

The Bertrand Russell Society

Fall 2015

Bulletin

Inside this issue ...

**Our columnists;
Feature articles by Blackwell, Lenz, Nickerson,
Trainer, and Turcon;
And much more.**

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Information for New and Renewing Members

Membership in the Society is \$45 per year for individuals, \$30 for students, and \$25 for those with limited incomes. Add \$10.00 to each for couples. A lifetime membership is \$1,000. In addition to the BRS *Bulletin*, membership includes a subscription to the peer-reviewed, scholarly journal, *Russell: The Journal of Bertrand Russell Studies* (published semi-annually by McMaster University), as well as other Society privileges, such as participation in the on-line BRS Forum, the BRS email list, access to a host of Russell-related, multi-media resources, eligibility to run for the board and serve on committees, and eligibility to attend the Annual Meeting.

Renewal dues should be paid by or on January 1st of each year. One's membership status can be determined by going to russell.mcmaster.ca/brsmembers.htm. There one will also find convenient links to join or renew via PayPal and our information form.

New and renewing members can also send a check or money order via traditional post to the treasurer (make it out to The Bertrand Russell Society). Send it to Michael Berumen, Treasurer, Bertrand Russell Society, 37155 Dickerson Run, Windsor, CO 80550. If a new member, please tell us a little about yourself beyond just your name (interests in Russell, profession, etc.). Include your postal address and email address, as well as your member status (i.e., regular, couple, student, limited income). If a renewing member, please let us know of any relevant changes to your contact information.

The BRS is a non-profit organization, and we greatly appreciate any extra donations or bequests that members choose to give. Donations may be tax-deductible in certain jurisdictions. Please check with your tax or legal advisor.

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Letters to the editor may be submitted to the editor's email address. Please reference the issue, author, and title of the article to which the letter relates. Letters should be concise. Publication will be at the discretion of the editor, and predicated upon available space. The editor reserves the right to truncate letters.

Manuscripts may be submitted to the editor at his email address in Microsoft Word. Feature articles and book reviews should be Russell-centric, dealing with Russell's life or works, and they should be written in either a scholarly or journalistic style. Articles generally should not exceed 7 single-spaced pages, and book reviews should not exceed 2 single-spaced pages. Mathematical, logical, and scientific symbols are fine, but please ensure that they are essential. Footnotes/endnotes should be used sparingly and primarily for citations; the editor reserves the right to convert footnotes to endnotes and vice versa, depending on layout needs. Parenthetical citations and page numbers, with standard reference descriptions at the end of the article, are also fine; but no abbreviations for works, please. Submissions should be made no later than August 31st and December 31st for the fall and spring issues, respectively. The editor will collaborate with the authors, as required, and authors will have the opportunity to review any suggested changes prior to publication. There are no guarantees of publication, and articles submitted may be held for future editions.

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Incoming President Tim Madigan Visits the Ashling Hotel, Where Ludwig Wittgenstein Stayed in Dublin

(de)Notations

- The BRS board of directors met at the 2015 Annual Meeting at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, on June 5-7. Tim Madigan was elected president of the Society, replacing Alan Schwerin. Peter Stone (our host) was elected vice president of the Society, replacing Ray Perkins. Ray Perkins was elected vice-chairman of the board, replacing Peter Stone. Other incumbent officers were reelected to their positions. Congratulations to all—and special thanks to Alan and Ray for many years of service in their positions.
- The following directors will serve as the executive committee of the BRS board of directors: Chad Trainer, Chair; Tim Madigan, President and CEO; Peter Stone, Vice President; Michael Potter, Secretary; and Michael Berumen, Treasurer.
- A.C. Grayling received the 2015 BRS Award. (See Peter Stone’s “Members’ Corner” column on page 8.)
- Gülberk Koç Maclean received the 2015 BRS Book Award for *Bertrand Russell’s Bundle Theory of Particulars* (Bloomsbury 2014).
- Alan Schwerin is the recipient of this year’s Lee Eisler Service Award in recognition of his many contributions to the Society and for his long service as president. Lee Eisler was an extraordinary presence for many years in the Society, and it is fitting that Alan should receive this award. Some past

- recipients include Ray Perkins, Warren Smith, Ken Blackwell, Dennis Darland, Marvin Kohl, Donald Jackanicz, and Thomas Stanley.
- President Tim Madigan has called for papers for the 2016 Annual Meeting, which he will host at St. John Fisher College in Rochester, New York, on June 24-26. If you are interested in presenting a paper on any aspect of Russell’s life, thought, and legacy—or if you wish to propose activities appropriate for the meeting (e.g., a master class)—forward an abstract or proposal to tmadigan@rochester.rr.com.
- Dennis Darland has done yeoman work on the Society’s behalf by collecting and collocating all past Society periodicals on his website: <http://dennisdarland.com/brs/>. Also, don’t forget to see Tom Stanley’s excellent multi-media library site at: <http://www.russellsocietylibrary.com/Logon.asp>. These sites are available to members only, and you can get the necessary logon information by emailing Dennis at bertie-episteme@hotmail.com. Tom and Dennis have done invaluable work for the Society.
- At the direction of the board, student dues will be increased from \$25 to \$30, effective immediately. Limited-income dues will remain at \$25. The Russell Journal, alone, is worth over \$30 per subscription, so both member classes receive a nice subsidy from the general membership, especially given the several additional benefits of the Society. Some of our student members have gone on to become professors at major institutions and regular dues payers, which makes this a worthwhile investment for the BRS and its future.
- This *Bulletin* appears twice a year, in the fall and spring. It is a large expense to the Society. In recognition of this fact, and also the reality that the digital age is upon us, the board has allowed the editor to produce one issue on a digital basis beginning in 2016. The editor has been given some discretion as to how this will be done. It will first occur in the fall of 2016.
- Mini-financial report through Aug. 2015:

Beginning Balance (1-1):	\$12,311.55
Revenue:	4,897.99
Expenses:	6,759.94
Ending Balance (8-31):	\$10,449.60



President's Corner

By Tim Madigan

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If I may wax Shakespearean for a moment, some men are born great, some men achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them. It was the latter which occurred to me at the 2015 annual conference at Trinity College, Dublin, when I was elected President of the Bertrand Russell Society, with my co-conspirator, Peter Stone, that conference's organizer, joining me as Vice President. Following in the footsteps of former President Alan Schwerin and former Vice President Ray Perkins, both of whom so ably served in those roles for 15 years, Peter and I know what large shoes we have to fill. But we are delighted that Alan and Ray remain board members of the Society as well as constant sources of advice and wisdom. Kudos to them both for their many years of service to the Society. Quoting Shakespeare again, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown"—but in this case the BRS "crown" will hopefully be one of laurels and not of thorns!

As newly-elected President, my first joyful duty is to invite all of you to attend the next annual meeting, to be held on the campus of my institution, St. John Fisher College, in Rochester, New York from June 24-26, 2016. A call for papers may be found elsewhere in the *Bulletin*, and I encourage you to consider submitting an abstract and giving a presentation at this event. The theme for the conference is "Bertrand Russell, the Public Intellectual," with an emphasis on the role that Russell played in promoting philosophical thought in an accessible manner. But *any* topic related to Russell's life and work is welcome for consideration. I'm also delighted to report that the Bertrand Russell Society Award will be given to *Philosophy Now* magazine, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2016, and which has ably followed in the Russellian tradition of encouraging philosophical inquiry in a popular manner. Rick Lewis, the founder and editor of *Philosophy Now*, and a strong admirer of Russell (as well as, I'm glad to say, a member of the BRS) will be coming over from London, England to accept the award on behalf of the magazine. In the principle of full disclosure, I should add that I am a member of the magazine's editorial board and I was for many years

a regular columnist for it; but my only remuneration for such is the glory of seeing my name in print—much like the glory I receive in being published in the *Bulletin*!

As President of the BRS, I'd also like to give proper credit to stalwart members of the Society who have made major contributions to it. One of these is my good friend Warren Allen Smith, a 2011 recipient of the Lee Eisler Service Award. I was recently reading a biography of the philosopher George Santayana (1863-1952), and was delighted to find in it a letter sent to him by none other than a 30-year old Warren in 1951. Then a graduate student in English at Columbia University, working under the auspices of his professor, the noted scholar Lionel Trilling, Warren attempted to come up with a definition of the meaning of the term "Humanism" by writing to several prominent individuals—including Thomas Mann, Sinclair Lewis, John Dos Passos, Henry Hazlitt, and Lewis Mumford—who had been identified in one way or another as "humanists." One of those who responded was Bertrand Russell, who (as Warren relates in his magnum opus *Who's Who in Hell*) wrote back: "You ask me whether I call myself a Scientific Humanist or a Naturalistic Humanist. I am not in the habit of giving myself labels, which I leave to others. I should not have any inclination to call myself humanist, as I think, on the whole, that the non-human part of the cosmos is much more interesting and satisfactory than the human part. But if anybody feels inclined to call me a Humanist, I shall not bring an action for libel" (*Who's Who in Hell*, page 950). Classic Russell!

Santayana, who in 1951 was living in retirement in Rome, Italy, and nearing the end of his long life, responded in length to Warren's letter in the following manner. "Dear Mr. Smith," he wrote:

In my old-fashioned terminology, a Humanist means a person saturated by the humanities: Humanism is something cultural: an accomplishment, not a doctrine. This might be something like what you call 'classical humanism.' But unfortunately there is also a metaphysical or cosmological humanism or moralism which maintains that the world is governed by human interests and an alleged universal moral sense. This cosmic humanism for realists, who believe that knowledge has a prior and inde-



pendent object which sense or thought signify, might be some religious orthodoxy, for idealists and phenomenologists an oracular destiny or dialectical evolution dominating the dream of life. This 'humanism' is what I call egotism or moralism, and reject altogether. Naturalism, on the contrary, is something to which I am so thoroughly wedded that I like to call it materialism, so as to prevent all confusion with romantic naturalism like Goethe's, for instance, or that of Bergson. Mine is the hard, non-humanistic naturalism of the Ionian philosophers, of Democritus, Lucretius, and Spinoza. [*The Letters of George Santayana*, Vol.8:328]

Warren has, I'm glad to say, continued his own explorations of the meaning of "humanism." I recently wrote to him, in light of the Santayana quote I'd stumbled upon, to ask how *he* might respond to a letter written to him by someone asking—as he had done in 1951—what "Humanism" means to him. He responded: "Like Santayana, I am a cultural humanist, one who rejects theism, egotism, and moralism. Life in which the humanities, not un-documentable beliefs, have been important has been inspiring ever since I rejected the doctrines of organized Methodism when I was a teenager."

I first met Warren in 1985, "in the heart of the heart of showbiz," when I visited his old recording studio on 42nd Street. He was organizing a secular humanist group for New York City subscribers to *Free Inquiry* magazine, which I was helping to edit at the time. This was during the heyday of "the Deuce's" sleazy era and Warren kindly led me—like Virgil leading Dante in *The Inferno*—through many explorations of the area before Mayor Giuliani so unkindly cleaned everything up. It was an historic time.

I have since made it my business to visit Warren as often as I can, and he also visited me in Buffalo and Rochester on several occasions. We've traveled together to various places, from San Jose, Costa Rica, to New Orleans, Louisiana (pre-Katrina) to his birthplace of Minburn, Iowa, which we visited in conjunction with attending the BRS Annual Conference at the University of Iowa. He is the perfect traveling companion – always with a quip on his lips, a desire to investigate every nook and cranny,

and, best of all, an impeccable sense of direction.

To me, Warren is the quintessential New Yorker—sophisticated, blasé, witty, and never fazed by anything. I have learned more about the City from my gallivanting about with him than any other way, and I've seen some sights that very few tourists ever get to see! But I've also had the pleasure—along with Dr. David White—of going across Warren's native state of Iowa with him, seeing his birthplace, his first college, and a good part of the land from whence he came. I have to say, the old song "How You Gonna Keep 'Em Down on the Farm" came to mind. Thank "god" the G.I. Bill brought Warren to the Big Apple, the only place on earth where he truly could be at home.

Warren demonstrates his commitment to Russell, not only through his activism for freedom of thought, but also by emulating his longevity. He will turn 94 on October 27, and is an inspiration to all of us who likewise hope to be of sound mind and body for as long as possible. I well remember attending his 90th birthday, and toasting him with "I look forward to being there for your 100th." He looked around the gathered crowd and sagely intoned: "Well, I'll be here, but I'm not so sure about all the rest of you." A lover of the arts, a freethinker, a social activist, a compassionate and caring humanitarian, and a true friend, Smith is a humanist in every sense of the word. To quote once more from the immortal Bard: "Thy friendship makes us fresh."

Russell and Society

By Ray Perkins

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Hiroshima, Russell and the Cold War Resurrected

In this year of the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (1945 Aug 6 and 9), it's fitting to look back at what Russell thought of the actions that took 200,000 civilian lives, marking at once the end of the Second World War and the beginning of a new reign of terror—the perilous nuclear age and the 40-year-long Cold War.



Russell's earliest public statement on Hiroshima appeared in the *Glasgow Forward* (Aug 18), written only a few days after the bombing (but before Japan formally surrendered, Aug 14). Russell speaks of it as a "political and moral failure":

It is impossible to imagine a more dramatic and horrifying combination of scientific triumph with political and moral failure than has been shown to the world in the destruction of Hiroshima.

He apparently thought that the moral failure was not confined to the killing of Japanese civilians. He was hardly in a position to have an opinion on whether the bombings were militarily necessary. As an old consequentialist he may well have thought, what Truman would long insist, that the quick end to the war morally justified the inherent evil of killing large numbers of innocents with a net saving of lives which the A-bombs made possible. (Indeed, Russell says in a 1954 letter exactly this—that he was "incline[d] to the view that" the bombs saved Japanese lives (and presumably American and Russian), although "[i]t is difficult to be sure of the facts in this case". We'll see that two decades later he was much less inclined to such a view.)

By "political and moral failure", he seems to mean that the Bomb's debut ushered in a new era, which, in the absence of new thinking, made the prospect of long-term human survival very bleak. As he puts it:

The prospect for the human race is somber beyond all precedent. Mankind are faced with a clear-cut alternative: either we shall all perish, or we shall have to acquire some slight degree of common sense. A great deal of new political thinking will be necessary if utter disaster is to be averted.

He doesn't try to say which disjunct of the "clear-cut alternative"—utter disaster or its aversion—is the more likely. He does mention some hopeful possibilities: a peaceful solution under voluntary or U.S.-coerced international cooperation or even the emergence of a victorious power after the next war, powerful enough to "establish a peaceful hegemony over the rest of the

globe." But none of these is thought to be more likely than the "utter disaster", and perhaps even less likely, given his description of the prospect for our species as "sombre." It's no less grim than Einstein's warning a year later that, for want of new thinking, "we drift toward unparalleled catastrophe" (1946). Einstein's warning is not unlike his own in his speech before the House of Lords in Nov 1945. The speech is remarkably prescient in predicting the H-bomb and for anticipating Einstein's call for "new thinking"—a phrase that became known worldwide ten years later in the Russell-Einstein Manifesto. But it's probably even more famously connected with Gorbachev's use four decades later to include his *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (political restructuring) which promoted events which made possible the end of the Cold War.

What Russell says in his House of Lords speech (Nov 28) is more hopeful regarding the prospects of Soviet cooperation on internationalizing nuclear weapons. Hiroshima is not directly mentioned and, to my knowledge, rarely was after that—other than as an event that spawned the nuclear age and a Cold War (*Has Man a Future?* p. 15). But we do find an even later mention, and one which I think important and of moral relevance in his *War Crimes in Vietnam* (1967, pp. 19-20). There it seems he makes use of the new revisionist scholarship of the time (David Horowitz's *Free World Colossus*, 1965, comes to mind) to set aright some of the myths of the "official" history: the U.S. atomization of two cities and 200,000 civilians was militarily unnecessary inasmuch as Japan was already militarily beaten and had been suing for peace through the Soviets for six months, and, as the Americans well knew, the Soviets would soon enter the war against Japan (as promised at Yalta and confirmed at Potsdam in late July—where Truman wrote in his diary: "He'll [Stalin] be in the Jap war on Aug 15. Fini Japs when that comes about").

But in that late book (WCV) Russell mentions the tragedy of Hiroshima, not so much as the first step in a journey to nuclear Armageddon, but as part of the U.S. plan, developed soon after the defeat of Germany, to dominate the post-war world and control the Asia region: The atomic bombings would not only awe the Russians,



but also Asian nationalists who needed to know which of the victors had ultimate military might (and the will to use it) and on which side of the ideological divide their futures depended.

Beginning in the late 1960s and continuing into the 1970s, even while the Vietnam War raged (ending in 1975), nuclear arms control talks and subsequent agreements (SALT) had managed to put some limits on the number of missiles, but not on multiple warheads. We did get the very important, and in many ways astonishing, 1968 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), which allowed the few nuclear nations to share nuclear technology with non-nuclear nations for peaceful purposes, subject to international inspections. In exchange, the nuclear weapon states pledged to bring an end to the nuclear arms race “at an early date” and to negotiations “in good faith” for total nuclear disarmament (and for a treaty on “general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control,” a phrase that must have gratified Russell, despite his absorbing undertakings to expose the war crimes in Vietnam). And in 1972 we also got the much needed Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty which essentially blocked an arms race in space for decades—until the U.S. unilaterally pulled out in 2002. But stockpiles continued to grow, ballooning to over 50,000—more nukes than there were targets. By 1980, new nuke technologies on both sides had given rise to war-fighting strategies—and official talk of fighting and winning a nuclear war.

This, of course, was anathema to the principal insight of the Manifesto’s “new thinking”: that nuclear war could not bring victory, only universal death. But real progress would have to wait until the advent of Gorbachev* who, along with Reagan, made possible the events that were unthinkable only a few years before: the dismantling of thousands of tanks and medium range missiles in Europe, the downfall of East European communism, the breakup of the Soviet Union, and, remarkably, the elimination of 80% of the superpowers’ bloated nuclear arsenals. The Cold War was over.

A New Cold War?

Sadly Russell’s legacy is in jeopardy. The remarkable achievement a quarter century ago has been threatened recently by the civil conflict in Ukraine, brought on by an illegal U.S.-encouraged *coup* and an unlawful Russian intervention, representing the latest in a build-up of tensions that really began soon after the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Bush Sr.’s assurance to Gorbachev that NATO would not expand eastward to Russia was ignored by Clinton, and the 30 year-old Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty was unilaterally ended by Bush Jr., raising old Russian fears of hostile encirclement, a new arms race in space, ABM defenses in Russia’s backyard to undermine their nuclear deterrent, and that new arms races were in the offing—fears seemingly confirmed by U.S. deployment of sea-based missile defense systems in the Black Sea and preparations for land-based systems in Poland and Czech Republic. And, of course, the unlawful U.S. war of aggression in Iraq—the regional effects of which have spawned ongoing crises—has damaged relations with not only Russia, but also virtually the whole international community. Apart from legal rights and wrongs, the real risk of escalation into a nuclear blunder demands military restraint on all sides. Let’s not forget, START (1991) and New START (2011) notwithstanding, the two nuclear giants still have more than two thousand warheads loaded atop intercontinental missiles and—unbelievable as it is 25 years after the end of the Cold War—are still on hair-trigger readiness!

Yet another sign of new Cold War hostility is the U.S. nuclear war exercises over the last year at U.S. bases around the world involving air and sea-based nuclear systems in long-range nuclear and conventional strike scenarios. In Europe, exercises included nonstrategic (tactical) weapons (nearly 200 nukes, many of Hiroshima size) now deployed at six air bases in five countries (Italy, Germany, Turkey, Holland and Belgium). Poland’s aircraft, although not nuclear capable, have, along with other NATO countries in the region (Czech Republic, Romania), non-nuclear support roles for the nuclear strike missions—“to show the world that we have the capability to strike anywhere in the world at a moment’s notice,” as one proud U.S. Air Force pilot said.

And that’s not all. Despite the wise and important international agreement recently



reached to prevent nuclear proliferation in Iran, the U.S. is now committed to “modernizing” (Oh how we love those euphemisms!) its nuclear forces over the next 30 years—to the tune of \$1 trillion. The planned “modernization” of all US nuclear weapons and all their delivery systems, as well as new production facilities, will do more than rob the national coffers of funds for human needs, local and global. Did we not learn over the past 70 years that weapons’ “modernizing” is contagious, causes dangerous arms races and thereby increases the chances of global catastrophe?

Nuclear Weapons and the Law

In addition to onerous expense, a renewed arms race and new dangers, these “modernization” plans are almost certainly *unlawful*: they violate the NPT, Art. VI, which binds the U.S. (and other nuclear powers) to negotiate the abolition of nuclear weapons, as noted above. It was precisely on these grounds that the Republic of the Marshall Islands brought suit against the U.S. in Federal Court and in the World Court (April, 2014), along with the eight other weapon nations. The Marshall Islanders, not unlike the Japanese witnesses to Hiroshima, know a thing or two about the devastation and human suffering connected with nuclear weapons: their islands were used as a U.S. atomic testing ground for 12 years at the end of WW2! The lawsuits are ongoing in both courts.** (See: <http://www.nuclearzero.org/>)

Nuclear Deterrence and Morality

And finally, nuclear deterrence is morally reprehensible: Nuclear deterrence, the policy of national defense via the threat to retaliate against an aggressor and impose “unacceptable damage”, must be believable to work; potential attackers must believe the victim would actually retaliate and do enough damage to make the initial attack, from the attacker’s perspective, “not worth it”. Thus deterrence *requires* the preparation for, and the willingness to commit, the killing of large numbers of innocent human beings. (The International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War recently determined that even a small nuclear exchange involving “only” 100 Hiroshima size weapons, e.g. between India and Pakistan, could immediately kill millions and initiate a protracted nuclear winter causing another billion deaths through global crop failure.) This is

a willingness to mass murder on a scale that makes even the worst atrocities of WW2 pale in comparison. Russell once called it “a willingness to commit genocide”***

Were Russell still with us today, surely, while ever hopeful, he would be disappointed and angered, not only by the opportunities squandered since the end of the Cold War, but also by what threatens to be its return.

On this 70th anniversary of the Bomb’s disastrous debut, the inhumanity of these weapons ought to motivate all of us to redouble our efforts to seek their abolition. The Doomsday Clock is once again close to midnight.

*Gorbachev has publicly attested to the influence that the Russell-Einstein Manifesto and its offspring organizations (especially the Pugwash Conferences) had on his personal thinking and that of the Soviet political and scientific intelligentsia of the day. See his *On My Country and the World*, 2000

**Only three of the nine nuclear nations are obligated to respond to the charges in the World Court: United Kingdom, India, and Pakistan. This is because only these three give the Court “compulsory jurisdiction.” The U.S. revoked its 40 year binding commitment to international adjudication in 1985 just after the Court ruled in favor of Nicaragua’s charges of U.S. aggression (supporting Contra human rights violations and mining Nicaragua’s harbors), and required the U.S. to pay reparations which the U.S. refused and blocked Court enforcement in the Security Council.

***In a letter addressed to the editor of *Maariv* (Tel Aviv, Israel), Jan 26, 1963; first known publication in *Bertrand Russell Society Quarterly*, Feb 2004).

Members’ Corner

By Peter Stone

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A.C. Grayling Receives 2015 BRS Award

The BRS Award Committee selected A.C. Grayling as the 2015 winner of the BRS Award. Peter Stone presented the award to Professor Grayling, on behalf of the Award Committee, at the 2015 Annual Meeting of the BRS, at Trinity College Dublin. Grayling then gave a talk entitled “On Russell’s Definition of Philosophy.” In presenting the award, Stone made the following remarks:

Every year, the task faced by the BRS Award Committee—identifying, each year, someone who deserves to be



honoured for carrying on, in some manner or other, the legacy of Bertrand Russell—poses quite a challenge. Such an honour can be earned in various ways—through work in philosophy, by being a leading public intellectual, or through exceptional scholarship on Russell himself, for example. This year marks the first year the BRS has held its annual meeting in Dublin—indeed, the first time the BRS has met in Europe. And so the committee asked itself whether there might be some European particularly deserving of the honour. It did not take long before A.C. Grayling's name came up.

Anthony Grayling* received his Ph.D. from Magdalen College, Oxford. Until 2011 he was Professor of Philosophy at Birkbeck College, University of London. He is currently Master of the New College of the Humanities, and a Supernumerary Fellow of St Anne's College, Oxford. He has written and edited over thirty books on philosophy and other subjects; among these books are *Descartes: The Life of René Descartes and Its Place in His Times* (2005); *Among the Dead Cities: Was the Allied Bombing of Civilians in WWII a Necessity or a Crime?* (2006); *Liberty in the Age of Terror: A Defence of Civil Society and Enlightenment Values* (2009); *The God Argument: The Case against Religion and for Humanism* (2013); and of course, *Wittgenstein: A Very Short Introduction* (originally published 1988) and *Russell: A Very Short Introduction* (originally published 1996)—both published originally under different names. This should give you a fair idea of the range of his interests.

For several years Grayling wrote the “Last Word” column for the *Guardian* and a column for *The Times*. He now writes the “Thinking Read” column for the *Barnes & Noble Review* in New York. He also serves as editor of *Online Review London* and is a contributing editor for *Prospect Magazine*.

Grayling has served as the Honorary Secretary of the Aristotelian Society. He is a past chairman of June Fourth, a human rights group concerned with China, and a representative to the United Nations Human Rights Council on behalf of the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU). He is a Vice President of the British Humanist Association, the Patron of the United Kingdom Armed Forces Humanist Association, a patron of Dignity in Dying, and an Honorary Associate of the National Secular Society.

Today Grayling joins an illustrious group of philosophers and public intellectuals, includ-

ing Paul Kurtz, Karl Popper, W.V.O. Quine, Stephen Jay Gould, Daniel Dennett, and Richard Dawkins. We are delighted to honour Professor Grayling with the 2015 BRS Award.

The award reads, “The 2015 Bertrand Russell Society Award to A.C. Grayling for his many contributions to philosophy, humanism, and public life in the spirit of Bertrand Russell.” Congratulations to Professor Grayling.

*I have borrowed liberally from A.C. Grayling's own website, <http://www.acgrayling.com/>, which contains a wealth of information about Grayling's impressive accomplishments.

Ed. note. Members are invited to submit brief columns to Members' Corner on newsworthy items regarding Russell, member activities, or other BRS-related matters.

Meet the BRS

By Donovan Wishon

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I was born in Carmel, California in 1979 and spent my early childhood living in Pomona, California with my mother and my brother (though I went to elementary school in nearby Claremont). At the end of my sixth-grade year, my mother moved us to Bakersfield, California to find work.

Despite being a voracious reader, I was unfocused and unengaged as a high school student, so I took the California High School Proficiency Exam and left school my junior year. Soon afterward, my family moved to Las Vegas while I enrolled in Bakersfield College.



Donovan Wishon

One of my first courses was introduction to philosophy. I wish I could say that my first brush with philosophy was enlightening and transformative, but the course was tedious and lifeless. So I stopped going, failed the course, and dropped out of school entirely. Over the next several years, I labored in the service industry for minimum wage plus tips and made several unsuccessful attempts to return to college.

It was during this period that I first met my future wife, Christy. Academically speaking, she was the polar opposite of me: she was an



organized, studious, and highly motivated student of biology with a deep passion for animals and conservation. I knew that I had to do more with my life if I wanted to keep her around. So I decided to return (once again) to Bakersfield College. I completed an associate's degree in English, earned a 4.0 GPA every semester, and graduated *summa cum laude*. I also retook philosophy and became fascinated with the issue of whether we can reconcile our ordinary view of ourselves with the scientific picture of reality. I also found great enjoyment in logic.

Still, I couldn't see myself doing philosophy professionally, and so I decided to pursue a BA in English at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas—partly to be near family—and partly because of the ready availability of service-industry work to pay for my education. But I couldn't bring myself to abandon philosophy altogether and chose it as a second major. After taking Todd Jones' course in metaphysics, there was no going back. Gripped by Mackie's argument from queerness against objective moral values, I turned to Ruth Garrett Millikan's *Language, Thought, and Other Biological Categories* to see whether a naturalist could recover a biologically-grounded notion of objective normativity. This sparked my lasting interest in philosophy of mind and language. On the other hand, Russell was a minor figure in my education at UNLV. While I read "On Denoting" in philosophy of language, my coursework in the history of analytic philosophy (with David Beisecker) focused instead on Quine, Kripke, and especially Sellars.

As an undergraduate, I also spent several summers studying abroad in Lüneburg, Germany. I proposed to Christy in Luxembourg in the summer of 2005, and we had an intimate wedding that December at a Calistoga winery.

In the fall of 2005, I applied to graduate programs in philosophy. My highest aspiration was to go to Stanford. John Perry had recently given a talk at UNLV, and I was convinced that he would be the perfect advisor for thinking about consciousness and our first-person knowledge of it. I knew my chances of getting accepted were abysmal, but to my surprise I got in. Against all odds, I went from a dropout to a doctoral student at Stanford!

We moved to the Bay Area and, during my second quarter, my wife gave birth to our son Dylan. So I spent most of my first year as a sleep-deprived cross between a phenomenal zombie and a Perry-Castañeda amnesiac (i.e.,

someone who doesn't remember who he is, where he's at, or what time it is).

While discussing the phenomenal concepts strategy one day during seminar, John Perry suggested the need for someone to reexamine Russell's distinction between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description. I already had great interest in Russell's neutral monism from reading David Chalmers' *The Conscious Mind* that summer, so I tried to get my hands on as much of Russell's theory of mind and knowledge as I could. I quickly realized that Russell's views about acquaintance differed greatly from the standard reading. In particular, he did not see acquaintance as precluding a subject from misidentifying the objects of his or her direct awareness or providing absolutely certain knowledge of them. Excited by my discovery, I arranged to take an independent studies course on the topic with John Perry, Krista Lawlor, and David Hills. In 2011, I gave a talk on "Russellian Acquaintance without Discriminating Knowledge" at the BRS annual meeting. I was awarded the student essay prize and met a number of like-minded scholars.

Still, I saw myself primarily as a philosopher of mind and language. I was the graduate student coordinator for Stanford's interdisciplinary workshop series on consciousness, and I even took graduate seminars in philosophy of mind with John Searle and John Campbell at UC Berkeley. The first chapter of my dissertation on "Russellian Acquaintance and Phenomenal Concepts" focused on Russell, but otherwise it engaged with contemporary work on consciousness.

In 2012, I joined the University of Mississippi as an assistant professor of philosophy. I immediately put together a conference for the centenary of *The Problems of Philosophy* that has since resulted in a volume I coedited with Bernard Linsky (a fellow Stanford alumnus). I also wrote a chapter on "Russell on Russellian Monism" for a volume on the topic and have a forthcoming paper in *Mind* on "Russellian Acquaintance and Frege's Puzzle". At the moment, I am writing a chapter on "Russell on Introspection and Self-Knowledge" for the *Bloomsbury Companion to Bertrand Russell* and a chapter on "Russell's Neutral Monism and Panpsychism" for the *Routledge Handbook on Panpsychism*.

I am still a card-carrying philosopher of mind and language, but I guess I've somehow become a Russell scholar, too.



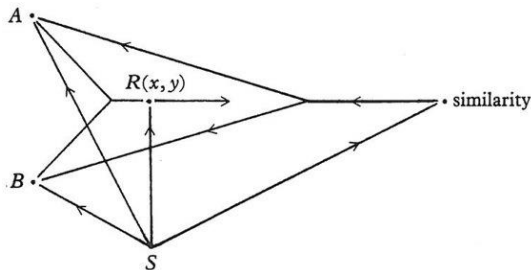
Analytics

By Katarina Perovic

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Russell's Puzzling Map of the Understanding Complex

Anyone familiar with Russell's work on multiple relation theory of judgment will have at some point puzzled over his map of the five-term understanding complex. He presents the map at the end of chapter 1, Part II, of his *Theory of Knowledge* (1913), and it is supposed to play an important role for Russell. He says that it is meant to help make clearer what goes on when a subject understands a "proposition", specifically, when S understands "A and B are similar". But, for a figure which is introduced to illuminate Russell's previous discussion, it raises more questions than it answers. Here it is:



Map A

According to multiple relation theory of judgment (MRTJ) that Russell is belaboring in his 1913 manuscript, when we understand the so-called "proposition" we do not stand in a single dual relation to one entity, but rather, we stand in a multiple relation to a number of different entities, some of which may but need not constitute an existing complex.

This view departs significantly from Russell's view ten years prior. In *Principles of Mathematics* (1903), Russell seemed to think of propositions as complexes composed of two types of "terms" or entities—particulars ("things") and universals ("concepts"). Thus, a Russellian proposition "Alice is wise" presumably contains the particular girl *Alice* and the universal *wisdom*. But in what does the truth or falsehood of such a proposition consist? The proposition "Alice is wise" is true simply in virtue of the existence of the complex *Alice being*

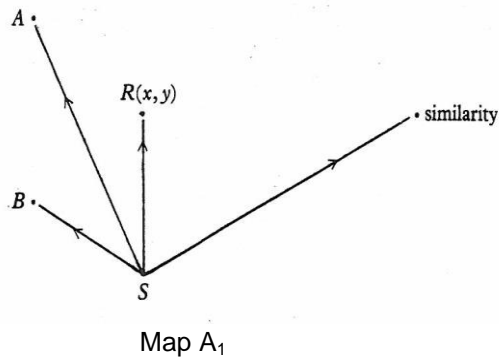
wise. But, given that there is no distinction between a proposition and a corresponding complex, there is really nothing informative that can be said about the truth of the proposition—its existence coincides with it being true. Even more troublingly, on this view, false propositions simply do not exist. Let's say that I falsely judge that Alice is *not* wise. According to his 1903 view, it would appear that I can judge no such thing since there is no such proposition.

After "On Denoting" (1905), however, Russell's views with regard to propositions and judgement began to shift. Definite descriptions were treated within a wider context—within a sentence—and thus no longer taken to refer to an entity (subsistent or existent), and a similar treatment was afforded to propositions. Russell thinks that propositions need to be considered within a wider context—within judgements—and thus when a subject S judges that Alice is wise, S is no longer in a judging relation to an entity, but is now in a relation to the entities which would compose a complex *Alice being wise* if S judged truly. In other words, the judgement is true if there exists a *corresponding* complex, and it is false if there is no such complex.

In 1910 ("On the Nature of Truth and Falsehood"), 1912 (*The Problems of Philosophy*) and finally in 1913 (*Theory of Knowledge* [TK]), we find Russell fully endorse the multiple relation theory of judgment, though the details of the theory change throughout that period and even within the TK manuscript itself.

By the time that Russell presents us with his map of the five-term understanding complex, he has settled on the following account of what goes on when we understand a "proposition". In particular, he argues that when S understands that A and B are similar, S stands in a multiple relation of understanding to four terms: A, B, *similarity*, and the general form of dual complexes $R(x,y)$. It is this situation that the map A above is supposed to represent for Russell.

The first question to address about map A above, is: If the understanding relation is supposed to hold between the subject S, and the four terms A, B, *similarity*, and the form $R(x,y)$, why does Russell draw in further lines connecting the latter four terms with each other? In other words, why doesn't he draw map A as follows:



Map A₁ is just like map A, insofar as it represents the multiple relation of understanding relating the subject S to the terms A, B, *similarity*, and the form $R(x, y)$, but this is all that map A₁ does. What then is the role of those further lines in Russell's preferred map A?

On p. 112 of *TK*, Russell seems to offer a clue as to how we might want to answer the first question. He writes:

In order to understand "A and B are similar", we must be acquainted with A and B and similarity, and with the general form of symmetrical dual complexes. [...] *But these separate acquaintances, even if they all coexist in one momentary experience, do not constitute understanding of the one proposition "A and B are similar", which obviously brings the three constituents and the form into relation with each other, so that all become parts of one complex.* It is this comprehensive relation which is the essential thing about the understanding of a proposition. Our problem is, therefore, to discover the nature of this comprehensive relation. (*TK*, p.112, italics mine)

Thus, what seems to motivate the choice of map A is Russell's desire to represent the relation of understanding as a "comprehensive relation", a relation very different from a number of separate, but simultaneous acquaintance relations. Map A₁ could be seen as representing either four separate acquaintance relations going from S to the terms A, B, *similarity*, and $R(x, y)$, or as one multiple acquaintance relation going from S to the four terms. In the above passage, Russell explicitly rules out the identification of the understanding relation with four separate acquaintance relations, but he

also seems to rule out the identification of the understanding relation with one multiple acquaintance relation. When he says that the understanding relation "brings the three constituents and the form into relation with each other," it seems clear that understanding relation is more than an acquaintance relation between a subject and several objects, and that it is the nature of this "more" that Russell struggles to represent with his map A.

If this interpretation is correct, then we ought to take the understanding relation as standing not just between S on the one hand, and A, B, *similarity* and $R(x, y)$ on the other; but also as somehow standing between *similarity*, A, B, and the form $R(x, y)$. But if this is so, how can such a reading of the map A be reconciled with what Russell writes right after presenting us with it, on p.118: "In this figure, *one relation* goes from S to the four objects; *one relation* goes from $R(x, y)$ to *similarity*, and *another* to A and B, while *one relation* goes from *similarity* to A and B" (*TK*, p.118, italics mine).

If we are to take Russell's words in this quote at face value, there are *four* relations in an understanding complex, not one! But how can this be when Russell seems clearly committed to there being just one multiple comprehensive relation of understanding that acts as the relating relation in the understanding complex? Could it be that he misspoke and that these are not indeed separate relations? If this is so, then what should he have said? Perhaps what he was after was a representation of the understanding relation together with the suggestion of what it is that we understand when we are acquainted with the terms A, B, *similarity*, and the form $R(x, y)$. That is, it might be that Russell was trying to represent how multiple acquaintance with the different terms produces an understanding of how the terms are to be arranged, that is, if the proposition is true. Or perhaps, it is the understanding relation that relates in a very complex way that only a diagram could show. In this case, Russell's talk of relations on p.118 is just loose talk; instead, he should have spoken of different "parts" of one understanding relation.

There are many more questions that we can ask about this map. For instance, there is a question about whether Russell was concerned with representing a position relation with the line that goes from *similarity* to A and B. (There is evidence of attempts on his part to draw that line differently, and this could be attributed to the development of his views on



“position” and position relations). There is a question about the exact status and role that the logical form is supposed to play in his MRTJ. And, of course, there are questions about the conceptual and historical significance that this and other diagrams of judgment are meant to play in the development of Russell’s thought. My aim here was simply to bring Russell’s map in *TK* back to your attention and point out that it deserves some puzzling over, for it may just hold the key to a better understanding of how Russell thought of his MRTJ.

From the Student Desk

By Landon D.C. Elkind

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A Partial Defense of Euclid

Russell’s 1902, three-page article, “The Teaching of Euclid”, contains few kind words for the ancient Greek geometer Euclid (c. 300 BCE), author of the widely-treasured *Elements*, who likely is, and probably has been for some time, the most famous mathematician in the Western intellectual tradition. Russell writes, “[Euclid’s] definitions do not always define, his axioms are not always indemonstrable, his demonstrations require many axioms of which he is quite unconscious.” (Russell 1902, 165) Russell held that Euclid’s *Elements* fails as an exemplar of “logical excellence” (Russell 1902, 165); most of his remarks target this claim, often made by apologists of Euclid.

Some historical context will explain why Euclid’s book drew Russell’s ire. Russell wrote at the tail-end of a protracted, nineteenth-century debate concerning the pedagogical status of Euclid’s *Elements*. The historical dominance of Euclid’s *Elements* as *the* textbook for geometry—even up to the schooldays of the lad Russell (Russell 1945, 211)—was being hotly disputed in 1902. Alice Jenkins describes the debate:

Arguments raged in specialist educational circles about whether the *Elements* constituted a textbook, and whether better alternatives were currently available or could be designed; and these arguments spilled over into national debate. (Jenkins, 269)

Plenty of writers entered the fray, including Lewis Carroll, who wrote a book, *Euclid and His Modern Rivals*, “In furtherance of the great cause which I have at heart—the vindication of Euclid’s masterpiece...” (Carroll, xxxvi) And Russell also had his say.

But let us see where Euclid erred so much that Russell’s opposed using *Elements* as a textbook. Proposition 1 of Book 1 illicitly assumes “that the circles used in this construction intersect”; this is “not noticed by Euclid because of the dangerous habit of using a figure.” (Russell 1902, 165) Proposition 4 of Book 1 “is a tissue of nonsense” because the proof relies on superposition; Russell writes:

Superposition is a logically worthless device; for if our triangles are spatial, not material, there is a logical contradiction in the notion of moving them, while if they are material, they cannot be perfectly rigid, and when superposed they are certain to be slightly deformed from the shape they had before. (Russell 1902, 165-166)

He details other unstated claims that Euclid’s propositions and proofs presuppose, concluding:

Many more general criticisms might be passed on Euclid’s methods and on his conception of Geometry; but the above definite fallacies seem sufficient to show that the value of his work as a masterpiece of logic has been very grossly exaggerated. (Russell 1902, 167)

There is not sufficient space to state here, much less to examine, all Russell’s criticisms, despite the interesting questions such criticisms raise about the nature of mathematical proof. I do note, however, that the mere fact that the *Elements* involves spurious assumptions, or merely unstated ones, does not entail that Euclid’s work loses its value aesthetically or pedagogically.

Consider an analogy with Gottlob Frege’s *Basic Laws of Arithmetic*. Frege’s system is inconsistent (Frege 1967, 127-128). Yet we should not refuse to use Frege’s text as a teaching tool on this basis alone. As Montgomery Furth says in introducing Frege’s book, “[Frege’s] ideas abound in both subtlety and power; [his] presentation is carried out in ac-



cordance with standards of definiteness, clarity, and rigor far higher than those prevailing in *Principia...*" (Frege 1967, vi) Ignoring Furth's dig at *Principia*, *Elements* is rigorous, definite, and clear by the standards of its day, which do, admittedly, tolerate far shoddier reasoning than our current standards. And where *Elements* falls short by our lights, a geometric lesson lies in wait.

Furthermore, if we can appreciate the logical integrity of even an inconsistent system, we can appreciate the integrity of a gap-filled system like Euclid's *Elements*. Indeed, Russell later shows a strong appreciation of Euclid: "The theory [of proportion] is developed in Euclid, and has great logical beauty." (Russell 1945, 210) He continues:

Most of his *Elements* was not original, but the order of propositions, and the logical structure, were largely his. The more one studies geometry, the more admirable these are seen to be...Euclid's *Elements* is certainly one of the greatest books ever written... (Russell 1945, 211)

We might add to our data Russell's formative experience with Euclid's tutelage:

At the age of eleven, I began Euclid, with my brother as my tutor. This was one of the great events of my life, as dazzling as first love. I had not imagined there was anything so delicious in the world. (Russell 2010, 25)

If the *Elements* can so inspire thinkers such as Russell, why indeed should we not beg our youths to study it? The study of Euclid, as Russell's later remarks indicate, can bestow upon readers a deeper sensitivity to the logical connections among the propositions and books woven together.

So, while I agree with Russell that Euclid's work falls short by our standards of logical rigor, I can hardly accept on that basis alone his intimation that the *Elements* is unfit for the classroom. I rather think Russell's scruples about superposition and so forth—if you'll pardon the pun—misses the point.

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This and That

By Michael E. Berumen
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Legacy: Russell vs. Wittgenstein

Everyone knows Russell first met Wittgenstein, whom he fondly called "my German," in 1911, and that this meeting would have profound effects on philosophy. Then 39-years old, Russell already had made his bones in academia, and he was an established don. Young Ludwig, only 22, had come to study mathematics after having pursued coursework in engineering and aeronautics. In him, Russell found what he felt was an almost preternatural talent for philosophy, a burning kind of genius, and it is clear from his correspondence with his lover, Ottoline Morrell, that he thought he had found his proper philosophical heir.

Notwithstanding the considerable influence they had on one another, it would not be long before the relationship became strained. It was evident that Russell did not always understand Wittgenstein; that he found his temperamental protégé emotionally taxing; and that



Wittgenstein had become less appreciative of Russell, the man, at times even contemptuous, and much more critical of his ideas and work. Indeed, it is not an understatement to say that some of his criticisms were devastating to Russell, particularly as it related to his epistemology and perhaps nothing more than his critique of Russell's theory of judgment.

Nonetheless, Russell eventually would pave the way for Wittgenstein to receive his doctorate and get published. Wittgenstein, who found Russell's personal character and ethical views wanting, went off to war, apparently



Ludwig Wittgenstein

thinking it demonstrated higher morals to fight for the Kaiser while the sinful Russell protested the ensuing carnage. After the War, he would publish his famous *Tractatus-Logico-Philosophicus* (1922), with an Introduction by Russell. Wittgenstein disapproved of Russell's generous introduction, though, and as he always did with critics, he said he was misunderstood, never thinking perhaps he was not always clear. The book might well have never seen the light of day had it not been for Russell. In fact, it is entirely possible no one ever would have heard of Ludwig Wittgenstein had it not been for Russell.

In due course Russell would get over his beguilement by Wittgenstein, whose personal charisma affected many with whom he came in contact, then, and as it would for many years thereafter, even after his death. In my own student days in the early 1970s, though he was long dead, Wittgenstein still cast a spell on many professors, who would go to some comical lengths to affect his mannerisms, even his dress.

By the early 1920s, Russell shed his discouragement resulting from Wittgenstein's criticisms, and, having recovered his philosophical bearings, he proceeded to produce more groundbreaking work. In the meantime, over the years, Wittgenstein grew increasingly critical of the approach of both Russell and his earlier self—his *Tractatus* period, culminating in the posthumously published *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), which would be very influential in philosophy for the next several decades.

In "Some Replies to Criticism" in *My Philosophical Development*, Russell summed up his view of Wittgenstein's *Investigations*, and his overall view of his post-*Tractatus* work:

I have not found in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* anything that seemed to me interesting and I do not understand why a whole school finds important wisdom in its pages. Psychologically this is surprising. The earlier Wittgenstein, whom I knew intimately, was a man addicted to passionately intense thinking, profoundly aware of the difficult problems of which I, like him, felt the importance, and possessed (or at least so I thought) of true philosophical genius. The later Wittgenstein, on the contrary, seems to have grown tired of serious thinking and to have invented a doctrine which would make such an activity unnecessary. I do not for one moment believe that the doctrine which has these lazy consequences is true. I realise, however, that I have an overpoweringly strong bias against it, for, if it is true, philosophy is, at best, a slight help to lexicographers, and at worst, an idle tea-table amusement. (London: Routledge, 1959, Reprinted in 1993) p. 161.

History will judge who will have the last word. The way analytic philosophy is done today, its overarching themes, even in its several schools, and certainly much in logic, owes more to Russell than perhaps any single person. Even the initial emphasis of the idea that our language ... how we use it ... is important, was identified by Russell in works such as *Principles of Mathematics* (1903) long before Wittgenstein was on the scene. Once again philosophers are looking beyond mere lexical structure and use, and seeking to understand *how we know, what can be known, and what there is* beyond ourselves. These are Russellian themes, and he would be pleased.

Russell's legacy is secure, including his more robust (not as robust as I would like—as he excluded too much from it, I think, particularly in the area of ethics) conception of philosophy. This, even as Wittgenstein's epigrammatic, more parsimonious, and less demanding approach to philosophy, one embodied and elevated in the once fashionable ordinary language school, has already begun to lose some of its luster. I would not suggest that all they



did was without value, and I would doubt in a serious, non-hyperbolic moment that Russell would be so utterly dismissive. Even so, there was an element of slothfulness in the whole approach. And it is true that the ordinary language folks often avoided the heavy lifting of formal logic, mathematics, and the sciences. But these things have made a comeback in philosophy, I'm glad to say. After all, the world is much greater than just what we say about it.

“... and it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well ...”



Lord Russell took considerable delight in the Christmas Season, festooned in his red Chinese robe and his pocket watch on Christmas morning. We take some liberties with

his likeness, here—but a good Father Christmas he'd surely make! Consider a gift membership to the BRS for the upcoming holidays. The introductory price is only \$30. The subscription to the Russell Journal, alone, makes this a considerable bargain. We will send out a secular e-card that acknowledges your gift (upon request), along with the standard welcome information. Notify us at opinealot@gmail.com.

Classified: Help Wanted

The current editor/copyeditor of the *Bulletin* will retire from his editorial duties in 2017, another 3 issues hence. Any BRS member interested in assuming these duties is encouraged to email our president, Tim Madigan, at: tmadigan@rochester.rr.com.

Answer to Not Necessarily Trivial on Page 3: Why did Russell Quit Mathematics?

Russell wrote in *My Philosophical Development* that he thought undergraduate training in mathematics at Cambridge was “definitely bad” when he was a student there. He was especially disdainful of the “order of merit in the Tripos” examination process, the means by which students obtained their bachelor’s degrees. He said, “Indeed, the whole subject of mathematics was presented as a set of clever tricks by which to pile up marks in the Tripos.” We might call this pedagogical technique “teaching to the test,” nowadays. Once he finished his Tripos requirements, Russell said that he “sold all my mathematical books and made a vow that I would never look at a mathematical book again. And so, in my fourth year, I plunged with wholehearted delight into the fantastic world of philosophy.” Upon passing his Moral Sciences Tripos in 1894, Russell then began his Fellowship dissertation on “The Foundations of Geometry,” in which he focused on non-Euclidean geometry in relation to Kant’s transcendental aesthetic—basically defending a Kantian outlook. This would form the basis of his first book in philosophy, *An Essay on the Foundations of Geometry* (1897), which he would later characterize as “somewhat foolish.” Not long thereafter he would abandon his Kantian-Euclidean view of space with the advent of Einstein’s work. (BR, 1959, *My Philosophical Development*, London: Routledge pp. 29-31).

Forthcoming Member Book

Expected in December 2015 is a new book—an anthology edited by members Tim Madigan and Peter Stone, *Bertrand Russell, the Public Intellectual*, from Tiger Bark Press.



Bertrand Russell's Illnesses and Injuries

By Ken Blackwell

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Bertrand Russell impressed people who knew him as extraordinarily healthy and energetic in mind and body. As Beatrice Webb confided in 1902 in her *Diary*, “phases of health of mind and body ... seem unknown to him” (2: 252–3). In what follows, speculation about the health of Russell’s mind is avoided.¹ Instead, a survey of his bodily illnesses and injuries is offered in the hope that it will assist in some future medical examination of Russell’s vitality and an appreciation of his endurance. I have not added to or questioned the medical terms and diagnoses found in the documents.²

Webb knew Russell as a young man. Alys, even in old age, described Russell thus to her sister’s husband: “If only you and I were as strong and vigorous as he is, never any signs of weakness nor illness, not even colds” (bracers.mcmaster.ca/124387). Yet Russell accumulated a surprising amount of first-hand experience of physical illness, although at 60 he could still say, “I have only been ill once”, and made light of it: “I like people to know how *very* ill I was that once, and I feel vexed when I come across other people who have been more nearly dead without dying” (“Pride in Illness”, *Mortals*, p. 127). At age 94 he could still write to Lord Amulree, author of *Adding Life to Years*, that he enjoyed good health and wanted the best possible advice to keep it that way; he added that a local G.P. visited him regularly and in recent weeks a masseur.

Here is a record of his known physical afflictions, as revealed in his correspondence and in the biographies. It should be noted that Russell was rarely a complainer of his bouts of ill health, much less a hypochondriac or alarmist. How he occupied himself other than stoically during debilitating illness is unknown. As a self-employed author for the greater part of his life, he must have found illness worrying. Surely periods of illness reduced his creativity, output and income—all of this being important to biographers.

Not listed are ordinary health problems like his extensive dental work or when he began to use reading glasses or wear a hearing aid. (Kate Tait found him “so deaf” at the end [*My Father*, p. 201].) We don’t know if he ever had cancer (unless that was the reason for his prostate removal), but he relates a cancer scare brought on by his dentist in 1911: a specialist three weeks later told him there as nothing the matter (*Auto*. 1: 204). BR admitted to having “no more medical knowledge than is possessed by every educated layman” (5 May 1960); and “I have not the least idea as to the cause of my vitality concerning which you ask. The question is obviously medical ...” (30 July 1960). Sometimes, however, he attributed his good health to his glands; on another occasion, to “defecating twice a day with unfailing regularity” (*Auto*. 2: 200). His outstanding medical problem, to judge from the list, was a proneness to bronchitis. He was also prone to fatigue brought on by overwork (“sometimes I feel so weary that I do not know how to go on” (1939, *SLBR* 2: #439). It’s in matters of health that the fusion of mind and body is strongest. All of this is not to deny the setbacks he suffered from the onset of advanced old age, but rather to point out that he is a model for overcoming them if you still have useful work and the walls of the ego can be allowed to recede.

DATE	ILLNESS	BRACERS OR OTHER REFERENCE
c.1880	“In getting out of a carriage at her [Mrs. Scott’s] door, I fell on the paving-stones, and hurt my penis. After this I had to sit twice a day in a hot bath and sponge it carefully.”	<i>Auto</i> . 1: 202.
1892/beginning	“I had a slight attack of influenza which left me for several months completely without energy or interest in anything whatever.”	<i>My Philosophical Development</i> , p. 37. In conversation with the author
1894/08-09	Headaches.	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/20492 https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/123586
1902/04	Headaches.	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/123788
1908/03/18	Has had influenza.	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/58494
1911–14	“I was suffering from pyorrhoea although I did not know it, and this caused my breath	<i>Auto</i> . 1: 206. Moorehead, <i>BR, a Life</i> , p. 198.

DATE	ILLNESS	BRACERS OR OTHER REFERENCE
(Continued from pg. 17)	to be offensive, which also I did not know." BR was "again suffering from toothache – an American dentist finally cured his bad breath".	<i>Selected Letters of BR</i> 1: 501.
1915–16	Gum trouble returns.	<i>SLBR</i> 2: 45, 84.
1916/06/04	"Am sure all will go well. Do ask Dr. Wilson 3 Gordon Square for sleeping draught to-night Ottoline". [This is the night before BR was to appear before the Lord Mayor and be prosecuted for writing the Everett leaflet. Insomnia due to anxiety would not be unexpected.]	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/114676
1917	A friend hopes the doctor has given BR a remedy for insomnia.	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/79608
1917/04/17	"It is not German measles, only a very mild attack of influenza [that BR has]."	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/19150
1918/01/26	"I am laid up with piles". Elizabeth Russell's physician brother cured him.	http://bracers.mcmaster.ca/19283 http://bracers.mcmaster.ca/46919 <i>SLBR</i> 2: 168 n.2.
1918/07–08	Headaches in Brixton Prison prevented his reading and writing philosophy from mid-July. He became irritable and unable to get on with work because the wet weather gave him a headache. He missed tobacco.	<i>SLBR</i> 2: #317. Monk 1: 534. https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/46926
1919/04/22	"My cold is so bad I think it must be influenza—". Had a fever yesterday. [BR did not contract the worldwide, often deadly flu of 1918-19.]	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/19471 https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/78124
1920/02/02 1920/02/03 1920/02/17	Has broken his collar bone, calling it a "broken shoulder". "My shoulder is really mending at last—I have got my clothes on properly at last, and only a sling, which I am to get rid of in a few days—".	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/57884 http://bracers.mcmaster.ca/722 http://bracers.mcmaster.ca/19617
1921/03/18	Dora Russell has the best description of BR's near-fatal illness in Beijing. Her account includes a contemporary letter to her mother. After apparently recovering from bronchitis (says BR) or the flu and a cough (says Dora), he developed double pneumonia. His temperature was 104 to 107° for 3 weeks with his heart skipping beats. Thrombosis in the leg, and phlebitis. Weakened heart. Convalescence brought "weakness and great physical discomfort", and BR needed a cane for walking, using such "a stick" in visiting Japan. Monk adds dysentery and kidney disease. The consensus is that he did nearly die.	<i>The Tamarisk Tree</i> , 1: 133-45. <i>Auto.</i> 2: 130. https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/78102 . <i>Dear BR</i> , pp. 42–3 (US edn., 6). <i>SLBR</i> 2: 225. Monk 1: 597–603.
1921/05/11	"I have been having enemas constantly."	http://bracers.mcmaster.ca/18794 <i>SLBR</i> 2: #347.
1921/07?	Verbatim note by the German physician	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/76126

DATE	ILLNESS	BRACERS OR OTHER REFERENCE
(Continued from pg. 18.)	(Franz Esser) who attended BR: "Mr. Bertrand Russell was in march april and the following months suffering from pneumonia on both the lungs, after it he got thrombosis of veins on the raight leg with a lot of absesses in consequence. He could not stand his severe disease without large quantities of Campher-Oil and Digitalis. His heart now is still in a very weak condition, sometimes he gets swollen feet. It is to have very much attention on the frequence of the puls and the quantity of urine. The wounds from incisions on his leg will getting close by themselves."	
1923/12/31	"[A] mild attack of pneumonia" results in the postponement of his planned US lecture tour.	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/18837 SLBR 2: #356.
1924/11/04	Has been ill with flu.	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/119136
1925/04/01	"False alarm but probably bronchitis"	http://bracers.mcmaster.ca/118659
1929/04/04?	Whooping cough.	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/18882 SLBR 2: #379
1930/01/03	BR read proofs of Grudin's <i>A Primer of Aesthetics: Logical Approches to a Philosophy of Art</i> (1930) while laid up with bronchitis.	http://bracers.mcmaster.ca/1346
1930/05/05	Dora is sorry BR is ill and hopes he doesn't have the measles or chickenpox.	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/118848 https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/114899
1933/07?	BR "was critically ill on a trip to Spain, and described his symptoms to the Spanish doctor in Latin". It was ptomaine poisoning.	Wood, <i>BR the Passionate Sceptic</i> , p. 178. SLBR 2: 325 n.3.
1934/12	Aldous Huxley recommended a slow regular breathing exercise for BR's insomnia.	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/1425
1935/01	Suffering from what Dr. Streatfeild described as insomnia and "acute nervous exhaustion", BR postponed his Scandinavian lecture tour. "Doctor absolutely forbids any work for a least three months."	Clark, p. 452; M. Stevenson, "No Poverty, Much Comfort, Little Wealth", <i>Russell</i> 31 (2011): 105. https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/121067 Monk 2: 179-80.
1937/01/05 (prior to)	"[W]as overwhelmed with work and suffering from influenza."	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/18980
1939/05/30	BR "is lying on his back resting a tiresome sprain". Wore a corset for his injured back and spent a month in bed "tortured by almost unbearable sciatica. The result of this is that I got behindhand with the preparations for my lectures, and that throughout the coming academic year I was always overworked and always conscious that my lectures were inadequate."	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/47293 https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/52776 https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/120594 <i>Auto.</i> 2: 218.
1940/03/26	BR is up and about from the flu; Patricia is just out of hospital. The Russells have all been ill.	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/120505
1940/12/22	"BR is suffering from slight bronchitis."	http://bracers.mcmaster.ca/121556

DATE	ILLNESS	BRACERS OR OTHER REFERENCE
1945/09/12 1945/12/10	“Regret delay illness answer no”. Just getting over influenza (“several attacks”) and “a prolonged spell of intense overwork”, BR “is therefore obliged to do nothing that he can avoid for the next month, and to a great deal less than he has been doing for the rest of his life.”	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/48037 https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/54109
1946/02/24 1946/03/01	“[I]ll for some time with influenza leading to bronchitis”; “repeated flu and bronchitis”	http://bracers.mcmaster.ca/55968 http://bracers.mcmaster.ca/54808
1946/09/ 1946/10/09	“a broken toe”. Toe is now recovered.	http://bracers.mcmaster.ca/7409 http://bracers.mcmaster.ca/55494
1948/05/7–10	Churchill’s doctor reminded BR in 1953: “I think we last met when you were seedy at The Hague.” (BR participated in Churchill’s Congress of Europe.)	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/78758
1950/08/21	His arm was in a sling because he had shaken too many Australian hands.	<i>The Spokesman-Review</i> , Spokane, WA, 22 Aug. 1950, p. 1; http://bracers.mcmaster.ca/122761
1953/06	Is hospitalized with pneumonia: was seriously ill and some damage was said to always remain. Torn muscle in back. Wood says he nearly died.	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/12539 Crawshay-Williams, p. 72 Wood, p. 236.
1954/01/05 1954/01/22	“B. looks frighteningly thin and frail and I am terrified by the idea that pending operation (prostate) mid-January is going to kill him....” BR has had his prostate operation (whether for an enlarged or cancerous prostate is unknown). Wood says it “proved even more serious than expected.” A hospital infection delayed his release.	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/129279 https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/129281 Crawshay-Williams, p. 102 Wood, p. 238. SLBR 2: 479.
1957/05/07 1957/08/15	To his physician BR described in detail his excess wind and consequent belching attendant on his swallowing difficulty. The affliction (his term) got worse until he adopted a liquid diet. BR lived on Complian (a nutritious drink) and raw egg in milk for the remainder of his life. “My trouble is not an illness, but an affliction of the throat that makes swallowing difficult.” He had apparently been examined for throat cancer and requested psychological diagnoses.	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/74749 https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/67612 SLBR 2: #541. Crawshay-Williams, pp. 115–16 https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/117404 https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/508
1960/04/02	Has had a slight illness which has interfered with his work.	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/83243
1961/02/09	BR complained of increasing deafness.	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/224
1961/04/17 1961/05/20	BR fell ill with a serious case of shingles (Dr. Boyd identified it as Herpes Zoster). He “had excruciating pain for several weeks and had to be kept under heavy drugs to dull it. The pain has now expended itself, except for short and infrequent bouts, and he is very much better though still rather weak and tottery.” Edith Russell then got	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/80940 https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/124657

DATE	ILLNESS	BRACERS OR OTHER REFERENCE
(cont. from pg. 20)	chicken pox.	
1962/01/28	"I have been ill for some time".	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/127746
1963/10/07	His temperature during a bout of flu was 104°.	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/74670
1963/10/11	Has recovered from pneumonia and is having trouble with his vision. Dr. Boyd wrote that a cataract operation is in prospect.	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/74748
1965/03/08 1965/09/15	Has been ill with bronchitis. Edith wrote: "In 1957 I had to spend several months in bed because of a heart attack and, since then, Bertie has had several serious illnesses, and we have been in gaol...."	http://bracers.mcmaster.ca/7726 https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/30420
1967/10/07	Has fallen ill.	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/116909
1967/12/03 1967/12/12	Edith describes BR's illness and the effect of drugs on him. An elevator is being installed in Plas Penrhyn. "I meant to have written to you [Conrad] long ago but have been very ill, in fact dangerously ill. I am now beginning to recover, but the house is still the house of an invalid." BR "took to a wheelchair."	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/118531 https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/10438 Crawshay-Williams, p. 156; Clark, <i>Life of BR</i> , p. 629.
1968/05/18 1968/12/25	"Bertie is just recovering from 'flu." "I hope you are both well and that Grandpa is now fully recovered from his illness."	Crawshay-Williams, p. 153. https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/130297
1969/10/17	Had a fall a short while ago. [Perhaps the occasion when BR's masseur fell on him.]	https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/118734
1969/12	"[A] few days before Christmas, the bronchial troubles returned and he was again given massive doses of antibiotics."	Clark, p. 637.
1970/02/02	"[A]cute bronchitis", "mostly confined to bed". "He seemed to have recovered from the last [bronchial] attack and it was only on the evening of Monday, 2 February, at 7 'clock, that he felt rather ill. He was dead within the hour." Edith corrected this: "No. While we were having tea together at 4.30."	Monk 2: 500. Clark, p. 638. E. Russell, "Clark's Fatuous Book" (Part 3), <i>Russell</i> 30 (2010): 141.

Endnotes and References

¹ Ray Monk begins his psychological study by viewing Russell's "sexual fatigue" at age 22 as recurring impotence (*Bertrand Russell* 1: 102).

² His biographers have not studied his ailments, fractures and afflictions, but the "health of Russell" index entry in Volume 2 of Nick Griffin's *Selected Letters of BR* is very useful. Russell regarded himself as an old man as early as age 59. Although he took advantage of improved medical technology, he made the political point that "every increase in medical skill is bound to make the world more and more conservative" ("The Menace of Old Age", in *Mortals and Others*). As for the disadvantages of old age, he regarded them as "obvious and uninteresting" ("On Being Old", in *Essays in Skepticism*).

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That Bertrand Russell took things in stride and suffered no hypochondria is evident: “As regards health, I have nothing useful to say since I have little experience with illness. I eat and drink whatever I like, and sleep when I cannot keep awake. I never do anything whatever on the ground that it is good for health, though in actual fact the things I like doing are mostly wholesome.” (1951, “How to Grow Old,” Rpt. in *Portraits From Memory and Other Essays*, 1956, London: Allen & Unwin, p. 51)

Interview with Nicholas Griffin: Bertrand Russell on Science and Religion

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The research project “Science and Religion: Exploring the Spectrum” launched recently by Fern Elsdon-Baker (Newman University, United Kingdom) and Bernard Lightman (York University, Canada), of which I am a part, seeks to study the historical and contemporary relationship between religion and science within English-language discourse in Britain and Canada. Our project brings together social psychologists, sociologists, and historians of science to study the interaction of views about religion and science in the present, as well as the historical relationships between these belief systems in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹

Bertrand Russell was a prominent voice on the topic of science and religion, particularly in Britain in the mid-twentieth century. Russell’s earlier achievements in philosophy and logic had given his opinions on political and contemporary issues deeper significance, and many British newspapers as well as BBC radio and television offered Russell’s perspectives on the place of religion and science within society. Several secularist organizations, including the British Humanist Association, the National Secular Society, and the Rationalist Press Association, published pamphlet copies of Russell’s essays on the subjects of religion and science. Russell also published several popular essay collections on these subjects.

Nicholas Griffin, professor of philosophy at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, has devoted the better part of his career to the study of Russell, particularly the development of Russell’s philosophical work. Griffin is Director of the Bertrand Russell Research Center, and has been involved in the editing and publication of Russell’s collected papers. Throughout his career, Griffin has worked with the Russell Archives at McMaster, an amazing historical resource encompassing 40,000 of Russell’s letters, plus original manuscripts, objects, and materials from Russell’s long life.

The following is a transcript of an interview conducted with Professor Griffin about Russell’s perspectives on science, religion, and their respective roles in society, as well as some of Russell’s own personal beliefs.

SN: Thank you, Professor Griffin, for agreeing to join me and discuss Russell’s views on science and religion. In your opinion what is Russell’s most important work on religion? And can you describe the view on religion Russell argues for in this work?

NG: From a philosophical point of view I’d have to say his most important work on religion was “On Denoting”, his theory of definite descriptions.² The reason for that is that it is his only really original contribution, although indirectly, to the philosophy of religion. Its impact on religion has to do with the ontological argument for the existence of God, a traditional argument from medieval times, which Kant had famously attacked by saying that it depended upon viewing existence as a predicate when in fact existence wasn’t a predicate. What Russell did in that paper was to provide the standard way that we have now of understanding what existence is if it is not a predicate.

The ontological argument runs something like this. God is the greatest conceivable being. To conceive of a being as having existence is to conceive of a greater being than to conceive of a being that has all the same properties, but lacks existence, and therefore God, if he can be conceived at all, must exist, because he would then be the greatest being, and the greatest being would have to have the property of existence on top of all the others.

There is obviously some subterfuge and sleight of hand—something has obviously gone wrong with that argument, because by the same token you can prove that there was a greatest rabbit. It would be the rabbit which had all rabbitly perfections, and then would have to have existence on top. But it wasn’t clear what was wrong with it until Immanuel Kant came along. Kant said that that it treats existence as if it were just another property like all the others, whereas it’s quite different. Russell in “On Denoting” explained that difference by showing how existence was to be expressed by quantifiers rather than by property expressions or predicates. That’s the philosophical answer. That’s Russell’s only original contribution to philosophy of religion.

In terms of what his best work was, *Religion and Science* (1935), because it was the most extended and considered.³ But that wasn't the most influential, because it was hardly ever reprinted. The works that had most influence were the essays that went into *Why I Am Not a Christian*, which was published in 1957, edited, not by Russell, but by Paul Edwards, a fellow philosopher and freethinker.⁴ But a lot of those essays already had been in print and been republished in various collections for a long time and had had a good deal of influence. I think their influence was to preserve the nineteenth century tradition of freethought through the twentieth century. There is not much that is really very modern in them. He does not address movements in twentieth century theology, like demythologization, existential theology or anything like that. It is very much traditional theology that he attacks, and he attacks it with arguments that are by and large traditional arguments.

SN: The Wikipedia article on Russell describes his view on religion as agnostic or atheist, concluding: "For most of his adult life, Russell maintained that religion is little more than superstition and, despite any positive effects that religion might have, it is largely harmful to people. He believed that religion and the religious outlook serve to impede knowledge and foster fear and dependency, and are responsible for much of our world's wars, oppression, and misery." Is this a correct summary of his attitude towards religion, in your view?

NG: I think it is pretty accurate. A couple of comments. The first on agnostic or atheist. He was often asked this question. There are lots of letters in the Russell Archives, people writing to him to ask whether he regarded himself as an agnostic or an atheist. He typically said that he was an agnostic. I think the reason for that was that he had very high standards for knowledge. The atheist would be someone who claims to know there is no God. That for Russell would require a proof. He always said he denied that he could prove that God *didn't* exist, but he thought that there was no evidence whatsoever to support the view that God *did* exist. By way of comparison, he somewhere said—it may have been in *Religion and Science*—that just as he couldn't prove that God existed, he couldn't prove that there wasn't a teapot in orbit between the earth and Mars, but he thought that God was equally unlikely.

Russell did think that religion was responsible for a great deal of harm. He was acutely aware of historical religious wars and religious oppression, of the horrors of the Inquisition and the ongoing horrors of religious oppression in everyday life. He was living in the 1920s and 30s when religion was in retreat, but it still had a very substantial hold on people's lives, especially on matters of sexual morality that he was concerned with. He thought it did a very great deal of harm. In that respect his arguments against religion are a bit different from the nineteenth century ones. The nineteenth century arguments against religion tended to question it on scientific grounds, but say nonetheless that religious morality was crucial, was really important, and just because God didn't exist, it doesn't mean we shouldn't behave like Christians. Russell on the other hand thought that it would be better if we didn't behave like Christians. That would make us more kindly to one another, less bigoted, less judgemental, less oppressive.

On the other hand, that being said, he did think there was something he sometimes referred to as a religious attitude towards the world that he did value. That emerged originally around 1910, 1911, when he started to look at the idea of a non-credal religion. He was not unique at that time in looking at non-credal religion. Tolstoy was moving in that direction. It was sort of a trend. Beliefs that were associated with religion had become untenable. But it was thought that if you take the beliefs out of religion, then you were still left with a religious attitude toward things. Russell did tend to think that was a good thing. It was not associated with organized religions or with churches, and obviously not with any specific doctrines. But as an attitude to the world, an attitude of reverence and wonder, and a sense of human finitude, of smallness and fragility against the universe, that was something that he valued. That he thought was difficult to achieve without something like religion. If you've got the religious beliefs, it's much easier to take that attitude towards the world. If you don't have them, you have to have to find some other source for it. It seems like an ungrounded attitude to have towards the world. It's difficult to put your finger on exactly what he was after, because it was non-credal, so there's not going to be a statement of beliefs attached to it. Russell was not necessarily good once he got away from beliefs and the reasons for them. That was his forte. Here he was in a territory where his best talents were not necessarily the most helpful ones. The essays you find it in are "The Essence of Religion" (1912) and "Mysticism and Logic" (1914).⁵

SN: In Russell's 1935 book, *Religion and Science*, Russell's main problem dispensing with religion altogether is confronting the construction of a secular code of ethics. Can you describe what role Russell envisioned for the governance of science within his view of a secular society?

NG: The role of religion in all that is essentially the role of a non-credal religious attitude towards the world. But I've already spoken about that. The other question is about society and ethics and science, and that's a tangled relation. Russell was very concerned about what science could do in the wrong hands. He was also for most of his career a non-cognitivist about moral issues. His attitude varied a bit and I am simplifying it and eroding distinctions. His attitude was roughly that moral judgements did not attribute properties to actions. If you judge some action as wrong or right, you weren't saying that it had some property or characteristic, you were condemning it or praising it. It was an expressivist view. This gave him some trouble as he had very strong moral convictions about all sorts of things. He found it very difficult to believe that the only thing to be said against some of the evils of the world was that he disapproved of them. Expressivism was not a terribly happy moral position to have. But at least we can say that Russell never let it restrict his expression of moral sentiments, which he did frequently.

He found a special problem with society and science because of the difficulty of instituting democratic control. He was a liberal democrat, essentially. He believed that generally governments should be subject to democratic control, and that that would generally be a good thing, though he recognized cases in which it wouldn't because the public also could be swept away by enthusiasms to wars and persecutions in democratic states. But he thought that on the whole, although democracy wasn't perfect, it was better than the alternatives. The difficulty for him with science was that democracy could be an effective control, but was not necessarily the best control. The reason for this is that people were just not well informed enough, and they couldn't be, about the scientific issues that went on in the management of science. It would be little use to have a referendum on whether the Human Genome Project, for example, was worth undertaking. So the usual democratic role for controlling social enterprises wasn't necessarily a good one for controlling science. That left him with a quandary as to how science should be controlled, and how it should be geared towards public ends. He was enormously aware of how that could happen. He had seen the benefits of science being applied to social problems in public health innovations, but he was also hugely aware of the misery science could cause as well. So I don't think he ever had a really settled answer. I think it would be a significant research project, and maybe a desirable one, to go through his writings to see what he thought on that matter. I'm pretty sure it would be some sort of balance of democratic input but with experts having a great deal of say in it. He was concerned about how far the experts would go on their own if they weren't controlled by some force or other. He was terribly worried they would be controlled by politicians who would use them evilly.

He was very impressed by things like the Federation of American Scientists formed after the atomic bomb. He was less impressed by the communist version, the Federation of World Scientific Workers. But still on the whole, even with the communist version, he still felt that it was good to have it. He didn't want to be associated with it too closely, but he thought it was good that Soviet scientists and scientists from Eastern Europe were joining a group like that to raise the issues. And he would have been impressed by groups of scientists who held a moratorium on genetic modification of organisms. Like most liberals, he would see getting the best results as a matter of checks and balances, and in this case he found it difficult to identify what the checks and balances should be, and no doubt thought that they changed over time. I'm pretty sure now he would be concerned less about governments and more about the control of science by corporations. The pharmaceutical industry run amok, and things like that. But that just wasn't so much an issue in his time.

SN: Russell seems to put scientists on a pedestal as objective, rational agents. But he cautions about the abuse of science through bad governance, for instance in his 1924 book *Icarus, or, The Future of Science*. I am interested in Russell's conception of the scientist. Did he really believe science, and scientists, were special creatures free from dogma, ideology and bias, or did he, in your opinion, use this image of the scientist cynically and for rhetorical purposes within his political battles (for instance, in his anti-nuclear campaigns of the 1950s and 60s)?

NG: No, I don't think he put scientists on a pedestal. In preparation for this I looked at some of his books *Icarus, or, The Future of Science* (1924), *The Scientific Outlook* (1931), *The Impact of Science on Society* (1953).⁶ I was quite astonished by how critical he was of science, of how many bad things he held scientists responsible for. This came as a bit of a shock. If you read Aldous Huxley's *Crome Yellow* where Russell appears as Mr. Scogan, this character is the über-scientist, a caricature of a semi-mad scientist because he's scientific about everything.⁷ He's supposed to be Russell, but Russell was nothing like that.

In *The Impact of Science on Society*, there's a twenty-page chapter on general influence of scientific technique, of which one and a half pages are devoted to the good things that science has done for humanity, like cure disease and extend life, eliminate difficult tasks and things like that. And the rest is concerned with

the horrors it has brought about, the industrial revolution, the appalling conditions in Britain in the early nineteenth century, the delay in the abolition of slavery in America, colonialism, he blames all of those on scientific technique. It's almost as an afterthought in the chapter that he gets to curing diseases, providing electricity, and all the things that we like. So he really was quite critical of science and the results that science produces.

The standard defence of science is that science is neutral, and can be used for good or evil, a fairly standard cliché used by those who defend science. But Russell never says anything as simplistic as that so far as I know. His attitude was obviously that it could be used either way—it could do good things it could do bad things, and which it did would be very much tied up with the political system in which it occurred. He was very concerned with the political uses of science and the way that it would foster, for example, dictatorship, by making control over people's attitudes and their behaviour more absolute and tighter.

In *The Impact of Science on Society* or *The Scientific Outlook*, he says that one of the great things that science has done is made it possible to pass information faster than people can travel. This has made the apprehension of criminals much easier. He thinks this is very bad because while robbers and murderers can't get away anymore, it means that victims of oppression can't get away either. He goes on to indicate that the victims of Nazism and Stalinism can't escape Hitler and Stalin as they would have done in the nineteenth century because they would have gone out of the country before the border authorities would have been alerted as to their exit. He's much more impressed by that than he is by the fact that ordinary cutthroats and pick-pockets could be more easily apprehended.

I don't think Russell thought scientists were special people. He greatly admired some of them, but his admiration of them as people was selective. He greatly admired Einstein, for example, both as a person and as a scientist. But I don't recall any great admiration of Oppenheimer, for example, even after Oppenheimer fell from grace with the American authorities. I don't think he went out of his way to offer condolences to Oppenheimer, or bring him into the nuclear-critical fold. I think he thought he'd done his job as a government scientist far too well and far too uncritically up to when the bomb went off.

I don't think he put them on a pedestal. In *Scientific Outlook* I was rather amused, he describes there a future scientific society which could well be (Russell thought it was) the inspiration for Huxley's novel *Brave New World*, in which the lower orders are allowed free reign, they can indulge themselves, sexual morality is relaxed, they can think what they like, do what they like, so long as they are in for work during the necessary hours. But the people who control the system, the governors, which will include the scientists, are held to a much higher standard. Their thoughts and actions, even personal actions, are of interest to the state. So their sex lives are rigidly controlled and they have a much more puritanical morality imposed on them. Unlike Freud, who thought it made people civilized, Russell thought puritanism and sexual abstinence made people cruel. He said this would produce a great deal of cruelty in the upper echelons of the Brave New World society. And this would be expressed in cruel experiments that they did, that were really unnecessary.

Earlier in the book there is a chapter on Pavlov, so he may well have been inspired to think of cruel experiments when he was thinking of Pavlov, though in the chapter on Pavlov there's not a word of criticism about what Pavlov did to dogs. But it does show that he thought the scientists would not be special, that their lives and their response to the restrictions on their lives would not be made specially easy or different because they were rational beings or scientifically trained. They would be subject to the same passions, perversions and problems as anyone else. It seems to be a rather quaint example. I don't think there is any empirical evidence to suggest that scientists who are sexually repressed would conduct cruel experiments! But Russell seemed to think it was a possibility.

SN: Was Russell a scientific positivist? Were there other sources of authoritative knowledge for Russell, besides science, logic, and mathematics?

NG: For sources of knowledge I think not. Except for just ordinary common sense perception, which would give us knowledge of the basic furniture of the world around us, what he used to call "history and geography", which bits of matter are where and when. We would have ordinary perceptual knowledge of that. But for theoretical knowledge it was logic and mathematics, which were one and the same, and science. But a positivist, no, he was never a positivist. His work influenced the positivists very deeply, but he was not himself a positivist.

Again you find in *The Scientific Outlook* that he had a view of science that was not unlike Karl Popper's. A statement had to be verifiable in order to be meaningful according to the positivists. According to Popper that was just wrong. What scientific statements had to be according to Popper was falsifiable. Russell never offered falsifiability as a demarcation criterion for science, and for good reason, because there is a lot that's

wrong with that. A lot of scientific statements are not falsifiable. But he did hold the view that Popper based it on, the view that scientific theories can never be completely confirmed or verified, but can be completely refuted. So there is always the possibility of refutation, but not the possibility of complete verification. He expresses that view in *The Scientific Outlook*, and he expressed it also about a decade earlier in his paper on "Vagueness".⁸ There he combines it with the view that that is why scientists like precision, because the more precise a theory's prediction is, the more likely it is to be refuted, and therefore the more impressive it is when it's not.

I like to think of this as the true fragment of Popper's philosophy of science. It excludes the false stuff about demarcation. It's there, in the case of "Vagueness", about fifteen years before Popper put it forward. Again even in *The Scientific Outlook*, it's still a few years before Popper began to publish it. So that was certainly not a positivistic view, it wasn't a doctrine the logical positivists would have shared.

SN: Ever since I read Stephan Andersson's book about Russell's personal mathematical mythology, I've been curious about it.⁹ What is your opinion of Stephen Andersson's thesis that upon rejecting the Christian faith of his childhood, Russell's devotion to the philosophical foundations of mathematics had the quality of a 'personal religion'?

NG: He got a certain amount of "religious satisfaction" from it. He's explicit about that in a number of places. He said that one of the reasons he went into philosophy in the first place was to discover whether anything akin to religious belief could be defended intellectually. Originally the Neo-Hegelian philosophy which dominated late Victorian Britain got his hopes up. For a few years he found a philosophical doctrine that was both logically defensible and religiously satisfying. When he abandoned that, he lost a lot of that satisfaction. But he kept some of it because of his mathematical Platonism. He believed in a timeless mathematical world, and enjoyed what he called the perfection of it. It could only have been an aesthetic satisfaction, although Russell often speaks of it as if it was a moral one. He was a Platonist about values as well at that time.

SN: If you see mathematics as perfect knowledge, does a quest to philosophically define that have religious overtones?

NG: Undeniably there are religious overtones. That comes out in the way Russell spoke about it.

He liked the mathematical realm. He enjoyed working on understanding the way mathematics worked, and essentially doing what he tried to do in *Principia Mathematica*, a rational reconstruction of the whole of mathematics. He enjoyed discovering its structure. He found an attraction in that work and in the clarification that it brought. In the very early stages of that process, he thought that in doing that, there was something out there in the world that was being understood in that way. That was a belief that he then came to abandon in the middle of that process between *Principles of Mathematics* in 1903 and *Principia Mathematica* in 1913. Halfway through, although not entirely, that belief begins to die away and the Platonism starts dropping out.

The theory of descriptions in 1905 was not done particularly to abandon Platonism. Some aspects of his Platonism always continued. He continued to believe in universals, and came eventually to believe that particulars were made up of them, so that really the fundamental constituents of the world were universal. He maintained that, but it lost its religious gloss, and it lost its mathematical structure. He came to think, we're not entirely sure when, but quite early on, as a result of his interactions with Wittgenstein, he came to believe that mathematics was essentially a grammatical or a linguistic enterprise, so that mathematical truths were grammatical truths, that they were analytic statements devoid of synthetic content. So with that, he began what he called the long retreat from Pythagoras, which had dominated his early life.

The one point on which I think Andersson gets it wrong, is that Andersson makes this a quest for certainty. That may have been an influence early on, but very early on. The one text that Andersson can use to defend that claim was that Russell said that right at the beginning one of his motives for studying philosophy was to see whether there was anything akin to religion that could be defended and the other was to know whether anything could be known for certainty, and that is why he started studying mathematics. But I think that is a prime motive that disappears fairly early on.

The point of the enterprise of *Principia* or even *Principles of Mathematics* was not to show that mathematics was certain, in a way that hadn't been known before. The certainty of mathematics was taken for granted. What were sought were the basic principles from which mathematics could be deduced. He took the science for granted, and then found out what its logical structure was, what it depended upon, what would have to be true if the science was to be true, and so on, rather than to try and found the science on more se-

cure foundations, which would have been an absurd enterprise for *Principia*. It takes until half way through the second volume until he proves that one plus one was two and it is not a whit more certain when you get to the end of the proof than it was before. The whole proof comes from a whole bunch of axioms, some of which are much less certain than one plus one equals two.

The point was not to try and really assure us that arithmetic worked, that it was correct, but to show what concepts you needed in order to be able to do arithmetic, what the logical underpinnings of arithmetic were, what the minimum assumptions were on which you could base it. But certainly not the suggestion that these assumptions were somehow certain while arithmetic was somehow doubtful, that's a crazy notion.

SN: What influence, in your opinion, did Russell have in Britain and globally with respect to his views on religion through his popular writings, media appearances, and press coverage?

NG: Well he had a considerable influence on the opinions of all sorts of people, myself included. *Why I Am Not A Christian* was one of the works I read in school and took courage from. Britain was a place with an established religion and we had prayers each day in school, school was a fairly religious organization. Russell kept the pressure up on that in a way. Freethought had begun as a popular movement in Victorian times, Russell was well aware of it, was influenced by it when he was growing up, and he continued the influence writing pamphlets.

When I was young in Britain it was easy to find copies of his pamphlets still being sold by various secular organizations in Britain, the Humanists, the National Secular Society, the Rationalist Press Association—they all had Russell texts on hand that they distributed. So he was quite influential there, and in various other movements that were associated with the decline of religious control of social and moral life, secular reform for example. He was a strong advocate there on things like birth control. He wasn't so far as I know involved in movements to legalize abortion; but he was involved in homosexual law reform, which, while not in themselves religious issues, the other side tended to be supported by religious movements. So he had a popular role in the secularization of British society through the twentieth century by writing and also by broadcasting. He spoke of these things on TV and was quite possibly Britain's best known atheist, or agnostic, for a large part of the twentieth century.

SN: Do you have any other thoughts you wish to share about how Russell was important to how our attitudes about science and religion have changed over the course of the twentieth century?

NG: Russell's attitudes towards religion are quite clear-cut. However, his attitudes towards science are very complicated and deserve more study. There is a book waiting to be written on that topic, I think.

Ed. note: A truncated version of this interview appears on <http://www.scienceligionsspectrum.org/>

Endnotes

¹ More information about our project can be found at www.scienceligionsspectrum.org.

² "On Denoting" was first published in the journal *Mind* 14 (Oct. 1905): 479-93. It is reprinted in Bertrand Russell, *Foundations of Logic: 1903-05*, edited by Alasdair Urquhart with the assistance of Albert C. Lewis, *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell* vol. 4, 414-427, London: Routledge.

³ Russell's unpublished essay, "Religion and Science", which he wrote while working on the manuscript for the book *Religion and Science*, was influenced by Andrew Dickson White's *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (1896). According to John G. Slater, "Many of the facts and quotations he cites can be found in that book, indeed, Russell cites several pages from White's book in a list at the end of this manuscript". See the editorial note prefacing "Religion and Science", Bertrand Russell, *A Fresh Look at Empiricism, 1927-42*, edited by John G. Slater with the assistance of Peter Köllner, *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell* vol. 10, 237-245, London: Routledge. Russell's adoption of White confirms interpretations that White's book was a major source from which the contention that religion and science are in conflict entered Western historiography. See Bernard Lightman "The 'Conflict Thesis' and Scientific Naturalism", forthcoming in 2015 in *State, Religion and Church in Russia and Worldwide*, draft provided by author, p. 16; and

James Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies: A Study of the Protestant struggle to come to terms with Darwin in Great Britain and America, 1870-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, 19-49. Russell's book *Religion and Science* appeared in 1935 and was published in the Home University Library, by Oxford University Press.

⁴ *Why I Am Not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects*, edited by Paul Edwards, was published in London by George Allen and Unwin Ltd. and Simon and Schuster in New York, in 1957. The original essay, "Why I am Not A Christian", was published in April 1927 by Watts & Company as a pamphlet for the Rationalist Press Association of London, who kept it in print until the 1950s. The text of the original pamphlet is reprinted in Bertrand Russell, *A Fresh Look at Empiricism, 1927-42*, edited by John G. Slater with the assistance of Peter Köllner, *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell* vol. 10, 181-193, London: Routledge.

⁵ "The Essence of Religion" was first published on 11 October 1912 in *The Hibbert Journal*, a liberal review of religion, theology and philosophy. Afterwards Russell lead a discussion based on his article at the Cambridge "Heretics" Society. The essay is reprinted in Bertrand Russell, *A Fresh Look at Empiricism, 1927-42*, edited by John G. Slater with the assistance of Peter Köllner, *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell* vol. 10, 112-122, London: Routledge. Russell's essay "Mysticism and Logic" also appeared in *The Hibbert Journal* 12, (July, 1914): 780-803. Russell also read the essay to the "Heretics", and later delivered it as a lecture in America several times. A copy of the text can be found in Russell, *A Fresh Look at Empiricism*, 158-177.

⁶ *Icarus or The Future of Science* was published in 1924 in the "To-Day and To-Morrow" series by Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, London. *The Scientific Outlook* was published by W.W. Norton & Company Inc., New York, in 1931. *The Impact of Science on Society* appeared in 1952, published by George Allen & Unwin Ltd.; it was based upon lectures Russell had given at Ruskin College (Oxford), Columbia University (New York), and the Royal Society of Medicine (London).

⁷ *Crome Yellow* by Aldous Huxley was first published in November of 1921 by Chatto and Windus, London. Russell had a copy, from the "Phoenix Library" edition of 1929. Russ Lib 0545, Bertrand Russell Archives, McMaster University.

⁸ "Vagueness" appeared in *The Australian Journal of Philosophy* I (June 1923): 84-92. It originated from an essay Russell read before the philosophical "Jowett Society" at Oxford University in the fall of 1922. The essay is reprinted in Bertrand Russell, *Essays on Language, Mind and Matter, 1919-26*, edited by John G. Slater with the assistance of Bernd Frohmann, *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell* vol. 9, 145-154, London: Unwin Hyman.

⁹ Stefan Andersson, *In Quest of Certainty: Bertrand Russell's search for certainty in religion and mathematics up to The Principles of Mathematics* (1903), Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1994.

"Scientific knowledge has its dangers; but so has every great thing. And over and beyond the dangers with which it threatens the present, it opens up as nothing else can the vision of a possible happy world, a world without poverty, without war, with little illness. And, what is perhaps more than all, when science has mastered the forces which mould human character, it will be able to produce populations in which few suffer from destructive fierceness and in which the great majority regard other people, not as competitors to be feared, but as helpers in a common task."

(Bertrand Russell, 1955, "Science and Human Life," Rpt. *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell*, ed. R. Egnor and L. Denonn, 1961 NY: Simon and Schuster, p. 724)

How Bertrand Russell Became a Public Intellectual during World War I (By contrast with John Dewey)

By John R. Lenz

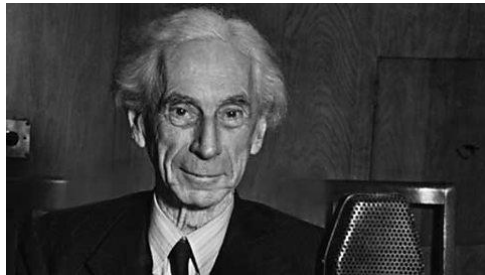
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This is an abridged version of a paper that will appear in the forthcoming book, *Bertrand Russell as a Public Intellectual*, edited by Tim Madigan and Peter Stone. I first presented this in Oct. 2013 in the European Conference on Public Intellectuals held at the Luso-American Foundation in Lisbon.

Introduction: Two Types of Public Intellectuals

Bertrand Russell became a new kind of public intellectual during World War I by dissenting both from the war and from other intellectuals' war efforts. By "new" I mean both for Russell, and fairly new in history. This is close in time to the creation of the modern public intellectual. As an example, I contrast Russell with John Dewey. Studying this provides a way to think about the relation between ideas and action and also gives a broader view of what philosophy meant to Russell.

The term "intellectual", as a noun designating a class of people, is thought to have been first coined c. 1898 during the French Dreyfus affair. Noam Chomsky often invokes this origin of the term: the intellectual was born as a dissenter. In 1916 Russell linked his "new career" with that earlier defining episode, calling his work "a rallying-ground for the intellectuals who ... are being driven to action, as they were in France by the Dreyfus case." (1988, pp. xxxvii, 340; cp. lvi)



Russell at BBC Reith Lecture 1948

In fact, the word goes back earlier. The French utopian socialist Henri de Saint-Simon called (1821) upon "*intellectuels positifs*" to improve the organization of a future industrial society by using their scientific expertise. (The word "sociology" originated in his circle.)

Significantly, both of these two earliest uses of the word define an "intellectual" in relation to public issues. We thus have two different founding models: to dissent from the dominant power (like Socrates or Chomsky), or to contribute as a social scientist; operate from without or from within; question the dominant ideology or reinforce it. While social scientific expertise may often be deployed with progressive, radical, or even utopian intent for the improve-

ment of society, too often it may also be found allied with the sources of power, influence and success. (One finds the same dilemma in related debates over the purposes of education.)

Erich Fromm (1967) extolled Russell as a prophet (disobedient to power) and not a priest (part of the system). Russell himself commented negatively on the type of the intellectual as merely a technician; he himself was a sage, meaning he had in view "the ends of life, ... what people should live for. [but] Unfortunately, the more civilized the world becomes [e.g. with the advance of science] the less it wants to listen to the sages." (Russell 1939, 435-6) This shows he was never satisfied with being a technical analytical philosopher; that is a recurrent theme of this essay.

To illustrate the conflict between two different types of public intellectuals, I contrast John Dewey's Pragmatism and nationalism during WWI with Russell's cosmopolitanism, what I call his detachment. Intellectuals fought a war of ideas which involved differing views of the relation of mind to politics.

Opposing war is virtually regarded as part of the job description of a public intellectual, and if we widen that to "speak truth to power," few would disagree. (That slogan originated with the Quakers. Russell engaged in some political work with his Quaker first wife, Alys.) But this has not always been the case in history and in the present. Intellectuals often take sides in national disputes. They often provide ammunition for a ruling ideology and justify the status quo. That is common for many reasons. They want success and power. That is the theme of Julien Benda's brilliant polemic, *The Betrayal of the Intellectuals* (1927).

Opposing the war propelled Bertrand Russell into his long career as arguably the foremost English-speaking public intellectual of the twentieth century. Russell believed that his life's work for humanity was ultimately more important than his technical work in mathematical logic. While he had political interests earlier, the onset of war between the supposedly most civilized countries on earth raised Russell's awareness to a

higher level. From being an occasional political activist, something which typically means furthering the causes of one party versus another, he became a critic, on a higher plane, of the self-interested behavior of states, and advocate of an international perspective. This set him against most intellectuals at the time. His message is just as important today as ever.

Dewey and Santayana in World War I: Intellectual Nationalism

John Dewey (1859-1952) was a great public intellectual, although not personally charismatic, and a noble figure. He's certainly a hero to professors: co-founder of the American Association of University Professors, he championed academic freedom and tenure, on the premise that professors work for the public good. Less admirably, in February 1915, Dewey began a series of lectures, soon after published as a mass-market book, *German Philosophy and Politics*. He linked German thought with German militarism. This is a war book, despite the author's unconvincing protestations of innocence. Pitting Germans against Americans on an intellectual battleground, he calls for a new American social philosophy: our philosophy is (or will be) better than theirs because our "social practice" is better (1915, 129-30). Criticizing "the whole philosophy of Nationalism," he calls for an international solution which is, however, a patently American one that will spread over the world (131-2). Of interest here is the close connection of ideas and life. For his Pragmatism, ideas cannot be separated from social practice. Philosophy is all public and practical, or it is worthless. Russell and others became public intellectuals of a different kind.

We're familiar with this general attack on German thought, because this became commonplace from the 1930s on. But it goes back to WWI, when it was less justified. Nietzsche was already taking a beating in England. By fantastically tracing German militarism back to Kant—Kant, the cosmopolitan advocate of "perpetual peace"—Dewey merely follows up, and improves, British propaganda. Look at the military metaphors Dewey uses to describe the method of the winning American philosophy: "by bringing to bear all the resources of inquiry upon locating the target, constructing propulsive machinery and figuring out the curve of the trajectory." (28)

The modern theory of propaganda originated in this same period in Britain and the U.S. "Leading public intellectuals" were behind this social-scientific work on public opinion. Noam Chomsky—whose idol is Russell—writes, "People in the John Dewey circle ... took pride in the fact that for the first time in history, as they saw it, a wartime fervor was created not by military leaders and politicians but by the more responsible, serious members of the community--namely, thoughtful intellectuals. ... turning a relatively pacifist population into raving anti-German fanatics." (2005, 19-20)

George Santayana (1863-1952) made a similar salvo, targetting the poet Goethe as an especial villain ("sinister ... hollow and aggressive") of *Egotism in German Philosophy* (1916; cp. 1915).

Pragmatism of course intends to promote democratic virtues. But it is limiting. *Are all ideas really social and not separable from practice?* Today, that kind of politics is very much a defining feature of academic life and criticism. Many hold that thought can never be free of politics. That is a shame. Is it impossible to rise above partisan politics? In short, is there nothing more to being an intellectual? That view of intellectual politics is what Bertrand Russell objected to. His contrary, more high-minded, international and cosmopolitan outlook carried much influence. He knew that the battle is just as much about education, and that education is also the solution.

Bertrand Russell: Being Engaged by Becoming Detached

The war made Russell (1872-1970) a public intellectual, and he became a model one for the 20th century. His earlier foray into electoral politics had been different. The dissenting public intellectual relies on a different idea of the relation between intellectual life (contemplation) and real life (action). An intellectual can criticize politics and power structures from outside. As with Socrates, an engaged intellectual is more than a citizen of the existing state of affairs. "One of the difficulties in discussing the duty of a philosopher is to find some difference between his duty and that of every other human being." (Russell 1964, 457)

Russell called for intellectuals to rise above nationalism; winning a short-term conflict was no solution. His long-term hope was to improve humanity. Becoming a public intellectual involved putting aside his world-famous work in mathematical logic:

"The War of 1914-1918 changed everything for me. I ceased to be academic and took to writing a new kind of books. I changed my whole conception of human nature. ... when the War came I

felt as if I heard the voice of God. I knew that it was my business to protest, however futile protest might be. My whole nature was involved. As a lover of truth, the national propaganda of all the belligerent nations sickened me. As a lover of civilization, the return to barbarism appalled me." (1968, Ch. 1)

Intellectuals disappointed him: "I had supposed that intellectuals frequently loved truth, but I found here again that not ten per cent of them prefer truth to popularity." (*Ibid.*) Liberals were the most disappointing. Of one friend he wrote, "If she had known Christ before he delivered the Sermon on the Mount she would have begged him to keep silent for fear of injuring his social position in Nazareth." (1988, p. xxxvii) Even most scientists (he complained) serve the status quo "in their capacity of good citizens, anxious to defend virtue and property." (1931/1949, p. 105) Again, to improve society, it is not enough to be a good citizen.

In 1915 he published in neutral Switzerland a long essay, "On Justice in War-Time: An Appeal to the Intellectuals of Europe," whose subtitle deliberately evokes the Dreyfusards. Intellectuals who were taking partisan sides had betrayed their profession: "Suddenly. ... all this [previous cooperation] is forgotten: German scholars repudiate English honours, English scholars maintain that Germany has done nothing of importance in learning." (1988, p. 177) Why? "Nationalism, the greatest curse of the modern world, as religious bigotry was the curse of former ages. ... there is no remedy except the recognition, through reason, of the absurdity and limitation of the national ideal. In this work, no help is to be expected from the intellectuals, who are everywhere the slaves of the State, in spirit if not in pocket." (1988, pp. 111-112) (By the way, Einstein also rejected nationalism from this time on.)

The special duty of intellectuals to a higher truth became one theme of his numerous wartime writings. They should know better than to propagate jingoistic Anglo-American attacks on German philosophy. Lovers of truth should criticize the propaganda of all sides including their own. They have a duty to all of humanity. As truth is universal, so is humanity: "the enemy are men, like ourselves, neither better nor worse." and "All nations, at all times, are egoistic. ... until it is recognized that all the nations engaged in the war are equally and wholly selfish, no true thought about the issues involved is possible." (1988, p. 171)

Behind all this lies a high-minded idea of universal reason—one that goes further than the search for mathematical truth. He faulted Pragmatism for holding an instrumentalist use of reason as a means to an end. In *History of Western Philosophy* he called Dewey's a philosophy of "social power": all practical, promoting technological manipulation, lacking higher ideals. (1946, p. 855, cp. p. 854) Remarkably -- again, given Russell's limited technical definition of "scientific" academic philosophy -- in his popular writings he often says and implies that a wise man will see the proper ends of life. He put what was most important to him in his popular writings!

Russell always advocated both technological and contemplative notions of science (see *The Problems of Philosophy* and *The Scientific Outlook*, e.g.). Most academics, he says, "hardly have any spiritual life" (Letter to Ottoline Morrell, March 4, 1916): a most interesting complaint, coming from an atheist! By "spiritual" he meant inner conscience, a sense of higher ends of life. Impartial truth, meaning in this case human truth, combined with compassion, is Russell's hallmark.

His notion of the duty of an intellectual relies on an idea of universal, almost transcendent truth. He passionately advocates intellectual detachment. Spinoza was one of his idols, and *The Problems of Philosophy* (1912) ends with heartfelt praises of contemplation (Chapter XV). A universal view is ethically superior because all humans are part of the larger cosmos. His appeal to intellectuals ends with this call for a broader perspective:

"Men of learning should be the guardians of one of the sacred fires that illumine the darkness ...: upon them depends the ideal of just thought, of disinterested pursuit of truth, which, if it had existed more widely, would have sufficed alone to prevent the present horror. To serve this ideal, to keep alive a purpose remote from strife, is more worthy of the intellectual leaders of Europe than to help Governments in stimulating hatred and slaughtering more ... young men It is time to forget our supposed separate duty towards Germany, Austria, Russia, France, or England, and remember that higher duty to mankind in which we can still be at one." (1988, p. 180.)

Russell became engaged by being detached. His detachment from national self-interest went hand-in-hand with a detached view of universal truth and humanity. This high-minded ideal carried an important political consequence: cosmopolitanism. Being detached gives one a larger perspective and ability to engage at a higher level. Socrates, in Plato's *Republic*, represents the sage who, having become enlightened,

"returns to the cave," that is to the world. This is how intellectualism improves the world, not by engaging in partisan fighting for one side or another. Sure, this is open to charges of intellectual elitism, but, on the positive side, the intellectual life is valuable in itself and does contribution to the public good. Intellectuals bring something to the world that would otherwise be lost. Initially at odds with the state, like Socrates, they work for its improvement.

Many of Russell's most loved writings consist of barbed criticisms of the structure of power. He held a realist view of politics (e.g. in *Power* [1938]), a bleak Thucydidean view of politics as competing self-interest. If we recognize with the Realist that that's the way it is, how can we overcome it? That is the idealist's dilemma, and we know that Russell was full of hope for the future of humanity. People (the Realist holds) have always behaved this way, but (the utopian thinks) human beings must learn to act differently than they have in all of history.

Russell combined criticism with an ideal of progress. His internationalism led him to propose various forms of world government, from 1915 until at least 1964, combined with a high degree of local autonomy. But education was the best hope. History teaching itself must be reformed to combat nationalism. "Teaching of history ought to be internationalized, not taught in each country so as to produce false beliefs favouring that country. This would be done if men wished to diminish strife and hatred." (1988, 342) This empiricist could be idealistic, even utopian.

Russell's Legacy

The real question is the relation of ideas to history. This is almost the same as the mind-body problem. Dewey held there is no separation between ideas and practice, that is, no airy intellectual realm. Russell's more high-minded view that intellectual detachment could improve humanity, while it seems remote and even transcendent, did carry great influence. Followers and colleagues include Romain Rolland and Julien Benda (both indebted to Spinoza as Russell was), Einstein, the Pugwash conferences, and others who proposed a vision of globalism before globalization.

In 1919, Romain Rolland (1866-1944) secured the signatures of many intellectuals, including Russell, to a manifesto, "Declaration of the Independence of the Mind." He takes the same line as Russell; for example: "Most of the intellectuals placed their science, their art, their reason, at the service of the governments." "Let us free the mind from these compromises, from these unworthy alliances, from these veiled slaveries! Mind is no one's servitor. It is we who are the servitors of mind. We have no other master." (1920, 209-215)

This tradition, which implies a duality of mind (intellect or contemplation) and body (political self-interest or action), was ultimately more forward-looking than Dewey's supposedly more modern sort of pragmatic action-only politics, although the latter perhaps dominates today. One does not have to be all practical to make a difference, and sometimes it gets in the way. Dewey was a professor, but Russell took mind to the streets—around the world, through the decades and into a better future. His legacy remains alive today.

Of course Russell was not perfect on these issues. He admitted that Germany might be more militaristic (but not by nature). He praises the English as special and different. Both Dewey and Russell changed their views in the 1930s: Dewey became a pacifist; Russell supported the war against fascism. But that is another story. (See the full version of this paper.) Interestingly, Thomas Akehurst has argued that in the later 20th century analytical philosophy came to be favored as politically safe. But it is a setback for Russell's legacy when his many writings are narrowly restricted to that field of study.

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Bertie and Ludwig: A Buddy Flick?

Upon publication of Ray Monk's biography *Bertrand Russell: The Spirit of Solitude 1872-1921*, the Australian writer, literary critic, and broadcaster, Clive James, put forth a not so flattering view of Russell, and a mostly flattering review of Monk's biography. He begins with the somewhat amusing idea of a Wittgenstein and Russell buddy movie, and do also note the actors he chooses to play them.

Two twentieth-century philosophers whose names are inseparable, Ludwig Wittgenstein and Bertrand Russell, were such a great double act that there simply has to be a buddy movie sooner or later. At last, the material is all set to be licked into a script. Ray Monk has now matched his justly lauded biography of Wittgenstein with a fat and equally enthralling first volume wrapping up the earlier half of Bertrand Russell's long life—*Bertrand Russell: The Spirit of Solitude 1872-1921* (Free Press)—and is sitting on the hottest Hollywood prospect since Paul Newman and Robert Redford signed on for *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*. Every A-list male star will want to play Wittgenstein—the philosopher who blew away all the other philosophers, including Russell—so, although Lyle Lovett looks the part and Arnie has the accent, Tom Cruise will probably get the job, armed with a Tatlin-tower lopsided bouffant coiffure personally teased out by the great José. ('Mmm! You look like beeg theenker now!') Nobody bankable—not even Steve Martin, a philosophy wonk who can actually explicate *Principia Mathematica* while wearing a plastic arrow through his head—will want to play the physically unappealing Russell, so the way should be clear for the perfect choice: Gene Wilder. Fluctuating uncontrollably between idealism and disillusion, forever persuaded that sexual fulfillment is at hand in the form of a luscious girl in a red dress, Wilder's persona, like his appearance, exactly fits a part that should revive his career. The only strike against Wilder is that even he has a bit too much gravitas for the role. On the evidence of Monk's book, Russell, for all his clipped speech and pipe-sucking air of cerebral precision, was a zany, a pantaloone, a fourth stooge. Monk does his best to lend Russell dignity and stature, but that's the way it comes out, like a fanfare from a whoopee cushion. (Dec. 1996, *The New Yorker*)

How about Jude Law for Wittgenstein and Derek Jacobi for Russell? Well, the editor had to look up "pantaloone," which he thought was just a pair of baggy pants. But he discovered it can also mean a lascivious, old, clownish man. After the foregoing remark about Russell's "unappealing" appearance, examining a photo of James was simply a must. I suppose we should be accustomed to comments about other people's lack of attractiveness in this era of Donald Trump. It just seems that some of us might be advised to be a little more cautious and self-conscious about making such observations about others. In any case, in his piece, James goes on to disparage Russell's writing style and praise Wittgenstein's. *What a hoot*. That said quite enough about Clive James' literary tastes for this editor. To read the complete review online, go to his blog, here: <http://www.clivejames.com/evenaswespeak/russell>.

Bereft of God and Anglican Complacency: A Comparison of Russell's Empiricism with that of Berkeley

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Abstract

Bertrand Russell considered George Berkeley's philosophy to be fundamentally flawed. Russell argued that Berkeley had an unduly expansive view of subjectivity's role in the constitution of the nature of the cosmos. He considered Berkeley's philosophy to be further defective on account of its uncritical assumption of mind-matter dualism. Even within this dualism, Russell saw Berkeley as failing to consistently apply to "spirits" the skepticism he was so determined to apply to matter. If anything, Berkeley's arguments appeared more appropriate as a means to establish solipsism rather than the immaterialism for which Berkeley longed.

Russell, however, did credit Berkeley with being the first philosopher to show that a denial of matter's existence can be tenably maintained without being simply ridiculous. Russell harbored misgivings about Berkeley's linguistic theory of mathematics, and yet Russell largely retreated from his earlier Platonic universe. He even viewed the progress of physics, albeit with some wryness, as ultimately vindicating much of Berkeley's view.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Anglican bishop George Berkeley (1685-1753) ranks with Locke and Hume as one of the three great British empiricists. Locke had decried the substance/attribute dichotomy as confused and obscure, and he maintained that we really have no idea of a body's "substance," or "substratum." Berkeley found the view that material *substance* was inherently beyond our knowledge too occult for his tastes. He opted instead to doubt material substance's very being. As an empiricist, he believed that all our ideas are ultimately derived from particulars and, as a result, there really are no such things as *abstract ideas*. According to Berkeley's philosophy, there is "nothing...perceived by the senses beside ideas," and that which is *unthinking* cannot be a *cause of thought*. Consequently, "*Spirit*, or that which perceives" is all that we can reasonably conclude exists. However, in denying that objects of sense amount to anything more than ideas which cannot exist unperceived, Berkeley does not intend to imply that "bodies are annihilated and created every moment, or exist not at all during the intervals between our perception of them."¹ For God is always beholding everything we normally think of as objective. So on this ground alone, what we think of as "external" enjoys a continuous existence.

Sensory data, in Berkeley's world, was a God-given language only for our self-preservation. So, in addition to insisting that our ideas of objects are distinct from the natures of the objects themselves, Berkeley cautions us against naively assuming cases of *cause* and *effect*, and settling instead for relations between signs and things signified. His position is that natural philosophy ought to refrain from "pretending to explain things by corporeal causes."² For doing so fails to inform us concerning the true efficient and final causes. That is, the natural philosophers' achievements amount to no more than identifying the "general rules and methods of motion; and to account for particular phænomena by reducing them under, or shewing their conformity to, such general rules....[N]othing could be more vain and imaginary than to suppose with Descartes, that...the whole world...might be produced, by a necessary consequence, from the laws of motion."³ Instead, natural philosophy ought to be concerned with deciphering this "language of universal natural order." For it reveals the "omnipresent Intelligence" and is incompatible with a "capricious or chaotic succession of changes."⁴

To be sure, as Frederick Copleston says, "Berkeley's philosophy is exciting in the sense that a brief statement of it...makes it appear so remote from the ordinary man's view of the world that it arrests the attention."⁵

Berkeley is also well-known for his "antiabstractionism," that is, his abhorrence of abstract ideas. Although he shares in the British empiricists' consensus that "the *qualities* or *modes* of things do never really exist each of them apart by itself," he is critical of what he sees as the prevailing and harmful belief that we can nevertheless formulate *abstract ideas*.⁶ Berkeley disparages abstract ideas as monstrosities that are by-

products of humanity's use of words. Since nothing abstract can be sensorily perceived, we have no real grasp of abstract ideas. David Hume did not hesitate to credit Berkeley here with "one of the greatest and most valuable discoveries that has been made of late years in the republic of letters."⁷

II. Where Berkeley was Wrong

Russell associates Berkeley with a tendency in philosophy to "allow the description of the world to be influenced unduly by considerations derived from the nature of human knowledge."⁸ Russell also disapproved of the way Berkeley uncritically assumes the validity of the mind-matter dichotomy (and its attendant vernacular). His view is that Berkeley's reasoning "suffers from the absence of any definition of the word 'mental'. He relies, in fact, upon the received view that everything must be either material or mental, and that nothing is both."⁹ Berkeley is guilty of ignoring the possibility of events that are neither mental nor material or those that might take the form of both. Such events are, in any case, empirical inquiry's province.

Either way, as Russell would have it, spirit is just as inscrutable as matter for nearly identical reasons and what passes for Berkeley's idealism should be understood as a case for solipsism.¹⁰ "Berkeley holds it logically possible that there should be unperceived things, since he holds that some real things, viz., spiritual substances, are unperceived. And it seems obvious that, when we say that an event is perceived, we mean something more than that it occurs."¹¹ Russell believed that the existence of other minds, or spirits, must be subject to the very same doubts as the existence of material objects. He proposes for our consideration two reflections: the reflection on the physical datum "There is a table", and the psychological reflection "I am in a state of mind in which a table appears to my sight." According to Russell,

It is extremely important to realize that the psychological reflection is a transcending of the given every whit as much as the physical; indeed even more if anything. It was the failure to notice this which led to Berkeley and Subjective Idealism, and made people suppose their knowledge of their own states of mind was more certain and ultimate than that of the outside world. The experience is originally given as one whole, a subjective idea with an objective reference; thought splits the whole into two parts, relegating the one to Physics, the other to Psychology; Metaphysics endeavours, somewhat lamely, it is to be feared, to undo the work of thought and restore the original concrete unity; or, as has been said, to stitch Cassim together again after the robbers have hewn him asunder (*Papers* 1 196-7).

Berkeley criticized the doctrine of *substance* but not as consistently as he ought to have. I say this because he denounces the view that substances are anything over and above the sum of their attributes as "groundless and unintelligible."¹² That is, "substances" are phantoms that were originally derived from the unreflective common man's casual discourse, but that have now degenerated into "erroneous conceits of the philosophers."¹³ Yet, notwithstanding the foregoing defects Berkeley associates with the whole idea of *substance*, he still speaks of how "there is not any other substance than *Spirit*, or that which perceives."¹⁴ This inconsistency on Berkeley's part could well account for Russell's lack of praise for Berkeley's otherwise enlightened philosophy of *substance*.

Russell thought Berkeley was right in "treating the sense-data which constitute our perception...as more or less subjective," in the sense that that data depend upon the perceiver as much as upon the object of our perception. "*But this is an entirely different point from the one by which Berkeley seeks to prove that whatever can be immediately known must be in a mind....It is necessary to prove, generally, that by being known, things are shown to be mental. This is what Berkeley believes himself to have done.*"¹⁵

III. Where Berkeley was Right

There are a number of areas, however, where Russell eventually believed Berkeley came closer to the truth than Russell had originally appreciated. Berkeley had maintained that *number* is a creature of the mind; whereas Russell had initially been intent on proving that mathematics is independent of the mathematicians. His earlier view was that points of space and instants of time exist objectively. But Russell later came around to a view much closer to Berkeley's. He describes his philosophical development during the First World War as a "retreat from Pythagoras." By this he meant that he no longer thought mathematics exists over and above human awareness but, instead, that mathematics consists of tautologies or is merely analytic—true by definition. This change in Russell's outlook was part of the priority he put on his own version of Ockham's razor, namely, *the substitution of logical constructions for inferred entities*.

According to *Problems of Philosophy*, Berkeley “retains the merit of having shown that the existence of matter is capable of being denied without absurdity, and that if there are any things that exist independently of us they cannot be the immediate objects of our sensations.”¹⁶ Russell understood Berkeley’s philosophy as the “first serious attempt” to establish idealism on epistemologically-oriented grounds.¹⁷

As mentioned earlier, Russell thought Berkeley was right to contend that sense-data depend upon the perceiver as much as upon the object of our perception. As Russell would have it, Berkeley’s one correct and “important conclusion” about sensation is different from the conclusion Berkeley “thinks he is proving.”¹⁸ While Berkeley thought he was proving that all reality is mental, what he proved instead was that “we perceive qualities, not things, and that qualities are relative to the percipient.”¹⁹ If Berkeley had really believed that “all knowledge depends solely on sense,” he ought to have believed that matter does not exist “when unperceived by any finite mind, and define matter, with Mill, as a ‘permanent possibility of sensation’.”²⁰

IV. Russell and the New Science

If we understand the relationship between the philosopher and the natural world as corresponding to that between the Subject and the Object, Russell can be understood as encouraging the Subject to transcend those aspects of his or her experiences that are merely relative to oneself and to focus instead on the nature of the Object. It was Russell’s fate, however, to live during an era in which the more the physicists learned about the natural world, the less *objective* its nature seemed to be.

Early in the second decade of the 20th century, the differential calculus had made sufficient strides in the realm of gravitational astronomy to make the very idea of *causation* seem suspect. In another area of physics, the *mass* of something used to be understood as pertaining to its amount of matter. Since the amount of matter was discovered to vary according to whether the entity was in motion, and motion is relative, the mass of an object is now understood to be relative to the measuring observer. Russell explains how “There is no longer reason to believe that there is such a thing as ‘matter’ consisting of atoms that persist and move. [Rather,] There is a collection of events ordered in the four-dimensional manifold of space-time.”²¹ According to the Theory of Relativity, “any physical statement in terms of the motions of bodies is in part conventional and subjective, and must contain an element not belonging to the physical occurrence.”²² As Caroline Moorehead says in her biography of Russell, “Given the recent scientific discoveries – ranging from the atom to radioactivity—the senses were turning out to be less reliable than they had seemed.”²³

As much as Russell disparaged the “more insane forms of subjectivism in modern times,”²⁴ he was thus bound to conclude—with some hyperbole we may presume—that, the more progress physics made, the more committed we were to the sort of philosophy Berkeley espoused.

Regarding the philosophy of the physical world, a paradox of physics’ *progress* is that it results in a *reduction* of the areas where we can consider ourselves to have genuine knowledge. Russell decries how “the cold breath of scepticism...has destroyed the life of physics and astronomy.”²⁵ “It is a curious fact—of which relativity is not the only illustration—that, as reasoning improves, its claims to the power of proving facts grow less and less.”²⁶ It is possible we are nowhere near exhausting the delusions we are under concerning what we think we know. If anything, biological accounts of how our sensory perception arose can make Berkeley’s view seem *less* remote.

Russell observes: “It is a curious fact that, just when the man in [the] street has begun to believe thoroughly in science, the man in the laboratory has begun to lose his faith... Nowadays... the revolutionary ideas of the philosophy of physics have come from the physicists themselves, and are the outcome of careful experiments.”²⁷ It was, in Russell’s view, *animal faith* that motivated much of the earlier scientists’ belief in *matter*. “We are, in fact, led to the position of Berkeley, according to which only thoughts exist.”²⁸

In 1928, Russell reflected:

It is obvious that our old comfortable notion of ‘solid matter’ cannot survive. A piece of matter is nothing but a series of events obeying certain laws.... The notion of substance grew more shadowy in metaphysics as time went on, but it survived in physics because it did no harm—until relativity was invented.... A piece of matter, which we took to be a single persistent entity, is really a string of entities, like the apparently persistent objects in a cinema.... [W]hat has hitherto seemed one of the most marked peculiarities of mind, namely subjectivity, or the possession of a point of view, has now invaded physics, and is found not to involve mind: photographic cameras in different places may photograph the ‘same’ event, but they will photograph it differently. Even chronometers and measuring-rods become subjective in modern physics; what they directly record is not a physical fact, but their relation to a

physical fact. Thus physics and psychology have approached each other, and the old dualism of mind and matter has broken down (*SE* 60-1).

At the time of *The Analysis of Matter*, Russell derived some solace from pondering neutral monism's emancipation from the difficulties Berkeley raises.²⁹ The school of thought known as "neutral monism" attempts to:

...harmonize two different tendencies, one in psychology, the other in physics....On the one hand, many psychologists, especially those of the behaviourist school, tend to adopt what is essentially a materialistic position, as a matter of method if not of metaphysics. They make psychology increasingly dependent on physiology and external observation, and tend to think of matter as something much more solid and indubitable than mind. Meanwhile the physicists, especially Einstein and other exponents of the theory of relativity, have been making 'matter' less and less material. Their world consists of 'events', from which 'matter' is derived by a logical construction (*The Analysis of Mind* 5). Physics and psychology are not distinguished by their material. Mind and matter alike are logical constructions; the particulars out of which they are constructed, or from which they are inferred, have various relations, some of which are studied by physics, others by psychology. Broadly speaking, physics groups particulars by their active places, psychology by their passive places (*The Analysis of Mind* 307).

Yet, in a 1930 letter to a certain Maurice Amos, Russell reflects on how "It is amusing how the physicists have come round to poor old Bishop Berkeley. You remember how when we were young we were taught that although idealism was, of course, quite the thing, Bishop Berkeley's form of it was rather silly; now it is the only form that survives. I do not see how to refute it, though temperamentally I find it repulsive."³⁰ And fifteen years after *The Analysis of Matter*, he says that "the effect of physics is to bolster up Berkeley."³¹

In his autobiography, Russell recalls: "As regards metaphysics, when, under the influence of [G.E.] Moore, I first threw off the belief in German idealism, I experienced the delight of believing that the sensible world is real. Bit by bit, chiefly under the influence of physics, this delight has faded, and I have been driven to a position not unlike that of Berkeley, without his God and his Anglican complacency."³²

V. Was Russell Exaggerating?

No one can seriously suggest that Russell became a plain and simple convert to Berkeley's philosophy. So a more interesting question becomes, "What of value did Russell think remains in Berkeley's philosophy once we subtract Berkeley's God and Anglican complacency?" Might this not be tantamount to subtracting Berkeley from Berkeley's philosophy? For all the potential importance of this point about the progress of physics and the supposed validation of Berkeley's views, not once does Russell raise it in the chapter his 1945 *History of Western Philosophy* devoted to Berkeley.

I posit that Russell said such pro-Berkeley things because of their shock value rather than anything in the way of a tribute to the Anglican cleric. Biographers note Russell's tendency at times to exaggerate and be less than measured in his rhetoric. Ronald W. Clark describes him as prone to "overstatement...of the kind with which he often ruined a good case."³³ This trait was most in evidence when Russell was discussing politics. From claims during the First World War that "every word the Germans say against us is justified" to declarations during the 1960s that "Kennedy and Macmillan are much more wicked than Hitler," such hyperbole played directly into his detractors' hands. But if we are to understand Russell's goals on such occasions, I think we do well to heed Rupert Crawshay-Williams' explanations that "Implicit exaggeration was a factor in much of Russell's wit."³⁴ "[I]f he had said exactly what he meant[,]...there would have been no surprise and in particular no jolt to received ideas."³⁵ Russell himself protested: "I have discovered that only when my statements appear to be unbridled do they command attention."³⁶

The question before us presently concerns the degree to which Russell was similarly exaggerating when making claims like "the effect of physics is to bolster up Berkeley." I think the matter comes down to Russell's interest in how there are matters we consider *objective* and yet entail a much greater component of *subjectivity* than even the most rigorous thinkers appreciate. He deliberately resorted to the shock effect of exaggeration to make this point. What better way to shock his secular pro-science readers than to say the most advanced science culminates in the insights of that critic of natural philosophy: the old Anglican bishop Berkeley?

VI. Conclusion

In summary, Russell subscribed to neutral monism in lieu of the old mind-matter dichotomy to which Berkeley (among many others) was aligned. And Russell also took Berkeley to task for not being as skeptical concerning mind as he was concerning matter. Russell did, however, come around to believing in the linguistic theory of mathematics, which Berkeley anticipated. He repeatedly warned philosophers against letting their understanding of reality's objective nature be unduly influenced by considerations derived from the nature of human knowledge. For good or ill, Russell eventually saw science as substantiating much more of reality's subjective nature than he and other scientifically-minded philosophers of his day would have ever expected. Yet the degree to which his homages to Berkeley are sincere is bound to be a matter for speculation.

Note: The author is grateful to Ray Perkins and Michael Berumen for their editorial suggestions.

Endnotes

¹ George Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* Part First § 48, All references to Berkeley are to *The Works of George Berkeley*. With Prefaces, Annotations, Appendices, and an Account of his Life, by Alexander Campbell Fraser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901).

² *ibid.*, § 66, See also §§ 107-108.

³ *ibid.*, §§ 231-232

⁴ George Berkeley, Alexander Fraser 1: 293n. 1, See also *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* Part First §§ 29, 146-147 & 151, *The Third Dialogue between Hylas and Philonous* pp. 478-80 and *Alciphron* Fourth Dialogue §§ 5-7 (pp. 160-164) & 14.

⁵ Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy Vol. V: Hobbes to Hume* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1959) p. 204

⁶ George Berkeley, Alexander Fraser, *The Author's Introduction to A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* §§ 6-7, See also *Alciphron* Seventh Dialogue §§ 5-7, & 11 (p. 340).

⁷ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* Book I, Part I, Section VII from David Hume: Philosophical Works. Edited by Thomas Hill Green and Thomas Hodge. (Darmstadt: Grose. Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1964)

⁸ Bertrand Russell, *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1948) p. xi

⁹ Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1945) p. 651, See also 654.

¹⁰ Bertrand Russell, *Autobiography of Bertrand Russell* vol. II (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968) p. 292

¹¹ Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* p. 655

¹² George Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* Part First § 49, See also §§ 67 & 91.

¹³ George Berkeley, *The Third Dialogue between Hylas and Philonous* p. 465

¹⁴ George Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* Part First § 7

¹⁵ Bertrand Russell, *Problems of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1912) p. 41 (italics added)

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 13

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 38

¹⁸ Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* p. 649

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 649.

²⁰ Bertrand Russell, "Paper on the History of Philosophy [1894]" (no. 21 in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell* vol. 1 p. 145

²¹ Bertrand Russell, "Mind and Matter in Modern Science" reprinted in *Bertrand Russell on God and Religion* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1986) p. 155

²² Bertrand Russell, *The ABC of Atoms* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1923) p. 151

²³ Caroline Moorehead, *Bertrand Russell: A Life* (New York: Viking, 1992) p. 169

²⁴ Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* p. xxii

²⁵ Bertrand Russell, *The Scientific Outlook* (New York: Norton, 1931) p. 100

²⁶ Bertrand Russell, *The ABC of Relativity* (New York: Mentor, 1959 reprint of 1925 original) p. 140

²⁷ Bertrand Russell, *The Scientific Outlook* p. 85

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 80

²⁹ Bertrand Russell, *The Analysis of Matter* With a New Introduction by Lester E. Denonn. (New York: Dover Publications 1954). p. 7



³⁰ Bertrand Russell, *Autobiography of Bertrand Russell* vol. II. P. 292

³¹ *ibid.*, p.386

³² *ibid.*, p. 233

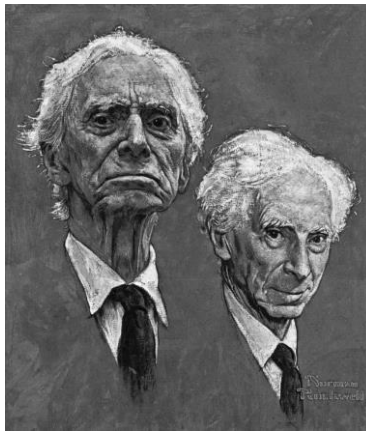
³³ Ronald W. Clark, *The Life of Bertrand Russell* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976) p. 255

³⁴ Rupert Crawshay-Williams, *Russell Remembered* (New York: Oxford University Press 1970)

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³⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶ *The Guardian* October 2, 1961 p. 8, Cited at Ray Perkins' *Yours Faithfully, Bertrand Russell* Perkins Jr., Ray. *Yours Faithfully, Bertrand Russell* (Chicago & La Salle: Open Court 2002) p. 279



**94 Year Old Russell by Norman Rockwell on
the Cover of *Ramparts* in May, 1967**

A Relevant, Final Message from the Past

In his last written statement, days before his death in 1970, Russell said something that was as true then as it is today, and something that applies not only to the Middle East, but to other parts of the globe. One could easily substitute Russia or China, for example—or other countries, past and present—for Israel.

The development of the crisis in the Middle East is both dangerous and instructive. For over 20 years Israel has expanded by force of arms. After every stage in this expansion Israel has appealed to “reason” and has suggested “negotiations”. This is the traditional role of the imperial power, because it wishes to consolidate with the least difficulty what it has already taken by violence. Every new conquest becomes the new basis of the proposed negotiation from strength, which ignores the injustice of the previous aggression. The aggression committed by Israel must be condemned, not only because no state has the right to annex foreign territory, but because every expansion is an experiment to discover how much more aggression the world will tolerate.

It is true that Russell was old and frail when this was written. But the “Russellian style” is evident, and his signature is affixed to the statement (the editor checked with the Russell Archives on its authenticity), and his controversial amanuensis, Ralph Schoenman, had been dispatched by Russell by the time this was released.

Russell's Homes: Carn Voel

By Sheila Turcon

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Carn Voel near Porthcurno in Cornwall was acquired by Dora and Bertrand Russell as a country home in 1922. They wanted to raise their children for part of the year in a place with plenty of fresh air and space. Although they already owned a home in London on Sydney Street, it was a terraced house on a busy street. Russell decided that it would be Cornwall, but it was Dora who looked at various properties with a house agent, Mr. Treglown of J.A. Treglown & Sons, Marazion. She first saw Sunny Bank in March 1922, a house “rather stark in brown stucco and awful dark red paint, surrounded by about a quarter of an acre of rough grass and a few evergreen bushes ... It faced south and in the distance I could see the blue-green line of the sea” (*Tamarisk Tree*, p. 157). After living in the house for a month, they decided to purchase it (*Tamarisk Tree*, p. 158). The Russells added a front porch to anchor the house, choosing a design “that owed something to Chinese inspiration” (*Tamarisk Tree*, p. 158). They decided that the name, Sunny Bank, simply wouldn't do, and so they chose Carn Voel, the name of a headland at nearby Nanjizal. Their daughter, Katharine Tait, describes the house in her charming monograph, *Carn Voel*: “It stands four-square, a child's drawing of a house with a door in the middle, windows either side, three windows above and then two dormers like misplaced eyebrows.” “It was built about 1912, a solid craftsman's job with three reception, nine bedrooms and the ‘usual offices’, built to be a boarding house” The boarders were employees of Cable and Wireless of Porthcurno (*Carn Voel*, pp. 1-2). The house had modern conveniences including a coal range and a bathroom (*Carn Voel*, p. 3).



Carn Voel in 1988, taken by the author

The couple disagree as to when Dora became the sole owner of Carn Voel. It is not clear which one of them is correct. Russell writes that “I spent the summer of 1932 at Carn Voel, which I later gave to Dora” (*Autobiography*, p. 190). He never returned. He wrote to his lawyer, Crompton Llewelyn Davies, telling him that “my gift of Carn Voel to Dora, was, as she knew, on the assumption that it would be kept in the family and available for us both.” The gift also included furniture and £2,500 (letter, ca. 22 June 1932; .133440). Russell's friend J.E. Littlewood had offered Russell £200 to help purchase the house (23 May 1922). Dora writes that the house had been hers “from the beginning” and that she rented it to Russell that summer of 1932 (*Tamarisk Tree*, p. 251). The couple was by then estranged. Russell wanted to rent Carn Voel permanently at £100 per year (29 April 1932; .250500), but settled on renting for just the summer. However, less than a year later Russell wrote to Dora that he had given up on the idea of living at Carn Voel “since the Cornish climate gives Peter [his third wife] rheumatism” (14 Feb. 1933). Accepting that Russell would not be returning, she wrote to enquire if he had removed “all the books etc. that you need?” (8 April 1933). After Dora's death in 1986, the Russell archivist Kenneth Blackwell went to the house and returned with books and papers that had belonged to Russell. Kate Tait, in her book about Carn Voel, calls it her mother's house. She notes that the

purchase price was £800 (*Carn Voel*, p. 3). The house has remained in the family to this day. Kate now lives there with her son Andrew.

For many years in the 1920s it was a happy holiday home. Russell enjoyed living there, writing that “the beauty of the Cornish coast is inextricably mixed in my memories with the ecstasy of watching two healthy happy children learning the joys of sea and rocks and sun and storm.” “During the morning my wife and I worked while the children were in care of a nurse, and later a governess.” After lunch the family went to one of many nearby beaches. Then back home to a large tea and the children went to bed. The adults had the evening to follow “their grown-up pursuits” (*Autobiography*, p. 151). Books that Russell worked on during this time period were the second edition of *Principia Mathematica* and *The ABC of Relativity*.

Despite its distance from London (the house is about four miles from Land's End), visitors frequently arrived. Dora names some of them: Frank Russell, Miles and Joan Malleison, J.B.S. and Charlotte Haldane, Ottoline Morrell, Tagore, Mr. and Mrs. Y.R. Chao, Sybil Thorndike and her husband Lewis Casson (by chance), C.H. Hsu, and Wittgenstein (*Tamarisk Tree*, pp. 181, 183, 207). Russell invited Gilbert Murray to visit the first summer they were there (31 March 1922; Rec. Acq. 71E). Later on he invited Raymond Streatfeild (letter, Rec. Acq. 46).

Constance Malleison (Colette), an actress and Russell's lover, spent the last two weeks of July 1930 there. Dora was away, giving birth to her (but not Russell's) daughter Harriet. As Colette writes to her mother: “We went on a cross-country tramp the moment I arrived. I just kicked off my shoes and away we went. The whole coast is beautiful, rocks and sea and cliffs which we both love.” Colette had a poor opinion of the house finding it “drab, drab, drab. Not one speck of imagination or taste. Quite all right, of course, for very young children's holidays.” “There's little privacy in this house, and the bathroom is a sight: the kind I'm quite used to



Kate in Front of Chinese Porch, 1930

in shabby lodgings on tour. The house is in a rough field, with a rough attempt at a garden.” She found it “very different” from Ashford Carbonell and Lynton where she and Russell had vacationed previously or even her former country cottage at Bellingdon. She and Russell spent time with the children but also alone because a nursery-governess had been employed for the summer. Although she is not named, she is described as a “red-haired, freckled, impecunious Oxford undergraduate.” She was Marjorie (Peter) Spence, later Russell's third wife. Russell introduced Colette to Peter as an “old friend”. Colette detected no budding romance and noted that Russell once lost his temper when Peter could not locate the children, telling her to do what she was told. There was also a chauffeur, Hines. There must also have been a cook and cleaner but there is no mention of them in Colette's letter to her mother, Priscilla Annesley, written on 29 July (Urch-Malleison typescript). During the morning they worked, Russell at a “dwarf table” in the small front room and she in the back room at a “giant table”. Colette was presumably working on her autobiography *After Ten Years* (1931), but she may also have been writing the first draft of her novel *The Coming Back* (1933), a fictionalized account of her affair with Russell which she rewrote in June 1931 (letter to Leon Levenson, 20 June 1931). “In the afternoon we motor and picnic with the children.” One day they took the children to see the Cutty Sark at Falmouth. They also went to the Isles of Scilly. She told her mother that Russell's “marriage is in shreds” while she cared “for him as much as ever”. Yet, after this lovely sojourn together, Colette and Russell went their separate ways.

Kate Tait describes the interior of the house quite differently from Colette. There were yellow and orange paints used as well as beautiful wallpapers of birds and flowers. The furnishings included “lovely rugs, ebony tables, gorgeous ivory ornaments, shiny silk curtains ...” (*Carn Voel*, p. 4). Kate recalls a cook, a

nanny/governess (not by name), Matt, who pumped water, and Matt's wife, Daisy, who was the housemaid (*Carn Voel*, p. 5-6). A list of servants who worked at Carn Voel is available (.250506). Colette, with her disparaging remarks about the garden at Carn Voel, may not have realized how difficult it is to garden there—the winds are often strong and laden with salt from the nearby sea. Colette's description of the inside of the house as not having taste may simply be a reflection of her own very different taste.

It was my good fortune to get to know Kate during her many visits to McMaster during the 1980s. The first time I saw Kate she was giving a talk about her parents at McMaster University; I was appalled at the intrusive nature of the questions from the audience, but Kate handled the answers with aplomb. I was very impressed by her quiet command of the situation. At one point, she came to stay for a long period to edit her correspondence with her father. She took an apartment near mine. We both enjoyed walking and we spent time on the Bruce Trail, a long-distance hiking trail which runs along the escarpment from the Bruce Peninsula to Niagara. In May 1986, however, her mother died and she had to return to Carn Voel to deal with the estate and look after her brother John. He died not long after in December 1987 while returning from London where he sat in the House of Lords. At some point before that Dora had given up her London flat and lived full-time in Cornwall—John rented a room in Twickenham when attending sessions of the Lords. Kate found she loved living in her childhood home and decided to stay on. She had visited her mother there over the years, bringing her children for visits. John's children had also spent time there, as had her sister Harriet's children.



Kate on the Cornish Coast, 1988, taken by the Author

I first visited her there in 1988. It was not my first visit to Cornwall, but I had never been that far west before. Renovations were barely underway—the house was the same as it had been for decades. Dora had not kept it up, partly because of financial reasons, but also because she always had far more interesting things to do in her life. About all that Dora had accomplished was rewiring and a bathroom update (*Carn Voel*, p. 28). Kate's son Andrew had joined her and was helping out. The house was still located in a very rural setting, even though many decades had passed since the Russells first arrived. A potato field was adjacent; each day a local farmer took his cows down the road past the house and into a grazing field. The main floor had a kitchen and scullery; John's room was still covered in residue from years of cigarette smoke. I climbed to the top floor of the house which has wonderful views of the sea, walked the cliff paths with Kate, and went to see "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" at the Minack Theatre carved out of the cliffs overlooking the water. It had opened in 1932, the last year Russell was there. The colour of the water along this part of the Cornish coast is an amazingly beautiful turquoise—very distracting for play watching.

I returned in 1992. The house had undergone major renovations. The main floor had been turned into a self-contained flat that had been sold to generate the funds for the work required. The two upper floors were modernized and were now a comfortable place for Kate and Andrew to live. Their two black cats, TopCat and LapCat, were still there, entertaining as ever. Again we walked the cliff paths passing by the fishing village of Penberth. We also drove to the Barbara Hepworth Sculpture Gallery in St. Ives, to St. Michael's Mount where we had a Cornish cream tea, and to the village of Mousehole. It was a joy to spend time in this beautiful landscape. As we walked, memories came back to Kate about her happy Cornish childhood and she told me many family stories. I vaguely remember a story about the difficulty of getting to a beach (the cliffs are high and steep) and something about a car. I don't remember if the stories were told in 1988 or 1992 or both. I suppose a true Russell scholar would have returned to her room and jotted down all the stories – but I didn't and these stories have faded away in my memory. Some stories—perhaps those told to me, perhaps different ones—are in her book, *My Father Bertrand Russell*. In 1995 Kate sent me a small print of a watercolour drawing of Carn Voel done by Andrew Tait. I put it in a frame, and it brings back lovely memories of Carn Voel each time I look at it.

At some point before 1998, Kate was able, with the financial assistance of her former husband, to purchase the ground floor flat where her son Andrew now lives. She concludes her monograph: "I count myself lucky to live year round where I have always wanted to be, enjoying both the quiet solitude of winter and the lively social life of summer" (*Carn Voel*, p. 33). She continues to live there today.



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Ed. Note: Lady Kate is an Honorary Member of the Society and its former treasurer.

Homeless

“Somewhere at the back of my father’s mind, at the bottom of his heart, in the depths of his soul, there was an empty space that had once been filled by God, and he never found anything else to put in it. He wrote of it in letters during the First World War, and once he said that human affection was to him “at bottom an attempt to escape from the vain search for God.” After the war, finding his life more satisfying, he stopped talking that way; nostalgia for religion was quite absent from our house. Nevertheless, I picked up the yearning from him, together with his ghostlike feeling of not belonging, of having no home in this world.”

(Katharine Russell Tait, 1975, *My Father Bertrand Russell*, New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, p. 185.)

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Last but not Least

Are you thinking of estate planning? Consider a bequest, no matter how modest, to The Bertrand Russell Society, Inc. in your will and/or trust, and let your interest in and support of Bertrand Russell scholarship, his ideas, his ideals, and your Society continue well into the future. A Russellian afterlife, as it were!!

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