Chapter 3

Russell's "Indexical Phenomenalism"

Russell is, in many ways, the philosophical heir of Mill, attempting (as David Pears puts it) to arrange a marriage between empiricism and logic. In carrying out this task he weaves together logical and epistemological strands in an analysis of language and linguistic meaning, an analysis which gives a peculiarly prominent place to certain indexicals.

Where it was necessary to surmise and extrapolate to see how indexicality and context fit into Mill's view, Russell provides explicit detail. Russell collects many of the indexicals under the heading of "emphatic particulars" and returns to them often throughout his career because of what he sees as their crucial connection to empirical knowledge. The account he provides of the key indexicals 'I', 'now' and 'this' in "On the Nature of Acquaintance" is an essential component of his logical atomism. The important role indexicals play in the theory of acquaintance and the role that acquaintance plays in logical atomism grow out of Russell's analysis of linguistic meaning and, as with Mill, the features of this analysis most relevant to his views on indexicals are connected with his general theory of singular reference. The most basic singular terms, what he called "logically proper names", are intended to play the crucial logical role which had been played in Aristotelian logic by first substances terms. And just as Aristotle displays the connection between indexicality and first substances by calling them "this something", Russell repeatedly cites 'this', 'that', and 'I' as examples of logically proper names.

Russell's account of indexicals thus seems to be motivated from two directions. From the logical side, the apparent paradox of true negative existential statements seemed to require that the most basic referring terms have referents which are somehow guaranteed to exist; he thought he could meet this requirement by analyzing the meanings of apparently non-referring expressions in terms of statements containing "logically proper names" of objects of immediate acquaintance. From the epistemological side, Russell's convictions about the fundamentally perspectival nature of empirical knowledge led him to make explicit the perspectival features of the most basic evidence for the truth of empirical propositions; again this involved statements referring to objects of immediate acquaintance. In both cases these statements contain indexicals. Russell's desire to give a unified theory which satisfied both the logical and epistemological requirements eventually led, in his logical atomism, to the view that certain indexicals play a key foundational role in the

1 In his "Introduction" to Russell's *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, p. 30.
empirical content, and thus in the meaning, of natural language. The nature of this role comes out clearly in the relation Russell holds to exist among the three kinds of singular terms: proper names, definite descriptions and indexicals.

In this chapter I examine the place of indexicals in Russell's theory of singular reference, first in connection with logic and then in connection with the theory of knowledge. Next, an examination of the theoretical roles he requires indexicals to play reveals the contextual structure that must be assumed in order to account for their filling these roles. I argue that the model of context Russell is depending on is a development of the private model suggested by Mill's explicit account of proper names. Finally, I show that such a model is incoherent and fails to explain important features of linguistic meaning.

**Singular Terms in Russell's Logic**

Russell's account of the logical structure of definite descriptions and ordinary uses of common names, first proposed in "On Denoting" and later developed in *Principia Mathematica*, is well known. Nonetheless, it is worth a brief overview because it so clearly illustrates the interrelations among singular terms in his system, and the logical considerations which motivate his views on indexicals.

On the surface Russell holds a Millian direct reference theory of proper names. A proper names lacks descriptive content, its meaning is exhausted by the particular to which it refers. "When you are acquainted with that particular, you have a full, adequate, and complete understanding of the name, and no further information is required. No further information as to the facts that are true of that particular would enable you to have a fuller understanding of the meaning of the name." In the *Principia* system the most basic formulae (elementary propositions) contain symbols which represent individual objects. These symbols "stand for individuals" or "directly represent objects" (PM, p. 51) and are called "logically proper names" or "proper names in the strict sense."

But problems arise when this system is applied straightforwardly to natural language, for example, in the case of statements which deny the existence of a named object. Russell clearly believes that "Apollo does not exist" is a true statement, but if it is analyzed as an elementary proposition—whether as one in which a property (non-existence) is predicated of an object, or as one in which another property (existence) is denied of an object—and if the meaning of the whole expression depends on the meanings of its parts, and if, finally, the meaning of a name such as 'Apollo' is just the object it names, then the meaningfulness

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3 Hereafter, PM.
4 *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, p. 63.
of the statement depends on the existence of the object named by 'Apollo'. Thus, the statement cannot be both meaningful and true. Russell's solution to this apparent paradox can be seen as a three step procedure for replacing apparently referring terms with logically proper names. This procedure involves all the different kinds of singular terms. The aim of the procedure is to explain the meanings of apparently referring expressions of natural language in terms that provide for directly referential components of elementary propositions while avoiding the problem raised by true negative existential statements.

The first step in this procedure involves explaining the meanings of non-referring proper names, without ignoring the fact that we often use proper names without knowing whether the object named exists or not. This means that any plausible explanation of the meanings of fictional proper names ('Apollo', 'Pegasus', etc.) will also need to apply smoothly to many cases of non-fictional proper names. Russell's method is to replace most occurrences of proper names with definite descriptions. This replacement is supposed to apply uniformly to names of both existent and non-existent objects. In *Principia*, the claim is made rather baldly, being justified only by its ability to avoid the logical problems mentioned above.

"Apollo" means really "the object having such and such properties," say "the object having the properties enumerated in the *Classical Dictionary.*" . . . the same principle applies to many uses of proper names of existent objects, e.g. to all uses of proper names for objects known to the speaker only by report, and not by personal acquaintance.\(^5\)

To Socrates himself, the word "Socrates" no doubt stood for an object of which he was immediately aware. . . . But to us, who only know Socrates by description, the word "Socrates" cannot mean what it means to him: it means rather "the person having such and such properties," (say) "the Athenian philosopher who drank hemlock."\(^6\)

But this step alone doesn't solve the problem. If we take definite descriptions to be directly referential terms in the sense that their meaning is simply an object which is named by a component of an elementary proposition, then negative existentials raise exactly the same problem for descriptions that we saw with many proper names.

Suppose we say "the round square does not exist." It seems plain that this is a true proposition, yet we cannot regard it as denying the existence of a certain object called "the round square." For if there were such an object, it would exist. . . Whenever the

\(^5\) PM, p. 31.
\(^6\) Ibid., p. 50.
grammatical subject of a proposition can be supposed not to exist without rendering
the proposition meaningless, it is plain that the grammatical subject is not a proper
name, i.e., not a name directly representing some object.\footnote{Ibid., p. 66.}

Thus, at this point, a second step in the analytic procedure is required, and Russell takes
this step in his famous theory of descriptions. The meaning of a definite description is to
be analyzed in a way which makes explicit the presumptions of existence and uniqueness
which it implies, and which also results in the elimination of the original expression. The
\textit{Principia} version goes as follows:

"The author of \textit{Waverley} was a poet" . . . implies (1) that \textit{Waverley} was written, (2)
that it was written by one man, and not in collaboration, (3) that the one man who
wrote it was a poet. . . . Now taking $\phi x$ to replace "$x$ wrote \textit{Waverley}," it is plain
that any statement apparently about $(\lambda x)(\phi x)$ [the $x$ such that $x$ is $\phi$] requires (1)
$(\exists x)(\phi x)$ and (2) $\phi x . \phi y . \exists x y . x = y$. Here (1) states that at least one object satisfies
$\phi x$, while (2) states that at most one object satisfies $\phi x$.\footnote{Ibid., p. 68.}

Thus, the sentence "There is no such person as the King of France" is analyzed as the
negation of the proposition "There exists an object which has the property of being the
King of France," and so the sentence can be both meaningful and true although its
grammatical subject fails to refer to anything.

This is sometimes taken to be the end of the story, since the apparent contradiction has
been removed. On this reading, the problem of non-referring singular terms has been solved
as soon as statements containing two kinds of singular terms, names and definite
descriptions, have been analyzed away in favor of statements without those kinds of terms.
The referring function has been taken over by the variable. But if our interest goes beyond
just solving this particular kind of logical inconsistency—if, for example, we are interested
in how referring terms in general get their meanings—we need to understand how the
variable is able to take over the referring functions of names and definite descriptions.
Russell is careful to explain this and this explanation gives us a third and final step in the
procedure that leads to indexicals.

Variables are introduced in \textit{Principia} as follows: "When a . . . variable occurs, it
represents any object such that the statement concerned can be made significantly (i.e.
either truly or falsely) concerning that object." (p. 4) To make a significant statement about
an object is to assert an elementary proposition of the form $F a$, where $a$ "directly

\begin{enumerate}
\item \footnote{Ibid., p. 66.}
\item \footnote{Ibid., p. 68.}
\end{enumerate}
represents" the object. Thus, a bound variable only makes a contribution to the meaning of a sentence when understood as a place holder for a logically proper name. Furthermore, since the "significance" of any statement depends on its ability to have a truth value, the significance of the bound variables in the analysis of definite descriptions depends on the significance of elementary propositions which result when the variable is replaced with a logically proper name. This dependence of the truth, and thus the meaningfulness, of sentences containing variables upon the truth of propositions containing logically proper names is clear in the Principia version of the theory of descriptions. Here is the explanation of the meaning of statements of the form "the so-and-so is such-and-such":

"The $x$ satisfying $\phi x$ satisfies $fx$" is to mean: "There is an object $c$ such that $fx$ is true when, and only when $x$ is $c$, and $fc$ is true". In this $(\iota x)(\phi x)$ has completely disappeared; thus "$(\iota x)(\phi x)$" is merely symbolic, and does not directly represent an object, as single small Latin letters are assumed to do.  

This move from variables to logically proper names concludes the three step analysis. The meanings of ordinary proper names is given in terms of definite descriptions, the meanings of definite descriptions are given in terms of statements containing quantified variables, and the meanings of statements containing variables are given in terms of elementary propositions. This puts an enormous theoretical load on those propositions. Specifically, it makes the meaning of all referring terms dependent on the meaningfulness of the logically proper names that occur in elementary statements. It is an apparent embarrassment to the theory that plausible examples of such statements are scarce—as we read at page 45 of PM: "Truly elementary judgements are not easily found." When examples are given, they invariably contains indexicals: "this is red", "this is earlier than that."  

There are several factors which makes indexicals intuitively plausible candidates for filling the logical role required of logically proper names. That Russell recognizes them as an identifiable group of expressions with an important characteristic in common is clear from the way he describes them as "that class of words that pick out certain particulars from the universe by their relation to oneself, and, I think, by the fact that they, or particulars related to them, are present to you at the moment of speaking." It is easy to understand how this characteristic makes them good candidates for logically proper names. Since the meaning of an indexical is somehow bound up with the facts surrounding its

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9 Ibid.
11 Philosophy of Logical Atomism, p. 86.
occurrence, it seems plausible that its meaningful occurrence might guarantee the existence of that to which it refers. Russell attempts to make this guarantee explicit. He argues that the particulars which are the referents of indexicals are terms of the relation of acquaintance which holds between a perceiving subject and the object perceived, and thus the existence of the relation presupposes the existence of both its terms. On such a view, indexicals can, indeed, provide the guarantee of successful reference that the solution to the original logical problem required. But can they play the other role required of logically proper names? Specifically, can we find expressions containing indexicals which will act as the elementary building blocks for all our empirical knowledge, thus giving epistemic content to the logical structure described in *Principia*? And if such expressions can be found, will the reduction of singular reference to indexical reference undertaken in the logical analysis of denoting expressions give a plausible picture of the relation between the empirical contents of singular terms in natural language? Russell's answers to these questions come out in the epistemological investigations which complement his work on logic.

**The Epistemological Account of Singular Terms**

Having neatly solved the logical problem posed by negative existentials, Russell tries to make this formal system a plausible guide to important features of ordinary language, for example its use in making scientific statements and arguments. But if logic is to provide a vehicle for the analysis of factual scientific language, the logically proper names, in terms of which all reference is to be understood, must somehow connect with the objects that enter into scientific discourse, that is, objects of experience, or as Russell says, acquaintance. Accordingly, Russell gives an epistemological justification for the importance of indexical reference which exactly parallels the three step logical analysis we have been considering. He takes up these issues in "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description" (KAKD) and in "On the Nature of Acquaintance" (ONA).

Whereas in *Principia* the first step in the logical analysis of referring terms (converting proper names to definite descriptions) is taken dogmatically, in KAKD the move is justified in terms of the thoughts had by a user of language.

Common words, even proper names, are usually really descriptions. That is to say, the thought in the mind of the person using a proper name correctly can generally only be expressed explicitly if we replace the proper name with a description.¹²

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¹² KAKD, p. 21.
He considers as an example the name 'Julius Caesar.' No one alive today is acquainted with the Roman emperor of that name, and yet we readily understand sentences about him, and even know true propositions about him. But Russell wants us to see that there is something strange about any claim to knowledge about something in the absence of direct knowledge of that thing. He says, "Every proposition which we can understand must be composed wholly of constituents with which we are acquainted," since "it seems scarcely possible to believe that we can make a judgement or entertain a supposition without knowing what we are judging or supposing about."\textsuperscript{13} On this view, since we are not acquainted with him, Julius Caesar himself must not be a component of the propositions we believe, and thus the name 'Julius Caesar', when we use it, must have some other meaning. "In order to discover what is actually in my mind when I judge about Julius Caesar, we must substitute for the proper name a description made up of some of the things I know about him,"\textsuperscript{14} for example, that he was the man once called by the name 'Julius Caesar.' Here we have the epistemological counterpart to the first step in the logical analysis: elimination of an apparent proper name in favor of a definite description. This amounts to replacing a claim to knowledge about a specific object with a claim to knowledge about an object picked out by a description. Russell makes this explicit: "Thus our judgement is wholly reduced to constituents with which we are acquainted, but Julius Caesar himself has ceased to be a constituent or our judgement."\textsuperscript{15}

He immediately moves to step two, eliminating the definite description. "This, however, requires a proviso... that 'the man whose name was Julius Caesar' must not, as a whole, be a constituent of our judgement. ... 'The man whose name was Julius Caesar was assassinated' may be interpreted as meaning 'One and only one man was called Julius Caesar, and that one was assassinated.'"\textsuperscript{16} The result of this procedure "when applied to propositions whose grammatical subject is 'the so-and-so', is to substitute a variable as subject; that is, we obtain a proposition of the form 'There is something which alone is so-and-so, and that something is such-and-such.'"\textsuperscript{17} At this point in KAKD Russell closes the discussion with the comment that, having explained the meaning of definite descriptions (and thus, also, the meaning of most proper names) in terms of sentences containing variables, he does not intend, in that paper, to say anything about the "difficult problem" of the nature of the variable. Fortunately we do not require a complete account of how

\textsuperscript{13} KAKD, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 24.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p.26.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 31.
variables behave, but only an idea of how the referential part of their meaning was
supposed to contribute to the epistemic content of sentences containing them; for this,
there are plenty of clues in KAKD.

First of all, since for Russell the objects of understanding, judgement and knowledge are
propositions, the logical relations between variables and logically proper names is relevant
to the epistemology of the variable. So what does it mean to understand a proposition
containing a quantified variable? Partly, of course, it means knowing what it takes to make
the proposition true. A proposition of the form (∃x)φx is true just in case "some value of
x makes it true" and the values of x are named by logically proper names which can appear
meaningfully in propositions of the form φa. This means that, just as the truth of a
quantified statement depends on the truth of an elementary proposition, understanding a
quantified statement depends on the ability to understand elementary statements containing
the predicates in question.

Secondly, statements containing variables are epistemologically dependent on
elementary propositions in another way. What enters into the analyzed definite
description is not the object that the description denotes but rather "the concept of
denotation, which will be represented by a variable." As with any concept,
understanding "the concept of denotation" is dependent upon understanding instances of
denotation, and thus understanding propositions containing logically proper names.
Because the concept of denotation actually is a component of a proposition we can know,
it must be, on Russell's view, something with which we are acquainted, and this
acquaintance can be expected to follow the pattern of acquaintance with other concepts
through their instances:

Awareness of universals is called conceiving, and a universal of which we are aware
is called a concept. Not only are we aware of particular yellows, but if we have seen
a sufficient number of yellows, and have sufficient intelligence, we are aware of the
universal yellow.

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18 Cf. ibid., p. 30.
19 Discussions with Johannes Brandl were invaluable in helping me see how best to explain
the dependence of the meanings of variable-containing expressions on the meanings of
expressions containing logically proper names.
20 KAKD, p.29.
21 Ibid., p. 18.
Paraphrasing one of Russell's examples will clarify the relation between denotation and the truth of a statement containing a variable. 'The author of *Waverley* is a poet' is supposed to be of the form:

$$(\exists x) ((\phi x) \& (y) (\phi y \supset (x=y) \& \psi x)).$$

A Russellesque paraphrase of the *Waverley* example could run:

The propositional function 'x wrote *Waverley* and no one else did' produces a true proposition when x is replaced by a term which denotes an object, and the propositional function 'x is a poet' also produces a true proposition when its x is replaced by a term which denotes the same object.\(^2\)

Understanding this sentence requires being acquainted with the following: two propositional functions, the "making true" relation, the concepts of terms and objects, and the concept of the "denotes" relation. But it does not require acquaintance with the object which in fact is the denotation involved. This is supposed to explain why we can know that the sentence is true without being acquainted with Scott.

The line of argument undertaken in KAKD is intended to justify on epistemological grounds the logical reduction of the referring functions of all other singular terms to that of logically proper names. But here, when it comes to determining what logically proper names are, we no longer need to surmise from examples. Russell tells us explicitly, citing Mill's criterion:

Proper names [are] . . . words which do not assign a property to an object, but merely and solely name it. . . In this sense, there are only two words which are strictly proper names of particulars, namely, 'I' and 'this'.\(^3\)

We turn now to Russell's account of the meaning of these words, with the hope of uncovering the contextual factors which contribute to fixing their meanings on each occasion of use.

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\(^2\) There are problems applying Russell's explanation to his examples, since he claims both that "the subject of our judgement" in cases involving definite descriptions is a propositional function, and also that "the concept of denotation" occurs in propositions about "the so-and-so." This first claim is consistent with the paraphrase with which he closes the paper: "'the so-and-so is such-and-such' will mean that 'x is so-and-so and nothing else is, and x is such-and-such'" but there is no mention in this of the concept of denotation. The paraphrase given here is an attempt to make explicit the role of denotation which the variable is supposed to represent.

\(^3\) Ibid., p. 26.
Indexicals and the Analysis of Experience

As we have seen, both logical and epistemological concerns led Russell to a step by step procedure for reducing all singular reference to what we have been calling indexical reference. Given the theoretical importance this confers on these words, we would expect a detailed account of their meaning, and this is just what we find in "On the Nature of Acquaintance."\textsuperscript{24}

The main aim of ONA, originally delivered as the 1914 Lowell Lectures, is to give a careful refutation of the "neutral monism" of Dewey and James. Russell argues for rejection of this theory, which claims the essential sameness of the mental and material, in favor of his own system, which does not. His critique culminates with what he calls "the most fatal objection," one "which is derived from considerations of 'this' and 'now' and 'I'." These considerations also allow him to present key features of his own view. The kernel of the objection is that neutral monism cannot account for what Russell calls the "selectiveness" of experience, by which he means its perspectival structure: the obvious quality of experience that it is not just of something, but of something from a point of view. There is always some 'me' for which experience is 'mine'.

According to neutral monism the difference between the objective order and the subjective order is not that there are mental entities which enter into one and not the other, but just that the two are alternative arrangements of the same entities. In the objective order these entities are arranged according to relations that we just happen to call material, or physical, and in the subjective/psychological order (human experience) they are arranged differently. But it is clear to Russell that the subjective order of experience is not merely different from the other; rather it has a peculiar structure which requires for its explanation concepts not even applicable to the objective order. Giving such an explanation is particularly important given the epistemological role of experience; Russell's empiricism assumes that experience provides the only basis for knowledge of the objective order.

Since neutral monism regards experience as just a different arrangement of the entities of the objective order, it fails to explain the special structure of experience. This failure, Russell says, is most apparent in its failure to give any account of the indexicals 'I', 'now' and 'this'. He attempts to do the job himself, and begins with 'I'.\textsuperscript{25} He first notes some obvious peculiarities about how that word is used.

\textsuperscript{24} Published in Logic and Knowledge.

\textsuperscript{25} ONA, pp. 163-8.
It does not mean one person more than another, but rather that general characteristic, whatever it is, that makes each one of us call himself 'I'. But 'I' itself is not a universal: on each occasion of its use, there is only one person who is I, though this person differs according to the speaker. It is more nearly correct to describe 'I' as an ambiguous proper name than to describe it as a universal. But when used, 'I' is not in the least ambiguous: it means the person using it, and no one else.\footnote{Ibid., p. 164. Note here the appeal to the idea of "meaning on an occasion of use"; the contrast between the meaning an expression has on \textit{every} occasion and the meaning it has on \textit{particular} occasions is obvious in the case of indexicals, but describing precisely what the distinction is has become an important problem for the philosophy of language. As we will see in Ch. 6, Husserl is the first to give an explicit and detailed account of this distinction. Strawson's distinction between \textit{statements} and \textit{sentences} is helpful as are insights contributed by Quine, Grice, Kaplan, etc., which will be taken up in later chapters. Although this fundamental distinction between two kinds of linguistic meaning generally only becomes visible upon consideration of indexicals, it has implications for a variety of other philosophical issues.}

This characterization, though intuitively compelling, offends Russell as being not sufficiently clear. In particular, the usual way of understanding what it would be to refer to a "person" includes reference to a being which exists over time, with a physical body, recognizable appearance, personality, etc. For Russell, this distorts what really happens on each particular occasion that 'I' is used. These publicly visible, enduring features which we normally identify with the referent of 'I' are "obtained by an extension from the present subject and . . . the essential problem is concerned with our consciousness of the present subject."

\footnote{Ibid., p. 164.}

If enduring objects are constructed from momentary sense data with which we have direct acquaintance, the enduring persons we suppose to be the referents of particular uses of 'I' ought to be connected with particular events of experience in which something answering to 'I' plays a role.

As we have seen, acquaintance is an aspect of experience that Russell thinks is epistemologically indispensable, and he takes acquaintance to be a two term relation between a subject and an object.\footnote{He also gives arguments, directed principally at Meinong, to the effect that it is not a three term relation involving 'content'.} Our contact with whatever it is that 'I' refers to typically occurs as an event of acquaintance, i.e. an instance of the acquaintance relation. He accordingly offers for consideration as a clarified explanation of the meaning of 'I':

1) The subject of the experience which I am now having.

Does this obviously circular description get us anywhere? Whether or not it does depends on what it is supposed to be doing. Russell thinks there are two kinds of explanations that
can be given of the meanings of linguistic expressions. On the one hand, ordinary names and definite descriptions have definitions which give the descriptive content that fixes their reference. On the other hand, logically proper names, because they refer without relying on properties of their objects, cannot, strictly speaking, be defined, but their meanings can be elucidated, by a person who knows how to use them, by reflecting on how they are used. If the denotation of 'I' is not an object of direct acquaintance, then 'I' is a hidden description and we can expect a definition; because it is circular, 1) would be inadequate. But before endorsing that conclusion, Russell considers the alternative: that 'I' refers to an object with which we are acquainted. Hume's difficulty finding such an object is taken as evidence that, even if becoming acquainted with this object is possible, it is at least very difficult. This is enough to convince Russell that 'I' is not a logically proper name after all; the reason he gives for this conclusion is important to note. Logically proper names, he thinks, can only be learned in connection with an acquaintance with the object they name. If we can become acquainted with the referent of 'I' only with difficulty, it should be difficult for children to learn to use 'I' correctly, which it is not.

Even if by great exertion some rare person could catch a glimpse of himself, this would not suffice; for 'I' is a term which we all know how to use, and which must therefore have some easily accessible meaning.\(^{29}\)

Ironically, when Russell appeals to the fact that "we all know how to use 'I'," and uses this as evidence that the meaning of the word must be "easily accessible" he is endorsing a line of argument which, as we shall see, can be used to show a serious flaw in his whole program of grounding all reference in the link between logically proper names and acquaintance with sense data. At this point in his argument, though, he is just aiming to show that, contrary to appearances, 'I' is not such a proper name.

But if that's the case, then 'I' must be a hidden description, and thus definable. As a result, there is no choice but to try to eliminate the circularity from 1) by finding another way to describe what is characteristic of the object to which 'I' refers on a given occasion.

Since the referent of 'I' is the subject of every experience which the speaker has, and since we are often aware of the fact that we are experiencing an object even as that experience is occurring, Russell thinks he can point to experiences which provide enough descriptive content to give a more satisfactory definition. Focusing on this momentary reflective experience of one's own experiencing, he proposes a second definition, one not containing 'I':

\(^{29}\) ONA, p. 164.
2) ‘I’ means the subject of the present experience.

Even though we may not be acquainted with the subject of our experiences, being acquainted with the concept of acquaintance would let us know that it is a relation between a subject and an object. Thus, whenever we are aware of an object we can infer that there is some entity which answers to the definite description 'the subject of the present experience'. This is the denotation of 'I' if used by that experiencer on that occasion. So far, so good. We now have a noncircular definition of 'I'.

However a new problem arises, namely, what does ‘present’ mean in 2)? Russell notes that, as used here, 'present' could be taken in several different ways, and the ambiguity must be examined and dispelled in the interest of clarity. One obvious way to take 'present' is as referring to the current time, so that 'present experience' would have the same meaning as 'what is experienced now'. This will not do for a couple of reasons. For one thing, there is no reason many persons could not be having experiences at the same time, and we don't want one person's use of 'I' to denote all those people. More importantly for Russell, it is the relation of being contemporaneous with the present experience that is the basis for our understanding the temporal designation of 'now' or 'at the present time' and so those terms should be defined in terms of 'present experience', and not the other way around. Thus, this temporal sense of 'present' is put to one side for the moment.

In another sense, 'present' just means 'being experienced' or 'being the object of acquaintance'. But if this is what it means in our definition of 'I' then 'present experience' would be redundant, and 'subject of present experience' would just mean 'subject of experience' which is not a singular term but a universal, applying indiscriminately to every experiencing mind.

However, there is a third meaning of 'present' which applies, not to every experience, but only to some of them. Experiences can be grouped according to the different sorts of objects they have; e.g., remembrances are experiences of past objects. Another kind encompasses thoughts of timeless abstractions, numbers, etc. In both of these cases, the objects experienced do not fall under 'present' in the temporal sense. In contrast to

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30 Although 'present' is not commonly cited as an example of an indexical, its various spatial and temporal meanings show the same context-sensitivity as 'here' and 'now' and have the general characteristics of indexical meaning sketched in Ch. 1.

31 A brief sketch of the problem, including objections to possible solutions is to be found at ONA, p. 131.
memories and abstract thoughts, there is a sense of 'present' which is applicable to that category of experiences which includes only sensations and perceptions. This is the sense that is relevant to the definition of 'present time' since what we mean by the present time is the time which is occupied by the objects of my momentary perceptions, not of my memories. This gives us a clarified notion with which to return to the temporal sense of 'present' and give a better definition. 'Now' and 'the present time' mean the moment in time of that which is being sensed or perceived.

The sense of 'present' connected with sensation and perception is also the one that seems most relevant to our definition of 'I', since the specificity of 'I' seems more closely linked to the perspectival nature of perception than to the more general nature of memories and abstract mathematical thoughts. Thus, the next step in the analysis of the meaning of 'I' leads to an attempt to specify the structure of perceptual experience, and more importantly, the awareness of having perceptual experience; it is in this reflective awareness that it is first possible to see that there must be something that is the subject of every event of perceiving.

According to Russell, the kinds of things we perceive are facts. In the case we are interested in, it is the relational fact: that something is acquainted with a particular object (here the subject of the acquaintance relation is represented by the word 'something', and symbolized by a variable). This fact can be symbolized as:

\[(\exists S) (S - Aq - O)\]

An experience of this fact will, like all experiences of facts, be a perception, and so it will be the kind of experience which is "present" in the favored sense. If we call this the 'relation of presence' (symbolized with x-P-y), then the structure of our reflective experience will be:

\[S' - P - [(\exists S) (S - Aq - O)]\]

where \((\exists S) (S - Aq - O)\) is the fact being perceived by, and so, present to a subject S'.

Having thus introduced by example a specific kind of experiential relation, we can attempt a clarifying explanation of the key term 'present experience' which raised problems for the definition of 'I'.

"Present experiences' are those experiences which have the relation of presence to the subject using the phrase."33

32 Russell gives this brief characterization of the distinction between sensation and perception: "We may distinguish sensation from perception by saying that the former gives particulars [i.e., sense data] while the latter gives facts." (ONA p. 165) Since what is at issue in the theory of reference is knowledge of and reference to particulars, this distinction is crucial. Russell himself later modified his views on this distinction, as we shall see, and in ways that point up the difficulties of the ONA account of indexical meaning.

33 ONA, p. 167.
But here again we must raise the question of the status of this explanation. Is it a definition of a descriptive phrase 'the present experience', or is it an explication of the use of a logically proper name? If the former, then understanding the meaning of present experience means being able to ascertain whether or not a particular experience has the relation of presence to the person using the phrase. But Russell argues that this cannot be the case, since such a requirement would lead to an endless regress. What he seems to have in mind is the following: For something to have the relation of presence to a subject just means for it to occur in a fact of the form: $S - P - O$. In the case at hand, the "present object" is another fact—the fact that some object was being experienced, and this fact has the structure: $(\exists S) (S - Aq - O)$. But the fact that we "all know how to use 'I'" implies that we all know when present experiences are occurring, and so the question arises: what does knowing that involve? If it is a case of knowledge by description, then it requires our knowing that we are perceiving a fact of the required form: $S' - P - [(\exists S) (S - Aq - O)]$. A perception of this fact would be a distinct new fact of the form:

$S'' - P - [S' - P - [(Es) (s - Aq - O)]]$. But now, continuing under the assumption that knowledge that we are perceiving something is knowledge by description, we would again have to be able to perceive this new fact, and the regress continues. Russell says:

In order to know a present experience, it is not necessary that I should perceive the fact

$S' - P - (S - Aq - O)$

and it must be possible to pick out an experience as present without having perception of this fact.\(^{34}\)

The conclusion is that present experiences are known by acquaintance and not by description, and therefore that "'the present experience' or 'the present object,' or some phrase fulfilling a similar purpose, must be capable of being used as a proper name."\(^{35}\)

At this point Russell turns his attention to an expression he thinks can fulfill this purpose, the one logically proper name he still recognizes: 'this'. Here his theory of reference reaches rock bottom and we can see what he requires in the way of indexical reference and context to make his theory work. It is striking that when he explains the meaning of 'this' he uses a picture of the activity of naming which is strongly reminiscent of Mill's robber:

\(^{34}\) Ibid.

\(^{35}\) Ibid.
Suppose I were occupied, like Adam, in bestowing names upon various objects. The objects upon which I should bestow names would all be objects with which I was acquainted, but it would not be necessary for me to reflect that I was acquainted with them. . . It is only subsequent reflection that proves that they all have this distinguishing characteristic; during the process of naming they appear merely as this, that and the other. 36

We are to suppose that the fact that we are capable of applying a logically proper name to an object guarantees that it is an "object of present experience." We could know which objects these were if we always knew when we were "bestowing names" since objects of present experience are the only properly-namable objects. Russell thinks we can know when this is happening if we understand the meaning of the word 'this'.

**Analysis of the Meaning of 'This'**

What Russell needs for his argument to go through is not just the claim that 'this' sometimes acts as a logically proper name (since we might still doubt, in a given case whether we were engaged in "bestowing names"). What he needs is the implausibly strong claim that "the word 'this' is always a proper name, in the sense that it applies directly to just one object, and does not in any way describe the object to which it applies." 37 To account for the fact that 'this' refers to different things on different occasions, he proposes the following explanation of its meaning: "'this' is the name of the object attended to at the moment by the person using the word." Although we are acquainted with myriad things over time, and even many different things at any given time, we are able to select from among them a single object to refer to with 'this' by attending to that object. Russell thinks this gives him what he needs for an explication (not, remember, a definition) of 'this'. At this point Russell becomes emphatic, if less than clear.

It would be an error to suppose that 'this' means 'the object to which I am now attending'. 'This' is a proper name applied to the object to which I am now attending. If it be asked how I come to select this object, the answer is that, by hypothesis, I am selecting it, since it is the object of my attention. 'This' is not waiting to be defined by the property of being given, but is given; first it is actually given, and then reflection shows that it is 'that which is given'. 38

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36 Ibid.
37 Ibid., p. 167-8.
38 Ibid., p. 168.
The reader longs for some explanation of the notions of attention and givenness, here suddenly introduced, but none is forthcoming. What is clear is the reason for Russell's emphatic tone. Having hit rock-bottom in his analysis, the plausibility of the whole theory depends on accepting this account of the meaning of primitive referring terms. This chain of dependance becomes clear in the very next paragraph.

We may now retrace our steps in the opposite order. At any moment of my conscious life, there is one object (or at most some very small number of objects) to which I am attending. All knowledge of particulars radiates out from this object. This object is not intrinsically distinguishable from other objects—it just happens . . . that I am attending to it . . . Since I am attending to it I can name it; I can give it any name I choose, but when inventiveness gives out, I am apt to name it 'this'. . . . There is always a subject attending to any object called 'this'. The subject attending to 'this' is called 'I', and the time of the things which have the relation of presence to 'I' is called the present time. 'This' is the point from which the whole process starts, and 'this' itself is not defined, but simply given.39

Russell's hope here is that he has laid a foundation upon which to build a theory which satisfies both his logical and epistemological requirements. The theory is logical atomism and it is not difficult to see how that theory is intended to grow from this founding scenario.

Atomic sentences play a dual role which allows the theory to join logic with empirical knowledge. The supposed dependence of all uses of 'this' on the existence of its momentary referent solves the logical problems of negative existentials and makes 'this' acceptable as a primitive referring term. The compelling immediacy of the acquaintance relation between the subject and the object provide convincing evidence of the truth of statements of the form 'this is x' and does it in a way that automatically accounts for the perspectival structure of knowledge and experience—what Russell calls the “central illumination fading away into outer darkness.”40 Logical atomism is an attempt to display the way that "all knowledge of particulars radiates outward" from the events of interaction between an experiencing subject in which 'this' is used to refer to a sense datum. There is an orderly progression which begins with demonstrative statements. Instances of 'this is yellow' are required for understanding the concept yellow and for understanding the variable-containing expression 'something is yellow.' An experience where 'this is yellow' is linked with 'this is the sun' may serve as evidence for the truth of 'the sun is yellow.'

39 Ibid.
40 Ibid., p. 169.
Having provided the link between logic and experience at the level of the primitive terms, the content of complexes constructed from these terms falls out straightforwardly.

Although we can see how Russell wants his account of indexical reference to work, and why it is important to him that it should, a close look at his account reveals fundamental flaws that contributed to the failure of logical atomism. This critical examination can be set up in terms of our four guiding questions concerning indexicality and context. We have already answered the first two: We have identified a crucial theoretical role played by certain indexicals in Russell's theory of singular reference. We have also seen the relation Russell holds to exist among referring terms—names reduce to descriptions, descriptions reduce to bound variables, bound variables depend for their meaning on logically proper names, and (strictly speaking) the only logically proper name is 'this'. Even among the indexicals Russell considers, there is a dependance ordering in which the meanings of 'I', 'now' and 'present' (in various senses) depend on the meaning of 'this'. What remain to be answered are the questions about the role context plays in the meaning of 'this' and what context would have to be like in order to fulfill this role.

**Problems for Russellian Context**

Russell is clear that 'this' function as a Millian proper name in that its meaningfulness resides purely in its connection to an object which it introduces into discourse. A peculiarity of 'this' is that it applies to different objects on different occasions. He is also clear that there are specific features of the momentary "occasions of use" which account for 'this' referring to one object rather than another. Although Russell does not use the word 'context' in describing this determination of meaning, it fits with our intuitive characterization of context as the collection of those features surrounding an utterance of an expression which account for the variable aspects of its meaning on that occasion. Thus, identifying Russellian context involves answering the question: What are these determining features and how do they function as contextual influences on the meaning of 'this'?

The features of the occasion of use that Russell can admit as influencing the meaning of 'this' are limited by other commitments he holds. On the one hand, he considers it an unavoidable obligation of any philosophical account of experience that it be able to explain: "What makes one subject, one object and one time intimate, near and immediate," to a given person at a given moment, but in a way that connects other subjects to other objects at other times. This commitment guarantees that the set of relevant contextual features will include, at least, a subject who both experiences an object and uses the expression. On the other hand, Russell's commitment to the doctrine that what we experience, moment to moment, are sense data, not external physical objects, means that no enduring objects,
including other experiencing persons will be contextually relevant. The material for the principle of selection of the referent needs to be found within the momentary situation of interaction between an experiencing subject and a collection of sense data. This is the interaction Russell portrays in his image of Adam's solitary activity of bestowing names. In this activity there are two crucial features which link the subject with a particular sense datum, and thus fix the meaning of 'this'. First, the subject attends to that datum. Second, the subject bestows the name on that object, in other words, uses the word with the intention to refer to the sense datum which is the object of attention. This gives us a fairly clear picture of the relation between the meaning of 'this' and the circumstances surrounding its use.

To fit Russell's view, a context for meaningful use of 'this' will contain a single experiencing subject having the ability to attend to a single sense datum at a particular moment and to use a word with the intention to refer to that sense datum. In order to use 'present', 'now' and 'I' the subject needs the additional ability to reflect on its own experiencing. No other subject's experiencing, attending or intending is required or even permitted as a condition for these words being meaningful.

At the end of Chapter 2 we reflected on what Mill's examples of indexical use could tell us about the semantic role of context. We saw that there were really two contrasting views of what context might be like which were suggested by those examples. His mention of the operation of naming or baptism suggested a public context where several individuals attend to a common object and then use a single word with the common intention to refer to that object. This kind of context is clearly excluded from Russell's theory because of his restriction of objects of empirical experience to sense data, and his restriction of momentary access to a sense datum to a single subject. On the other hand, Mill's robber example suggested a private model, in which a single individual tags an object with a name in order to serve a private purpose of being able to refer to the same object again. Russell's view that 'that', in its distinctive use as a referring singular term, refers to a sense datum puts him squarely in the realm of the private model. A strong argument for the public model in Mill was his principle of semantic objectivity: that when we use words to refer, what we intend to refer to are the objects themselves and not our ideas of those objects. The importance of Russell's commitment to sense data in his adoption of the private model of indexical context, leads him to be explicit about how and why he parts company with Mill over the possibility of reference to external objects.

In KAKD (p. 22) he writes: "We often intend to make our statement, not in the form of a description, but about the actual thing described. . . . In this we are necessarily defeated, since the actual [object] is unknown to us." Russell raises a legitimate worry here which
serves as an important counterpoint to Mills principle. In spite of having a clear intention to refer to a specific object (that may be our *goal*), we may in fact fail to refer to that object if we lack the *means* or the access needed to carry out that intention. He explains how he thinks this failure of intention occurs in the case of 'this':

If I say 'this', pointing to some sensible object, what another man sees is not exactly the same as what I see, because he looks from a different place. Thus if he takes the word to designate the object which he sees, it has not the same meaning to him as to me. If he attempts to correct this, he will have to replace the immediate datum of his sight by a description, such as 'the object which, from the point of view of my friend, corresponds with the object which I see'. The words, therefore, in which I try to tell my experience will omit what is particular to it, and convey only what is universal.\(^{41}\)

We can formulate Russell's caveat to Mill's objectivity principle as two related claims:

**Principle of Acquaintance:** We can only refer directly to objects with which we are acquainted,

and

**Privacy of Acquaintance:** Two people can never know that they are acquainted with the same object in the same way at the same time.

In KAKD he illustrates the contrast between knowledge based on acquaintance and other grades of knowledge by pointing to the increasing distance between a knower and different kinds of objects of which he can still have some knowledge. He presents the following series of increasingly distant objects of knowledge. There is Bismarck as he is acquainted with himself, Bismarck as he is known to people who have met him, Bismarck as he is known through news and history reports, the man with the iron mask (about whom little is known beyond his location during one period of his life), and the longest lived man (about whom nothing is known except that there must be one). That we sometimes have knowledge of objects with which we are not acquainted might soften the blow of our failure to ever genuinely refer to those objects. We are supposed to see knowledge by description as supported by, not ruled out by, the nature of acquaintance and reference to objects of

\(^{41}\) Ibid., p. 156. As we will see in Ch. 6, it is similar concerns about the always-incomplete, variegated, and perspectival nature of our perceptions of objects of immediate experience which leads Husserl to his views on the nature of objective reference, specifically *indexical* reference. In Chapter 8 we will see what Kaplan makes of this *aspectual* limitation on our experience of objects.
acquaintance. But showing that we could still have knowledge of ordinary physical objects even if we never were acquainted with them (and were thus defeated in our intentions to refer to them), does not yet show that we are indeed defeated in our intentions to refer. To show this Russell needs to focus on the most plausible case of such reference—face to face "acquaintance" in its ordinary sense. But the incoherence of Russell's view becomes visible when he tries to explain such a case.

On Russell's view it is just false to say that Bismarck's friends were acquainted with him in the epistemologically required sense. What such people were acquainted with, strictly speaking, are "certain sense-data which [they] connected (rightly, we will suppose) with Bismarck's body. His body as a physical object, and still more his mind, were only known as the body and mind connected with these sense-data. That is, they were known by description." And although many different descriptions can pick out Bismark at different times and for different individuals, if a given individual is to have knowledge of Bismarck, "the essential point is that he knows that the various descriptions all apply to the same entity, in spite of not being acquainted with the entity in question." But how, we might well ask, is this possible?

This is the fatal flaw in Russell's epistemological reduction of all singular reference to indexical reference to sense data. External, physical objects endure through time; our sense data are fleeting. Knowledge of an enduring object would depend on the ability to collect together a series of sense data and know that they were data of that object. If we are not acquainted with the external object b (but only with sense data which may or may not actually be associated with b), in order to know that "b is F" we need to already know that "b is the source of G" and that "b is the source of H", etc., where "G" and "H" are descriptions of sense data which, at different times in our experience, originate from the single object b. But by hypothesis, we can never know those things because we're not acquainted with b. Without some link between sense data and its object, knowledge of external objects can never get started, and sense data alone can never provide that link.

However since, as even Russell agrees, we do know things about physical objects, then we must, at times, be acquainted with some of them. Another way of saying this is that we must have ways of keeping track of objects which allow us to collect together the information associated with various descriptions and perceptual contents which apply to those objects. This, as we have seen, is just what Mill thought proper names helped us do. But they can only do this if a proper name names the actual public object.

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42 KAKD, p. 21.
As we have seen, a key claim in Russell's characterization of 'this' is that it is always used to directly refer to an object of acquaintance, which, by his epistemology, must be a sense datum. It is no doubt possible that 'this' can be used to refer to a sense datum, but the claim that it is always used in this way is unsubstantiated and highly implausible. Even as he argues for our inability to refer to external objects, his account of how knowledge is grounded in acquaintance with atomic facts assumes that some terms at least must be able to refer to enduring objects. Any knowledge of enduring objects presupposes the ability to recognize several momentary sense data as being connected in some way with a single entity. It is plausible that we may only be able to refer to this entity indexically—e.g., as "this object to which I am now attending"—but such a reference would be to the enduring object, not the sense datum. If Russell is to maintain that we have any knowledge of enduring objects at all, he must accept that we have a kind of knowledge which is expressed by identificatory expressions like 'this is Bismarck' where 'this' refers, not to any collection of sense data, but to the the actual, enduring, public object which is Bismarck. When Russell says that our knowledge 'that a is F' depends on our knowing that various descriptions all apply to the same entity, the important point he has noticed might be put this way: Propositional knowledge about an object (knowing "that a is F") depends on (among other things) non-propositional knowledge of a—e.g., having the ability to identify a demonstratively. He says as much in what he takes to be his knockdown argument for the indispensability of knowledge by acquaintance—that it is "scarcely possible to believe that we can make a judgement or entertain a supposition without knowing what it is that we are judging about." That the word "know" is being used here in two different senses can be made more obvious by rephrasing this statement as follows: "we cannot know-what something is so-and-so unless we first know-what it is we are judging about." "Knowing that" depends in some way on "knowing what." One conclusion that can be drawn from this remark is that propositional knowledge (knowing "that P") is distinct from and often dependant on non-propositional knowledge (knowing what, who, how, etc.). Russell's concern is prompted by a difficult, genuine problem which arises from the realization that any given object answers to an endless number of descriptions—has many "ways of being given" or "modes of presentation"—which must be somehow tied to a single object if we are to "know what we are judging about."

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43 It is important to note that this distinction between propositional and non-propositional knowledge is related to, but distinct from Russell's distinction between knowledge by description (which is always propositional) and knowledge by acquaintance (which can be either propositional or non-propositional). For our purposes, it is also important to note the important role played by indexicals in expressing non-propositional knowledge.
Propositional knowledge about sense data can never do this job. And by this argument, propositional knowledge of physical objects can never get off the ground without non-propositional (i.e. identificatory or recognitional) knowledge of at least some physical objects. And the content of that knowledge will be expressed by indexical-containing statements such as 'This is a' where 'this' refers to a physical object.44

This undermines Russell's claim that 'this' always refers to a sense datum, and at the same time shows that the picture of context implied by his view is inadequate. Whatever else it contains, context must sometimes include enduring public objects as potential referents for indexicals.

There are other considerations, some of them recognized by Russell himself, which likewise support this conclusion. For example, we have already noted his claim that we all learn quite easily how to use 'I'. But in saying this he presupposes that it is possible to know when someone else is using 'I' correctly (how else could he substantiate such a claim?). And if our universal ability to use 'I' correctly shows (as he also affirms) that it must have some meaning that is easily accessible to the one using it, then judging that someone else knows how to use 'I' must likewise require that the one doing the judging have access of some kind to whatever 'I' means. Furthermore, the access we are supposed to have to the meaning of 'I' will be indirect—it depends, on Russell's own view, on our knowing how to use 'this'; and so judging that someone else knows how to use 'I' must likewise require that the one doing the judging have access of some kind to whatever 'I' means. But Russell claims that 'this' refers to a sense datum, which is, he says, as a matter of empirical fact, never shared by more than one subject at a time. If this is so, it precludes the possibility of our ever knowing how anyone else uses 'this' or 'I'. Even worse, since his theory of denoting expressions effectively reduces all singular reference to demonstrative reference using logically proper names, doubts about the meaning of 'this' infect all reference to public objects. Furthermore, his views about the way that understanding of general terms depends on understanding instances involving singular terms means that these doubts extend to general terms as well. This is what makes Russell's view susceptible to the private language argument. If the meanings of all our terms, both singular and general, rely on demonstrative reference to momentary, private sense data, we never know that we mean what anybody else means by anything we say. This is a counterintuitive conclusion to be avoided if at all possible.

One way to avoid this conclusion is by accepting that we are, at least at times, acquainted with enduring individuals. This can be done by revising the understanding of the contrast between sensation and perception which Russell articulates. When he says that

44 Cf. Strawson on re-identification in Individuals.
facts are given in perception and particulars are given in sensation he denies that our contact with particulars has any continuity with past experience. The conceptual content of our perceptions of facts, on the other hand, requires this continuity over time (to perceive that 'this is yellow,' for example, requires being influenced by the past experiences of yellow through which the concept was acquired). Much later Russell came to realize the difficulty created by his earlier use of this distinction to characterize our acquaintance with objects. Sensation, as a pure acquaintance with facts about momentary sense data untinged by past experience is itself a mere abstraction; in actual experience it never occurs. In 1959 he wrote:

>'Perception' as opposed to 'sensation' involves habit based upon past experience. We may distinguish sensation as that part of our total experience which is due to the stimulus alone, independently of past history. This is a theoretical core in the total occurrence. The total occurrence is always an interpretation in which the sensational core has accretions embodying habits. 45

This expresses a realization of the interpretive nature of even the most rudimentary experiences from which our knowledge of the world could be built. To equate the experience of every particular with the sensation of a sense datum is to ignore the interpretative aspect present in every experience, and it leads inevitably to the denial of all knowledge of enduring objects.

But once it is admitted that we are, at least sometimes, acquainted with actual physical objects, much of Russell's account of indexical reference becomes salvageable. The relations among the meanings of 'I', 'present' ('now') and 'this' stand up pretty well when actual objects are substituted to sense-data as referents. 46 The referent selection process involved in the meaning of 'this' fits especially well with our intuitive sense of what makes 'this' refer to one thing rather than another; clearly our ability to focus our attention on one object, or one aspect of an object within a complex scene is crucial to explaining the definiteness of the meaning 'this' has on specific occasions. Indexicals can still turn out to play an important role in solving the logical problem of negative existential statements. In contexts involving sensory attention, 'this' continues to serve as a good example of a logically proper name, to the extent that successful demonstrative reference implies the existence of the

45 My Philosophical Development, p. 143.
46 The interdefinability of indexical is commented upon repeatedly in the theories of indexicality we will examine. Several later cases follow the pattern, seen in Russell's account, of reducing the meanings or all indexicals to a single favored one. As mentioned in Ch. 1, this interdefinability is a strong indication that indexicals, for all their grammatical diversity, are join together by important semantic bonds.
object demonstrated (at least it seems to presuppose its *intersubjective availability*). In contexts not involving sensory attention the explanation of negative existentials will be more complex and will depend on understanding how those contexts work. The distinction between logically proper names and ordinary proper names can remain, though the explanation of many ordinary proper names will no longer be through descriptions, but directly to indexical statements of the kind noted by Mill: an ordinary use of 'Maria' need not be related to any description of the referent, but might depend for its meaningfulness on a dubbing use of 'this is Maria' or on someone's ability to confirm demonstratively that "that is Maria." The details of all of this, of course, remain to be worked out, but this sketch is intended to suggest that many features of Russell's account survive the rejection of his dogmatism about sense-data.

Any reinterpretation of the account of the meanings of indexicals will involve a corresponding change in the understanding of what context is like. The changes suggested clearly involve shifting from a private model to public model of context. Learning to use 'this', which includes verifying that it is being used with the same meaning by others, requires that the context that fixes its reference on a given occasion include at least two subjects, that one subject be able to tell what the other is attending to, and that the referent be, at least occasionally, an enduring public object. In modifying and developing Russell's account of indexical meaning we ought to aim to preserve his important insights about the perspectival aspects of many uses of language and of much of our knowledge of the world and the important role played by acquaintance with and demonstrative reference to objects of immediate experience. At the same time we must recognizing the inescapably social nature of meaning and the importance of objective reference in our very concept of knowledge. A concern to defend the objectivity of language and knowledge is deeply embedded in Frege's philosophy of language and so we can expect from him a theory of meaning in which some kind of public context will play an important role in indexical reference.
Fossils

{First put in the context of Logical Atomism???}--- He believed that there are simple propositions upon which all our knowledge of the world rests, and that all knowledge of particular things and of general properties of particular things originates in knowledge of simple facts expressed in these simple propositions. Even the understanding of the descriptive words that make up definite descriptions depends on first being acquainted with atomic facts in which they occur.

the only guarantee that seems available is that object occur in the very fact which “x is F” is supposed to report. Although such occasions are rare, when we use a name to refer to an object of current experience, an object with which, as Russell says, we are acquainted, such “logically proper names” do occur and they are basic to all our knowledge of the real world.

An important analysis of the meaning of indexicals within Russell’s Logical Atomism is given in his essay “On the Nature of Acquaintance”

III. Analysis of Experience (account of I, now, this) [p. 159]

What are contents of experience? Data: by intuitive inspection

1- there are some present objects
2- some of these are new to experience
3- recent past objects are still part of current experience
4- we can think of abstract facts
5- this includes an apparent “experiencing of experiencing” of those facts.
6- we can know (by description) that non-experienced objects exist.
   {gloss on knowl. by description}
7- only objects of present experience can be mentioned non-descriptively.
   two ways of “mentioning”: proper names and descriptions
8- judging, desiring, etc. presuppose, but are not merely experiences of obj’s.
9- some objects may be experienced by many, e.g. numbers, universals
10- some objects can only be experienced by single person, e.g. token desire

CONCL; A’s experiencing O is different from O, since others can experience O, But only A can experience A’s experiencing O; This experiencing must be a relation between O and something connected intimately with A abd bit if tge sane jubd as O, ‘that which experiences’, call it subject, call the relation Acq.

Question: What is the nature of the subject?
   -by definition, a term of the relation ‘acquaintance’ (known by description)
   -are we ever acq. with subjects? i.e. can subjects also be objects?

CON; elusiveness of subjects in introsp. c.f. Hume.

Answer requires analysis of meaning of ‘I’.
-“I” not a universal, but a name. an ambiguous proper name with meaning fixed for a given use.
-Introspection must thus be perception of facts (e.g. that something is acquainted w/ O) and not sensation of objects (e.g. the subject, the obj.. the rel. of Acquaintance)}

///“Emphatic particulars such as “this”, “I”, and “now” would be impossible without the selectiveness of mind” 169///