RUSSELL'S MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE *TRACTATUS* ON ORDINARY LANGUAGE

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It is widely accepted that Russell wrongly took Wittgenstein to be concerned with the conditions required for an ideal language in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Given Russell's relatively extensive communications with Wittgenstein, this misunderstanding is puzzling. I argue that Russell's mistake rests on two prior assumptions for which he had some justification. First, communications with Wittgenstein were plausibly interpreted by Russell as confirming, rather than refuting, the belief that Wittgenstein shared with him the view that psychology, epistemology, and logic are interdependent. Second, results from these areas in turn led Russell to the view that ordinary language is irredeemably vague and, as such, in need of replacement with an ideal language. In truth, however, Wittgenstein severed psychology and epistemology from his work and saw vagueness as a surface phenomenon only.

I. INTRODUCTION

I t is widely accepted[1] that Russell wrongly took Wittgenstein to be concerned with the conditions required for an *ideal* language in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.[2] Such an ideal language is required,

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[1] F. P. Ramsey, critical notice of L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, *Mind* 32 (Oct. 1923): 465–78; T. Iglesias, "Russell on Vagueness and Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*", in *Wittgenstein and His Impact on Contemporary Thought: Proceedings of the Second International Wittgenstein Symposium*, ed. E. Leinfellner *et al.* (Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1978), p. 46; P. M. S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth Century Analytic Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), pp. 26, 69.

[2] *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. C. K. Ogden (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1922).

according to Russell, because ordinary languages such as English suffer irredeemable vagueness and ambiguity, rendering them unsuitable for philosophical purposes. In contrast to Russell's interpretation, it is generally agreed that Wittgenstein took ordinary language to be in perfect logical order, believing that surface flaws such as vagueness would disappear upon analysis. As such, he was not concerned with the conditions required for an ideal language and did not seek to replace ordinary language with a better one; rather, he sought to provide the conditions required for any language, including ordinary language. An "ideal" language on his view would really be an ideal symbolism insofar as it would render perspicuous the underlying logic of ordinary language.

The question arises as to why Russell misunderstood Wittgenstein on such fundamental points, especially in light of the communications he had had with Wittgenstein both before and after the *Tractatus* was written. One reason, I suggest, is that Russell's philosophical framework, perhaps unbeknownst to both thinkers, was markedly different from Wittgenstein's during this period. Russell's view that ordinary language suffers from irredeemable vagueness arose from an inquiry into the nature of meaning that he began only in 1918. This inquiry was dominated by both psychological and epistemological considerations. In this way, results from psychology and epistemology informed his views about the relationships between language, logic, and the world.[3]

In his introduction to the *Tractatus*, Russell ascribes to Wittgenstein the same beliefs he holds about ordinary language, its flaws, and the need for an ideal language to replace it. This mistake arises from a prior assumption, not entirely unfounded, that Wittgenstein similarly accepted a connection, or interdependence, between psychology, epistemology, and logic. Indeed, correspondence suggests that Wittgenstein did divide the philosophical terrain into these three areas. But—and this is what Russell failed to see—he rendered results in the first two areas entirely irrelevant to his views about language and its relation to logic. *Pace* Russell, Wittgenstein starts with the view that ordinary language, to count as a language at all, must be in good logical order in spite of surface

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[3] I am not the first to suggest this. See T. Iglesias' work: "Russell's Introduction to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*", *Russell* o.s. nos. 25–28 (1977): 21–38; "Russell on Vagueness and Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*", in *Wittgenstein and His Impact on Contemporary Thought*, pp. 46–9; "Russell and Wittgenstein: Two Views of Ordinary Language", *Philosophical Studies* 28 (1981): 149–63.

vagueness and ambiguity. Thus while Russell's philosophical framework leads him to ask whether or not ordinary language *can* be in good logical order and mirror the world accurately, Wittgenstein's assumption is that it must be, regardless of psychological or epistemological findings.

In what follows, I revisit Russell's introduction to the *Tractatus* and suggest that while Russell does indeed misinterpret Wittgenstein's work on the fundamental points of the status of ordinary language and the role of an ideal logical symbolism, he has some good reasons to. But first I briefly sketch their views of ordinary language and vagueness.

II. ORDINARY LANGUAGE: IRREDEEMABLY VAGUE VS. ABSOLUTELY SHARP

Both Russell and Wittgenstein recognized the phenomenon of vagueness in ordinary language; however, their explanations of it differ substantially. The standard explanation of vagueness is most often stated in terms of unclear cases of the application of a predicate (a word) or concepts that do not have sharp cut-off points.[4] The concepts *heap* and *bald* are classic examples, there being no number of grains of sand or hairs that divide heaps from non-heaps, or bald people from non-bald people.[5] "John is bald" uttered when John is a borderline case of baldness results in a sentence the truth (or falsity) of which cannot be determined. Ordinary language, it is generally agreed, is rife with vagueness.

For Russell, ordinary language suffers from irredeemable vagueness and is unsuitable for philosophical purposes such as formal deductions and the discovery of ontological commitments. Russell's logical symbolism in the *Principia*, as an ideal language, will have no vagueness and, as such, no truth-value gaps. All propositions have one of the two truth-values (true or false) and the Law of Excluded Middle holds. Like Russell, Wittgenstein adheres to a two-valued logic and the requirement that the Law of Excluded Middle hold. But very unlike Russell, his view is that ordinary language meets these conditions since "what we MEAN must always be '*sharp*'".[6] Any vagueness in ordinary language is a surface

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[4] Ambiguity, by contrast, occurs when the same word may have more than one meaning. An object, for example, may be light in colour or light in weight.

[5] There is an exception to this view. Epistemic theorists such as Timothy Williamson believe that there are sharp cut-offs for such concepts, but we remain ignorant of them.

[6] *Notebooks, 1914–1916*, ed. G. H. von Wright and G. E. M. Anscombe (New York:

phenomenon; analysis will show that seemingly vague sentences in fact have determinate truth values. Thus although both thinkers adhere to the same conditions for logic and neither denies the phenomenon of vagueness in ordinary language, their views of the ultimate nature of ordinary language could not be more different: irredeemable vagueness, on the one hand, and ultimate sharpness on the other.

For Russell, although the language of the *Principia* was devised specifically with "a view to avoiding vagueness", it is not until 1918 that he provides a definition of vagueness, the result of his new interest in meaning, or symbolism, and the connection between language and fact ("Vagueness", *Papers* 9: 147).[7] In 1959 he writes,

It was in 1918 that I first became interested in the definition of "meaning" and in the relation of language to fact. Until then I had regarded language as "transparent" and had never examined what makes its relation to the non-linguistic world. The result of my thinking on this subject appeared in Lecture x of *The Analysis of Mind.*   (*MPD*, p. 108)

Consistent with these remarks, there is a proliferation of writings by Russell from 1918 to 1923 in which the topic of vagueness figures largely.[8] His conclusion is that ordinary language is irredeemably vague.

For Russell, vagueness (and precision) have "to do with the relation between a representation and that which it represents" ("Vagueness", *Papers* 9: 147–8). In this way, vagueness is a problem of meaning insofar

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Harper & Row, 1961); 2nd edn. (Chicago: U. of Chicago P., 1979), p. 68. Included is Wittgenstein's "Notes on Logic" (1913).

[7] For a detailed discussion of this shift, see my "Russell and Vagueness", *Russell* 23 (2003): 43–63.

[8] See, for example:

(1) 1918: Russell states in "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism" lectures that vagueness is very important to theory of knowledge (*PLA* in *LK*, pp. 179–80; *Papers* 8: 162–3).

(2) 1919: In "On Propositions", Russell states much of what will later comprise Chapter x in *The Analysis of Mind* concerning meaning (*LK*, pp. 300, 303–4; *Papers* 8: 290, 293).

(3) 1921: *The Analysis of Mind* is published (derived from lectures in 1919–20). There are 44 occurrences of the word "vague" or one of its cognates in this text. He also provides five full pages of discussion on vagueness (*AMi*, pp. 180–4).

(4) 1922 (May): For the Ogden publication of the *Tractatus*, Russell adds a full paragraph to his 1920 introduction to Wittgenstein's *Logische-philosophische Abhandlung*.

(5) 1922 (November): Russell presents his essay entitled "Vagueness" to the Jowett Society. It is published in 1923 (reprinted in *Papers* 9: 147–54).

as Russell sees meaning as the relation between a symbol and what is symbolized. The trouble with ordinary language is that it does not accurately represent reality through a one-one correspondence between the symbol and what is symbolized; instead, the representation is one-many.[9] Thus we can "see an ideal of precision to which we can approximate indefinitely; but we cannot attain this ideal" (*Papers* 9: 147, 151). The reason, on Russell's view, we are condemned to vagueness has to do with psychological and epistemological considerations that inform his view of the nature of the connection between language and fact.

For Russell, the connection between language and fact is part of psychology since it involves cognitive relations: it is through images and sensations that we connect words to things in the world. It also involves epistemology because while images and sensations provide words with meanings, they are also responsible for the limits of our knowledge. Since "the knowledge that we can obtain through our sensations is not as fine-grained as the stimuli to those sensations", so too the images, which are copies of sensations, fail to provide a one-one correspondence between a word and what it signifies ("Vagueness", 9: 150). In this way, knowledge from the senses is vague, and so too are all words. According to Russell, even "logical words, like the rest, when used by human beings, share the vagueness of all other words" (9: 151). Like a fuzzy photograph and that which it is a picture of, our language never accurately depicts reality.[10]

For Russell, an ideal language or symbolic logic is not just a tool with which to perform formal deductions, but also part of a technique to use for analysis. One goal of analysis is to discover the "ultimate simples, out of which the world is built" (*PLA*, p. 270; *Papers* 8: 234). Thus developing a correct symbolism is part of a larger metaphysical project for Rus-

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[9] This claim is repeated in "On Propositions" (*LK*, pp. 303–4, 309; *Papers* 8: 292–3, 297) as well as in *AMi* (pp. 207, 203). Russell is often charged, in light of his one-many analysis of vagueness, with confusing generality and vagueness. In fact, however, he holds a subtle distinction that has to do with epistemological considerations insofar as the variety of objects to which the vague word applies has not yet "appeared, to the person using the word, to be distinct" (*AMi*, p. 184). Russell's view of vagueness is by no means the standard one. See my "Russell and Vagueness" (cited at note 6).

[10] This is not to say we should cease trying to make language more accurate for particular needs. Indeed, Russell's language in *Principia* aims to do just that. Philosophy, like medicine and astronomy, should seek to make precise the language needed for the purpose at hand ("Mr. Strawson on Referring", *Papers* 11: 630–5).

sell. But this is a goal to which we can only approximate, given that we can only *imagine* a precise symbolism in which "meaning would be a one-one relation" ("Vagueness", 9: 152). As Russell puts it: "[Logic] is not applicable to this terrestrial life, but only to an imagined celestial existence" (9: 151). Ordinary language on Russell's view, "has no exact logic" and must be replaced an ideal language such as that in the *Principia*.[11]

By contrast, Wittgenstein begins with the assumption that "All propositions of our colloquial language are actually, just as they are, logically completely in order" (*Tractatus*, 5.5563). In a much-quoted letter to C. K. Ogden, Wittgenstein explains what he means by "logically completely ordered" in the *Tractatus*:

> By this I meant to say that the propositions of our ordinary language are not in any way logically *less correct* or less exact or *more confused* than propositions written down, say, in Russell's symbolism or any other "Begriffsschrift". (Only it is easier for us to gather their logical form when they are expressed in an appropriate symbolism.)[12]

In this way, Wittgenstein does not see ordinary language as irredeemably vague or logically defective. All propositions (if they are to count as propositions at all) have a determinate sense, but that sense is not immediately perspicuous in ordinary language (4.002). As such, a logical symbolism is required that "obeys the rules of *logical* grammar" (3.325). Thus while Wittgenstein seeks to lay bare the deep grammar of ordinary language with a logical symbolism that will show the logic of the world, Russell seeks a replacement for ordinary language that approximates to an ideal of precision that represents the world through a one-one correspondence.[13]

Wittgenstein provides very little discussion in the *Tractatus* about how to think of vague words or how to analyze sentences that contain them. Briefly, a proposition, on Wittgenstein's view, is a fact that is a concate-

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[11] "Mr. Strawson on Referring", *Papers* 11: 634. Regarding the Theory of Descriptions, Russell writes: "I was concerned to find a more accurate analysed thought to replace the somewhat confused thoughts most people at most times have in their heads" (*ibid.*).

[12] L. Wittgenstein, *Letters to C. K. Ogden with Comments on the English Translation of the* Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974), p. 50 (letter of 10 May 1922).

[13] Russell never accepts Wittgenstein's distinction between saying and showing. While this is extremely important, I leave the issue aside and focus here on vagueness and ordinary language.

nation of names that symbolize, or picture, a possible state of affairs
(*Tractatus*, 3.144ff.). There are two sorts of propositions: elementary ones,
which are concatenations of names that name simple objects, and mo-
lecular ones, which are truth-functions of elementary propositions. All
propositions are pictures and "the picture represents its sense", a possible
state of affairs (2.221, 2.202). A state of affairs is a combination of objects,
and the proposition is true if the names that name simple objects in the
proposition are configured in the same way as the simple objects are in
the world, and it is false otherwise. On this view, determinacy of sense
means that our ordinary language, very unlike a fuzzy photograph, pic-
tures reality sharply, even if this is not obvious on the surface.

Some commentators have tried to shed more light on what Wittgen-
stein might have had in mind concerning analysis and determinacy of
sense. Anscombe, for example, draws on a parenthetical remark at 5.156
that states that "A proposition can, indeed, be an incomplete picture of
a certain state of affairs, but it is always *a* complete picture." Anscombe
takes this to mean that for Wittgenstein "definiteness of sense consists in
this: a proposition may indeed leave a great deal open, but it is clear *what*
it leaves open."[14] It is determinate in that it has precise truth-conditions,
but it may leave some play to the facts. As Anscombe explains it, the play
that a proposition such as $(p \ \& \ q) \lor (\sim p \ \& \sim q)$ leaves to the facts is
shown by its truth-conditions: the proposition is true if both p and q are
true *or* neither p nor q is true. But each set of truth-conditions is quite
definite and together they make clear "*what* is left open" by the proposi-
tion (*ibid.*).[15]

But how can sentences containing vague words have precise truth-
conditions? Following a tack similar to Anscombe's, Glock suggests that

"The watch is lying on the table" leaves open the precise location of the watch.
But it must define absolutely sharply what possible locations it can occupy.

[14] G. E. M. Anscombe, *Introduction to Wittgenstein's* Tractatus, 3rd edn. (London:
Hutchinson, 1967), p. 73.

[15] This potentially works for molecular propositions, which are truth-functions of
elementary ones. An elementary proposition is a truth-function of itself, and cannot be
true or false in more than one way (5). Thus *if* there are to be propositions that leave
"play" to the facts, as in the Anscombe example and as in the Glock example discussed
in the next paragraph, they must ultimately be analyzable into truth-functions of
elementary propositions that do not leave any "play" to the facts and have, so to speak,
"rigid" determinacy.

Hence, logical analysis reveals it to be a statement to the effect that there are two objects of such-and-such a kind which stand in *one out of a variety of possible spatial relations* to each other.[16]

The relation "lying on" may look vague, but upon analysis we are to see that it provides a disjunction of possibilities, e.g. "The watch is precisely at this location *or* that location *or* that location...." This may have been Wittgenstein's view, though it immediately raises the issue of which set of disjunctions is meant.[17] And even if "lying on" is not so troublesome, classical examples of vague concepts such as *bald* and *heap* will be since it is implausible to assume we have a precise number of hairs or grains of sand in mind when we use the word. Given that the *Tractatus* was a highly programmatic work, these absences are hardly surprising. For our purposes, it is sufficient to note the contrast between Wittgenstein's and Russell's views on the status of ordinary language, vagueness, and consequently the role of an ideal language.

III. VAGUENESS AND RUSSELL'S INTRODUCTION

While it may be clear that Russell and Wittgenstein held different views, the question remains as to why Russell failed to see it. To understand why Russell misunderstood the task Wittgenstein set himself in the *Tractatus*, we need to look more closely at Russell's introduction as well as the

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[16] Hans-Johann Glock, *A Wittgenstein Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 98; my italics.

[17] Wittgenstein criticizes a similar view of propositions when discussing inference in his later work, *Philosophical Grammar*, ed. R. Rhees, trans. A. Kenny (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974), suggesting he may have at one time held such a view. He writes, "The whole idea that a proposition has to be thought along with any proposition that entails it rests on a false, psychologizing notion" (p. 248). He explains:

If the criterion for p's following from q consists in "thinking of p being involved in thinking of q" then while thinking of the proposition "in this box there are 10^5 grains of sand", you are thinking also of the 10^5 sentences "In this box there is one grain of sand", "... 2 grains of sand", etc. etc.   (P. 249)

Presumably, the idea that we are thinking of 10^5 sentences is supposed to be taken by us as absurd. This could equally apply to the many disjunctions one would apparently need to have in mind when thinking the sense of "The watch is lying on the table." Similarly, "[I]n the proposition 'he is in the room' I don't think of a hundred possible positions he might be in and certainly not of *all* the possible positions" (p. 247).

philosophical backdrop against which it is set.

Russell wrote two versions of the introduction to the *Tractatus*. The first introduction was published in 1921, as part of Wittgenstein's *Logische-philosophische Abhandlung*; the second was a revised version of the first,[18] and was published as part of Ogden's 1922 English version of the *Tractatus*. The 1922 introduction contains the important addition of the statement that ordinary language suffers from irredeemable vagueness.[19]

The two versions of Russell's introduction to the *Tractatus* are similar except for the third paragraph, to which there are substantial additions. These additions were made at the request of Ogden. In a letter dated 2 May 1922 Ogden asks Russell if he might explain in his introduction how Wittgenstein is original in attacking the problem of a perfect symbolism (*Papers* 9: 98). Ogden is concerned that readers will not understand how psychology is to be ruled out in the investigation of symbolism. He writes,

I daresay this [Wittgenstein's originality] *is* quite clearly brought out for those who understand, in your introduction, but the words underlined in red misled me and *I think most people will not rule Psychology out as you thought they ought to*. A sentence somewhere might seem appropriate.

<div align="right">(Papers 9: 98, second italics mine)</div>

What Ogden wants made clear to readers is how psychology is not a factor in determining the principles of symbolism. The misleading sentence he is referring to is one in which Russell stated that to understand Wittgenstein's principles of symbolism, "it will perhaps facilitate matters if we assume a logically perfect language"[20] (*Papers* 9: 98). In the remainder of the sentence, Russell stated that no language is logically perfect. Complying with Ogden's request, Russell did provide a paragraph that explains (i) how psychology is ruled out and (ii) why no language is logically perfect. These additions comprise the third paragraph of the introduction as it occurs in Ogden's version of the *Tractatus*. Ironically, it is Russell's misunderstanding of Wittgenstein's view,

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[18] For the details, see *Papers* 9: 96–100, esp. p. 97. See also *Letters to Ogden*, p. 7.

[19] For details on the additions and alterations, see Iglesias' "Russell's Introduction to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*" and "Russell on Vagueness and Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*".

[20] Russell replaced this sentence when he made his additions to the third paragraph (*Papers* 9: 590).

not Wittgenstein's view, that is made more clear to readers in the paragraph he supplies. The retained original wording is in lighter type:

In order to understand Mr. Wittgenstein's book, it is necessary to realize what is the problem with which he is concerned. In the part of his theory which deals with Symbolism he is concerned with the conditions which would have to be fulfilled by a logically perfect language. There are various problems as regards language. First, there is the problem what actually occurs in our minds when we use language with the intention of meaning something by it; this problem belongs to psychology. Secondly, there is the problem as to what is the relation subsisting between thoughts, words, or sentences, and that which they refer to or mean; this problem belongs to epistemology. Thirdly, there is the problem of using sentences so as to convey truth rather than falsehood; this belongs to the special sciences dealing with the subject-matter of the sentences in question. Fourthly, there is the question: what relation must one fact (such as a sentence) have to another in order to be *capable* of being a symbol for that other? This last is a logical question, and is the one with which Mr. Wittgenstein is concerned. He is concerned with the conditions for *accurate* Symbolism, i.e. for Symbolism in which a sentence "means" something quite definite. In practice, language is always more or less vague, so that what we assert is never quite precise. Thus, logic has two problems to deal with in regard to Symbolism: (1) the conditions for sense rather than nonsense in combinations of symbols; (2) the conditions for uniqueness of meaning or reference in symbols or combinations of symbols. A logically perfect language has rules of syntax which prevent nonsense, and has single symbols which always have a definite and unique meaning. Mr. Wittgenstein is concerned with the conditions for a logically perfect language—not that any language is logically perfect, or that we believe ourselves capable, here and now, of constructing a logically perfect language, but that the whole function of language is to have meaning, and it only fulfils this function in proportion as it approaches to the ideal language which we postulate.

Three points are of particular relevance to our investigations. First, Russell provides a division of the philosophical terrain into psychological, epistemological, and logical. He deems Wittgenstein's concern with the conditions for a logically perfect language as logical in nature. This attends to Ogden's request to make clear the exclusion of psychology.

Second, Russell adds that these logical investigations are concerned with the conditions for "*accurate* Symbolism" (*Tractatus*, p. 8, *Papers* 9: 101; Russell's italics). He then states that there are two conditions for a logically perfect language: (i) the conditions for sense rather than nonsense in combinations of symbols, and (ii) the conditions for uniqueness of meaning or reference in symbols or combinations of symbols. An ac-

curate symbolism for Russell is "one in which a sentence 'means' something quite definite" (*ibid*.).[21]

Third, Russell states that the condition of uniqueness of meaning ((ii) above) cannot be met by ordinary language since it is "always more or less vague" (*ibid*.). The explanation for its being vague is not given in the introduction, but as we saw, ordinary language can never meet the requirement of one-one correspondence for Russell because it is always one-many ("Vagueness", *Papers* 9: 152).

Russell did rightly see Wittgenstein's work as logical and *not* psychological or epistemological. What needs to be explained is how, in spite of this, he could misunderstand Wittgenstein's overall view of ordinary language. Part of the answer lies in realizing that although Russell marks the areas of investigation into psychological, epistemological, and logical, they are not wholly separate in his own work: psychology and epistemology inform his view of ordinary language, as we saw, which in turn supports his view of the need for an *ideal* language. The rest of the answer lies in the fact that Russell had some plausible reasons to believe Wittgenstein shared this view.

IV. THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE, PSYCHOLOGY AND LOGIC IN 1913

Theory of knowledge (epistemology) typically includes definitions of knowledge, foundations of knowledge, sources or kinds of knowledge, and limits to our knowledge. For Russell, psychology typically focuses on: the contents of our minds (sensation, imagination, memory, etc.) that are discoverable by introspection; the ways we have of being conscious, the cognitive relations we may have to things (on Russell's view this includes understanding and believing and always pertains to knowledge); and the non-cognitive mental states such as desiring and willing.[22]

In *Theory of Knowledge* (1913) Russell is concerned with analysing experience, of which acquaintance is fundamental (*Papers* 7: 5, 45). The central problem of epistemology, as Russell sees it,

... is the problem of distinguishing between true and false beliefs, and of finding, in as many regions as possible, criteria of true belief within those regions. This

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[21] Russell usually puts "means" in quotation marks because he does not yet have a full theory of meaning. See, for example, *PLA, LK*, pp. 268–9 (*Papers* 8: 233); *AMi*, pp. 188ff.

[22] *Papers* 7: 46, 110; *AMi*, pp. 18, 142.

problem takes us, through the analysis of belief and its presuppositions, into psychology and the enumeration of cognitive relations, while it takes us into logic through the distinction of truth and falsehood, which is irrelevant in a merely psychological discussion of belief. We may define epistemology in terms of this problem, as: *The analysis of true and false belief and their presuppositions, together with the search for criteria of true belief.*   (*Papers* 7: 46)

In this definition epistemology is not wholly separate from psychology and logic. Indeed, on Russell's view, a clear definition of epistemology is difficult for that very reason. The main difficulty is that "… it is impossible to assign the theory of knowledge a province distinct from that of logic and psychology. Any attempt to mark out such a province must, I believe, be artificial and therefore harmful" (*ibid.*). However, in his introduction to the *Tractatus*, Russell does indeed mark these areas out and states that Wittgenstein is attending to logical questions (I return to this in the next section).

For Russell, the psychological part of the theory of knowledge involves the analysis of the "the distinctions between sensation, imagination, memory, attention, etc., the nature of belief or judgment" (*Papers* 7: 46). This "analytic portion of the subject [theory of knowledge] insofar as it does not introduce the notion of truth and falsehood" is part of psychology, on Russell's view (*ibid.*). Presumably Russell believes this analysis is psychological since the phenomena mentioned are "cognitive relations" that involve acquaintance, and have to do with the "condition of mind" and its constituents.[23]

The logical part of the theory of knowledge involves truth and falsehood (*Papers* 7: 46). Since at this time there really are no propositions on Russell's view, it is judgments that have the property of truth. (Propositions are to be understood as incomplete symbols, made complete by the act of judgment.) Russell holds a correspondence theory of truth at this time, and in judgment we perceive this correspondence (7: 177). While judgment involves mental phenomena, they are "not defined by any purely psychological characteristic" insofar as they involve mind-independent facts (7: 178). Discovering the forms involved in judgments, which are also facts, is part of logic according to Russell (7: 46).

But discovering logical forms is also part of epistemology since they are the forms that we can in turn have knowledge of; for example,

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[23] *Papers* 7: 5, 45; *cf. PLA, LK*, p. 183; *Papers* 8: 183.

"something has some relation to something" or the five-term complex which is the form of judgment understood as a multiple relation (7: 115–18). These, as Russell will later state, are "new beasts" for the "Zoo" (*PLA, LK,* p. 226; *Papers* 8: 199). In this way, logic is required for epistemology in that it helps discover what there is (what forms exist), and thus what we can know. It is in these ways that Russell thinks that psychology, epistemology, and logic are linked.

Russell does not mention symbolism or meaning at this time other than to say that understanding the meaning of propositions involves acquaintance with their constituents. This is not surprising since he was not interested in "meaning" until 1918, as we saw above. In 1913, Russell is not interested in how we come to know the meanings of words, but takes it for granted we are acquainted with the meanings of words. When discussing the proposition "*A* precedes *B*", he writes: "It is obviously necessary that we should know what is meant by the words which occur in it, that is to say, we must have acquaintance with *A* and *B* and with the relation "preceding"(*Papers* 7: 111). Similarly, Russell temporarily defines an atomic proposition as "one whose verbal expression is of the same form as that of an atomic complex" (7: 110). Both of these views accord well with a view of language (quite different from the one he adopts in 1918) in which there is no intermediary between a word and its meaning:[24] understanding the meaning of a word is accounted for by direct acquaintance, and verbal expression (in most cases) matches the form of the complex. At this time, Russell's interest in words and their meanings is negligible.

We can now say that in 1913 the philosophical terrain divides into three *related* areas: psychology, epistemology, and logic. They can be summarized as follows:

(1) Epistemology • the analysis of true and false belief and their presuppositions, together with the search for a	**(2) Psychology** • the analysis of experience, the distinctions between sensation, imagination, memory,

[24] See also Peter Hylton's "Beginning with Analysis" in his *Propositions, Functions, and Analysis* (Oxford: Clarendon P., 2005), pp. 30–48, esp. 35–6.

| criterion of true belief (*Papers* 7: 46)
• self-evidence
• acquaintance
• facts of epistemology (such as logical forms) | attention, etc.
• acquaintance
• the nature of belief and judgment

(3) **Logic**
• distinction between truth and falsehood
• discovery of the logical forms of facts (including judgment) |

TABLE 1. RUSSELL IN 1913

V. RUSSELL'S BELIEFS ABOUT WITTGENSTEIN'S VIEWS

There are two reasons Russell may have believed that Wittgenstein shared his view of the relationship between psychology, epistemology, and logic. The first arises from discussions he had with Wittgenstein in 1913 as well as Wittgenstein's "Notes on Logic", and the second is suggested by correspondence in 1919.

First, consider a remark of Wittgenstein's in 1913. Wittgenstein argues against Russell's theory of judgment that included logical form as a constituent and takes the view that "There is no *thing* which is the *form* of a proposition, and no *name* which is the name of a form" (*Notebooks*, p. 99). But, when providing his own view of propositions at this time, Wittgenstein states:

I now determine the sense of "*xRy*" by laying down the rule: when the facts behave in regard to "*xRy*" so that the meaning of "*x*" stands in relation *R* to the meaning of "*y*", then I say that these facts are "of like sense" (*gleichsinnig*) with the proposition "*xRy*"; otherwise, "of opposite sense" (*entengegesetzt*). I correlate the facts to the symbol "*xRy*" by thus dividing them into those of like sense and those of opposite sense. To this correlation corresponds the correlation of name and meaning. Both are psychological. Thus I understand the form "*xRy*" when I know that it discriminates the behaviour of *x* and *y* according as these stand in the relation *R* or not.   (*Notebooks*, pp. 98–9)

Here, through the symbol "*xRy*" (the proposition), the world is divided into facts in which the referent (meaning) of "*x*" stands in the relation *R* to the referent of "*y*", and facts in which the referents of "*x*" and "*y*" are not so related. Wittgenstein states that correlations between the

names and their meanings—what "x" refers to and what "y" refers to—
are psychological. Presumably this means that the connection between
name and what is named is mental. The facts and the symbol share the
same form. Thus, according to Wittgenstein in 1913, I understand the
form when I understand how the relation and "x" and "y" in the symbol
divide the world into those facts in which the meanings of "x" and "y"
are R related, and those in which they are not.

Russell was aware of Wittgenstein's view of logical form since he had
a copy of "Notes on Logic" and had translated and rearranged the notes.
Moreover, the notes arose in part from conversation he had had with
Wittgenstein. Russell very likely would have agreed that the investigation
of how names get their meaning is a psychological one. Indeed, this ac-
cords with area (2) on Table 1.

Second, that Wittgenstein made such a division is reaffirmed to Rus-
sell later in 1919 when Wittgenstein responds to his query about the con-
stituents of thoughts. Wittgenstein provides Russell's question and then
his response:

"... But a Gedanke [thought] is a Tatsache [fact]: what are its constituents and
components, and what is their relation to those of the pictured Tatsache?" I
don't know *what* the constituents of a thought are but I know *that* it must have
such constituents which correspond to the words of Language. Again the kind
of relation of the constituents of the thought and of the pictured fact is irrele-
vant. It would be a matter of psychology to find out.

<div align="right">(Notebooks, p. 129 (19 Aug. 1919))</div>

Wittgenstein deems the determination of the constituents of a thought
a psychological investigation. This paragraph is often quoted to show
that Wittgenstein was not interested in psychology, but it should be
noted that it would have affirmed to Russell that Wittgenstein shared his
view that some work was logical, while other work was psychological.

Since both Russell and Wittgenstein divided investigations into psy-
chological, epistemological, and logical, it would not have been immedi-
ately obvious to Russell that Wittgenstein's division differed substantially
from his own. Given these considerations, it seems reasonable to say that
Russell was fully aware that Wittgenstein was relegating certain investiga-
tions to psychology and calling theory of knowledge the "philosophy of
psychology" (*Tractatus*, 4.1121). Following from this, Russell very plau-
sibly could have thought that he was simply pursuing areas of investiga-

tion—psychology and epistemology—that Wittgenstein had no interest in. In this light, there is no obvious reason Russell would have had to think that Wittgenstein rejected the interconnectedness of psychology, epistemology, and logic; only a reason to think he was not interested in the first two areas.

VI. PSYCHOLOGY, EPISTEMOLOGY, AND LOGIC IN 1918–22

From 1918 to 1922 much of Russell's division of philosophical problems into psychological, epistemological, and logical remains. The main difference is that a place is made for symbolism and meaning. But a theory of symbolism—which Russell states Wittgenstein is concerned to provide—cannot be purely logical on Russell's view. In 1918, he puts it thus:

I think that the notion of meaning is always more or less psychological, and that it is not possible to get a pure logical theory of meaning, nor therefore of symbolism. I think it is of the very essence of the explanation of what you mean by a symbolism to take account of such things as knowing, of cognitive relations, and probably of association. At any rate, I am pretty clear that the theory of symbolism and the use of symbolism is not a thing that can be explained in pure logic without taking account of the various cognitive relations that you may have to things. (*PLA*, p. 186; *Papers* 8: 167)

But the "cognitive relations" we have to things are the same as what in 1913 Wittgenstein deems the psychological: the relationship between the constituents of the thought and the pictured fact. As such, Russell very likely would have seen himself as pursuing what Wittgenstein relegated to psychology. What is more, the divisions Russell makes between psychology, epistemology, and logic, just as in 1913, are not wholly independent. As we saw, the relationship between the three areas, with the addition of the special sciences, are presented in Russell's introduction to the *Tractatus*. They can be summarized as follows:

(1) Psychology	(2) Epistemology
• the problem of what actually occurs in our minds when we use language with the intention of meaning something by it	• the problem of the relation subsisting between thoughts, words, or sentences, and that which they refer to or mean

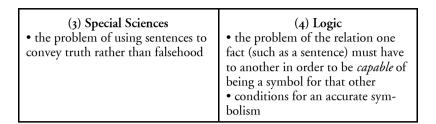| (3) Special Sciences	(4) Logic
• the problem of using sentences to convey truth rather than falsehood	• the problem of the relation one fact (such as a sentence) must have to another in order to be *capable* of being a symbol for that other • conditions for an accurate symbolism

TABLE 2. RUSSELL IN 1918–22

The first problem Russell notes and deems psychological—(1) what actually occurs in our minds when we use language with the intention of meaning something—accords well with Wittgenstein's reply to Russell in 1913 and 1918 that it would be a matter of psychology to discover what "the constituents of a thought" are and how they "correspond to the words of Language" (*Notebooks*, p. 129 (19 Aug. 1919)). Given Wittgenstein's reply, Russell naturally might have thought that Wittgenstein agreed with him regarding the division of tasks, in particular, the relegation of the investigation of thought constituents to psychology.

The second problem—(2) the relation subsisting between thoughts, words, or sentences, and that which they refer to or mean—was not present in Russell's work in 1913, but is very similar to what Wittgenstein relegates to psychology in 1913. This is important since meaning (symbolism) cuts across psychology, epistemology, and logic on Russell's view.

The third problem—(3) sentences that convey truth rather than falsehood—is relegated to the special sciences, whereas in 1913 no mention is made of the special sciences.

The fourth problem—(4) the relation that one fact (such as a sentence) must have to another in order to be *capable* of being a symbol for that other—Russell deems as logical. This has to do with logical form. But area (4), logic, also includes the conditions for an accurate symbolism, of which, as we saw, there are two: (i) the conditions for sense rather than nonsense in combinations of symbols, and (ii) the conditions for uniqueness of meaning or reference in symbols or combinations of symbols (*Tractatus*, p. 8; *Papers* 9: 101). Importantly, these cannot be severed entirely from epistemology and psychology.

In the next section, I show how areas (1), (2) and (4) are interdependent in Russell's work.

VII. INTERDEPENDENCE

We saw earlier how psychological and epistemological considerations informed Russell's view of ordinary language, its failings, and the need for an ideal language to replace it. It is this interdependence that forms the backdrop to Russell's introduction to the *Tractatus*. Understanding this helps to explain how Russell could misunderstand Wittgenstein's position on ordinary language. To further show how these areas are connected for Russell, I first look at the relation that one fact (such as a sentence) must have to another in order to be capable of being a symbol for it (area (4)).

What one fact must have in common with another in order to be capable of symbolizing it is logical form. This, I think, is just what Russell, in 1913, deemed as the logical investigation of discovering forms of facts, or what he also then called structures of facts (*Papers* 7: 114). Thus, his search for the logical form of understanding, or judgment, is what he would now deem—given his interest in symbolism—as the search for what is required by one fact to symbolize another. In the introduction to the *Tractatus*, Russell writes:

In order that a certain sentence should assert a certain fact there must, however the language may be constructed, be something in common between the structure of the sentence and the structure of the fact. This is perhaps the most fundamental thesis of Mr. Wittgenstein's theory. That which has to be in common between a sentence and the fact cannot, so he contends, be *said* in language.

(*Tractatus*, p. 8; *Papers* 9: 102)

It is the logical form—of which Russell was so interested in in 1913, and which he conceived of as a fact that we are acquainted with—that Wittgenstein claims cannot be said. Wittgenstein, unlike Russell, does not see logical forms as facts we can be acquainted with or have knowledge of.[25]

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[25] In 1918 Russell also believed that if, as the pragmatists contend, there is no such thing as "belief" as an "isolated phenomenon" (that is, if behaviourism is true), then these logical forms (of belief and judgment) he is discovering may not exist. But, he adds, discovering the nature of belief—whether it is an isolated phenomenon or not—is mainly an investigation for psychology, though it relates to logic as well (*PLA, LK*, p. 219; *Papers* 8: 193). For this reason Russell concludes that "there is a *curious interlacing* of logic with empirical studies" (*ibid.*, my italics). By contrast, Wittgenstein saw no such connection (*Tractatus*, 5.61; 5.552).

As in 1913, the discovery of the forms of propositions, which are now described in terms of symbols, is still relegated to the area of logic by Russell. But if we look closer at Russell's views, his relegation of this task to the province of logic does not entirely exclude it from psychological and epistemological considerations, at least in his own work. Concerning Wittgenstein's claim that the picture and what is pictured (reality) must share a common logical form, Russell adds

In certain elementary ways this is, of course, obvious. It is impossible, for example, to make a statement about two men (assuming for the moment that men may be treated as simples), without employing two names, and if you are going to assert a relation between two men it will be necessary that the sentence in which you make the assertion shall establish a relation between two names.

(*Tractatus*, pp. 9–10; *Papers* 9: 102)

It looks here as if Wittgenstein and Russell agree: In an accurate symbolism the relationship between a name and its bearer must be unique and definite, and these conditions are part of logical investigations, area (4). But for Russell, the relationship between a word and its meaning is both psychological and epistemological because it involves area (1)—namely, what actually occurs in our minds when we use language with the intention of meaning something by it—and also area (2)—namely, the relation subsisting between thoughts, words, or sentences, and that which they refer to or mean. As we saw in section 11, Russell had, at the time he wrote the introduction to the *Tractatus*, claimed that it is images, which are copies of sensations, that link words to things in the world. He then drew the conclusion that both knowledge and language are irredeemably vague and thought Wittgenstein agreed.

We can say, then, that when Russell divides the theory of symbolism into four areas in his introduction to the *Tractatus*, areas (1), (2) and (4) are interdependent. The relation between thoughts, words, or sentences and what they refer to, which he sees as belonging to epistemology, is also related to psychology; namely, what occurs in our minds when we use language, in particular, to images. The relation between words and what they refer to is in turn linked to the logical problem of the relation between one fact (a sentence) and another that must exist in order for one to be capable of symbolizing the other. This is because the logical investigation includes the conditions for an accurate symbolism, one of which is the definiteness and uniqueness of the meaning of symbols

(*Tractatus*, p. 8; *Papers* 9: 101). But the conditions for an accurate symbolism, and the reason ordinary language can never be one, cannot properly be understood without knowing what "meaning" is, and "meaning", for Russell, is informed by psychology and epistemology. Thus while Russell asks what the status of ordinary language is in light of his psychological and epistemological investigations — the results of which he thinks Wittgenstein agrees — Wittgenstein's position precludes such a question, and his view of ordinary language remains insulated from Russell's discoveries in psychology or epistemology.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Russell's misunderstanding of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* is at least in part due to his failure to see that Wittgenstein severed psychology and epistemology from his investigations at the start. The result of Wittgenstein's break was a completely different assumption concerning the status of natural language and the role of an "ideal" symbolism. By contrast, when Russell divided the philosophical terrain into different areas of investigation, they were not entirely "distinct provinces". The misunderstanding remained unnoticed by Russell because he and Wittgenstein used the same words — "psychology", "epistemology", and "logic" — and relegated tasks to these different areas. But they unknowingly (at least on Russell's part, and perhaps on Wittgenstein's as well) disagreed about the relationship between these areas of investigation. To be fair to Russell, the shift Wittgenstein made in the *Tractatus* was and is enormously difficult to grasp.[26] To line up "propositions, language, thought, the world" one behind the other, "each equivalent to each" as Wittgenstein did, is a fundamentally different starting-point from Russell's, where he began by *investigating* the relationships between language, thought, and the world, and seemed to discover only tenuous connections, very far from his ideal.[27]

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[26] As has been noted by others, it is also unclear whether Wittgenstein himself was successful in this, e.g. "The method of projection is the thinking of the sense of the sign" (*cf. Tractatus*, 3.11). See also my note 17.

[27] *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953; 2nd edn., 1958), §96.