not be what they are. But if the two terms do have this relation then to think that they do not have it will be false - and anything can be deduced from this false thesis. This argument of Russell's connects deduction with the notion of material implication, which would not be accepted by the idealists and which has also been rejected by many others. So Russell articulates the second argument that if anything is not related in the way in which some given terms are

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 225

related, then it must be numerically diverse from the given terms. This again renders inadequate the ground for the axiom of internal relations. By these arguments Russell rejects this axiom.

Although Russell cannot adequately distinguish between truth and necessary truth at this time, the second argument in favour of the axiom can be criticised (apart from Russell's criticism) from the standpoint of necessity and possibility, i.e. from the standpoint of modal logic.

The axiom holds that if two terms have certain relation, then they cannot but have it. Thus, if a and b have a relation R, then it is necessary for them to have that relation, i.e. they cannot but have it. This can be expressed formally as:

$$(A) \quad \underline{aRb} \supset \square \underline{aRb}.$$

But (A) is not valid. If a loves b, then it is not a necessary relation between a and b, rather a contingent one; a and b could be a and b without loving each other. But idealists argue for (A) by means of the claim that necessarily if a and b are related by R, then anything not related by R would not be identical to a and b. But this amounts to

$$(B) \quad \square (\underline{aRb} \supset \underline{aRb}),$$

which is valid. But it is quite insufficient to prove the stronger required thesis (A).

Joachim examines in his book three possible theories of truth, viz., 'Truth as correspondence', 'Truth as a quality of independent entities' and 'Truth as coherence'. Joachim rejects the first two and tries to establish the third one. On the other hand Russell rejects, and surely with some strong arguments, the view which Joachim attempts to establish. If Russell's refutation of Joachim's notion of the coherence theory of truth is acceptable, then there remains nothing as Joachim's positive contribution to the nature of truth, and Joachim's whole endeavour becomes negative.

From a somewhat different standpoint Joachim also considers his whole discussion to be negative. This is clear from Joachim's views that "The following Essay does not pretend to establish a new theory",<sup>1</sup> and that "It is natural to feel some hesitation in publishing a work avowedly critical in character and negative in result".<sup>2</sup> This, of course, does not support Russell's rejection of Joachim's view, but only the fact that Joachim himself does not establish any new theory of truth.

In spite of this, Russell gives some credit to Joachim. Russell holds that, "The question 'What is Truth?' is one which every philosopher ought to face, although,

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<sup>1</sup> Joachim, H. H. The Nature of Truth, p. 1

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 2

unfortunately ... it has become unfashionable to ask it. Mr. Joachim has done very well in undertaking a serious and careful discussion of the nature of truth".<sup>1</sup> Russell also gives credit to Joachim for giving a due consideration to the problem of error.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, though coherence does not give the meaning of truth, "As a criterion, coherence, in some sense, is certainly invaluable",<sup>3</sup> and "it is often a most important test of truth after a certain amount of truth has become known".<sup>4</sup>

Joachim and Russell are involved in a controversy as to the two approaches towards the understanding of the meaning of truth. Joachim aims at knowing the final truth or the whole truth, which will explain and will contain the explanation of everything. This approach is not satisfactory in the sense that human intelligence and experience cannot reach it, as Joachim himself holds that this whole or final truth is in the partial possession of all finite beings (The Nature of Truth, p. 84).

But Russell's approach is different, because it is not possible to know the final explanation of every thing

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<sup>1</sup>Russell, B. "What is Truth?", p. 349

<sup>2</sup>Russell, B. Philosophical Essays, p. 88

<sup>3</sup>Russell, B. "What is Truth?", p. 351

<sup>4</sup>Russell, B. The Problems of Philosophy, p. 125

and one has to stop somewhere, and one has to take something as assumption or as granted. This approach is mainly that of science. Science works and deals with the approximate truths instead of the absolute one. From this standpoint Russell holds that, "I cannot see why we should expect a reason for everything",<sup>1</sup> or that "final truth belongs to heaven, not to this world".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Russell, B. "The Nature of Truth", Mind., 1906, p. 532

<sup>2</sup>Russell, B. An Outline of Philosophy, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1927, p. 3

### Chapter III

#### THE MULTIPLE RELATION THEORY OF TRUTH

The theory of truth toward which Russell moves between 1905-1910 and maintains for sometime is based upon certain other views which Russell frequently uses in his discussions of truth throughout this period. Discussion of Russell's view of truth in this period presupposes the discussions of these other views. These views are, for example, the distinction between the criterion and meaning of truth, the distinction between what truth itself is and what things are true, and so on. The culmination of the discussion of Russell's view of truth may be made through the discussions of these other views.

Russell's distinction between the criterion and meaning of truth may be discussed first. Russell makes this distinction through the whole period and gives much importance to it. He discusses it in his rejections of both the pragmatic and coherence theories of truth. On above pages 34-35, brief reference has been made to it. This distinction may be discussed here more adequately.

Russell holds that the "distinction between the

nature of truth and a criterion of truth is important, and has not always been sufficiently emphasized by philosophers".<sup>1</sup> Russell discusses the nature of this distinction in different places in different ways, for example, at one time he takes the example of a library and its catalogue<sup>2</sup> and at another time the example of a trade-mark.<sup>3</sup> Russell considers the catalogue as one which can be used as a criterion for searching of books of a library. But the catalogue cannot make one sure whether a particular book is in the library or not. Because some catalogued books may be lost or may be out of the library for some reason or other and sometimes some books are found in the library which are still uncatalogued. And therefore, for Russell, though a catalogue can be a criterion for a book's being in the library, being listed in the catalogue cannot mean the same as being in the library, and in this case, also, satisfying the criterion does not logically guarantee possession of the property for which it is a criterion. Russell defines a criterion as follows: "Speaking abstractly, we may say that a property A is a criterion of a property B when the same

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<sup>1</sup>Russell, B. Philosophical Essays, p. 149

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 120

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 149



objects possess both".<sup>1</sup> But such a criterion may sometimes be useful and sometimes may not be. Russell distinguishes among the criteria as: "A is a useful criterion of B if it is easier to discover whether an object possesses the property A than whether it possess the property B".<sup>2</sup>

The exposition of the nature of the distinction between criterion and meaning does not seem to be a very satisfactory one. And Russell himself also says that, "The analogy of the library is not, to my mind, fantastic or unjust, but as close and exact an analogy as I have been able to think of".<sup>3</sup> It is not wrong to say that the catalogue is a criterion for a book's being in the library but it would be more appropriate to call it a guide for searching books. And 'criterion' and 'guide' are not exactly the same. Nor is this analogy satisfactory in the light of the later analogy which Russell makes in this connection. Russell says that, "A criterion is a sort of trade-mark, i.e. some comparatively obvious characteristic which is a guarantee of genuineness".<sup>4</sup>

Now, a criterion can be either a guaranteeing

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 120

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 120

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 121, my italics

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 149

criterion or one which is not a guaranteeing criterion. Thus a trade-mark is a guaranteeing criterion because satisfaction of the criterion guarantees the possession of the property for which it is a criterion and the catalogue in a library is not a guaranteeing one.

For this reason I have suggested above the word 'guide' instead of 'criterion'. Similarly, Wittgenstein contrasts<sup>1</sup> the word 'symptom' with 'criterion'. Thus the possession of the property A is a guide to, or symptom of, the possession of the property B, if most of the things which possess A, also possess B. But if all of the things which possess A, also possess B, then the possession of A is a guaranteeing criterion for the possession of B.

However, in this context, instead of the analogy of a library, perhaps a better analogy might lie in the case of selecting a person for a job. There would be a criterion for this purpose, on the basis of which different persons will be distinguished. But the criterion of the selection will not be the same as the meaning of selection. A criterion may be the physical fitness, which however, cannot even be the last thing to be the meaning of being selected for the job. One can measure something by different criteria or standards of measurements, but there is one

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<sup>1</sup>Wittgenstein, L. The Blue and Brown Books, Basil and Blackwell, Oxford, 1972, pp. 24-25.

thing measured. According to Russell the criteria of truth may be many, but he wants 'truth' to have one meaning. Thus Russell holds that he does not believe that truth has, universally, any one trade-mark as criterion.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of discussing this distinction is that Russell wants to know the meaning of truth instead of a criterion and Russell is criticising on this ground both the pragmatic and coherence theories of truth.

Again, before discussing the meaning of truth, Russell wants to make a distinction between what truth itself is and what things are true. This is clear when Russell says that,

The question 'What is Truth?' is one which may be understood in several different ways, and before beginning our search for an answer, it will be well to be quite clear as to the sense in which we are asking the question. We may mean to ask what things are true: is science true? is revealed religion true? and so on. But before we can answer such questions as these, we ought to be able to say what these questions mean: what is it, exactly, that we are asking when we say, 'is science true?' It is this preliminary question that I wish to discuss.<sup>2</sup>

Russell is clear and correct in making this distinction. This view of Russell's reminds one of the

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<sup>1</sup>Russell; B. Philosophical Essays, p. 149

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 147

Socratic procedure. Socrates also, to take an example, makes a distinction between the meaning of virtue and the things which are virtuous. But Socrates thinks that knowing the meaning of 'virtue' is the necessary precondition of knowing the things which are virtuous. But unlike Socrates, Russell thinks that without knowing the general considerations as to what 'truth' means, one can settle whether this or that is true (Russell says, if at all) by considerations concerning this or that.<sup>1</sup> Similarly a person who does not know anything about philosophy, logic or truth or even general knowledge, may well know the truth that man is mortal. Russell says, "we may know a number of plain facts without being able to say ... what we mean when we affirm their truth",<sup>2</sup> and that these are "Two questions, theoretically distinct, but very hard to discuss separately ...".<sup>3</sup> Russell is right here, because it is easier to know whether something is true than to know the general and abstract meaning of truth.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 147

<sup>2</sup> Russell, B. Unpublished paper of January-February 1907, manuscript p. 1, my italics

<sup>3</sup> Russell, B. Unpublished paper of June 1905, p. 1

<sup>4</sup> But compare (Philosophical Essays, p. 147) when Russell says that before answering the question of which things are true, one ought to be able to say what these questions mean.

Regarding this meaning of truth, Russell discards certain possibilities at the very beginning. Thus Russell does not want to know the meaning of truth in the sense of how the word is used.<sup>1</sup> Russell considers this kind of meaning to be the meaning used in dictionaries and not in philosophy. Russell also rejects some other perfectly proper uses of the term 'truth', because they are irrelevant for this inquiry. Thus, 'true man', 'true poet', etc. do not say anything about the nature of truth; rather what they say are about a man or a poet. Russell also rejects what people usually have in their minds when they use the word 'truth'. Russell holds that "This question comes nearer to the question we have to ask, but is still different from it. The question what ideas people have when they use a word is a question of psychology; moreover, there is very little in common between the ideas which two different people in fact attach to the same word ...".<sup>2</sup>

What Russell has in mind to discuss is that,

... in the case of such a word as 'truth', we all feel that some fundamental concept, of great philosophical importance, is involved, though it is difficult to be clear as to what this concept is. What we wish to do is to detach this concept from the mass of irrelevancies in which,

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<sup>1</sup>Russell, B. Philosophical Essays, p. 147

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 147-48

when we use it, it is normally embedded, and to bring clearly before the mind the abstract opposition upon which our distinction of true and false depends.<sup>1</sup>

Russell is also very clear about and conscious of the method which he will follow in his inquiry. The period under discussion is the period from which the twentieth century analytical trend gets its main impetus. And Russell's 1905 paper "On Denoting" is one of the starting points of this trend. Russell's method of discussing the nature of truth is also that of analysis. This aspect has been clear in his discussions of pragmatic and coherence theories of truth. Russell analyses and divides these views into simpler parts, examines the consequences, seeks to show the inner contradictions and thereby tries to render them unsatisfactory. This method of discussion is also prevalent in his positive inquiries as to the nature of truth. This is evident in the preceding quotation where Russell intends to detach the concepts and wants to get the clear abstract position. This whole position is further emphasised when Russell says,

The process to be gone through is essentially one of analysis: we have various complex and more or less confused beliefs about the true and the false, and we have to reduce these to forms

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 148

which are simple and clear, without causing any avoidable conflict between our initial complex and confused beliefs and our final simple and clear assertions. These final assertions are to be tested partly by their intrinsic evidence, partly by their power of accounting for the 'data'; and the 'data', in such a problem, are the complex and confused beliefs with which we start.<sup>1</sup>

Keeping this view in mind, Russell proceeds to give his view of the notion of truth. Russell starts his discussion with the things which are either true or false, and holds that, "Broadly speaking, the things that are true or false, in the sense with which we are concerned, are statements, and beliefs or judgments".<sup>2</sup> Russell uses here the words 'belief' and 'judgment' as synonyms.<sup>3</sup>

At this point two criticisms may be put forward. First, Russell says that the things which are true or false are statements, judgments, beliefs, etc., but these are not the things, but the kinds of things which are either true or false. It would be more accurate on Russell's part to say that these are the kinds of things which are true or false.

And secondly, the significant point to be noticed here is the absence of propositions from this list. But

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 143, my italics

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 148

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 148n

before 1905, the propositions are the primary bearers of truth-value. And even in 1905, though Russell explicitly confesses that he has no positive view about the nature of truth;<sup>1</sup> he still seems to retain his previous attachment to propositions. This is clear when he says that it is the things which are or may be objects of belief that can be called propositions, and it is such things to which he ascribes truth and falsehood.<sup>2</sup> The reason for the disappearance of propositions from Russell's list in 1910 is the multiple relation theory of belief he has in mind and is going to explain. This absence of propositions from the list is an initial indication of the transition to a definite formulation of Russell's own view.

Taking judgments or beliefs or statements as the things or the kinds of things which are true or false, Russell proceeds step by step to define the nature of truth. He proposes certain possible views, examines them, rejects them as inadequate, and in this way arrives at the view which he himself thinks to be the true account of the meaning of 'truth'. Regarding the first such possible view Russell holds that,

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<sup>1</sup>Russell, B. Unpublished paper of June 1905, manuscript p. 1

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 5



The truth or falsehood of statements can be defined in terms of the truth or falsehoods of beliefs. A statement is true when a person who believes it believes truly, and false when a person who believes it believes falsely. Thus in considering the nature of truth we may confine ourselves to the truth of beliefs, since the truth of statements is a notion derived from that of beliefs. The question we have to discuss is therefore: What is the difference between a true belief and a false belief?<sup>1</sup>

For discussing the difference between true and false beliefs, Russell introduces the notion of the believer; in other words, he introduces the notion of mind, with which every belief (whether true or false), is necessarily connected. Without a believer, there cannot be any belief, without a mind there cannot be anything to make a judgment. On the other hand whether a belief is true or false depends entirely upon "the facts about which he judges".<sup>2</sup> So, believing or judging becomes a unity of three aspects, viz., (a) a mind or believer, who judges or believes, (b) a fact or facts, upon which judgment or belief occurs, and (c) the relation between the two, which is the actual belief or judgment, and is either true or false. So, believing or judging is a process which seems to have subjective ground, and so far as discussed.

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<sup>1</sup>Russell, B. Philosophical Essays, pp. 148-49

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 149

an objective ground:

In all cognitive acts, such as believing, doubting, disbelieving, apprehending, perceiving, imagining, the mind has objects other than itself to which it stands in some one of these various relations. In such a case as perception this is sufficiently obvious: the thing perceived is necessarily something different from the act of perceiving it, and the perceiving is a relation between the person perceiving and the thing perceived.<sup>1</sup>

A similar view is also present in another of Russell's papers where he says, "Truth, then, we might suppose, is the quality of belief which have facts for their objects, and falsehood is the quality of other beliefs. And a fact may be defined as whatever there is that is a complex".<sup>2</sup> The further development of this notion of 'complexity' is one way by which Russell develops his notion of multiple relation. It can be said that Russell's notion of the multiple relation, which he develops in 1909, is present in embryo form at the time of writing his paper for the Aristotelian Society in 1906-07.

On the basis of this discussion, if judgment or belief is a relation between a subjective aspect, which

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 150

<sup>2</sup>Russell, B. "On the Nature of Truth", Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, 1906-07, p. 45, *my italics*; while reprinting this paper in Philosophical Essays, Russell omits the third part of the paper.

is a mind and an objective aspect, which is a fact or facts; then truth and falsehood should have some bearing on the nature of the objective aspect. And assuming that there are such objects which make the objective aspect, Russell, following Meinong, calls these objects 'objectives'.

It may be observed that some such objectives (namely, the true ones) are what Russell calls 'facts'; and says that, "we may make truth a property of the objects of judgments, i.e. of what we may call facts".<sup>1</sup> Russell makes it clear later on that the objects of only true judgments are the facts. Regarding such objectives or facts, Russell's view is that the objectives or facts are such that, one can think of them, but they themselves are not thoughts. In other words, they can be related with a mind, but they are not mental. Caesar's crossing the river Rubicon is such a fact, and if anybody thinks that it is a mental fact or an idea in his mind, then he must be suffering from water on brain.<sup>2</sup> The nature of the objectives or facts will be further clarified from the following discussion.

Thus Russell discusses whether a judgment or a belief can have a single fact as its object or more than one object. Russell says,

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<sup>1</sup>Russell, B. Unpublished paper of June 1905, manuscript p. 5

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 6

If I judge (say) that Charles I died on the scaffold, is that a relation between me and a single 'fact', namely, Charles I's death on the scaffold, or 'that Charles I died on the scaffold', or is it a relation between me and Charles I and dying and the scaffold? We shall find that the possibility of false judgments compels us to adopt the later view. But let us first examine the view that a judgment has a single object.<sup>1</sup>

It is evident from this passage that by 'fact' Russell means Charles I's death on the scaffold or 'that Charles I died on the scaffold'. These facts are also what Russell calls objectives. Thus,

So long as we only consider true judgments, the view that they have objectives is plausible: the actual event which we describe as 'Charles I's death on the scaffold' may be regarded as the objective of the judgment 'Charles I died on the scaffold'. But what is the objective of the judgment 'Charles I died in his bed'? There was no event such as 'Charles I's death in his bed'.<sup>2</sup>

From these two quoted passages it is clear that Russell uses 'objective' (when true) and 'fact' in the same sense. These uses of the 'fact' and 'objective' and giving the name 'objective' for the object of judgment are not in fact satisfactory. This unsatisfactoriness is evident from Russell's discussions of the objections to

<sup>1</sup>Russell, B. Philosophical Essays, p. 150, my italics

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 151, my italics

the view that judgment has an objective.

Russell holds that, "The first [objection] is that it is difficult to believe that there are such objects as 'that Charles I died in his bed', or even 'that Charles I died on the scaffold'."<sup>1</sup> But regarding the second instance that, 'that Charles I died on the scaffold', though it cannot be an object it is plausible to think of it as the objective of the judgment that Charles I died on the scaffold. In the context of this discussion, Russell uses the word 'object' in a different sense than its usual sense. And when Russell adopts 'objectives' (and prefers it to 'object'), he does so following Meinong (Philosophical Essays, p. 151). In Meinong there is the distinction between 'Objekte' and 'Gegenstande'. What Russell calls 'objectives' are a category of 'Gegenstande' and what Russell calls 'objects' are those which Meinong calls 'Objekte', i.e. those 'Gegenstande' which are not objectives. In this way 'objectives' can be said to be a species of 'Gegenstande'.

On the other hand, Russell makes a distinction between 'objectives' (which can again be true or false) and 'facts'. On the view Russell is here criticising, in the judgment that Charles I died on the scaffold, 'that Charles I died on the scaffold' is true and is an objective

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 151.

or a fact. But in the judgment that Charles I died in his bed, 'that Charles I died in his bed' is false and it is not a fact though it can be an objective. Thus arises the notion of false objectives, which though not logically impossible, is unsatisfactory and it is better to avoid such a view.<sup>1</sup> When the objective (of a judgment) is true, it is what Russell calls fact. In other words, true objectives are facts. But Russell is, upto this extent of his discussion, quite unhappy in using these words, and he considers them to be unsatisfactory.

This seems to be the reason why the distinction of 'object', 'objective' and 'fact' is only used at this stage in the development of Russell's discussion. With the final development of Russell's view at the end of the discussion, it will be found that he resolves 'facts' and 'objectives' to individual 'objects' and thereby drops the notions of 'fact' and 'objective'. On this aspect of Russell's view, P.T.Geach's comment goes in favour of Russell when Geach says, "analysing judgments in terms of 'objective' is a lazy analysis".<sup>2</sup>

Before discussing Russell's second objection in this connection, one discrepancy may be pointed out here.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 152

<sup>2</sup>Geach, P. T. Mental Acts, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1957, p. 49

In the two quoted passages on page 93, in the first one Russell does not use quotation mark to express a judgment, but in the second one Russell does so. In the first quoted passage Russell writes that "If I judge (say) that Charles I died on the scaffold ...", and in the second quoted passage he writes, "But ... the judgment 'Charles I died in his bed' ...". First, it is a discrepancy. Secondly, Russell is confusing (consciously or unconsciously) the difference between a sentence and a proposition. A proposition is what a sentence expresses; and this expression of a sentence is what the proposition is, and is specified by quotation mark. Russell is wrong in using a judgment sometimes as a sentence and sometimes as a proposition by the use of quotation marks. This, of course, has no bearing on the theory of truth that Russell is going to establish here, and this is more an observation than a criticism of Russell in this context.

However, the second objection against the view that a judgment has an objective is,

... more fatal, and more germane to the consideration of truth and falsehood. If we allow that all judgments have objectives, we shall have to allow that there are objectives which are false. Thus there will be in the world entities, not dependent upon the existence of judgments, which can be described as objective falsehoods. This is in itself almost incredible: we feel that there could be no falsehood if there were no minds to

make mistakes. But it has the further drawback that it leaves the difference between truth and falsehood quite inexplicable. We feel that when we judge truly some entity 'corresponding' in some way to our judgment is to be found outside our judgment, while when we judge falsely there is no such 'corresponding' entity.<sup>1</sup>

It is mainly on the ground of this second objection that Russell rejects the view that judgments have objectives. Because, in that case, false judgments will have false objectives and there will be such things as objective falsehoods, which Russell rightly thinks to be incredible.

On this ground Russell next proposes another possible view that we could say simply that true judgments have objectives but the false judgments do not have any such. And "With a new definition of objectives this view might become tenable, but it is not tenable so long as we hold to the view that judgment actually is a relation of the mind to an objective".<sup>2</sup>

Russell holds that, if judgment is a relation of the mind to an objective, then, according to the new definition, there will be no such things as false objectives to be related with the mind. This is because, "a relation

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 151-52

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 152, my italics



cannot be related to nothing".<sup>1</sup> In this dilemma, Russell wants to maintain the view that judgment involves a relation with a mind, and therefore finally is compelled to modify his view again and to hold that "no judgment consists in a relation to single object".<sup>2</sup>

Russell holds that, the difficulty of the view that we have been considering so far, is that it compels us either to accept the existence of the objective falsehood or to admit that when one judges falsely, there is nothing that he is judging.<sup>3</sup> And "The way out of the difficulty consists in maintaining that, whether we judge truly or whether we judge falsely, there is no one thing that we are judging".<sup>4</sup>

In this way Russell rejects the view that every judgment has a single objective, and proceeds to explain the view that instead of one objective, there are several objects which are involved in a judgment. Thus Russell says, "when we judge that Charles I died on the scaffold, we have before us, not one object, but several objects, namely, Charles I and dying and the scaffold".<sup>5</sup> As

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 153.

mentioned earlier, it may also be noticed here that Russell is expressing a judgment without quotation marks, and doing so correctly. Now in the case of the several objects, we need to examine what happens to false judgments. Following Russell, it can be said that if it is judged that Charles I died in his bed, then it is a false judgment, but it has several objects and the objects are not fictitious. In this case, the objects are Charles I, dying and the bed; consequently, there is no such thing as the objective falsehood and in a false judgment one can still have a relation of something with the mind. This is what Russell thinks is the correct view. Russell says that, "Thus in this view judgment is a relation of the mind to several other terms: when these other terms have inter se a 'corresponding' relation, the judgment is true; when not, it is false. This view, which I believe to be the correct one, must now be further expanded and explained".<sup>1</sup> Thus we get the nucleus or the fundamental concept of Russell's view.

Now, in the case of the judgment that Charles I died on the scaffold, Russell does not mean that the mind of a person (who judges) has different separate relations with each of the separate objects, namely, Charles I, dying and scaffold. Russell does not deny that this is

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 153

possible; and in fact, the mind of the person who judges, can be separately conscious of each of these several separate objects. Thus, the judging mind can have a separate relation with Charles I, being a relation of two terms; or it can have another separate relation with dying, being another relation of two terms, and so on.

But Russell does not mean these several separate relations. Because, in that case, the judgment will lose its integrity. Thus Russell holds that, "In order to obtain this judgment [that Charles I died on the scaffold], we must have one single unity of the mind and Charles I and dying and the scaffold, i.e. we must have, not several instances of a relation between two terms, but one instance [i.e. a unity] of a relation between more than two terms".<sup>1</sup>

About the relations Russell holds that,

We will give the name 'multiple relations' to such as require more than two terms. Thus a relation is 'multiple' if the simplest propositions in which it occurs are propositions involving more than two terms (not counting the relation). From what has been said it is obvious that multiple relations are common, and that many matters cannot be understood without their help.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 154, my italics

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 155

As an instance of multiple relation Russell takes another example and a term of new type, namely, time-factor. Many relations hold between two terms at some times and not at others, thus a complete expression of the relation between these two terms require a relation of more than two places - namely a three-place relation in which two places are held by the original two terms and the third by a time. Russell says that, "Take such a proposition as 'A loved B in May and hated him in June', ... Then we cannot say that, apart from dates, A has to B either the relation of loving or that of hating. This necessity for a date does not arise with all ordinary relationships; for example, if A is the brother of B ...".<sup>1</sup> About the unity of the relation of mind and other terms in a judgment, Russell says here that, "This relation between A and B and May cannot be analysed into relations between A and B, A and May, B and May: it is a single unity".<sup>2</sup> Russell thinks that in the philosophy of time and change, the account of time-factor as one term of a relation is a necessary one.

On the basis of the notion of multiple relation Russell says that, "The theory of judgment which I am advocating is that judgment is not a dual relation of

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 154

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 154

the mind to a single objective, but a multiple relation of the mind to the various other terms with which the judgment is concerned".<sup>1</sup> Or that, "Every judgment is a relation of a mind to several objects, one of which is a relation; the judgment is true when the relation which is one of the objects relates the other objects, otherwise it is false".<sup>2</sup>

Russell then proceeds to give an account of the 'correspondence' which is connected with the notion of truth. Russell again takes the example of the judgment that A loves B. In this judgment there are three terms A, B and the relation 'love'. And it may happen that A loves B, but B does not love A. One has therefore to distinguish the judgment that A loves B from the judgment that B loves A. Whether the relation goes from A to B or from B to A really makes a difference in the corresponding judgment. And there will be two senses of the relation as it goes from A to B or from B to A; and accordingly there will be a corresponding complex object. Russell says,

Then the relation as it enters into the judgment must have a 'sense', and in the corresponding complex it must have the same 'sense'. Thus

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 155, my italics

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 150

the judgment that two terms have a certain relation R is a relation of the mind to the two terms and the relation R with the appropriate sense: the 'corresponding' complex consists of the two terms related by the relation R with the same sense. The judgment is true when there is such a complex, and false when there is not. ... This gives the definition of truth and falsehood.<sup>1</sup>

We now know what the meaning (with which Russell starts all his discussions in all his papers on the nature of truth, and for which he expresses so much concern) of truth

This whole thing has been presented by Russell in a different way in The Problems of Philosophy (chapter XII). Russell maintains there the same position that truth and falsehood are the properties of beliefs, statements, or judgments and says, "What is called belief or judgment is nothing but this relation of believing or judging, which relates a mind to several things other than itself".<sup>2</sup> Russell calls the mind the subject of judgment and the other objects the constituents of judgments.<sup>3</sup> The relation itself between the subject on the one hand and the objects on the other hand is the relation of judging or

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 158, my italics

<sup>2</sup> Russell, B. The Problems of Philosophy, p. 126

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 126

believing. This relation of judging is true when it is related to its objects in the way or order or direction or sense in which the objects themselves are actually related. Russell makes this clear by the example that,

Othello's judgment that Cassio loves Desdemona differs from his judgment that Desdemona loves Cassio, in spite of the fact that it consists of the same constituents, because the relation of judging places the constituents in a different order in the two cases.<sup>1</sup>

"Thus a belief is true when it corresponds to a certain associated complex [in the actual order or direction of its terms], and false when it does not".<sup>2</sup>

However, before giving my own view on this notion of truth, certain other criticisms may be discussed first.

P. T. Geach says that Russell's theory does not show how it is that we should be able to understand the statement abbreviated as 'James judges that P'.<sup>3</sup> This criticism is due to the fact that the analysis of judgment

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 126-27; it may be mentioned here that in this later version, the order of the terms of the judgment is the order determined by the judging relation. But in the earlier version of 1910, the order of the terms is determined by the subordinate relation which itself is one term of the judgment. Thus in the example that A loves B, the order of A and B is determined by 'love' and thus obviating some subsequent criticisms of the theory.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 128

<sup>3</sup>Geach, P. T. Mental Acts, p. 49

will differ with different possible interpretations of 'P', and "Russell's theory would here require different relations of judging ... for every different logical form of sentences expressing judgments".<sup>1</sup>

From a similar standpoint Wittgenstein says that in "A judges (that) P", P cannot be replaced by a proper name, and that this is apparent if we substitute "A judges that P is true and not-P is false".<sup>2</sup> And also that Russell "imagines every fact as a spatial complex, and since spatial complexes consist of things and relations only, therefore he holds all do".<sup>3</sup>

P. T. Geach further argues:

Again Russell holds that if James judges that a is larger than b, then the relation larger than is one of the things between which the judging relation obtains. But this idea, of a relation's being itself one among things that are related, is by no means clear. A relative term like 'larger than' is incomplete....<sup>4</sup>

Geach observes that when certain relation enters as a term in the judging relation, certain obscurity results and

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 49

<sup>2</sup> Wittgenstein, L. Notebooks 1914-1916, Harper and Brothers, New York, from © Basil and Blackwell, 1966, p. 96

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 96

<sup>4</sup> Geach, P. T. Mental Acts, p. 50



that Russell does not notice this difficulty.

Even if it is said that,

... the relation  $R$  is before the mind, not as relating  $a$  and  $b$ , but only as a term of a judging relation that holds between the mind,  $a$ , the relation  $R$ , and  $b$ , [then] how can there be any talk of the relation  $R$ 's 'proceeding' from  $a$  to  $b$  rather than from  $b$  to  $a$ ? ... This difficulty looks even worse if we consider how in fact the relation  $R$  does enter into the judgment ... .<sup>1</sup>

This criticism is in fact applicable only to the earlier version of the theory in 1910, due to the distinction as made in the foot note on page 104.

From a somewhat different standpoint Wittgenstein holds that "The fact that in a certain sense the logical form of [a sentence]  $P$  must be present even if  $P$  is not the case, shews symbolically through the fact that ' $P$ ' occurs in ' $\sim P$ '," and in contrast to Russell further continues that "Any proposition can be negated. And this shews that 'true' and 'false' mean the same for all propositions".<sup>2</sup> Russell's multiple relation theory does not take account of such possibilities and that seems to be inadequate on its part.

Closely similar to P. T. Geach's is the argument

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 51-52

<sup>2</sup>Wittgenstein, L. Notebooks 1914-1916, p. 21

put forward by A. D. Woozley. Woozley is inclined first, to doubt whether the theory of truth which Russell seems to think is implied by it, i.e. the correspondence theory, is really implied by it or is tenable,<sup>1</sup> and secondly to say that "Russell does not explain what he means by 'correspondence,'".<sup>2</sup>

Woozley explains it by taking an example that M judges that A is related to B. Woozley distinguishes two complexes in this judgment, viz.,

(a) the judging complex M j A r B, where M is the subject or the judging mind, j is the judging relation;

and,

(b) the fact complex A r B,

and further analyses these two complexes as the following:

- (i) In (a) there are four terms (M, A, r, B), and one relation (j). In (b) there are two terms (A and B) and the relation (r);
- (ii) In (a) r is a term; in (b) it is a relation;
- (iii) In (a) the order of A, r, and B is determined by j; in (b) the order of A, r, and B is determined by r.<sup>3</sup>

Now the question that is asked is that in the light of these differences, how the multiple relation theory can claim a correspondence between ArB as part of the judgment complex and ArB as the whole of the fact

<sup>1</sup> Woozley, A. D. Theory of Knowledge, Hutchinson & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., London, 1957, p. 125

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 126

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 126

complex. In reply to this query of Woodzley's it may be said that the 'correspondence' required for true judgment is to be found in the identity of the fact complex as found in the judgment with same state of affairs in the world. In false judgment there is no such identity, the fact complex does not exist outside of the judgment. Whether or not the identity holds can, of course, be determined by 'standard empirical (or other) means.

However, what Woodzley is more concerned with is: "The real difficulty is that r performs a different function in each of the two complexes, being a term in one and a relation in the other",<sup>1</sup> and Woodzley thinks that this criticism regarding the distinction of two functions of the same relation can be maintained if the theory is not reinterpreted or modified.

However, apart from such intrinsic difficulties, is Russell giving in his multiple relation theory the meaning of truth or the criterion for distinguishing truth or falsehood of a judgment or the both? This question arises because, Russell has been throughout the whole discussion, so concerned about the distinction between the criterion and the meaning of truth. And in discussing his positive views, throughout the whole discussion Russell

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 126

is mainly discussing when a judgment is true and when it is false, and in his final definition (as discussed above on pages 102-03) of truth, Russell also is saying when a judgment is true and when it is not and then saying, "This gives the definition of truth and falsehood". Thus, simply by telling us when a judgment is true and when not, Russell is just giving a criterion for distinguishing true judgments from false ones.

Discussion on the issue of the meaning and criterion of truth has been given at the beginning of the chapter; but that has been given for the exposition of Russell's view. It is again taken over here for the evaluation of his view.

We can agree that there is a difference between meaning and criterion. This difference takes its shape and extent in the context in which one is involved. Sometimes it is the criterion which helps to get the meaning, sometimes it does not. In the selection of a person for a job, the criterion of selection may be the level of intelligence of the person, but the meaning of 'being selected' is not the level of intelligence or the intelligence itself. In this case, the meaning of 'being selected' is far away from the criterion and close to the purpose of selection.

The meaning of different things are different, and

the corresponding contexts are also different. Similarly, the criterion of one thing is different from that of another thing. And the nature of the relation between meaning and criterion is also different with different things and contexts. What Russell says is the definition of truth, can as well be a criterion of the distinction between true and false judgments.

In certain cases it also is not clear how to determine the truth or falsehood of a judgment by the multiple relation theory. If one judges that God exists, it is not clear how or in which way or ways the term 'God' can be related with 'exists' and the 'judging mind'.

Secondly if the term 'God' is related with a mind in more than one way, then more than one truth can occur from the single judgment that God exists. Russell's multiple relation theory of truth in this early formulation does not explain such a case.

In spite of these limitations and incompletenesses, Russell's theory occupies an important place in history. The historical way of its development, its transitional and formative character, its basis as the elimination of inner contradictions of certain other views, and its analytical approach and mathematical elements - all these contribute to its significance. It is the outcome of a

period when Russell is completing his Principia Mathematica. And his notion of multiple relation gets much of its impetus from mathematics (Philosophical Essays, p. 154). And as much as this, it can be said to be a mathematics and science oriented view of truth.

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