

Fitting the (old) pattern

by Michael Byrd

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THIS MEMORIAL VOLUME comprises an assortment of twenty-six papers which aim, in its editor's words, "to assess some of the achievements of Bertrand Russell in philosophy, logic and mathematics, ethics and politics." Philosophy of logic and mathematics, metaphysics, and epistemology preponderate; all but three pieces clearly fall under at least one of these rubrics. No essay concerns itself, even tangentially, with Russell's writings on education or religion. In its distribution of topics, this anthology fits the pattern of three other, comparatively recent anthologies, that of Klemke, that of Pears, and that of Nakhnikian. As in Grice's example of a letter of recommendation saying only, "He is punctual, and his handwriting is excellent", this pattern implicates a view, widely held by academic philosophers, as to the location of Russell's important philosophical accomplishments and as to the quality of his contributions in other areas. While some recent work—for instance, Blackwell's new book—challenges this shared picture, it remains the commonplace view. It bears mentioning that the Schilpp volume, published in 1944, does not exhibit this pattern.

The volume was published in 1979; however, it is clear, I think, that the collection was put together about five years earlier. One contributor, Abraham Robinson, died in 1974, a fact not noted in the volume. A careful examination of footnote and bibliographical references reveals no citation of work published after 1974. The matter of date helps somewhat to explain why, with one exception (Feigl), none of its authors made use of the resources of the Russell Archives.

I described the volume as an assortment to indicate the somewhat disconcerting variety found therein. Naturally, one expects variety of conclusion, argument, and method. This is certainly to be found in the anthologies by Pears, Klemke and Nakhnikian. What I lack in the present case is a conception of what sort or kind of paper would have been deemed inappropriate to include. Perhaps the extreme case is Friedman's "On Some Relations between Leibniz's Monadology and Transfinite Set Theory: a Complement to Russell's Thesis on Leibniz". The only intrinsic connection of this paper to Russell's philosophical work

is that Russell held that the key to Leibniz's metaphysics is his logic, whereas Friedman argues that there is enlightenment to be gained from pursuing a "converse" idea—that Leibniz's metaphysical principles (e.g. perfection, plenitude) are a useful key in thinking creatively about frontier ideas in modern set theory.

Although the anthology as a whole seems to me to suffer the shortcomings noted, I want to emphasize that there are many substantial, provocative papers. I shall limit my discussion to four of these.

Charles Chihara's paper "A Diagnosis of the Liar and Other Semantical Vicious-Circle Paradoxes" distinguishes the diagnostic problem presented by the paradoxes from the preventative problem. The diagnostic problem is to explain what, in the case of the argumentation leading to the paradoxes, is deceiving us and to explain how and why the argumentation succeeds in deceiving us. Russell's solution to the diagnostic problem was that the paradoxes all involved, in some way, violations of the Vicious Circle Principle. The preventative problem is to devise logical systems, or languages, which both avoid the paradoxes and yet retain as much as can be had of the essential features of the relevant concepts. Russell's solution to this problem was, in 1910, the ramified theory of types.

Like Russell in the case of the semantic paradoxes, Chihara argues that definitions are at the heart of the deception. In the Grelling Paradox, the predicate "is heterological" is defined as applying to a predicate P if and only if P does not apply to P . Applying the defined predicate to itself yields explicit contradiction by elementary logic. Chihara locates the origin of the deception in the definition; it, he claims, is inconsistent. The deception in this and related cases is convincing for two reasons; first, we are inclined to think that definitions can be made true by fiat, and second, these definitions work in a perfectly satisfactory way in most cases. I find this diagnosis simple, conservative, and explanatory.

The Liar Paradox is less straightforward; for there is nothing directly identifiable as a definition of truth. Instead, we have biconditionals of the form " X is true iff Y " where X names sentence Y . In a subsequent paper, "The Semantic Paradoxes: a Diagnostic Investigation", Chihara claims that such biconditionals express generally accepted conventions governing the meaning of the word "true". If this is so, we can diagnose the origin and deceptiveness of the Liar as above. This diagnosis poses an interesting problem for those concerned with the semantics of natural languages. The problem is: within what framework can one best describe a non-trivial system which, under standard conditions, yields inconsistent results?

John Myhill's "A Refutation of an Unjustified Attack on the Axiom of Reducibility" explains why Russell's Axiom of Reducibility does not reinstate the semantical paradoxes which the ramification of types is expressly introduced to avoid. The central case which Myhill considers is the Grelling Paradox. Let me attempt to state how a straightforward derivation of this paradox is avoided in a relatively non-technical way. Let us suppose that expressions are individuals of the lowest type. Now, we might let D be a binary predicate relating such expressions to the property, or set, of individuals which they designate, and then define "heterological" by: $\text{Het}(x)$ if and only if there is a property P of individuals such that $D(x, P)$ and not Px . But, in ramified type theory, there is no such type as the type: property of individuals. Rather there is a collection of orders of properties, the lowest being the so-called predicative properties. If we now let D^* be a binary predicate relating (predicate) expressions and the predicative properties they designate, we arrive at a heterologicality predicate in the ramified theory: $\text{Het}^*(x)$ if and only if there is a predicative property P of individuals such that $D^*(x, P)$ and not Px . By virtue of the quantification in the definiens, Het^* is not a predicative property of individuals. So, if h^* is an expression designating Het^* and we assume, as usual, that names are unambiguous, the definition yields the non-paradoxical result that not $\text{Het}^*(h^*)$.

The Axiom of Reducibility, however, ensures that there is a *predicative* property Het^{**} of individuals which is coextensive with Het^* . Suppose there is, among the individuals, an expression h^{**} which designates Het^{**} . Then contradiction follows. If $\text{Het}^{**}(h^{**})$, then, by Reducibility, $\text{Het}^*(h^{**})$, and by definition, there is a predicative property P such that $D^*(h^{**}, P)$ and not- $P(h^{**})$. Since h^{**} is unambiguous and $D^*(h^{**}, \text{Het}^{**})$, we have not- $\text{Het}^{**}(h^{**})$. The argument is simply run in reverse to show that not- $\text{Het}^{**}(h^{**})$ implies $\text{Het}^{**}(h^{**})$. But evidently the derivation rests on the assumption that there is such an expression h^{**} , and this may be consistently denied.

We may, if we wish, add a new name h^{***} to the language and stipulate explicitly that $D^*(h^{***}, \text{Het}^{**})$. This does not restore the paradox; for, by extending the language, we are no longer assured that Het^* is coextensive in the new language with the predicative property Het^{**} . Indeed, the Axiom of Reducibility assures, for the extended domain, there is a predicative property coextensive with Het^* . But, given consistency, this property is not coextensive with Het^{**} , and no expression designates it in the sense of D . The matters that Myhill examines are also studied, with similar results, in Alonzo Church's "Comparison of Russell's Resolution of the Semantical Antinomies with That of Tar-

ski" (*Journal of Symbolic Logic*, 41 [1976]: 747–60). An excellent survey of the general area of ramified type theory is Allen Hazen's contribution to Volume I of the *Handbook of Philosophical Logic* (ed. D. Gabbay and F. Guenther [Dordrecht: Reidel, 1983]).

Timothy Sprigge's "Russell and Bradley on Relations" maintains that Russell's arguments against Bradley's monistic treatment of relations are inconclusive and misdirected. For example, Russell's argument from asymmetrical relations in *The Principles of Mathematics* is judged inconclusive. According to Russell, the monistic view of relations holds that the proposition aRb is, in some sense, equivalent to a proposition predicating a certain property of the whole composed of a and b . Since the whole composed of a and b is identical with the whole composed of b and a , aRb will imply bRa , on the monistic view. Sprigge's response is that the monist regards aRb as equivalent to a proposition ascribing a property to a totality which includes a and b , not to the mere aggregate of a and b . Moreover, the property ascribed to this totality is, we might say, a complex structural property. For instance, in the case of the proposition that the cup is above the saucer, we are applying to a certain totality the predicate of being the totality of a cup above a saucer. And this clearly does not imply that the totality has the property of being a saucer above a cup.

In response, I would say that these properties are complex, structural properties. They have complex, important implicative relations to one another. In what does their complexity consist? How can we go about representing this complexity without the reintroduction of relational predication at some level? Without answers to these questions, Sprigge's response is not persuasive to me.

Sprigge argues that Russell's criticisms of the doctrine of internal relations, even if correct, overlook those features of Bradley's treatment of relations that are most important for monism. Sprigge distinguishes the view Russell attacks, the doctrine of internal relations, from a view which, Sprigge claims, is both compelling and conducive to monism, the doctrine of holistic relations. A relation is internal to its terms if the fact that the relation holds between the terms follows necessarily from the nature of the terms. A relation between terms is holistic if "their being in this relation is a matter of their being mere abstractions from a more genuine individual which embraces them both" (p. 164). As Sprigge points out, the view that all relations are internal is neither necessary nor sufficient for monism. Leibniz's monadology would apparently be a pluralist metaphysics with all relations internal. On the other hand, if all relations are holistic, there can only be one individual.

Sprigge is correct that the arguments in "On the Nature of Truth"

and "The Monistic Theory of Truth" are directed primarily at the internalist view. However, Russell regularly criticizes the holistic view, or rather, an apparent consequence of it; namely that analysis is falsification. In *The Principles of Mathematics*, Russell attempts to discern what limited truth there is in this doctrine (p. 141). He admits that complex unities (e.g. propositions) are not mere aggregates of their parts; but this does not make the parts or their relations mere abstractions. Ultimately, I think, Russell feels that the holist is operating with a sense of *whole* which is not coherent: "The only kind of unity to which I can attach precise sense—apart from the unity of the absolutely simple—is that of a whole composed of parts" (*Principles*, p. 466). Sprigge's challenging views are expounded at greater length in a chapter on relations in his recent book *The Vindication of Absolute Idealism* (Edinburgh: U. of Edinburgh Press, 1983).

Alan R. White's "Propositions and Sentences" claims that Russell's views about the nature of analysis and the analysis of belief are vitiated by his confusions about the nature of propositions—particularly his propensity to confound them with their linguistic expression. Versions of the charge that Russell's argumentation is seriously compromised by use-mention mistakes have been ably confuted in recent papers by Code and Blackburn, Hochberg, and Richards.¹ But there is a related charge in White's paper which needs separate attention. White's charge concerns Russell's view as to what the constituents of a proposition are (p. 26). Russell, according to White, had two views of what it is to be a constituent of a proposition. On the first, "constituent" is used in the ordinary sense of that which is contained in or occurs in something. I agree; this is indeed how Russell standardly uses "constituent". And it is clear that, at least in work up to *Principia Mathematica*, Russell held that concrete entities, properties, and relations were among the constituents of propositions. According to White, Russell also held the view that to be a constituent of a proposition is to be what the proposition is about. Limiting attention to *The Principles of Mathematics* (which is frequently cited by White), it is clear that Russell held no such view. He does allow, with respect to certain items, which are constituents of propositions, that they are also what the proposition is about. And, in each passage cited by White from the *Principles*, Rus-

¹ Simon Blackburn and Alan Code, "The Power of Russell's Criticism of Frege: 'On Denoting' pp. 48–50", *Analysis*, 38 (1978): 65–77; Herbert Hochberg, "Russell's Attack on Frege's Theory of Meaning", *Philosophica*, 18 (1976): 9–34; John Richards, "Propositional Functions and Russell's Philosophy of Language, 1903–14", *The Philosophical Forum*, 11 (1980): 315–39.

sell's point is merely that—not the point that *to be* a constituent is *to be* what the proposition is about. Indeed, at one cited passage (p. 45), Russell is carefully explaining that some of the entities occurring in a proposition are not what the proposition is about. Shortly thereafter, a crucial chapter (Chapter v on denoting) is devoted entirely to the opposite divergence, where a proposition is about an entity even though that entity does not occur in the proposition. Far from conflating constituency and aboutness, Russell's theories of denoting in the years from 1900 to 1905 are an explicit attempt to come to grips with their distinctness.

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