

Abstracts: Annual Meeting of the Bertrand Russell Society

Stefan Andersson

Independent Scholar

A PRESENTATION OF *WAR CRIMES IN VIETNAM*

Prior to the launching of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation in 1963 we have very few cases of publications attributed to BR that warrant the question “Did BR really write this?” The only one I can think of is *Wisdom of the West*. This would all change after the establishment of the BRPF and the entrance of Ralph Schoenman. Some years ago I borrowed Dr. Blackwell’s copy of *War Crimes in Vietnam*, and it contained remarks regarding the authorship of certain chapters. This paper is based on those notes and my correspondence with Russell Stetler. The purpose is to distinguish between those chapters that BR most likely wrote himself and those that he read and approved, and whether his allegations about the Vietnam War were supported by facts.

Alan Bishop

McMaster University

“THE FRUIT OF MANY YEARS”: BERTRAND RUSSELL AND VERA BRITAIN

In my paper I consider the relationship between Russell and his younger English contemporary Vera Brittain (1893–1970). They were both very prolific writers, journalists and lecturers, and she became widely known and respected as a leading feminist and pacifist. Four of Russell’s books notably impressed and influenced her— *What I Believe* (1925), *The Conquest of Happiness* (1930), and especially *Marriage and Morals* (1929) and *Which Way to Peace?* (1936). Even when they diverged in opinion and action during the Second World War (she remained firmly pacifist throughout), Vera Brittain deeply respected Russell for his intellectual and political leadership, and after the War supported CND strongly (only the political aspirations of her husband and daughter prevented her from later supporting the Committee of 100); in 1940 she and her husband had spent an evening with Russell in the US, and, a long-time stalwart of the

Peace Pledge Union, she played an important role in resolving a conflict, during the 1960s, between Russell and *Peace News*.

Kenneth Blackwell

BRRC, McMaster University

WIT AND HUMOUR OF *PRINCIPIA MATHEMATICA*

In very old age Russell recalled *PM*'s most humorous passage, and there are others to be enjoyed.

David Blitz

Central Connecticut State University

RUSSELL AND OMNICIDE: FROM *ON THE BEACH* TO GAME THEORY

Russell held what was then considered an extreme view on the consequences of nuclear war: that a thermonuclear conflict between the US and USSR would lead to the annihilation of humanity. The term “omnicide” was introduced for such a conflagration c. 1959 and was depicted that year in fictional form by the movie version of Nevil Shute’s *On the Beach*, which Russell went to the see. Russell’s view that an accident or stupidity on the part of those in power would — if not restrained by the abolition of war — lead to the end of mankind, turned out to be, as of the date of this abstract, wrong; though his fear that nuclear weapons would persist and proliferate has proven correct. Apologists for the nuclear arms race point to Mutual Assured Destruction (known by its acronym “MAD”) as having been successful in creating a “balance of terror” under which neither nuclear power was tempted to act. Russell’s analysis, however, was based on a game-theoretical analysis as well — the Game of Chicken, for which the worst-case scenario was indeed mutual destruction. This paper will compare Russell’s use of game-theoretic models with others, such as the Prisoner’s Dilemma, which have also been applied to the nuclear race.

Andrew Bone
BRRC, McMaster University
RUSSELL, INDIA AND THE COLD WAR

Russell had supported the goal of Indian independence for almost thirty years before its achievement in 1947—although he had disagreed with the tactics of the nationalist movement in the last phase of the struggle and was keenly aware of the sectarian divisions that erupted with such violence after the announcement of partition in the final months of British rule. While acknowledging the enormous challenges confronting the newly independent state, he retained considerable hope that it would develop in a progressive, secular and democratic direction under Nehru’s political leadership and—of more central concern to Russell in the 1950s—that India’s non-aligned status would enable it to play a crucial mediating role in the Cold War. Gradually, however, Russell lost faith in the possibility of India acting as a broker of détente and was further disillusioned by the nation’s resort to conventional power politics in its aggressive assertion of sovereignty in border disputes with China and Pakistan in the 1960s.

William Bruneau
University of British Columbia
THE EDUCATION OF BERTRAND RUSSELL

The aim is to argue how Russell’s educational theory and practice at Beacon Hill School (1927–31) can be reliably connected to his own previous formal and “experiential” (I’ll explain, I promise) education—but without losing my emphasis on the daily work of Dora and Bertie in their school.

Carey R. Carlson
Independent Scholar
FINITE EVENTISM

A new quantum theory is constructed from a temporal successor relation, based

on the eventism of Bertrand Russell and Alfred North Whitehead. Specific results include the structural definition of energy and the quantum structure of the electron. The remainder of the article examines the consequences of eliminating spatial relations from the theory of physics. Extension-in-space is no longer valid for framing the dualism of mind and body. The causal location of human mental events in the brain is pinpointed to the cortical homunculi, which are now redefined as regions of pure temporal succession.

James Connelly

Trent University

ON RUSSELL'S "PARALYSIS"

In the context of a broader discussion of Russell and Wittgenstein on the nature of judgment, Rosalind Carey (2007) has recently offered a new and controversial reading of Wittgenstein's fateful, but notoriously obscure, criticisms of Russell's so-called "multiple-relation" theory of judgment. In contrast to each of the two main "camps" into which scholarship on the issue is divided, one which sees Wittgenstein as concerned with issues of logical type (e.g., Griffin 1980, 1985, Sommerville 1979), and the other which sees him as concerned with the unity of the proposition (Hanks 2007), Carey instead sees Wittgenstein as focused on Russell's invocation of a neutral fact to undergird the sense of a proposition. According to Carey, Russell's reported "paralysis" then consists in his having no ready analysis of the form of belief which will both account for the bipolarity of judgment as well as accommodate Wittgenstein's criticism. In this paper, I offer both a critique of, and an alternative to, Carey's reading of that criticism, one according to which the target of Wittgenstein's infamous so-called "post-card" objection to Russell's theory lies in its invocation not of neutral facts, but rather of logical forms. The intended target of Wittgenstein's criticism is then not, as Carey has suggested, Russell's introduction of neutral facts as evident in working notes under the title "Props". These notes instead represent a failed alternative proposal, developed by Russell in response to Wittgenstein's somewhat earlier, and less articulate, critique of logical forms.

Bernard Linsky

University of Alberta

THE PARADOX IN RUSSELL'S LETTER TO FREGE OF 16 JUNE 1902

Russell wrote to Frege on 16 June 1902, telling Frege of a “difficulty” which is now famous as “Russell’s Paradox”. It was already known before 1902 that sets of sets that are not members of themselves lead to contradictions. Russell didn’t direct his argument particularly against Frege’s famous “Basic Law V”. So, what was Russell’s problem?

Tim Madigan (with Ken Blackwell)

St John Fisher College

THE LOST RUSSELL DOCUMENTARY

In 1965 the radical filmmaker Emile de Antonio (famous for, among other works, *Point of Order*, *In the Year of the Pig*, and *Painters Painting*) attempted to make a documentary about the life and philosophy of his hero, Bertrand Russell. Having worked closely with Russell’s then–secretary Ralph Schoenman and author Mark Lane on the Warren Report critique, *Rush to Judgment*, de Antonio was interested in making a “living obituary”, with the full cooperation of its subject. While the initial filming went well, the project broke down and was abandoned, due primarily to friction between de Antonio, Schoenman and Lane. In this presentation, excerpts from the remaining footage will be shown along with passages from the transcripts of the interviews.

Tom Riggins

New York University

BERTRAND RUSSELL ON BOLSHEVISM AND THE CONDITIONS FOR ESTABLISHING SOCIALISM

The paper is about *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*, comments on the trip in the *Autobiography* and the *Collected Papers* and remarks from the

official Labour delegation's report as well as a Bolshevik review of his book from 1921.

Peter Stone

Stanford University

RUSSELL, MODERN LOGIC AND THE GRAPHIC NOVEL *LOGICOMIX*

The graphic novel *Logicomix*, by Apostolos Doxiadis and Christos Papadimitriou, tells the history of modern logic through the life story of the philosopher Bertrand Russell. As one of the founders of analytic philosophy, Russell tried—and failed—to derive the entirety of mathematics from logic, and thereby set mathematics upon absolutely certain foundations. His life therefore provides an excellent thread upon which to hang a story about modern logic. Doxiadis and Papadimitriou, however, prioritize storytelling over historical accuracy; they therefore omit or alter a number of facts regarding Russell and logic in the interest of telling a “good yarn”. There is nothing inherently wrong with prizing entertainment or aesthetic value over attention to the historical record. Unfortunately, the unifying theme developed in *Logicomix* is both extremely old, extremely popular (i.e., large numbers of people respond to it), and extremely pernicious. This theme holds that there are things that “mankind was not meant to know”, and that the pursuit of such knowledge is a dangerous—even blasphemous—undertaking. Doxiadis and Papadimitriou develop this theme by combining together two seemingly unrelated conclusions about Russell's life. The first conclusion is that Russell was attracted to the study of logic as part of a “quest for certainty”, a quest to find some source of unerring truth that could serve as a substitute for traditional religion. The second conclusion is that Russell was haunted by a fear of madness. Taken separately, both claims are widely accepted in the world of Russell studies. But Doxiadis and Papadimitriou combine these claims, in such a way as to suggest that the spectre of madness hung over Russell precisely because of his quest to find philosophical truth. In doing so, they are aided by the common perception that there is a correlation between brilliance in logic and insanity. This theme resonates with the general public in part because so many people share a strong anti-intellectualism, a deep and abiding fear of people who are devoted

to rational inquiry. Overcoming this fear is one of the most pressing problems of the modern era; and pandering to this fear can serve to reinforce this. While Doxiadis and Papdimitriou are to be commended for trying to introduce Russell and modern logic to a wider readership, the theme they use to unify this introduction reinforces dangerous popular prejudices—prejudices that Russell himself worked tirelessly to help others overcome.

Chad Trainer

Independent Scholar

RUSSELL'S RESISTANCE TO LEIBNIZ'S CONCEPTUALISM

In this paper I explore aspects of the relationship between the thought of Leibniz and Russell. It is a discussion of how the influence of Leibniz on Russell was caught in a tension, or conflict, between Russell's revolt against British Idealism, on one hand, and his appreciation of Ockham's razor, on the other. As the influence of the former began to wane and that of the latter to wax, Russell increasingly adopted a conceptualist philosophy of logic and mathematics to which Leibniz had exposed him much earlier, but which he rejected at the time as part of his opposition to British Idealism.

Sheila Turcon

BRRC, McMaster University

RUSSELL'S 1918 PRISON CORRESPONDENCE

Editing this correspondence is a very complex task. Constance Malleson wrote down all the pitfalls that an editor would encounter. While in prison from May to September 1918 Russell had to follow a series of rules. His brother Frank negotiated some of the terms in the application of those rules. Frank got approval for one incoming and one outgoing official letter per week. Those letters were crammed with messages to and from many people. Each month extracts were mimeographed and circulated. Constance Malleson was the most important person in Russell's emotional life at that time, but that fact was not well known. Thus she communicated using three different aliases in addition to

her stage and real names. She also used the personal columns in *The Times*. Russell wrote some letters to her in French, disguising them as book extracts. In June someone came up with the idea of smuggling letters in the uncut pages of books. These letters are often fragmentary and undated. After Russell left prison various typescripts of both types of letters were prepared. Those letters are sometimes condensed, sometimes annotated. Dates were sometimes changed. These letters are in different locations in the Russell Archives, so finding them all and entering them all in BRACERS with the appropriate cross-references has been a lengthy task, just completed.

With only one official visit allowed per week for half an hour plus a few business visitors, correspondence was Russell's vital connection to the outside world of his friends and family. He suffered huge mood swings and the letters helped him to vent his frustrations. They also provided nourishment for his inner being.

Warren Wagner

Independent Scholar

REALITY SYSTEMS, RUSSELL, MENTAL PROCESSES

All our data, both in physics and psychology, are subject to psychological causal laws; but physical casual laws, at least in traditional physics, can only be stated in terms of matter, which is both inferred and constructed, never a datum. In this respect psychology is nearer to what actually exists (*The Analysis of Mind*, last page, last paragraph).

In response to Russell's observations, I would like to propose Reality Systems Theory as a megamodel to provide context for mental processes and a distinction between General Reality (nature) and Special Reality (mind). Secondly, I would like to suggest that Neuro-Semantic Coding and Bundling is a useful model for organizing content from which reality is structured. Thirdly, I would like to comment that Russell's hierarchy of classical types—i.e. member, series, set, class, class of classes, extension, intension, etc as presented in *Principles of Mathematics*—is an elegant model for mental processes.

