

# Wittgenstein's criticism of Russell's theory of judgment

by Nicholas Griffin

THE PUBLICATION FOR the first time in its entirety of what was written of Russell's 1913 book, *Theory of Knowledge*,<sup>1</sup> throws a flood of light on many aspects of Russell's philosophy between the completion of *Principia* and his conversion to neutral monism, and perhaps even more on the origins of Wittgenstein's logical atomism. The book was to consist of two large parts (Russell at one time thought there might be two separate volumes): one concerned with analysis and the other with synthesis. The synthetic part, which was later taken up in *Our Knowledge of the External World* (1914) and papers such as "The Relation of Sense-Data to Physics" (1914) and "The Ultimate Constituents of Matter" (1915), was intended to show how scientific knowledge (including knowledge of logic as well as knowledge of the empirical sciences) could be obtained from the epistemic base presented in the first part of the book. It was in the first part, the foundation for the whole system, that the project came to grief, and as a result Russell never wrote the synthetic part. In this paper, I shall be concerned entirely with the nature of Russell's epistemic foundations in *Theory of Knowledge* and the reasons why he came to think them unsatisfactory.

Russell came to view the work as unsatisfactory because of criticism from Wittgenstein, who was then his student. The criticism is of great importance for two reasons: firstly, it decisively influenced Russell's

later work (and may have been in part responsible for his move away from professional philosophy); secondly, because it inaugurates Wittgenstein's career as an independent philosopher. It is interesting to note that in Wittgenstein's letters to Russell prior to this criticism he talks of "our problems" in logic and philosophy. After the criticism these problems become "your problems", i.e. Russell's problems alone.<sup>2</sup> It turns out that much of Wittgenstein's criticism of Russell in his *Notebooks*, especially the criticism in the "Notes on Logic" and the "Notes Dictated to G.E. Moore", was directed at Russell's position in his unpublished book.<sup>3</sup>

In outline, the foundations of Russell's epistemology in *Theory of Knowledge* are familiar from his slightly earlier writings on epistemology—notably, *The Problems of Philosophy* (1912) and "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description" (1911)—and from the six chapters of *Theory of Knowledge* which he did publish in *The Monist* in 1914 and 1915. Russell had, in *Theory of Knowledge*, a familiar two-tier epistemology: on the first tier the central concept was the concept of acquaintance, a dyadic relation between a cognizing subject and the object cognized. At this time, Russell was, of course, a Platonist about universals, and so, in addition to acquaintance with sense-data (and of course, the contents of our minds) there was also acquaintance with universals, which Russell thought was necessary for the understanding of propositions. This much is already present in *The Problems of Philosophy*. In *Theory of Knowledge* Russell held that there was a third type of acquaintance: acquaintance with logical objects. Such acquaintance was necessary not just for understanding logic, or molecular propositions, but for understanding any sort of proposition; for understanding a proposition required being acquainted with the form of the proposition—and the form of the proposition was, in some sense Russell was not very clear about, a logical object. But these unclarities were not the main problem. They are a sign more of an incomplete project than of a fatally flawed one.

The second tier of Russell's epistemology concerned what it's convenient (though misleading, as we shall see) to call "propositional attitudes", such as belief, judgment, understanding, etc. The key difference between the two tiers consisted in the fact that truth and

<sup>2</sup> See Wittgenstein, *Letters to Russell, Moore and Keynes*, ed. G.H. von Wright (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974). Compare letters R.6, summer 1912 ("our problems") and R.7, 26 Dec. 1912 ("our Theory of Symbolism") with R.13, 22 July 1913 ("my problems get clear now and I feel rather hopeful").

<sup>3</sup> See Wittgenstein, *Notebooks 1914–1916*, ed. G.H. von Wright and G.E.M. Anscombe, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979).

<sup>1</sup> *Theory of Knowledge: The 1913 Manuscript*, ed. E.R. Eames and K. Blackwell, Vol. 7 of *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell* (London and Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1984).

falsehood (or correctness and error) arose at the second level but not at the first. (One couldn't have an erroneous sensation, as one might have an erroneous belief.) For this reason, of course, it was often held that the objects of such attitudes as belief were propositions, items which could be true or false. The difficulty for Russell in dealing with belief was that he wanted an account of propositional attitudes which would not invoke propositions. Russell felt that there could be no such objects as propositions (in particular, there could be no such objects as *false* propositions), and thus the relation of believing could not be a dyadic relation between a subject and a proposition, nor, indeed, a dyadic relation of any kind, because the objections against propositions as objects of belief would hold against any other type of object. There would have to be two kinds of such objects, true ones and false ones, and it was hard to see how there could actually *be* false ones.

Russell's response to this difficulty was the multiple relation theory of judgment, outlined in *The Problems of Philosophy*, in "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description" and in the final essay on truth and falsehood in *Philosophical Essays* (1910). On this theory, Othello's belief that Desdemona loves Cassio, e.g., is analyzed as a four-place belief-relation holding between Othello (the subject), Desdemona, the universal *loves*, and Cassio. Thus what appears to be a proposition, that Desdemona loves Cassio, is broken down into its components. The propositional expression becomes an incomplete symbol, analogous to a definite description, having no meaning on its own, but requiring completion by a "propositional" attitude in order to be significant. Thus Russell's realism seems to be preserved. When Othello believes that Desdemona loves Cassio we do not need to invoke an allegedly shadowy non-entity, Desdemona's love for Cassio, in order to make sense of the belief. We require just the objects, Cassio, Desdemona and *loves* which are united with Othello in an actual belief-complex.

Now if you take belief to be genuinely and literally a propositional attitude, then *one* problem at least becomes very easy to solve. It becomes very easy to explain how Othello's belief that Desdemona loves Cassio differs from his belief that Cassio loves Desdemona. The two beliefs have different propositional objects. But if we adopt Russell's multiple relation theory, this problem becomes quite difficult. For in both cases the objects of the belief are the same: Desdemona, *loves* and Cassio. The difference would seem to be a difference in the way these objects are related to one another, and yet, for the purposes of the multiple relation theory, these objects are not related to one another at all, but only related to Othello. Moreover, this problem, which I call

the direction problem, has a more general form for the multiple relation theory (which I call the wide form of the direction problem). The wide form of the problem is the following: On the multiple relation theory the relation *loves* occurs as an object in the analysis of Othello's belief just as Desdemona and Cassio occur; it does *not* occur as a relating relation. Consequently, there would seem to be nothing in the theory as so far stated to distinguish Othello's belief that Desdemona loves Cassio from a nonsensical belief that loves Cassio Desdemona, for example. Since the same three objects are involved, how can we be sure that they can be "put together" in the right way, and not in wrong or even nonsensical ways? It was the direction problem which led to the rapid development of the multiple relation theory from its earliest advocated form in *Philosophical Essays* to the form in which Russell finally abandoned it in *Theory of Knowledge*.

In the first version Russell attempted to solve the narrower direction problem by a distinction in sense in the subordinate relation, *loves*, which, he said, was either directed from Desdemona to Cassio or from Cassio to Desdemona. But this, as G.F. Stout (and much later P.T. Geach) pointed out, doesn't help very much.<sup>4</sup> For *loves* occurs in the belief as a term of a complex, *not* as its relating relation, and yet it is only of relating relations that one can significantly speak of the sense or direction of the relation from one term to the other. As *loves* occurs in the belief-complex it is a universal and has no terms; thus it cannot have a direction from one term to the other. In *The Problems of Philosophy* and "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description" Russell changed his theory, so that it was the belief-relation itself, the relating relation of the belief-complex, which determines the order of the terms, producing different beliefs as it goes from Othello, to Desdemona and then to *loves* and Cassio, or from Othello to Cassio and then to *loves* and Desdemona.

Stout wasn't satisfied with this and returned to the attack, claiming that if it was the belief-relation which assembled the objects of belief in the right order, then the believer would have to be aware of the belief-relation in each act of belief (*Studies*, pp. 350–1). Now this doesn't seem to follow, for it is surely possible for one to be aware of a distinction between *A* and *B* and for that distinction to arise from *C* without one's having to be aware of *C*. Moreover, while Russell does

<sup>4</sup> See G.F. Stout, "The Object of Thought and Real Being", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, II (1911): 187–208; reprinted in Stout, *Studies in Philosophy and Psychology* (London: Macmillan, 1930), pp. 335–52 (at 349–50); P.T. Geach, *Mental Acts* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), p. 51.

not explicitly deal with Stout's objections in *Theory of Knowledge*, he does say there that acquaintance with a complex does not imply acquaintance with its relating relation (p. 82). A special consequence of this is that one can be acquainted with a belief-complex without being acquainted with the specific belief-relation which unites it. Thus, it would seem, Stout's objection is not a troubling one for Russell. And yet, Russell did not content himself in *Theory of Knowledge* with the reply to the direction problem that he put forward in *The Problems of Philosophy*. The reason was that we can't, properly speaking, talk of the belief-relation ordering the objects of belief which, after all, are actual objects in the world, not their mental representatives. If Desdemona does not love Cassio, no amount of belief by Othello will bring them into that arrangement (*Theory of Knowledge*, p. 116).

In fact, *Theory of Knowledge* contains two innovations in dealing with the direction problem. The first concerns the wide form, which had been left untouched by the development in *The Problems of Philosophy*. Consider again the wide form of the direction problem. It is plain that the task here is not just to distinguish such garbled beliefs as loves Desdemona Cassio from other garbled beliefs and from beliefs that are not garbled. The task is to distinguish the garbled beliefs and exclude them. Now if one simply relies upon the belief-relation to do the ordering, there seems to be nothing which makes it impossible to believe that loves Desdemona Cassio. What Russell does in *Theory of Knowledge* to try and exclude such events is add in as an extra term of the belief-relation the logical form of the complex (if there is one) which the belief is about. Thus, on analysis, Othello believes that Desdemona loves Cassio is a five-place relation between Othello, Desdemona, loves, Cassio and the logical form of dyadic complexes. Thus garbled beliefs get excluded because, not only are there no complexes in which an individual relates another individual to a first-order relation, but there is no logical form for such complexes either.

The second innovation in *Theory of Knowledge* concerns the narrower form of the direction problem. With the addition of logical forms, we have, as materials from which to fashion beliefs, the objects which the belief is about and the logical form in which they are to be related. Now in the case of some beliefs, specifying the objects and the form is sufficient to specify the belief. For example, the belief that *A* is similar to *B* is completely determined once the objects, *A*, *B* and similarity, and the form of a dyadic complex are specified. This is obviously because similarity is a symmetrical relation, so the belief that *A* is similar to *B* is the same belief as the belief that *B* is similar to *A*. Thus, given the constituents and the form, there is really only one way (or

strictly, two equivalent ways) of putting the constituents together according to the form. So this is one way in which a belief can be specified by specifying its objects and the relevant form, namely when the subordinate relation is symmetrical. There is another way in which the constituents and the form may be sufficient. An example of this is the belief that *A* is a member of *B*. Here we have the constituents *A*, *B* and the membership relation and a logical form. But the logical form in this case is not that of an elementary dyadic complex because the two terms are of different logical types. Because of this we cannot put the constituents together the wrong way round in the form, to get *B* is a member of *A*—for that is nonsense. Consequently, given the form and the constituents, the belief is determined. Russell describes the subordinate relation in this case as heterogeneous. A nonsymmetrical relation which is not heterogeneous is homogeneous. So the problem cases are those in which the belief involves a homogeneous relation, for in these cases the constituents and the form are not jointly sufficient to determine the belief. Russell terms those relations in which the terms can be exchanged to produce a different complex *permutative*. And he sees his task as that of replacing permutative relations by non-permutative ones.<sup>5</sup>

In *Theory of Knowledge* (pp. 80–9, 144–8) Russell tackles the direction problem by defining a procedure by means of which every homogeneous relation may be replaced by a set of heterogeneous relations. The procedure works as follows. In the belief that Desdemona loves Cassio, *loves* is clearly a homogeneous relation. According to Russell, it is misleading to give the form of the putative complex which is the object of belief as the form of an elementary dyadic complex. Instead one must subject Desdemona-loves-Cassio to further analysis, to produce a complex of different form, which Russell calls the “associated complex”. We have the form of a dyadic complex, that is a complex with two distinct positions in it. We can specify the complex Desdemona-loves-Cassio uniquely by specifying the constituents, the form and which position the constituents occupy in the complex. Thus instead of the homogeneous relation *loves* we introduce two new relations of position, *P*<sub>1</sub> and *P*<sub>2</sub>, which specify which position the two terms take in the complex. Thus we can specify the complex Desdemona-

<sup>5</sup> In fact Russell introduced the homogeneous/heterogeneous, permutative/non-permutative terminology as applying to complexes (*Theory of Knowledge*, pp. 122–3). Nothing is lost, however, by transferring it to the relations which form the complex. And at least one thing is gained, for Russell's usage suggests a reification of complexes which it is his purpose to avoid. Relations, by contrast, are already reified.

loves-Cassio by saying that it is that complex  $\alpha$  in which *loves* is the relating relation and such that Desdemona has the relation  $P_1$  to  $\alpha$  and Cassio has the relation  $P_2$  to  $\alpha$ . The complex Cassio-loves-Desdemona can be specified similarly, except that in this case Cassio has the relation  $P_1$  to  $\alpha$  and Desdemona has the relation  $P_2$  to  $\alpha$ . The positional relations,  $P_1$  and  $P_2$ , are not subject to the direction problem because they are heterogeneous: the complex which constitutes their second term is of a different logical type to the individual which constitutes their first term.

Whether or not one has much sympathy for Russell's overall project, I think one can admire the originality and ingenuity of his account. And by the same token one can admire the subtlety and power of Wittgenstein's criticisms, to which I want to turn next. Wittgenstein's criticisms of Russell's theory of judgment had started before Russell embarked upon *Theory of Knowledge*. In a letter to Russell of January 1913 Wittgenstein wrote:

I have changed by views on "atomic" complexes: I now think that Qualities, Relations (like Love), etc. are all copulae! That means I for instance analyse a subject-predicate prop[osition], say, "Socrates is human" into "Socrates" and "Something is human" (which I think is not complex). The reason for this, is a very fundamental one: I think that there cannot be different Types of things! In other words whatever can be symbolized by a simple proper name must belong to one type. And further: every theory of types must be rendered superfluous by a proper theory of the symbolism: For instance if I analyse the prop[osition] Socrates is mortal into Socrates, Mortality and  $(\exists x, y)\epsilon_1(x, y)$  I want a theory of types to tell me that "Mortality is Socrates" is nonsensical, because if I treat "Mortality" as a proper name (as I did) there is nothing to prevent me to make the substitution the wrong way round. But if I analyse [it] (as I do now) into Socrates and  $(\exists x)x$  is mortal or generally into  $x$  and  $(\exists x)\phi(x)$ \* it becomes impossible to substitute the wrong way round, because the two symbols are now of a different kind themselves.

\* Prop[osition]s which I formerly wrote  $\epsilon_2(a, R, b)$  I now write  $R(a, b)$  and analyse them into  $a, b$ , and  $(\exists x, y)\underbrace{R(x, y)}_{\text{not complex}}$ .<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Wittgenstein, *Letters to Russell, Keynes and Moore*, letter R.9. On the interpretation of this letter see also the Note at the end of this paper.

Now it is clear immediately that what Wittgenstein is here raising is the wide form of the direction problem: the need to avoid nonsensical judgments, such as Mortality is Socrates. We cannot be sure, but it seems highly probable that Russell introduced the first of his two innovations in *Theory of Knowledge*, the admission of logical form as an object of belief, in order to overcome this objection.

That he thought he'd been successful is suggested by his correspondence with Lady Ottoline Morrell. While Russell was writing those parts of *Theory of Knowledge* which deal with acquaintance with relations (Chapter VII of Part I, significantly the first of the unpublished chapters), Wittgenstein went to him

... with a refutation of the theory of judgment which I used to hold. He was right, but I think the correction required is not very serious. I shall have to make up my mind within a week, as I shall soon reach judgment [in the writing of *Theory of Knowledge*]. [No. 782, postmarked 21 May 1913]

Now the fact that Russell says that Wittgenstein refuted the theory he "used to hold" suggests that Russell considered his current theory protected against Wittgenstein's criticisms; but the fact that Russell thought some "not very serious" correction was required suggests that his defence was not yet complete.

I should think that Russell at this stage was already contemplating the introduction of logical forms as terms in the judgment. Such an addition could hardly be described as "not very serious". The admission of logical forms certainly provide a defence against the criticism Wittgenstein made in his letter of January 1913. For we cannot substitute mortality and Socrates the wrong way round if we have to substitute them into a form in which the positions are protected by type requirements—for mortality and Socrates are of different logical types.

So what, then, was the "not very serious" correction? I think it concerned the status of the subordinate verb in the belief-complex. This would fit with certain provisos that Russell added to "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description" when he reprinted it in *Mysticism and Logic* in 1918<sup>7</sup> and with remarks in "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism" (1918), in which he points out the impossibility of putting "the subordinate verb on a level with its terms as an object

<sup>7</sup> See *Mysticism and Logic* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1963; 1st ed., 1918), p.159n.

term in the belief".<sup>8</sup> Moreover, a change on exactly this point can be detected in the manuscript of *Theory of Knowledge*. In Chapter VII of Part I which Russell was writing when Wittgenstein went to him with his criticisms, Russell is very tentative about the status of the relating relation in the complex which it relates: "it is probably a mistake", he writes, to treat the terms of a complex and the relating relation as "on a level" and that when we say the relating relation is part of the complex "it may be doubted whether 'part' has quite the same meaning" as when we say that the terms are part of the complex (*Theory of Knowledge*, p. 83). Yet in the very next chapter, written after Wittgenstein had visited him, he becomes, without any argument, very definite on this point: "the way in which a relating relation occurs in an atomic complex is quite different from the way in which its terms occur"; "subject and predicate obviously differ *logically*, and not merely as two particulars differ" (p. 90). It is tempting to see these changes as due to Wittgenstein's criticism.

There is something of this line of attack in Wittgenstein's letter of January as well. For there Wittgenstein says that if we "treat 'Mortality' as a proper name (as I did) there is nothing to prevent me to make the substitution the wrong way round." This criticism takes us a bit deeper, and its importance was perhaps not immediately grasped by Russell. Wittgenstein is arguing that if one takes both mortality and Socrates to be terms of the belief-relation then one is treating "mortality" as a proper name, i.e. treating mortality as an individual, and if one does that there is nothing to block the faulty substitutions. In particular, the type restrictions on admissible substitutions won't help. These type restrictions in fact will break down, because, as follows from the definition of "being of the same type" in *Principia* (\*10.121), Socrates and mortality will both be of the same type if both can be arguments to a single function. And it seems that both *are* treated as arguments of a single function, the belief-function. It is far from clear that this is an insuperable obstacle, however. It is true that Russell's *Principia* definition of an individual as whatever is neither a function nor a proposition<sup>9</sup> will have to go, because universals will need to be introduced as a distinct logical category. Moreover, Russell cannot construe relations as they occur as terms of the belief-relation either as

functions or as relating relations. They have to occur as terms. Even so, one could admit that the terms of a belief-relation are of different logical types (in any belief-complex there must be at least one subordinate relation). So there seems no reason why the type restrictions required to prevent faulty substitutions must inevitably break down if the subordinate relation is admitted as a term of the belief-relation.

Despite this, Russell, somewhat later in *Theory of Knowledge*, changes his theory yet again in order to remove the difficulty about the status of the subordinate relation. This time he takes a more radical step, and in the case of judgments which involve permutative subordinate relations, he removes the subordinate relation altogether as a constituent of the judgment. He can do this by means of his positional relations. Russell's original specification of the complex Desdemona-loves-Cassio was as that dyadic complex  $\alpha$  in which *loves* was the relating relation and such that Desdemona has relation  $P_1$  to  $\alpha$  and Cassio has relation  $P_2$  to  $\alpha$ . Russell's claim now is that one can specify the complex uniquely without mentioning *loves* (pp. 146–7). This is achieved by ensuring that the relating relation is determined once the positional relations are specified.

It is to be noted that these remarks apply only to permutative relations. Indeed, Russell seems to think that non-permutative relations are immune to Wittgenstein's criticisms. Russell treats permutative and non-permutative complexes very differently. In the case of non-permutative complexes "the mere enumeration of simple names determines the complex meant." "It is impossible to find a complex name which shall name [the permutative] complex [A-before-B] directly, because no direct name will distinguish it from 'B-before-A'. Complex names, in fact, are only directly applicable to non-permutative complexes ..." (p. 148). It is obviously because permutative complexes have direction (or sense) that Russell maintains that they can't be named. The position here is similar to that expressed in Wittgenstein's "Notes on Logic" written in September 1913 which must be considered as in part a reply to Russell's *Theory of Knowledge*. Thus Wittgenstein writes:

Names are points, propositions arrows—they have *sense*.... When we say "A believes *p*" this sounds, it is true, as if we could here substitute a proper name for "*p*". But we can see that here a *sense*, not a meaning, is concerned. (*Notebooks*, p. 97)

Both Russell and Wittgenstein are agreed that propositions with sense cannot be named, because the name cannot show the sense. But they differ in that Wittgenstein held that all propositions have sense,

<sup>8</sup> "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism", *Logic and Knowledge*, ed. R.C. Marsh (London: Allen and Unwin, 1956), p. 226; and Vol. 8 of *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, ed. J.G. Slater (London: Allen and Unwin, forthcoming 1986), p. 199.

<sup>9</sup> B. Russell and A.N. Whitehead, *Principia Mathematica*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925–27), I: 132.

whereas Russell held that only permutative ones have sense. Thus if permutative propositions (or complexes) could be analyzed into non-permutative ones, Russell would be able to defend his theory of judgment—which essentially amounted to the construction of complex names for complexes out of simple names for their constituent elements. Since there is no evidence that Wittgenstein in May 1913 had the theory of polarity upon which his account of the sense of a proposition depends, it seems that we have Wittgenstein in the “Notes on Logic” generalizing a theory he got originally from Russell.

The problems Wittgenstein raised in his first visit did not prevent Russell from continuing the book. However, as Russell was writing the chapter on propositional understanding (Chapter I of Part II), the first chapter in which multiple relations figured, Wittgenstein came to him with fresh criticisms. Russell reported what ensued to Lady Ottoline Morrell:

I showed him a crucial part of what I have been writing. He said it was wrong, not realizing the difficulties—that he had tried my view and knew it wouldn't work. I couldn't understand his objection—in fact he was very inarticulate—but I felt in my bones that he must be right, and that he has seen something I have missed. (No. 787, 27 May 1913)

The nature of the objection Wittgenstein was trying to make on that occasion can be established with reasonable certainty from one of Wittgenstein's letters to Russell (dated by Russell as June 1913):

I can now express my objection to your theory of judgment exactly: I believe it is obvious that, from the prop[osition] “A judges that (say)  $a$  is in the Rel[ation]  $R$  to  $b$ ”, if correctly analysed, the prop[osition] “ $aRb \vee \sim aRb$ ” must follow directly *without the use of any other premiss*. This condition is not fulfilled by your theory. (Letters, R.12)

That this was the objection that Wittgenstein had been trying to explain to Russell during the discussion which Russell reported to Morrell on 28 May is suggested both by the dating of the two letters and by the fact that Wittgenstein says in his letter: “I can now express my objection ... exactly”, which corroborates Russell's report to Morrell that Wittgenstein “was very inarticulate” during their discussion. That this was the decisive objection that led Russell ultimately to abandon the multiple relation theory is suggested by the next surviving letter from Wittgenstein to Russell, written on 22 July 1913, where he writes (obviously in reponse to Russell's reply to his earlier letter):

I am very sorry to hear that my objection to your theory of judgment paralyzes you. I think it can only be removed by a correct theory of propositions. (Letters, R.13)

By the evidence of his letters to Ottoline Morrell, Russell wasn't paralyzed at once. He managed to finish writing Part II of *Theory of Knowledge*, and the manuscript breaks off where it does, not because of this second instalment of Wittgenstein's criticism, but because of the problems which faced him in dealing with molecular propositions in Part III. Probably the day after the criticism, he claimed to have “recovered from the effect of Wittgenstein's criticisms, though I think in all likelihood they are just. But even if they are they won't destroy the value of the book” (no. 792, 28 May 1913?). He remained uneasy, however: “I have only superficially and by an act of will got over Wittgenstein's attack—it has made the work a task rather than a joy” (no. 793, pmk. 1 June 1913); “it needed a great effort to get over Wittgenstein's criticism” (no. 796, pmk. 3 June). Nonetheless, he continued to write Part II of the book, and remained convinced of its value (no. 793, pmk. 1 June). Even the chapter on the definition of truth he thought “rather good ... certainly a great advance on what I wrote before on the same subject” (no. 791, pmk. 31 May).

A full realization of the damage Wittgenstein had done didn't come to him until the third week in June. Wittgenstein's June letter, explaining his objection “exactly”, was partly concerned with arranging for Russell to meet Wittgenstein's mother for lunch at the Savoy Hotel. According to Russell's Cambridge Pocket Diary, this meeting, with Wittgenstein present, took place on 18 June. Either at this lunch or at some other time that day Russell and Wittgenstein almost certainly discussed the theory of judgment again. (Unfortunately, the Morrell correspondence breaks off for a crucial few days between 14 and 19 June.) The lunch took place on Wednesday the 18th. On Thursday night Russell wrote to Morrell that the previous day he had felt ready for suicide. “All that has gone wrong with me lately comes from Wittgenstein's attack on my work—I have only just realized this. It was very difficult to be honest about it, as it makes a large part of the book I meant to write impossible for years to come probably.” It was, he said, “the first time in my life that I have failed in honesty over work” (no. 811, pmk. 20 June). It was only now that Russell finally abandoned the book.

So, what was the big objection? It's long been noted that the requirement that  $aRb \vee \sim aRb$  follow directly from a judgment that  $aRb$ , imposes a significance constraint on judgments. For  $aRb \vee \sim aRb$  is a tautology and thus follows classically from any proposition, *provided*

that  $aRb$  is significant. The reason Wittgenstein presents his objection in the way he does was pointed out by Somerville.<sup>10</sup> It has to do with \*13.3 of *Principia*, or rather its dyadic analogue:

$$*13.3a \quad aRb \vee \sim aRb \supset. (xRy \vee \sim xRy) \equiv [(x=a \ \& \ y=b) \vee (x \neq a \ \& \ y=b) \vee (x=a \ \& \ y \neq b) \vee (x \neq a \ \& \ y \neq b)]$$

What this amounts to is the following: if  $aRb$  is significant then  $xRy$  is significant if and only if  $x$  and  $y$  are either identical or not identical to  $a$  and  $b$ . The proposition is used in *Principia* in proving that any two types with a common member are identical (\*20.81). Consider now  $S$ 's judgment that  $aRb$ , and suppose that the case is the simplest one of an elementary dyadic non-permutative relation (e.g. " $a$  is similar to  $b$ "). On Russell's theory this belief is analyzed as  $B(S, a, R, B, \Sigma)$ , where  $\Sigma$  is the form of an elementary dyadic complex. Does this ensure that  $aRb$  is significant? The answer is, not without further premisses. For we need to stipulate that  $a$  and  $b$  are indeed individuals, that  $R$  is a first-order relation and that  $\Sigma$  is the form of a first-order dyadic complex. Why won't Wittgenstein allow us these stipulations? Because to make them would require further judgments. We are trying to analyze what is supposed to be the simplest type of elementary judgment. But to do so would seem to involve us in yet further judgments. Moreover, the further judgments required are of an extremely problematic character. For to judge that  $a$  and  $b$  are suitable arguments for a first-order relation is to make a judgment of higher than first-order. Yet, as Russell makes quite clear in *Principia* (pp. 44–6), higher-order judgments are to be defined cumulatively on lower-order ones. Thus we cannot presuppose second-order judgments in order to analyze elementary judgments. So why not abandon the requirement that the judgment be significant? Why not simply allow nonsense to be believed? (If the positivists are right, it very often is.) The problem here is that the entire point and purpose of Russell's multiple relation theory is to avoid having to postulate propositions as independent entities, since propositions, in the only sense in which they are admissible at all, as false abstractions, are to be obtained from multiple relations like belief. Thus if nonsensical beliefs are permitted, then so, too, will be non-

<sup>10</sup> Stephen Somerville, "Types, Categories and Significance" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, McMaster University, 1979), pp. 702–6); "Wittgenstein to Russell (July 1913): 'I Am Very Sorry to Hear ... My Objection Paralyzes You'", in *Language, Logic and Philosophy. Proceedings of the 4th International Wittgenstein Symposium* (Vienna: Holder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1981), pp. 186–7.

sensical propositions in the admissible sense. Consequently, if Wittgenstein's significance requirement is let go, the propositions which emerge will not be regimented by type theory. For it is clear that, even when construed as false abstractions, only significant propositions are admissible. In other words, type theory will break down if the multiple relation theory is adhered to. Faced with these alternatives, Russell abandoned the multiple relation theory.<sup>11</sup>

Troy, Ontario

*Note.* In his commentary on this paper at the 1985 conference of the Canadian Philosophical Association, Ralph Johnson pointed out that, in his letter of January 1913, Wittgenstein seems to be arguing against the multiple relation theory on the grounds that it requires the theory of types, which Wittgenstein thought was mistaken (in fact, meaningless). Wittgenstein, according to Johnson, is arguing that type theory is necessary for the multiple relation theory in order to ensure that nonsensical judgments are excluded. Indeed, Wittgenstein says in the letter, in a passage I didn't quote, "What I am *most* certain of is not however the correctness of my present way of analysis, but of the fact that all theory of types must be done away with." This interpretation of the letter does not, I think, invalidate my interpretation of Wittgenstein's position, namely that he was arguing that the multiple relation theory is incompatible with type theory. In fact, the two arguments can be harmonized rather elegantly. For Wittgenstein was arguing, on the one hand, that type theory was necessary for the multiple relation theory (in order to prevent faulty substitutions) and, on the other, that the multiple relation theory is incompatible with type theory (since type distinctions will break down if the multiple relation theory is true). His argument against the multiple relation theory therefore takes the classic form of a *reductio ad absurdum*:  $A \supset B$ ,  $A \supset \sim B$ , so  $\sim A$ .

<sup>11</sup> Great debts are owed to Ken Blackwell, who first opened up this topic for discussion in his unpublished M.A. thesis, "Wittgenstein's Impact on Russell's Theory of Belief" (McMaster University, 1974), and to Stephen Somerville, who made the crucial connection with type theory. Versions of this paper have been read at the University of Hawaii, the Australian National University, the University of Sydney, Victoria University of Wellington, and at the 1985 CPA conference at Montreal. I am grateful to the audiences at all these places for much useful discussion, but especially to Ralph Johnson, the commentator at the CPA, whose exemplary commentary has resulted in numerous improvements.