

ОЗНАЙОМЛЕНІСТЬ ТА ДЕСКРИПЦІЇ У РАННІЙ ФІЛОСОФІЇ БЕРТРАНА РАССЕЛА

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Метою цієї статті є аналіз раних теорій ознайомленості та дескрипцій Рассела. Він намагався запропонувати рішення проблеми Майнонга щодо неіснуючих сутностей і використав формальну логіку для розробки теорії визначених дескрипцій, яка була пов'язана з гносеологічним принципом обізнаності. Я погоджуюся з думкою, що історичний Рассел змінив деякі свої погляди, але принцип обізнаності залишився «структурним ядром» у його філософії. Автор стверджує, що обізнаність також є регулятивним принципом його логічного атомізму, навіть якщо на перший погляд його основний інтерес був іншим. Проблема так званих пропозиційних конститuentів виявляє цю приховану передумову і знову розкриває його емпіричний погляд, зафіксований у реляційній структурі.

Ключові слова: *Рассел, дескрипція, обізнаність, логічний атомізм, означування, аналіз.*

ACQUAINTANCE AND DESCRIPTIONS IN EARLY PHILOSOPHY OF BERTRAND RUSSELL

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The aim of this article is to offer an analysis of early Russell's theories of acquaintance and description. He tried to offer a solution to the Meinong's problem of non-existent entities and used formal logic to develop a theory of definite descriptions which was related to the epistemological principle of acquaintance. I agree the view that the historical Russell changed some of his views but the principle of acquaintance remained "the structural core" in his philosophy. I try to argue that acquaintance is also a regulative principle in his logical atomism, even if at the first glance his main interest was another. The problem of the so called propositional constituents brings to light this hidden presupposition and reveals again his empiricist view fixed in a relational framework.

Keywords: *Russell, logical atomism, acquaintance, descriptions, denoting, analysis.*

Introduction: a historical Russell

It is well known historical fact that Russell went through a number of philosophical metamorphoses throughout his life, characterized by thematic cuts, methodological preferences and theoretical accents. Of course, certain continuities and constants can be identified, as the researchers of his work have already done. For example, Hager [1994] claims that analysis and relations are the keys to continuity in Russell's

philosophy and Galaugher [2013] mentions that after Russell's break with idealism in the year 1898 he adopted an anti-psychologistic position and developed de-compositional analysis. In this article I limit my research to the historical interval between the so-called Russell's rebellion against neo-hegelianism at the beginning of the twentieth century and the series of lectures on logical atomism delivered in London in the year 1918.

My attempt is to find an epistemological line of continuity, which does not replace the others, but only adds to them. I think it also starts with the revolt against idealism and consists in the adoption of an empiricist perspective based on a theory about sense data. The main problem throughout his career, from the beginnings under the influence of Bradley, was to combine appearance and reality, logic and sense data [Milkov, 2001]. In “Meinong’s Theory of Complexes and Assumptions” Russell argues that two distinct attitudes occur towards objects, namely, one, that of presentations, second, that of judgment. The first gives us acquaintance, the second gives knowledge. Russell developed this idea and the principle of acquaintance became “the structural core” of his changing views [Russell, 1904:224].

Although Russell states later in “On Denoting” that the principle of acquaintance is also a consequence of the theory of descriptions, in fact, historically, he developed this principle before 1905, in his search for an alternative to Meinong’s theory of objects. The theory of descriptions was just the conclusive solution to Meinong’s theory¹.

Russell wrote later in *My Philosophical Development* about his reasons to propose his own theory: “If you say that the golden mountain does not exist, it is obvious that there is something that you are saying does not exist – namely the golden mountain; therefore, the golden mountain must subsist in some shadowy Platonic realm of being, for otherwise your statement that the golden mountain does not exist would have no meaning. I confess that, until I hit upon the theory of descriptions, his argument seemed to me convincing” [Russell, 1959:84].

It is obvious that Russell was already focused on this problem of non-existent objects. He has already noted in *Principles of Mathematics*: “A concept may denote although it does not denote anything” [Russell 1937: 73]. And in “The Existential Import of Propositions”, published in *Mind* in 1905, Russell refers to definite descriptions which describe nothing and names that name nothing: “‘The present king of England’ is a denoting concept denoting an individual. ‘The present king of France’ is a similar complex concept denoting nothing. The phrase intends to point out an individual, but fails to do so: it does not point out an unreal individual but no individual at all. The same explanation applies to mythical personages, Apollo, Priam etc. these words all have a meaning, which can be found by looking them up in a classical dictionary; but they have not a denotation; there is no individual, real or imaginary, which they point out” [Russell, 1994:487].

In his lectures about logical atomism Russell invokes a criterion regarding our attitude towards such strange entities as the round square or the golden mountain [Russell, 1972:79–80]. Meinong maintains that there is such an object as the round square even if it doesn’t exist or subsist because he thinks that in a proposition as “The round square is a fiction” we have in front of our mind the object “the round square” and without the object we can’t make an utterance about it. When we say something about the round square this means that it is a constituent of our judgment. Russell rejects Meinong’s theory with the help of the criterion based on the so-called “the sense of reality” or “the instinct of reality”, but this criterion is coupled with the logical force of descriptions theory.

The place of acquaintance in “On Denoting”

Russell states the principle of denoting: “a phrase is denoting solely in virtue of its form” [Russell, 1905:479]. He gives some examples: a man, some man, any man, every man, all men, the present King of England, the present King of France, the centre of mass of the Solar System at the first instant of the twentieth century, the revolution of the earth around the sun, the revolution of the sun around the earth.

Russell develops his theory of descriptions, mentions the logical forms of propositions which contains the most primitive denoting phrases (everything, nothing, something), and asserts the principle of his theory: “denoting phrases never have any meaning in themselves, but (...) every proposition in whose verbal expression they occur has a meaning” [Russell, 1905:480].

Following Russell, we distinguish three types of cases:

(1) A phrase may be denoting, and yet not denote anything; e.g. ‘the present King of France’.

(2) A phrase may denote one definite object; e.g. ‘the present King of England’.

(3) A phrase may denote ambiguously; e.g. ‘a man’ denotes not many men, but an ambiguous man.

Russell’s logical goal is to extract the deep logical form from these linguistic phrases which denote something. If these phrases contain the definite article “the” then is involved the uniqueness of the denoting object is involved. For example, when we say „x was the father of Charles II” we assert not only that a person x had a certain relation to Charles II, but also that this relation is unique, namely, that nobody else had this relation.

Russell discusses about the object which is the subject of denoting and he passes from the theory of denoting to the theory of knowledge: “The subject of

¹ I have developed this idea in [Stoenescu, 2017].

denoting is of very great importance not only in logic and mathematics, but also in theory of knowledge" [Russell, 1905:479]. The epistemological distinction between *acquaintance* and *knowledge about* is defined by Russell as the distinction "between the things we have presentations of, and the things we only reach by means of denoting phrase" [Idem.]. He mentions the possibility to know that a phrase denotes unambiguously although we don't know by acquaintance the object which it denotes, as in the case of the centre of mass of the Solar System. We can't be acquainted with the centre of mass of the Solar system, but it is denoted by the description "the centre of mass of the Solar system".

We have acquaintance with objects of perception, but also with abstract logical objects. It isn't necessary to be acquainted with the object denoted by the descriptions meanings we are acquainted with. We can think and we may know about things with which we have no acquaintance (e.g. other minds).

Therefore, Russell's main intention was to avoid the difficulties related to denoting phrases which stand for genuine constituents such as "the present King of France" or "the round square". As I already have mentioned above, Meinong admits that these phrases are grammatically correct denoting phrases which stand for an object. Russell develops his theory of description so that to solve these strange cases in which the denotation appears to be absent, such as "the present King of France is bald".

It is obvious that Russell's theory of descriptions affects Meinong's argument about the non-existent objects. I think that Russell was confronted with a tension between his epistemological preference for a direct realism based on the concept of acquaintance and his critique of Meinong's theory, but his own theory of description dissolved this tension². In Meinong's view a proposition is meaningful if we have a direct relation with the object of the proposition and this means that the object has to exist even if we assert a proposition about its non-existence. Russell's theory about denoting concepts offers an alternative to this constraint and gives meaning to a proposition about an object even if the object doesn't exist. Russell's theory of descriptions escapes us from this ontological trap: instead of containing an object, the proposition contains a denoting concept which does not denote anything. The theory of descriptions goes further, it eliminates all the representational ingredients from the theory and find the solution in the logical analysis of language³.

Russell explains this result. When there is something we aren't acquainted with, but all we have is only a definition by denoting phrases, then the propositions in which this thing is introduced by a denoting phrase do not contain this thing as a constituent. Instead of the thing, the proposition contains the constituents expressed by the words of the denoting phrase and we have an immediate acquaintance with them. Therefore, we are acquainted with all the constituents, either a thing or the words of the denoting phrase, of a proposition which has a meaning for us and it is also apprehended by us. In the cases of things as matter or the other minds which are known to us by denoting phrases "we are not *acquainted* with them, but we know them as what has such and such properties. (...) What we know is 'So-and-so has a mind which has such and such properties' but we do not know 'A has such and such properties' where A is the mind in question. In such a case, we know the properties of a thing without having acquaintance with the thing itself, and without, consequently, knowing any single proposition of which the thing itself is a constituent" [Russell, 1905:492–493].

This principle of acquaintance was first announced by Russell at the end of "On Denoting" as a result of his theory of description [Russell, 1905:55]. If this is the case, then, as Griffin remarks, two problems arise:

(a) Why did Russell think that the principle of acquaintance was a result of his theory of description?

(b) "Since sentences containing expressions for definite descriptions are, on the theory of description, paraphrased into canonical sentences involving only quantifiers, bound variables, proper names, logical constants, and predicate expressions, what are the constituents of the proposition expressed by the canonical sentence? In particular, what constituents (if any) correspond to the quantifiers and bound variables?" [Griffin 1982:71–72].

I believe that the answers to both questions can be found with the help of careful research about the ways how Russell developed the principle of acquaintance and the theory of descriptions in the framework of logical atomism, his main concern for more than a decade after "On Denoting".

Knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description

Russell enters into the details of the difference between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description in other articles which followed immediately after "On Denoting"⁴. The first problem is whether or not it is correct to claim that we can know something when

² See [Stoenescu, 2017] for details.

³ See [Hylton, 2005:198] for Russell's progress from theory of denoting concepts to the theory of descriptions.

⁴ See [Russell, 1910; 1912; 1914].

the object is merely described. Our intuitive answer is an affirmative one. For example, we know that the candidate who gets most votes will be elected, but we don't know who this candidate is. Therefore, we shall speak about knowledge by description and we shall use the description "the candidate who gets most votes" for the unacquainted person is known to exist. But what do we know in these cases? What are the differences between acquaintance and description as genuine kinds of knowledge?

Acquaintance is defined as "the simplest and most pervading aspect of experience" [Russell, 1914:1]. Russell clarifies the meaning of acquaintance: "I am acquainted with an object when I have a direct cognitive relation to that object, i.e. when I am directly aware of the object itself" [Russell, 1910:108]. Acquaintance as a relation between subject and object is the converse of presentation: "*S* has acquaintance with *O*" is the same thing with "*O* is presented to *S*". Moreover, Russell specifies the differences between acquaintance and knowledge, and he opens a debate about the varieties of knowledge.

First, I am acquainted with an object even when it isn't actually before my mind, but I know that it was and it is possible that it will be again. The case is similar with that when I am justified to assert that I know that $2+2=4$ even when I am thinking of something else. Second, the word "acquaintance" emphasizes more than "presentation", the relational character, and the need for the dualism subject/object but without any commitment to philosophical views such as materialism, idealism or solipsism. The problem of this alleged philosophical neutrality of acquaintance deserves to be set aside and discussed at length on another occasion.

But with which kinds of objects are we acquainted? Russell provides several examples. First of all, it is obvious that we are acquainted of *sense data*. When I see a colour I have a direct acquaintance with the colour. Of course, a perceived object is complex, but we have the cognitive capacity to extract the relation between our mind and a colour which is seen. We are aware of the difference between a simple colour and a complex presentation in introspection.

In addition to awareness of *particulars* such as perceived colours and other sense data we have also awareness of *universals*. A universal of which we are aware is called a *concept*. Russell concludes that it is correct to say that we are aware alike of particular yellows and of the universal *yellow*. This universal of yellow is the subject in judgements as "Yellow differs from blue" or "Yellow resembles blue less than green

does". In "This is yellow" the predicate is the universal yellow and 'this' is a particular sense-datum. Finally, Russell believes that we are equally aware of universal relations (up and down, before and after, resemblance, awareness itself). Moreover, we must suppose that we are acquainted with the meaning of the universal relation itself (of "before" in "this is before that"), and not merely with complex instances of it.

Therefore, there are two sorts of objects, particulars and universals, of which we are aware, and this distinction is exhaustive (similar to the distinction between abstract and concrete). All existents and all complexes with at least one constituent as existent are particulars. All objects of which no particular is a constituent are universals.

In "On the Nature of Acquaintance", Russell comes back to acquaintance and describes it in terms of relations. It is defined as "a dual relation between a subject and an object which need not have any community of nature" [Russell, 1914:1]. The subject is "mental", the object isn't, except in introspection. The object may be in the present, in the past, or not in time at all. The object may be a sensible particular, or a universal, or an abstract logical fact. All cognitive relations – attention, sensation, memory, imagination, believing, disbelieving etc. – presuppose acquaintance.

Taking into account all that has been said, it becomes clear that we are not acquainted with physical objects (different from and even opposed to sense data) and with other minds. These are known to us by description. A description is any phrase of the form "a so-and-so" (this is an ambiguous description, for example, "a man") or "the so-and-so" (this is a definite description, for example, "the man with the iron mask"). An object is known by description when we know that it is "the so-and-so", namely, we know that there is one object and it have a certain property and we don't know it by acquaintance. We know that the man with the iron mask existed, but we don't know who he was. Common words and proper names are descriptions (for example, Bismarck, analyzed as "the first Chancellor of the German Empire").

Russell also mentions that his theory has to be defended against three other rival theories:

(1) the theory of Mach and James which reject acquaintance as a relation involved in all mental facts and claims that there is "but merely a different grouping of the same objects as those dealt with by non-psychological science" [Idem.].

(2) the theory which considers that the immediate object is mental, as well as the subject, a theory which, I

think, leads to a subjective interpretation of acquaintance in an idealistic framework;

(3) the theory which states that between subject and object there is a third entity, the “content”, which is mental (“that thought or state of mind by means of which the subject apprehends the object” [Idem.].

In order to make more clear his own theory, Russell defines the principle of acquaintance as a fundamental epistemological principle: “Every proposition which we can understand must be composed wholly of constituents with which we are acquainted” [Russell, 1910:117]. And Russell adds: “The chief reason for supposing the principle true is that it seems scarcely possible to believe that we can make a judgment or entertain a supposition without knowing what it is that we are judging or supposing about” [Idem.].

What does it mean to make a judgment? A judgment is a relation of a mind to several entities which compose what is judged. If I judge that *A* loves *B*, the judgment consists in the existence of a four-term relation (*judging*) before me, *A*, love and *B*. All these are the distinctive constituents of the judgment in question.

But what is meant by “understanding a proposition”? Note that we understand a proposition (*A* loves *B*) even if it is just a supposition (we merely suppose that *A* loves *B*). The existence of the fact isn’t a condition for understanding.

Therefore, the principle is restated: “Whenever a relation of supposing or judging occurs, the terms to which the supposing or judging mind is related by the relation of supposing or judging must be terms with which the mind in question is acquainted” [Russell, 1910:118].

Let’s make a summary together with Clark [1981]. First, acquaintance as “the structural core” of Russell’s changing views. Is a direct and simple relation between a knower and objects of his experience (as perception of external objects) or awareness (in introspection). Second, acquaintance is a sort of knowledge of *things*, by contrast with the knowledge of truths, but unlike thinking, an act of acquaintance just is a single occurrent awareness. It is, Russell says, partly following Berkeley’s idea of immediate knowledge, a simple act which involves no inference or judgments. Just knowledge by description is expressed by judgments.

The simplicity of acquaintance has three dimensions [Clark, 1981:234]. First, acquaintance is a simple mental act occurrence without any constituent. Second, acquaintance is a simple and direct semantic link with the objects of acquaintance. Third, the objects of acquaintance are ontologically simple, without discrete parts and basic constituents. The objects known by

description are complex. For example, I am acquainted just with the surface of the fruit when I visually perceive it, not with an orange, the fruit as such. I cannot know the orange by acquaintance, but I can describe it as a complex.

But the question is if we should accept that the principle of acquaintance is a consequence of the theory of description. Shall we speak about reducibility to acquaintance or acquaintance is entailed by the theory of definite descriptions? Hintikka notes that “at first sight, there seems to be no reason to assume the entailment” [Hintikka, 1981:176]. What is the theory of descriptions about? It merely shows us how to use a logical method to paraphrase in terms of logical bounded variables and quantifiers sentences which contains descriptive expressions of natural language. But if a description contains variables and they are quantified, then the natural consequence is to accept a range of values for these variables. Does this analysis as such imply any supposition about the domain to what these quantifiers range over? In other words, what is the nature of this range of values? The principle of acquaintance would lead to a physicalistic interpretation. Hintikka gives an answer and mentions the circularity which affects the reasoning: “The only reason why Russell can think that his theory of denoting (including his treatment of definite descriptions) implies his theory of knowledge by acquaintance is apparently by assuming that the values of the variables in the *analysans* of each sentence containing definite descriptions range over objects of acquaintance. But such an assumption seems to be patently circular. It assumes precisely what to be proved” [Idem.]. I think that there is no way to escape from this circularity, it has to be assumed if we want to avoid other problems regarding the relation between language, reality and our mind as it is the regress ad infinitum.

Let’s pass now to the second problem mentioned above: what constituents correspond to the quantifiers and bound variables? I think that the answer to this question was one of the big challenges for Russell’s theory of logical atomism as a theory about the constituents.

The problem of ultimate constituents and logical atomism

First of all, let’s remember that the standard statement for the principle of acquaintance refers to the constituents of a proposition: “Every proposition which we can understand must be composed wholly of constituents with which we are acquainted” [Russell, 1910:117]. Russell talks about acquaintance as a relation between a subject and an object and proposes a logical theory of

descriptions which is based on an analysis of the structure of our language. What can we say about the relation between the constituents of our formal language and those which correspond to the structure of facts and the structure of the judgments which have a meaning and are understood?

Julius Caesar as person is a constituent who belongs to factual history. He isn't a constituent of a judgment, and he isn't a constituent either as an idea or a mental entity. The ideas become a veil between us and outside things and, in Russell's view, this is the first step in an endless regress: "the relation of idea to object will have to be explained by supposing that the idea itself has an idea of the object, and so on ad infinitum" [Russell, 1910:120].

The judgment "the man whose name was Julius Caesar was assassinated" may be interpreted, according to the theory of descriptions, as meaning "One and only one man was called Julius Caesar, and that one was assassinated". Is there any reason to regard the phrase "the man whose name was Julius Caesar" as expressing a constituent of the judgment? I think that Hintikka is right when he asserts that, first of all, Russell supposes that there exists a perceptually individual object with which the subject is aware and *S* is acquainted with *A* if and only if there is an object perceptually individuated for *S*, and *S* knows that this perceptual individuation is identical with *A*. On the contrary, *S* knows who *A* is just in case there is a physically individuated object with which *S* identifies *A*.

Consequently, if we speak about physically objects then we have to refer and to describe them individually with the help of our language. We shall use logically proper names ("This", "I") to express reference to particulars with which one is acquainted. Clark takes this suggestion as a good way to understand the functionality of acquaintance and he proposes the analogy with logically proper names and their formal interpretation. But the question is if acquaintance is really analogous to naming. Acquaintance is a semantically simple relation of designation, but the analogy with naming is misleading, because we aren't acquainted with things as physical objects and not even with their qualities. We are acquainted with redness, not with red one thing is still very clear: in Russell's theory denoting phrases are supposed to denote objects of acquaintance. But how shall we formally interpret the logical structure and the constituents of descriptions? Here is enough room for some mistakes. Hintikka mentions just two:

– Are the quantifiers and bound variables genuine constituents of propositions? In 1905 Russell should say no. He talks about apparent variables.

– But he surely thinks of the values of bound variables as individuals individuated by acquaintance [Hintikka, 1981:182].

Moreover, Hintikka argues that the theory of descriptions replaced references to non-existent entities which aren't acquainted with bound variables whose ranges are acquainted. But Russell didn't follow this line till the end because (1) he didn't operate with a modern concept of a quantifier and (2) he didn't understand that ontological commitment is realized by the quantifier because he thought that variables are just a notational device [Hintikka, 1981:181]. Here is the place to remind Griffin's reply to Hintikka's critical notice. Griffin asserts that (1) is correct, but (2) have to be rejected because developed the point about ontological commitment in his theory of descriptions as one opposed to Meinong's theory [Griffin, 1982:72].

Griffin claims that Hintikka thought in terms of Quine's dogma about Russell's view of quantification. The reply offered by Griffin is based on a passage from an unpublished manuscript written in the year 1906, immediately after "On Denoting": "What can be an apparent variable must have some kind of being"⁵.

The question is if the fact that Russell's terminology contains the expression "apparent variable" is a reason to doubt about the ontological commitment. There are some accurate evidences that the so called "apparent variables" are nothing but bound variables which range over the acquainted things. It is consistent with Russell's theory to say that an apparent or bound variable is instantiated by a proper name and that the proper names refer to objects of acquaintance. It is true; the problems are caused by the different assertions made by the historical Russell. Before "On Denoting", in the early times of *Principles of Mathematics* Russell claimed the thesis that in order to understand a judgment like "All men are mortal" it isn't necessary to know what men there are, but after "On Denoting" he abandoned this view and put the description in relation to acquaintance.

A consequence of this development is the legitimation of the question (b) mentioned by Griffin. The answer may be found in Russell's paper published after "On Denoting" where he asserts that the objects of acquaintance are the value-range of variables and that the variables can be introduced as constituents of quantified propositions. The problem which remains is that the difference between existentially and universally quantified propositions from the standpoint of acquaintance. In "On Denoting" we can find suggestions for the case of existentially quantified propositions.

⁵ See [Griffin, 1982:72]. The unpublished manuscript from Russell's Archive is entitled "The Paradox of the Liar".

Thus the principle of acquaintance should be thought as a restriction on our understanding of meaning. This means that the effect is that a *de re* theory about the meaning of words becomes an empirical theory. Acquaintance becomes double powered: first, it is “the way in which the mind apprehends things which in the case of perception and memory of perception originate as input” and second, it has another because “it is also the way in which the mind grasps basic truths about those things.” Historically, “acquaintance was primarily the way of understanding meanings and only secondary the way of grasping basic truth” [Pears, 1981:149].

Anyway, acquaintance is a simple and unanalysable relation between a mind and an object, but the objects of acquaintance are complex. Moreover, in his papers about logical atomism Russell suggests that there weren't simple objects as such. If the unanalysability of acquaintance as a simple relation does not entail that the objects of acquaintance are also simple, this means that an act of acquaintance may assure an apprehension of complexity [Clark, 1981:238]. Conceptually speaking, the act of acquaintance has some constituents which are related with the objects of acquaintance. Russell's assertions regarding this last point aren't very clear, sometimes they are obscure and sometimes they induce perplexity. He seems to accept that simples have a kind of reality which is different from the reality of anything else. In his “Logical Atomism” he writes: “When I speak of ‘simples’ I ought to explain that I am speaking of something not experienced as such, but known only inferentially as the limit of analysis” [Russell 1972:158]. How shall we understand this? In “Logical Atomism” Russell offers a key to understand his previous assertion about simples: “I do not believe that there are complexes and unities in the same sense in which there are simples” [Russell, 1972:157]. Are then the simples merely those ultimate acquainted constituents which can be related by logical analysis with the ultimate constituents of the meaning? Russell's example in *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism* is about the meaning of “red”. We understand the word “red” (or “redness”) if only if we have seen red things [Russell, 1972:49]. Then we use the logical tools of analysis and we define “red” as “the colour with the greatest wave-length”. Is this the actual meaning of the word “red”? No, this is just a description. Therefore, the expression “the colour with the greatest wave-length” is a substitute just for the word “red” but not for the acquaintance of ‘red’ (or “redness”). According to Russell, an expression that describes a direct experience will explain only another term from our vocabulary, and

not a sensorial given which is acquainted as such. The explanatory relationship is between linguistic entities, and not between a linguistic entity and direct experience as such.

Conclusion: the simplest final idea

I accepted from the beginning as the working hypothesis Russell's idea that the principle of acquaintance is a consequence of the theory of descriptions and I have tried to enter into the details of this principle as it was developed in early Russell's early philosophy. Moreover, his logical atomism is better understood only when it is related with Russell's empiricist assumptions. Generally speaking, I think that after his revolt against idealism Russell was always, at least ultimately, a supporter of empiricism as the best explanatory epistemology. And I believe that this presupposition explains why his logical atomism is not just a theory about the logical analysis of the propositional constituents but also a plea for the role of acquaintance.

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