

CHAPTER FIVE

Theory of Acquaintance:

Russell in his essay "On Denoting" distinguished two forms of knowledge, such as 'acquaintance' and 'knowledge about'. For him the distinction between them is "the distinction between the things we have presentations of, and the things we only reach by means of denoting phrases."⁵⁸ It may be the case that certain phrase denotes unambiguously, although we have no acquaintance with what it denotes. In fact in the case of perception we have acquaintance with the objects of perception and even in the thought process we have acquaintance with objects of a more abstract logical character, but we do not necessarily have acquaintance with the objects denoted by phrases composed of words with whose meanings we are acquainted. That is why Russell inclines to say that all our thinking has to start from acquaintance, but it succeeds in thinking about many things with which we have no acquaintance. In introducing the theory of acquaintance, Russell thereby proposes a psychological-semantic principle, which he calls the principle of acquaintance. One of his formulations of the principle reads: "Every proposition which we can understand must be composed wholly of constituents with which we are acquainted".⁵⁹

According to Russell if we understand the meaning of a sentence, then we must have direct acquaintance with all the constituents of the fact, which correspond to the sentence. Russell has no reservation in claiming that there is very little with which we are directly acquainted. In dreams, fantasies and hallucination we are aware of various 'images', in some perception we are aware of sense-data (sensations, percepts). At his earlier stage Russell also maintained that even in conceptual thought we are immediately aware of universals. However, we do not have direct awareness of material objects that belong to the world of natural science. We do not have direct awareness of other men, either of their bodies or of their minds. There are some memories, which make us directly aware of a fragment of the past, but these fragments are vanishingly small compared to the great

⁵⁸ Russell, Bertrand: "On Denoting", included in *Logic and Knowledge*, edited by Robert Charles Marsh, London and New York, 1956, p.41.

⁵⁹ Russell, Bertrand: *The Problems of Philosophy*, Oxford, 1948, p.56.

bulk of the past of which we are not aware. Thus, Russell seems to have conceived that what we are directly aware largely coincides with the world of 'perceptions', which according to Hume, constitutes the whole range of our consciousness.

What has been said above clearly indicates that Russell's principle of acquaintance acquires very far reaching consequences. When we say that 'Kolkata is in India', neither Kolkata nor India is a constituent of the fact which corresponds to the sentence. Again, when we say that 'Brutus murdered Caesar', neither Brutus nor Caesar belongs to these entities of which we are directly aware and in that sense neither of them is a constituent of the fact corresponding to the sentence. It is important to note here that when we intend to talk about the constituents of the facts that are affirmed or denied, we are never saying anything beyond what occurs in our restricted world of private experience. If we choose to say that the constituents of the facts which correspond to our sentences are what we actually 'talk about', then we must also say that we are always talking about things entirely distinct from those we believe we are talking about. Thus to know what we are talking about becomes an enormously difficult problem, which only specialists in logic, metaphysics, and epistemology have a chance to solve.

Russell in fact was very much aware of the difficulty cited above. That is why he, in fact, proposes a system of reconstruction of the so-called ordinary or natural language. Russell was doubtful regarding ordinary language as he conceived that such expressions actually failed to designate constituents in the facts affirmed or denied. According to Russell the best chance of representing an individual constituent belongs to the pronouns 'this' and 'that'. Names of perceived qualities such as 'red', 'green' and so on, are also considered by Russell to represent constituents of its facts. Russell inclines to say that every name in a sentence of the logically perfect language ought to indicate a (simple) constituent of the fact which corresponds to the sentence. That is why; Russell elsewhere holds that every name in a logically perfect language designates an entity with which the user of the language is directly acquainted.

We think that the two forms of knowledge such as ‘acquaintance’ and ‘knowledge about’ are somewhat obscure due to the fact that they are discussed in the context of denoting phrases. However, in his concluding remarks, Russell says, “... when there is anything with which we do not have immediate acquaintance, but only definition by denoting phrases, then the propositions in which this thing is introduced by means of denoting phrases do not really contain this thing as a constituent, but contain instead the constituents expressed by the several words of the denoting phrase. Thus, in every proposition that we can apprehend all the constituents are really entities with which we have immediate acquaintance.”⁶⁰ If we carefully try to apprehend the theme of the passage quoted above, it would be clear to us that Russell clearly relates the epistemological concept of ‘acquaintance’ to the logical ontological question of propositional constituents and thereby establishing the intimate connection between the two. At times Russell fails to specify the subtle distinction between ‘acquaintance’ and ‘knowledge about’. However, in his article “knowledge by Acquaintance and knowledge by Description”, Russell clearly intuits the subtle distinction between these two concepts. The fundamental distinction between them is that ‘knowledge by acquaintance’ is direct and immediate whereas ‘knowledge by description’ is inferred and therefore indirect.

According to Russell, knowledge by acquaintance is knowledge of things obtained ‘without the intermediary of any process of inference or any knowledge of truths’.⁶¹ It is obvious to say that when I am claiming that I am acquainted with an object, I have a direct cognitive relation to that object. In such a case I am directly aware of the object itself. As it is a kind of knowledge that does not depend on in any way upon inference, it is indubitable, not subject to error. Russell says, ‘If I am acquainted with a thing which exists, my acquaintance gives me the knowledge that it exists.’⁶² Thus, it appears to us that the so-called principle of acquaintance as proposed by Russell amounts to a truism, but if we think it carefully it would seem to us that it would require important epistemological ramifications. From epistemological aspect, what is mostly required to be noticed is that Russell does not consider acquaintance as a kind of knowing, and since it

⁶⁰ Russell, Bertrand: “On Denoting”, included in *Logic and Knowledge*, op. cit. p. 45.

⁶¹ Russell, Bertrand: *The Problems of Philosophy*, op. cit. p. 46.

⁶² *Ibid.* p.45.

provides in itself complete evidence that the object of acquaintance exists, the knowledge claim it makes is taken to be apodictic, incapable of being mistaken.

However, there is no question of doubt that the concept of acquaintance is extremely important in Russell's whole approach to the problem of knowledge of the external world. Elsewhere Russell himself conceives that the concept of acquaintance is essentially called for empirical knowledge. In fact, when he examines the perennial philosophical questions of 'appearance and reality', he argues that acquaintance – which he calls 'direct awareness' is the fundamental kind of empirical knowledge. It is perhaps, says Russell, the only mode of cognizing external reality to which the term 'knowledge' is strictly applicable. Here, emulating Descartes, he engages in a program of systematic doubting, seeking to discover if there is 'any knowledge in the world which is so certain that no reasonable man may doubt it.'⁶³ In fact Russell is sure that our knowledge of the external world must be grounded in these experiences in which we are immediately aware of the world. We do, of course, search certainty and in doing so 'it is natural to begin with our present experiences, and, in some sense knowledge is to be derived from them.'⁶⁴ Russell's sole objective is to have the basic elements of our empirical knowledge, which is conditioned by the assumption that these objects with which a relationship of direct awareness is possible have a privileged status. The question then is: what are these objects? These objects are always sense-data, but never physical objects. The question that immediately crops up in mind is that: why does Russell prefer sense-data instead of physical objects? Although this is not the question that needs to be addressed here, but in a passing manner it can be said, rather precisely, that Russell advocates sense-data over physical objects simply because of the fact that unlike physical objects, there is no room of doubting regarding the existence of sense data. According to Russell it would always be possible to doubt the existence of physical objects; whereas it would not be possible to doubt the existence of sense-data. Although it is true to say that the ontological significance of physical object symbols is important in Russell's philosophy, but due to the dubious, though supposedly, nature of our knowledge of

⁶³ Ibid. p.7

⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 7

physical object it is not considered to be the significant issue for the present purpose. What is mostly urgent at this juncture is to foresee why acquaintance or direct awareness of an object is taken to be an indispensable condition for knowing that object exists.

In justifying the question: why acquaintance or direct awareness of an object is taken to be an indispensable condition of knowing that object exists? Russell again calls upon the Cartesian method. Following Descartes, Russell seems to conceive empirical knowledge on the paradigm of mathematical or logical knowledge. According to Russell in order to qualify as genuine knowledge, an empirical knowledge claim must be supported by evidence sufficient to establish it as incontrovertibly true. Theoretically, doubt may be raised against a true particular empirical proposition. In this regard a true particular empirical proposition lacks genuine knowledge. This actually compels Russell to regard sense-data as the true objects of knowledge in sense-experience. According to Russell knowledge of physical objects is problematic. Since sense-data are presentational objects, 'things immediately known to me just as they are.'⁶⁵ To know them we have to be aware of them and being aware of them we know them perfectly. Russell says 'The particular shade of colour that I am seeing may have many things said about it – I may say that it is brown, that it is rather dark and so on. But such statements, though they make me know truths about the colour, do not make me know the colour itself, as opposed to knowledge of truths about it. I know the colour perfectly and completely when I see it, and no further knowledge of it is even theoretically possible.'⁶⁶ Being completely 'given' in sense-experience, sense-data provide both the necessary and sufficient evidence of their existence. Physical objects, on the contrary, are not presented directly in sense experience and are therefore known only indirectly, i.e., by means of description. This means that physical objects are not, according to the certainty theory of knowing, known at all, but only 'inferred'. In fact, in our ordinary life we cannot bypass the relevance or implication of inference. In fact inference is regarded as a perfectly legitimate procedure whereby genuine knowledge may be acquired. However, the so-called inference as Russell believes, takes place when we pass from sense-data to physical objects is at least

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 47

⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 47

theoretically capable of being mistaken. Since it would be mistaken at least theoretically, it cannot be regarded as genuine knowledge.

What is revealed from the above consideration is that Russell categorizes sense-data within the domain of the principle of acquaintance or the principle of direct awareness and the so-called physical-objects under the domain of 'knowledge by description'. We have already specified with special reference to Russell, what he means by sense-data and the principle of acquaintance. However, we are yet to specify what does Russell mean by 'knowledge by description'? According to Russell 'knowledge by description' "always involves ... some knowledge of truths as its source and ground."⁶⁷ Knowledge of description is not a direct cognitive relation with the object known; rather we know an object by description when we know that it is 'the-so-and-so'. That is when we know that there is one object, and no more, having a certain property. We think the phrase 'knowledge by description' is made clear if we go through the remark of Russell found in his book **The Problem of Philosophy**. Russell says, "My knowledge of the table is of the kind which we shall call 'knowledge by description'. The table is the physical object which causes such and such sense-data'. This describes the table by means of the sense-data. In order to know anything at all about the table, we must know truths concerning it with things with which we have acquaintance: we must know that 'such and such sense-data are caused by physical object'. There is no state of mind in which we are directly aware of the table; all our knowledge of the table is really knowledge of truths and the actual thing which is the table is not, strictly speaking, known to us at all."⁶⁸

The above remarks of Russell clearly show in what respect or context the phrase 'knowledge by description' is fundamentally different from 'knowledge of acquaintance'. Russell further seems to conceive that in order to know the physical object, even to know that it exists, it is necessary to relate the knowledge we have by acquaintance (of sense-data) with certain truths, which bring with us to our experience of the external world. This again reaffirms the earlier standpoint of Russell that knowledge of physical objects

⁶⁷ Ibid. p.47

⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 47

is not genuine knowledge as it hinges on the assumptions and inferences which might conceivably be mistaken.

On the basis of the above observation, we are now in a better position to assess why Russell envisages the so-called logically perfect language instead of natural language. The main objective of Russellian form of ideal language is that by introducing such form of language, Russell seeks minimum number of words, which name objects with which we are directly acquainted. Such types of words can be regarded as proper names. Thus, we can say that one of the prime objectives of Russell's introduction of the theory of acquaintance is to have or secure a minimum number of words which names objects with which we are directly acquainted. This conclusion is reached in the following way: (a) In accordance with the referential theory of meaning, meaning are **objects** meant entities designated by words functioning as 'names'; (b) to understand a word, we must know what it actually means; what entity it refers to; (c) since only genuinely cognizable entities are those with which we are acquainted, it follows that only words designating objects of acquaintance, or words definable in terms of such objects, are intelligible to us. Thus, it can be concluded on the basis of (a), (b) and (c) that in an ideal language, as shown in the previous sequel that all words standing for ultimate constituents (the logically proper names of the language) must be words that designate objects with which we are acquainted. Any other words failing to fulfill the requirements cited above would be unintelligible.

Certainly, the so-called words named as 'logically proper names' must denote entities with which we are directly acquainted. However, this view does not follow solely from the assumptions, primarily the reference theory of meaning, which led him to posit particulars as constituents of atomic facts. So conceived, particulars are simply a logical necessity, entities demanded by the linguistic requirement that our basic words have meanings which are definite and unique, not amenable to further analysis. Accordingly, particulars need only be 'logically' simple. To identify particulars with these empirical objects which are capable of direct, presentational cognition presupposes a further, far seeking assumption relating 'meaning' to 'understanding' and ultimately to the theory of

acquaintance. This additional assumption played an increasingly large role in Russell's Philosophy of Language, particularly in his reconstruction of physical object statements in terms of sense-datum statements. Thus, it seems clear that by introducing the concept of acquaintance Russell ultimately arrived or secured a minimum number of vocabularies or words named as logically proper names by means of which the so-called logically perfect language can be constructed. Let us pass on to discuss the concept of proper names after Russell.

Proper names:

According to Russell there is a traditional distinction between 'proper' names and 'class' names. A proper name is essentially applied to only one object; on the contrary, a class name is applied to all objects of a certain kind. For example, 'Socrates' is a proper name while 'man' is a class name. According to Russell a proper name is said to be meaningless if it fails to denote an object for which it is named. On the contrary, a class name is not subject to any such limitation. Moreover, it may be the case that there is only one instance of a class name, for example, 'Satellite on the earth'. In such a case, the one member may have a proper name, namely, the moon. However, the proper name, namely, 'the moon' does not have the same meaning as the class name; namely, 'Satellite of the earth', because 'Satellite of the earth' is a unit class, but we cannot say 'the moon is a unit class'. The 'moon' is no longer a class or at any rates not a class of the same logical type as 'Satellite of the earth'.

Having been identified the distinction between proper and class names, Russell then goes on to give a precise definition of proper names. Instead of giving a straightforward definition of proper names, Russell rather approaches such definition from the point of view of metaphysics, logic, physics, syntax or theory of knowledge. According to Russell proper names owe their existence in ordinary language to the concept of 'substance'. A substance is named and their properties are assigned to it. Even at times we give a name to a collection of substances and thereby extend our definition to embrace collections of substances. In fact proper names, opines Russell, are ghosts of substances. According to

Russell, the syntactical definition of proper name must be relative to a given language. In our ordinary language, a name will be a word, which can never occur in a sentence except as a subject. More precisely, it can be said that a proper name is a word, which may occur in any form of sentence not containing variables. Does it make sense to say that proper names are 'syncategorematic' which actually means that they have no significance by themselves, but contribute to the significance of sentences in which they occur? According to Russell proper names are not syncategorematic. The application of proper names can also be found in logic as well. In general since logical propositions contain only variables there is no room for names. However, in the case of substitution a variable is substituted by a constant, which is nothing but a name. If any kind of hierarchy is admitted among variables, 'proper name' will be 'constants' which are values of variables of lower type. Thus, it can be said that the involvement of proper names can reach into every branch of discipline.

Two types of names:

Russell at the very outset classifies names into 'logically proper names' and 'ordinary proper names'. For him the so-called logically proper names are based on the realist theory of meaning and the principle of acquaintance. On the contrary, ordinary proper names are called 'truncated or telescoped descriptions.'⁶⁹ One of the notable aspects of Russell's principle of acquaintance is that an ordinary proper name cannot be said to function as a logically proper name. Ordinary proper names such as 'Aristotle', 'Socrates' etc. do not designate entities with which we are directly acquainted. According to Russell, since we are not acquainted with Socrates, we therefore cannot name him. When we use the word 'Socrates', we actually use it as a description. In such a case our thought may be rendered by some such phrase as 'The Master of Plato' or 'The philosopher who drank the hemlock' or 'The person whom logicians assert to be mortal', but we definitely do not use the name as a name in the true sense of the word. Russell elsewhere maintains that although it would be at least theoretically be possible to be acquainted with objects designated by ordinary proper names; however on the basis of

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 29

the principle of acquaintance as discussed above, we can legitimately claim that under no possible circumstances could we be acquainted with such objects. For Russell the entities as denoted or designated by ordinary proper names are simply not the kind of entities of which knowledge of acquaintance is possible. As Russell himself points out that the only person who might conceivably be acquainted with a person is that person himself. Speaking of Bismarck, for instance, Russell says, "... if he made a judgment about himself, he himself might be a constituent of the judgment. Here the proper name has the direct use which it always wishes to have, as simply standing for a certain object, and not for a description of the object."⁷⁰ A person who knows Bismarck is not, strictly speaking, acquainted with Bismarck himself. What this person was acquainted with were certain sense-data, which he connected with Bismarck's body. His body as the physical object was only known as the body and the mind connected with sense-data. That is why, they were known by description.

One question needs to be addressed at the juncture. The question is: why does Russell incline to say that no one except the person himself could have knowledge by acquaintance of that person? Why does he further hold that an ordinary name cannot function as a logically proper name? Owing to apprehend Russell on this point we must reinvokethe basic assumption underlying the theory of acquaintance which hinges on the principle that all words which are intelligible to us must either directly designate objects of acquaintance or be analyzable in terms of such objects. A person, Russell says, has the same kind of metaphysical status that physical objects have. Accordingly, persons, like physical objects, can be known only by description. It then follows that except for the person himself, no one is acquainted with the entity named by an ordinary proper name. According to Russell except the bearer of the name (ordinary proper name) is 'unintelligible' as the entity, which it supposedly names, is not, truly speaking, capable of being known. The reason, in fact, is that proper names ordinarily be defined in terms of qualities and spatio-temporal relations. Most subject-predicate propositions, Russell conceives, assert that a certain quality named by the predicate is one of a bundle of equalities named by the subject. Russell therefore says, "Proper names in the ordinary

⁷⁰ Ibid. p.54.

sense ... are misleading, and embody a false metaphysics.”⁷¹ Ordinary proper names, therefore, cannot function as logically proper names. For Russell owing to qualify as a logically proper name, an expression must be intelligible and this criterion can only be fulfilled by a logically proper name.

According to Russell an ostensible name can only be genuine name and in this regard it can be equated with a logically proper name. Russell says, “An atomic proposition is one which does mention actual particulars, not merely describe them but actually name them ...”⁷² However, an ostensible name may not be regarded as a genuine name if it can be replaced by some description, which will serve to convey the meaning we intend to express when we use the name in some proposition. The only situation in which this can occur is when we use a symbol simply to refer, to point directly to an object i.e., when we use a symbol ostensibly to designate an object with which we are acquainted. The words that we can understand must denote things that can be pointed out. Whenever a word is used except to ‘point out’, it is functioning not as a name but as a description. Since ordinary names fail to designate entities, such words, which purport to name them, cannot be recommended as genuine proper names.

Russell further inclines to say that not only do ordinary proper names really function as descriptions rather than names, the entities they ostensibly name are not such that can legitimately be said to be bearers of proper names. In fact this is more or less exactly the same point that has already been discussed: only objects of acquaintance can be named, and persons are not such objects. However, there remains a different sense through which the so-called ordinary proper names as the genuine nominee of objects can be criticized. Earlier on Russell holds that persons are entities which can only be described; but he is now suggesting that the concept person does not designate an entity at all. Like other physical object the concept of person can be analyzable in terms of sets or classes of particulars, what Russell at times elsewhere calls ‘logical fiction’?⁷³ The same point can also be noted in his book **My Philosophical Development**, where Russell says, “The

⁷¹ Russell, Bertrand: *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits*, Humanities press, 1948, p. 99

⁷² Russell, Bertrand: *Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, op.cit.200.

⁷³ *Ibid.* p.191

subject is psychology and the particle of matter is physics, if they are to be intelligible to us, must both be regarded either as bundles of experienced qualities and relations or as related to such bundles by relations known to experience.”⁷⁴ The real theme of the passage, we think, is that person should not be regarded as an ontologically basic category, rather as a kind of ‘construct’ out of date provided through sense-experience. Elsewhere Russell even says that a person is a certain series of experiences.

According to Russell since ordinary proper names do not fulfill the requirements for logically proper names, it would be very difficult to have any instance of a name at all in the proper strict sense of the word. Going forward, Russell would like to say that only words, which can function in the desired sense, are the demonstratives pronouns, such as ‘this’ and ‘that’. For him they can only be used to refer to an object in such a way that it would not be possible to replace them with a description. He says, “The only words one does use as names in the logical sense are words like ‘this’ and ‘that’. One can use ‘this’ as a name to stand for a particular with which one is acquainted at the moment. We say ‘This is white’. If you agree that ‘This is white’ meaning the ‘this’, that you see, you are using ‘this’ as a proper name. But if you try to apprehend the proposition that I am expressing when I say, ‘This is white’ you cannot do it. If you mean this piece of chalk as a physical object, then you are not using a proper name. It is only when you use ‘this’ quite strictly, to stand for an actual object of sense that it is really a proper name.”⁷⁵

It again reveals from the above passage that only logically proper names can be applied to objects of acquaintance. Accordingly, the so-called physical objects composed of qualities and relations cannot be designated as names, Russell enlists two radical characters of logically proper names. These are (a) a logically proper name cannot designate the same object for two different people and (b) a logically proper name can designate only those entities with which we are acquainted at the moment. Having been attributed these two distinctive features to logically proper names; Russell then conceives that only demonstrative pronouns can be considered as logically proper names. Demonstrative pronouns alone have the capacity to denote objects in an ‘ambiguous’

⁷⁴ Russell, Bertrand: *My Philosophical Development*, op. cit. 170

⁷⁵ Russell, Bertrand: *Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, op. cit. p.201

way. The demonstrative pronoun 'this' for example, constantly designates different objects to different people at one and the same time and to the same person at different times. Russell says " ... it (this) has a very odd property for a proper name, namely that it seldom means the same thing two moments running and does not mean the same thing to the speaker and to the hearer. It is really a proper name all the same, and it is almost the only thing I can think of that is used properly and logically in the sense that I was talking of a proper name."⁷⁶

We think there nothing remains unclear when Russell inclines to say that the so-called logically proper names such as 'this' or 'that' are ambiguous. In fact if we anticipate the premise that 'an inevitable consequence of a constant adherence to the theory of acquaintance is the quest for logically proper names and that we can name only those objects with which we are acquainted' and that the only objects with which we are acquainted are sense-data, then we have in effect already accepted this conclusion. Realistically, we know by acquaintance only these sense-data of which we are directly aware at a given moment and these sense-data are at least numerically different from any sense-data we ourselves may have at some other time or which any other person may be aware of, either at the same time or at any other time. When we use the word 'this' to designate some object of acquaintance, what it denotes will be different from moment to moment and will never be any object with which any one else is acquainted. This means to say that the meaning of 'this' varies every time it is used to designate a different object. Therefore the meaning of 'this' is constantly changing which surely runs with the theme of his referential theory of meaning where he holds that 'the meaning of a word is the object to which it refers'.

Since the meaning of a word is the object to which it refers, Russell accordingly seeks only demonstrative pronouns as the domain of ideal language, which is capable of standing for particulars. Russell elsewhere says that all words which function as names can be used only in the actual presence of the object being named and this has the consequence that 'as regards its vocabulary a logical perfect language would be largely private to the speaker', Russell further conceives that the simple objects for which there

⁷⁶ Ibid. p.201

is to be one word and no more are sense-data and the words which stand for them must be, in a properly reconstructed language, the demonstratives 'this' and 'that'. If we enable to reconstruct an ideal form of language with these demonstratives, then we would be in a position to conceive that grammar will not mislead us concerning the true forms of propositions. In fact if we carefully try to understand Russell, it would be revealed to us that he does not carry out an actual reconstruction of ordinary language like other reconstructions; what he suggests, in fact, is that how various particular types of prepositions could be re-cast so as to improve their forms. Although Russell was skeptical about the true formation of ordinary language, but at the same time he did not see the necessity of working out the details of this program. His main interest was in calling attention to the theoretical need for such a reconstruction. He does not share with the conviction that the proposal of ideal language as a philosophical method is all about in knowing the true picture of the world: rather he seems to conceive that there are some distinctive reasons why the theoretical goal of reconstructionism is philosophical requisite. Russell is inclined to dig up such linguistic expressions which have a genuinely referential function. Russell's prime objective of his theory of acquaintance is to determine which words ostensibly referring to particulars are genuinely referential and which are merely incomplete symbols and are therefore dispensable. His objective is to dig up those symbols, which cannot be eliminated from language as they devote entities, which are supposed to be ontologically basic.

It seems clear to us that by introducing the theory of acquaintance and by seeking logically proper names having genuinely referential function, Russell seeks for minimum vocabulary or minimum logical apparatus from which the whole mathematics can ultimately be derived. Regarding this point, Prof. Urmson has thought that not only in the general method of analysis it recommended, but more specifically the P.M. logic may have influenced Russell's logical atomist position. Urmson says, "... as the techniques of logic could define and thus make theoretically superfluous the more complex and abstruse concepts of mathematics, so by the application of the same techniques the less concrete items of the furniture of heaven and earth ... could be defined and theoretically eliminated."⁷⁷ What does Russell actually mean by 'logical technique' is made clear with

⁷⁷ Urmson, J.O. *Philosophical Analysis*, Oxford, 1956, p.6.

the help of the maxim called ‘Occam’s Razor’. That maxim comes in, in practice, in this way: ‘taken some science, say physics, you have there a given body of doctrine’ a set of propositions expressed in symbols – I am including words among symbols – I am including words among symbols – and you think that you have reason to believe that on the whole these propositions, rightly interpreted, are fairly true, but you do not know what is the actual meaning of the symbols that you are using ... you go through, if you are analyzing a science like physics, these propositions with a view to finding out what is the smallest empirical apparatus – or the smallest apparatus, not necessarily wholly empirical – out of which you can build up these propositions. What is the smallest number of simple undefined things at the heart and the smallest number of undemonstrative premises, out of which you can define the things that need to be defined and prove the things that need to be proved? That problem that you like to take in any case is by no means a simple one; but on the contrary an extremely difficult one. It is one which requires a very great amount of logical technique; and the sort of things that I have been talking about in these lectures is the preliminaries and first steps in that logical technique.”⁷⁸

According to Russell the relation of logic to ontology is very complex. We attempt to separate linguistic aspects of the problem from those that have a bearing on ontology. The linguistic problems are capable of a precise solution; but the ontological problems remains much more obscure. However, the purely linguistic problems have an ontological background, though a somewhat vague one. According to Russell sentences are composed of words capable of asserting facts. Words must have a certain kind of relation to something else that is called ‘meaning’. The degree of ontological commitment is involved in all ordinary speech. If a sentence is to have significance, some of its words must point to something and if our ordinary empirical statements are to be significant, they must point to something outside words. Thus Russell in his philosophical analysis of language introduces a general philosophical method composed of minimum ‘vocabulary’ which is designated as ‘logically proper names’. His program of revisionism, in fact, as a whole is an effort to secure a ‘minimum vocabulary’ which would provide the basic terms for the logically perfect language he envisages as the

⁷⁸ Ruessll, Bertrand: Problems of Philosophy, op. cit. pp. 270-71

ultimate goal of reconstructionism. This vocabulary, Russell opines, is in effect the indispensable types of symbols remaining after the superfluous words have been extirpated or reduced to or defined in terms of words which function referentially. The philosophical implication of seeking such philosophical method is that this ^{quest} for a minimum vocabulary had, for Russell, genuine ontological significance. Following Russell, Wittgenstein in his **Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus** also introduces the same vocabulary. According to Wittgenstein language is constructed by proposition and in proposition we have only names (logically proper names) along with relational terms. Names along with the help of relational terms constitute propositions (composite or complex or atomic or elementary proposition etc.) which picture facts (world or reality). Following Russell or having been influenced by Russell, Wittgenstein holds that a name, if it is a genuine one, denotes an object and the meaning of the name is the meaning of the object. If a name fails to denote an object, it is no longer regarded as a genuine name. Thus like Russell, Wittgenstein also holds the same position by stating the fact that names have genuine ontological significance. He was convinced that if we can discover it, the symbols it includes will be these which stand for objects which we should regard as the basic 'stuff' of the world. According to Russell words lacking genuine reference have no ontological significance and they appear to be mere excess baggage. However, all these symbols having genuine reference must be taken as having ontological significance as they denote some basic reality. According to Russell ordinary language is derived from the basic 'stuff' of the world and these part of ordinary language, which built upon the basic stuff, is called 'incomplete symbols'. Incomplete symbols, however, will be capable of interpretation in terms of basic symbols having genuine ontological significance.

Thus, it seems clear that Russell's ultimate objective of his philosophical analysis of language is to set up a criterion for determining what entities are to be regarded as ontologically basic. The theory of acquaintance, which Russell envisages, is cognitive. Accordingly, those alleged entities, which are inherently incapable of being cognized in the direct way required in order to qualify as objects of acquaintance must be considered suspect. Every effort must be made to interpret them in terms of entities, which are

objects of acquaintance. It may perhaps be difficult at times, we think, to define all our words in terms of words designating objects known by acquaintance; but it is the goal or objective for which we should set our sights. So long we fail to show at least in principle, how can we define constituent words in terms of words 'which represent the hard core of experience by which our sentences are attached to the world.' Thus the basic stuff of the world is required for establishing the ontological significance of the symbols.

Observation:

It has been claimed by many that the so-called name theory as proposed by Russell gives rise to a methodological problem as he elsewhere attributes necessary features on his naming theory, but does not specify precisely which one is the defining feature of such theory. Broadly speaking, there are two roots by means of which such theory can be detected. These are (a) the realist theory of meaning and (b) the principle of acquaintance. As far as the theory of acquaintance is concerned there underlies some genuine problem. It is always question-begging to uphold the view that there are un-analyzable names i.e., logically proper names. Realist's theory of meaning holds that a name's meaning is its bearer which again lets the meaning function vacuous. The realist theory was also introduced by Wittgenstein in his **Tractatus**, which was based on the presupposition that the bearers of names must be necessary, unchanging and indestructible, a view similar to one Russell held in **Principia Mathematica**. However, the realistic theory of meaning may be criticized from various angles.

In the first place, it can be said that if the bearers of names were contingent, then according to the realist theory of meaning, such names would become meaningless and any talk relating to these names would be utter nonsense. But we think this would be absurd as we at times talk about names which may not exist and it would also be the case that there are many names prevailing in language of which bearers are yet to be conceivable to us. If 'a' names 'a' then 'a' would be meaningless if 'a' had not existed. According to the realist theory of meaning if a name lacks its bearer then either it would be meaningless or else it would mean something else. In identifying the meaning of a

name along with its bearer does not require that the bearer of names should be necessary existents. Secondly, according to this theory the relationship between names and its meaning is sui-generic in the sense that both of them are necessary, constant and unchanging. Accordingly, if the named object changes, then so does the meaning constant, we must make only unchanging things. Such view again is not tenable as it involves into confusion. In fact it is true to say that if 'a' is 'a' then if a changes, so does the meaning of 'a'. However, from this it does not following that after the change 'a' has occupied a distinct meaning. Frege in fact tries to overcome this problem by introducing the distinction between sense and reference. According to Frege the sense (meaning) of a name may be changing, but from this it does not follow that its reference is also changing along with its meaning.

Thirdly, the realist theory of meaning identifies the meaning of a name with its bearer. It holds that so long Socrates exists, the name 'Socrates' remains meaningful, as it is associated with its 'meaning-relatum'. The danger of this theory is that as soon as Socrates does not exist, the name Socrates loses its meaning as in such a case the name Socrates is not identified with meaning –relatum. The realist theory of meaning holds good if it is presupposed that the bearers of names to be indestructible. Thus it has been conceived by many that the so-called realist theory does not hold good if it is presupposed that the bearers of names are necessary, unchanging, or indestructible. What is true to say is that 'a' might change or cease to exist, while all along 'a' stands for a.

When Russell interprets names as logically proper names, he thereby wants to establish that a name must have a genuine reference. He says that a sentence containing a name is about the named object. The meaning of a name in itself determines what the bearer of it is. But this is not to be the case in description. A name genuinely refers to its bearer: whereas a description does not genuinely refer to whatever object of which it holds. The similar theory is also found in Kripke's article 'Naming and Necessity', where Kripke distinguishes between 'rigid designators by virtue of having their genuine reference. Descriptions are not rigid in the same sense as they lack genuine reference.

If a name is a rigid designator, then it must have a bearer. Accordingly, there is no name without bearer. In this sense empty names are not considered to be names at all. But this proposal involves us into a terminological difficulty. Usually, we very often refer 'Vulcan' as 'empty names', meaning names without bearers. In responding to this question it can be said that there are empty names, but they are not names. Since they are empty names, they are held to be non-names. Thus besides genuine names, there we find other categories of names, such as, syntactic name; fictional and mythological names like Hamlet, Pegasus. Russell however, considers all fictional and mythological names as empty names and finally considered these names as truncated or telescoped descriptions. Russell says, 'They are really not about anything, but we think they are about the man named Hamlet'. The propositions in the play are false because there were no such men; they are significant because we know from experience the noise 'Hamlet', the meaning of 'name' and the meaning of 'man'. The fundamental falsehood in the play is the proposition: the noise 'Hamlet' is a name."⁷⁹ Every syntactic name abbreviates a description true of nothing, and so every sentence in which such a syntactic name has primary occurrence is false. However, Russell's position may be criticized from Meinong's perspective. According to Meinong syntactic names do not lack bearers in this sense that although the bearers of such names do not exist; none-the less they have logical being. In fact Russell himself was a believer of such theory at his earlier stage, but in his later writings he decisively rejected any such approach. This is clearly depicted in the following quotation.

'Logic, I should maintain, must no more admit a unicorn than zoology can; for logic is concerned with the real world just as truly as zoology, though with its more abstract and general features. To say that unicorns have existence in heraldry, or in literature, or in imagination, is a most pitiful and paltry evasion. What exists in heraldry is not an animal, made of flesh and blood, moving and breathing of its own initiative. What exists is a picture, or a description in words. Similarly, to maintain that Hamlet, for example, exists in his own world, just as truly as (say) Napoleon existed in the ordinary world, is to say something deliberately confusing or else confused to a degree which is scarcely credible. There is only one world, the 'real' world: Shakespeare's imagination is part of it, and the

⁷⁹ Russell, Bertrand: *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*, op. cit. p.277

thoughts he had in writing. Hamlet is real. So are the thoughts that we have in reading the play. But it is of the very essence of fiction that only the thoughts, feelings etc. in Shakespeare and his readers are real and that there is not, in addition to them, an objective Hamlet. When you have taken account of all the feelings roused by Napoleon in writers and readers of history, you have not touched the actual man, but in the case of Hamlet you have come to the end of him. If no one thought about Hamlet, there would be nothing left to him, if no one had thought about Napoleon, he would soon have seen to it that someone did. The sense of reality is vital in logics and whoever juggles with it by pretending that Hamlet has another kind of reality is doing a disservice to thought. A robust sense of reality is very necessary in framing a correct analysis of proposition about unicorns, golden mountain, round square and other such pseudo-objects.”⁸⁰

One may, however, raise a quip by saying that if empty names are held to be meaningless as Russell appears to conceive, then how they can communicate? It is true to say that empty names have a communicative use. Children are taught how to use empty expressions correctly. One must admit the meaningfulness of empty names as they occur in positive and negative existential sentences. Expressions containing empty names can be used false and true respectively. Now, the point is that if empty name is said to be communicative, then the person would surely be in a position to say what the name used in the sentence actually communicates? Does Vulcan being an empty name communicate something? Clearly, it would not, for there is no such thing. Perhaps then sentences in which empty names are used express some general proposition functioning as a description. This again remains unsound because in order to use empty name in general proposition one has to accept beforehand that empty syntactical names like Vulcan are meaningful. The ‘no-sense’ theorist of empty names may thus end up by giving the same overall account of the beliefs of users of empty names as the description theorist would give. In fact McDowell in his “On the Sense and Reference of a Proper Name” offers an explanation of why it is specially tempting to regard an empty name as an abbreviated description. It is true to say that thought is something purely mental. Accordingly, our thinking entails nothing about the way the world is outside our thoughts. Of course, some

⁸⁰ *ibid.* p. pp.69-70

thoughts are essentially thoughts about objects, and there can be no thoughts about objects that do not exist. The objects are woven into the thought.

We think that the problem regarding existential sentences remains unsolved: Russell in solving such problem would recommend meta-linguistic approach in the case of fictional names. According to this approach, 'Vulcan does not exist' will be analyzed as 'Vulcan' is not a name and 'Vulcan does exist' as 'Vulcan' is a name. According to Russell there are no names which lack bearers and in this regard he justifies why the so-called ordinary proper names are not designated as names. We think that by admitting only logically proper names as genuine names, Russell seeks a high degree of confidence in dealing with these names. Russell seems to have believed that only our sense data beliefs are enlightened to the highest degree of confidence. Accordingly, names or more precisely, logically proper names can name only sense data. Such apprehension is looking behind his theory of acquaintance as his principle of acquaintance gets him to the conclusion. It also helps Russell to regard ordinary proper names as names.

Are ordinary names really names?

We have seen that Russell denies ordinary names as names simple on the ground that such names lack their bearer. According to Russell the meaning of a name is its bearer. However, it does not follow from the doctrine that the meaning of a name 'a' consists in the fact that it names a. This is justified in saying that "'a' names a' is not the same fact as the fact that "'a' names b', even if $a=b$. For example, someone may believe that 'Tully' names Tully without believing that 'Tully' names Cicero. According to Russell if two names name the same they mean the same in terms of his adherence to the view that the meaning of a name is its bearer. However, the example, discussed above, shows that what we ordinarily regard as names, for example, 'Tully' and 'Cicero' do not satisfy the principle as observed above.

According to Russell if two names name the same they mean the same in terms of his adherence to the view that the meaning of a name is its bearer. But on the basis of the above observation it seems clear that what we ordinarily regard as names, for example, 'Tully' and 'Cicero', do not satisfy the principle that names which name the same mean the same. This in fact has prompted Russell to make a sharp division between ordinary proper name and logically proper name. This idea of Russell is by and large effective but

from this it does not mean to say that it has to be granted without question begging. Russell's doctrine would be proper in case of demonstratives concerning contextual determination. However, demonstratives certainly fail to satisfy the converse of the principle that expressions which names different things have different meanings. In fact, in his *Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, Russell has accepted the view which made demonstratives ambiguous, but elsewhere he has realized that this was a mistake and thereby comes to know that demonstrative pronoun has, in some sense, a single meaning despite the fact that it can be used, on different occasion, to demonstrate different things. Moreover, if names are rigid designators by Peacock's standard, then it may seem that they should satisfy the false doctrine. Will not it be possible to use the same name, in giving the truth conditions of two sentences which differ only in that a name is one is replaced in the other by a distinct name which names the same? In fact, the truth condition be one which could serve as the core of a total theory of meaning; it would be one which one could use to ascribe to a man such propositional attitudes as beliefs and assertions on the strength of the noises he makes. However, such a truth condition will match a name in the sentence for which it is a truth condition with a synonym. Moreover, names which name the same mean the same also fails to follow from the point about singular belief. For although 'A believes that Tully is bald' entails 'A believes concerning Tully, that he is bald', which in turn entails 'A believes, Concerning Cicero, that he is bald', there is no route from here to 'A believes that Cicero is bald'. It leads us to say that singular belief gives no support to the view that 'Tully is bald' and 'Cicero is bald' express the same belief. This again leads us to say that there is no ground to claim that "Tully" and "Cicero" are synonyms. Thus, it is claimed that there is no support to the view that if names name the same, then they mean the same.

Russell elsewhere says that a true identity sentence in which the identity sign is flanked by names is just a tautology and more interestingly he uses this supposed fact as an argument for the description theory of ordinary proper names. As the sentence 'Tully is Cicero' can come as surprising news, they are not mere tautologies and it so cannot be that both the syntactic names are genuine names. We think Frege's position in this regard is similar to that of Russell as like Russell, Frege in his work "On Sense and Reference" used similar consideration to come to a similar conclusion which ultimately has prompted

him to sense the subtle distinction between sense and reference. According to Frege for any name there is some identificatory knowledge concerning its bearer which must be possessed by anyone who understands the name and this leads naturally to the view that names are disguised descriptions. We think that both Russell and Frege are wrong in supposing that there is any problem in knowing that $a=b$, even if both 'a' and 'b' are names and $a=b$. Both Russell and Frege have arrived at the conclusion that ' $a=b$ ' is a tautology simply because ' $a=b$ ' has the same cognitive value like ' $a=a$ ', which we think is not tenable. As it has already been shown that the view that names which name the same mean the same can support that ' $a=b$ ' means the same as ' $a=a$ ', but it has already been established that names name the same does not guarantee that they mean the same. Moreover, if A knows that 'a' names a then he knows concerning a, that a names it; so if $a=b$, he knows concerning b, that 'a' names it; so he knows that 'a' names b. Now, if $a=b$ and one who understands ' $a=b$ ', he thereby knows that ' $a=b$ '. But this argument as we saw is invalid as one cannot infer from the fact that A knows, concerning b, that 'a' names it, that A knows that 'a' names b.