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The Present Relevance of Bertrand Russell's Criticism of Logical Positivism

Author(s): Henrique Jales Ribeiro

Source: *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*, Oct. - Dec., 1999, T. 55, Fasc. 4 (Oct. - Dec., 1999), pp. 427-458

Published by: Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40337342>

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## THE PRESENT RELEVANCE OF BERTRAND RUSSELL'S CRITICISM OF LOGICAL POSITIVISM<sup>1</sup>

The theme of my paper is based upon the Third Part of my doctoral thesis: *Bertrand Russell and the Origins of Analytical Philosophy. The Impact of Wittgenstein's 'Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus' upon Russell's Philosophy*. When I presented my thesis, in January 1999, I had not the time to include in it this part, whose title was: "The Present Relevance of Bertrand Russell's Philosophy of Science." The first chapter of this Third Part was just about the connection between Russell and logical positivism: "The Crisis of the Viennese Logical Positivism in the 1930's: From Russell's Ignored Version to the 'Official Version', and Contemporary Philosophical Relativism." What I intend to say here is based upon this chapter.

### 1. Criticizing some myths: a historical sketch of Russell as "empiricist" and "logical positivist"

Let me begin with a reference to Kenneth Blackwell, the Director of the Bertrand Russell Archives at MacMaster University (now retired). Some time ago he put d a question in "Russell-I", the e-mail list of our Society. The question was: "Was Russell's a logical positivist?". I was sincerely shocked with such a question, because for me it was completely evident that Russell never was a logical positivist. But Ken's question is very interesting, because, in fact, there is even within the research on Russell's philosophy the belief or the suspicion that he was, indirectly at least, a logical positivist.

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<sup>1</sup>Paper presented in June 5 (1999) at the 26th Annual Meeting of the Bertrand Russell Society (Monmouth University, West Long Branch, New Jersey, U. S. A.) with the support of *Fundação Luso-Americana para o Desenvolvimento* (Rua do Sacramento à Lapa, 21. 1200 Lisboa Portugal). I add now the section called "The myth of Russell's empiricism: rereading the history of analytic philosophy" (based upon a recent paper presented in November 15 at the *Institut 'Wiener Kreis'*, Vienna-Austria) the Notes and the Bibliographic References.

Let me continue in a very provocative way by saying, first, that what we are discussing here, when we discuss the historical and philosophical connection between Russell and logical positivism, is the history of a myth, or the history of a fiction: and the myth is that Russell's philosophy would be at the origins of logical positivism, or that Russell would subscribe, beforehand or simultaneously, to the very same thesis of logical positivism on the foundations of knowledge and language; in particular, and historically speaking, both would develop, in a new way, the British empiricist tradition of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. In fact, there are two myths, and not only one: Russell's philosophy would be at the origins of logical positivism, because logical positivism would continue in a new way, after Russell, the British empiricist tradition. Therefore, the myth of Russell's "logical positivism" seems to be based upon the myth of Russell's "empiricism". As Popper said in a different philosophical context, having in mind, directly, the Oxford school of linguistic analysis and logical positivism, and, indirectly, some historical responsibility of Russell's philosophy:

It was felt that the so called 'new way of ideas' of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, that is to say the psychological or rather pseudo-psychological method of analysing our ideas and their origin in our senses, should be replaced by a more 'objective' and a less genetic method. It was felt that we should analyse words and their meanings or usages rather than 'ideas' or 'conceptions' or 'notions'; that we should analyse propositions or statements or sentences rather than 'thoughts' or 'beliefs' or 'judgments'.<sup>2</sup>

Both myths have been proposed along the history of analytical philosophy. In the 1950's several logical positivists held it, like Joergensen and von Mises.<sup>3</sup> It's true that others, like E. Nagel, clearly didn't subscribe to it; but, as we could say, the exception, in a sense, confirms the rule.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>K. Popper. *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, Preface. 1959 (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1974), p. 17. See below note 6.

<sup>3</sup>Joergensen. for example, says: "... it cannot be denied that the positivism of the Vienna Circle is more closely related to the English empiricists than to the French materialists, with whom, from an epistemological point of view, it has, strictly speaking, in common only a strong aversion to speculative thinking. Among its great teachers we do not find the French encyclopedists or Comte, but *Bertrand Russell, the greatest living representative of English empiricism, may not unjustly be called the 'father' of logical positivism*. since in him is found for the first time the conscious and extensive application of logical analysis to the problems of epistemological empiricism, a position which was reached by neither Comte nor Mach but which is characteristic of logical empiricism."(J. Joergensen, "The Development of Logical

And again, in the 1950's, both myths have been defended, among others, by Quine and Putnam. It is not without relevance that in the most important paper for the criticism of logical positivism, the "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", Quine puts Russell's philosophy at the origins of this philosophical movement, and accuses him of defending the same atomist and reductionist thesis on the foundations of knowledge and language.<sup>5</sup> From the part of Popper, as I suggested above, we have just the same reading of Russell in several papers produced before the English edition of the *Logic of Scientific Discovery*, and in this book.<sup>6</sup> And no doubt that Putnam held these myths in some of his papers of the 1960's and the 1970's; for example, in some papers collected in his famous *Philosophical Papers*.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, both myths are very well known: they are, I must say, the widespread reading of the relationship between Russell, empiricism and logical positivism.

Recently, I found them in A. Richardson's book *Carnap's Aufbau and the Construction of the World*; a book essential for the contemporary rehabilitation of logical positivism, which, concerning Russell's philosophy, is nevertheless, at least, a bad book. I said it to Professor Richardson; and he was not

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Empiricism". in *The Development of Logical Empiricism*. International Encyclopedia of Unified Science. Chicago, 1951, p. 11. the italics are mine)

<sup>4</sup>Nagel was clearly a philosophical adversary of Russell since his first writings. (See "Measurement". in *Philosophy of Science. Science, Language and Experience. Laws and Theories. Time and Causality*. ed. by A. Danto and S. Morgenbesser. New York: A Meridian Book. 1960. pp. 121-140.) In his papers concerning the history of logical positivism, his tendency is to ignore completely Russell. By contrast, Moore and Wittgenstein are referred to. (See, for example, the chapter 9 of *Logic Without Metaphysics*. London-New York: The Free Press. 1956.) And in his papers on Russell, his criticism are always obvious and constants. By the time of Russell's *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*, he published a severe review of the book, considering that it has no philosophical relevance. (See "Mr. Russell on Meaning and Truth", in *The Journal of Philosophy*. 37, 11, 1941. pp. 253-280.) And two or three years later, he depreciates strongly Russell's philosophy of science in general. See "Russell's Philosophy of Science". in *The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell*. ed. by P. A. Schilpp. La Salle-Illinois: Open Court. 1944, pp. 317-356.

<sup>5</sup>See W. V. O. Quine. "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" (1951). in *From a Logical Point of View* (Cambridge-Massachusetts/London: Harvard University Press. 1994). section 5. p. 37 and foll.

<sup>6</sup>See K. Popper. "The Nature of Philosophical Problems and their Roots in Science" (1952). in *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (London. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972). pp. 66-97; K. Popper. "Science: Conjectures and Refutations" (1953). in *Ibidem*. 33-65. specially, pp. 54-55; and K. Popper. *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. section 4. pp. 34-38.

<sup>7</sup>See H. Putnam. "Language and Philosophy". in *Mind, Language and Reality. Philosophical Papers* (1975). vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1986). specially, pp. 17-18; and "Brains and Behaviour" (1963). in *Ibidem*. specially, pp. 325-326.

happy with that; but the fact is that he clearly identifies Russell as an "empiricist" and "logical empiricist".<sup>8</sup>

Of course, the history of these myths cannot be made here. We should talk about A. J. Ayer's theory of Russell as a member of the tradition of British empiricism, and we should show how this theory is a philosophical mistake with concerning Russell.<sup>9</sup> We should talk about a similar kind of identification between Russell, British empiricism and logical positivism made by the English ordinary language philosophers, and associated philosophers, like Urmson, Strawson and Pears;<sup>10</sup> and, again, we should show how and why their theories are wrong about Russell and the above-mentioned connection. And, obviously, we should talk about the use of Russell's philosophy by the Viennese logical positivists themselves, mainly at the end of the 1920's, and we should show how Russell's philosophy, or a certain *Russell*, was used as an instrument for the justification of the legitimacy of the logical positivist analytical practice.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>He opposes Carnap's project in the *Aufbau* to Russell's project in *Our Knowledge of the External World* in the following terms: "The new logic is, thus, not a tool to use in pursuit of a reductive epistemological-cum-ontological project bequeathed to us by the British empiricists, but rather a way of reformulating the whole question of what is at stake in philosophy. Carnap's anti-metaphysics is surely the consequence of a much more fundamental understanding of 'logic as the essence of philosophy' than in Russell's empiricism of 1914." (A. Richardson. *Carnap's Construction of the World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 26-27)

<sup>9</sup>The theory was first presented by Ayer in the paper "The Analytic Movement in Contemporary British Philosophy" (1935). *Actes du Congrès International de Philosophie Scientifique* (Paris, 1936). It was developed in several works after that, such as *Ayer's Language, Truth and Logic* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1936). Recall Ayer's first words in this book, where we can find too a surprising assimilation of Wittgenstein and empiricism: "The views which are put forward in this treatise derive from the doctrines of Bertrand Russell and Wittgenstein, which are themselves the outcome of the empiricism of Berkeley and D. Hume." (*Ibidem*, p. 11)

<sup>10</sup>J. O. Urmson, the official historian of the English analytical philosophy in the 1950's and 1960's, presents the philosophical background of that identification in *Philosophical Analysis. Its Developments Between the Two World Wars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956); D. Pears wrote a book on Russell's "empiricism": *Bertrand Russell and the British Tradition in Philosophy* (London: Collins, 1967). Concerning P. Strawson, see *Analysis and Metaphysics. An Introduction to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), specially, p. 20.

<sup>11</sup>That kind of use of Russell's philosophy, for example, in *The Scientific Conception of the World: The 'Wiener Kreis'* (1929), is especial notorious if we recall that some important logical positivists, such as Neurath and Schlick, never subscribed to Russell's philosophy from the 1920's onwards. However, my point is that the constitution of an organized philosophical movement by the Viennese logical positivists, at that time, led them to justify their analytical practice in the history of philosophy in general, and in Russell's philosophy in particular. This explains the curious historiography of the above-mentioned paper: the British empiricism,

I studied this kind of historical and philosophical connections in my doctoral thesis, and, obviously, it is not possible to insist here on the subject.<sup>12</sup>

## 2. The myth of Russell's "empiricism": rereading the history of analytical philosophy

With respect to the identification of Russell with empiricism, put forward by Quine and others from the 1950s and reiterated without real justification in contemporary analytical historiography, it is essential to point out that this identification has arisen in the history of analytical philosophy as a meta-historical and metaphilosophical thesis that seeks to place the problem of the legitimacy of empiricism not in Russell's philosophy in itself, but in the subsequent analytical contexts and the respective conceptions of analysis, and to exclude, in practice, that philosophy from the strictly analytical field. The fundamental presupposition of that identification, in this sense, is that Russell's own conception of analysis, in contrast with the latest conceptions of those contexts, would be contaminated by his markedly psychological and epistemological perspectives, and therefore could not constitute the more or less ideal historical norm for the development of analytical philosophy. This conception, in particular, would hark back to the tradition of the so-called "British empiricism" of Locke, Berkeley and Hume, a tradition that is essentially foreign to the true spirit of philosophical analysis.<sup>13</sup>

This was precisely the perspective argued by English analytical philosophy (M. Black, A. J. Austin, P. Strawson, etc.) from the 1950s on, following a theory on the topic presented by A. J. Ayer. Indeed it was to this that Quine and others (Putnam and Goodman, for instance) appealed indirectly, having been clearly influenced in this aspect by the English philosophical

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Comte positivism, Russell, Wittgenstein, the French conventionalism, Mach, and so on. *all* would have been at the origins of logical positivism. See "The Scientific Conception of the World", in *O. Neurath. Empiricism and Sociology* (ed. by M. Neurath and R. Cohen. Dordrecht-Boston: Reidel Publishing Co., 1973).

<sup>12</sup>See H. Ribeiro. *Bertrand Russell e as origens da filosofia analítica. O impacto do 'Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus' de L. Wittgenstein na filosofia de Russell*. Part I: On the History and Proto-History of Analytical Philosophy. pp. 25-186.

<sup>13</sup>Concerning English analytical philosophy in the 1950's, see J. O. Urmson, *Philosophical Analysis. Its Development Between the Two World Wars*; and J. O. Urmson. "Histoire the L'Analyse", in *La Philosophie Analytique* (Paris: Minuit, 1962). pp. 11-22. Concerning analytic philosophy afterwards, Dummett's views are surely an essential reference. See M. Dummett. *Frege: Philosophy of Language* (Worcester-London: Duckworth, 1981). pp. 664-684.

context of the era. It should be noted that neither Quine and Co., nor the English philosophers themselves, ever gave an adequate historical and philosophical explanation of the assimilation of Russell and empiricism, which indiscriminately embraced all the vast philosophical work of that author.<sup>14</sup> In fact, they took it more or less for granted, on the assumption that the Russellian concept of analysis was (in the words of J. O. Urmson, official historian of the English analytical movement) a “classic” or “metaphysical” concept of analysis to be rejected outright.<sup>15</sup> This empiricist imputation of Russell’s philosophy, therefore, becomes even more strange or paradoxical once it is ascertained that Russell himself never defended this type of connection either explicitly or implicitly, and had even appeared to expressly reject it on various occasions.<sup>16</sup>

In the last twenty years specialised research on Russell has clearly suggested the falsity of such an imputation. Recently what has emerged as the context for Russell’s thought at the end of the previous century has not proved to be the British empiricism of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, as the English analytical philosophers erroneously believed, but the English neo-Hegelian idealism of Bradley, McTaggart and Bosanquet.<sup>17</sup> In addition, the realism and pluralism of Russell’s philosophy of logic and mathematics between *The Principles of Mathematics* and the *Principia Mathematica* was never intended to have any epistemological significance, in the sense in which empiricism is

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<sup>14</sup>As I showed in my thesis, neither Quine and Putnam, nor Goodman, in spite of the originality of their respective philosophies, have had a reading of the history of analytic philosophy in English analytical philosophy in the 1950’s. This explains why they have accepted in general, without discussion, the views of the English philosophers on the subject.

<sup>15</sup>See J. O. Urmson, “Histoire de l’analyse”, in *La Philosophie Analytique*, p. 19.

<sup>16</sup>See, for example, Russell’s remarks in “A Microcosm of British Philosophy”, in *B. Russell. Essays on Language, Mind and Matter: 1919-1926*. The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell, vol. 9 (ed. by J. Slater, London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), p. 385: “Traditional British Philosophy, as represented by Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Mill and Spencer, never became technical. It could be read by gentleman of leisure, and was read by artisans. It started from common sense, criticizing its inconsistencies with more or less severity in ordinary language and usually in an excellent literary style. It arrived in the end at scepticism—at least that was its logical outcome, explicit in Hume, but concealed from the others in proportion to their muddle-headedness. Dr. Moore is an admirable representative of this method, by no means sceptical in temperament, but often driven into sceptical conclusions by his perfect intellectual integrity.”

<sup>17</sup>See P. Hylton, *Russell, Idealism, and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); and N. Griffin, *Russell’s Idealist Apprenticeship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

generally understood.<sup>18</sup> Equally, as far as the foundations of mathematics in particular is concerned, logicism was essentially conceived in hypothetical-deductive terms, that is to say, in very different terms from traditional foundationalism in philosophy.<sup>19</sup> Finally, as for the so-called "Russell's external world program" and logical atomism in general, in other words, as for Russell's philosophy after *Our Knowledge of the External World*, it seems clear today that, for him, the concept of acquaintance was more one possible methodological principle for general philosophical investigation in the face of the holistic pretensions of pragmatism (W. James, J. Dewey and others) at the beginning of the century, rather than an epistemological principle in itself, like phenomenalism.<sup>20</sup> Russell himself, bearing in mind Mach and his theories, clearly rejected this assimilation at a certain point.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, if it is true that the epistemological significance of acquaintance is largely residual in Russell's work, it is nonetheless also true that it is transitional, being limited to a period in this work of no more than five or six years. After 1918, principally through the concept of "vagueness", there emerged in Russell's philosophy what may be called a partial semantic holism, within the framework of which the concept of acquaintance shed its previous foundationalist connotations.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup>See P. Hylton, "Logic in Russell's Logicism", in *The Analytic Tradition: Meaning, Thought and Knowledge* (ed. by D. Bell and N. Cooper, Cambridge-Massachusetts: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp. 137-172.

<sup>19</sup>See B. Russell, "The Regressive Method of Discovering the Premises of Mathematics" (1907), read before the Cambridge Mathematical Club, 9 March 1907. Published in B. Russell, *Essays in Analysis* (ed. by Douglas Lackey, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973) And A. D. Irvine, "Epistemic Logicism and Russell's Regressive Method", published in A. D. Irvine (ed.), *Bertrand Russell. Critical Assessments*, vol. III (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 172-195.

<sup>20</sup>It is in this sense that the concept of "acquaintance" is introduced in the manuscript *Theory of Knowledge*. See B. Russell, *Theory of Knowledge: The 1913 Manuscript*, The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell, vol. 7 (ed. by E. R. Eames, London and New York: Routledge, 1993), Part I, chap. II, "Neutral Monism", specially, p. 22 and foll.. In this Part, "Preliminary Description of Experience", Russell presents even, at a certain moment, a refutation of empiricism, or as he calls it, "the older empiricism philosophy": "it is certain that the world contains some things not in my experience, and highly probable that it contains a vast number of such things." (*Ibidem*, p. 11)

<sup>21</sup>See B. Russell, "The Philosophical Analysis of Matter" (1925), in *Bertrand Russell. Essays on Language, Mind and Matter: 1919-1926*, 275-284. Russell says, for example: "There is a philosophy called 'phenomenalism' which is attractive, but to my mind not practically feasible. This would base physics upon phenomena alone. I think those who advocate this philosophy have hardly realized its implications." (*Ibidem*, p. 281)

<sup>22</sup>I studied in my doctoral thesis the emergence and development of the concept of "vagueness" in Russell's philosophy, together with its historical and philosophical implications,



### 3. Towards a rehabilitation of Russell's view on logical positivism

It is necessary to say that the other myth, the myth according to which Russell was a logical positivist, has not been criticized or discussed until now by the research on Russell. There is not a single work, within the research on Russell or outside it, treating properly from an historiographic perspective the history of the relationship between Russell and logical positivism.

This is surprising and regrettable. Surprising, because research on logical positivism in the last twenty years has changed completely our view on logical positivism *without changing the traditional view on the above-mentioned relationship*. And, of course, it is necessary, if not urgent, to do it. Regrettable, because the same very reasons which have led to the reformulation of the traditional view on logical positivism should have led to the reformulation of the traditional view on Russell's relationship with logical positivism. What we have here, concerning Russell's philosophy, is an important lack of research.

I said last year at the 25th Annual Meeting of the Bertrand Russell Society,<sup>23</sup> and I said it in my doctoral thesis, that we need a rehabilitation of Russell's philosophy concerning the period from the impact of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* to the books *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits* and *My Philosophical Development*. Now I must say in other words: we need a rehabilitation of Russell's philosophy concerning its historical and philosophical connection with logical positivism. A rehabilitation similar to what N. Griffin, P. Hylton and others have made concerning Russell's philosophy from the idealistic period to *Principia Mathematica*.

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from the manuscript *Theory of Knowledge* to his later works. My point is that, contrary to a well-known interpretation (according to which such a concept must be opposed to the "exactness" and "precision" of an ideal language to be constructed), the vagueness of ordinary language, as the vagueness of our "systems of representation" in general, for Russell, is essentially the result of an unavoidable mediation of the data by language (regardless of what the data and the language may in fact be, for example, in the context of the hypothetical-deductive systems of empirical sciences). By "vagueness", what Russell intended to say (mainly after 1918) was really what Quine much more later will define as the "indetermination of translation". (See in this sense Russell's paper "Vagueness" (1923), in *Bertrand Russell. Essays on Language, Mind and Matter: 1919-1926*, pp. 145-154.) Russell's partial semantic holism led him in "On Propositions" (1919) to neutral monism and to the theory that meaning, in general, has its basis in the use of language.

<sup>23</sup>"From the Official Image of Russell to the Rehabilitation of his Philosophy". Contributed Paper presented on the 20th June 1998 at the 25th Annual Meeting of the Bertrand Russell Society (St. Petersburg-Florida, U.S.A.).

### 3. 1 Some conditions of the rehabilitation: a new reading of the impact of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*

In fact, we can't approach to our problem, that is, the relationship between Russell and logical positivism without precisely this rehabilitation. Its main point is, as I showed in my thesis, the impact of the *Tractatus* upon Russell's philosophy. If, as we could say according to the traditional or received view, Russell's philosophy entered in bankruptcy with the impact of the *Tractatus*, that is, the consequences of that impact was a collapse of Russell's philosophy, there is no point at all in studying Russell's philosophy after the 1920's, and, therefore, in studying the historical and philosophical connection between Russell and logical positivism.

This is just the main consequence of the reading of some scholars: I would quote the reading of E. Eames in *Bertrand Russell's Dialogue with his Contemporaries*, which should be called perhaps "Bertrand Russell's Monologue with His Contemporaries".<sup>24</sup> Or the reading of P. Hylton, not perhaps in his celebrated book *Bertrand Russell, Idealism and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy*, but in some of his papers like "Logic on Russell's Logicism".<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Concerning Wittgenstein's influence on Russell's philosophy. in general. Eames's balance is catastrophic. Wittgenstein's criticism. she argues. "destroyed" Russell's philosophy in general: "for Russell the grand scheme of an ultimate scientific and philosophical synthesis became impossible. That faults had been found in the theory of types was of less significance. and. if this was to be a matter only for logic. it became of less concern to him. *for he essentially gave up his own work in an area in which he now felt insecure and believed to be irrelevant to his philosophical interests.*"(E. R. Eames. *Bertrand Russell's Dialogue with His Contemporaries*. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press. 1989, p. 166, the italics are mine) In addition. Wittgenstein's criticisms created the background of the emergence of logical positivism itself: "But the consequence of the Wittgensteinian view of logic not only dealt blows to his philosophy as a whole and caused him to abandon all remnants of the logical realms of *The Principles of Mathematics*. but also entailed the notion of a sharp distinction between logical and empirical truth. This distinction. the dicotomy of the logical. analytic. syntactical. and a priori. as opposed to the empirical. factual. synthetic. and a posteriori. became an accepted premise of logical positivists (and logical empiricists) and dominated one branch of philosophical analysis from the 1920's until after the World War II."(*Ibidem*. pp. 166-167)

<sup>25</sup>In this paper. Hylton spoke of a "bankruptcy" of Russell's philosophy with the impact of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. and in connection with "Russell's recognition that his thought about the nature of logic was bankrupt: his old view will no longer work. he has nothing to take its place. and yet his work crucially depends on logic having some kind of special philosophical status."(P. Hylton. "Logic in Russell's Logicism". in *The Analytic Tradition: Meaning Thought and Knowledge*. ed. by D. Bell and N. Cooper. Oxford-Cambridge/Massachusetts: Basil Blackwell. 1991. p. 165)

Or, quoting another example, the reading of Francisco Rodriguez-Consuegra in his paper "Russell's perilous journey from atomism to holism: 1919-1951".

### 3.1.1 A spanish example

Let me begin by Francisco Rodriguez-Consuegra in the paper just quoted. His main thesis is that Russell's philosophy until the impact of the *Tractatus* was atomist and reductionist, and that, after that impact, Russell came to holism, as his theory of meaning and truth in the *Analysis of Mind*, for, example, shows. But, because Russell would not be aware of the consequences of his holistic views, his theory of meaning from the beginning of the 1920's to his later books was inconsistent and without true philosophical relevance.<sup>26</sup>

Now, Rodriguez-Consuegra interpretation is interesting, in the first place, because, as I said before, is a development of the reading made by those (such as Rodriguez-Consuegra himself) who are responsables, in a sense, for the rehabilitation of Russell's first philosophy.<sup>27</sup> But the result of that reading is mainly negative, if not catastrophic: Russell's theory of meaning and truth after the 1920's has nothing interesting to offer us, today, unless some philosophical naivety.

This is regrettable: how can we say along only twenty pages that all the evolution of Russell's philosophy contained in important books such as *The Analysis of Mind*, *The Analysis of Matter*, *An Outline of Philosophy*, *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*, *Human Knowledge* and *My Philosophical Development*, has really nothing interesting to offer us, philosophically speaking?

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<sup>26</sup>The main consequence is that "Russell was never able to philosophically justify his actual analytic and constructive practice". F. Rodriguez-Consuegra emphasizes at each stage of Russell's philosophy that kind of difficulties, for example, concerning the structural epistemology of *An Analysis of Matter*, or Russell's views on the foundations of logic and mathematics after the 1930's. For him, Russell would be unable to justify his analytical practice because, under the influence of his "holistic tendencies", he would be *perilously* unable to understand and to solve the very same metaphysical problems of his post-idealistic period, and essentially Bradley's paradox concerning relations. This is the reason for the title of the paper: "Russell's perilous journey".

<sup>27</sup>I think in F. Rodriguez-Consuegra's book, *The Mathematical Philosophy of Bertrand Russell: Origins and Development* (Basel-Boston-Berlin: Birkhäuser Verlag, 1991). The importance of this book to the rehabilitation of Russell's philosophy (from the idealistic period to the second edition of *Principia Mathematica*) can only be compared with Hylton's and Griffin's books (see above note 17). Obviously, there is nothing personal in my criticism of F. Rodriguez-Consuegra's paper. His contribute to the research on Russell in the last fifteen years is enormous.

My single answer to that question is that Rodriguez-Consuegra thesis in that paper is just an example of our contemporary analytical historiography concerning Russell's philosophy, according to which, in fact, Russell's philosophy after the 1920's has no philosophical relevance at all. But Rodriguez-Consuegra thesis is interesting too, because it points to the central problem of Russell's philosophy even before the impact of *Tractatus*: the problem atomism *versus* holism.<sup>28</sup>

Rodriguez-Consuegra holds that Russell's approach to this problem was naive: Russell would be unaware of the difficulties of his own holistic positions, and this fact would explain the absence of true philosophical relevance of his philosophy after the 1920's. Well, let me begin by saying that this kind of reading has no historical and philosophical justification, and, therefore, is completely wrong: it is necessary to criticize systematically if, as I suggested, we endeavour to a rehabilitation of Russell's philosophy in general.

#### 4. Two essential proposals for the rehabilitation of Russell's philosophy

What I intend to suggest is that what we have in Russell's philosophy after the 1920's is a mature approach to the implications of holism for philosophy in general; an approach which prepared the way for Russell's criticism not only of logical positivism, but also of pragmatism, of the English ordinary language philosophy, and even, beforehand, to what Dummett called the "american school" (Quine, Goodman, Putnam, etc.). I think in books like *An*

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<sup>28</sup>Rodriguez-Consuegra surely deserves the honour of presenting this problem for the very first time. Before him, Russell would be essentially an empiricist along the development of his philosophy. As he suggests rightly, Russell's holistic tendencies (the "new period" of his philosophy) begun in 1919 with "On Propositions". "giving the pre-eminence to relations over terms, which practically disappeared in favour of structures, forms and qualities, so leading to a new view of knowledge as being something structural": and, with *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* and *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits*, they ended "in the open recognition that our knowledge of the world is only structural" (*Ibidem*, pp. 219 and 233). But he continues to think, without really justifying his theory, that Russell's philosophy until "On Propositions" is "atomist" or "reductionist" in the empiricist sense: Russell's holism "unavoidably supposes ... a renunciation of empiricism" (*Ibidem*, p. 233) Furthermore, Russell's holism in the new period would be simply a new way of putting the same problems of the post-idealistic period (1901...), namely, Bradley's paradox concerning relations. This explains why Russell's view on logical positivism after the 1930's, and its presuppositions in his earlier work, are completely undervalued by Rodriguez-Consuegra's paper (see *Ibidem*, pp. 220 and 238-240).

*Inquiry Into Meaning and Truth, Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits*, or in the last chapter of *My Philosophical Development*. I propose, therefore, two essential thesis as preliminary conditions of what I called "a rehabilitation of Russell's philosophy" concerning its historical and philosophical relationship with logical positivism:

*First*: there is not a collapse of Russell's philosophy with the impact of the *Tractatus*: Russell's philosophy was alive and even more stronger than before that impact;

*Secondly*: there is not "a perilous journey from atomism to holism", as Rodriguez-Consuegra wrongly said about Russell's philosophy after the 1920's: what we find in this philosophy is, on the contrary, a mature approach to the implications of holism for philosophy in general.

Both thesis are essentially connected because, as I showed in my doctoral thesis, the first fight against holism and its consequences, from the part of Russell, was just his criticism of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, mainly in the "Introduction" of this book. This is, of course, an important and serious issue, and I am aware that is impossible to discuss here attentively. Let me recall only some of the thesis which I held in my thesis:

(1) The main point of Russell's "Introduction" to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* is the criticism of Wittgenstein's radical logical holism in that book. Russell didn't accepted Wittgenstein's radical holistic solutions concerning mathematical logic and philosophical problems in general; an holism which leads to the end of theoretical philosophy and mysticism;<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>After some emphasis in Wittgenstein's "doctrine of pure logic". Russell criticizes several times Wittgenstein's holistic positions in the *Tractatus*, in connection with mathematical logic and philosophy in general. That kind of positions are, according to him, instances "of Wittgenstein's fundamental thesis, that it is impossible to say anything about the world as a whole, and that whatever can be said has to be about bounded portions of the whole." (B. Russell, "Introduction" of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. London: Kegan Paul, 1933, p. 17) And he insists: "Logic [for Wittgenstein] fills the world. In logic, therefore, we cannot say, there is this and this in the world, but not that, for to say so would require that logic should go beyond the boundaries of the world as it could contemplate these boundaries from the other side also." (*Ibidem*, p. 18) That means, for example, to banish identity and transfinite numbers from mathematical logic. Philosophically speaking, that means to condemn theoretical philosophy and to embrace mysticism, even if "Mr. Wittgenstein manages to say a good deal about what cannot be said" (*Ibidem*, p. 22). In face of the catastrophic results of Wittgenstein's holistic

(2) With the impact of the physical theory of relativity, of pragmatism and even some work from Wittgenstein before the *Tractatus* (like some texts of the *Tagebücher*), we find in Russell's philosophy after 1919 a partial semantic holism in his philosophy of language, his theory of knowledge, and his philosophy of science. Russell feared the consequences of radical holism in general as we can see not only in the "Introduction" of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, but in his criticism of the pragmatism of Dewey, of Schiller's idealistic views, or, more generally, in his criticism of the Hegelian and neo-Hegelian philosophy;<sup>30</sup>

(3) Russell opposed to radical holism in philosophy just his partial semantic holism, even if, sometimes, he was not completely aware of it of the views criticized, or of his own views. This explains why he thought that his partial semantic holism could be found in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* (Russell's concept of vagueness).<sup>31</sup> This was wrong, because, as I showed in my thesis, semantic holism (not logical holism) is absent, in fact, from Wittgenstein's philosophy until the 1930's. What Quine called in the 1960's the "indetermination of translation" cannot be found in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, but, surprisingly enough, can be found in Russell's philosophy even before the impact of the *Tractatus*.<sup>32</sup>

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views on logic, Russell suggests the alternative of an hierarchy of languages: "The totalities concerning which Mr. Wittgenstein holds that is impossible to speak logically are nevertheless thought by him to exist, and are the subject-matter of his mysticism. The totality resulting from our hierarchy would be not merely logically inexpressible, but a fiction, a mere delusion, and in this way the supposed sphere of the mystical would be abolished." (*Ibidem*, p. 23)

<sup>30</sup>Concerning Dewey, and the Hegelian and neo-Hegelian philosophy, it is remarkable that the essentials of Russell's criticism, from this point of view, do not change a lot along the evolution of his philosophy. See, about Dewey, "Professor Dewey's Essays in Experimental Logic" (1919), in *Bertrand Russell. The Philosophy of Logical Atomism and Other Essays: 1914-19*, The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell, vol. 8 (ed. by J. Slater, London-Boston-Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1986), pp. 132-155; and "Dewey's *New Logic*" (1939), *Bertrand Russell. A Fresh Look at Empiricism: 1927-1942*, The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell, vol. 10 (ed. by J. Slater, London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 141-160. About F. S. C. Schiller, see "The Meaning of 'Meaning'" (1920), in *Bertrand Russell. Essays on Language, Mind and Matter: 1919-1926*, pp. 87-93.

<sup>31</sup>See the "Introduction" of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, p. 8.

<sup>32</sup>This does not mean that in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein would ignore holism, but that the holism of that book is essentially a feature of the metaphilosophical level of philosophical justification, and not (as happens with the "indetermination of translation" in general) of the level of the 'theory-ladenness' of observation in itself. In fact, there is a sort of semantic holism in the theory of showing and in Wittgenstein's criticism of solipsism, as Hintikka & Hintikka showed in the book *Investigations on Wittgenstein* (Basil Blackwell, 1986); and, above all, there is in that book a sort of radical logical holism as I suggested along my doctoral thesis.

What I said before is simply a preface of the theme of my talk. A long but necessary preface because I would like to insist on my thesis that Russell's mature approach to holism and its consequences is what essentially explain his attitude regarding logical positivism in the 1930's.

### 5. The traditional view and the new researches on logical positivism: holism as a case study

Let me try to explain now, briefly, how the new researches on logical positivism have changed the traditional view of it. When I speak of the "traditional view", I mean just the reading of the anti-positivist criticism of Quine, Popper, Putnam and others. Speaking of the new researches on logical positivism, I mean, as I suggested before, the studies of R. Haller, A. Coffa, T. Uebel, M. Friedman, A. Richardson, F. Stadler, among other important authors which offer us what we may call *a rehabilitation of the Viennese logical positivism*.<sup>33</sup>

Let me take as an example R. Haller, the pionner of the researches on logical positivism.<sup>34</sup> In "New Light on the Vienna Circle", Haller speaks of an "official history" of logical positivism made by contemporary anti-positivist criticism. His essential point is that the "official history" pretends that logical

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and D. McCarthy showed carefully in his paper "The Philosophy of Logical Holism" (in *Wittgenstein in Florida*, Proceedings of the Colloquium on the Philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein, Dordrecht-London-Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991), pp. 51-125. In contrast, the 'theory-ladness' of observation is clearly suggested in Russell's evolution to neutral monism already in "On Propositions", and it is explicitly present in some relevant passages of *An Analysis of Mind*.

<sup>33</sup>See, for example, R. Haller, *Studien zur Österreichischen Philosophie* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1979); A. Coffa, *The Semantic Tradition from Kant to Carnap: To the Vienna Station* (ed. by L. Wessels, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); T. Uebel, *Overcoming Logical Positivism from Within: The Emergence of Neurath's Naturalism in the Vienna Circle's Protocol Sentence Debate* (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, 1992); M. Friedman, *Reconsidering Logical Positivism*; and A. Richardson, *Carnap's Construction of the World*.

<sup>34</sup>Some important works of Haller must be mentioned: *Studien zur Österreichischen Philosophie* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1979), which includes, namely, "Der Wiener Kreis und die analytische Philosophie" and "Über O. Neurath"; "New Light on the Vienna Circle" (in *Monist*, 65, 25-37, 1982), "Der erste Wiener Kreis" (*Erkenntnis*, 22, 1985, 341-358), and another fundamental set of papers on the relationship between Wittgenstein, logical positivism and the Austrian philosophy: *Fragen zu Wittgenstein und Aufsätze zu Österreichischen Philosophie* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1986), translated into English in 1988 (*Questions on Wittgenstein*, London: Routledge).

positivism has been refuted and even killed by the authors of the history itself. On the contrary, argues Haller, not only the Viennese logical positivists (even M. Schlick) never subscribed really to a reductionist epistemology or to a classic foundationalism, but, in fact, they have anticipated the holistic perspectives of Quine and other antipositivist critics. He says, for example, concerning the relationship between Neurath and Quine:

Now it is quite clear that the strongest criticism of the dogma of reductionism in one of the Quinean interpretations was put forward by Neurath, almost seventy years ago. Already in one of his first publications, he argues that any attempt to create a scientific system (theory) has to operate with 'doubtful' premises. The truth of every proposition in the system is related with the truth of other propositions. We cannot construct a system on the background of a *tabula rasa*, because we cannot get rid of the inherited conceptual apparatus. But if we have to take into account that every statement about the world is connected with all other statements, then any change in one part of the system implies changes in all the other parts.<sup>35</sup>

Instead of a death of logical positivism, what happened really, according to Haller, was that the modern anti-positivist critics have followed and developed, without (of course) any acknowledgement of their historical and philosophical sources, the holistic philosophy of the Viennese logical positivists. This point has been developed by others, like G. A. Reisch, in his famous "Did Kuhn Kill Logical Positivism?" He suggested that, contrary to the official version of the history, there is a hidden but strong connection between Carnap, for example, and Kuhn; a connection which has as its central issue just Carnap's *anticipation* of Kuhn's holism, even if this anticipation, as we know, was never really acknowledged by Kuhn himself.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>R. Haller. "New Light on the Vienna Circle", p. 33. See also R. Haller. "Das Neurath-Prinzip – Grundlagen und Folgerungen". in *Fragen zu Wittgenstein und Aufsätze zur Österreichischen Philosophie*. pp. 108-124.

<sup>36</sup>See *Philosophy of Science*. 58. 1991, pp. 264-267. And also J. Earman. "Carnap, Kuhn, and the Philosophy of Science Methodology", in *World Changes. Thomas Kuhn and the Nature of Science* (ed. by P. Horwich, Cambridge-Massachusetts/London: The Mit Press. 1992). pp. 9-36.



## 6. Some implications, ignored in the past, for the research on Russell

At this moment, let me make a historical remark concerning Haller's views. As I showed in my thesis, Haller is right when he showed that the "official history" of Quine, Popper and Putnam is false and misleading; but, unfortunately, he continued to subscribe to the thesis of Quine and Co., according to which Russell was atomist and reductionist in his philosophy. In fact, he continued to think, as Quine and Co. did, that Russell's philosophy is something belonging to the past, that is, without any relevance not only, of course, to contemporary philosophy, but to the interpretation of logical positivism itself.<sup>37</sup>

The truth, in the first place, is that by the time of O. Neurath's proposal of the so-called "Neurath's-Quine's principle", Russell was one of the first contemporary philosophers, if not the first, in *The Problems of Philosophy* (1912), to criticize systematically the theory of meaning and truth implicit in such a principle as the "coherence theory of truth", and to call attention for the fact that this theory cannot be accepted as giving the meaning of truth, and leads, in practice to the end of theoretical philosophy itself (a conclusion, by the way that Neurath and Quine would subscribe).<sup>38</sup> As happened along his

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<sup>37</sup>In one of his papers, Haller says, for example, that Russell adopted a "phenomenalist point of view, which he also ascribed to the early Wittgenstein through his interpretation of the *Tractatus*." (R. Haller, *Questions on Wittgenstein*. London: Routledge, 1988, pp. 59-60)

<sup>38</sup>In *The Problems of Philosophy*, 1912, having in mind pragmatism and the Hegelian and neo-Hegelian philosophies, Russell defines the theory according to which truth consists in coherence in the following terms: "It is said that the mark of falsehood is failure to cohere in the body of our beliefs, and that it is the essence of a truth to form part of the completely rounded system which is the truth." (*Ibidem*, London: Oxford University Press, 1973, p. 70) In the 1930's and the 1940's, having in mind specially logical positivism, instead of "beliefs" he will employ "sentences". In 1912 he has two objections to the coherence theory of truth: (1) "there is no reason to suppose that *only* one coherent body of beliefs is possible ... In more scientific matters, it is certain that there are often two or more hypotheses which account for all the known facts on some subject, and although, in such cases, men of science endeavour to find facts which rule out all the hypotheses except one, there is no reason why they should always succeed." (2) "... this definition of truth is that it assumes the meaning of 'coherence' known, whereas, in fact, 'coherence' presupposes the truth of the laws of logic. ... But if the law of contradiction itself were subjected to the test of coherence, we should find that, if we choose to suppose it false, nothing will any longer be incoherent with anything else. Thus the laws of logic supply the skeleton or framework within which the test of coherence applies, and they themselves cannot be established by this test." Russell concludes that "coherence cannot be accepted as giving the meaning of truth, though it is often a most important test of truth after a certain amount of truth has become known." (*Ibidem*, p. 71) Neurath proposes his holistic views for the first time (what some call today his "first boat") in 1913, in a long article

later books, he did that (like Neurath and Quine) without using the concept of "holism", because, as I showed in my thesis, he thought that what he had called (from the beginning of the century) "monism", could be identified, partially at least, with what we call today "holism".<sup>39</sup>

And, secondly, the truth is that Russell was the first contemporary philosopher to criticize systematically the philosophical presuppositions of logical positivism, including holism, first in some of his papers in the 1930's, like "On Verification" (1938), and after, and mainly, in his book *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* (1940). However, as I said before, Haller in his studies, as other contemporary authors, ignores completely Russell's view on logical positivism, and makes the wrong identification between Russell, empiricism and the traditional view of logical positivism criticized by him. But, if the view according to which logical positivism would be reductionist is a myth created by the modern antipositivist criticism of Quine and Co., as Haller himself held, that kind of identification about Russell too has no historical and philosophical justification at all.

### **7. Returning to the new researches on logical positivism: holism and relativism as a case study for a "systematic historiography"**

Let me take another important example of the new researches on logical positivism: M. Friedman's studies, and, in particular, his paper "Philosophy and the Exact Sciences. Logical Positivism as a Case Study". Friedman, in this paper,<sup>40</sup> subscribes to R. Haller's interpretation concerning holism in the Vien-

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published by a German political science journal. See O. Neurath. "Probleme der Kriegswirtschaftslehre". *Zeitschrift für Volkswirtschaft, Sozialpolitik und Verwaltung*, 20. pp. 52-114; and N. Cartwright, J. Cat. L. Fleck, and T. Uebel. *Otto Neurath: Philosophy Between Science and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). p. 89 and foll..

<sup>39</sup>In this regard, it is significant that when holism emerged clearly in Russell's philosophy, after the paper "On Propositions" (1919), he became himself a "monist" with his adoption of neutral monism. Russell makes use of the concept of "holism" only once, in 1939, about Dewey's philosophy. (See Russell's paper "Dewey's *New Logic*", in *Bertrand Russell. A Fresh Look at Empiricism: 1927-1942*. pp. 141-163.) But, of course, the fact that he didn't make use of the word doesn't mean that he ignored the concept. See below notes 44 and 47.

<sup>40</sup>It must be noted that M. Friedman's views in this paper are, in a sense, not entirely compatible with his latest views in the recent book *Reconsidering Logical Positivism*, and, in this regard, it is very significant that the paper in question is not included in that book. In "Philosophy and the Exact Sciences" Friedman insists clearly on the holism and (specially on the) relativism of the logical positivists (Carnap and Schlick, for example) from the 1920's

nese logical positivism, but he adds two important issues: the holism of the Viennese logical positivists, as the logical or syntactical holism of Carnap's *Der Logische Syntax der Sprache*, leads essentially to relativism; and contemporaries philosophy and culture seem to follow not only the holism of the logical positivists but also their relativism. He says in one of his papers:

With the demise of logical positivism it has become fashionable to attack the ideal of scientific objectivity and rationality which they championed as well. Taking the exact sciences of mathematics, optics, astronomy, and physics as paradigmatic of objective and rational knowledge is now dismissed as vulgar 'scientism', and we are now told that the world of modern mathematical physics, for example, is just one world picture among others—with no special claim to objective validity. In particular, the systems of representation embodied in the disciplines of art, literature, social science, or religion are equally legitimate and equally 'objective'. When such 'relativistic' sentiments are expressed even by eminent philosophers of science, they become especially compelling and must certainly give one pause.<sup>41</sup>

and, in the following pages, he explains how this contemporary relativism as some of its philosophical sources in logical positivism itself.

Well, we have here two important elements: not only logical positivism was, in general, holistic but he was relativistic too.<sup>42</sup> But, speaking of relativ-

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onwards. even if he didn't employ always this terminology ("holism" for example). By contrast, in his book he emphasizes the a priori nature of philosophical thought for the logical positivists, as Carnap. His point is that Carnap's philosophy, from the *Aufbau* until his latest works, presents a new kind of theoretical thinking completely independent of the presuppositions of the traditional epistemology and without any ontological implications (what we could call a "pure epistemology"). (See *Reconsidering Logical Positivism*, p. 124.) To insist on that kind of apriorism, as Friedman did recently, seems to be in contrast with his previous insistence, in the above-mentioned paper, on the relativism of logical positivism: Carnap's apriorism would be philosophically interesting for contemporary philosophy, while its relativism should be condemned. See, in this sense, A. Richardson's *Carnap's Construction of the World*, pp. 217-229.

<sup>41</sup>M. Friedman, "Philosophy and the Exact Sciences: Logical Positivism as a Case Study", in *Inference, Explanation, and Other Frustrations. Essays in the Philosophy of Science* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-Oxford: University of California Press, 1992), p. 84.

<sup>42</sup>In the paper quoted, Friedman doesn't use explicitly the concept of "holism", in contrast to what happens with "relativism". But he has clearly in mind *holism* when he holds: "It should be clear ... how far we are from a naively empiricist conception of knowledge and experience. In particular, the 'theory-ladenness' of observation is rigorously articulated and explicitly defended". He argues that the holism of the logical positivist, from the 1920's onwards, is a consequence of their acceptance of Kant's theory concerning the paradigmatic status of mathematics and mathematical physics: "Mathematics and mathematical physics are

ism, as speaking of holism, we are not simply alluding to the same concepts used by contemporary historiography. This is, I suppose, one of the difficulties of Friedman's and Haller's interpretations. They are essentially right when they suggest that holism and relativism are not philosophical attitudes introduced for the first time by contemporary philosophy, contrary to the widespread reading of analytical historiography; they are essentially right, too, when they suggest that Viennese logical positivism has anticipated, in a sense, the contemporary holism of some anti-positivist critics, like Quine or Popper. Nevertheless, their concept of holism seems to be very wide, and, in the end, methodologically misleading.<sup>43</sup>

As I have suggested in my thesis, we have to distinguish between a *logical* and a *semantic* holism, and, in the context of such a kind of distinction, we have to make several important distinctions.<sup>44</sup> This is a work for what we

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paradigmatic of objectivity and rationality because it is only by ordering, interpreting, and structuring our sensory perceptions within a rigorous mathematical framework that we can first 'objectify' them."(*Ibidem*, p. 89) It is also this theory the main reason for logical positivist relativism: "[they] wish to follow Kant in insisting upon the need for a general theoretical framework in order to confer objectivity and rationality on our sense experience. [They] also wish to follow Kant in maintaining the privileged position of mathematics and mathematical physics. Yet there is no longer a single spatiotemporal framework that alone can perform this 'objectifying' function. On the contrary, each of the many possible frameworks appears to exemplify its own particular standards of objectivity and rationality." And he puts the question and suggests the obvious answer: "Are we not forced, therefore, into a position of epistemic and conceptual 'relativism' which undermines the very notions of objectivity and rationality that we are trying so hard to preserve?"(*Ibidem*, p. 90) His specific answer concerning Carnap, is that in a book like *Logische Syntax der Sprache* we find the project of an "absolute relativism", that is to say, an attempt to articulate a neutral perspective-logical syntax-from which we can survey all possible linguistic frameworks and within which we can develop a precise notion of true-relative-to-a-framework."(*Ibidem*, p. 95)

<sup>43</sup>Having in mind the texts just quoted (note 42), it seems obvious that the 'theory-ladenness' of observation, in general, must be distinguished of the "objectifying function" of mathematics and mathematical physics, which seems to present a different kind of holism (what we will call "logical holism"), connected, in some way, with the first one. For the logical positivists, as Schlick and Reichenbach, the 'theory-ladenness' of observation is clearly a problem not only of the theory of science, but also of the theory of knowledge and of the philosophy of language. It is, in the first place, a semantic problem, and only after that a logical one. See, below, note 47.

<sup>44</sup>What characterizes holism, generally, is the identification of the theory (regardless of what the theory may in fact be, for example, in ordinary language, in science, or in our systems of representation in general) with a framework whose properties are originally, in a more or less radical way, the properties of the interpreted data. In logical holism, these properties are essentially logico-structural: in semantic holism, they explain not only the structure of the data, or its logical form, but its very nature. From this point of view, we could say that the

may call, following the French historiographer M. Gueroult, a "systematic historiography".<sup>45</sup> For example, it is obvious that what we have with the concept of science as an hypothetical and deductive system, proposed by some Viennese logical positivists as Schlick and Reichenbach, by Russell in *An Analysis of Matter*, and by Popper in *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, is logical holism, in so far as logic is just the way (even if sometimes it is not the only one) of developing such a concept; and it is also obvious that this kind of holism is different from the (somewhat radical) semantic holism of Neurath.<sup>46</sup> But none would deny that that kind of holism is a *partial* logical holism, not a radical one, and that in some cases, as happens just with the philosophers already quoted, this partial logical holism has its origins in certain semantic and holistic problems concerning epistemology and the philosophy of language.<sup>47</sup> In the same sense, we should distinguish between a *partial* and a

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concept of holism has clearly a Kantian significance, even if the notion of a knowing subject is not essential for its definition (as happens, by the way, with logical positivism). Some aspects of "pre-Critical" philosophies (such as Leibniz's and Spinoza's), can be considered as "monists", not as "holists", given the absence of Kant's "Copernican revolution".

<sup>45</sup>See M. Gueroult, *Dianoématique*. Livre I, Histoire de l'histoire de la Philosophie, Paris: Aubier, 1984. I. Michaud has recently said about M. Gueroult's view on the historiography of philosophy: "Ce grand historien de la philosophie a ... toujours souligné que l'histoire de la philosophie ne peut pas être une fin en soi. ... il ne s'agit pas à travers elle de satisfaire à une curiosité inédite, ou à un souci de psychologie, de sociologie ou d'ethnologie. Il s'agit encore moins d'aller chercher dans le passé de quoi faire l'économie d'une pensée actuelle. Le rapport à la tradition ... a pour fin de mettre en valeur les capacités de suggestion philosophique d'une pensée en tal que telle. Autrement dit, comme on l'oublie trop facilement en très naturellement dans la myopie de l'activité historique ... l'histoire de la philosophie n'a de sens que comme horizon d'une pensée qui, à son tour, dans la mesure de ses moyens (qui sont ce qu'ils sont), veut se mettre à la tâche." (I. Michaud, "La fin de l'histoire de la philosophie", in *Philosophie analytique et histoire de la philosophie*, ed. by Jean-Michel Vienne, Paris: J. Vrin, 1997, p. 157)

<sup>46</sup>Popper's (logical) holism in *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* is always mentioned by contemporary historiography in opposition to the "reductionism" and "empiricism" of the logical positivists: but the fact is that the logical positivists themselves, such as Schlick, Carnap and Reichenbach, clearly subscribed to different versions of the same kind of holism from the 1920's onwards. See, for example, M. Schlick, "The Philosophical Significance of Relativity", in *Moritz Schlick, Philosophical Papers: 1882-1936*, vol. I (ed. by H. L. Mulder e B. v. Velde-Schlick, Dordrecht-Boston-London: Reidel Publishing Co., 1979). On the other hand, Neurath's holism from the 1910's on has clearly a naturalistic significance which is absent, generally, in the other logical positivists.

<sup>47</sup>Logical holism (or the different versions of it) seems to be essentially a solution for the difficulties of semantic holism in general. This is, I suppose, the case of Russell's and Reichenbach's versions. It is just as a solution for those difficulties that, in the "Metaphysics of Natural Science" (1926), Reichenbach conceived his version: "There are no facts, pro-

radical semantic holism: the first one, as I suggested, seems to be compatible with logical holism, and in the end, contrary to what happens with a radical semantic holism as Quine's holism, with the possibility of classic theoretical philosophy itself. (What I'm saying concerning different kinds of holism is valid concerning the associated kinds of relativism, that is, we should distinguish a logical relativism from a semantic one, etc..)

Because the philosophical background of such a kind of distinctions seems to be absent from Friedman's studies, he has the same negative image of Russell as Quine, Putnam and others, that is to say, the results of Friedman's reading of the connection between Russell and the Viennese logical positivists, in the end, are not very different from the results of the reading of Quine and Co.. Haller, as we saw, continued to speak, wrongly, of "reductionism" concerning Russell's philosophy, forgetting, in fact, that his own criticism of the traditional reading of the logical positivist theory of meaning also applies to Russell's theory. This is also the case of Friedman's interpretation; and, finally, his reading of Russell has the same consequences of Haller's reading. The new concept suggested by Friedman is what I called above (a partial) "logical holism": from different perspectives, both Russell and the logical positivists in the middle of the 1920's would subscribe to that kind of holism and to the associated relativism; and in both cases too this logical holism as its basis in some semantic problems. But, of course, this does not mean that the origins of logical positivism would be Russell's philosophy; on the contrary, Friedman suggests that these origins are essentially German neo-Kantism (Cassirer and others). The problem with logical holism, for him, is just that it is infected by

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claims the idealist, who views the whole conception of the world as a construction of reason. In a certain sense, this is true. ... even the simplest facts of daily life are to some extent theory-laden. ... But how can facts decide between theories if they themselves presuppose theories? Instead of overthrowing the theory 'refuted' by experiment, may we not alter the theories that first made the 'thing' observed into 'this' particular fact? Could we not arbitrarily establish 'any' theory in just this way, by interpreting every fact accordingly? Are there any facts at all that claim to characterize something objective?" (in *H. Reichenbach. Selected Writings: 1913-1953*, vol. 1, ed. by M. Reichenbach and R. Cohen, Dordrecht-Boston-London:Reidel Publishing Co., 1978, p. 289.) The same happens with Russell's version of logical holism in *The Analysis of Matter*. In this book, there is clearly an holistic and naturalistic approach to the epistemological problems in general, and, in particular, those related to the philosophy of language. This is obvious concerning Russell's theories on the objectivity of the physical science, induction, and causality. (See *Ibidem*. London: Routledge, 1992, p. 149 and foll..) For Russell, the 'theory-ladenness' observation is the crucial problem. As he says, "A datum obviously, must be a fact known by perception. But it is very difficult to arrive at a fact in which there is no element of inference, and yet it would seem improper to call something a 'datum' if it involved inference as well observation." (*Ibidem*, p. 187)

logical relativism; but logical relativism supposes that logic can constitute in some sense a framework-neutral discipline, and this is impossible. Friedman concludes that Russell's logical holism in *The Analysis of Matter*, as the holism of the logical positivists due to different reasons, is a story of failure.<sup>48</sup>

Well, this is perhaps true. However, Friedman seems to think that the logical and relativistic holism of the logical positivists, and principally Russell's holism and relativism, is generally a naive philosophy of science, that is, a philosophy not aware of its presuppositions and consequences. This is, in a sense, contradictory with Friedman's suggestion that logical holism has its origins in some semantic and holistic problems in epistemology and philosophy of language, because the existence of that kind of problems for Russell and the logical positivists shows that semantic holism is not a novelty introduced by the contemporary anti-positivist criticism, and that both Russell and (at least some of) the logical positivists have been aware of it and of some of its difficulties. What I am saying is that, if Friedman is right when he holds that logical holism is Russell's and logical positivist's solution for semantic and holistic problems, we should put, in a sense, that kind of solution in the same

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<sup>48</sup>The historical reasons presented for the failure of logical positivism are different from those concerning Russell. Russell's logical holism failed because Russell would be unaware of its logical and epistemological presuppositions. This is the main conclusion of Friedman's and Demopolous paper "The Concept of Structure in *The Analysis of Matter*", published in *Rereading Russell: Essays in Bertrand Russell's Metaphysics and Epistemology* (ed. by C. A. Anderson and A. Savage, Nineapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), pp. 169-182. The motif for their criticism is an article of the mathematician M. H. A. Newman criticizing Russell's approach in *An Anaysis of Matter*, and pointing out that the admission, by Russell's theory, of some 'percetual' criterion to choose between the different possible mathematical structures which are available violates the main requirement of Russell himself that our knowledge of the world is to be only structural. (See M. H. A. Newman, "Mr. Russell Causal Theory of Perception", in *Mind*, vol. 37, 1928.) For Friedman and Demopoulos, Russell would not be aware of the difficulties presented by Newman's criticism, and after that he gave up the idea that our knowledge of the physical world is purely structural. These seem to be two very drastic conclusions, and the last one is clearly false, as the structural epistemology of Russell's book *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits* shows. But, concerning Russell's lack of awareness of Newman's criticism, we must recall that the interpretation of the axioms of science as a deductive system, in Russell's view, is made not only by its empirical application, and that such interpretation demands be it a psychological and epistemological interpretation, or an ontological one. This means that the axioms, for Russell, are not strictly implicit definitions, and that the system is already interpreted. In other words: Newman (and Friedman and Demopoulos) would be right if Russell's structural epistemology was a conventionalist one: but this is not the case. Logical positivism (and specially, Carnap), according to Friedman, failed because Gödel Theorem shows that there is no framework-neutral metaperspective in logic. See "The Philosophy of Exact Sciences", pp. 94-94.

metaphilosophical level we put generally today Quine's solution for semantic and holistic problems, that is, Quine's naturalized epistemology.<sup>49</sup> In particular, concerning Russell, we should study the origins of those semantic and holistic problems which have led to logical holism in *The Analysis of Matter*; and, because Russell's solution in that book is simply one of the solutions he proposes along his philosophical evolution to us, we should study Russell's philosophy in general just from this new perspective. This is what I did in my thesis, and what I'm trying to do now.

### **8. Russell's criticism of logical positivism: an anticipation of contemporary historiography**

Now, returning to our initial problem: I hold that this rehabilitation of the image of logical positivism was suggested by Russell himself so soon as *An Inquiry Into Meaning and Truth* (1940). That is to say: I hold that Russell was the first contemporary philosopher to suggest that the essential characteristic of the logical positivist theory of science was not reductionism but logical holism, not a classical foundationalism but logical relativism. But, because my thesis is not of course the end of the story, let me say something about how Russell has put the problem atomism *versus* holism in the book quoted above.

Russell, as I said before concerning his reading of the *Tractatus*, feared the implications of radical holism for philosophy in general. For him, this was just the case of some logical positivist's solutions for the crisis of the justification of the so-called "protocol sentences", at the beginning of the 1930's, as Hempel's, Neurath's and even Carnap's solutions.<sup>50</sup> He thought that those justi-

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<sup>49</sup>This is, I suppose, an unavoidable consequence of the idea that holism is not a novelty introduced for the first time by Quine in the history of philosophy, and that, in fact, he didn't showed that Carnap's philosophy or the logical positivism in general have been wrong. The most part of contemporary historiography on logical positivism begins with just that important presuppositions. but, unfortunately, at a certain point the old presuppositions reappear more or less explicitly. This is just what happens with Friedman's interpretation of Russell and the logical positivism. Once the normative evaluations have been generally dismissed, a new way seems to have been opened for what I called, following Guerout, a "systematic historiography".

<sup>50</sup>See R. Carnap, "On Protocol Sentences" (1932), in *NOÛS*, 21, 1987, pp. 457-470 (transl. by R. Creath and R. Nollan); O. Neurath, "Protocol Sentences", in *Logical Positivism* (ed. by A. J. Ayer, transl. by G. Schik, London: The Free Press, 1959), pp. 199-208; C. Hempel, "On the Logical Positivist's Theory of Truth", in *Analysis*, vol. 2, 4, 1935; H. Feigl, "Sense and Nonsense in Scientific Realism", in *Actes du Congrès International de Philosophie*



fications have led to a linguistic reduction of philosophical problems, and that such a reduction, in its turn, could lead to the end of epistemology and of the philosophy of science themselves.<sup>51</sup> That he clearly had in mind, in his criticism, a sort of radical logico-linguistic holism from the part of the logical positivists, is obvious in some of the texts of *An Inquiry*, such as:

Their view is that 'truth' is a syntactical, not a semantic concept: a proposition is 'true' within a given system if it is consistent with the rest of the system, but there may be other systems, inconsistent with the first, in which the proposition in question will be 'false'. There is no such process, according to them, as deriving the truth of a proposition from some non-verbal occurrence: the world of words is a closed self-contained world, and the philosopher need not to concern himself with anything outside it.<sup>52</sup>

This linguistic reduction of philosophy is the most pernicious consequence of the denial from the part of some logical positivists of the existence of a pure datum, that is, of the existence of something independent of language, as the so-called "facts" or "perceptions". For Russell, those denials

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*Scientifique* (Paris: Hermann. 1936). pp. 50-56. For a more general view. see F. Barone. "La polémique sur les énoncés protocolaires dans l'épistémologie du Cercle de Vienne", in *Le Cercle de Vienne: Doctrines et Controverses* (ed. by J. Sebestik and A. Soulez. Paris: Klincksieck. 1986. pp. 181-197; T. E. Uebel. "Rational Reconstruction as Elucidation? Carnap in the Early Protocol Sentence Debate", in *Synthese*. 93. 1992. pp. 107-140.

<sup>51</sup>For Russell. this end of epistemology and of the philosophy of science was also the final outcome of the English ordinary language philosophy. In *My Philosophical Development* (London: George Allen and Unwin. 1959), at a time where the English philosophers saw themselves in clear opposition to logical positivism, he points out explicitly such a kind of conclusion: "...the new philosophy seems to me have abandoned, without necessity, the grave and important task which philosophy throughout the ages has hitherto pursued. Philosophers from Tales onwards have tried to understand the world. ... I cannot feel that the new philosophy is carrying on this tradition. ... A philosophy which is to have any value should be built upon a wide and firm foundation of knowledge that is not specifically philosophical. Such a knowledge is the soil from which the tree of philosophy derives its vigour. Philosophy which does not draw nourishment from this soil will soon wither and cease to grow" (*Ibidem*. p. 230). Was Russell right? Well. the fact is that the post-logical positivist and post-English ordinary language philosophers. such as Quine, Rorty and Feyerabend, do in fact proposed, more or less influenced by the analytical context of the 1950's and 1960's. and *end to the philosophy of science*. I have studied this historical and philosophical connection in my paper (English translation of the Portuguese title): "The End of the Philosophy of Science in the History of Analytical Philosophy". *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*. LIV. 3-4, 1998. pp. 395-428.

<sup>52</sup>B. Russell, *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*, 1940 (Middlesex: Penguin Books. 1973. pp. 132-133).

have lead to Hegelianism in philosophy, and, in particular, to a sort of "Hegelian pan-logism". He found identical attitudes concerning the denial of a pure datum in the pragmatism of Dewey and in the English ordinary language philosophy. About Carnap and Hempel, from the positivist side, and Dewey, from the pragmatist one, he holds:

There are some schools of philosophy – notable the Hegelians and the instrumentalists – which deny the distinction between data and inferences altogether. They maintain that in all our knowledge there is an inferential element, that knowledge is an organic whole, and that the test of truth is coherence rather than conformity with 'fact'. I do not deny an element of truth in this view, but I think that, if taken as the whole truth, it renders the part played by perception in knowledge inexplicable. ...

That there must be a pure datum is, I think, a logically irrefutable consequence of the fact that perception gives rise to new knowledge. Suppose, for example, that I have hitherto entertained a certain group of theories, but I now perceive that somewhere among these theories there is a mistake. There is necessarily, in this case, something not deducible from previous theories, and this something is a new datum for my knowledge of matters of facts, for we mean by a 'datum' merely a piece of knowledge that is not deduced. To deny data in this sense is, it seems to me, only possible for a Hegelian pan-logism.<sup>53</sup>

It is evident in this and other texts of *An Inquiry* that Russell found that it was essential to maintain the distinction between language and facts, or, as Quine would say ten years later, between the logical and the empirical elements of the theory of meaning – that is, the distinction to which the author of "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", ten years after Russell's book, opposes his semantic naturalism –, in order to avoid a logico-linguistic reduction of philosophy<sup>54</sup> It is also clear that Russell's arguments are not based upon a naive

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<sup>53</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 117.

<sup>54</sup>See "Two Dogmas of Empiricism". section 6: "Empiricism without the Dogmas". For Quine too there is a sort of logico-linguistic reduction of philosophy in Carnap's work associated with the first dogma. as long as. as he says in the "Background for analyticity". "the primary business of the theory of meaning [is] simply the synonymy of linguistic forms and the analyticity of statements."(*Ibidem*. 22) But it seems to be evident that. for him. this kind of logico-linguistic reduction has no epistemological import in the holistic sense. Even in the most "attenuated form" of Carnap's reductionism. it is always "a limiting kind of statement [not the scientific theory as a whole] which is vacuously confirmed. *ipso facto*. come what may."(*Ibidem*. p. 41) This explains why the background of the two dogmas. and the true adversary of Quine's semantic naturalism. is ultimately the "unempirical dogma" according to which "a statement is somehow analyzable into a linguistic and a factual component". and "in some statements the factual component should be null" (*Ibidem*. p. 36). It is just such a distinction the essential point of Russell's criticism of logical positivism. In this regard, we could

reductionism, as his critics (namely Quine) pretend, but just upon lucid holistic presuppositions. This is obvious when, without the terminology of contemporary historiography, Russell calls attention for the fact that Neurath's and Hempel's solutions for the positivist crisis in the thirties lead inevitably to logical relativism, or, as is the case of Neurath's proposals, to a sort of semantic and sociological one:

Hempel, it is true, denies that such consequences of his doctrine. He says: 'Carnap and Neurath do by no means intend to say: 'there are no facts, there are only propositions'; on the contrary, the occurrence of certain statements in the protocol of an observer or in a scientific book is regarded as an empirical fact, and the propositions occurring as empirical objects'. But this makes no sense of the whole theory. For what is an 'empirical fact'? To say: 'A is an empirical fact' or, according to Neurath and Hempel, to say: 'the proposition 'A occurs' is consistent with a certain body of already accepted propositions'. In a different culture circle another body of propositions may be accepted; owing to this fact, Neurath is an exile. He remarks himself that practical life soon reduces the ambiguity, and that we are influenced by the opinion of neighbours. In other words, empirical truth can be determined by the police. This doctrine, it is evident, is a complete abandonment of empiricism, of which the very essence is that only experiences can determine the truth or falsehood of non-tautologous propositions.<sup>55</sup>

Note, once more, that nothing in the texts quoted until now suggested that Russell would thought that reductionism is the essential characteristic of the logical positivist theory of meaning and truth, as the theory of Quine and Co., more recently, asserts. In fact, Russell's interpretation is clearly an anticipation of the central thesis of the new researches on logical positivism, according to which that theory is clearly holistic, not simply and only reductionist. This do not means that Russell ignored the relevance of some reductionist

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say that Russell's criticism is based just upon a view contrary to Quine's criticisms: only the dissociation between language and facts can preserve the possibility of an independent and autonomous theoretical thinking. Russell's aim, in *An Inquiry*, is to denounce the *holistic tendencies* of the logical positivist theory of meaning and truth in general, and not to defend the thesis that that theory is essentially or necessarily holistic. From this perspective, he is not interested in the distinction between the semantic holism of Dewey and Neurath, and the logical holism of Hempel and Carnap: sometimes, when empiricism itself is threatened by those holistic tendencies, he seems even to confound both kinds of holism. But, contrary to what will happen with Quine ten years later, for him reductionism is only an aspect of Carnap's philosophy.

<sup>55</sup>B. Russell, *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*, p. 140.

thesis in the context of the logical positivist theories of meaning, in particular, in Carnap's philosophy.<sup>56</sup> In 1935-1936, with "The Limits of Empiricism", he was so impressed with the limits and difficulties of a pure empiricist philosophy, that, contrary to what will happen two years later in *An Inquiry*, he gave no relevance at all to holism and its epistemological consequences.<sup>57</sup> In *An Inquiry*, Russell continues to insist on the positivist reductionism, in particular, in some reductionism from the part of Carnap, pointing out to some unacceptable contradictions arising with the defence of it. Therefore, we could ask what is, according to Russell, the connection between reductionism and holism in logical positivism.

Well, Russell's theory seems to be that, surely, holism is the last positivist word concerning the theory of meaning, and that reductionism, even Schlick's reductionism, is essentially an escape of the logical positivists, in general, from some pernicious consequences of holism. This just the thesis held by Friedman, from an historiographical perspective, in the paper quoted above.<sup>58</sup> In other words, for Russell logical positivists would not be com-

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<sup>56</sup>Carnap's reductionism and the unavoidable contradictions of the verification theory are the main subject-matter of the chapter 22 of *An Inquiry*. But, again, for Russell the contradictions in question are essentially the result of the holistic presuppositions of Carnap's work in general. As Russell says, proposing a new sort of paradox: "empiricism, as a theory of knowledge, is self-refuting. For, however it may be formulated, it most involve some general proposition about the dependence of knowledge upon experience; and any such proposition, if true, must have as a consequence that itself cannot be known. While, therefore, empiricism may be true, it cannot, if true, be known to be so." (*Ibidem*, pp. 156-157)

<sup>57</sup>In that paper Russell criticizes the doctrine of finitism in mathematics set forth by A. Ambrose, and he doesn't mention anywhere logical positivism. But only one year after that he wrote to Moore that he intended "to develop the ideas in my paper on 'The Limits of Empiricism', & to investigate the relation of language to facts, as to which Carnap's ideas seem to me very adequate" (*Autobiography*, London: Routledge, 1991, pp. 456-457) He did that just in his paper "On Verification" (1937-1938). This suggests that by the time of Russell's paper he already had some doubts concerning Carnap's ideas on the relations of language to facts.

<sup>58</sup>Friedman presents the theoretical framework of that thesis in the following terms: "The problem of adjudicating between competing theoretical frameworks arises for the logical positivists in their earliest writings on relativity theory. ... Throughout the 1920's Schlick and the other logical positivists – Reichenbach, in particular – attempt to solve this epistemological problem by means of the doctrine of 'conventionalism' which they derive from Poincaré. ... Now this doctrine, when consistently thought through, does in fact lead to a kind of radical empiricism. Since we wish to hold that two 'empirical equivalent' theories are therefore completely equivalent descriptions of the same objective facts, we are committed to the view that the empirical facts – that is, the observable facts – are all the objective facts. We are committed to the view that the entire content or meaning of a scientific theory is lodged in its consequences from the actual and possible observations. And, in fact, around 1930 this view har-

pletely aware of all the consequences of their holistic thesis, and, as a consequence, they have adopted reductionism sometimes. Of course, Russell suggests this thesis not in the context of an historiographical analysis, but metaphilosophically, that is, as an inevitable result of his theoretical analysis of the place of reductionism and holism within the logical positivist theory of meaning. This is just the main conclusion of Russell's interpretation of Carnap's theories in the chapter 22 of *An Inquiry*. After some criticism of the contradictions between reductionism and holism in Carnap's "Testability and Meaning", Russell says with some tolerance:

Throughout the above discussion, I have not been contending that what Carnap's says is mistaken, but only that there are certain prior questions to be considered, and that, while they are ignored, the relation of empirical knowledge to non-linguistic occurrences cannot be properly understood. ...<sup>59</sup>

As we can see, the level of Russell's criticism of Carnap's theories is clearly the level of the metaphilosophical debate atomism *versus* holism, that is, just the debate that almost ten years after *An Inquiry* Quine will bring into practice (apparently) for the very first time.

Are Russell's own solutions for the debate (as they are developed in *An Inquiry* and in *Human Knowledge*) interesting today, philosophically speaking? Perhaps not, if we look only for the details and not for the main ideas and proposals; and these are essentially the result of a doubly original perspective: a rejection of a classic foundationalism, that is, of the views which ignore the advantages of naturalism for epistemology and philosophy of language, and, simultaneously, a rejection of a radical naturalism and anti-foundationalism, that is, of the views which lead, as Russell would argue, to the end philosophy itself. It was from both perspectives that Russell wrote his provocative book *Human Knowledge*: at one time where, in the face of American pragmatism, logical positivism and the English ordinary language philosophy, the foundationalist notion of "human knowledge" became senseless, he looked for a possible compromise which would save the perennial concept of Philosophy coming from the Greeks. Perhaps Russell was not completely aware of all the implications of this compromise for philosophy in general; and this would explain, eventually, some criticism of contemporary philosophers, concerning, for example, the so-called "causal theory of meaning". But surely he was

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dens into a kind of dogma for the logical positivists in the form of the notorious Verifiability Principle. ("Philosophy and the Exact Sciences", pp. 91-92)

<sup>59</sup>B. Russell, *An Inquiry into meaning and Truth*, p. 297.

aware of the fact that the precocious naturalism and relativism of his own epoch would condemn philosophy, in the end, to be simply an "human science" among others. And, apparently, this is just what happens today. If we look closely, there are no more philosophical books on "Human Knowledge".

### **9. Final remarks about the present relevance of Russell's criticism of logical positivism**

These considerations lead me finally, once more, to recall some conclusions of my research presented in my doctoral thesis. For those who came to the research on Russell after what I called the "official reading" of his philosophy, it would seem paradoxical to speak of "relevance and originality in Russell's criticism of logical positivism" since the conclusions of current studies assert exactly the opposite (that is, that Russell's philosophy, and, in particular, his theory of science, is simply a part of a classic or traditional phase in the development of analytical philosophy which has been transcended more or less definitively). However, we have suggested that this type of reading of history is generally false and misleading in a series of basic aspects, and that is important to see them as a disastrous prejudice of historical research. In truth, there is a series of indications in Russell's philosophy, in particular after the 1920's, that seem to point not only to a profound originality of thought but also to some relevance for a time like ours that is apparently centred upon the problem of holism and its philosophical implications. The following issues need to be borne in mind:

(1) In *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* and *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits*, Russell was one of the first contemporary philosophers, if not the first, to undertake a systematic criticism of the holistic presuppositions of logical positivism, and, like more recent historiography, to see in these presuppositions the essential character of the positivists theory of science;

2) More generally, the central problem in his last works seem to be a criticism of the consequences of radical holism for philosophy (the logical holism of the positivists generally, but also the linguistic holism of the English ordinary language philosophy and the naturalist and anti-foundationalist holism of certain positivists, like Neurath, or pragmatists, like Dewey), and also a concept of a philosophical alternative compatible with this criticism, that would consist in what I called in my thesis "a naturalist foundationalism" or "a foundationalist naturalism", that is to say, it would follow a developmental

path that would appeal to what was essentially valid in naturalism, without rejecting the need for philosophical foundations (essential for Russell);

(3) This alternative to holism needs to be retought especially in our days, where philosophy seems to have embraced a holism and anti-foundationalism which are the root of a philosophical and general cultural relativism. Russell, to a certain extent, had a philosophical understanding of this situation. He was completely aware of the provocative or scandalous nature of this recommendations taken from solipsism and Cartesianism which appeared in his last philosophical book, at a time when holism had begun to dominate philosophical thought in general. But, in contrast to the current interpretation, this proves that he is not alien to the problem of holism and its implications, but rather, this problem is at the hub of his philosophy.

*HENRIQUE JALES RIBEIRO*

Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Coimbra

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*Abstract*

Bertrand Russell has been traditionally identified with logical positivism. The author of this paper holds that this identification has no historical basis in Russell's philosophy, and he suggests that, since the logical positivists themselves, it has been used metahistorically and metaphilosophically as an instrument of the legitimacy of analytical practice along the different contexts of analytical philosophy. He shows that when logical positivism emerged in the international scene, during the 1930's, Russell was one of the first philosophers (if not the first), long before the anti-positivist criticism of Popper, Quine, Kuhn and others, to oppose to it and to criticize systematically it from a purely philosophical perspective. Furthermore, he holds that Russell's criticism is an anticipation of the central thesis of contemporary historiography, according to which the most known logical positivists, from the beginning of their career, clearly had an holistic attitude concerning philosophical problems in general.

*Resumo*

Bertrand Russell tem sido tradicionalmente com o positivismo lógico. O autor deste trabalho defende que esta identificação não tem uma base histórica na filosofia de Russell, e sugere que esta, desde os próprios positivistas lógicos, foi usada meta-histórica e meta-filosoficamente como um instrumento de legitimação da prática analítica ao longo dos diferentes contextos da filosofia analítica. Ele mostra que quando o positivismo lógico emergiu na cena internacional, durante os anos trinta, Russell foi um dos primeiros filósofos (senão o primeiro), muito antes das críticas anti-positivistas feitas por Popper, Quine, Kuhn e outros, a opor-se-lhe e a criticá-lo sistematicamente de um perspectiva puramente filosófica. Além disso, o autor defende que essa crítica é claramente uma antecipação da tese central da historiografia contemporânea, de acordo com a qual os mais conhecidos positivistas lógicos tiveram, desde o princípio da sua carreira, uma atitude claramente holista a respeito dos problemas filosóficos em geral.