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ARTICLE

OXFORD REALISM: KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTION I

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> Nothing can be more completely false than that we can experience only our own ideas. That is indeed without exaggeration the very epitome of *all* falsity.
>
> C. S. Peirce

The twentieth century saw a revival of philosophy at Oxford. It came to play a prominent role not only on the British scene but also in the whole of the English-speaking world; a role that it had not played since, perhaps, the late medieval period. This revival goes back in part to the recreation in the late nineteenth century of the three oldest chairs of philosophy in Oxford, the Wykeham Professor of Logic at New College, the Waynflete Professor of Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy at Magdalen College and the White's Professor of Moral Philosophy at Corpus Christi College. There are in this century two principal schools of philosophy with which the name of Oxford is associated: 'Oxford Realism' and the so-called 'Oxford philosophy', which is also known, perhaps more appropriately, as 'ordinary language philosophy'. Oxford Realism originated in the philosophy of John Cook Wilson (1849–1915), who was Wykeham Professor of Logic at New College for some five and twenty years, from 1889 to 1915. Although he was not as well known outside Oxford as his contemporary Bradley was, Cook Wilson was regarded at the time of his death as being 'by far the most influential philosophical teacher in Oxford'.[1] In this paper, I shall explore some of his lasting influence.

The following may be rich in historical details and in anecdotes. Oxford Realism is an important chapter of twentieth-century British philosophy that has been largely consigned to oblivion and I have thus sought to provide as broad a sketch of it as I could, while still focusing on a few particular theses and arguments. I shall discuss primarily Cook Wilson's claim that knowledge cannot be defined in terms of belief (or opinion) and its influence on a number of Oxford philosophers, Prichard and Austin in particular. The connections between Oxford Realists, such as Prichard and Austin, are not generally known and it is one of the aims of this paper to

[1] H. W. B. Joseph, 'Professor John Cook Wilson', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, No. 7 (1916): 555–65, p. 555.

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bring these to the fore, especially in connection with Austin's discussion of knowledge and perception in 'Other Minds' and *Sense and Sensibilia*.[2]

The sort of 'direct realism' sought by Cook Wilson, Prichard, and Austin is now being revived by, e.g. John McDowell in *Mind and World* or Hilary Putnam in his Dewey Lectures, 'Sense, Nonsense, and the Senses: An Inquiry into the Powers of the Human Mind'.[3] McDowell acknowledges the influence of Wilfrid Sellars and Putnam discusses as precursors the likes of Aristotle, Reid, and Austin. As is nearly always the case elsewhere in the literature, Oxford Realists are ignored. I have tried to provide here a faithful account of their theses and arguments not necessarily out of conviction but at least in order to set the historical record straight.

1. BRITISH IDEALISM AND THE RISE OF REALISM

A native form of idealism, often described as 'neo-Hegelianism', was the dominant philosophical movement in Great Britain during the late Victorian era. Oxford played a major role in the rise of that movement: its father is generally acknowledged to be the Oxonian Thomas Hill Green, author of the influential *Prolegomena to Ethics*.[4] Some of its most important earlier figures were also at Oxford, from Edward Caird to Francis Herbert Bradley, author of the monumental *Appearance and Reality*.[5] Bernard Bosanquet, William Wallace, and Robert Lewis Nettleship were among prominent members also at Oxford. But all of these were dead by the turn of the century, with the exception of Bosanquet, who left in 1881, and Bradley, who was to die as early as 1924 and who never actually taught but lived as a recluse. So, although John Alexander Stewart, who was White's Professor of Moral Philosophy, 1897–1927, and John Alexander Smith, who was Waynflete Professor of Metaphysical Philosophy, 1910–1935, were idealists of sorts – Stewart and, especially, Smith were influenced by the Italian idealists Gentile and Croce – British idealism never really entirely dominated philosophical thought in Oxford. The movement was, of course, influential outside Oxford, especially in Cambridge (with McTaggart, Ward) and in Scottish universities such as Glasgow and St. Andrews (with Pringle-Pattison, Ritchie, Seth, and again Caird, Wallace). Later Oxford representatives include Harold Joachim who was to replace

[2] J. L. Austin, 'Other Minds', in *Philosophical Papers* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 76–116; *Sense and Sensibilia* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1962).

[3] J. McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press, 1994); H. Putnam, 'Sense, Nonsense, and the Senses: An Inquiry into the Powers of the Human Mind', *Journal of Philosophy*, No. 91 (1994): 445–517.

[4] T. H. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1883). On the importance of Green for British philosophy, see J. Skorupski, *English-Language Philosophy. 1750–1945* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993) chap. 3.

[5] F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, sec. edn. (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1897).

Cook Wilson as the Wykeham Professor of Logic, 1919–1935 – so that during most of the 1920s the three Oxford professorships were held by idealists, thus creating the impression of domination – and Robin George Collingwood, another reader of Croce who was Waynflete Professor of Metaphysical Philosophy at Magdalen, 1935–1941. Collingwood was perhaps the last idealist to hold a position of importance in Britain but, by voluntarily remaining aloof, he seemingly had very little influence within Oxonian philosophical circles. As Ryle once pointed out: 'Philosophy got moving at Oxford without his participation'.[6]

The label 'neo-Hegelianism' is more often than not a little bit inappropriate since most so-called neo-Hegelians did not follow Hegel's dialectical route towards monism.[7] These philosophers were idealists in the sense that they shared the monism of their German predecessors but they tried instead to secure it via a criticism and transformation of Locke's theory of sensation. For example, Bradley agreed with Green's criticism of empiricism but argued instead that immediate experience, which he called 'feeling', does not consist of a flow of discrete sensations, which requires a structuring mind. In the words of James Bradley, he saw it as consisting of 'a continuous whole of content constituting a non-relational unity of subject and object'.[8] As far as knowledge is concerned, the object of knowledge was held by Bradley to be inseparable from the act of knowing itself. He made this very point in a well-known passage:

> This is the point on which I insist, and it is the very ground on which I stand, when I urge that reality is sentient experience. I mean that to be real is to be indissolubly one thing with sentience. It is to be something which comes as a feature and aspect within one whole of feeling, something which, except as an integral element of such sentience, has no meaning at all. And what I repudiate is the separation of feeling from the felt, or of the desired from desire, or what is thought from thinking or the division – I might add – of anything from anything else.[9]

Bradley and followers such as Green or Bosanquet believed that there is in immediate experience no such thing as a direct apprehension of entities

[6] G. Ryle, 'Autobiographical', in O. P. Wood and G. Pitcher (eds.) *Ryle* (London, Macmillan) 1–15, p. 14.

[7] J. Bradley, 'F. H. Bradley's Metaphysics of Feeling and its Place in History', in A. Manser and G. Stock (eds.) *The Philosophy of F. H. Bradley* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1984) 227–42, pp. 228–9. On British readings of Hegel, see also J. Bradley, 'Hegel in Britain: A Brief History of British Commentary and Attitudes', *The Heythrop Journal*, No. 20 (1979): 1–24, 163–82. If one wishes to speak of a Germanic influence on British philosophers of the late nineteenth century, from Bradley and Bosanquet to Cook Wilson, one should also look at Hermann Lotze, who seems to have exerted a tremendous but understudied influence on all these figures.

[8] J. Bradley, 'F. H. Bradley's Metaphysics of Feeling and its Place in History', p. 230.

[9] F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, pp. 128–9.

such as sense-data or physical objects whose existence is independent of the subject and its cognitive activities. Bradley thus argued in *Appearance and Reality*[10] that the account of sensation as a relation between two independent entities (the subject and the object), which is itself separately given, is in fact incoherent and that relations are but the work of the mind; the objects of knowledge being constituted in and by the subject's cognitive activities.[11]

English philosophy at the turn of the century was in no way uniform, and 'realist' philosophies rose here and there in reaction against prevailing idealism. The battleground was, along with the doctrine of relations,[12] primarily immediate experience, where at least some form of the Lockean account of sensation had to be vindicated against idealists. One such realist philosopher was the Mancunian Samuel Alexander. In his lecture, to the British Academy, 'The Basis of Realism', he objected to the view that in knowledge the knower and the known are not independent but interdependent, claiming that 'so far are objects from being dependent on mind that we must rather say, if we speak of dependence at all, that it is mind which is dependent on objects'.[13] Alexander spoke instead of a 'compresence': 'mind and its object are two separate existences connected together by the relation of togetherness or compresence'.[14] In Cambridge, George Edward Moore and Bertrand Russell rejected the idealism of Bradley they had originally espoused. This is an already well known story which does not need to be told once more.[15] I should perhaps at least point out that, when Moore expressed his change of mind in his 1903 paper on 'The Refutation of Idealism',[16] he stated that if his paper 'refutes anything at all', it will at least refute the idealist view – obviously derived from Bradley – that 'what makes [any piece of fact] real can be nothing but its presence as an inseparable aspect of *a sentient experience*'.[17]

[10] Ibid. pp. 16–29.

[11] For the relation of Bradley's theory of relations to his theory of 'feeling', see J. Bradley, 'Relations, intelligibilité et non-contradiction dans la métaphysique du sentir de F.H. Bradley: une réinterprétation', *Archives de philosophie*, No. 54 (1991): 529–551; No. 55 (1992): 77–91.

[12] For Cook Wilson's criticisms of Bradley's theory of relations, see J. Cook Wilson, *Statement and Inference*, (2 vols, A. S. L. Farquharson (ed.) Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1926), pp. 692–5; R. K. Tacelli, 'Cook Wilson as Critic of Bradley', *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, No. 8 (1991): 199–205.

[13] S. Alexander, 'The Basis of Realism', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, No. 6 (1914): 279–314, p. 281. This lecture was part of an exchange with Bernard Bosanquet, who expressed his reaction to the new Realism in *The Distinction between Mind and its Objects* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1913).

[14] S. Alexander, 'The Basis of Realism', p. 283.

[15] See, e.g. T. Baldwin, *G. E. Moore* (London, Routledge, 1990); P. Hylton, *Russell, Idealism, and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990).

[16] G. E. Moore, 'The Refutation of Idealism', in *Philosophical Papers* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1922), pp. 1–30.

[17] G. E. Moore, 'The Refutation of Idealism', p. 8.

In Oxford, Thomas Case had already published in 1888 a book on *Physical Realism*.[18] But, as I shall point out in section 3, Case's own brand has little to do with the characteristic form of realism that was to take root in Oxford. When a replacement for Thomas Fowler in the Wykeham Chair of Logic was sought in 1889, Case was among the front-runners (along with John Venn) but John Cook Wilson was elected, who was to remain the Wykeham Professor until his death, on August 10, 1915. (Case eventually became Waynflete Professor of Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy, 1899–1909.) As I shall show in section 2, Cook Wilson and his followers argued against the idealists that 'knowing in no way alters or modifies the thing known'. In section 3, I shall point out that the main difference between Oxonian (Cook Wilson, Prichard) and Cantabrigian (Moore, Russell) realism lies in the fact that the latter, following the eighteenth-century empiricists, admits of epistemological 'intermediaries' in perception, while the former follows in essentials Reid's criticisms of any *tertium quid*. Differences of the sort explain the constant barrage of criticisms against typically Cantabrigian notions such as that of 'sense-data' from Prichard's early work at the turn of the century (section 4) to Austin's *Sense and Sensibilia* in the 1950s (section 9, part II of this paper).

Although he held the chair of logic, Cook Wilson was far from being a first-rate logician, even by pre-Fregean standards. During his lifetime, he published but a handful of studies on Aristotle and a minor mathematical study: *On the Traversing of Geometrical Figures*.[19] He had, however, more than a passing interest in mathematics: [20] he spent many years trying to find a mathematical refutation of non-Euclidean geometries in order to 'convince the rank and file of mathematicians' so that 'they would at least not suppose the philosophic criticism, by which I intended anyhow to attack, somehow wrong'.[21] Of course, he never found such a proof. This anecdote does not merely show how deeply conservative Cook Wilson's taste was, it also points to a serious difficulty, which will be presented at the very end of next section.

The turn of the century was a time of great advances in sciences but Cook Wilson and his followers more often than not rejected new ideas reaching Oxford. In particular, resistance to the new mathematical logic of Frege and

[18] T. Case, *Physical Realism* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1888).

[19] J. Cook Wilson, *Aristotelian Studies I* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1912); *On the Traversing of Geometrical Figures* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1905). For a complete bibliography of Cook Wilson's work, see J. Cook Wilson, *Statement and Inference*, pp. Lxvi–lxxii.

[20] Of Cook Wilson's ventures into mathematics, E. W. Hobson wrote: 'With his many sided interests he hardly gave sufficient time and thought to the subject to make himself conversant with the modern aspects of the underlying problems'. After quoting these words, the editor of Cook Wilson's works, A. S. L. Farquharson, added: 'he could not shut his ears to the sirens' song and thus my table is strewn with the wreckage of his many ventures in those delusive waters' (J. Cook Wilson, *Statement and Inference*, p. xxxviii).

[21] J. Cook Wilson, *Statement and Inference*, p. xcvi.

Russell was very strong. As Sir Alfred Ayer once described him, Cook Wilson was a 'fervent Aristotelian' who 'sat like Canute rebuking the advancing tide of mathematical logic'.[22] Cook Wilson's comments on Russell's paradox were indeed contemptuous. He described it as a 'rather foolish fallacy' and a 'very fallacious verbal mistake' of Russell's.[23] He also wrote:

> I am afraid I am obliged to think that a man is conceited as well as silly to think such puerilities are worthy to be put in print: and it's simply exasperating to think that he finds a publisher (where was the publisher's reader?), and that in this way such contemptible stuff can even find its way into examinations.[24]

The influence of Cook Wilson's aversion was, sadly, a lasting one: it was only in the 1950s that mathematical logic was taught for the first time in Oxford. (See part II of this paper, section 7 for more details about logic at Oxford.)

Cook Wilson was very reluctant to publish and his writings on logic were published posthumously by his student A. S. L. Farquharson under the title *Statement and Inference*.[25] His reluctance is partly explainable by the fact that his views where constantly shifting – this is witnessed by many contradictory passages in *Statement and Inference*. It was also a matter of principle: Cook Wilson once wrote that 'the (printed) letter killeth, and it is extraordinary how it will prevent the acutest from exercising their wonted clearness of vision'.[26] His argument was that authors who have committed to print their views on a given issue would more often than not, should their views prove to be erroneous, feel obliged to defend them and to engage in

[22] A. J. Ayer, *Part of my Life* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 77.

[23] J. Cook Wilson, *Statement and Inference*, p. cx.

[24] J. Cook Wilson, *Statement and Inference*, p. 739. As §§ 147–8 of *Statement and Inference* make it clear, Cook Wilson's criticisms of Russell's 'fantastic mathematical nonsense' were not mere expressions of contempt but relied on his views about universals (p. 348). As I do not wish to discuss the issue of universals in this paper, I can only refer the reader to these sections (pp. 340–53).

[25] J. Cook Wilson, *Statement and Inference*, op. cit. There are very few accounts of Cook Wilson's philosophy; one may profitably read obituaries by his pupils, i.e. H. W. B. Joseph, 'Professor John Cook Wilson' and H. A. Prichard, 'Professor John Cook Wilson', *Mind*, No. 28 (1919): 297–318. After the appearance of *Statement and Inference* in 1926, a few papers appeared in *Mind* discussing various aspects of Cook Wilson's philosophy: R. Robinson, 'Cook Wilson's View of Judgement', *Mind*, No. 37 (1928): 304–17; R. Robinson, 'Cook Wilson's View of the Origin of "Judgement" ' *Mind*, No. 37 (1928): 454–70; M. B. Foster, 'The Concrete Universal: Cook Wilson and Bosanquet', *Mind*, No. 40 (1931): 1–22; E. J. Furlong, 'Cook Wilson and the Non-Euclideans', *Mind*, No. 40 (1941), 122–39. On Cook Wilson's 'logic', see R. Robinson, *The Province of Logic. An Interpretation of Certain Parts of Cook Wilson's 'Statement and Inference'* (London, Routledge, 1931) which is, I believe, the only book devoted to his work. C. R. Morris's *Idealistic Logic* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1933), pp. 222–73 provides a critical account from the standpoint of idealism and J. Passmore's *A Hundred Years of Philosophy*, sec. edn. (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1968), chap. 10, contains an excellent, short introduction.

[26] J. Cook Wilson, *Statement and Inference*, p. 871.

pointless rhetorical exchanges instead of seeing immediately the validity of arguments against them.[27] Moreover, Oxford was at the turn of the century a small, isolated philosophical community in which there was no pressure to publish. Not surprisingly, therefore, it was mainly through his teaching and personal contact that Cook Wilson spread his views. He was the centre of gravity of the school that came to be known as Oxford Realism. His influence continued in Oxford after his death through the teaching and writings of disciples such as Harold Arthur Prichard (1871–1947) and Horace William Brindley Joseph (1867–1943).[28]

Prichard, who studied at New College in the 1890s, is most certainly a leading figure and I shall discuss extensively his ideas in sections 4–6. Joseph kept Cook Wilson's heritage alive within New College (with help, later, from Alic Smith), although he never truly parted with idealism.[29] A prolific and original writer, Joseph had a wider range of interests than any other Oxford philosopher of his times did. Although I shall very briefly refer below to his contributions to epistemology and ethics, I have chosen not to provide here the extensive treatment that his ideas also deserve. For the moment, I should just like to mention his contributions to other fields, in order to give an idea of the width of his philosophical scope. Joseph wrote

[27] See also the confession reported in R. G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 19.

[28] For biographical details about Prichard and Joseph, see H. H. Price, 'Harold Arthur Prichard. 1871–1947', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, No. 33 (1947): 331–50; H. A. Prichard, 'H. W. B. Joseph, 1867–1943', *Mind*, 53 (1944): 189–91; A. H. Smith, 'Horace William Brindley Joseph. 1867–1943', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, No. 31 (1945), 375–98. A number of minor figures were close to Oxford Realism. Within New College, Alic Smith, who became Warden after the Second World War, was a Kant scholar. The author of *Kantian Studies* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1947), he also wrote a *Treatise on Knowledge* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1943) which is very much influenced by Cook Wilson and Prichard. Within Oxford, mention should be made of Edgar Frederick Carritt, Collingwood's tutor. Carritt specialized in aesthetics but wrote also in ethics. See, e.g. *The Theory of Beauty*, 5th edition (London, Methuen, 1949); *The Theory of Morals. An Introduction to Ethical Philosophy* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1928); *Ethical and Political Thinking* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1947). Outside Oxford, one should mention John Leofric Stocks and William George de Burgh. Although sympathetic, they cannot, however, be said to have been Oxford Realists. Stocks succeeded Samuel Alexander in Manchester in 1924. Involved in politics, Stocks wrote mainly on ethics and political philosophy. See, e.g, *Reason and Intuition*, reprint (Freeport N.Y., Books for Libraries Press, 1970); *Morality and Purpose* (New York, Schocken Books, 1969). William George de Burgh was close friend of Joseph, Joachim, and Smith since his student days and, after his retirement from his Chair at Reading in 1935, he helped with tuition at New College until his death in 1943. This philosopher of religion aimed at a synoptic view in which Christian theological dogmas were to be harmonized with the whole of human knowledge. He held revelation as an independent source of genuine knowledge and insisted that truth should not be confined to logical propositional form: one could speak of the 'non-propositional' truth of a religious insight as much as that of a sense-perception. But de Burgh was far from adopting the intuitionist stance of Prichard and Ross. (On the latter, see footnote 59, below.) See, e.g. *From Morality to Religion*, reprint, (Port Washington, Kennikat Press, 1970), p. 217n.

[29] On this point, see the brief remarks at beginning of section 6, in part II of this paper.

extensively on Plato, Leibniz, Berkeley, and Kant.[30] In typically Victorian fashion, he also took part of the debate about the concept of evolution, criticizing Spencer, Darwin, and Huxley in his Herbert Spencer Lecture on 'The Concept of Evolution'.[31] He also busied himself trying to refute another newfangled idea, Marxism, in a book on *The Labour Theory of Value in Karl Marx*.[32] Joseph also tackled issues in philosophy of mathematics, displaying the same aversion as Cook Wilson's for important developments of the day, such as the new theories of the continuum of Cantor and Dedekind.[33] Joseph will be mainly remembered, however, for his contribution to (Aristotelian) logic. He followed Cook Wilson in seeing nothing worthy in the mathematical logic of Russell, which he criticized, late in his career, in a series of papers in *Mind* entitled 'A Defense of Freethinking in Logistics'.[34] His *Introduction to Logic* remains to this day one of the better manuals of logic written from the standpoint of Aristotelian logic, which he sought to propound in a purer form, free from historical accretions. This is another example of the conservative taste of early Oxford Realists and their reluctance to open up to modern logic.[35] This attitude may be explained by

[30] H. W. B. Joseph, *Essays in Ancient and Modern Philosophy* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1935); *Lectures on the Philosophy of Leibniz*, in J. L. Austin (ed.) (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1949).

[31] H. W. B. Joseph, 'The Concept of Evolution', in *Essays in Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, pp. 303–34.

[32] H. W. B. Joseph, *The Labour Theory of Value in Karl Marx* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1923).

[33] Cook Wilson spoke with contempt of Dedekind and the 'modern vagaries connected with symbolic logic' (J. Cook Wilson, *Statement and Inference*, p. xcviii). In a letter to Bosanquet, Cook Wilson hinted that Dedekind's definition of irrationals and of continuity came 'from a ghastly mistake' and wrote of chaffing 'the modern metaphysico-mathematician for a mare's nest constructed from fallacies the Platonist saw through long ago' (J. Cook Wilson, *Statement and Inference*, p. ciii). Joseph also adopted uncritically the Greek conception of the continuum and thought that he could show, following Cook Wilson's footsteps, that its modern arithmetical construction by Dedekind and Cantor, which was readily adopted by Cambridge mathematicians such as Hardy and Russell, to be mistaken because it is based on a view of the line as being composed of points. Joseph's efforts remained fruitless, however, and his paper on 'The Arithmetical Continuum' was left unpublished, along with many volumes of lecture notes, which include fully written manuscripts of the 'Lectures on Modern Realism' and the 'Lectures on External and Internal Relations and the Philosophy of Analysis' delivered in 1932, where he voiced objections to Russell, Moore, and Wittgenstein. For some details about Joseph's literary estate, still housed in New College, see H. A. Prichard, 'H. W. B. Joseph, 1867–1943', p. 190 and R. K. Tacelli, 'Things in Space: Realism and Idealism in the Philosophy of H. W. B. Joseph', doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto, 1980, which contains transcriptions of another fully written manuscript, that of the 'Lectures on Things in Space'.

[34] H. W. B. Joseph, 'A Defense of Freethinking in Logistics', *Mind*, No. 41 (1932): 424–40; No. 42 (1933): 417–43; No. 43 (1934): 315–20.

[35] H. W. B. Joseph, *An Introduction to Logic* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1906), sec. edn., 1916. Another fine example of philosophical logic belonging to the old Aristotelian 'paradigm', written by a Cook Wilsonian, is Richard Robinson's *Definition* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1954).

the fact that, at the turn of the century, philosophy at Oxford was linked to the study of the Ancients, with which it had been associated throughout the nineteenth century. Greek philosophy still played a major role in Modern Greats, introduced in the early 1920s and, in particular, logic was done by way of a commentary on Aristotle.[36] As Ryle would later recall from his student days in the early 1920s: 'Logic, save for Aristotelian scholarship, was in the doldrums'.[37]

2. COOK WILSON AND THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF A THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

Although known as a realist, Cook Wilson was actually influenced in his youth by Kant, Lotze, Green, and Bradley. It was Green's reputation which brought him to Oxford and he went to Göttingen, around 1873–4, to study with Lotze. In his later years, he finally came to reject the idealist view that in knowledge the knower and the known are interdependent, arguing that knowing makes no difference to what is known; a view that he expressed by saying:

> You can no more act upon the object by knowing it than you can 'please the Dean and Chapter by stroking the dome of St. Paul's' [. . .] Obviously if we 'do anything to' anything in knowing, it is not done to the object known, to what we know, for that simply contradicts the presuppositions of the act of knowledge itself.[38]

This quotation is taken from a letter by Cook Wilson to Prichard (6.I.1904).[39] In *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*, which will be briefly discussed below, Prichard made the same point:

> Knowledge unconditionally presupposes that the reality known exists independently of the knowledge of it, and that we know it as it exists in this independence. It is simply *impossible* to think that any reality depends on our knowledge of it. If there is to be knowledge, there must first *be* something to be

[36] On the introduction of Modern Greats and the changes it brought about in Oxford, see G. Ryle, 'Fifty Years of Philosophy and Philosophers', *Philosophy*, No. 51 (1976): 381–89, 383–4. Surely, the most important change for philosophy at Oxford was the introduction in the 1950s of the B.Phil. to replace to old B.Litt., under the patronage of Gilbert Ryle. On this see J. D. Mabbott, *Oxford Memories* (Oxford, Thornton's of Oxford, 1986), pp. 145–7.

[37] G. Ryle, 'Autobiographical', p. 4. It is fitting to recall here that Cook Wilson himself was primarily an Aristotelian scholar and that it is his follower Sir David Ross (Deputy Professor of Philosophy in 1923–7) who is responsible for the Oxford Edition of Aristotle's writings. The influence of Aristotle is omnipresent in the works of Oxford Realists from Cook Wilson to Ryle's 'categories' and Austin's and Strawson's conception of 'analysis', etc.

[38] J. Cook Wilson, *Statement and Inference*, p. 802.

[39] *Ibid.*, pp. 801–8.

> known. In other words, knowledge is essentially discovery, or finding what already is. If a reality could only be or come to be in virtue of some activity or process on part of the mind, that activity or process would not be 'knowing', but 'making' or 'creating', and to make and to know must in the end be admitted to be mutually exclusive.[40]

In short: 'knowing in no way alters or modifies the thing known'.[41] This was the maxim of Oxford Realism. The first step towards vindicating this stance was to argue that a correct understanding of relations does not warrant the idealist conclusion that an object is merely a part of the process of knowing because it is known; it necessitates that the object has a reality of its own. Cook Wilson argued from analogy, using the case of a collision between two bodies:

> This is nothing apart from the bodies which come into collision: it is inseparable from them. Abstract the bodies and the collision is gone also. However, the very nature of the collision between two bodies, A and B, necessitates itself that A and B should be different from one another. It also necessitates that A should have a being other than being in collision with B, and it is only as having such being that it can enter into the given relation with B. [. . .] We have, then, here a case where a relation, though empty and meaningless if we abstract from it the terms related, is so far from necessitating their inclusion in itself that it necessitates the contrary; for it necessitates that these terms must have a being of their own which is not included in the being of the relation. [. . .] The truth is, that just as the collision with B is only possible through a being of B other than its coming into collision, and it is with B as having such a being that the collision takes place, so also the apprehension of an object is only possible through a being of the object other than its being apprehended, and it is this being, no part itself of the apprehending thought, which is what is apprehended.[42]

Thus, Cook Wilson argued, the fact that an object is apprehended does not imply that it is merely a part of the 'apprehending consciousness'. A key part of Cook Wilson's argumentation is his notion of 'apprehension'. This is a fundamental notion for he defines logic as the study of 'apprehension'; unfortunately, nowhere does he provide a definition.[43] One may infer from his writings that he had in mind a notion at the same time close to Aristotle's *noesis* and to Russell's 'acquaintance'.[44] It is at least safe to say that,

[40] H. A. Prichard, *Kant's Theory of Knowledge* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1909), p. 108.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 118.

[42] J. Cook Wilson, *Statement and Inference*, p. 74.

[43] *Ibid.*, pp. 78f. On this, see the editor's footnote to p. 78.

[44] See, for example, Bertrand Russell's essay on 'Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description', in *Mysticism and Logic*, reprint (London, Allen & Unwin, 1976) 200–21), or the passages from Russell's *Problems of Philosophy* quoted in section 3, below. As will become clear below, the debate between Cambridge and Oxford Realists will turn around the nature of the objects of perception.

according to him, 'apprehension' designates the immediate cognitive relation between a subject and an object, where the subject does not doubt the existence of the object. This is reminiscent of Thomas Reid, who held in his *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (Bk. II, chap. v) that perception involves some conception of the object and the conviction of its existence, this conviction being immediate and non-inferential. This view certainly has Aristotelian origins since it harks back to the *Posterior Analytics*, where Aristotle argued in the last pages (II.19) that there must be a form of immediate, non-inferential knowledge which is to be found in perception. Cook Wilson was not exactly faithful to Aristotle and Reid, however, since 'apprehensions' can be, according to him, both perceptual and non-perceptual,[45] and some are obtained by inference while some are not, the latter being the material of inference.[46]

Cook Wilson rejected the distinction, current among idealist logicians, between judgement and inference. His claim was the opposite, namely that inferring is one of the forms of judgement: 'if we take judging in its most natural sense, that is as decision on evidence after deliberation, then inferring is just one of those form of apprehending to which the words judging and judgement most properly apply'.[47] We are also told that '[a] judgement is a decision. To judge is to decide. It implies previous indecision, a previous thinking process in which we were doubting'.[48] Since knowledge excludes doubt, knowledge and judgement are for Cook Wilson two different things. He thus criticized idealists for also thinking that judgement is a common form which includes knowledge, along with belief, opinion, etc.[49] In short, there is no common form (judgement) which would include non-inferred knowledge, opinion, and belief, but would exclude inferred knowledge (inferences).

Instead, Cook Wilson sharply separated knowledge from both opinion and belief and he claimed that knowledge, in the form of 'apprehension', was presupposed by other activities of thinking such as judging and opining. For example, he claimed that 'there will be something else besides judgement to be recognized in the formation of opinion, that is to say knowledge, as manifested in such activities as occur in ordinary perception; activities, in other words, which are not properly speaking *decisions*'.[50] Therefore, 'opining' was conceived of as a form of decision that involves knowledge but goes beyond knowledge. It is not knowledge. In fact, Cook Wilson's account of opinion resembles that of probabilistic reasoning:

> It is a peculiar thing – the result of estimate – and we call it by a peculiar name, opinion. For it, taken in its strict and proper sense, we can use no term that

[45] J. Cook Wilson, *Statement and Inference*, p. 79.
[46] *Ibid.*, pp. 84–5.
[47] *Ibid.*, p. 86.
[48] *Ibid.*, p. 92.
[49] *Ibid.*, pp. 86–7.
[50] *Ibid.*, p. 96.

> belongs to knowing. For the opinion that A is B is founded on evidence we know to be insufficient, whereas it is of the very nature of knowledge not to make its statements at all on grounds recognized to be insufficient, nor to come to any decision except that the grounds are insufficient; for it is here that in the knowing activity we stop.[51]

Belief is also to be distinguished from knowledge: 'Belief is not knowledge and the man who knows does not believe at all what he knows; he knows it'.[52]

It is an obvious consequence of the claims that knowing is to be distinguished from these other mental activities and that it is presupposed by all of them that one cannot, in turn, define knowledge. Prichard neatly summarized the point: 'Knowledge is *sui generis*, and, as such, cannot be explained'.[53] This 'Oxford folly', as Frank Ramsey once put it,[54] of considering knowledge as undefinable pitted Oxford philosophers against the empiricist tradition and much of twentieth-century epistemology, which followed the Cantabrigian in defining knowledge in terms of belief. (See section 10, in part II of this paper, for indications about current realist positions akin to Cook Wilson's.) It also led its proponents to question the very possibility of a theory of knowledge. Indeed, Cook Wilson and Prichard saw in it no more than a contradiction in terms:

> Knowledge is *sui generis* and therefore a 'theory' of it is impossible. Knowledge is simply knowledge, and an attempt to state it in terms of something else must end in describing something which is not knowledge.[55]

[51] *Ibid.*, pp. 99–100.

[52] *Ibid.*, p. 100.

[53] H. A. Prichard, *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*, p. 124.

[54] F. P. Ramsey, *Notes on Philosophy, Probability and Mathematics*, in M.-C. Galavotti (ed.) (Naples, Bibliopolis, 1991), p. 81.

[55] H. A. Prichard, *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*, p. 245. The neo-Kantian philosopher Leonard Nelson, from Göttingen, also propounded an argument to the same effect in his address to the Fourth International Congress of Philosophy in Bologna (1911), entitled 'Die unmöglichkeit der Erkenntnistheorie' or 'The Impossibility of a Theory of Knowledge'. For the English translation, see L. Nelson, *Socratic Method and Critical Philosophy. Selected Essays* (New York, Dover, 1949), pp. 185–205; for recent discussions of Nelson's argument, see R. Chisholm, 'Socratic Method and the Theory of Knowledge', in P. Schröder (ed.) *Vernunft Erkenntnis Sittlichkeit. Internationales philosophisches Symposion Göttingen, vom 27.–29. Oktober 1977 aus Anlaß des 50. Todestages von Leonard Nelson* (Hamburg, Felix Meiner, 1979), pp. 37–54; R. Haller, 'The Possibility of the Theory of Knowledge', *Ratio*, No. 21 (1979): 87–96. Nelson's work was known to Cook Wilson, who refers without naming him explicitly to his book *Über das sogennante Erkenntnisproblem*. Cook Wilson was struck by the title, which translates: 'On the So-Called Problem of Knowledge'. He wrote:

> For a long time I heard no sign of any such tendency as my own on the Continent, but, after the lapse of some years, one of my hearers told me that a book had just appeared in Germany which had important affinities with my own views. This was in 1908, and the title of the book was *Das* s o g e n n a n t e *Erkenntnisproblem*. The main thought in the book seemed to me that indicated by its significant title, and that thought had been familiar in Oxford teaching and discussions long before the appearance of the German book.
>
> (Cook Wilson, *Statement and Inference*, p. 872)

Prichard developed an analogous line of reasoning about the concept of duty in ethics.[56] In analogy with the case of knowledge, Prichard saw the notion of obligation as unanalysable and believed that any attempt to define it would end up in replacing it by something else.[57] It was his firm belief that one possesses an immediate, intuitive moral apprehension, which tells one how to act in a given situation; this knowledge being self-evident and not a matter of argument. The mistake alluded to in the title of his first paper on the subject, 'Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?',[58] was that moral philosophers believed that it is in fact a matter of argument and that a justification is needed: according to him, duties are not in need of any justification by some 'theory' – as in the case of knowledge, where it is senseless to ask for a proof of something which is already known. The basis of common morality being known by 'moral apprehension' or 'intuition' and since no theory could justify apprehended duties, the only thing which is left for the ethics teacher to do is simply to improve his students' capacity for moral apprehension by removing prejudices, etc. These ideas led to the creation of a movement sometimes known as 'Oxford Intuitionism'.[59]

[56] Although I am concerned principally with Prichard's writings in epistemology, it should indeed be said that he is mainly remembered today for his writings in ethics. As a matter of fact, when he was finally elected to a chair in 1928, it was as White's Professor of Moral Philosophy. He remained in that position until the year of his retirement, 1938, and wrote mainly on ethics in the later part of his career, with only a few brief but interesting excursions into epistemology. As he was not a prolific writer, he published only a handful of papers on ethics but these were very influential. Prichard left an unfinished manuscript, parts of which were edited posthumously by Sir W. D. Ross, along with a collection of his papers in *Moral Obligation* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1949). For a review of Prichard's book, see C. D. Broad, 'Critical Notice: *Moral Obligation*. Essays and Lectures by H. A. Prichard', *Mind*, No. 59 (1950): 555–6.

[57] This point was already made by Urmson in 'Prichard and Knowledge', in J. Dancy, J. M. E. Moravcsik, C. C. W. Taylor (eds) *Human Agency. Language, Duty, and Value* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1988) 11–24, p. 14.

[58] H. A. Prichard, 'Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?', *Mind*, No. 21 (1912): 21–37.

[59] Oxford Intuitionism was developed mainly by a student of Prichard, Sir David Ross, who was among other things responsible for the Oxford Edition of Aristotle's writings. The preface of *The Right and the Good* makes plain his allegiance to Prichard: 'My main obligation is to Professor H. A. Prichard. I believe I owe the main lines of the view expressed in my first two chapters to his article "Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?"' (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1930), p. v. The influence of Prichard extended also to other Oxonians such as the aesthetician E. F. Carritt (another reader of Croce), whose writings on ethics bear a realist influence, and the Intuitionist movement held a prominent place in British moral philosophy for at least ten years before the Second World War. H. W. B. Joseph published a small book, *Some Problems in Ethics* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1931) in which he actually disagreed on all points with Prichard, believing that reducing guidance in actions to a direct moral apprehension of duty made morality irrational (pp. 68f.). In a more Platonic fashion, Joseph insisted that morality could only be made intelligible in reference to the notion of 'good'. But Joseph's reaction appears to be very mild when compared to that of Collingwood. For brief accounts of Oxford Intuitionism, see J. D. Mabbott, *An Introduction to Ethics* (London, Hutchinson, 1966), chap. 5; G. J. Warnock, *Contemporary Moral Philosophy* (London, St. Martin's Press, 1967), chap. 2; and a unique paper in French by John Laird, 'Les moralistes contemporains à Oxford et la renaissance de l'intuitionnisme', *Recherches philosophiques*, No. 1 (1932): 235–52.

Such a radical stance on knowledge had other, rather unlikely, consequences. For example, it forced Prichard to hold even more unpalatable views such as the thesis of the eternal existence of minds. Indeed, an idealist might retort against the realist that his position involves materialism which, in turn, implies that there was a material world prior to the existence of knowing minds and that such minds would have evolved from it. This is claimed to be impossible since matter, having only characteristics bound up with extension and motion, cannot have originated something of a different kind such as minds. This argument would serve, from the idealist point of view, as a *reductio ad absurdum* of realism. Prichard's reply was that existence of a material world is only prior to the existence of knowledge of it, not to the existence of minds and that:

> Knowing implies the ultimate or unoriginated existence of beings possessed of the capacity to know. Otherwise, knowledge would be a merely derivative product, capable of being stated in terms of something else, and in the end in terms of matter and motion.[60]

To come back to Cook Wilson on knowledge and belief. The important characteristic of belief that sets it apart from other mental activities such as knowing and opining is the psychological feeling of confidence, which is *sui generis*:

> To a high degree of such confidence, where it naturally exists, is attached the word belief, and language here, as not infrequently, is true to distinctions which have value in our consciousness. It is not opinion, it is not knowledge, it is not properly even judgement.[61]

[60] H. A. Prichard, *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*, p. 128. This thesis is but part of Plato's theory of the soul. The latter was at the centre of the following, rather funny, exchange between Prichard and Ryle (during a meeting of the Philosopher's tea, around 1937), which is recalled by William Kneale:

> I cannot recall the original question, but I remember that [Prichard] had caught the attention of the rest of us by asserting in a casual unemphatic way that substances were obviously ungenerable and indestructible. Pressed to give an example, he said that he himself was a substance. At this my colleague Professor Ryle, not yet a professor but an *enfant terrible*, asked 'What were you doing when Julius Caesar landed in Britain?'. For a moment Prichard made no reply, and then, with the air of one who is puzzled by the asking of the question rather than by the question itself, said simply 'I have forgotten'. Still eager for the truth, Ryle tried again. 'Is it only about yourself', he asked, 'that you have such knowledge, or can you be sure also that I was in existence at the time of Caesar's invasion?' For a moment Prichard paused again as though puzzled by the asking of the question. Then, pointing to Ryle's body, he said brightly 'Yes, but of course I am not talking about *this*: I mean the real Ryle'
> (*On Having a Mind*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1962, pp. 7–8)

[61] J. Cook Wilson, *Statement and Inference*, p. 102.

(One should notice, *en passant*, the reliance on ordinary language, which is said to be 'true to distinctions which have value in our consciousness'. This is the sort of attitude which was to characterize the ordinary language philosophy of Austin. See section 8, in part II of this paper.) Cook Wilson did not deny that someone who only believes but does not know – in his sense of 'knowing' – possesses the same degree of confidence than someone who knows. Thus, someone may judge upon a mistaken view of the evidence with the same degree of confidence and he is 'in the same frame of mind as when he decides that the evidence proves and really does prove'.[62] Cook Wilson further believed – no pun intended – that there is no 'general criterion of knowledge by which we should know what was knowing and what was not' but also that '[t]he consciousness that the knowing process is a knowing process must be contained within the knowing process itself'.[63] He was thus led to distinguish a further 'form of consciousness' that has been called 'being under the impression that'. This notion was to play an important role within the Oxford Realist movement (for Prichard and Price in particular). This 'form of consciousness' would be the case where there is 'real error other than false opinion' which in fact 'does not lie in false judgement, taking judgement in its strict and proper sense' (i.e. decision on evidence after deliberation).[64] The typical example is that of seeing the back of Smith on the street and being under the impression that it is Jones. Cook Wilson's analysis of that example is worth quoting *in extenso*:

> For example, we see at a little distance a person whom 'we mistake for an acquaintance' and without hesitation perform some act which it would be a liberty to take with any one but an acquaintance, do something in fact which we rightly say we should not have done if we had ever suspected he was not an acquaintance. We did not act on an opinion that it was our friend; for, in forming an opinion, we are aware that the evidence is insufficient and, if we had thought *that*, we should never have done the act. It seems more like belief; but, if we had consciously made it a matter of belief, we should have distinguished it from knowledge, and again, *ex hypothesi*, we should not have done the act. Probably one answer offered would be that, though we didn't know, we thought we knew. But this will not suffice. [. . .] if we really thought we knew, we must have reflected and must have thought the evidence conclusive, whereas, *ex hypothesi*, any reflection shows it could not be conclusive.[65]

It is clear, then, that 'being under the impression that' is akin neither to judgement nor to apprehension and hence to knowledge, opinion, or belief. It is a peculiar 'form of consciousness' indeed, characterized in fact by the absence of disbelief:

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 106.
[63] *Ibid.*, p. 107.
[64] *Ibid.*, p. 108.
[65] *Ibid.*, p. 109–110.

> It is true that, if asked, we might say 'I thought it was my friend' – 'I believed it was my friend', but these expressions are all inaccurate. The truth is, as will be admitted, that in the given case, when I perceive the familiar characteristics of my friend, it never 'enters into my head' that they could belong to any one else. I don't think about that at all, and so the processes of judgement, belief, and opinion are impossible. The thinking process is not fully awakened, and this fact of consciousness throws light upon that general characteristic of all thinking, which at first may seem to us so empty, viz. that it is an activity of consciousness.[66]

> The peculiar attitude of consciousness which simulates judgement and which we have designated as treating an X as if it were A, without the judgement that X is A, eludes all attempts to express it in terms of the awakened consciousness or in any other terms but such as we have been given peculiar to itself. For instance, it is erroneous, but it is not erroneous judgement, belief, or opinion.[67]

To provide an uncontroversial characterization of Cook Wilson's views on knowledge seems to me to be a difficult albeit important task. As a first but perhaps inexact approximation, I should like to claim that Cook Wilson appears to have committed himself, by arguing that knowledge is *sui generis* and not to be defined on the basis of belief, to the view that it is necessary that 'if I know that *p*, then *p*'.[68] To use an expression taken from Austin's paper on 'Other Minds': 'If I know, I can't be wrong'.[69] At first blush, Cook Wilson also appears to rule out error about knowledge inasmuch as he claims that consciousness of knowledge guarantees the truth of its object. Cook Wilson's notion of 'being under the impression that' appears to have been devised precisely to avoid this rather unpalatable conclusion. It is a form of consciousness which is undistinguishable from knowledge – so it is neither judgement nor belief nor opinion – but it leaves room for error. There is, however, an obvious difficulty with this further position: what guarantees then that all cases of knowledge are not really cases of 'being under the impression that'?

In sections 8 and 9, part II of this paper, I shall introduce some of the figures educated within the Oxford Realist tradition in the early 1930s, such as Austin and Urmson. It is not inappropriate to get ahead of ourselves here and have a quick look at their reactions to such fundamental difficulties. H. P. Grice's reaction was simply to reject Cook Wilson's position. According to him, the latter's position on knowledge leaves 'no room for the possibility of thinking that we know *p* when in fact it is not the case that *p*'.[70] Furthermore, the introduction of the state of 'being under the impression that' or

[66] *Ibid.*, p. 110.
[67] *Ibid.*, p. 111.
[68] I would to thank the referee for this Journal for having corrected me on this point.
[69] J. L. Austin, 'Other Minds', p. 79.
[70] H. P. Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words*, (Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 383.

'taking for granted' (as it is sometimes referred to) does not solve the problem, 'for what enables us to deny that all of our so-called knowledge is really only 'taking for granted'?'.[71] On the other hand, J. O. Urmson believed that it is 'very hard to discard' Cook Wilson's position:

> Does the fact that I sometimes accept a fallacious argument as valid (claim the immediate apprehension of an argument as valid when it is in fact fallacious) show that I can never recognize an argument to be valid? And if a claim to see a fallacy is never admissible, since there is no immediate apprehension, and accusations of fallacy must always be proved, will one not have to apprehend the validity of this proof? Or are we to demand an infinity of metaproofs?[72]

Urmson was actually of the opinion that Cook Wilson's positions 'require emendation rather than wholesale rejection':

> I do have much sympathy with the view of Cook Wilson and Prichard that, while the nature of belief has to be elucidated in terms of its relation to knowledge, knowledge has to be contrasted with belief and opinion rather than being treated as a special case of belief.[73]

I shall claim in section 9 (in part II of this paper) that Austin also followed Cook Wilson and Prichard on this point, when criticizing Price and Ayer on sense-data in *Sense and Sensibilia*. In 'Other Minds', Austin presented a way out of the difficulty raised here by Grice. He took an altogether different and novel approach, namely that of drawing a parallel between 'I know' and 'I promise'[74] and claiming that 'To suppose that 'I know' is a descriptive phrase, is only one example of the *descriptive fallacy*, so common in philosophy'.[75] This way, Austin could defend a Cook Wilsonian line on knowledge (see section 9) while making sense of 'If I know, I can't be wrong' by pointing out that failure to know is analogous to failure to keep a promise. As a matter of fact, in both cases:

> It is overlooked that the conditions which must be satisfied if I am to show that a thing is within my cognisance or within my power are conditions, not about the future, but about *the present and the past*: it is not demanded that I do more than *believe* about the future.[76]

This way, one can say, to vary Austin's example, that 'I know that pigs don't fly' implies that 'I know that none ever have' but, concerning the future, only that 'I believe that none ever will'. This undermines the possibility of

[71] *Ibid.*, pp. 383–4.
[72] J. O. Urmson, 'Prichard and Knowledge', pp. 14–15.
[73] *Ibid.*, p. 15.
[74] J. L. Austin, 'Other Minds', pp. 98f.
[75] *Ibid.*, p. 103.
[76] *Ibid.*, p. 101.

raising doubts about the certainty of 'I know' (and 'I promise') on the grounds that one cannot foresee the future. A full discussion of Austin's arguments would leave us far afield.[77] These brief remarks were not even intended as a rough sketch of the ideas contained in this rich paper; it was rather my intention merely to emphasize that Austin's discussion of 'If I know, I can't be wrong' in 'Other Minds' is better understood when seen against the background of Oxford Realism.

There is a serious difficulty with Cook Wilson's position which can be seen by looking at his unsuccessful attempt at finding a mathematical refutation of non-Euclidean geometries, which was mentioned in section 1. Cook Wilson simply believed that the idea of a non-Euclidean space is a 'chimera'[78] and that Euclid's fifth axiom or axiom of parallels, which does not hold for non-Euclidean geometries, is 'absolutely self-evident'.[79] His claim was that he 'knows' or 'apprehended' that Euclid's fifth axiom is true, in his very restricted sense of 'knowing': if one knows that *p*, then *p* is the case. But either someone 'apprehends' the truth of *p* or that person doesn't. E. J. Furlong, who wrote a sympathetic account of Cook Wilson's views on geometry, pointed out that Cook Wilson could only reply to those who claim not to be able to 'apprehend' the truth of Euclid's fifth axiom by trying to 'remove, as the moral intuitionist does, whatever confusions or prejudices . . . prevent them from apprehending the truth of the disputed proposition'.[80] There is nothing else that could be done. This example clearly shows the extreme fallibility of claims to 'apprehension' which seriously undermines the whole of Cook Wilson's philosophy.

3. ANTI-REPRESENTATIONALISM: REID & COOK WILSON

One useful way of distinguishing between the realist schools of Oxford and Cambridge is to recall Thomas Reid's objections to early Modernist theories of perception in Essay II of his *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*. Of course, the following will not be a *précis* of a history of British empiricism. I do not wish to claim that Oxford Realists were merely Scottish common-sense philosophers. My claim is the rather limited one that the Oxford Realists shared with Reid a rejection of the idea that a *tertium quid* (of whatever sort) was needed for a proper explanation of perception (what has been dubbed below 'representationalist theories') and that, moreover, there is a striking similarity between their arguments. In his unpublished

[77] One would have to take into account cogent criticisms levelled at the analogy between 'I know' and 'I promise' in, e.g. J. Harrison, 'Knowing and Promising', *Mind*, No. 71 (1962): 443–57. See also Geach's critique, quoted at the end of section 7, in part II of this paper.

[78] J. Cook Wilson, *Statement and Inference*, p. 456.

[79] *Ibid.*, p. 561.

[80] E. J. Furlong, 'Cook Wilson and the Non-Euclideans', p. 128. The allusion to moral intuitionism points out to a similar problem faced by Prichard in ethics.

'Lectures on Modern Realism', H. W. B. Joseph justified such parallels when he pointed out that the sort of realism held by Cook Wilson and Prichard had no equivalent in the contemporary British philosophical scene (at the time) and that one had to go back to Reid to find an ally.[81]

In Book II, chapter ix of his *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, Reid begins by quoting Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*: 'It is evident that the mind knows not things immediately, but only by the intervention of the ideas it has of them' (Bk. IV, ch. iv). Such a thesis is seen by Reid as a move frequently made by philosophers:

> Philosophers, ancient and modern, have maintained, that the operations of the mind, like the tools of an artificer, can only be employed upon objects that are present in the *mind*, or in the *brain*, where the mind is supposed to reside. Therefore, objects that are distant, in time or place, must have a representative in the mind, or in the brain; some image or picture of them, which is the object that the mind contemplates. This representative image was, in the old philosophy, called a *species* or *phantasm*. Since the time of Descartes, it had more commonly been called an *idea*; and every thought is conceived to have an idea for its object.
>
> (II ix, 7)

Synonyms for 'ideas' include, since the eighteenth-century: 'sense-impressions', 'representations', 'phenomena', and 'appearances'. Twentieth-century equivalent notions include: 'sense-data', 'sensa', and the more recent 'sense-qualia' and 'qualia'. All these are meant to be 'representatives' in the mind, theories that assume such intermediaries or *tertium quid* are often called 'representationalist'. Reid disagreed and argued that 'to think of any object by a medium, seems to be words without meaning' (II, ix, 9).[82] Reid saw that this thesis would ultimately lead to idealism and scepticism about the objects of the external world:

> I apprehend, therefore, that if philosophers will maintain, that ideas in the mind are the only immediate objects of thought, they will be forced to grant that they are the *sole* objects of thought, and that it is impossible for men to think of any thing else. Yet, surely Mr. Locke believed that we can think of many things that are not ideas in the mind; but he seems not to have perceived, that the maintaining that ideas in the mind are the only immediate objects of thought, must necessarily draw this consequence along with it.
>
> The consequence, however, was seen by Bishop Berkeley and Mr. Hume, who rather chose to admit the consequence than to give up the principle from which it follows.
>
> (II, ix, 9)

[81] The Joseph archives are located at New College, Oxford; the 'Lectures on Modern Realism' are in Box 3, envelopes 1 & 2.

[82] I am leaving aside the difficulties involved with Reid's finer analyses, where some sort of *tertium quid* seems to be reintroduced with his notion of 'sensation'.

As will be seen below, a claim very similar to Reid's claim that the introduction of 'ideas' as the 'only immediate objects of thought' would eventually lead to idealism was a cornerstone of the sort of realism espoused by Cook Wilson and Prichard.

It is fitting to notice in the context of this paper that Reid also argued in the *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* that Locke's use of the word 'idea' went 'beyond what is usual in the English language' (II, ix, 1), as he confused, according to Reid, the 'operation of the mind in thinking', which is the ordinary meaning, and the 'idea or object of thought' (II, ix, 7), i.e. 'those internal objects of thought which philosophers suppose' (II, ix, 8). In other words, Reid accused Locke (and those who followed him) of not having paid enough attention to ordinary language and the 'common sense of mankind' which is embodied in it:

> If we pay any regard to the common sense of mankind, thought and the object of thought are different things, and ought to be distinguished. It is true, thought cannot be without an object; for everyman who thinks must think of something; but the object he thinks of is one thing, his thought of that object is another thing. They are distinguished in all languages even by the vulgar.
>
> (II, ix, 7)

Even more striking, Reid took this very confusion to be 'the greatest blemish in the *Essay on Human Understanding*' (II, ix, 8). According to Reid, philosophers in general gave:

> Too little attention to the distinction between the operations of the mind, and the objects of those operations. Although this distinction be familiar to the vulgar, and found in the structure of all languages, philosophers, when they speak of ideas, often confound the two together . . . For ideas being supposed to be a shadowy kind of beings, intermediate between the thought, and the object of thought, sometimes seem to coalesce with the thought, sometimes with the object of thought, and sometimes to have a distinct existence of their own.
>
> (II, ix, 11)

This sort of criticism should be considered, along with Aristotle's practice of conceptual analysis, as a forerunner of the various forms of 'analysis' of ordinary language not only in Moore but also in Cook Wilson, Prichard, Ryle, and Austin. (See section 8, in part II of this paper, for details.)

To come back to the realist schools in Oxford and Cambridge. It is clear that Cantabrigians developed, at the turn of the century, representationalist theories in the wake of Berkeley and Hume and thus in opposition to Reid. When Moore rejected idealism, it was initially in favour of a strongly Platonist philosophy of concepts as substances and not the common-sense empiricism that was to characterize his later philosophy.[83] At the time,

[83] T. Baldwin, *G. E. Moore*, chap. 2.

Moore held a more 'naive' form of realism about perception. For example, he wrote at the end of 'The Refutation of Idealism' that 'I am as directly aware of the existence of material things in space as of my own sensations'.[84] But, partly because of his reflecting on the problem of illusion, Moore abandoned this 'naive' realism and argued in 'The Nature and Reality of Objects of Perception' that sense-data are *the sole direct objects of perception*.[85] Moore spoke in that paper of 'things', 'objects', or 'contents' which we perceive'[86] and of 'sense-contents'.[87] In his 1910–11 lectures, which were published only in 1953 under the title *Some Main Problems of Philosophy*, and in a 1910 paper on 'The Subject-Matter of Psychology',[88] Moore introduced the term 'sense-datum' for the class of 'entities', such as colour, size, and shape that are 'directly apprehended' or 'given by the senses'.[89] Russell, who had read Moore's lectures, was to popularize the notion of sense-data two years later, in chapter 2 of *Problems of Philosophy*:

> Let us give the name of 'sense-data' to the things that are immediately known in sensation: such things as colours, sounds, smells, hardnesses, roughnesses, and so on. We shall give the name 'sensation' to the experience of being immediately aware of these things. Thus, whenever we see a colour, we have a sensation *of* the colour, but the colour itself is a sense-datum, not a sensation. . . . It is plain that if we are to know anything about the table, it must be by means of these sense-data – brown colour, oblong shape, smoothness, etc. which we associate with the table.[90]

In chapter 4, Russell defined 'acquaintance' as follows, listing 'sense-data' as one of the kind of things that are known 'by acquaintance':

> We shall say that we have *acquaintance* with anything of which we are directly aware, without the intermediary of any process of inference or any knowledge of truths. Thus in the presence of my table I am acquainted with the sense-data that make up the appearance of my table – its colour, shape, hardness, smoothness, etc.[91]

[84] G.E. Moore, 'The Refutation of Idealism', p. 30.

[85] G.E. Moore, 'The Nature and Reality of Objects of Perception', in *Philosophical Papers* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1922) pp. 31–96.

[86] *Ibid.*, p. 70.

[87] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

[88] G. E. Moore, *Some Main Problems of Philosophy* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1953), p. 30; 'The Subject-Matter of Psychology', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, No. 10 (1910): 36–62, p. 57.

[89] According to *Some Main Problems of Philosophy*, direct apprehension is defined (in a circular manner) as 'that which happens when you actually see any colour, when you actually hear any sound . . . etc., etc. In all these cases you directly apprehend the sense-datum in question – the particular colour, or sound, or smell' (p. 46).

[90] B. Russell, *Problems of Philosophy*, reprint (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 4.

[91] *Ibid.*, p. 25. In that chapter, one also learns that 'acquaintance' is a term for relation with quite a number of things: sensation of present sense-data, memory of past ones, self-consciousness of one's mental activities, and conceiving of universals.

(In his paper 'Is There "Knowledge by Acquaintance"?', Moore was to acknowledge that Russell's relation of 'acquaintance' was essentially the same notion as his notion of 'direct apprehension'.)[92] In response to a remark by Dawes Hick about his use of the word 'appearance' in *Problems of Philosophy*, Russell made it quite plain that he conceived of sense-data as a *tertium quid* standing between the mind and objects.[93] The peculiarity of the notion of 'sense-datum' and related ones[94] is that one distinguishes between the mental event or sensation and its object, the sense-datum. So the latter is not a sensation but the *object* of sensation that can be 'perceived' or 'observed'. It is against this that Oxford Realists are going to react.

In Oxford, Thomas Case had taught Cook Wilson and they remained lifelong friends.[95] However, Case propounded in his book on *Physical Realism* a representationalist theory which will probably look to the reader who has just followed Reid's line of argument as confused. The book opens up with a statement of the task of philosophy as he conceived of it:

> No metaphysical theory of existence can be complete, unless it recognises the known reality of the insensible physical world; and no psychological theory of human knowledge can be accepted as even a probable hypothesis unless it explains how these scientific objects of human knowledge are known from the original data of the sense.[96]

Case introduced a *tertium quid*:

> Physical realism must accept the representative theory, but not in its idealistic form. The data presented to the sense are internal, yet not psychical. They are physical parts of the nervous system . . . representing, but only partly resembling, the external world. . . . From [this] I form the following theory of sensation. In that the sensible object is internal, sensation is not the immediate apprehension of an external object. In that the sensible object is physical, sensation is not the immediate apprehension of a psychical fact. In that it is the immediate apprehension of an object, though internal, it is a kind of perception. I should define sensation, or sensitive perception, as the immediate apprehension of an internal physical object within the nervous system of a sentient being.[97]

(Russell is not very far away!) Case further conceived perception as not

[92] G. E. Moore, 'Is There "Knowledge by Acquaintance"?', *Aristotelian Society. Supplementary Volume 2* (1919): 179–93.

[93] See G. Dawes Hick, 'The Nature of Sense-Data', *Mind*, No. 21 (1912): 399–409, p. 402; and B. Russell, 'The Nature of Sense-data, – A Reply to Dr. Dawes Hick', *Mind*, No. 22 (1913): 76–81, p. 79.

[94] Such as, e.g. the 'sensa' of a Cantabrigian contemporary, C. D. Broad. See his *Scientific Thought* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1923), p. 240.

[95] J. Cook Wilson, *Statement and Inference*, p. xxiv.

[96] T. Case, *Physical Realism*, pp. 3–4.

[97] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

limited to sensation, thus introducing an 'inferential or mediate perception', with the help of which he thought that we could advance to the knowledge of the 'external original'. These objects could be either 'originals represented by sensible objects, and resembling them in primary not in secondary qualities', such as fire and waves, or 'objects unrepresented', such as undulations of aether.[98] Another Oxonian who held a representationalist view was G. F. Stout, the Wilde Reader in Mental Philosophy. In 1902, he left for Cambridge, joining their choir of sense-datum theorists.

Cook Wilson, on the other hand, can be said to have sided with Reid and he should be seen as the true source of the peculiarly Oxonian form of realism with which I am preoccupied, not Case. My claim is that it is Cook Wilson's anti-representationalism which was to shape Oxford Realism up to and including Austin's *Sense and Sensibilia.* It is true that contrary to, say, Moore, Cook Wilson never, as far as I know, referred to Reid. But it is difficult to imagine that he did not know Reid's writings. Not only had Reid been the main influence on Scottish philosophy during the first half of the nineteenth century, from Dugald Steward and Thomas Brown to Sir William Hamilton (the editor of Reid's *Works*), John Stuart Mill had also published a detailed critique of Hamilton in *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* (1865),[99] which caused a heated debate in Oxford just before Cook Wilson began his studies at Oxford in the late 1860s, partly because Mill also attacked an Oxonian disciple of Hamilton, H. L. Mansel, who had been the Waynflete Professor of Metaphysical Philosophy at Oxford since 1859 (but he was to become Dean of St. Paul's, London in 1867). Mansel defended Reid and Hamilton in a rejoinder to Mill, *The Philosophy of the Conditioned*.[100] It is hard to believe that Cook Wilson did not know these works; at least we know that he read Mansel's *Prolegomena Logica*, which he criticized in his lectures.[101] Moreover, the pedigree for such anti-representationalist views leads back to a common ancestor: Aristotle. Reid's anti-representationalist views have indeed a strong Scholastic, Aristotelian flavour.[102] In Book IV of the *De Anima*, which was studied at

[98] *Ibid.*, pp. 33–4.

[99] J. S. Mill, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* (Toronto/London, University of Toronto Press/Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979).

[100] H. L. Mansel, *The Philosophy of the Conditioned* (London, Strachan, 1866), reprint (Bristol, Thoemmes, 1991). On the debate, see A. Ryan, 'Introduction', in J. S. Mill, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, pp. vii–lxii. As Ryan shows, the issue was considerably muddled by Hamilton's and Mansel's attempt at marrying Reid with Kant.

[101] J. Cook Wilson, *Statement and Inference*, pp. 64f. & 92.

[102] On the affinities between the critiques of representationalist theories in Aquinas, Arnauld, and Reid, see J. J. Haldane, 'Reid, Scholasticism and Current Philosophy of Mind', in M. Delgarno and E. Matthews (eds) *The Philosophy of Thomas Reid*, (Dordrecht, Kluwer, 1989), pp. 285–304; and D. Schulthess, 'Antoine Arnauld et Thomas Reid, défenseurs des certitudes perceptives communes et critiques des entités représentatives', *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, vol. 40 (1986): 276–91. It has to be said, however, that Reid misread both Aristotle and Arnauld. On this see, in addition to the above-mentioned papers, D. Schulthess, *Philosophie et Sens Commun Chez Thomas Reid (1710–1796)* (Berne, Peter Lang, 1983), chap. 4.

length by Cook Wilson,[103] Aristotle wrote that 'the thinking part of the soul, while impassible, must be capable of receiving the form of an object; that is, must be potentially the same as its object without being the object' (IV, 429a, 14–17). There are well-known problems with Aristotle's position as stated here – e.g. it is difficult to see how the mind becomes 'potentially the same' as its objects – but what is of interest for us are the ideas, relayed by Reid and the Cook Wilsonians, that there are no intermediaries between the mind and material objects and that the mind perceives external properties and not their representation within itself.[104] From such a standpoint, things began to go wrong with Descartes.[105]

At any rate, Joseph's above-mentioned remark in his 'Lecture on Modern Realism' shows conclusively that the Oxford Realists were aware of the parallels that obtain between their views and those of the Scottish philosopher. Indeed, Cook Wilson argued forcefully, and at length, against representationalist theories, in a manner which is rather reminiscent of Reid's *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*. Cook Wilson's account of perception is set out clearly in a 1904 letter to Stout on 'Primary and Secondary Qualities',[106] which was written in reply to a paper by Stout himself bearing the same title.[107] There is no room here for a presentation of Cook Wilson's detailed analyses and I hope that the following excerpts will give the reader an idea of the richness of his letter.

After opening remarks aimed at lack of clarity in Stout's exposition, Cook Wilson writes:

> You begin an important section of your argument by assuming the idea of sensations being *representative*.
> They { represent – express – stand for } something other than themselves.
> Now, I venture to think that the idea of such *representation* in philosophy, or psychology rather, is very loose and treacherous and, if used at all, should be preceded by a 'critique' of such *representative* character, and an explanation of the exact sense in which the word representative is used.[108]

He flatly rejects the notion: 'The idea of representation, then, in fine, seems to me not only useless in philosophy but misleading as tending to obscure the solution of a difficult problem'.[109] This is clear in the case of primary

103 J. Cook Wilson, *Statement and Inference*, pp. xxvi and xxx.

104 See, e.g. M. C. Nussbaum and H. Putnam, 'Changing Aristotle's Mind', in M. C. Nussbaum and A. O. Rorty (eds) *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 27–56.

105 This is very clear in Reid (II, viii). Cook Wilson and Prichard had the same diagnosis. See the quotation, towards the beginning of next section, from *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*, p. 123.

106 J. Cook Wilson, *Statement and Inference*, pp. 764–800.

107 G. F. Stout, 'Primary and Secondary Qualities', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, No. 4 (1904): 141–60.

108 J. Cook Wilson, *Statement and Inference*, p. 769.

109 *Ibid.*, p. 772.

qualities and their 'representative' sensations, e.g. the 'felt' or 'visual extension'. In such cases, Cook Wilson wrote:

> The word 'representative', instead of being an explanation, is itself a problem, and indeed is itself due to a confusion in our ordinary thinking. Now the very description of these sensations (tactual and the like), as *mediating* our knowledge of the extension, implies that they are different from extension and have no extension in themselves. They are not therefore 'representative' by reason of likeness. How, then, are they representatives? As already contended, in no kind of way can they themselves 'represent' anything other than themselves. If we consider them as representative it must be either on the ground of likeness (excluded in this instance) or because of their association (in their qualitative character and their given temporal order) with extension. We must therefore be already acquainted with extension either to recognise the likeness of the representative sensations to it or to know of the association. But this is impossible if the mediation of our knowledge of extension by the sensations (together with their order) means, as it usually does, that we depend entirely on the sensations for our knowledge of extension at all.[110]

The following passage, taken from the above-mentioned letter to Prichard (6.I.1904), summarizes some of Cook Wilson's more general arguments:

> We want to explain knowing an object and we explain it solely in terms of the object known, and that by giving the mind not the object but some idea of it which is said to be like it – an image (however the fact may be disguised). The chief fallacy of this is not so much the impossibility of knowing such image is like the object, or that there is any object at all, but that it assumes the very thing it is intended to explain. The image itself has to be apprehended and the difficulty is only repeated.[111]

In this passage, Cook Wilson refers to many distinct arguments: first, there is the argument that it is thus impossible to know anything about the relation between the representative and the object, since one can never truly compare the former to the latter, secondly, there is the claim that representationalist theories are always in danger of leading towards idealism, since one must then somehow 'prove' the existence of the object which is, so to speak, 'behind' its representatives – there might be none – and, finally, there is the claim that all such theories are begging the question, since the representative has to be apprehended in turn by the mind, and not only this further 'apprehension' remains unexplained, it would require that the mind be equipped with the very apparatus that the representationalist theories were, to begin with, devised to explain.[112] This last point is also made in the letter on 'Primary and Secondary Qualities':

[110] *Ibid.*, pp. 771–2.

[111] *Ibid.*, p. 803.

[112] One is here not very far from Anthony Kenny's 'The Homonculus Fallacy'. See A. Kenny, *The Legacy of Wittgenstein* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1985), pp. 125–36.

> The psychologist's account of perception commits him to a view as to what the data are which are produced in the consciousness of the perceiving subject, from which the subject is somehow to advance to the perception of the object. These data are really presented as something which the subject has to *interpret.* But the account given is entirely false, for on examination it will be found that the subject, in order to effect the interpretation, must already be equipped with all the ideas about the nature of reality which he is supposed to acquire through perception and from the data.[113]

Cook Wilson's finer analyses led him, however, to allow, in the case of secondary qualities, for the perception of one's own 'sensation', thus reintroducing some sort of intermediary. This is reminiscent of Reid, who introduced his distinction between 'sensation' and 'perception' in his *Essays* (Bk. II, ch. xvi) for the same purpose.[114] He argued for a position which is in the end not very far from that of Locke's in his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, where secondary qualities are introduced as 'powers to produce certain sensations in us' (Bk. II, ch. viii, § 10):

> The facts in the case of the secondary qualities seem to be (taking heat) that we perceive only our own sensation (Hs) and possibly the extension of the hot body, *if we touch it*: we infer a special power in the body to cause it, and we arrive at our idea of the state of the body which has the power (Hm) by inference and there is nothing else in reality. Hs, then, is perceived, Hm is not perceived but inferred by a scientific theory.[115]

It should be pointed out that, on this very point, Cook Wilson's position does not vary significantly from Reid's or Hamilton's.

Colour is given a special treatment because:

> The perception of colour is impossible without the perception of extension, not at all as an inference but as a necessary part of aspect of the same perception, and such extension again is absolutely unintelligible save as the extension of a *surface* – i.e. a real surface.[116]

Again, one ought to notice a commonality here between Cook Wilson and Reid, inasmuch as the latter argued against the view, notoriously held by Hume, that the *minimum visibile* could be at the same time coloured and unextended. The arguments are, however, quite different. Reid argues that in the case of perceived colour there is no distinction between 'sensation'

[113] J. Cook Wilson, *Statement and Inference*, pp. 797–8.

[114] It should be said, however, that Cook Wilson's 'sensations', like their counterpart in Reid, are not akin to 'sense-data'. In the case of Reid, see D. W. Hamlyn, *Sensation and Perception* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), p. 129.

[115] *Ibid.*, pp. 776–7.

[116] *Ibid.*, p. 781.

and 'perception'.[117] According to Cook Wilson, if we perceive two colours juxtaposed together on a surface, which do not blend into each other, we 'perceive' their common limit or boundary as linear, that is 'really the common boundary of the surfaces to which we refer the colours'.[118] This is not the case with what he called 'sensations' (e.g. taste, smell, pain, and sound), where no such boundary arises when two sensations succeed each other. Therefore 'the sensation, whether tactual or of colour, are *not* extended, and the idea of extension is *absolutely inapplicable* to them'.[119] Subjectivist accounts of visual extension can thus be flatly rejected:

> Now the view that visual extension (and sensible extension in general) is merely subjective, is nothing in the thing, is an appearance as opposed to reality; an appearance which somehow represents a reality, which as unreal and merely subjective has no *position* in real space, depends wholly upon the view that sensations can be in themselves extended, and is therefore, I am obliged to think, entirely untenable.[120]

Cook Wilson was thus led to the opinion that it is 'either a confusion or a mere *façon de parler* to speak of the colour *sensation* as extended, and as a *façon de parler* is only excusable as meaning that the surface to which the colour is referred is extended'.[121] Instead, he came close, at times, to an account of colours as dispositional properties, e.g. when he remarked that 'we simply think of their colour as a property *they* have in the light, just as we think of floating as a property cork has in the water' [Cook Wilson 1926, p. 765].[122]

4. PRICHARD'S THEORY OF APPEARING

Prichard succinctly elaborated on Cook Wilson's theory of perception in a short paper, published in *Mind* in 1906, on 'Appearances and Reality', and three years later in his book on *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*.[123] As a brief

[117] See, e.g. D. W. Hamlyn, *Sensation and Perception*, p. 126. For Hume' position, see D. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Bk. I, part ii, sec. iii (L. A. Selby-Bigge (ed.) (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 38). It may also be said that the sort of view held by Reid and Cook Wilson was first propounded by Berkeley but see D. Raynor, ' "Minima Sensibilia" in Berkeley and Hume', *Dialogue*, No. 19 (1980): 196–200.

[118] *Ibid.*, p. 782.

[119] *Ibid.*

[120] *Ibid.*

[121] *Ibid.*

[122] J. Cook Wilson, *Statement and Inference*, p. 765. An account of colours as dispositional properties has been put forward in, e.g., M. A. E. Dummett, 'Common Sense and Physics', in G. F. Macdonald (ed.) *Perception and Identity. Essays Presented to A.J. Ayer with his Replies*, Ithaca (Cornell University Press, 1979), pp. 1–40.

[123] H. A. Prichard, 'Appearances and Reality', *Mind*, No. 15 (1906): 223–9; *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*, pp. 81–8.

preliminary to the presentation of Prichard's ideas, I would like to quote once more from Cook Wilson's letter to Stout on 'Primary and Secondary Qualities', this time about the 'objectification' of the 'appearing' as 'appearance':

> This [subjective act of perceiving] is sometimes spoken from the side of the object as the *appearance* of the object to us. This 'appearance' then gets distinguished from the object, and that in itself is justified in so far as our subjective act of recognition of the object's nature is not the same as that nature. But next the *appearance*, though properly the appear*ing* of the object, gets to be looked on as itself an object and the immediate object of our consciousness, and being already, as we have seen, distinguished from the object and related to our subjectivity, becomes, so to say, a merely subjective 'object' – 'appearance' in that sense. And so, as *appearance* of the object, it has now to be represented not as the object but as some phenomenon caused in our consciousness by the object. Thus for the true appearance (= appearing) to us of the *object* is substituted through the 'objectification' of the appearing as appearance, the appearing to us of an *appearance*, the appearing of a phenomenon caused in us by the object.[124]

Cook Wilson has described here, in so many words, the very move that Moore was to make a year later in 'The Nature and Reality of Objects of Perception' and which would ultimately allow Russell and him to speak of 'sense-data' – here: 'appearances' – as (subjective, private) *objects* of perception. This passage is followed by another warning against the danger of idealism, reminiscent of Reid:

> It must be observed that the result of this is that there could be no direct perception or consciousness of Reality under any circumstances or any condition of knowing or perceiving. . . . From this error would necessarily result a mere subjective idealism. Reality would become an absolutely unknowable 'Thing in Itself', and finally disappear altogether (as with Berkeley) as an hypothesis which we couldn't possibly justify.[125]

Again, the diagnosis is very similar to Reid's: 'this insidious and scarcely "conscious" dialectic has done much mischief in modern metaphysics and theories of perception'.[126] As already pointed out, from such a standpoint things began to go wrong with Descartes. Prichard expressed this clearly in *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*:

> That the real contrary to realism is *subjective* idealism is confirmed by the history of the theory of knowledge from Descartes onwards. For the initial supposition that has originated and sustained the problem is that in knowledge the

[124] J. Cook Wilson, *Statement and Inference*, p. 796.
[125] *Ibid.*, p. 797.
[126] *Ibid.*

> mind is, at any rate in he first instance, confined within itself. This supposition granted, it has always seemed that, while there is no difficulty in understanding the mind's acquisition of knowledge of what belongs to its own being, it is difficult, if not impossible, to understand how it can acquire knowledge of what does not belong to its own being. [. . .] Since *ex hypothesi* the mind is confined within itself, it can only apprehend a reality independent of it through something within the mind which 'represents' or 'copies' the reality[127]

In 'Appearances and Reality', Prichard argued for a so-called 'theory of appearing'. This is one of the possible rejoinders to the argument from illusion, a problem as old as Plato which was devised around the example of the straight stick that looks bent when plunged in water: it was thought that the fact that we could misperceive things or that our senses could deceive us meant that the 'naive' realism of the 'plain man', who is said to believe that he directly perceives material objects, is wrong and that what one is really aware of in perception are representatives. Prichard's 'theory of appearing' was designed to vindicate realism, albeit not under its naive form. He stated the issue clearly:

> The conclusion at once seems to follow that we only know things as they look or appear to us and not as they are. And from this it is but a short step to the [. . .] view that we only know 'appearances' or 'phenomena'.
>
> To put the difficulty shortly. Access to things implies perception. Yet if perception only gives us things as they look and not as they are, access to things as they are is impossible. But perception does in fact only give us things as they look, for this is presupposed by the distinction we actually draw between what they look and what they are.
>
> This conclusion can only be avoided by maintaining that the reality of the distinction is still compatible with the position that perception at least gives us things as they are in some qualified way; that after all there is *some* identity between what things look and what they are.[128]

Thus, a theory of appearing is devised to show that the distinction between appearance and reality is compatible with realism. Once more, it is not possible to deal adequately with Prichard's theory and I shall confine myself to a few of the arguments I have discerned in these dense texts.

To begin with, it is granted by Prichard that the distinction between appearance and reality relates to primary but not secondary qualities.[129] Concerning primary qualities, Prichard develops a number of arguments to the effect that a proper analysis of expressions of the sort 'a thing looks or appears to be so and so, though we know that it is not so in reality' does not warrant a distinction between attributes belonging to the things themselves and attributes belonging to things as they appear to us – a distinction that

[127] H. A. Prichard, *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*, p. 123.
[128] H. A. Prichard, 'Appearances and Reality', p. 224.
[129] *Ibid.*, pp. 224–5. See also H. A. Prichard, *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*, p. 87.

would leave the door open to subjective idealism. There are, in the end, 'no such things as appearances at all'.[130] The distinction between appearance and reality which is drawn in such expressions implies, rather, knowledge of an independent reality.

I shall call the first of Prichard's arguments the 'predicability' argument: when I say 'railway lines look convergent', I mean to say that it is the railway lines *qua* physical objects that look convergent, not their appearance. Predicates such as 'convergent' apply to physical objects, not to appearances or sense-data: when a stick is plunged in water, it is the stick that looks bent, not the sense-datum which is crooked. It is thus wrong to speak of the appearance itself as being bent. Other predicates apply to appearances, such as 'delusive', 'veridical', etc. In *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*, Prichard put the point thus:

> It is, as we say, the real lines that we see. Even the term 'convergent', in the assertion that the lines *look* convergent, conveys this implication. For 'convergent' is essentially a characteristic not of an appearance but of a reality, in the sense in which something independent of perception may be opposed as a reality to an 'appearance', which, as such, presupposes perception. We can say neither that an appearance is convergent, nor that the appearance of the lines is convergent. Only a reality similar to the lines, e.g. two roads, can be said to be convergent.[131]

This is a key argument against which one finds, in the words of Prichard, many 'conspicuous offenders',[132] from Stout to Ayer. One of them is, for example, Henry Price in *Perception.* (I shall say more about that book in section 8, in part II of this paper.) His account of 'distortion' in perspective reads:

> Thus a distant hillside which is full of protuberances, and slopes upwards at quite a gentle angle, will appear flat and vertical, like a scene painted on cardboard. This means that the sense-datum, the colour-expanse which we sense, actually *is* flat and vertical.[133]

Prichard still used the argument in his later essays[134] and so did Ryle, who was to write in *The Concept of Mind* that '[t]alking about the apparent speeds of aeroplanes is not talking about the speeds of appearances of aeroplanes'.[135] But Austin only skirted the issue in *Sense and Sensibilia*.[136]

If I mean to say that it is the railways lines qua physical objects that look

[130] H. A. Prichard, 'Appearances and Reality', p. 228.
[131] H. A. Prichard, *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*, p. 81.
[132] H. A. Prichard, *Knowledge and Perception. Essays and Lectures* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 56.
[133] H. H. Price, *Perception* (London, Methuen. 1932, sec. edn., 1950), p. 28.
[134] H. A. Prichard, *Knowledge and Perception*, p. 56.
[135] G. Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, reprint (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1980), pp. 206–7.
[136] J. L. Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia*, pp. 28 and 80.

convergent, this also implies, according to Prichard, that I know something *general* about reality, that is that I am able to say that physical objects have certain *possible* predicates: 'To deny this is to be wholly unable to state how things look'.[137] This is the core of Prichard's theory of appearing. When I say that 'railway lines look convergent', my claim is that a physical object, namely the railway lines, appears to have a characteristic, that of 'being convergent' but I do not know if this is true. In doing so, Prichard claims, I am in fact already admitting that reality is spatial since I am implying that 'the lines possess some characteristic which falls within the genus to which convergence belongs'; in other words I imply that they are convergent, divergent, or parallel, so:

> The assertion [. . .] in respect of a primary quality, that a thing looks so and so implies knowledge of its general character as spatial, and ignorance only of a detail; and the assertion that a thing only looks or appears so and so implies knowledge of the detail in question.[138]

In a nutshell, 'the distinction between reality and appearance presupposes that we at least know the *general* nature of reality'.[139]

At this stage of the discussion in *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*, Prichard mentions *en passant* a difficulty, which he formulates as a question: 'If lines are not convergent, how is it possible even to say that they *look* convergent?'.[140] In other words: How can a thing look other than what it really is? He was unable at the time to provide a satisfactory answer. As a matter of fact, it seems that his inability to provide an answer to this question ultimately provoked the abandonment of his theory of appearing, at some point in the 1920s. (See section 6, in part II of this paper.)

A further argument is to the effect that assertions that things only look so and so can only make sense against a background of assertions giving us things as they really are, otherwise it would not be possible at all to make judgements about appearance and reality:

> Thus the assertion that the moon looks as large as the sun implies that there is something in perception which suggests that the moon is as large; and this is only possible if, under certain circumstances, perception gives us the real relative size. And under certain conditions, it does so. If objects are equally distant from the observer, perception successfully gives their relative size. If we thought that there were no circumstances under which we should perceive the real relative size, we could never assert that one object *looks* as large as another does. Similarly the statement that the stick looks bent implies that, given certain physical conditions, we should see the true shape of objects.[141]

[137] H. A. Prichard, 'Appearances and Reality', p. 225.
[138] H. A. Prichard, *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*, p. 82.
[139] H. A. Prichard, 'Appearances and Reality', p. 227.
[140] H. A. Prichard, *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*, p. 82.
[141] H. A. Prichard, 'Appearances and Reality', p. 226.

So when sense-datum theorists such as Russell wrote, e.g. that 'we unconsciously infer the "real" size and shape of a visible object from its apparent size and shape, according to its distance and our point of view',[142] Prichard could only read nonsense. Prichard probably got this argument, which we could dub the 'background argument', from Cook Wilson.[143] It has been re-used many times by Oxford Realists, including by Austin. (See section 9, in part II of this paper.)

The last argument to be presented here, I shall call the 'discounting argument'. Our ability to draw a distinction between appearance and reality presupposes that we are aware that the way objects are given to us in perception is dependent on a number of conditions. We have to take these conditions into account in order to distinguish between appearance and reality:

> Our possession of the distinction between appearance and reality and our power of determining in particular what is appearance and what is reality presuppose that we understand how our apprehension of objects is conditioned by relation to us as observers. It is only because we know that our distance from an object affects its apparent size, that we can draw a distinction between the size it looks and the size it is. If we forget this, we can draw no distinction at all. The same knowledge is presupposed by that power to discount difference of distance which enables us to determine the real relative size of two objects.[144]

> The proper way to describe the process of taking into account the conditions under which we perceive, is to state it as a process of 'discounting' or 'correction'. We begin with a judgement of immediate perception, 'I perceive the moon to be as large as the sun'. Then reflexion on my position as an observer forces me to modify this judgement, and I assert, 'The sun is really larger, though if I were to forget the difference of distance, I should say that I saw it to be as large'. The point is that the immediate judgement of perception does not remain side by side with the judgement that corrects it.[145]

Regarding secondary qualities Prichard simply claimed that the distinction between appearance and reality does not relate to them. The distinction does not relate either to sensations: 'A pain is necessarily what I feel it to be; distinction between what it is, and I feel or perceive it as, is meaningless'.[146] His stance is rather close to that of Locke (and Cook Wilson), although he does not talk openly of 'powers':

[142] B. Russell, *Our Knowledge of the External World*, reprint (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 75.

[143] See his rejection of the distinction between 'apparent size' and 'real size' in J. Cook Wilson, *Statement and Inference*, pp. 786f.

[144] H. A. Prichard, 'Appearances and Reality', p. 226.

[145] *Ibid.*, p. 228.

[146] *Ibid.*, p. 225.

> No one, it may reasonably be said, who is familiar with and really faces the issue, will maintain that sounds, smells, tastes, and sensations of touch exist apart from a sensitive subject. So much is this the case, that when once the issue is raised, it is difficult and, in the end, impossible to use the word 'appear' in connection with these qualities. Thus it is difficult and, in the end, impossible to say that a bell *appears* noisy, or that sugar *appears* sweet. We say, rather, that the bell and the sugar produce certain sensations in us.[147]

But for Prichard the case of colour is slightly more complicated because it is closely connected with the shape of objects and might look more like a primary quality. However, Prichard concedes in the end that 'colour is not a quality of bodies'.[148] No stranger to absurd theses, Prichard feels then compelled to hold the view that, with respect to colour, objects never look what they are:

> If colour is not a quality of bodies, then, with respect to colour, things look what they never are or, in other words, are wholly different from what they look; and since it seems impossible to hold that colour is really a property of bodies, this conclusion must, in spite of its difficulty, be admitted to be true.[149]

To conclude this section, one final word on Prichard's book on *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*. It is a long diatribe against Kant which is based on a phenomenalistic interpretation of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Indeed, according to Prichard, Kant is committed to the view that 'representations' or 'appearances', as he calls them, have a being of their own at the same time as they represent 'things in themselves': 'though from the point of view of the thing in itself an appearance is an appearance or perception of it, yet regarded from the standpoint of what it is in itself, an appearance is a reality perceived of the kind mental'.[150] Furthermore, Prichard thought that Kant's 'synthesis' was a construction of physical objects out of their appearances.[151] Prichard's opposition to Kant extended to his conception of judgement. Following Cook Wilson, Prichard sharply distinguished between judgement and knowledge: the bringing of particulars under universals does not take place in judgement, as Kant believed, but in knowledge. So, not only do we 'apprehend' particulars, we 'apprehend' universals under which they fall. Universals are thus not products (as Kant would say: of the spontaneity of

[147] H. A. Prichard, *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*, p. 86.

[148] *Ibid.*, p. 87.

[149] *Ibid.*, pp. 87–8.

[150] *Ibid.*, p. 137.

[151] Needless to say, this account of Kant, which has been described by W. H. Walsh as 'not so much a serious study of Kant as a work using Kant as a stalking-horse in an argument for independent philosophical conclusion' ('Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*: Commentators in English, 1875–1945', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, No. 42 (1981): 732), has been severely criticized. See, for example, G. Bird, *Kant's Theory of Knowledge* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962).

understanding) but they are features of facts that are 'apprehended'. Furthermore, Prichard would emphasize that there is a distinction to be made between 'is' and 'looks' or 'appears'. According to him, the word 'is' 'essentially relates to what really is' and, in the case of looking at a straight stick immersed in water, we can 'rightly say that that the stick looks or appears bent to us as perceiving' and not that 'the stick *is* bent to us as perceiving'.[152] Prichard was thus led to leave perception aside, so to speak: 'Our apprehension of what things *are* is essentially a matter of thought or judgement, and not of perception. We do not *perceive* but *think* a thing as it is'.[153] This realism about universals is one of the fundamental aspects of Oxford Realism. I shall not, however, discuss this topic, which deserves a paper of its own.[154]

5. PRICHARD AGAINST RUSSELL

Cook Wilson died in 1915. As the influence of the idealists slowly disappeared in the 1920s and 1930s and the influence of Cantabrigians such as Moore and Russell over the younger generations grew steadily, the target of his followers – Prichard and Joseph – changed. It was no longer any Hegelian, Italian or Bradleian form of idealism. Isaiah Berlin, who began his studies in the early 1930s, reported that the 'deadliest enemies' of Prichard and Joseph were by then 'no longer the Idealists, whose day . . . was done, but the empiricists and sceptics headed by the father of fallacies, Hume, followed by Mill, William James, Russell'.[155] Russell became Prichard's *bête noire*. Already as early as 1915, Prichard wrote in *Mind* a lengthy, scathing (but in the end not very convincing) review of Russell's Lowell lectures, *Our Knowledge of the External World*, with references also to the paper 'The Relation of Sense-Data to Physics'.[156] In 1928, he struck

[152] H. A. Prichard, *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*, p. 72.

[153] *Ibid*., p. 99.

[154] The reader might want to look at the debate about universals between Joseph and Ramsey, at the Joint Session of the year 1926: H. W. B. Joseph, 'Universals and the "Method of Analysis"', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society. Supplementary Volume*, 6 (1926), 1–16; F. P. Ramsey, 'Universals and the "Method of Analysis"', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society. Supplementary Volume*, 6 (1926), 17–26. (The third participant in the symposium was another Cantabrigian, Richard Braithwaite.)

[155] I. Berlin, 'Austin and the Early Beginnings of Oxford Philosophy', in *Essays on J. L. Austin* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 4. It is quite fitting to point out here that, after reviewing and criticizing Russell's newest views on perception in 'Mr. Bertrand Russell's *Outline of Philosophy*', Prichard came to the conclusion that '[he] thus appears to arrive by a quite different route at a scepticism similar to that which really underlies Bradley's "Appearance and Reality"' ('Mr. Bertrand Russell's *Outline of Philosophy*', *Mind*, No. 37 (1928): 265–82, p. 278).

[156] H. A. Prichard, 'Mr. Bertrand Russell on Our Knowledge of the External World', *Mind*, No. 24 (1915): 145–85.

again with yet another incendiary article, this time on 'Mr. Bertrand Russell's *Outline of Philosophy*', where he expressed his puzzlement in strongly worded remarks such as this splendid one, concerning Russell's definition of matter as 'series of groups of events, connected by discoverable laws': [157]

> At the risk of seeming both ultra-dogmatic and also incapable of understanding even the meaning of the statements in which the new and higher truth has to be expressed, I should like to ask Mr. Russell and those who think with him whether there is really a word of truth in this view from beginning to end.[158]

I should say a few words about Russell before presenting some of Prichard's criticisms, limiting myself mainly to his 1915 review of Russell's *Our Knowledge of the External World*.[159]

A Berkeleyian form of 'subjective idealism' was the point of departure of Moore and Russell, who was himself quite explicit about this at the end of his *Outline of Philosophy*, where he wrote that 'matter will be a construction built out of percepts, and our metaphysics will be essentially that of Berkeley'.[160] This affinity was already obvious in the first chapters of *Problems of Philosophy*,[161] where Russell wrote rather dubious statements such as this one, when discussing the perception of a table: 'The real table, if there is one, is not *immediately* known to us at all'.[162] Moore and Russell sought to vindicate realism by showing how knowledge of the external world could nevertheless be achieved. Russell thought that he could do this by his method of 'logical construction' and that he would help himself to the tools of modern mathematical logic. He thus seems to have embodied all that Prichard thought was wrong with the then contemporary approach, and more.

Mathematical logic was still in its infancy at the turn of the century but, contrary to Oxford Realists, Russell, who discovered it through the writings of Peano and Frege, immediately saw its potential for reshaping philosophical debates and helped develop it. It is well known that Russell's first contribution to logic was the discovery of a paradox that vitiated Frege's system.[163]

[157] B. Russell, *An Outline of Philosophy* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1928), p. 124.

[158] H. A. Prichard, 'Mr. Bertrand Russell's *Outline of Philosophy*', p. 279.

[159] It is impossible to deal adequately here with all the issues raised in the debate between Russell and Prichard. Large parts of Prichard's text will be ignored, in particular his criticisms of Russell's Leibnizian theory of 'private spaces' and of the six-dimensional 'space of perspectives'.

[160] B. Russell, *An Outline of Philosophy*, p. 301.

[161] As we shall see in section 6, part II of this paper, Prichard even accused, later, Russell and like-minded philosophers of having fallaciously substituted sense-data to Berkeley's secondary qualities as objects of perception.

[162] B. Russell, *Problems of Philosophy*, p. 3.

[163] B. Russell, 'Letter to Frege', in J. van Heijenoort (ed.) *From Frege to Gödel. A Sourcebook in Mathematical Logic, 1879–1931* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass., 1967), pp. 124–5.

His efforts, first recorded in his *Principles of Mathematics*,[164] led to the publication in 1910–13 of the three volumes of the *Principia Mathematica*, written jointly with A. N. Whitehead.[165] Russell wished to apply the 'new logic', as he called it, to philosophy by conceiving what seems to be the first programme of analytical philosophy: to take a given domain of philosophy and replace its traditional concepts by 'logical constructions'.[166] Once this was achieved, one could presumably settle old debates in a 'scientific' manner. In philosophy of mathematics, Russell sought to define the fundamental notions of arithmetic in purely logical terms and he believed that once this reduction would be achieved he could then settle traditional questions of the nature of arithmetical propositions. On the basis of his attempt at reformulating the basic concepts of arithmetic in logical terms and of deriving arithmetical propositions from logic, he could claim that, *pace* Kant, arithmetical propositions are analytic and not synthetic a priori. Immediately prior to the Great War, thus just after completing *Principia Mathematica*, Russell turned to the theory of knowledge, where he thought that he could do a similar job. He wanted to apply to the 'philosophy of physics', as he called it, the method of 'logical constructions' by following a maxim suggested by Whitehead: 'Wherever possible, logical constructions are to be substituted for inferred entities'.[167] This method is clearly summarized in a passage from 'The Relation of Sense-Data to Physics':

> Given a set of propositions nominally dealing with the supposed inferred entities, we observe the properties which are required of the supposed entities in order to make these propositions true. By dint of a little logical ingenuity, we then construct some logical function of less hypothetical entities which has the requisite properties. This constructed function we substitute for the supposed inferred entities, and thereby obtain a new and less doubtful interpretation of the body of propositions in question. This method, so fruitful in the philosophy of mathematics, will be found equally applicable in the philosophy of physics, where, I do not doubt, it would have been applied long ago but for the fact that

[164] B. Russell, *The Principles of Mathematic* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1903).

[165] A. N. Whitehead & B. Russell, *Principia Mathematica*, 3 vols (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1910–13, sec. edn, 1925–7).

[166] Prichard was as prejudiced against the 'new logic' as Cook Wilson was. He did not really state his reasons and his dismissal was rather curt:

> I venture to suggest to Mr. Russell that he should [. . .] consider whether *all* the presuppositions of the 'new logic' may not be after all only an attempt to escape the consequences of old errors – errors which some at any rate had been disposed of once and for all in the history of philosophy – by the addition of others which though new are none the less gratuitous.
>
> ('Mr Bertrand Russell on Our Knowledge of the External World', p. 185n)

[167] B. Russell, *Mysticism and Logic*, p. 149.

> all who have studied this subject hitherto have been completely ignorant of mathematical logic.[168]

In *Our Knowledge of the External World*, Russell argued that the point of departure of the 'construction' will be our 'hard data', i.e. sense-data and laws of logic,[169] and framed the 'problem of our knowledge of the external world' in the form of a question: 'Can the existence of anything other than our own hard data be inferred from the existence of those data?'.[170] He hoped that a 'complete application of the method [. . .] would exhibit matter wholly in terms of sense-data',[171] and he ended up defining a 'thing' as 'a series of aspects, namely those which would commonly be said to be *of* the thing' or, later in the same text, as a 'series of aspects which obey the laws of physics'.[172]

Prichard did not really understand the point of Russell's method of 'logical construction'. He thought that Russell was asking that statements of common sense or of physics would be shown to be true only if one could provide 'new meanings' for certain terms occurring in them:

> On Mr. Russell's view, in order to state what is true, we can retain the terms 'thing' and 'atom' [. . .] *provided that* we give these terms new meanings, viz. those given in Mr. Russell's definitions. Thus the common-sense statement, 'My pen dropped on the floor' will be true if, though only if, it means 'A certain class of appearance dropped upon another class of appearances. [. . .] Mr. Russell's view is exposed to the familiar objection which Berkeley quotes against himself, though in a different form: 'After all, say you, it sounds very harsh to say, we eat and drink ideas, and are clothed with ideas.' If for 'ideas' there be substituted 'series of appearances', this objection applies to Mr. Russell.[173]

Quoting Russell's definition of a 'thing' as a 'series of aspects which obey the laws of physics', Prichard added: 'This *must* mean that it is true to say, *e.g*, of certain series of aspects that action and reaction are equal and opposite or that they attract one another inversely as the square of the distance'.[174] To this, he saw that Russell could have replied that the words such as 'attract' or 'action' should also be given new meanings but:

> If this process be fully carried out, we shall be left with nothing but language appropriate to Berkeley, and with no justification for retaining any of the

[168] *Ibid.*, pp. 150–1.
[169] B. Russell, *Our Knowledge of the External World*, pp. 77f.
[170] *Ibid.*, p. 80.
[171] B. Russell, *Mysticism and Logic*, p. 150
[172] B. Russell, *Our Knowledge of the External World*, pp. 112 & 115–16.
[173] H. A. Prichard, 'Mr. Bertrand Russell on Our Knowledge of the External World', p. 173.
[174] *Ibid.*, p. 174.

> language of common sense and science and, in that case, unless I have entirely misunderstood Mr. Russell, his whole mission will have gone.[175]

One may retort that Prichard has indeed misunderstood Russell. But can we fault him for having qualms about Russell's 'logical constructions'?

Prichard criticized vehemently Russell's *tertium quid*, i.e. the notion sense-data, and he used some of the arguments he had already developed, such as the 'predicability argument':

> Realities which are capable of being spatially related, are not appearances to someone but bodies. No one thinks, or could think, that an appearance to me could be, say, to the left of, or near to, another. The thing is impossible. To realise this, we have only to face the issue directly, when not under the obsession of some theory. Such statements are as obviously untrue as to speak, as Mr. Russell does, of the *appearance* of a penny as circular, or a certain *appearance* as blue.[176]

(In his critical study, Prichard's use of 'appearances' corresponds roughly to Russell's 'sense-data' and his 'bodies' to Russell's 'things', so I shall use them interchangeably, but shall adhere to Prichard's usage when discussing his views in later sections of this paper.) Against Russell's numerous remarks to the effect that one knows only sense-data directly but not the thing 'behind' it, his main line of argument, in continuation with 'Appearances and Reality', was this: 'if, as Mr. Russell thinks, we are somehow directly aware of what are called appearances, we must also be directly aware of what are called bodies, since the apprehension of the one must be inseparable from that of the other'.[177] Prichard also had an obvious criticism of Russell's notion of 'sensibilia'. The latter was defined thus:

> I shall give the name *sensibilia* to those objects which have the same metaphysical and physical status as sense-data without necessarily being data to any mind. Thus the relation of a *sensibile* to a sense-datum is like that of a man to a husband: a man becomes a husband by entering into the relation of marriage, and similarly a *sensibile* becomes a sense-datum by entering into the relation of acquaintance.[178]

Prichard simply pointed out that 'appearance is a 'doubly relative term',[179] that is that an appearance is not only appearance of a body, it is also an appearance to someone, so that he could then point out that 'Mr Russell [. . .] never even raises what would seem the natural question to put, viz. "Is

[175] *Ibid.*
[176] *Ibid.*, p. 162.
[177] *Ibid.*, p. 176.
[178] B. Russell, *Mysticism and Logic*, pp. 143–4.
[179] H. A. Prichard, 'Mr. Bertrand Russell on Our Knowledge of the External World', p. 176.

it not simply nonsense to speak of an appearance which is not an appearance to some one?" '.[180]

Again, Prichard's line throughout his critical study was that by an 'appearance' we could only mean an appearance of a body. So when Russell wrote that '[s]tarting from a world of helter-skelter sense-data, we wish to collect them into series, each of which can be regarded as consisting of the successive appearances of one "thing" ',[181] Prichard argued against Russell that 'there is, and can be, no such process'[182] and that 'not only do we never speak of a process by which we advance from a knowledge of appearances to a knowledge of things but to speak thus would be nonsense'.[183]

Prichard has at least one historically interesting argument. When Russell claimed that 'we should identify the thing as the class of its appearances',[184] Prichard retorted that 'no group of appearances can possibly form a substitute for a body, in the sense of having the same properties'.[185] Prichard argues:

> Even if it were possible to think of appearances without thinking of them as appearances of a body, how could any characteristic possessed by certain of them *so considered*, possibly render them a group or unity such that they would also necessarily have the unity of being appearances presented by one and the same body? There *could* be no such characteristic. For appearances meant when we or common-sense speak of appearances of one thing, derive their unity solely from the fact that the bodies which present the appearances are one and the same.[186]

At any rate, Prichard insists:

> Whether Mr. Russell's substitute for 'a body' of common sense will do as a substitute for it or not, the very terms in which this substitute has to be described presuppose the existence of bodies, and consequently Mr. Russell's view that there are these substitutes covertly implies that common sense is speaking and thinking truly when it speaks and thinks of bodies. The point – and I venture to press its importance – may be expressed slightly differently by saying that,

[180] *Ibid.*, p. 154. In fairness to Russell, it should be said that he abandoned the notion of sense-data by the time he published *The Analysis of Mind*, in 1921. See B. Russell, *The Analysis of Mind*, reprint (London, Allen & Unwin, 1989), pp. 141–2; *My Philosophical Development*, reprint (London, Allen & Unwin, 1985), pp. 100–1. On the other hand, Moore was still indecisively pondering in the 1940s whether sense-data are identical or not with physical surfaces (and whether or not they could exist unperceived): 'I am strongly inclined to take both of these incompatible views', (G. E. Moore, 'A Reply to my Critics' in P. A. Schilpp (ed.) *The Philosophy of G. E. Moore*, LaSalle Ill. (Open Court, third edn., 1958), 535–687, p. 659.

[181] B. Russell, *Our Knowledge of the External World*, p. 107.

[182] H. A. Prichard, 'Mr. Bertrand Russell on Our Knowledge of the External World', p. 184.

[183] *Ibid.*, p. 177.

[184] B. Russell, *Mysticism and Logic*, p. 149.

[185] H. A. Prichard, 'Mr. Bertrand Russell on Our Knowledge of the External World', p. 180.

[186] *Ibid.*, p. 181.

> whether the view which Mr. Russell takes to be the true view which is to replace that of common sense be true or not, it is impossible even to state it without falling back on the language of common sense and therefore without presupposing the truth of the thought which underlies this language.[187]

I venture in turn to press the point that, when one reads passages like this, the ordinary language philosophy of Austin, especially in his criticisms of sense-datum theorists of his days, owes a lot to Prichard.

To be continued in the next issue.

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[187] Ibid., pp. 182–3.