

## **Russell' S Critique of Bradley**

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### **Abstract**

In the years following Russell's break with idealism, Russell's strategy in attacking idealism consists in focusing attention on the whole development from Kant to Hegel relative to the question of the purported transformation of logic into ontology. Russell will not only reject the psychologism of the Kantian and Hegelian paradigms, but he will also radicalize his critique of this procedure, extending it to Hegel's entire heritage; indeed the idealist tradition as a whole and Bradley in particular. This paper argues that Russell's rejection of Bradley's philosophy is a child of Russell's attitude towards idealism. The assumption that all of idealism is irredeemably psychologistic is a key element in Russell's treatment of Bradley's theory of judgement as a species of subject-predicate logic as well as his reception of Bradley's claim regarding the 'unreality' of relations. As a counter point to the assumed psychologism that infects the whole of idealism, Russell will advance his theory of logical atomism, a theory of proposition which dispenses with the role of the mind in judgement. The move to exclude the subject from the epistemological process is presumably a service to the ideal of objectivity; and, to this extent, is continuous with Russell's anti-idealism. Whereas the whole of idealism tries to secure objectivity by configuring it in terms of subjectivity, Russell's alternative route for securing objectivity is to de-configure objectivity from subjectivity. This de-configuration drives Russell's crusade against idealism. But it is, nevertheless, problematic.

**Keywords:** Russell, Bradley, Idealism, Psychologism, Judgment

### **1. PREAMBLE**

Russell had a brief idealist period as a student in Cambridge. Subsequently,

Russell's early 'philosophical love' became the object of his attack. One way to make sense of Russell's philosophical re-orientation following his revolt against idealism is in terms of the problem of objectivity, a recurrent issue in philosophy since the birth of modern philosophy. (Jones, 1975, pp. xix-xx) Whereas Kant dealt with the matter under the rubrics of his so-called 'Copernican revolution' by reconfiguring objectivity in terms of (transcendental) subjectivity, Hegel attempted a completion of the Kantian project by arguing that the categories are no mere thought determinations but determination of the *object qua object*, thus affirming a basic identity between thought and reality. (Hegel, 1991, par.40-60; Duquette, 1996, pp. 1-16)

In the years following Russell's break with idealism, Russell's strategy in attacking idealism consists in focusing attention on the whole development from Kant to Hegel relative to the question of the purported transformation of logic into ontology. (Russell, 1914, pp. 10-21) On Russell's view, neither the Kantian nor the Hegelian paradigms guarantee the *salvation of objectivity*. Both remain inescapably psychologistic, so far as the price for the salvation of objectivity is the reconfiguration of objectivity in terms of subjectivity. (Russell, 1963, pp. 3-20) Consequently, Russell will not only reject this procedure as moribund, but will also radicalize his critique of this procedure, extending it to Hegel's entire heritage; indeed the idealist tradition as a whole. (Allard, 1994, pp. 3-13)

In considering Russell's critique of Bradley, it is important to keep in mind the foregoing point. For, as will become evident in what follows, Russell's rejection of Bradley's philosophy is a child of Russell's attitude towards idealism. The assumption that all of idealism is irredeemably psychologistic and, as such, cannot guarantee the salvation of objectivity, is at the heart of Russell's reception of Bradley. (Hylton, 1990, pp. 1-17; Hylton, 1993, pp. 450) The assumption is a key element in Russell's treatment of Bradley's theory of judgement as a species of subject-predicate logic as well as his reception of Bradley's claim regarding the 'unreality' of relations. As a counter point to the assumed psychologism that infects the whole of idealism, Russell will advance his theory of logical atomism, a theory of proposition which dispenses with the role of the mind in judgement. The move to exclude the subject from the epistemological process is presumably a service to the ideal of objectivity; and, to this extent, is continuous with Russell's anti-idealism. Whereas the whole of idealism tries to secure objectivity by configuring it in terms of subjectivity, Russell's alternative route for securing objectivity is to de-configure objectivity from subjectivity. This de-configuration drives Russell's crusade against idealism. But it is, nevertheless, problematic.

Given the correlation between Russell's anti-psychologism and his rejection of idealism and the fact that Russell's appraisal of Bradley presupposes both considerations, it is pertinent to explore Russell's understanding of idealism before considering the specifics of his criticism of Bradley. Consequently, for sake of convenient treatment we develop our argument in following steps. First, we examine Russell's understanding of idealism by considering his association with Moore; then after a consideration of the specifics of Russell's criticism of Bradley, we critically examine Bradley's response to Russell before concluding with a brief note on

Bradley's contemporary significance.

## 2. THE QUESTION OF RUSSELL'S RECEPTION OF IDEALISM

The best way to capture Russell's attitude to idealism is in terms of Russell's association with Moore, who was his colleague in Cambridge during their undergraduate years and later played a key role with Russell in founding analytic philosophy. Of course the aspect of their association that is immediately pertinent is their shared loathing of idealism. This is evident from Moore's lead papers, "*The Nature of Judgement*" and the celebrated "*Refutation of Idealism*". Both are thoroughgoing attacks on idealism. The first focuses on the idealist theory of judgement, especially the place assigned to the mind relative to the issue of the unity of judgement, while the second undertakes to demonstrate the illogicality of the idealist thesis concerning the spirituality of the universe.

### 2. 1. MOORE-RUSSELL ASSOCIATION, IDEALISM AND ANTI-PSYCHOLOGISM

We should focus on the influence of this association on Russell. That its impact on Russell was enormous and that Russell attached extreme importance to it can be gauged from Russell's remarks in his autobiographical work, *My Philosophical Development*. For he tells us here explicitly that, "it was towards the end of 1898 that Moore and I rebelled against both Kant and Hegel. Moore led the way, but I followed closely in his footsteps". (Russell, 1959, p. 54) In further acknowledging his debt to Moore, Russell says succinctly in the *Principles of Mathematics*:

On fundamental questions of philosophy, my position, in all its chief features is derived from Mr. G. E. Moore. I have accepted from him the non-existential nature of propositions (except such as happen to assert existence) and their independence of any knowing mind; also the pluralism which regards the world, both that of existents and entities, as composed of an infinite number of mutually independent entities, with relations which are ultimate, and not reducible to adjectives of their terms or of the whole which these compose. Before learning these views from him, I found myself unable to construct any philosophy of arithmetic; whereas their acceptance brought about an immediate liberation from a large number of difficulties, which I believe to be otherwise insuperable. The doctrines just mentioned are, in my opinion, quite indispensable to any even tolerably satisfactory philosophy of mathematics.... Formally, my premises are simply assumed; but the fact that they allow mathematics to be true, which most current philosophies do not, is surely a powerful argument in their favour. (Russell, 1937, p. xviii)

Russell's confession here is significant. For, it conveys Russell's self-understanding of his project at the same time it intimates Russell's overall philosophical orientation. (Russell, 1992) Indeed, the passage offers a good summary statement of the basic furniture of Russell's early philosophy. Consequently, we should note a number of points in this regard. First is Russell's anti-psychologism.

Second is the conviction that the panacea to psychologism lies in the doctrine of non-existential nature of proposition, and that this inexorably entails a radical pluralism concerning the nature of the universe and its content. The third point concerns the value of the doctrine of external relations and the service it renders to the philosophy of mathematics. (Ayer, 1972, pp. 35-67)

While this last point ultimately connects with Russell's logicism it is clear that the three points are, nevertheless, connected. Russell's anti-idealism drives them. Idealism's purported assertion of an existential theory of judgement is replaced with its opposite, that is, the non-existential theory of judgement, while the doctrine of external relations replaces idealism's doctrine of internal relations; and where idealism asserts monism, Russell asserts radical pluralism. (Griffins, 1991, p. 177) The duty that these counter-positions serve in the crusade against Idealism explains Russell's gratitude to Moore, since he learnt them from Moore. In spite of Russell's chequered philosophical career, which saw him change his mind on several subjects, the doctrines Russell derived from Moore remained dear to Russell's heart, and were never revoked. (Russell, 1959, pp. 45-50)

This point may lead us to overestimate the import of the association between Russell and Moore. But the result would be the levelling of Moore and Russell. Such levelling is hardly true to the whole matter. For, indeed, a significant difference exists between them. The divergence turns on Russell's *logicism*, and, as we shall see, this consideration is important from the point of view of what Bradley makes of Russell's criticism of him. Russell is right to say that his doctrine of external relations and its associated pluralism are derived from Moore. Both thinkers are one, to the extent that these commitments allow them to shake off the purported psychologistic pretensions of idealism. This much is suggested by their shared commitment to the non-existential theory of propositions, the view on which propositions are non-mental entities - which entities are analogously eternal like the classic Platonic forms. (Hylton, 1990, p. 108)

The passage we cited earlier is explicit about the convergence between Moore and Russell, but it is not so explicit about the divergence between them, albeit there is arguably a hint nevertheless. This concerns Russell's conviction about the larger potentials of the doctrines he learnt from Moore. (Russell, 1937, p. xviii) The upshot here is Russell's now famous reduction of mathematics to logic. This move derives its motivation partly from Russell's inheritance from Moore. However, Moore disapproves of Russell's logicism, that is, the duty that the doctrine of external relations does within Russell's philosophy of mathematics; and, indeed, the overall ontological status of Russell's philosophy of mathematics. These issues are at the heart of the divergence between the two men. For, on Moore's view, Russell's procedure smacks of formalism. Nonetheless, these considerations are pivotal for Russell's outlook. So we can ignore them only at the risk of one-sided understanding of Russell's attitude towards idealism, for his logicism is continuous with the anti-psychologism he shares with Moore. (Corrado, 1975), p. 11

## 2. 2. RUSSELL, EXTERNAL RELATION AND LOGICISM

What makes the doctrine of external relations amenable to Russell's agenda is its implicit notion of truth – the idea that truth is an absolute concept. This means that truth admits of no degree. (Hylton, 1990, pp. 8-12; Allard, 1994, pp. 137-158) As a consequence, a proposition is either true or false, and its falsity does not depend on its relation to the mind, or another proposition for that matter. It is true *in itself* and *by itself*. In short, truth is absolute, objective and unconditioned. (Hylton, 1984, p. 384; Baldwin, 1984, pp. 357-373) Although Russell and Moore are both committed to the ideal of truth as an absolute concept, the issue is the work it does within mathematical logic. Apart from the basis it offers for the formulation of a truth-functional logic, it also enables Russell to reduce mathematics to Logic, and then claim a paradigmatic status for mathematical logic as the ultimate tool for philosophical analysis. (Corrado, 1975, Chapter 1)

Russell advances this thesis explicitly in *Our Knowledge of the External World*. The second lecture of that work, with the title, "*Logic as the Essence of Philosophy*" clearly suggests the revolutionary status of the claim. Russell himself was not in doubt about this. For, in developing this claim, his strategy throughout the lecture consists in contrasting his new logic to other paradigms in terms of its virtues, all the time unequivocally asserting the supremacy of mathematical logic. Indeed, Russell argues that the advent of the new logic must render obsolete all previous logics such as Aristotelian logic and Idealist logic. While this move explains why Russell took much interest in the issue of analysis of logical forms, it is nonetheless surprising that the analysis of such forms is presented as the essence of philosophy. (Russell, 1992, p. 8; Slatter, 1994, p. 33) Perhaps this is the most radical and contentious of Russell's claims regarding the new logic.

To resume the upshot of our discussion so far, we should underline the affiliation between Russell's logicism and his commitment to the doctrine of external relations. While both elements are important moments in Russell's attitude towards idealism, the former is the more crucial for reasons that should be evident from Russell's fascination with mathematics. True, the doctrine of external relations allowed Russell to construct a philosophy of mathematics. But it is the move implicit in Russell's logicism that explains the privilege with which he invests mathematical logic. Russell's logicism also explains the philosophical currency that mathematical logic acquires, thus making Russell's reduction of mathematics to logic not merely a thesis in mathematics but also an ontological thesis. (Zvie Bar-on, 1996, pp. 22-34) In short we have here, above all, a putative conversion of philosophy to logic.

The affiliation of all this to Russell's anti-psychologism should be evident from our discussion. For, as we have seen, idealism on Russell's view tries to deal with the issue of objectivity by fundamentally transforming logic into ontology. But in both of its modern variations, that is, the Kantian and Hegelian models, Russell's contention is that it issues in psychologism. In thus claiming a paradigmatic status for mathematical logic as the paradigm for philosophical analysis, Russell is still working within the larger frame of the question of the salvation of objectivity. His claim about

the status of mathematical logic could be viewed as another variant of the transformation of logic into ontology.

But the further point is Russell's contention that his own paradigmatic reduction of logic to ontology safeguards objectivity, and, as such, is a far cry from the psychologistic pretensions of idealist logic. In Russell's scheme, therefore, logicism completes the assault on idealism which the affirmation of the doctrine of external relation initiates. But we should stress that Russell's claims are controversial. They are not likely to be accepted by Russell's idealist rivals, who in a sense partly define Russell's problem for him. (Hylton, 1990, 107-109; Hylton, 1993, pp. 445-485) In what follows shall concentrate on the specifics of Russell's criticisms of Bradley as a prelude to a consideration of Bradley's perspective on the matter and then an assessment of the exchange between the two thinkers.

### **3. THE SPECIFICS OF RUSSELL'S CRITICISM OF BRADLEY**

So far, we have approached Russell's appraisal of Bradley in terms of Russell's attitude to idealism for two reasons. One is to show that Russell's rejection of Bradley is a function of Russell's attitude to idealism. The other is to suggest that this procedure fails to do justice to the specificity of Bradley's views. We can develop this line of thought by considering two issues that are pivotal in Russell's reception of Bradley. One is the issue of internal relations. The other concerns the status of subject-predicate logic. By an internal relation, Russell means the view that "every relation is grounded in the nature of the terms." (Russell, 1996, pp. 139-141; Eames, 1989, p. 9) And by subject-predicate logic, Russell refers to the understanding that in every proposition, a property is predicated of a subject. (Russell, 1996, pp. 139-141)

Russell's interest in these issues lies in his conviction that they provide the logical basis for monism, the view that there is only one reality. (Russell, 1903, p. xviii) Given the truth of the axiom of internal relation –Russell reasons– the assumption is that it follows at once that the whole of reality or of truth must be a significant whole. (Russell, 1966, p. 139) In the same vein, the assumption that we always predicate a property to a subject (in judgement) generates the conclusion that every predication is a predication about the whole of reality. Thus the axiom of internal relation and subject predicate logic are both tailor-made to support a monistic conclusion. (Griffins, 1991, p. 78)

We should stress that in coupling the axiom of internal relation and subject predicate logic, Russell's purpose is to suggest that the logical basis they purportedly provide for monism is porous. This is not at all surprising. For, if Russell's target is monistic idealism, the easiest way to secure his case is to discredit its alleged logical foundation. Indeed, this is the strategy that Russell adopts. In each case, he tries to show that the premises of monism are unfounded; and, if endorsed, must lead to ridiculous conclusions such as the inability to guarantee the reality and objectivity of relation, since both premises must impel us to regard relation as the work of the mind. (Moore, 1986, p. 69)

### **3. 1. RUSSELL AND THE STATUS OF SUBJECT-PREDICATE LOGIC**

Russell tries to give content to the above objections by considering the views of representative figures. Thus part of the goal of his book on Leibniz is to demonstrate the inadequacy of subject-predicate logic. He introduces his case by telling us that:

In the belief that propositions must in the last analysis, have a subject and a predicate, Leibniz does not differ either from his predecessors or from his successors. Any philosophy, which uses either substance or the Absolute, will be found, on inspection to depend upon this belief. Kant's belief in an unknowable thing-in-itself was largely due to the same story. It cannot be denied, therefore, that the doctrine is important. Philosophers have differed, not so much in respect of belief in its truth, as in respect of their consistency in carrying it out. In this latter respect, Leibniz deserves credit. But his assumption of a plurality of substance made the denial of relation peculiarly difficult; and involved him in all paradoxes of the pre-established harmony. (Russell, 1992, p. 15; Griffins, 1991, p. 78)

The above passage suggests that Russell's attitude to Leibniz is quite ambiguous. While Russell is certainly fascinated by Leibniz's doctrine of plurality of substances, Russell's key point—and that is what is relevant for our purpose—is that this thesis is incompatible with Leibniz's reliance on subject-predicate logic. That Leibniz does, in fact, rely on it, evidences a fundamental inconsistency in Leibniz's entire work. Given Leibniz's deployment of this logic, Russell thinks that Leibniz ought to have argued to a monistic conclusion. But rather than argue for such conclusion, Leibniz espouses a pluralistic metaphysics, which celebrates the so-called windowless monads. (Russell, 1992, pp. 1-3)

Notice that Russell's contention that Leibniz is inconsistent reflects his constructive interest in Leibniz. By articulating Leibniz's alleged inconsistency, Russell's intent is to indicate that the monistic conclusion which Leibniz's mode of inquiry should have led is quite incapable of handling the reality or objectivity of relation, since Leibniz idealises relation. (Russell, 1992, pp. 13-14) Russell's complaint here is best understood against the backdrop his anti-psychologism. (Russell, 1959, pp. 63-64; Moore, 1922, pp. 1-30) Russell certainly wants a share in Leibniz's windowless monads. But he wants to have nothing to do with its logical basis. Indeed, he would prefer to relocate this insight on a fresh logical basis other than that of monism. Arguably, Russell's own logical atomism pursues this course.

Russell's further complaint against subject-predicate logic is that it is not a universal mode of inquiry. This complaint is continuous with the alleged inability of subject-predicate logic to do justice to the objectivity of relation. For in securing the content of this complaint, Russell invokes a counter-example to the effect that subject-predicate logic cannot handle asymmetrical relation in the sense that its resources allow only for the analysis of relation into subject-predicate form. As a result of this limitation, it will either ignore asymmetrical relations, given that they cannot be analyzed into subject-predicate form; or it will try to assimilate them into the subject-predicate mould. Russell's conclusion is that the universalistic pretension

of subject-predicate logic is in trouble if it cannot handle asymmetrical relations. Indeed, Russell takes this as conclusive evidence of the inherent inadequacy of subject-predicate logic, the assumption being that any adequate logic should be able to do justice to all forms of relations, especially asymmetrical relation.

### 3.2. RUSSELL AND THE AXIOM OF INTERNAL RELATION

Concerning the logical incoherence of the axiom of internal relations, it is Joachim that Russell takes as his representative figure, although there are pockets of references to Bradley as the argument unfolds. This is the focus of Russell's "*The Monistic Theory of Truth*". Russell's coupling of the axiom of internal relation and subject-predicate logic is evident in this article and can hardly escape the reader's attention. Indeed, *the Monistic Theory of Truth* builds on Russell's assault on subject-predicate logic in his *Leibniz*. The axiom of internal relation is no less inimical to the objectivity of relation than subject-predicate logic. Since monism depends on these supposedly unsure pillars, monism itself is false. As Russell says in the *Principles of Mathematics* in reference to Bradley:

The axiom of internal relations (which is found on every page of Bradley) leads to a hopelessly inadequate account of relation. And this is because the monistic theory sees all relations as consisting in a relational property R being predicated of a complex and individual whole (a, b). Further the monistic theory views the relation of both a and b to the whole (a, b) as exactly the same. Hence, the idealist (or "monistic") theory of relations treats all relations as symmetrical.... (Its inability) to handle asymmetrical relations forces us to conclude that the monistic doctrine of relation is false (Russell, 1903, p. 225)

Aside from the general claim that monism is false, Russell also argues that the idealist vision leads to "rigid monism". By this, Russell means that it cannot handle difference but must reduce it to a totality in which difference is sacrificed at the altar of the whole. Russell, 1966, pp. 145-146)

A number of points now emerge from our discussion of Russell's attack on the logical foundation of monism. First is the relation of mutual dependence that is taken to exist between monism and its fundamental pillars, the axiom of internal relations and subject-predicate logic. Second, not only does one implicate the other; there is also the belief that this relationship obtains with regards to all forms of idealism. (Hylton, 1993, p. 450) Thus to be committed to idealism is to be committed to subject-predicate logic, and this is no less an affirmation of the axiom of internal relation. Third, there is also the related belief that because of the inadequacy of subject-predicate logic, no metaphysics affiliated to it will be able to do justice to difference.

It is important to see that these assumptions underlie Russell's criticism of idealism. To see that Russell believes that they are universally applicable to all variants of idealism is to understand why he extends the same criticism to Bradley. In effect, Russell believes that since his reading of idealism is correct; and, since Bradley

himself is a self-professed apostle of monistic idealism, Bradley inescapably relies on the axiom of internal relation and its associated logic. But, if Bradley shares in the gains of this procedure, namely, the enthronement of idealism, Bradley should also share in its failings. In other words, Bradley must fall with idealism. (Russell, 1903, p. 37)

Russell's general approach to Bradley appears to vindicate this line of thought. For a close survey of Russell's work does not indicate that Russell discussed Bradley's view directly on these issues. For the most part, what we notice is that Bradley's name is either mentioned in the general context of Russell's assault on idealism or it is examined relative to the treatment of a representative figure. This is certainly the case with Russell's *Leibniz*, and *The Monistic Theory of Truth*, which focus largely on Leibniz and Joachim respectively. Even more instructive is that sometimes the views of the representative figures that propel Russell's attack on idealism are not discussed in their specificity, but in relation to the assumptions that underlie Russell's overall attitude to idealism.

In attacking the subject-predicate logic in his book on Leibniz, for instance, Russell does not directly discuss the views of Kant, Hegel and Bradley, although he affiliates them with subject-predicate logic, a mode of inquiry that Leibniz supposedly exemplified. Yet, Russell wants us to believe that the case he makes against Leibniz must apply to these philosophers. It is not that Russell is wrong in seeing that they are affiliated to this mode of inquiry; what is in doubt is whether justice is done to the specificity of their affiliation to it. Of course, if one has a monolithic understanding of idealism, the issue of specificity becomes inconsequential. The overall drift of Russell's *Leibniz* seems to suggest that his conception of idealism is monolithic, for the condemnation of Leibniz for relying on subject predicate logic is generalised such as to apply to Kant, Hegel and Bradley. (Russell, 1992, p. 12)

Russell's *Our Knowledge of the External World* evinces a similar strategy, for he here condemns Bradley by association without a direct discussion of his position.

Hegel and his followers widened the scope of logic in quite a different way - a way which I believe to be fallacious ... In their writings, logic is practically identical with metaphysics. In broad outline, the way this came about is as follows. Hegel believed that, by means of a priori reasoning, it could be shown that the world must have various important and interesting characteristics, since any world without these characteristics would be impossible and self-contradictory. Thus, what he calls "logic" is an investigation of the nature of the universe, in so far as this can be inferred merely from the principle that the universe must be logically self-consistent... The way in which, as it seems to me, Hegel's system assumes the ordinary logic, which it subsequently criticises, is exemplified by the general conception of 'categories', with which he operates throughout. This conception is, I think, essentially a product of logical confusion, but it seems in some way to stand for the conception of "qualities of Reality as a whole". Mr Bradley has worked out a theory according to which in all judgement, we are ascribing a predicate to Reality as a whole, and this theory

is derived from Hegel. (Russell, 1914, p. 21)

In summing up the upshot of our account so far of the specifics of Russell's appraisal of Bradley, it will certainly strike us as surprising that Russell's strategy is the policy of condemnation by association. (Eames, 1989, p. 20) Nor is it the case that Hegel's view is well represented. The way to explain this, however, is in terms of the assumptions that underlie Russell's overall attitude to idealism, which as we have seen, is Russell's anti-psychologism. If Russell takes idealism as irredeemably psychologistic, it is not surprising that he will not discriminate between the various views of the idealists. This appears to be the logic that underpins his discussion of the fundamental pillars of idealism, that is, the axiom of internal relation and subject-predicate logic. Russell's anti-psychologism seems also to provide an explanation for his impartial treatment of various representatives of idealism relative to this head.

As we have seen, Russell condemns internal relations only to replace them with external relations. Similarly, subject-predicate logic is condemned for the reason of its existential status, only to be replaced by non-existential theory of judgement, so external relations emerge as the antipode of internal relations. Similarly, logical atomism (non-existential theory of propositions) turns out to be no less an antipode of existential theory of judgement which Bradley's version is a paradigmatic instance on Russell's reading. But we have also seen that subject predicate logic is swept away only to make way for the self-becoming of mathematical logic, as paradigmatic for philosophical analysis; so that Russell's anti-psychologism finds its completion in Russell's logicism.

The finality of Russell's appraisal of Bradley would depend on the accuracy of his reading of idealism. It must surely appear weak, or not stated with the needed sophistication, if it is proven to be one-sided and motivated by the desire to institute a rival metaphysics. But before we can adjudicate these issues, it is necessary to consider the matter from Bradley's perspective.

#### **4. THE MATTER CONSIDERED FROM BRADLEY'S PERSPECTIVE**

Bradley and Russell were in correspondence for more than a decade. (Eames, 1989, p. 19) From these exchanges, most of which are reproduced in Bradley's *Essays on Truth and Reality*, it is evident that Bradley did not accept Russell's appraisal of his philosophy. (Bradley, 1914, 278-303) Not only did Bradley find it problematic, but on more than one occasion Bradley complained to Russell about a fundamental misrepresentation of his position. (Eames, 1989), pp. 20-22) Indeed, the impression is that Bradley was somehow a victim of Russell's anti-idealism, which finds expression in Russell's interpretation of idealist logic and the various issues it raises such as the question of its affiliation to the axiom of internal relation and the status of subject-predicate logic, and whether, its associated monistic world view can handle difference.

#### 4.1. THE PROBLEMATIC STATUS OF THE DUALISM OF EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL RELATIONS

In responding to Russell's charges, Bradley's procedure is to deny that the objections are applicable to his own position. Nonetheless Bradley also gives an indication of the true situation of the matter. Let us consider, for example, the charge that Bradley's philosophy depends on the axiom of internal relations. Russell had referred to Bradley in his *Leibniz* as a contemporary instance of a metaphysics deriving from the axiom of internal relations. But Bradley responded with a letter in which he argued that the interpretation was mistaken. (Eames, 1989, 22)

Indeed, Bradley maintains that Russell perceives him thus because Russell's sense of internal relations is one relative to which internal relations is the radical opposite of external relations, so that the affirmation of internal relation must entail a denial of external relation. On Bradley's view, however, the opposition between the two is rather artificial. We do not have to choose between the two, such as to imply that the affirmation of one means the denial of the other. In other words, the two are important, and by all means must find a place in our conceptual scheme.

But that said there remains a genuine issue, namely, the extent to which the truth of either internal or external relations can be pressed. Can we regard either as absolute truth? Bradley denies we can do so, albeit without necessarily implying that both are on a par. Internal relation may be truer than external relation, but it itself cannot be treated as an absolute truth. (Bradley, 1914, pp. 290) In his correspondence with Russell, Bradley is explicit that it is only when external relation is taken in the absolute sense that he denies it, for the relative truth of external relation has now turned into a fundamental error.

It is no less the case with internal relation, if and when taken in the absolute sense. As Bradley makes explicit in *Essays on Truth and Reality*, "External relations, if they are taken to be absolute, I, in short, cannot understand, except as a supposed necessary alternative when internal relations are denied. But the whole 'either or', between external relation and internal relations, to me seems unsound." (Bradley, 1914, p. 258) In the *Unfinished Draft on Relation* Bradley points out that, "mere internal relations, then like relations that are merely external are untenable, if they make a claim to absolute truth. But taken otherwise, and viewed as helpful makeshift and a useful aid in the pursuit of knowledge, external and internal relations are both admissible and can be relatively true. (Bradley, 1935, p. 645) Indeed, in clarifying his position and situating it in proper perspective, Bradley maintains that:

A hard division, made anywhere between what is internal merely and what is external only, must together with the distinction anywhere drawn between (on the one hand) essence and (on the other hand) mere circumstance or mere matter of fact, cannot in the end be accepted. It may be justified in practice I agree, but it cannot I must insist be offered as anything which possesses ultimate truth and reality. (Bradley, 1935, p. 647)

Remark the care Bradley takes to qualify what he denies. What is evident from the foregoing passages is that Bradley's attitude towards the matter of internal and external relations at best remains ambiguous, depending on the senses of internal or external relations at issue. How else are we to interpret his insistence that "the whole 'either-or', between external relations and internal relations seems unsound"? (Bradley, 1914, p. 258)

#### **4. 2. THE QUESTION OF THE INCOMPLETENESS OF THE RELATIONAL FORM**

The implication, therefore, is that Bradley is not merely rejecting the opposition between internal and external relations, but is also drawing attention to a more fundamental issue relative to which the claims of both internal relations and external relations are to be judged. If neither of them is absolute, it means we cannot adjudicate the status of one ultimately in terms of the other. In each case, the conclusion that emerges is that neither is the ground of itself. Nor could it be regarded as the ultimate ground of the other. The affiliation between internal and external relations is not in doubt. Yet the fact of their affiliation, and the admission that none is its own ground or the ultimate ground of the other renews the question as to what the ground of the relational form might be and how both internal and external relation relate to this ground.

These concerns in respect of the ground of both internal and external relations are recurrent in the *Unfinished Draft on Relation*, (Bradley, 1935, pp. 628-676) and perhaps largely explain why Bradley scrutinizes both internal relation and external relations. Fundamentally, the point is to underline the incompleteness of the relational form as such; and, as a consequence, focus attention on the more basic question of the ground of the relational form.

This is a cogent interpretation of Bradley's rather general claim that both internal and external relations are doomed to fail, since "in any mere relational synthesis there will be something left out or else something imported surreptitiously from elsewhere". (Bradley, 1914, p. 239) On Bradley's account, the failing of internal relations arises from the fact that "ideas we are compelled to use are all in varying degrees imperfect", seeking as it were, (Bradley, 1914, 239) to hold on to "the initial felt-fact of identity and difference; but in doing so, at the same time, they paradoxically point to a higher consummation beyond all relation." (Bradley, 1914, pp. 239-240) To this extent, "they cannot in the end be thought consistently." (Bradley, 1914, pp. 239-4) In respect of the logic behind the failure of external relations, Bradley tells us that:

They first of all seem to break wholly with the sensible fact, with that felt union of diverse with which we begin. But in doing so, they not only dissolve its immediate totality, but they appear to wish to leave its carcass lying, so to speak somewhere unexplained outside of truth and reality. And having destroyed the starting place, they further cut us off in principle (so far as I see) from any

higher advance to a higher unity. The totality they seem to offer (though I hardly know) what this is, and indeed, whether or how it is offered) does not satisfy our ultimate desire, and themselves unthinkable, the construction they build seems joined by inconsistency. This, at least until I am better informed is what I am forced to think of external relations, if taken absolute (Bradley, 1914, p. 240)

In addressing the question of the incompleteness of the relational form, we cannot mistake Bradley's overall concern, namely, the need to do justice to "what is fully at play in the ontological situation". But here lies precisely the Achilles heels of both internal relations and external relations. For, even though both fail via different routes and in varied degree, none could be said to be fully representative of what is at issue in the ontological situation, so that the question of their respective mode of failure pales into insignificance relative to the larger question of their completeness. So long as neither is wholly faithful to the full happening of being in the ontological situation, we could not say the demand of completeness is satisfied. To this extent our relational constructions are not absolute representations but appearances. Understood in this context, Bradley's view that the relational form is fundamentally incomplete more or less implicates his doctrine of appearance and his metaphysics of the absolute, for, in truth, the overall point is that the relational form in its incompleteness is no more than appearance, yet appearance that is fundamentally grounded in the absolute. (Mander, 1993, pp. 3-10)

#### **4. 3. THE RELATIVITY OF THE RELATIONAL FORM AND THE PROBLEM OF METAPHYSICS**

The foregoing point in respect of the affiliation between Bradley's doctrine of appearance and his metaphysics of the absolute cast light on Bradley's strategy in addressing Russell's charge that Bradley's philosophy derives from the axiom of internal relations. (Bradley, 1914, p. 291) By situating the matter of the relative failings of external relations and internal relations against the larger backdrop of his metaphysics of the absolute, Bradley's overall purpose is to shift attention from what is peripheral for metaphysics to what is fundamental for metaphysics. What is fundamental for metaphysics is the issue of the completeness of the relational form as such and whether or not it can be its own ground.

In other words what is fundamental is not just the failure of either external relation or internal relations, but the *ontological meaning of this failure*. So long as the matter is formulated in terms of the exclusive disjunction between external relations and internal relations, then the matter is peripheral and hardly touches the core of the metaphysical problematic. To this extent approaching the matter of the *ontology of relation* from the standpoint of the dualism of internal relations and external relations can hardly advance the cause of metaphysical thinking.

In engaging the issue, therefore, Bradley is at pain all the time to transcend the dualism of external relations and internal relations, while at the same time

interrogating the ground of the relational form as such in attempt to answer the ultimate question of what can possibly satisfy the intellect in the end.

If there is any merit in Bradley's claim that what is fundamental for metaphysics is the question of the completeness of the relational form and whether it can serve as its own ground or not, rather than the question of choosing between internal and external relation, it not only tells against the accuracy of Russell's characterisation of Bradley, but it also shows how this characterization forecloses the possibility of understanding Bradley. For by charging that Bradley's philosophy derives from the axiom of internal relations, Russell more or less focuses attention precisely on that which is of marginal importance to Bradley's metaphysics.

The effect of this selective characterization can be seen in the general tendency to assume that the issue between Russell and Bradley is dispute over internal relations and external relations. (Fortier, 1996, pp. 25-39) Of course, were this merely the issue, it would be easy to settle it, for once it is accepted, on Russell's reading, that Bradley's metaphysics derives from the axiom of internal relations, the inevitable conclusion must be that Bradley denies its opposite, that is, external relations.

Obviously, Bradley's effort to shift attention to what is crucial for metaphysics is significant. It does show that a necessary *prolegomena* to an understanding of Bradley's metaphysics of relations is the dissolution of the artificial opposition between internal and external relation, since in the end, the fundamental issue for Bradley is the question of the adequacy of the relational form as such. (Candlish, 1998, pp. 111-115)

Such a move is liberating. Russell's failure to grant it perhaps explains the seeming stalemate between Bradley and Russell. For, it should be evident that it is bound to affect so many other considerations such as the question of the status of subject-predicate logic and the monistic worldview it supposedly generates. As we have seen, Russell tries to discredit monism by attacking its so-called logical foundation, his point being that the inability of subject-predicate logic to handle asymmetrical relation not only means that it is inadequate, but it also means that any metaphysics affiliated to it (such as monistic idealism) must be unable to account for difference.

In clarifying his viewpoint in the *Unfinished Draft on Relations*, Bradley shows he is fully aware of the logic behind Russell's criticisms as he says:

I may be permitted, perhaps, here in this connection to notice the objection adopted in the main from Mr. Russell and urged by him as fatal to every kind of monism. He assumes that every monism must take the universe as throughout a simply unity of qualities and adjectives in and of a whole which completely determines them, and is bound (I understand also) in this way to account for and explain all its contents - which it obviously cannot do in the case of asymmetrical relations (Bradley, 1935, p. 672)

But Bradley is also explicit that Russell's conclusion simply does not follow as he says again:

Now nothing, I agree can be more obvious (than) that not only some, but also

any form of relational experience is, on such a view of monism, impossible, while (as a fact) it is undeniable. But for myself (if I may speak as a Monist), this from the first has been obvious, and I do not take the ultimate reality as above, and I had hoped that so much was clear, and further as to claiming or admitting that monism has to explain everything, nothing could be further from what I hold. Such a contention to my-self is ridiculous. Hence, when it is objected against me as a monist that all that I as such have a right to is the terms and the whole, while the order or direction is neither - my answer is that no whole is really a simple whole, and in every whole are always conditions unexpressed and in these conditions fall the difference expressed here... In short, far from admitting that monism requires that all truth can be interpreted as a predication of qualities of the whole, monism with me contends that all predications, no matter what, is in the end untrue and in the end unreal, because and so far as it involves always and ignores unexpressed conditions (Bradley, 1935, p. 672)

## 5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The disparity between Russell's viewpoint and Bradley's viewpoint is evident from the above passages; but it is also clear that Russell's critique of Bradley is a child of Russell's anti-idealism. Indeed, if matters were to be adjudicated from the standpoint of Russell's anti-idealism, Bradley simply has no case and the inexorable conclusion is that the *coup de grace* is complete. Yet it remains to be seen whether Russell's reading of idealism is accurate.

The larger context of Russell's anti-idealism is the problem of objectivity of knowledge. On Russell's view the transformation of logic into ontology by idealism is ridden with psychologism. To this extent, it not only tantamount to the abuse of logic, but it also means fundamentally that idealism lacks the inner resources to engage constructively with the objectivity issue.

But if idealism undermines objectivity by means of logic, Russell wants to recuperate objectivity by means of logic. He will, therefore fight the idealists on the same ground by replacing their logic with a new logic, mathematical logic, which henceforth will ensure that the rights of objectivity are protected; so that Russell's logicism arguably completes the *salvific process* of recuperating objectivity as initiated by his invocation of the doctrine of external relations. Thus Russell's anti-psychologism accounts for Russell's anti-idealism just as his anti-psychologism also accounts for the enthusiasm he demonstrates in relation to the doctrine of external relations as well as his confidence in the possibilities of logicism.

Yet while it cannot be doubted that genuine issues abound in the identification of logic and metaphysics (ontology) by the idealist tradition, it will amount to a matter of sheer simplification to fail to see that there are different versions of this identification and that one cannot be reduced to the other without the risk of a *monolithic reception of idealism*. The Kantian version of the identification is certainly not free of

difficulties as evidenced by the resurgence of scepticism in the wake of the cognitive dualism of the critical philosophy. Nor is the Hegelian version of the identification free of difficulties especially in the wake of the *panlogism* that ensues from the apotheosis of dialectical reason by Hegel's speculative idealism.

Yet the Hegelian version represents an advancement over the Kantian version so far as it redresses the injustice meted out to the *in-itself* dimension of the object. However, at another level, the Achilles heels of the Hegelian version is that in restoring the in-itself dimension of objectivity, it does so, only to undermine it again *enroute* the *dialectical sublation* of the in-itself of the object by the self-mediating dialectical reason. The Hegelian version allows us to speak of *objectivity qua objectivity* as the Kantian version does not allow on account of the limits imposed by possible experience.

But the overall result is that on the Hegelian version *object qua object* is domesticated for the self, so far as it is ultimately guaranteed by the self-mediating activity of dialectical subject. To the extent that Russell criticizes the Kantian and Hegelian versions of this identification on account of the difficulties they engender for the possibility of objective knowledge, Bradley is one with Russell.

Perhaps we should add that despite working within the idealist tradition, Bradley is extremely critical of self, especially when self is understood as self-organizing and the point of reference in terms of which the unity of the non-self is to be secured. Of course in criticizing the self it is not that Bradley is unaware of the possibilities of the self, but is at pain to obviate the *apotheosis* of the self that is a common feature of modern philosophy. (Bradley, 1930, pp. 89-104)

Yet despite his critical mien towards modern philosophy, Bradley, as we have seen, dissents once the inadequacies of these initiatives are taken, as Russell does, as a reason to abandon idealist logic. While Bradley sees the Hegelian version as an advance over its Kantian counterpart, Bradley does not see the Hegelian version, however, as offering us a dialectical resting place. Nor does he think its flaws necessarily warrant the abandonment of idealist logic, since on, Bradley's view the flaws are not necessarily part of the essence of idealist orientation. (Bradley, 1930, pp. 89-104)

On the contrary it expresses a fundamental feature of the relational form, which in effect implies, as we have seen that we cannot hope to find any system of logic that is finally adequate, for as a consequence of the inherent incompleteness of the relational form, every system of thought (logic) must content itself with fundamental incompleteness.

What clearly emerges here is that Russell and Bradley seem to have different concepts of idealist logic, or rather the demand of logic, which also reflects their different concepts of objectivity. Russell's concept of idealism appears to be monolithic whereas Bradley's concept of idealism appears to be highly nuanced, perhaps as a consequence of Bradley's believe that we cannot speak of pure objectivity nor can we speak of pure subjectivity.

The dualism of objectivity and subjectivity is as unacceptable as the reduction of object to subject or again the reduction of subject to object. Our conceptual scheme must make room for a double intuition all the time, the intuition of immanence and the intuition of transcendence. While one cannot be reduced to the other, the supreme philosophical task is to work out a proper understanding of the interplay that subsists between them.

Bradley never doubted the possibilities of mathematical logic especially with respect to its claim to handle asymmetrical relations. Nonetheless he believed that mathematical logic is as inadequate as other forms of logic and to this extent cannot be constituted into the paradigm of all philosophical analysis without the risk of metaphysical abstraction. But the truer philosophic ideal is that one solution is better than another is, to the extent that it is bedevilled with fewer difficulties relative to question of the salvation of the double intuition of transcendence and immanence relative to the broader question of the nature of the real.

We cannot say for instance that a scheme that reduces one of the intuitions to the other is on the same metaphysical pedestal as one which provides for both possibilities. Nor can we say a scheme in which both intuitions are set in dualistic opposition is better than one which allows us to appreciate the inter-play between transcendence and immanence.

The perennial appeal of Bradley's nuanced concept of idealism lies in its openness to both of these considerations. As he himself says in summing up the import of his *magnum opus Appearance and Reality*, "it is against both sides of this mistake; it is against this empty transcendence and this shallow pantheism, that our pages may be called on sustained polemic. The relation of every appearance as an adjective of Reality, and the presence of Reality among its appearances in different degrees and with diverse values – this is the double truth we have found to be the centre of philosophy. (Bradley, 1930, p. 488)

In view of our account of Bradley's response to the alleged derivation of his metaphysics from the axiom of internal relations, it should come as no surprise that Bradley rejected the Russellian charges as inapplicable to his monism, since as a consequence of the monolithic concept of idealism that drives Russell's reception of Bradley's metaphysics, there is failure to take into account Bradley's peculiar affiliation to the idealist tradition.

Consequently while Bradley is prepared to grant with Russell that subject-predicate logic is inadequate, the overall metaphysical issue from the standpoint of Bradley is to develop an adequate hermeneutic of the relativity of the relational form. Against this backdrop, therefore, the task of metaphysics does not end with the affirmation of the relativity of our concepts. Rather it begins with a genuine attempt to understand the meaning of the relativity of the relational form and what this entail for our understanding of the nature of ultimate reality.

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