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Introduction

In 1916 a Professor of Education at the University of London, and an active member of the Aristotelian Society, began a paper with the following retrospective: ‘the question of the relation between sense-data and physical objects has, during the last 15 years, frequently engaged the attention of this Society. It has also received much consideration elsewhere, Mr. Bertrand Russell’s Lowell lecture on *Our Knowledge of the External World* ... being recent as well as a very important instance.’¹ This paper was written in reaction to a Symposium held two years earlier by the same Society on ‘The Status of Sense-Data’. The Symposium centred on the nature of sensible objects, and their relation to physical things and the subject. The two main contributors to this Symposium were also the two most distinguished philosophers of perception at the time: G.E. Moore (1873–1958) and G.F. Stout (1860–1944). Their papers stimulated, it seems, a very lively discussion. A reason, of course, for the intensity of the discussions that ensued, apart from the clarity and power of the papers, was that the Symposium was really the climax of a debate that began a good many years earlier, and many who participated were in some way or other an integral part of this history.

It was an exciting Symposium for another reason, the two giants had also modified their positions, and those in the audience were quick to notice and react to these changes.² Moore now expressly defended a position closely akin to Locke’s representationalism, while Stout, really the one who had initiated the debate more than a decade ago, was now defending a position closely resembling that of his early opponents. Stout’s paper was conceding quite a bit to the British New Realists – the two main and most vocal representatives were in the audience at the time. It was also during this meeting that Moore initiated the group present at the meeting to Bertrand Russell’s recently published work, as

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an alternative to Stout's and his own positions. Although recently back from the United States, Russell was not present at the meeting. It was thus due to Moore that many philosophers were introduced for the first time to the method of logical construction as applied to the problem of the external world. Moore, however, was critical of this application and labelled such constructions 'Pickwickian' at best; others disagreed. One of those who outspokenly disagreed was the Professor of Education already mentioned, T.P. Nunn (1870–1944), one of the most articulate defenders of the British New Realism, and an ardent opponent throughout the years of Stout's brand of realism. The other British New Realist, and long time opponent of Stout's doctrine, was also in the audience, namely, Samuel Alexander (1859–1938).

The Symposium, including Nunn's 1916 article, marked off the end of a fifteen-year debate that broiled between some of the philosophers during this Edwardian period. If Russell had attended this meeting, almost everyone who was involved in the debate for the last decade would have been present. A few days after the meeting, Nunn met with Russell, freshly back from the United States. On 9 July 1914, both went for a walk, and Russell explained to Nunn that he was really just too 'fed up' with philosophical discussion to have joined them at the Symposium held in Durham. Nunn went on to describe to Russell, probably in quite some detail, the discussions that took place, including Moore's latest position and his construal of Russell's constructions, and Stout's modifications and concessions. Among other things, Russell answered by further explicating his logical constructions, and by giving Nunn a copy of his 'The Relation of Sense-Data to Physics', published earlier that year – his own contribution to this debate. The following day, after skimming over Russell's article, Nunn wrote to his friend, Samuel Alexander, explaining, with much excitement, that Russell's 'article explains in part the position which Moore tried to describe and will, I think, give you as much comfort as I believe it is going to give me. Russell tells me that he started by recognizing that my paper on "Secondary Qualities" was successful as far as it went but that it needed to be completed by a theory of space and time in order to stand properly on its legs. (I told him, of course, that you and I were acutely conscious of that same fact.) The present article is an attempt to supply the needed basis. One wants, of course, time to think over the matter but speaking with cautious though early enthusiasm I must say that I find it masterly and believe that it promises to give me complete satisfaction ...'³

The full title of Nunn's paper, referred to in this letter, is 'Are Secondary Qualities Independent of Perception?' It was a paper delivered to the

Aristotelian Society four years earlier, and made some of the clearest objections against Stout's doctrine, while also explicitly composing a defence of Alexander's realism against some of Stout's objections. Nunn's paper, in other words, was an essential part of a larger controversy, and must be understood in the context of this dialectic. One of the remarkable things to notice, therefore, in the letter quoted, is that Russell is actually placing his application of the method of logical construction to the problem of the external world squarely within this debate. In this work I propose to examine the extent to which this debate, which I label 'the Controversy', not only took centre stage in so many important papers and discussions of the Society during the period, but also significantly influenced Russell's work on the logical construction of the external world. In the course of this work, it will be shown that the influence was substantial, especially for Russell's work between 1912 to 1915, a time when he produced a prolific amount of material dedicated to the problem of the external world. From Russell's peculiar construing of 'sense-data' and 'sensibilia', his arguments for their 'physical' and 'extra-mental' nature, to his very method of logical construction as it applies to the problem of the external world, we will discover direct ways in which the Controversy shaped Russell's philosophy.

The problem of the external world – and more specifically, its two related forms: the *nature* of sensible objects, and how these latter connect or *relate* to physical things and the perceiving subject – were hot issues in Edwardian English philosophy, especially between 1900 and 1916. The Controversy focused primarily on these two aspects of the problem of the external world. Most of this debate took place in the meetings of the Aristotelian Society, the content of which was certainly much richer than what was published in the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, but the latter is what I primarily rely on in telling this story. Beginning with G.F. Stout's article of 1904 entitled 'Primary and Secondary Qualities', which initiated the Controversy, here then is its structure:

1. Stout's (1904), at first accepted by T.P. Nunn's (1906).
2. Earliest critical reply in writing was a letter to Stout by John Cook Wilson.
3. Stout restates his position in his (1905), partly in response to Cook Wilson.
4. Indirect reply to (1) through a critique of Stout's (1905) by G. Dawes Hicks' (1906a).
5. Stout replies to Dawes Hicks, and the latter retorts (1906b).

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6. Alexander criticizes Stout (1) in his (1909).
7. Stout replies to Alexander also in the same year (1909).
8. Alexander responds to Stout in (1910).
9. Nunn's criticisms of Stout and defence of Alexander in (1910).
10. B. Bosanquet's (1913) criticisms of Alexander.
11. G.E. Moore's (1906) and his 1910–1911 Lectures (published in 1953), directly address many of the issues of this Controversy.
12. Symposium by Moore and Stout on Sense-Data in their (1914).
13. Alexander's *The Basis of Realism* (1914) responds to Bosanquet, and further develops his position.
14. Nunn responds to (12) in (1916).

Evidently, many philosophical perspectives were represented in this Controversy. Notice, however, aside from the eminent idealist, Bosanquet, many of the interlocutors were realists of some sort or other. On the whole, in other words, this debate took place amongst *realists*. I emphasize this aspect because if Russell's work from this period is to be partly understood within this context, as I wish to show it must, he was really grappling with other realists at the time, and trying to frame his own brand of realism in relation to many of the issues and assumptions that this Controversy revealed. G.F. Stout is, what I will refer to as, a 'Proto-New Realist', and a critical exponent of the Austrian Realists. I label him a 'Proto-New Realist', partly because I wish to emphasize the vital role his responses played in aiding the development of the nascent British New Realism. Unlike the American New Realists, it ought to be noted, the British form did not take on a neutral monism – a position that regards the basic elements involved in perception as being neither substantially mental nor non-mental. Rather, one of the defining characteristics of the British New Realism, is its belief in 'physical appearances', which also sets it apart from the direct realism of the 'Old Realists'. I argue, that it was Stout's arguments for taking sensible objects (appearances) to be existents in their own right, albeit psychical, that laid the ground for this feature of the British New Realists.

Stout alludes to his role in the development of British New Realism, particularly of Alexander's brand, in an affectionate piece composed after the latter's death, that reminisced about their long personal relationship, and, above all, their philosophical discussions. 'Shortly before Alexander began to publish the first installment of his system', recalls Stout, 'we had a discussion turning on the nature and object of sense-perception. He closed the conversation by proposing that we should each of us work out his own view in detail and then compare

results.⁴ Even though Stout humbly goes on to claim that ‘I am far from suggesting that this discussion first started Alexander on his constructive work’, I will attempt to show that these discussions and the resulting papers did help Alexander to formulate his brand of British New Realism.⁵ The ‘constructive work’, which Stout refers to here, I believe has more to do with Alexander’s later metaphysical system devised in *Space, Time and Deity*, published in 1920, than with the earlier material I am primarily interested in. This is important to note, mainly because many now associate Alexander’s name with this grand metaphysical system, however important, overlooking many of his earlier contributions, which as we shall see are significant in their own right. Though I will confine my discussion of Alexander’s earlier contributions to what is relevant to the Controversy, it will be obvious that his realism from this period should be seen as an important and distinct stage in his philosophy. I also believe that these earlier contributions are where he had the most profound philosophical impact on those around him at the time. This division of Alexander’s work into, generally speaking, two stages may appear to be artificial at first, but Stout authoritatively records a change in Alexander towards a more speculative method, commenting, that earlier on, ‘on many points we differed. But behind our differences there seemed always to be a basis of agreement which facilitated mutual understanding. This was so at least until the conception of his space-time system dawned upon Alexander’s mind as a dazzling revelation and led him to refashion all his previous views.’⁶

Stout’s 1904 and 1905 papers both sparked critical reactions. The first reaction came in the form of a private letter, which will play an important role in our story. After Stout presented his 1904 paper to the Society, John Cook Wilson (1849–1915) engaged Stout in an intense discussion about the nature of his ‘representations’ and ‘qualities’. A month after the meeting, Cook Wilson sent a lengthy letter to Stout, detailing all the many points he diverged from him. Stout’s 1905 paper ‘Things and Sensations’, a fascinating paper in its own right, I suggest, contained certain responses to Cook Wilson’s objections. One of the reasons, then, that I will include Cook Wilson’s letter, aside from its penetrating critique, is that being an ‘Old Realist’ he contrasts nicely with not only Stout’s Proto-New Realism, but also with the British New Realism. I will also be including some of G. Dawes Hicks’ (1862–1941) criticisms of Stout, primarily because the former represents another very important strain of the British Brentanian tradition. Dawes Hicks’ importance, however, is not limited to his critical stance towards Stout’s moving beyond this tradition, but also in revealing a very important continuity

in the ideas of both Stout and Russell – the idea that sensible appearances are *existents* in their own right.

The exchange, however, with which I will be most interested in is that which dramatically continued on between the British New Realists and Stout. The heated, but respectful, back and forth between Alexander and Nunn, on the one hand, and Stout on the other, will highlight some fundamental arguments and assumptions in their respective work. This process leads not only to some of the best (re)articulations by Stout of his doctrine, but also to the development of the nascent British New Realism itself. For instance, both Alexander and Nunn identify an assumption essential to Stout: the latter assumes in some of his arguments for the mental nature of sensible-presentations that one and the same thing cannot have more than one sensible quality at one and the same place. I call this ‘Stout’s Postulate’. It is then replaced by the British New Realists, by what I will call ‘Nunn’s Postulate’, which states that one and the same thing may have many different and even contrary sensible qualities all in the same place. These postulates play a fundamental role in our story, for they directly and explicitly affect the way Russell understands the nature and the construction of space. The dialectic that centred around these two Postulates also reveals the way in which Russell’s attempt to reconcile these two contrary intuitions in his analysis of ‘the same place as’ is connected to one of his central problems: the reconciliation of the world of physics with the world of psychology.

This is not all. Stout began in even earlier works of 1896 and 1899 to outline a philosophical psychology that would accommodate many philosophical positions and issues, including the problem of the external world. C.A. Mace, who wrote, ‘The Permanent Contributions to Psychology of George Frederick Stout’, goes as far as to claim, and correctly so, that Stout’s ‘most distinctive contribution’ as a psychologist and philosopher was to ‘the problem of our awareness of the self and the external world’.⁷ These contributions, however, were partly made under the guise of a critical acceptance of many of the fundamental doctrines of the school of Brentano. As I shall attempt to highlight in various ways, throughout this work, Stout’s unique notion of ‘presentation’ was partly a refined and critical inheritance of Brentano’s immanent objects.⁸ Stout’s notion is unique, however, because he stresses, unlike Dawes Hicks and K. Twardowski (one of the most important adherents of the school of Brentano), the independent and separate *existence* of these presentations or *Inhalte* (contents). This I will argue, in Chapter 4, can be directly connected to Moore’s and

Russell's concept of 'sense-data'. Indeed, the very dialectic of the Controversy provided some of the rough material out of which 'sense-data' and 'sensibilia' were given shape. It was Nunn's convincing and clear rejection of the mental nature of Stout's presentations, for example, and Alexander's emphasis upon their 'physical' nature that opened the way to Russell's peculiar shaping of sense-data and sensibilia. Russell accepted, as did the British New Realists, Stout's emphasis on the independent existence of sensible-presentations, but he also noticed that all of them assumed too much in their arguments for or against the mentality of presentations. Russell thereby gives a measured and qualified account of sensible appearances, especially in relation to the Controversy.

There is also the question of how to relate sensible appearances to the physical world. Stout proposed, at least at first, a two-stage answer. The first stage involved an 'immediate inference', and the second, what he called, an 'ideal construction'.⁹ In 1905, however, he concluded that the latter is the more viable approach in understanding the relation between sensible appearances and the physical world, and abandoned immediate inferences. The notion of an 'ideal construction' goes as far back as Stout's two volume work *Analytic Psychology* (1896) and especially his *Manual of Psychology* (1899). This latter book was one of the most widely read works on philosophical psychology in Britain, and as late as the 1930s it continued to be published, edition after edition. I think it is even plausible to claim that these two works also represent, along with Stout's oral and written involvement in the Controversy, the best and most well-known constructive answers to the problem of the external world proposed during the period. The problem is, however, nowhere does Stout get into the details of how exactly an ideal construction proceeds in relation to 'thinghood', 'space', 'time' and 'causality', as he says it does, in the *Manual's* chapter on 'The External World'.

Despite this paucity, we may usefully characterize Stout's ideal constructions, based on widely spread out remarks and various applications made of this device in both his psychological and philosophical works, as a socio-psychological process meant to fill in the gaps of our everyday experiences. This process is philosophically conditioned by certain metaphysical assumptions about the *fragmentary* nature of our immediate experiences (such as, sensible objects), and some sort of presumed inductive principle, such as the need for *continuity* and uniformity in our experience of the world. But all this psychologically proceeds without the awareness of the subject; it is only when we

'logically analyse' our experience of the external world that we arrive at such philosophical conditions. It is in this way that we also arrive at the various distinct elements of our experience of the external world. There are the elements, which are immediately experienced, such as sensible appearances that 'interpenetrate' physical things, which are not immediately experienced; the two are separate and distinct existents which are somehow correlated. What secures the veracity of such constructions is the harmony and correspondence between purpose, action and results in our everyday interaction with the external world.

To get a better idea of what Stout meant by all this, it might also be useful to note in passing that Stout's ideal constructions are really a variation of something that goes as far back as Johann Friedrich Herbart's realist reading of Immanuel Kant. I only briefly mention this relation between Stout and Herbart here so that the reader may keep it in mind when encountering Stout's notion of ideal constructions in this work. As early as 1888, Stout wrote a very clear exposition of Herbart's work, probably the first such exposition of this great German philosopher and psychologist in English.¹⁰ Even though Herbart's work was largely ignored during his lifetime, mainly because he wrote during the height of German Idealism, it, nevertheless, saw a revival after the German Revolution of 1848, when the call 'Back to Kant' was made. Herbart's realist interpretation of Kant found support from such realists as Hermann von Helmholtz, who wished, among other things, to eliminate the innate forms of intuition, like space and time, so central to the Idealist interpretation of Kant. The central idea here is that space, for instance, is a construction 'generated from the ground up', through unconscious and psychological processes. Space is not real, nor is it merely an innate idea, but rather is a symbolic representation necessary for our multifaceted interaction with the world. Stout and Herbart's constructions are, therefore, kinds of hypotheses necessary for the order, coherence and continuity of our experience.¹¹ It is this lineage of constructions, of which I have only given the briefest sketch, that I will refer to as 'psychological constructions'.

Alexander and Nunn both seem to accept this constructive process in their respective doctrines. Alexander, however, goes on to actually propose that the manner in which the immediate parts we are presented with in our experience of the external world are connected to their wholes (like physical things) is dictated, not only by our mental processes alone, but also by what is *given* extra-mentally in the physical things themselves. I am not quite sure what to make of this, it may just be an early form of structural realism. Nunn, however, is very

interesting in this regard. In a small, but significant book, *The Aims and Achievements of the Scientific Method* (1907), Nunn surveys the history of science and the nature of scientific hypothesis, and catalogues three different types of constructions. He argues that only scientific hypotheses or 'secondary constructions', which, instead of *replacing* primary data, *complete* them using entities of the same kind as the primary data are considered legitimate. This legitimate sense of construction is an extension of 'psychological constructions' into the realm of science. This is made clear in his distinction between primary constructions, which are constructions we make in our everyday interactions with the world (ideal constructions), and secondary constructions that further build, add to and order our primary constructions in accordance to a certain conceptual framework. The one is practical, the other theoretical.

Stout's move away from an 'immediate inference' to an 'ideal construction', moreover, represents his aversion to implicitly positing certain aspects of experience that require explanation; that is, immediately inferring only seems to exasperate the problem of surreptitiously positing aspects of experience that are in need of explanation. From Russell's perspective, Stout's intuition was quite right; but because of the psychological nature of Stout's constructions, the explanation proposed by Stout was more in line with finding the most primordial place from which to ground epistemology, and thereby our knowledge of the external world. This place was the pre-cognitive and primitive aspects of our psychological experience, where Stout felt he could secure himself from actually positing logic and knowledge, for he identified these as the aspects in need of explanation. Nunn, but especially Alexander, both consciously tread cautiously, so as not to merely postulate what their epistemological theories were meant to explain. Alexander went as far as to distinguish his New Realism from the Old by claiming that unlike the latter, his realism did not merely '*postulate*' physical things in its explanation of our knowledge of the external world; the language of 'absence' and 'presence', 'derivative' and 'primitive', 'original' and 'acquired', are all connected to this caution in the works of Stout, Nunn and Alexander.

Despite the presence of this framework, however, from Russell's vantage point, these philosophers did not go far enough. This was due partly to not properly or consistently distinguishing justification from explanation in their epistemological work, to their respective methods, and the way they understood philosophy's relation to other disciplines, such as psychology and physics. This especially becomes evident when

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'psychological constructions' are juxtaposed to Russell's 'logical constructions'. Such juxtapositions, I believe, Russell himself consciously made in his work on the logical construction of the external world. Not only does Russell say that such psychological constructions have no proper and exact procedure, but that they do not provide a *philosophical* answer to the problem of the external world.

Aside from 'psychological constructions', there is also another essential strain of construction, which one might call 'mathematical constructions'. Mathematical constructions certainly have a long history, and find interesting and very potent philosophical applications, for instance, in the works of Kant and Schelling.¹² In their mathematical role, constructions begin to take on significant aspects in the nineteenth century. This is particularly the case in contrast to other mathematical methods used in the introduction and justification of mathematical objects, such as the method of postulation and the method of implicit definition. When it came to the justification of certain mathematical entities (such as imaginary numbers), some nineteenth-century mathematicians constructed such entities, in order to avoid merely *postulating* them. This is, for instance, the impetus behind the constructions of certain mathematical entities advanced by Richard Dedekind (1831–1916), and Karl Georg Christian von Staudt (1798–1867). Russell's early work in mathematical philosophy may also be seen in this light. In his *Principles of Mathematics* (1903), Russell goes as far as to attack Dedekind's construction of irrational numbers, accusing him of purporting to avoid postulations, but not actually doing so. Russell's problem with such constructions, a problem that he also urges against Giuseppe Peano (1858–1932) and others, is based on the observation that certain principles are surreptitiously introduced, which actually contaminate the purported construction with mere postulates and unwarranted assumptions. Such principles are more generally inductive principles used to support some inference, as for instance, a principle of continuity. In this phase of Russell's philosophy, he gives special preference to an inference in the construction of mathematical entities, such as cardinal numbers, that is based only on his logical principle of abstraction, which supports an inference from one kind of entity (a class) to another (a cardinal number). After the class paradoxes were discovered in the midst of this inference and the associated Platonist interpretation of the principle of abstraction, Russell, later, tried to avoid such an inference, and re-interpreted the principle in a Nominalist sense. This eventually leads to the distinction between inference and construction. The details of this history I will give in

Chapter 6. What I wish to emphasize here, as in the last chapter, is Russell's explicit intention to avoid merely postulating doubtful entities, its connection to the history of nineteenth-century mathematics, and its relation to his 'logical constructions'.

In connection to the Controversy, therefore, I hope to show several things. The problem of the external world was usually approached using 'psychological constructions', which were a confused mixture of tacit inferences based on some inductive principles (especially that of continuity), socio-psychological processes and metaphysical assumptions about the nature of the parts (like sensible objects) and the whole (such as the universe, physical things or external world). What Russell was, therefore, proposing was a new approach to the problem, an approach based, generally speaking, on 'mathematical constructions'. Russell must have seen the analogy between the former approach (psychological constructions as they were used in the Controversy) and the history of mathematics of the nineteenth century. As in the latter history, those in the Controversy also purported to avoid the mere postulation of what required explanation. There was also the similar role played, in the Controversy and in the history of mathematics, by inductive inferences and the principles supporting them, such as the principles of continuity. It is no surprise, then, that Russell attempted to use devices from mathematical construction, in order to help him propose a solution to the problem of the external world. Russell, to be sure, did not see this analogy immediately; his *Problems of Philosophy* (1912) was definitely much more in line with the inductive approach. I will show that Russell must have actually become aware of this analogy between the way the problem of the external world was construed by the Controversy and the mathematical approach to the problem of dubious entities, only after being introduced to aspects of this Controversy through his study of Nunn, made for a remarkable paper written after *Problems of Philosophy* entitled 'On Matter' (1912).

Consequently, one of the things I will try to do in this work is make sense of Russell's attempt to connect the problem of the external world and its solution, to issues in mathematical logic. I find it interesting that Russell regularly comments on the importance of mathematical logic and the recent developments of mathematics in books and articles on the *philosophical* problem of the external world. I will try to show how these comments actually make sense in the context of how the problem of the external world was treated at the time, especially in the Controversy. But even more important is the close analogy between the way philosophers during this period approached the problem of the external world

and the way certain mathematical developments of the late nineteenth century approached the problem of suspicious entities. Both attempted in their own respective ways to avoid 'postulation'. In the last chapter I will try to demonstrate that Russell was in a position to see this analogy, and that he used it to his advantage in the way he construed the problem of the external world and its solution.

In further comparing ideal constructions to Russell's 'logical constructions', which were meant to solve similar issues, one of the main points Russell makes against such ideal constructions is that they are not *philosophically* relevant. Russell's discussion of philosophical method and logical construction is meant to show how *logic* is the essence of philosophy. This contrast between types of construction will help us to understand what Russell means by claiming that the epistemological problem of the external world is between logic and psychology. We will see in Chapter 5, how the sectioning off of such disciplines as psychology, physiology, physics, etc. from philosophy will affect how we understand what we ought to take as given as opposed to derivative in our knowledge. It goes without saying that Stout, Alexander, Nunn and Russell advanced, or just simply assumed, different possible relationships between these disciplines.

Russell also objected that such ideal constructions, and psychological constructions in general, lacked a strict procedure. In Russell this procedure is provided by mathematical logic. As we shall see in Chapter 6, such a definite logical procedure for the construction of physical things and space rests on a realism about relations – something that Russell shared with Nunn. This may be why both rejected phenomenalism. Throughout my exposition of especially Nunn and Russell, however, I will only touch on some reasons why their respective notions of construction cannot be regarded as simply phenomenalist. No sustained demonstration of this point, however will be given, even though I give a treatment of the issue at the end of Chapter 6, and something is also presented in Chapter 3 with regard to Nunn's sophisticated understanding of the role that constructions play in science and their relation to Mach's phenomenalism. For the purposes of clarity, the characterization of phenomenalism I rely on is one that rejects any element in sense-experience as existing and persisting without a perceiver, coupled with the rejection of the existence of an element that is not of *same kind* that the basic perceived elements in experience are.¹³

Admirable and important work has been done by Nicholas Griffin and Peter Hylton in detailing the historical context of Russell's Idealist phase. By providing the philosophical and historical context to Russell's

transition away from Idealism, they have done a great service for Russell scholarship by highlighting the resulting nuanced and subtle features of his philosophy. What I attempt is something similar for some of Russell's middle philosophy. I will not be directly interested in Russell's Idealist phase, nor will I be directly concerned with his logico-mathematical work and his early uses of constructions (of cardinal numbers, classes, etc.). This is not to say I will have nothing to say about these issues, nor am I suggesting that nothing is relevant here with regard to my project. I want to give a partial but significant philosophical and historical background to the problem of the external world, a problem that Russell was concerned with from about 1911 onwards. This task will especially deal with a solution he advanced to this problem based on the 'method of logical construction'. Out of this background will also arise a context for Russell's 'sense-data' and 'sensibilia', and more generally for his distinctive realism at the time.

Though Russell continued the programme of logical constructions late into his career, I will only be examining this notion as it develops in and around 1911–1915. This means I will not be concerned with the interesting constructions of the self in the *Analysis of Mind* (1921), nor with the construction of matter in *Analysis of Matter* (1927). There are a few reasons for this: one is that these works reflect a thoroughly new perspective, such as a concern for more of a structural approach to constructions, and the rejection of the sense-data/sensation distinction so central to the period I am interested in. Even though these later constructions may be more sophisticated and nuanced in their exposition, I will be primarily concerned with Russell's early project of logical construction because of its philosophical context, origins and general historical motivations. That is, I wish to stay as close to the Edwardian period as possible.

I will be primarily concerned with the British philosophical scene, rather than the American or Continental one. This may seem odd to some, especially since it appears that Russell interpreters have mainly stressed his historical and philosophical links to the Continent (Frege, Meinong etc.) and the American tradition (William James, John Dewey, the American New Realists etc.). Stressing these influences upon Russell is certainly important, for no one can deny them. However, I am surprised at how little there is in the vast literature on Russell in relation to the influence, context and arguments that his own English contemporaries provided.¹⁴ What has been written tends to be about, and understandably so, Russell's relation to G.E. Moore, A.N. Whitehead, or F.H. Bradley. Russell, however, was also involved with a larger English

philosophical scene: participating in symposia, colloquia, writing for English academic and non-academic periodicals, keeping in touch both in person and in letters with many of his colleagues, etc. At the same time many of these contemporaries seriously engaged Russell's philosophy. Even though some of these philosophers have now disappeared from current philosophy's radar, they were well recognized and influential in their time. This includes philosophers such as G. Dawes Hicks, G.F. Stout, John Cook Wilson, Sir T.P. Nunn, Samuel Alexander, B. Bosanquet and so on. This study examines how such figures played a significant role in the development of Russell's thought, especially in relation to the method of logical construction and his notion of sensible objects.

Chapter 1 deals with the doctrine Stout articulated in 'Primary and Secondary Qualities', and as reformulated in subsequent articles. The main points I will try to extract from my discussion of Stout, and which are essential to the rest of my argument, are: (1) the purported mental nature of sensible-presentations; (2) Stout's connection to Brentano; (3) the independent and separate *existence* of sensible appearances as opposed to their being simple appearances of things or aspects or products of mental acts; and (4) Stout's notion of ideal constructions. Even though I do explore a few other surrounding aspects, there is just so much in Stout that one can easily lose focus. An entire separate work can be written on Stout's philosophy, which spans at least a fifty-year period, accompanied by many changes and nuanced advances. In this way, I will stick to what is most relevant to the history I expound, especially in relation to the British New Realists and Russell.

Chapter 2 is partly set up as a back-and-forth between Stout and Alexander. This will highlight certain interesting features of British New Realism, which I conclude was partly developed in response to Stout. Alexander's doctrine will emerge as an interesting exploration of the nascent New Realism, and an important articulation used as a reference point by many philosophers at the time. My discussion of British New Realism continues on into Chapter 3, where I focus on Nunn and his unique take on Stout's doctrine. Nunn's approach is to expose implausible assumptions in Stout's arguments, and from this approach, as we shall see, Russell greatly benefited in his own work on the problem of the external world. In this chapter I will also take some time out to explore Nunn's construal of scientific hypothesis as constructions, and their relation to Mach's phenomenalism. Chapter 4 deals with Russell's sensible objects: sense-data and sensibilia. In many ways, this chapter is a result of the chapters preceding it. In it my main

purpose is to show exactly how Russell's sensible objects were a product of this Controversy. In order to appreciate some of the novelties and some of the constraints Russell placed on sense-data and sensibilia, I show that they must be seen from within the context provided by the Controversy. Finally, Chapters 5 and 6 will examine how logical constructions are directly connected to some of the issues in the Controversy. Specifically, I will explore how Nunn's and Stout's Postulates play an essential role in Russell's construction of spaces, and his important distinction between the place *from* which something appears and the place *at* which it appears. Stout's ideal constructions will be contrasted with logical constructions, and more generally with Russell's concern with a scientific method for philosophy. Many of Russell's epistemological doctrines, in this period, it will be found, are a critical acceptance or rejection of many of the assumptions and notions of Stout, Alexander and Nunn. Lastly, I will try to understand why Russell insisted on introducing mathematical and logical methods into the philosophical problem of the external world, and why he repeatedly insisted that those working on such philosophical problems must also be familiar with the recent developments in mathematics.

It may be evident from this outline that due to the nature of the argument there will be some overlap and repetition; this however is unavoidable. The argument is arranged from chapter to chapter as a build-up to some of the vital conclusions I make with regard to Russell's place in the Controversy. The reader I hope will benefit from the exploration of the various threads of the argument, all which have some bearing on Russell's own solution to the problem of the external world. These various threads I attempt to tie together in the last three chapters. The first three chapters, however, are also essential to this snowball effect, especially if one is to capture the full extent of the subtle refinements, advances, observations and influences between all those involved in the Controversy, including Russell.

Finally, a brief word about the label 'Edwardian' in the title of this book. Despite disagreements as to what exactly should be regarded the Edwardian period, and despite the fact that King Edward VII died on May 1910, some historians place the period between 1901 and the beginning of the First World War.¹⁵ Without getting into the details, I have simply taken for granted these dates as correctly demarcating the Edwardian period. The Controversy begins and roughly ends between these dates as well, and so may be labelled 'Edwardian'.¹⁶ The philosophers involved in this Edwardian Controversy, specifically Stout, Alexander and Nunn, I take to be, at least some of the Edwardian

Philosophers, but certainly not all. Demarcating the philosophers involved in this way, will allow me to make some claims about the attention and importance allotted to their respective philosophical works. Hence, the Edwardian period, so demarcated, roughly corresponds to certain phases in the respective philosophical proposals advanced by the protagonists of this story. Within this period, that is, they develop their philosophies in original ways, clearly marked by important shifts by the end of the period. On the one hand, Nunn's most significant philosophical contributions, which seem to be overlooked by many historians of analytic philosophy, actually occurred in this period, while afterwards he shifted his attention to mathematical education. On the other hand, Stout and Alexander are usually regarded to have their most influential philosophical periods, respectively, before or after this period; part of my effort, then, is to demonstrate the impact of their work, particularly in the context of the Edwardian Controversy. Russell too may be considered an Edwardian philosopher, considering that some of his most important work at least was done in this period, and that he was absorbed in the issues of the Controversy. The label does not suggest that the respective careers of the philosophers did not extend before or beyond this period; it is only meant to hone in our attention to a specific timeframe, which sets an important background and intellectual context for Russell's ideas in epistemology – a context largely overlooked by the vast literature in Russell studies.

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