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## G. Lando, **Relations, Objects and the Theory of Types: How Wittgenstein Mislead Russell**

### 1. Russell's acknowledgements

• “The following [is the text] of a course of eight lectures delivered in [Gordon Square] London, in the first months of 1918, which are very largely concerned with explaining certain ideas which I learnt from my friend and former pupil Ludwig Wittgenstein. I have had no opportunity of knowing his views since August, 1914, and I do not even know whether he is alive or dead. He has therefore no responsibility for what is said in these lectures beyond that of having originally supplied many of the theories contained.” (Russell 1918, p. 167)

• “Understanding a predicate is quite a different thing from understanding a name. By a predicate, as you know, I mean the word that is used to designate a quality such as red, white, square, round, and the understanding of a word like that involves a different kind of act of mind from that which is involved in understanding a name. To understand a name you must be acquainted with the particular of which it is a name, and you must know that it is the name of that particular. You do not, that is to say, have any suggestion of the form of a proposition, whereas in understanding a predicate you do. To understand “red”, for instance, is to understand what is meant by saying that a thing is red. You have to bring in the form of a proposition. You do not have to know, concerning any particular “this”, that “this is red” but you have to know what is the meaning of saying that anything is red. You have to understand what one would call “being red”. The importance of that is in connection with the theory of types.” (Russell 1918, p. 182)

### 2. Wittgenstein on relations (and predicates): no analogy

• Four alternative readings:

a) relations can be eliminated (Anscombe 1959);

b) relations should be identified with the logical forms of the states of affairs and reduced to the logical forms of objects (Lando 2006);

c) relations are objects among others, their names work approximately as any other name (Hintikka-Hintikka 1986, Bonino 2001);

d) relations are the irreducible structures of states of affairs; their linguistic counterpart is an equally irreducible syntactic structure (Frascolla 2001).

### 3. The analogy

• Three levels:

I) on the ontological level, both Russellian relations and Wittgensteinian objects have essential combinatorial properties; Wittgenstein calls these combinatorial properties “logical form” of the objects;

II) on the syntactic level, both Russellian predicates and Tractarian names have analogous combinatorial properties, *i.e.* they are essentially connected with the propositions where they can occur;

III) on the semantic level, the two linguistic categories share a sort of “context principle”, *i.e.* they have meaning only in the context of a proposition.

• “2.01231 If I am to know an object, though I need not know its external properties, I must know all its internal properties.”

• “Attributes and relations, though they may be not susceptible of analysis, differ from substances by the fact that they suggest a structure, and that there can be no significant symbol which symbolizes them in isolation.” (Russell 1924, p. 337)

• “3.3 [...] Only in the context of a proposition has a name meaning.”

• “3.31 Every part of a proposition which characterizes its sense I call an expression [...]. An expression characterizes a form and a content.”

• “3.311 An expression presupposes the forms of all propositions in which it can occur.”

• “2.0122 The thing is independent, in so far as it can occur in all *possible* circumstances, but this form of independence is a form of connexion with the atomic fact, a form of dependence. (It is impossible for words to occur in two different ways, alone and in the proposition).”

### 5. Russell from relations to type theory

- “The relation of the symbol to what it means is different in different types. I am not now talking about this hierarchy of classes and so on, but the relation of a predicate to what it means is different from the relation of a name to what it means.” (Russell 1918, p. 268)
- “The theory of types is really a theory of symbols, not of things. In a proper logical language it would be perfectly obvious. The trouble that there is arises from our inveterate habit of trying to name what cannot be named. If we had a proper logical language, we should not be tempted to do that.” (Russell 1918, p. 267)

### 6. Wittgenstein from objects to type theory

- “3.33 In logical syntax the meaning of a sign ought never play a rôle; it must admit of being established without mention being thereby made of the *meaning* of a sign; it ought to presuppose *only* the description of the expressions.”
- “3.334 The rules of logical syntax must follow of themselves, if we only know how every single sign signifies.”
- “3.331 From this observation we get a further view into Russell's Theory of Types. Russell's error is shown by the fact that in drawing up his symbolic rules he has to speak about the things his signs mean.”
- “3.333 The reason why a function cannot be its own argument is that the sign for a function already contains the prototype of its argument, and it cannot contain itself.  
For let us suppose that the function  $F(fx)$  could be its own argument: in that case there would be a proposition ' $F(F(fx))$ ', in which the outer function  $F$  and the inner function  $F$  must have different meanings, since the inner one has the form  $\_ (f(x))$  and the outer one has the form  $\_ (fx)$ . Only the letter ' $F$ ' is common to the two functions, but the letter by itself signifies nothing. This immediately becomes clear if instead of ' $F(Fu)$ ' we write ' $(do) : F(Ou) . Ou = Fu$ '. That disposes of Russell's paradox.  
This is at once clear, if instead of ' $F(F(u))$ ' we write ' $(\exists \phi) : F(\phi u) . \phi u = Fu$ '.  
Herewith Russell's paradox vanishes.”

### 7. Conclusions: Russell as a bad Wittgensteinian

Why?

- A) what about the combinatorial properties of objects?
- B) too many bans.

### 8. Making sense of the acknowledgement: consequences for Tractarian objects

- 1) objects are analogous also to Fregean concepts (Geach 1976);
- 2) universals are objects (Hintikka-Hintikka 1986);
- 3) objects are universals (Frascolla 2006).

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