ABSTRACT. In this paper I describe a shift in Russell's views on names from the time of "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism" to An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth. It is the burden of the paper that the shift arose because Russell saw an ontological and epistemological problem created by his previous account of names, and because he then tried to correct it, while simultaneously endeavoring to establish an account consistent with science. Two lines of argument are employed to support this conclusion. In the first I cite the "Occam's Razor" ontology of "Logical Atomism" and contrast it with the more fully developed ontology of the later work, incidentally citing the remarks of commentators such as Ayer. In the second line of argument I specifically adduce material designed to show the metaphysical and epistemic import of the change in view on the status of names, noting that the significance of the change goes far beyond mere usage of terms. Finally, in a subsidiary line of argument, I sketch Russell's generally foundationalist approach to epistemology.

In An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth, Bertrand Russell attempts to develop a philosophical position that ties together what at first appears to be an extraordinarily slender ontology with the appropriate epistemology. The metaphysical views developed by Russell in the work lead to changes in his semantic and epistemological views, particularly with regard to names. It is with the latter topic that this paper is primarily concerned, and Russell's views on other matters—as well as his position taken as a whole—will generally be examined only insofar as they prove relevant to a delineation of his position with regard to names.

In the early twentieth century Russell developed what is now a somewhat celebrated doctrine about the usage of words to name particulars. "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism", a text developed from a series of lectures delivered by Russell in 1918, may be cited with respect to this view:

The only kind of word that is theoretically capable of standing for a particular is a proper name, and the whole matter of proper names is rather curious.

Proper names = all words for particulars.
... The names that we commonly use, like 'Socrates', are really abbreviations for descriptions; not only that, but what they describe are not particulars but complicated systems of classes or series ... The only words which one does use as names in the logical sense are words like 'this' or 'that'.

The above view was promulgated at least partially because of an ontological view of Russell's that was to shift over a period of time. There had, of course, already been shifts; Quine has cited the abandonment of a Meinongian view by the time of "On Denoting". But during the period of "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism", Russell developed a metaphysics which, as one commentator phrased it, "... wield[ed] Occam's razor with a heavy hand". The point was to narrow the range of an ontology down to that which could logically be constructed out of momentary sense experiences. Because of his view of the duration of a percept ("You can keep 'this' going for a minute or two ... I think things last for a finite time, a matter of some seconds or minutes or whatever it may happen to be."), the nameable was reduced to immediate sense-experience, and the English language itself rendered 'this' and 'that' phrases with a uniquely nominal quality, since they could be used to designate the percept without making unnecessary and defeasible attributions to the percept. This account of the relationship between the name and its object is adumbrated by Ayer in the following fashion in his work Russell:

Simple objects, for Russell, are those that can be denoted by logically proper names. And since it follows from his theory of descriptions that any nominative expression, which is not a proper name, (e.g., an indefinite description functioning as a name in an ersatz fashion) can be analyzed into predicates this already entails that all genuine objects must be simple ...

In any case, the above position, although by no means totally abandoned by Russell, had been somewhat modified by the time the Inquiry was written. What Russell had previously referred to as "facts" are more likely, in the early portion of the later work, to be referred to as concatenations of qualities and relations. What he will deem to be a name also changes.

From the point of view of logic, names are initially defined by Russell in the Inquiry as those items which fall under a predicate (monadic, dyadic, triadic, etc.) in an atomic statement. It would seem that the standard first-order predicate calculus definition is that any formula of the form $Fx$, $Fxy$, $Fxyz$, etc., could be filled out in such a way that English expressions replacing the variables would count as names, on Russell's view.

Russell describes his position in this manner:

If $R_n(x_1, x_2, x_3, \ldots, x_n)$ is a sentence of the atomic form, in which $R_n$ is an n-adic relation, $x_1, x_2, x_3, \ldots, x_n$ are names. We may define 'name' as any word that can occur in any species of atomic sentence, i.e., in a subject-predicate sentence, a triadic relation sentence, and so on ... This affords a syntactical definition of the word 'name'.
As Quine has noted, Russell had been credited by readers with "... explaining [entities] away in favor of nothing more than a nominalistic view of particulars and notations." But it is also worth noting that evidence of an intriguing shift in Russell's position since the time of the lectures constitutive of "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism" is given in the above passage. Since Russell's earlier position had been that most English nouns or grammatical proper names were merely abbreviated descriptions (abbreviated descriptions for classes of appearances, Russell's account at that time of what the naive observer tends to regard as physical objects), he could not have maintained that the referents of individual constants in sentences in the first-order predicate calculus were names. Yet, in the Inquiry, Russell proceeds further along the path of counting as names words other than demonstratives. In the chapter entitled "Proper Names", he writes as follows:

For our purposes, unless reason should appear to the contrary, we may accept as a name whatever would ordinarily be considered as such: Tom, Dick and Harry, the sun, the moon, England, France, etc. But as we proceed it will appear that, even though such words be names, they are for the most part not indispensable for the expression of what we know. Per contra, though some among indispensable words are, I believe, to be classed as names, these are, all of them, words not traditionally so classed. [Emphasis mine.]

At this point it becomes apparent that what Russell takes to be a name (as of the time of the Inquiry) is more related to some functional account of what constitutes a name than the name's designating a single momentary percept. From a functional standpoint, a name demarcates that which is presented in such a fashion that a variable in a description, for instance, is no longer theoretically satisfiable by any object but by one subject. Thus the "apparent variable" is rendered otiose when x can be replaced by a name. Indeed, as Russell himself writes, "We are concerned ... with such names as designate ... some continuous portion of space-time". Quine, writing of an even earlier move, notes that it is better to "... limit existence verbally to space-time and so divert attention from ontological commitments of other than spatio-temporal kind. Better to acknowledge all posits under an inclusive and familiar heading".

The relevant question at this point is phrased by the following: Is the shift in Russell's position with regard to names indicative of an important concomitant change in his metaphysics and epistemology, or is it merely a shift insofar as the application of the term 'name' is concerned? Several developments in the chapter titled "Proper Names" in the Inquiry are noteworthy at this juncture.

Russell proves sensitive to the reader's expected queries about the abandonment of the demonstratives 'this' and 'that' as the only logically proper names. The older position—the one attacked by Wittgenstein in Philosophical Investigations (and to be discussed later here)—is contrasted with Russell's newer view in the following paragraph:

The theory of names has been neglected, because its importance is only evident to the logician, and to him names can remain purely hypothetical, since no proposition of logic can
contain any actual name. For theory of knowledge, however, it is important to know what sort of objects have names, assuming that there are names. One is tempted to regard 'this is red' as a subject-predicate proposition; but if one does so, one finds that 'this' becomes a substance, an unknowable something in which predicates inhere, but which, nevertheless, is not identical with the sum of its predicates.\(^{11}\)

The above remarks somewhat tidily sum up a major change in Russell's views. Their tersity renders it difficult to decide how the shift came about; nevertheless, on the most patent analysis, it would appear that there was a problem with the former view because it involved predication, and it is predication which creates trouble for 'this' and 'that'—because of the fact that they may be used with predicates, the demonstratives themselves fall into a position similar to that of the old substance. It is this position which Russell wishes to avoid.

Veatch, in an essay on Russell's work during this period which tries to make the point that Russell sowed the seeds for later attacks on realism, gives a good description of what it means to describe Russell's ontology as "realist".

First, let me say just a word in explanation of the rather bold assertion that in the period of his logical atomism Russell was a metaphysical realist. In saying that he was a realist, I mean no more than that, as he himself puts it, 'the world contains facts, which are what they are whatever we choose to think about them', and that 'facts belong to the objective world: they are not created by our thoughts or beliefs except in special cases'. And in saying that Russell was a metaphysician, I mean no more than that in putting forth particulars on the one hand and universals and relations on the other as making up the ultimate furniture of the world, Russell was engaging in just that sort of ontological investigation or enquiry that is typical of a certain kind of metaphysical enterprise.\(^{12}\)

So if we think of Russell as primarily or largely a metaphysician here, then the shift in the status of 'red' which we were examining should come as no surprise. He now changes the status of 'red' in the immediately preceding example of that of a name from that of a predicate.

I wish to suggest that 'this is red' is not a subject-predicate proposition, but is the form 'redness is here'; that 'red' is a name, not a predicate; and that what would commonly be called a 'thing' is nothing but a bundle of coexisting qualities such as redness, hardness, etc.\(^{13}\)

The interesting twist to Russell's previous claims now provided by the material in the Inquiry may be sketched as follows: Names have a referential function. In the new account, names pick out or refer to bundles of qualities, which have an appealing place in a preliminary metaphysical account (as will be seen shortly). By referring to qualities, the words now given the status of names obviate the embarrassing difficulty of referring to something which cannot completely be described in terms of percepts, unlike the demonstratives 'this' and 'that'. In addi-
tion, as Russell notes, the problem of the continually changing designation of 'this' vanishes. The neatness of Russell's account springs from the intriguing way in which he has tied semantics together with an epistemology. As Klemke notes, in the Inquiry Russell is also specific about logical terms such as 'all', 'some', 'the' and 'or'. "Yet 'or' has a relation to experience, the experience of choice. Thus, psychologically, 'or' 'corresponds to a state of hesitation'".14

In a lengthy section to which only the briefest reference will be made here, Russell explains how sets of qualities and relations can satisfy the ontological requirements of contemporary science:

We need, for physics, something that cannot be in America and Europe at the same time; for physics, nothing can count as a thing unless it occupies a continuous portion of space-time, which redness does not. Nay, more: whatever occupies more than a point of space-time must, for physics, be divisible into smaller 'things'. Our purpose is, if possible, to construct out of qualities bundles having the spatio-temporal properties that physics requires of 'things'.15

Finally, Russell notes:

My conclusion is that qualities suffice, without our having to suppose that they have instances. Incidentally, we have reduced to the empirical level certain properties of spatio-temporal relations which threaten to be synthetic a priori general truths.16

Ayer, in the work previously cited in this paper, has some significant remarks with regard to the pertinence of Russell's shift with regard to names and its effects on an epistemology. Ayer notes that

... in An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth and thereafter he [Russell] makes names stand for complexes of qualities [and that Russell is now ceasing to employ names] in the sense in which he first conceived of them.17

But Ayer feels that there are arguments to favor

... not the introduction of substances, as entities distinct from their attributes, but rather the admission of the possibility that things which cannot be descriptively distinguished may still be distinguished demonstratively. This ties in with the theory of descriptions, where we have seen that, on the assumption that variables can be explained away, it is only in the possible need for demonstratives that an echo of particulars is retained.18

In a passage in the Inquiry to which no reference was made here, Russell accepted the identity of indiscernibles. Ayer then points out that demonstratives (to which, as we know, Russell had previously assigned the status of names) allow for the creation of distinctions between otherwise indistinguishable percepts. Of course, the distinctions created are tautological ones, as Ayer implies: they are demonstrative distinctions created by the use of demonstratives. Such distinctions do not solve the
question of whether or not there is an actual identity between entities otherwise indistinguishable.

It may be appropriate at this point, having given an adumbration of Russell's position with regard to names at the time of the writing of An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth to examine and reevaluate the resultant epistemology. Unlike some work in epistemology, Russell's claims do not rely on a purely inferential account of knowledge. 19

Russell takes as central to the creation of any account of the constituents of the world the establishment of non-inferential propositions. 20 Such propositions are the immediate results of percepts, and are epistemically sound—if anything may be held to be so—precisely because of that fact. They may serve as factual premises, and thus the account which may be constructed from them utilizes the most credible epistemic basis, whatever else its merits or demerits.

Like many approaches to epistemology extant at the time, Russell's may be termed foundational, in that it attempts to make explicit the minimal epistemic equipment needed to proceed philosophically while assigning that equipment a special status. Although Russell does not state it precisely, his basic propositions satisfy the traditional three-pronged approach to knowledge. It is also clear that his approach relies on something very like incorrigibility, although Russell pointedly refrains from going so far as to use such a classificatory term for his basic propositions. The basic propositions fall into the category of first-person statements about percepts, statements of the form "It looks to me as if there is a blue sphere . . .". "I see what appears to be a rectangular shape . . .", etc. Statements of this form, while not incorrigible, retain the highest degree of credibility when contrasted to other assertions. 21 In this respect Russell's account is similar to other foundationalist accounts. The problem here, of course, is one of establishing the intersubjective. Russell's epistemic notions are sound on a first-person, individual basis; if the early portion of the Inquiry alone is taken, the causal account of perception given (not discussed herein to this point) must be expanded to allow for an objective reality which gives rise to our percepts.

The requisite move is made by Russell in Chapter XV of the Inquiry. Witness the following:

. . . 'there are events in my experience which are simultaneous with what I see when in my study, but not with my seeing it'. This involves a separation between seeing and what I see; it also involves the hypothesis that what I see is causally independent of my seeing. A very little knowledge of the physics of light and the physiology of vision suffices to disprove the second of these hypotheses, and for the first it is hard to find good grounds. The realist is thus driven to a ding-an-sich as the cause of his visual percepts, and to the statement that this ding-an-sich can exist at times when it is not causing visual percepts. 22

Names now fit into the picture in a fashion that allows for congruency with Russell's previous work without rendering the new material tendentious.
We thus arrive at the following results: when the verbal expression of my belief involves no apparent variable, what is expressed and what is indicated are identical.\(^2\)

The crux of the matter in this connection is that where there is no "apparent variable" (i.e., no existential generalization), a name will denote a certain portion of a fact, while at the same time expressing belief. When the would-be-knower is merely in a state of belief without having access to a presented percept—as in the case of expectation—the verbal expression of belief will involve an apparent variable rather than a name.

Russell's brief account of the relationship between names, apparent variables and a causal account of percepts may be found at the end of Chapter XV of the *Inquiry*.

It will be seen that the relation of a belief or a sentence to what it indicates, i.e., to its verifier (if any), is often somewhat remote and causal. Also that, although to 'know' a verifier means to perceive it, we must, unless our knowledge is to be unbelievably depleted, know the truth of many sentences whose verifiers cannot be perceived. Such sentences, however, always contain a variable where the name of the verifier would occur if our perceptive faculties were sufficiently extensive.\(^3\)

In summation, I have tried to reconstruct the shift in Russell's position from the time of "Logical Atomism" to "An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth". The shift, I have claimed, is obviously the result of having seen a problem with the logical status of names if what is to count as a name is not tied into an appropriate metaphysics and/or epistemology.

The account of names given in "Logical Atomism" is a good deal tidier than the later version, and perhaps more elegant, but it does damage to the logician's wishes for a slender ontology consistent with the sciences. By the time of the *Inquiry*, I claim, Russell had seen these problems and aimed at a more consistent and thoroughgoing construction. We, as students of Russell, gain greatly from seeing a philosophical problem noticed, sketched, and—at least to some extent—solved.

**ENDNOTES**


7 Quine, *op. cit.*, 8.

8 Russell, *op. cit.*, 96.


10 Quine, *op. cit.*, 10.


12 Henry Veatch, "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism: A Realism Manque", in Klemke, *op. cit.*, 102-3. (Both of the interior quotes are from "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism", 1956 ed., 182, 183 respectively.)

13 Russell, *loc. cit.*

14 E.D. Klemke, "Logic and Ontology in Russell's Philosophy", in Klemke, *op. cit.*, 433-34.

15 Russell, *op. cit.*, 100.


17 Ayer, *op. cit.*, 104.


19 For a more contemporary account which does rely on such a view, see Gilbert Harman's *Thought*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974).


22 Russell, *op. cit.*, 220.
