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A Critical Look at Russell's Philosophy of Logical Atomism

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Abstract. The main aim of this paper is to critically examine Bertrand Russell's brand of Philosophy which he describes as a kind of Logical Atomism and by means of which he puts forward a kind of Metaphysics and a certain method of Analysis for developing this type of Philosophy. Russell, thus views the whole universe as made up of many separate entities with complex properties and various relations to each other. Russell's philosophy is an attempt to strip off the surface complexities of the world and thus arrive at the last residue in analysis which he calls the logical atoms of reality.

Keywords: Atomism, Universe, Relations, Metaphysics, Analysis, Residue.

1. Introduction

Bertrand Russell [1872-1870], was a British philosopher and a mathematician; a contemporary of G. E. Moore and Ludwig Wittgenstein, who contributed greatly in the formation and development of Analytical Philosophy. Russell began his philosophical career as an absolute idealist, but was converted to Realism by G. E. Moore, in 1898. Russell called his species of realism – 'Logical Atomism' – which he approached with a certain background from mathematical logic.

Going through Russell's philosophical works, one can discern basically three kinds of analysis which he applies to his philosophy, namely: the same level analysis – which mainly deals with clarification of language and which comprises – formal analysis and material analysis. Then, there is the new level analysis – which comprises: ontological and epistemological analyses. For Russell, ontological analysis together with formal analysis form part of what traditionally has been called 'Metaphysics'.

It is the attempt of this paper to critically examine certain aspects of his doctrine with an aim of clarifying some of the very tenets of his teachings on Logical Atomism. In this regard, we are not interested here in Russell's philosophy as a whole. Our attention would be mainly directed to his analysis of 'Facts' and 'Propositions', which are his treatment of linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of reality; as well as the ontological aspects of his atomism. The reason for this, shown in section two, is to see why Russell regards 'Facts' as the ultimate reality, since for him, analysis of complex matters of fact, should start with the analysis of facts about those complexes. Thereafter in section three, we would consider Russell's view on how words used in ordinary language can mislead us, through confusion of their grammatical and syntactical forms which are not their real logical forms; this can lead to false metaphysical ideas concerning the form or structure of the facts expressed by the sentences in question. Also in this section, are discussed the two main sources of error and confusion in philosophy, namely, the Russellian theory of types, followed by his theory of definite description which is discussed in section four.

In section five we discussed his notion of atomic and molecular propositions; followed immediately by a brief discussion of his notion on existence propositions. Finally, we shall take a critical look at certain controversies regarding his views as a whole.

2. Metaphysics as a Search for Ultimate Reality – Facts:

Metaphysics has often been characterized as that branch of philosophy that systematically investigates the general nature of first principles and problems of ultimate facts about the universe as a whole [Cf. The Heritage Illustrated Dictionary of English Language; 1975: 825]. In the ancient Greece, for instance, both Plato and Aristotle did seek to comprehend such ultimate facts about the universe and our world by attempting to reflect on the basic structures of the language we employ in talking about them. At the beginning of the last century too, between 1905 and the early 1920s, to be precise, a new metaphysical movement known as "Logical Atomism" took its rise on the horizon of intellectual firmament and sought to give a complete metaphysical account about the ultimate facts and realities in the universe. The chief exponents of this movement were Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein.

The fundamental principle of this movement is to be found in a series of lectures on 'The Philosophy of Logical Atomism' which Bertrand Russell delivered in London, in 1918 and in an essay on 'Logical Atomism' in which he declared his philosophical position in 1924. Logical Atomism, like we have hinted earlier, is a kind of Metaphysics, the basis of which is analysis, and the logic of which is atomism [Russell: 1968, 178]. According to Russell, the universe is composed of many separate entities, many of which have complex properties and have various relations to each other. It is the business of logical analysis as employed by Russell, "to strip off the surface complexities of the world and so to arrive at and isolate 'the last residue in analyses" [Warnock: 1969, 27]. It is important to note that this 'last residue in analysis' is what Russell calls logical atoms, as distinct from physical atoms. Accordingly Russell states that:

The reason that I call my doctrine Logical Atomism is because the atoms I wish to arrive at as the sort of last residue in analysis are logical atoms and not Physical atoms. Some of them will be what I call 'particulars' – such things as little patches of colour or sounds, momentary things – and some of them will be predicates or relations and so on. The point is that the atom I wish to arrive at is the atom of logical analysis, not the atom of physical analysis [Russell: 1918, 3; Cf. also Russell: 1968, 177 - 281].

Russell remarks that the atom of physical analysis or whatever physical science at any given time takes to be ultimate physical constituents of matter, is also subject to logical analysis, although in his final lecture on logical atomism, Russell makes what he call an excursus into metaphysics and introduces the idea of logical constructions or logical fictions as he calls it [Russell: 1968, 185]. Russell, thus, is primarily concerned with dealing with propositions and facts, and not strictly speaking with objects of physical sciences. Accordingly, he sees the universe as full of facts, which are mainly what they are no matter what we may choose to talk or think about them.

Facts are what make a proposition true or false. The following example may serve as an illustration of what Russell means by a fact. If I utter, for instance, the proposition, that: 'This month is May', then, what I uttered is true, if this month of the year is 'May'; otherwise, the proposition I uttered is false. The sense in which the proposition is true, is what makes it a fact. Facts are expressed only in propositions. Propositions are themselves made up of symbols, consisting of several words, which may themselves be symbols. Thus, "a symbol may be defined as complex when it has parts that are symbols" [Ibid; 185]. In this sense, propositions are complex symbols. Russell attaches great importance to the theory of symbolism, and as he puts it, "the importance lies in the fact that unless you are fairly self-conscious about symbols, unless you are fairly aware of the relation of the symbol to what it

symbolizes, you will find yourself attributing to the thing properties which only belong to the symbol" [Ibid; 185]. A symbol is, usually, something which means something else. A name like 'Peter', for instance, is a proper symbol for a man, while a proposition is the proper symbol for a fact.

According to Russell, a belief or a statement has duality of truth and falsehood, which a fact does not usually have. The two always involve a proposition like a fact. An example, is readily the belief expressed in a proposition like; "He believes that Socrates is dead". It should be noted that for Russell, propositions are not names for facts, as there are always two possible propositions corresponding to a fact. The assertion that "Socrates is dead", if it is a fact, involves the two propositions; "Socrates is dead" and "Socrates is not dead". According to Russell, there can only be one fact in the world which would make one of the propositions true and the other false.

Again, there can only be two kinds of relations between a proposition and a fact, that is, that of being true to fact and the other being false to fact. These relations are logical relations which subsist between a proposition and a fact [Ibid; 187]. As we have seen already, propositions are complex, because they comprise several words. That 'Socrates is mortal', is a complex proposition, and the fact expressed in this proposition is also a complex fact. According to Russell, "The things in the world have various properties and stand in various relations to each other. That they have these properties and relations are facts, and the things and their qualities or relations are quite clearly in some sense or other components of the facts that have those qualities or relations" [Ibid; 192]. Russell therefore insists that the analysis of complex things should as a matter fact be restricted to the analysis of facts about those things. Thus, for Russell, "it is with the analysis of facts that one's consideration of the problem of complexity must begin not by the analysis of apparently complex things" [Ibid; 192].

Indeed, propositions are complex symbols and the facts they stand for are also complex. But Russell goes on to show that some words, however, are simple symbols in the sense that these words are symbols, (unlike most words in propositions), whose parts are not symbols. The word 'red' is a simple symbol. It symbolizes a 'simple' object, that is, an object that cannot be otherwise symbolized than by a simple symbol. According to Russell, we cannot understand the word 'red' except through acquaintance with what it is that the word 'red' symbolizes – that is, a particular shade of colour. According to him, the definition of the word 'red', as "the colour with the greatest wave length", is a correct description, but it cannot, however, provide an analysis of the word [Ibid; 194-195; Cf. also Russell, 1918: 22]. David Pears, remarked that Russell's reason for saying this "is that an analysis gives the meaning of a word, or at least the legitimate part of its meaning, and since the average person who uses the word 'red' knows nothing about the physical theory of colour, a definition based on that theory cannot have anything to do with the meaning that the word has for him" [Pears, 1967: 44].

3. Language Misleads Us

Russell, furthermore, sees the whole meaning of words used in ordinary language, as misleading; and often full of complexities and even ambiguities [Russell, 1968: 195]. According to him, the grammatical and syntactical form of a sentence may be different from its real logical form. In this sense, it shows that the grammatical and syntactical form does not always match its real logical form, so that we are often mislead, in most cases, as to the proper logical form of any given sentence; through this type of confusion, we run into false metaphysical ideas as regards the form or structure of the facts expressed by the sentences in question. Thus, Russell says that: "language misleads us both by its vocabulary and by its syntax. We must be on our guard in both respects if our logic is not to lead to a false metaphysic" [Russell, 1924: 369]. Ludwig Wittgenstein in his "Tractatus", points out that Russell was the very first person to call attention to this question of 'logical form' and its importance in philosophy. Accordingly, Wittgenstein says that "Russell's merit is to have

shown that the apparent logical form of a proposition need not be its real form" [Wittgenstein, 1922: 4.0031]. This very notion is quite fundamental in Russell's philosophy as a whole. Russell starts with the everyday awareness of the fact that two sentences may be grammatically or syntactically the same and yet when we attempt to replace expressions which function meaningfully in the one, we soon discover that they do not function meaningfully in the other. The difference between the two sentences then must be non-grammatical or logical; this results from the fact that the expressions in question are of different 'logical types' [Charlesworth, 1961: 52]. Russell gives a definition of what a 'logical type' is all about, by saying that:

A and B are of the same logical type if, and only if, given any fact of which A
is a constituent, there is a corresponding fact which has B as a constituent, which either results by substituting B for A, or is the negation of what so results. To take an illustration, Socrates and Aristotle are of the same type because 'Socrates was a philosopher' and 'Aristotle was a philosopher' are both facts. To love and to kill are of the same type, because 'Plato loves Socrates' and 'Plato did not kill Socrates' are both facts [Russell, 1924: 369].

From all this definition, it would seem to follow, according to Russell, that "when two words have meanings of different types, the relations of the words to what they mean are of different types"; signifying or rather showing that "there is not one relation of meaning between words and what they stand for, but as many relations of meaning, each of a different logical type, as there are logical types among the objects for which there are word" [Ibid; 370]. This, for Russell, is what constitutes a major source of error and confusion in philosophy. As a result, Russell talks about two main sources of this type of confusion in philosophy; the first deals with his "theory of types" which according to him involves certain logical contradictions or paradoxes – "of which the simplest and oldest is the one about Epimenides the Cretan, who said that all Cretans were liars, which may be reduced to the man who says 'I am lying" – which shows "that no solution is technical possible without the doctrine of types" [Ibid; 371]. According to Russell, these types of paradoxes or contradictions arise from a confusion of expressions of different logical types. In this very respect, it means that a linguistic expression could be of one logical type and therefore "form part of a significant proposition, and in this sense have meaning, without being always able to be substituted for another word or symbol in the same or some other proposition without producing nonsense" [Ibid; 371]. Once stated in this manner, Russell's doctrine of types looks readily a truism. Thus, the proposition "Brutus killed Caesar" is a valid and significant proposition, whereas, "Killed killed Caesar", is an invalid and nonsensical proposition; such that there is no way one can replace "Brutus" by "Killed", though both words are meaningful [Ibid; 370]. As we have seen, Russell speaks of this theory of types in a generalized philosophical form, when he says that "there is not one relation of meaning between words and what they stand for, but as many relations of meaning, each of a different logical type as there are logical types among the objects for which there are words" [Ibid; 371]. This, for Russell, we must repeat, here, is 'a very portent source of error and confusion in philosophy. According to Russell, "The following words, for example, by their very nature, sin against it: attribute, relation, complex, fact, truth, falsehood, not, liar, omniscience" [Ibid; 372]. Thus, for example, to say that "attributes are or are not relations", or for that matter, that "facts are or are not simples", or that "facts cannot be named", - all of these go against the theory of types and as such, these very sentences are in a strict sense, as meaningless as saying that "Socrates is identical" [Ibid; 372f; Cf. also Charlesworth, 1961, 55]. For Russell, relations *qua* relations perform the function of relating; while attributes *qua* attributes perform the function of attribution; in that respect, we cannot meaningfully employ the two words and assert, for example, that "attributes are or are not relations" [Charlesworth, 1961, 56].

Since, for Russell, words are all of the same logical types, thus, when the meanings of two

words are of different contrasting types, the relations of the two words to what they mean are also of different [Russell, 1924, 372]. When attribute-words and relation-words are of the same type, we can significantly say that "attribute-words and relation-words have different uses" [Ibid; 372]. In the same respect, although we cannot significantly assert that "facts are not simples", since what a fact is, is what is asserted by a proposition [Cf. page 4 above]; - we can say, that "the symbol for a fact must not replace the symbol for a simple, or vice versa, if significance is to be preserved" [Ibid; 373]. In the same way, "facts can be asserted or denied, but cannot be named" [Ibid; 373]. For Russell, it is strictly speaking, nonsense to assert that facts cannot be named; rather, what can be asserted, without falling into nonsense is this that: "the symbol for a fact is not a name" [Ibid; 373]. This, according to Russell, shows how meaning is a different relation for different types. For him, "the way to mean a fact is to assert it"; and "the way to mean a simple is to name it" [Ibid; 373].

One important merit of Russell's theory of types, is that the theory seem to offer great value in drawing attention to the fact that grammatically ideal sentences may very often prove to be logically vicious [Charlesworth, 1961: 56]. But an equally obvious difficulty issuing from the theory seems to be that it cannot itself be stated without going against itself, since the word 'type' cannot be used in a sentence of the kind 'expressions are of different types' without violating the theory [Black, 1944: 229f; Cf. also Charlesworth, 1961: 56-57]. This difficulty is "only a symptom of a more general and more fundamental difficulty inherent in the theory", as Max Black has pointed out, noting that the criterion which Russell employs for distinguishing different logical types leads in the end to an impossible multiplication of them [Black, 239]. Max Black also pointed out that there are cases where the criterion of substitution does not permit us to distinguish between expressions which obviously are of different logical types.

As Black puts it:

There are certain polygamous contexts able to receive words of the most diverse syntactical types without degenerating into nonsense. It is proper to say both 'I am thinking about Russell' and 'I am thinking about continuity;

thus nothing that prevent the disintegrating and absurd inference that 'Russell' and 'continuity' are syntactically similar [Ibid, 237].

Against this criticism, Russell replies that he does not think that 'think' as used in Blacks example has the same sense in the two sentences. Therefore if Russell "means by this that 'think' is of a different logical type in each sentence", this surely is to multiply logical types in the most arbitrary way [Charlesworth, 1961: 57].

4. Russell and his Theory of Definite Description

The second main source of error and confusion in philosophy which Russell puts forward is that which dealt with his theory of definite descriptions. This theory of definite descriptions has had great influence more than any other doctrine, in the course of analytic movement, that it opened, so to speak, a new era in metaphysics, according to John Wisdom [Wisdom, 1953, 204]. This theory portrays "much more clearly and plausibly than the theory of types, how metaphysical problems – and, in particular, the arch-metaphysical problem of 'existence' – could be resolved by purely logical analysis" [Charlesworth, 1961, 59].

According to Russell, a definite description is a phrase of the grammatical form: "the so and so", an example of which is: "the present King of France", or "the author of Waverly" [Russell, 1919, 173]; and this implies a descriptive phrase, so used in such a way that it describes, if anything at all, one and only one entity. Russell often contrasts this theory with that of an indefinite description of the form – "a so and so" – 'a man' or 'a unicorn', for examples. Russell's theory of descriptions is an effort to demonstrate that the descriptions themselves are incomplete symbols, though they can function as grammatical subjects in sentences, these sentences "can be restated according to their

logical form in such a way that it becomes clear that the phrases in question are not the real logical subjects in the sentences in which they occur as grammatical subjects" [Copleston, 1967, 8; II, 193]. When this becomes obvious and clear, the tendency to assume that they must denote some entity disappears. It is then clear that these phrases when taken by themselves have no denoting function.

According to Russell, we tend to think that definite descriptions have similar logical functions as names: thus for example, the proposition: "Scott is the author of Waverly"; - here, we have a name "Scott" and a description, "the author of Waverly", which are said to apply to the same individual person [Russell, 1919, 173]. Thus, Russell makes a distinction between a name and all other symbols, which he explains as follows: Firstly, "a name is a simple symbol whose meaning is something that can only occur as subject; i.e. something of the kind that , we defined as an 'individual' or a 'particular'" [Ibid, 173]. Secondly, for Russell, a 'simple' symbol is such that it has no parts that are symbols. In this regard, we have 'Scott' as a simple symbol because, though it has parts, i.e. the separate letters that constitute it, yet these parts are not themselves symbols. On the other hand, "the author of Waverly" – is not a simple, since the separate words that go to make up the phrase are parts which are themselves symbols [Ibid, 174]. Thus, we have here only two items to compare and contrast. The first, is name which is a simple symbol, directly signifying an individual which is its meaning and having this meaning in its own terms, i.e. apart from the meanings of all other words; secondly, we have another description consisting of several words – whose meanings are already fixed; it is from these that would result whatever that is to be taken as the "meaning" of the description. Russell is of the view that "a proposition containing a description is not identical with what proposition becomes when a name is substituted, even if the name names the same object as the description describes [Ibid, 174]. In this context, the proposition: "Scott is the author of Waverly" is clearly different from the proposition: "Scott is Scott". Thus, the first proposition is clearly a fact in history, that Scott is the author of Waverly; whereas, the second is a trivial truism [Ibid, 174]. In this very respect, if we replace the name 'Scott' in the first proposition with any other name as "the author of Waverly" – the proposition will lose its truthfulness and will turn out to be false; and this would certainly make it a different proposition, not exactly the same as the initial proposition.

According to Russell, the only fact to assert, therefore, about "the author of Waverly", will be to assert that it means nothing. In this sense, the phrase if taken in isolation does not refer or denote anyone. Thus, the statement, "Scott is the author of Waverly", can be restated in a way that the very phrase 'the author of Waverly' is replaced or eliminated entirely. This means that "for all values of *x*, '*x* wrote Waverly' is equivalent to '*x* is Scott" [Copleston, 1967, 8; II, 194]. Again, according to Russell, we can always assert that 'the author of Waverly is Scott' and in this context, we are "predicating an attribute", i.e. "being Scotch, of an entity", in this case; i.e. being the author of Waverly [Ibid; 194]. Russell insists that 'the author of Waverly was Scotch', involves and is defined by the following three distinct propositions, - "at least one person wrote Waverly"; "at most one person wrote Waverly"; "whoever wrote Waverly was Scotch" [Russell, 1919, 177]. Stating these propositions formerly, we can say that "there is a term *c* such that [1] '*x* wrote Waverly' is always equivalent to '*x* is *c*', [2] *c* is Scotch" [Ibid, 178]. Here, the *c* in question is to be Scotch. And Russell was not in doubt that the author of Waverly was Scotch, i.e. in this context, that Sir Walter Scott wrote Waverly and was a Scotsman [Copleston, 1967, 194].

For Russell, it could be said that if the descriptive term 'the author of Waverly' is not a proper name and does not denote anyone, the same thing could be asserted of such descriptive term as 'the present king of France'. Thus, 'the author of Waverly was Scotch' can be reformulated in such a way as to reflect a true proposition, but which would not contain the descriptive, phrase 'the author of Waverly' and even 'the present king of France' can be reformulated in such a way that it does not contain the descriptive phrase 'the present king

of France' which will be false, though it will turn out a significant proposition. Put in this way, it would no longer be necessary to postulate any non-actual entity denoted by 'the present king of France' [Ibid, 194].

Russell's theory of descriptions has been severely criticised, by some philosophers, such as his contemporary – G.E. Moore, who pointed out that if someone had made the statement in 1700 that "the present king of France is bald", it would have been quite correct to say that 'the king of France denoted an individual in the person of Louis XIV'. This implies in this context that the statement, 'the present king of France' would not have been an incomplete symbol. Whereas this would be the case in some other circumstances, when there exists no such king of France; in such situations, the sentences in which 'the present king of France' occur; would not denote anyone at all.

Again, one may be mistaken to believe that for Russell, the ordinary man in the street may be tempted to think that there must be some sort of non-existing but real entity corresponding to 'the present king of France', because we can maintain that 'the present king of France' does not exist. Russell, of course, is not attributing any kind of mistake to this manner of thinking of the man in the street. Rather, his main point of view is that for philosophers who reflect on such implications or apparent implications of linguistic expressions [Ibid, 196], such descriptive phrases like 'the present king of France' have occasioned the temptation to posit entities with a queer status between actual existence and non-entity [Ibid, 196]. For Russell, the function of the theory of descriptions is to remove this temptation by showing that such descriptive phrases are incomplete symbols – which mean or represent nothing [Ibid, 206].

One particularly very important lesson to learn from Russell's theory of descriptions is the view that the grammatical form of a sentence need not be its real logical form, and this fact has very frequently misled some philosophers who failed to comprehend this

5. Russell's Notion of Atomic and Molecular Propositions

We cannot do justice to all the points or topics treated by Russell in his lectures on logical Atomism. But it is pertinent to touch at least briefly, his notion on atomic and molecular propositions. Now, for Russell, an atomic proposition is one which contains a single verb or verbal phrase [Russell, 1968: 197]. According to him, we can construct complex or molecular propositions, by the use of words such as 'and', 'or', and 'if', and so forth. By molecular propositions are meant, propositions which contain other propositions which can be called their atoms. They are propositions having such words as 'or', 'if', 'and', and so forth. For example, the statement "Either today is Thursday or I made a mistake in coming here" is a molecular proposition. It seems obvious from what we have seen thus far, that every proposition expresses a fact, and that to every fact, there corresponds two versions of a proposition of which one is true to fact and the other false to fact. Russell tries to show that in a molecular proposition like 'Socrates is mortal or Socrates is still living', there will be two different facts involved in the truth or falsity of this proposition. It does not have to be a single disjunctive fact. For Russell, it does not make sense to talk of a disjunctive fact; since there are no objective disjunctive facts in the world. Russell also expresses serious doubt about there being molecular facts. The meaning of disjunction in a molecular proposition is to serve as truth-functions showing the truth or falsity of propositions which enter into the molecular proposition. Molecular propositions are therefore instances of truth-functions of atomic propositions. Thus, the proposition 'This is black and that is white', require two atomic facts to make it true. Molecular proposition as truth function, like in the above proposition, requires that its truth or falsity be determined by the truth or falsity of the atomic propositions of which it is composed. No molecular facts are therefore required here. This is realistic when considered from the angle of deductive logic and mathematical logic. Russell is quite right in denying initially that there are molecular facts. This is because, when we recollect that for him,

facts are objective, that is, in the sense of being independent of our thinking about them, we will find out that there are no molecular facts in the world, but only facts which may be complex and subject to analysis. If we reconsider the disjunctive argument such as: p v q, we will notice at once, that it requires two facts, namely; the fact corresponding to 'p' and the fact corresponding to 'q'. This is clearly too obvious. Russell seems to have changed his earlier position in denying molecular facts when he started discussing 'general facts'. He seems to endorse the existence of molecular facts because he accepted that there are general facts – which are the genus of the molecular species [Schilpp, 1951, 86]. Russell believes that if one could enumerate all the atomic facts we have in the universe, then, the proposition: 'these are all the atomic facts there are' would indicate 'a general fact'. A general fact would be one which corresponds to a general proposition. And a general proposition would be one which asserts or denies the truth of all values of a propositional function. One cannot deny the existence of general facts or reduce them to other facts. Russell also admits that there are negative facts, though with some reservation. He seems to believe that propositions such as for example; 'Socrates is not alive' expresses such an objective negative fact, in the real world.

6. Russell on Existence Propositions

Russell has an altogether quite different theory on the existence propositions. According to him, "When you take any propositional function, and assert of it that it is possible, that it is sometimes true, that gives you the fundamental meaning of 'existence'" [Russell, 1968; 232]. It becomes a proposition which asserts the truth of at least one value of a propositional function. We can say, for instance, 'some men exist'. Existence is an essential property of a propositional function. This would mean that, the propositional function is true in at least one instance. Existence propositions do not refer to or talk about actual individuals, but rather talk about class or function. Thus, when I assert that 'there are men in Russia', I simply cannot name any one individual that lives there: hence, existence propositions cannot be about individual persons [Ibid, 234]. There are existence facts quite distinct from atomic facts, like those corresponding to 'some men exist'. Already, we observed that Russell employs the idea of existence very much in his theory of definite descriptions.

7. Criticism, Evaluation and Conclusion.

Indeed, Russell says at the beginning of his lectures on 'The Philosophy of Logical Atomism', that the lectures were partly based on explaining certain ideas which were suggested to him by Ludwig Wittgenstein. Most of these very ideas as Wittgenstein imparted them to Russell, at that time, were yet in its preliminary or immature stage, as Russell never saw him again until after the world war I, during which time Russell received from Wittgenstein, the manuscript of the *'Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus'.* Russell wrote an introduction to this book. But though he agreed with some of the ideas expressed in it by Wittgenstein, there were others which he could not stomach. For example, at that time, Russell accepted Wittgenstein's picture theory of the proposition, his theory that atomic propositions are all logically independent of one another, [Wittgenstein, 1974, xiii], and his theory that all the propositions of logic are tautologies which have no causal nexus- that is, they neither tell us anything about the actual existing world nor reveal to us another world of subsistent entities and timeless truths.

However, Russell appears unwilling to agree with Wittgenstein's theory that the form which a true proposition has in common with the corresponding fact cannot be 'said', but can only be 'shown'. Russell, we must remember believes very much in hierarchy of language. Again, Russell does not seem to agree with Wittgenstein's theory that there is no way whatsoever by which we can describe the totality of what there is in the universe. The '*Tractatus*', however won Russell's great admiration in spite of many things in it which he disagrees with.

It is true that Wittgenstein influenced Russell's ideas on his own logical atomism, but they both

seem to have different approaches to the theory. Wittgenstein approaches his own logical atomism as a pure logician, while Russell approaches his own by way of mathematical logic. Russell was apt to give examples of the actual constituents of the world, which Wittgenstein does not often attempt. For instance, that of atomic facts – 'This is White' is an example, and 'this' denotes an actual sense – datum, a proper name for a particular.

Russell uses in logical atomism reductive analysis not only to the physical objects of common sense and science but also to the human person. It is obviously true that while Russell had previously regarded the goal of analysis as a knowledge of simple particulars arrived at as the last residue, he later believed that while many things can be known to be complex, nothing can be known to be simple, because science has come to reveal that what is usually thought to be simple, are indeed complex in nature [Schilpp, 1951, 44]. From this, Russell arrived at the conclusion that analysis should never make dogmatic assertions that they have arrived at knowledge of what is simple.

Russell claimed to offer a new metaphysics quite distinct from that of the absolute idealists; - his logical atomism is indeed an ontological doctrine, of what ultimately in the final analysis exists in the world. The doctrine is indeed not an empirical doctrine; but one arrived at through reductive analysis of a non-empirical language to the nature of that reality which language describes. Russell and other logical atomists have asserted that the task of proposition is to state facts. But in actual sense of the word a proposition cannot state facts, they can only purport rather than say something about facts, much less say something about the relations between facts and proposition. This is why Wittgenstein came to the conclusion that most of what he said in the Tractatus is 'senseless', and Russell does not seem to believe this fact.

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