

THE BERTRAND RUSSELL SOCIETY QUARTERLY

May, 1996

No. 90



The Bertrand Russell Society

3802 North Kenneth Avenue, Chicago, IL 60641-2814, U.S.A.

The Bertrand Russell Society was founded in 1974 to foster a better understanding of Russell's work and to promote ideas and causes he thought important. The Society's motto is Russell's statement, "The good life is one inspired by love and guided by knowledge."

The Bertrand Russell Society Quarterly is published in February, May, August and November. Letters and manuscripts should be addressed to:

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- 1) Membership Renewal (If you have not yet renewed for 1996)
- 2) Treasurer's Report
- 3) Books available for sale from the BRS Library

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- B) If you receive a damaged copy of the Bertrand Russell Society Quarterly, let us know and we will replace it.
- C) Contributions of articles and letters are welcome. Please send them to the editor.

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THE BERTRAND RUSSELL SOCIETY, INC.

Cash Flow Report

1/1/96 Through 3/31/96

Compiled by Dennis Darland

BRS Treasurer

4/5/96

BRS-Bank, Cash, CC Accounts

Category Description	1/1/96- 3/31/96
Balance 12/31/96	1,430.95
INFLOWS	
Contributions:	
Contrib-BRS	425.00
Total Contributions	425.00
Dues:	
New Members	533.00
Renewals	2,294.00
Total Dues	2,827.00
Int Inc.	1.65
Library Inc	113.25
TOTAL INFLOWS	3,366.90
OUTFLOWS	
Library Exp	67.89
Newsletter	1,400.00
Other Exp	369.54
TOTAL OUTFLOWS	1,837.43
OVERALL TOTAL	1,529.47
BALANCE 3/31/96	2,960.42

Library Report

The Society library sells and lends books, audiotapes, videotapes, and other materials by and about Russell. Please direct BRS library inquiries and requests to Tom Stanley, Box 434, Wilder, VT 05088. (ck71@freenet.carleton.ca)

Books for sale H-Cloth, otherwise paperback. Prices are postpaid. Please send check or money order (U.S. funds only), payable to the "Bertrand Russell Society" to Tom Stanley.

BY BERTRAND RUSSELL:

Appeal to the American Conscience Spokesman	\$3.50	
Authority and the Individual	Unwin-Hyman	7.95
Has Man a Future?	Allen & Unwin	H \$8.00
History of the World in Epitome	Spokesman	1.00
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Bertrand Russell: A Life by Caroline Moorehead	H	\$14.00
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The Life of Bertrand Russell in Pictures and His Own Words, edited by Christopher Farley and David Hodgson	Spokesman	10.95
The Selected Letters of Bertrand Russell, Vol. I, The Private Years (1884-1914) by Nicholas Griffin	Houghton-Mifflin	H 17.50

From the Editor Michael J. Rockler

Over the past several years John Novak (who edits *Insights* for the John Dewey Society) and I have engaged in a number of debates on issues relating to differences between John Dewey and Bertrand Russell. At the 1994 BRS meeting that was held in Toronto as part of the Humanist coalition, we debated "Russell versus Dewey on Religion." In June at a meeting of the Canadian Learned Societies--which will be held in St. Catherines Ontario--Novak and I will debate the topic "Dewey versus Russell on Democracy."

In preparation for this debate I have recently reread Russell's *Power* which was first published in 1938 and was reissued by Routledge in 1992.

As always it is a pleasure to reread one of Russell's many popular books. And as usual, this book has relevance for the contemporary world.

Russell argues in this volume that the fundamental concept in the social sciences is the notion of power. He suggests that the concept of power in the social sciences is equivalent to the concept of energy in physics.

Russell goes on to identify several kinds of power including priestly power, kingly power, economic power, revolutionary power and what he calls "naked" power. This latter is the ability to force one's will on another.

Generally, I believe that Russell, in *Power*, offers a much more sophisticated view of democracy than does Dewey in *Democracy And Education*. Russell writes, for example,:

... One of the advantages of democracy, from the governmental point of view, is that it makes the average citizen easier to deceive, since he regards the government as his government. Opposition to a war which is not swiftly successful arises much less readily in a democracy than under any other form of constitution. In a democracy, a majority can only turn against the government by first admitting to themselves that they were mistaken in formerly thinking well of their chosen leaders, which is difficult and unpleasant. (p. 96)

BR's understanding of democracy offers a different perspective than Dewey's because Russell appreciated and accepted the limits of democracy in ways which probably have seemed heretical to Dewey.

Russell demonstrates still another limit when he writes:

... The members of the government have more power than the others, even if they are democratically elected; and so do officials appointed by a democratically elected government. The larger the organization, the greater the power of the executive.

Thus every increase in the size of organizations increases inequalities of power by simultaneously diminishing the independence of ordinary members and enlarging the scope of the initiative of the government. (p. 108)

Russell addressed problems of democracy in other writings as well. In several books he spoke of the danger of the "herd instinct" which can subvert democracy and which in his case led to his being imprisoned twice by democratic governments.

I am looking forward to my upcoming debate with John Novak on a program that will include Tim Madigan -- editor of *Free Inquiry* and a member of the BRS board.

Certainly John Dewey contributed much to an intellectual understanding of the modern world. But often his ideas are less clear than are those of Russell. I believe that Russell was usually more incisive than Dewey; certainly BR was a better writer. *Power* is an example of Russell's clear thinking and clear writing.

Six New Society Honorary Members Don Jackanicz

In March 1996, the Board of Directors of the Bertrand Russell Society voted to offer honorary Society membership to six persons: Ken Coates, Elizabeth R. Eames, Antony Flew, Michael Foot, Paul Kurtz, and Willard van Orman Quine. Each has accepted honorary membership for which the Society is grateful. Our new honorary members join the ranks of these other honorary members: Bertrand Russell's daughter, Katherine Russell Tait; Bertrand Russell's son, Conrad Russell; philosopher Paul Edwards; and philosopher D. F. Pears. Deceased honorary members are Bertrand Russell's second wife, Dora Black Russell; Bertrand Russell's son, John Russell; philosopher Alfred Ayer; Russell bibliographer Lester E. Denonn; scientist Linus Pauling; philosopher Karl Popper; and Philosopher Paul Arthur Schilpp.

The Society's Bylaws provide the following about honorary membership:

Honorary Membership may be conferred on a person who has been nominated by a member and approved by two-thirds of the Directors voting, after having met one or more of the following conditions: (1) is a member of Bertrand Russell's family; (2) had worked closely with Russell in an important way; (3) has made a distinctive contribution to Russell scholarship; (4) has acted in support of a cause or idea that Russell championed; (5) has promoted awareness of Russell or of Russell's work; (6) has exhibited qualities of character (such as moral courage) reminiscent of Russell. Honorary Members have the same rights and responsibilities as Individual Members, but they pay no dues.

The Board's decision, in accord with the Bylaw's provisions, recognizes the distinctive and diverse contributions each new honorary member has made in both Russell-related affairs and the wider world. Here are brief biographical sketches about these new honorary members. Society members are encouraged to learn more about them by reading their own numerous publications and articles about them in reference works.

Ken Coates. Born in Britain in 1930 and residing now in Matlock, Derbyshire, Mr. Coates has been a Member of the European Parliament since 1989. A former coal miner, he has been very much involved in the study of poverty, industrial relations, and disarmament. Since 1980 he has taught at the University of Nottingham, most recently as a Special Professor in Adult Education. Mr. Coates has been active in the programs of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, including as editor of the Foundation's publication, The Spokesman, and in connection with Russell's protests against

nuclear weapons in the 1960s. His publications include Industrial Democracy in Great Britain, Trade Unions in Britain, Heresies, and Think Globally, Act Locally. In his article, "Bertrand Russell and Industrial Democracy," in Bertrand Russell, 1872-1970, Mr. Coates wrote, "Bertrand Russell will rightly be remembered for many different contributions to human knowledge, to civilized thought."

Elizabeth R. Eames, A Professor of Philosophy at Southern Illinois University, Ms. Eames has authored two monographs about Russell - Bertrand Russell's Theory of Knowledge (1969) and Bertrand Russell's Dialogue with His Contemporaries (1989). In collaboration with Kenneth Blackwell, Ms. Eames was the editor of Theory of Knowledge: The 1913 Manuscript, which was the seventh volume of The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell (1984). She resides in Carbondale, Illinois and, before her honorary membership, had been a Society member for many years.

Antony Flew, Philosopher Antony Flew, born in 1923 has held numerous academic positions, including those at Oxford University, the University of Aberdeen, and the University of Keele. He has been an Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at the University of Reading since 1983. Mr. Flew has been a leader in organizations such as the Rationalist Press Association and the voluntary Euthanasia Society. His numerous books include Hume's Philosophy of Belief, God and Philosophy, The Presumption of Atheism, and Dictionary of Philosophy. Among his most noteworthy articles is "Immortality" in The Encyclopedia of Philosophy. His forthcoming volume, Philosophical Papers, edited by Society Vice President John Shosky, will include an essay titled "Russell's Judgement on Bolshevism." Mr. Flew resides in Reading.

Michael Foot, British journalist and politician Michael Foot was born in 1913 and attended Oxford university. During the 1930s through 1960s, he held various writing and editorial positions in newspapers including the Evening Standard. Mr. Foot has been a Member of Parliament from 1945 to 1955 and from 1960 to 1992. His Labour Party posts have included being Leader of the House of Commons, 1976-1979 and 1980-1983. Among his books are Aneurin Bevan, Loyalists and Loners, and most recently a major study of H.G. Wells. Mr. Foot, who resides in London, has over the years espoused many of Russell's political and social views in the national political arena.

Paul Kurtz, Born in 1925 and educated at New York University and Columbia University, Paul Kurtz resides in Buffalo where he is an Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at the State University of New York. His other academic posts have included those at Vassar College, New School for Social Research, and Union College. Since 1970 Mr. Kurtz has been president of publishing firm Prometheus Books, and since 1980 he has

been editor of Free Inquiry and chairman of the Council for Democratic and Secular Humanism. His many publications include In Defense of Secular Humanism, Eupraxophy: Living Without Religion, Exuberance: A Philosophy of Happiness, and The New Skepticism. Mr. Kurtz received the Bertrand Russell Society Award in 1988 for his varied humanist efforts. Before his honorary membership, he was a Society member.

Willard van Orman Quine. One of the foremost philosophers of our century, Willard van Orman Quine was born in 1908 and is primarily identified with his many years of teaching at Harvard University. He is now an Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at Harvard and resides in Boston. Mr. Quine's celebrated books include A System of Logistic, From a Logical point of View, Word and Object, The Ways of Paradox and Other Essays, Ontological Relativity and Other Essays, and The Logic of Sequences. He was the subject of Volume 18 of The Library of Living Philosophers, in part edited by the Society Honorary member Paul Arthur Schilpp, i.e. The Philosophy of W.V. Quine. He is the recipient of the 1996 Bertrand Russell Society Award for his great body of philosophical work inspired by Russell. In his letter accepting honorary membership, Mr. Quine wrote, "Russell meant much to me, and I have much valued the contribution of your Society in keeping his work and his image before us."

On John Novak's Reasons for Not Being A Russellian by Paul Hager

According to John Novak (*Bertrand Russell Society Quarterly*, No. 88, November 1995), Russell held that humans have "immaculate receptions", i.e. "immediate knowledge of atomistic aspects of reality", which serve as the "foundation for certain knowledge". On this basis, for reasons not made entirely clear in Novak's article, Russell's humanist credentials are thereby found wanting. Russell's alleged foundational certainty is claimed to have robbed him of "a deeper understanding of the human perspective".

However the major difficulty for Novak's argument is that Russell was never a proponent of the foundationalist position ascribed to him. Interestingly, as support for his saddling of Russell with the "immaculate receptions" position, Novak references not Russell, nor even scholarly work focused on Russell, but, rather, he cites books by Tiles and Burke on Dewey! Now I acknowledge that both of these are fine books on Dewey, but equally they are poor books in the sections that discuss Russell¹. They are poor guides to Russell because, quite simply, they misrepresent rather than illuminate his works.

The shortcomings of Novak's interpretation become clear from a consideration of Russell's method of philosophising, which he consistently applied throughout his post-idealist career. The method, which has not been well understood, has two parts. Firstly, philosophical analysis proceeds backwards from a given body of knowledge (the "results") to its premisses, and, secondly, it proceeds forwards from the premisses to a reconstruction of the original body of knowledge. Russell often referred (confusingly) to the first stage of philosophical analysis simply as "analysis", in contrast to the second stage which he called "synthesis". While the first stage was seen as being the most philosophical, both were nonetheless essential to philosophical analysis. Russell consistently adhered to this two directional view of analysis throughout his career.²

Whether applied to mathematical philosophy or philosophy more broadly, Russell repeatedly emphasised three important characteristics of his method of analysis. All of them pose problems for Novak's account. The three characteristics are:

(i) *ANALYSIS IS UNLIKELY TO BE FINAL*. This applies in several ways. Not only is analysis never final in the sense that new premisses may be discovered in relation to which existing premisses are results, but also there is the ever present possibility of alternative sets of premisses for the same results. In the former case, further stages of analysis in no way invalidate earlier ones. As Russell repeatedly emphasises, no error will flow from

taking complex objects to be simple at one level of analysis, as long as it is not assumed that such objects are incapable of further analysis. In the latter case, to ask what are the minimum premisses for a given set of results "is a technical question and it has no unique answer".³ Hence, one important task for philosophy is to devise alternative sets of premisses.

The first characteristic of analysis casts severe doubt on the Novak interpretation of Russell. On his account, analysis should stop at the certain knowledge of atomistic aspects of reality, i.e. at the secure foundations. Difficulties for Novak multiply as the other characteristics of analysis are considered.

(ii) *ANALYSIS ENLARGES THE DOMAINS OF PARTICULAR SUBJECTS.* The current science (say) on which analysis is practised changes as the subject itself evolves. Formerly tentative premisses for a science later become a part of that science. As the frontier is extended, territory that once belonged to philosophy becomes exact enough for incorporation into science. Thus "every advance in knowledge robs philosophy of some problems which formerly it had. . .".⁴ In terms of Russellian analysis, yesterday's premisses become tomorrow's results from which a new generation of philosophers will start the backwards journey of analysis. Thus the philosophy/science distinction "is one, not in the subject matter, but in the state of mind of the investigator."⁵ It remains for philosophy to move to the new frontier. Hence Russell's description of philosophy as occupying the "No Man's Land" between "theology and science"⁶ and the maxim that "science is what you more or less know and philosophy is what you do not know".⁷ Novak's certain premisses would provide a bedrock foundation as a barrier to further inquiry back beyond these premisses. This is clearly not what Russell had in mind.

(iii) *ANALYSIS LEADS TO PREMISES THAT ARE DECREASINGLY SELF-EVIDENT.* Russell made this point emphatically:

"When pure mathematics is organized as a deductive system. . . it becomes obvious that, if we are to believe in the truth of pure mathematics, it cannot be solely because we believe in the truth of the set of premisses. Some of the premisses are much less obvious than some of their consequences, and are believed chiefly because of their consequences. This will be found to be always the case when a science is arranged as a deductive system. It is not the logically simplest propositions of the system that are the most obvious, or that provide the chief art of our reasons for believing in the system. With the empirical sciences this is evident. Electro-dynamics, for example, can be concentrated into Maxwell's equations, but these equations are believed because of the observed truth of certain of their logical consequences.

Exactly the same thing happens in the pure realm of logic; the logically first principles of logic, -- at least some of them -- are to be believed, not on their own account, but on account of their consequences."⁸

Likewise "[i]n mathematics, the greatest degree of self-evidence is usually not to be found quite at the beginning, but at some later point; hence the early deductions, until they reach this point, give reasons rather for believing the premisses because true consequences follow them, than for believing the consequences because they follow from the premisses."⁹

The decreasing self-evidence of the premisses has ontological implications. According to Russell the current premisses provide our best guide to the nature of the most fundamental entities, hence, e.g., his replacement of common sense physical objects by sense-data and events. The decreasing self-evidence of the premisses was also the basis of Russell's vintage statement that "the point of philosophy is to start with something so simple as not to seem worth stating, and to end up with something so paradoxical that no one will believe it".¹⁰ This decreasing self-evidence of the premisses, coupled with the earlier claim that there may be alternative premisses from which the same given set of results is deducible, is the basis of Russell's characteristic open-mindedness about the finality or otherwise of his philosophical views at any given stage. Once again, Novak's foundational certainty is notable by its absence from these non-foundationalist sentiments. Indeed, Russell insists that though the

"... demand for certainty is ... natural ... [it] is nevertheless an intellectual vice ... What philosophy should dissipate is *certainty*, whether of knowledge or of ignorance ... all our knowledge is, in a greater or less degree, uncertain and vague. . ."¹¹

Because, firstly, the premisses become decreasingly self-evident as knowledge advances, and secondly, alternative sets of premisses are always a possibility, Russell holds that both science and the philosophy offer "successive approximations to the truth", rather than certainty.¹² We are inevitably reminded here of Popper's swamp analogy for knowledge. Thus, far from being a hardline foundationist, Russell was in fact developing fallibilism in advance of Popper.

So Novak's argument against Russell's humanism, based on his alleged foundationalist epistemology, fails. What sort of epistemological position does Novak claim to be conducive to the kind of deep humanism that he favours? He provides some of its general features in the second half of his article. It may surprise Novak, but I think that Russell's work is broadly in agreement with these features. Certainly Russell agrees that knowledge is a human construction. (Amongst other things his method of analysis is an account of that construction process). He also agrees that there is a reality "out there" of which our knowledge is inescapably inferential.

However, Russell, like Dewey, emphasises that humans too are part of this world "out there". Thus human perceptions and the like, as natural occurrences, are part of what needs to be accounted for in any satisfactory theory of the world. Russell simply required that human empirical experience should be consistent with our theories of the nature of the world. Novak's "immaculate receptions" are not so much knowledge in Russell but "hard data" which our wider theories need to explain. That Russell's fallibilism extended even to human empirical experience is evident from his later serious consideration of the theory that properties might really be particulars. Thus Russell's understanding of the nature of perceptual experience evolved and was not marked by the dogmatism implied in Novak's term "immaculate receptions".

Perhaps where Novak really parts company with Russell lies in their views of the scope and significance of human knowledge. Russell thinks that human knowledge is constructed and hence very limited. As he repeatedly states, 'what physics tells us is very little'. However, he also thinks that physics is the soundest knowledge that we have. Though inescapably inferential, physics offers our best account of the world. According to physics, the world is immeasurably immense with humans consigned to a small role when viewed from the cosmic scale. For Russell, the same applies to the knowledge that humans construct:

"Cosmically and casually, knowledge is an unimportant feature of the universe; a science which omitted to mention its occurrence might, from an impersonal point of view, suffer only from a very trivial imperfection".¹³

By contrast, Novak's article suggests that he places human knowledge construction firmly at the centre of his universe. Is this the real source of his dissatisfaction with Russell's humanism?

It seems then that Novak's differences with Russell have nothing to do with foundationalism at all. Rather the problem lies in the fact that Russell sees humans beings and their minimal knowledge as a small feature of something very much bigger. By contrast, Novak's constructivism limits him very much to the realm of the human. (One is reminded of Russell's "cosmic impiety" charge against Dewey). But if this is so, I cannot see how it would follow that Russell was any less of a humanist.

¹ See my review of Burke forthcoming in *Studies in Philosophy and Education*. There is something distinctly odd about a pair of secondary sources on Dewey being quoted as sufficient authorities to refute Russell. How impressed would John Novak be if two secondary sources on Russell were cited as sufficient to show the alleged fatal defect in Dewey's thought?

² Detailed argument for this claim, and for the pervasiveness of the three characteristics of analysis discussed below, is given in P. Hager *Continuity and Change in the Development of Russell's Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1994).

³ Russell *My Philosophical Development* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1975), p. 162.

- ⁴ Russell *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1970), p. 243.
- ⁵ Russell *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*, p. 1.
- ⁶ Russell *History of Western Philosophy* (London & Unwin, 1971), p. 13.
- ⁷ Russell *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*, p. 243.
- ⁸ Russell "Logical Atomism" in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell* Vol. 9 (London: Unwin Hman, 1988), pp. 163-4.
- ⁹ Russell and Whitehead *Principia Mathematica* 3 Vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925-27, p. v.
- ¹⁰ Russell *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*, p. 172.
- ¹¹ Russell "Philosophy for Laymen" in *Unpopular Essays* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1970), pp. 32-3.
- ¹² Russell *History of Western Philosophy*, p. 789.
- ¹³ Russell *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966), p. 9.

Bertrand Russell: Meditations on "The Modern Nightmare" Gladys Garner Leithauser

Bertrand Russell, a thinker at the forefront of twentieth-century mathematics and philosophy, is also a significant literary figure. His career as a writer spans half a dozen decades and a broad spectrum of subjects, from highly technical expositions through popularizing works on science to spirited commentaries on social and ethical issues.

When the new century was just beginning, Russell opened a claim to fields beyond logic and his most trusted mode of exposition, the analytical. He published several "lyrical" essays, such as the poetic "On History," the romantic "The Study of Mathematics," and the rhetorically enterprising "A Free Man's Worship," now a classic of modernist expression. The third, in particular, although he later felt it to be overwritten, attracted so much enthusiasm, even on an international scale, that Russell began to see a role for himself as a modern man of letters.

By the close of World War I, Russell was consciously pursuing this role, winning new readers among the general public by the good sense and moral force in such books as Principles of Social Reconstruction (1916) and by the clarity and wit of his style. As the role developed in the next decades, it often took on the overtones of the secular prophet. To replace the figure of the venerable Victorian sage, a modern observer and guide needed familiarity with the outlook and content of science. Russell's achievements in high mathematics and his expositions such as Our Knowledge of the External World as a field for Scientific Method in Philosophy (1914) underscored his credibility as a spokesman for the era. But it was his expanded efforts to discuss social and political issues and the institutions and organizations impinging on them that culminated at mid-century in honors: In 1950 he received both the Order of Merit and the Nobel Prize for Literature; the second cited his "writing in which he champions humanitarian causes and freedom of thought."

Following the awards, Russell began a different phase: the writing of fiction. Now past the age of eighty, he produced three volumes of short stories. While the fiction is no match for the prodigious accomplishments in other fields, it offers an intriguing demonstration of his effort to present "the truth of vision" as well as the "truth of science." In the stories, Russell found a way to work with materials outside the strictly rational and logically secure: doubts, fears, intuitions, and the range of human emotions. Describing his creative process, he states:

The writing of these stories was a great release of my hitherto unexpressed feelings and of thoughts which could not be stated

without mention of fears that had no rational basis. . . I found it possible to express in this fictional form dangers that would have been deemed silly while only a few men recognized them . . . In this way it was possible to warn of dangers which might or might not occur in the near future. (Autobiography, III, 1967; 31-32).

Thus we see why the plots in Russell's fiction become intellectual constructions that increasingly express the fear he called "the modern nightmare" (Fact and Fiction, 1961; 227). This dreadful visitation is the inchoate realization that modern humankind is determining a course that may lead to self-destruction. Russell's fiction conveys the ambivalent message that our age sways between destruction and new definitions of progress for humanity.

In his fictional presentation of this danger, Russell revealed himself in the vanguard of a philosophical shift in our culture's attitude toward science. Even among scientists and enthusiasts, doubts of our course and our methodology became evident. In the same years that Russell turned to fiction to presage his fears, for example, writers such as Robert Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, and Arthur Clarke began careers that would change and shape much of modern science fiction. They chose not to imply the utopianism that had characterized society's general disposition toward science and led to the early "Golden Age" of science fiction. Instead, their approach warned of the misuse of science while often portraying human beings using scientific principles in positive applications that defeated misuses. These tales often led readers to claim that science fiction writers "see more" than the scientists; as we have seen, Russell's claim was not that he could "see more" but that he could "say more" in the genre. As ambivalent as these contemporaries, Russell makes plain the allure of scientific investigation while recognizing its limits and rearing its excesses.

The shadowing by caution and dread in his fiction contrasts with a brightening of his outlook evidenced in the non-fiction which he was simultaneously writing: one of his most optimistic books, New Hopes for a Changing World (1952). Despite the onset of the Korean War in 1950, Russell, like many in the West, found reassurance in the fact that a world organization, the United Nations, for the first time in history, had acted against an aggressor and also in the promise that recent technological advances might counter population increases with a new plenty. Further, he enjoyed the heightened personal happiness of his fourth and final marriage and, to use his own jocular word, the "respectability" of the two great writing awards.

Still, underneath his conscious intention to present a positive prospect and greater optimism, Russell felt the pressure of frightening speculations. The perfecting of the hydrogen bomb haunted him, and the stressful

differences between the United States and the Soviet Union burdened him long before they intensified into the Cold War and culminated in the Cuban missile crisis.

Moreover, to counter criticism that he had largely ignored ethics in his philosophical writings, Russell undertook Society in Ethics and Politics (1954), only to discover what he called "the impossibility of reconciling ethical feelings with ethical doctrines. In the depth of my mind," he writes, "this dark frustration brooded constantly. I tried to intersperse lighter matters into my thought, especially by writing stories which contained an element of fantasy" (Autobiography, III; 30).

Thus we see Russell's work in the Fifties and Sixties, in both the philosophical and the creative fields, as struggling with warring themes: the enlarging hopes of humanity versus its deepening perils, both intensified by the advances of science. It is hardly surprising that many of his stories verge toward science fiction, which he can base on ways to gain perspective on humanity's present and future. Even the semi-autographical novella "The Perplexities of John Forstice," long unpublished, sets a scientific tone by presenting the protagonist as a physicist, a man who, like Russell, is an abstract thinker -- a consistent choice when we recall that Russell at the time of writing the story was establishing himself as an interpreter for the scientific method.

Russell's two most substantial stories fit into the genre of science fiction in different ways. Probably the most successful of all his stories, "Satan in the Suburbs," coherently interweaves many themes in a subtle and complex way. Although the central figure, Dr. Mallako, is the familiar one of the evil scientists, Russell gives him freshness, creating a character who may be only an eccentric psychiatrist in practice in the suburbs, or an advocate of the cult of irrationality who has become a nightmare figure for the obsessed narrator, or, indeed, a true devil-figure, lending a metaphysical meaning to the story, whatever the conscious intention of the rationalistic author.

This story seems reminiscent of E.T.A. Hoffman's fantastic Tales, which successfully merge levels of explanation and channel the supernatural not science. Russell as a modern philosopher does not wish to deal metaphysically with the origin of evil as part of a system, but here he is able to deal with it vigorously as an artistic matter, leaving the reader to choose whether evil springs from the substrata of the consciousness of the characters or from the realm of the supernatural. In looking at the story with its three spheres--reality, the dream world, or absolute truth-- we perhaps find our study best repaid by a focus on the psychological, that is, on the dream world in its aspect of "nightmare." The story reflects Russell's

deep interest in the concealed forces of the unconscious, his fear of the irrational; the "bad dreams" is the release of irrationality into the community.

In creating Dr. Mallako, Russell successfully integrates the three spheres of possible meaning into one symbolic figure, one of the keys to the story's success. Whichever of the three we choose to explain his ambiguous nature, Dr. Mallako remains truly sinister; there is nothing in him of the Mephistophelean figure that Russell elsewhere suggests can, as the adversarial Spirit of Negation, allow humanity the possibility of working toward some good.

We see the second substantial use of science fiction in Russell's story "Zahatopolk," a novella that treats the theme of suppressive influence on individuals by rigid institutions of society. The theme first became significant for Russell's work in Principles of Social Reconstruction (1916), which grew out of a series of lectures planned with D.H. Lawrence. Russell's enthusiasm for the joint project with Lawrence soon diminished, and the lectures and book when ready were Russell's authorship alone. But one effect of Lawrence's influence may have lingered: the Aztec mythology of his The Plumed Serpent (1926), a book which contributed to our symbolic knowledge of reality.

In developing a theme reminiscent of his brief association with Lawrence, Russell may have found himself thinking of the Indian cultures of the Americas as suitable for his new work (and of a possible parody); he sets it in the "restored hall of the Incas at Cuzco." The time is forty centuries into the future; the society is one of world domination based on "the innate superiority of the Red Man." The society, rigid and static, has dogmatized its mythic views.

One lone, protesting person, Diotima, stands against authority. By her refusal to become the "bride" of the god Zahatopolk, she brings on herself a terrible capital punishment, burning at the stake. By forcing events towards her own execution, Diotima achieves the traditional martyr's death. She thus underscores the relation to Socrates already suggested by her name, an allusion to the woman from Mantinea who, in the Symposium, was Socrates's instructor, engaging him in discussion of the nature of the ideal. The Diotima of "Zahatopolk" similarly leads the young male protagonist, Thomas, toward thought of the ideal.

As Diotima's thinking develops, she comes to consider the powerful myths that shape Zahatopolkian society as sources of "ugliness and horror," and she becomes an instructor in the way to live without myths--in short, a guide for the modern age.

The challenge Russell's story offers to system and organization is to both religion and science. He satirizes mythologizers here. We see first

the College of Indoctrination, where the speaker is professor Driuzdustages, lecturing his students on history. Looking back on our age--for his culture it is "the ages of darkness"--he shows himself to be a leader who inhabits a dry, boring mental world. Unable to inspire, to be source of new ideas, he is pompous, elitist, silly, the caricature of a don. A Red Man who leads his fellow citizens, he is a racist whose beliefs have made him proud but intellectually sterile. Thus a target of the satire seems to be also the mythopoeic tendency whenever it contributes to racism and nationalism.

Professor Driuzdustages and his society have fallen victim to the practice that turns myths into gods. But the story is also a warning against the myth-making potentialities of science, the attitude that turns its benefits into "miracles", its achievements into myth. We find two Sacred Mountains in the story, one bearing a deadly fungus, the other, a radioactive dust. The fungus suggests germ warfare, for immunization becomes possible, while the second suggests the fallout from atomic and hydrogen bombs. Russell does not intend his science fiction to promote the myth of a world necessarily made better through science.

"Zahatopolk" is a rich, complex story in which I have barely touched on a few themes. As we watch Diotima pass on her questioning, dialectical methodology to Thomas we see him become, of course, a "doubting Thomas." The idea that doubt is essential to our process of inquiry is surely Russell's message, evidenced by Diotima's passing on the mantle of rational thinking to Thomas at her death. As she does so, she causes his collapse into unconsciousness, followed by his awakening into a raised consciousness. For one moment, Thomas's doubt has been transformed into a mystic experience, an epiphany in the story much like the one Russell experienced at witnessing the suffering of Mrs. Whitehead. Through this transfer of spiritual fire, Thomas has become able to act, but the passion to do so has originated in doubt.

This event is not the end of the story. The remaining sections illustrate Russell's theme that society must have an ongoing dialectic in our relationship to myth: We must guard against our tendency to allow a view to become a mythos. In promoting this theme, Russell is engaging in dialogue with such writers as T.S. Eliot and Thomas Mann, with their endeavors to preserve old cultures. He wants the alive, the progressive, the evolutionary. But he also warns that science and technology have the potentiality to become the new gods and myths.

In making himself a spokesman for and interpreter of science, Russell tried various forms of expression. When doubt of its purposes and methods arose, he tried creative writing to present his misgivings and anxieties. Of the various forms of fiction he experimented with, the little "Nightmares of Eminent Persons" seem to me his satiric forte. The skillful design

of this little form--which I think Russell can claim as original--is apparent as soon as one tries explication. Like a rich poem, each "Nightmare" requires more space for explanation than the clever little work occupies in its entirety.

Russell completed and published a dozen "Nightmares." Each involves a dream sequence, set into a frame of waking reality. Thus each gives an opportunity to combine reality with fantasy. In addition, some employ science fiction, as in "Dean Acheson's Nightmare." The format lends itself easily to political satire, as in "Stalin's Nightmare" or "Eisenhower's Nightmare," giving Russell a brief, effective way to comment on topical issues. And it allows a statement on human "types," as in "The Mathematician's Nightmare," illustrating in a playful, yet empathetic way the oddities, frailties, vanities, and concerns of varying members of the human race.

Together, the "Nightmares" allow Russell to pursue his interest in the forces of the unconscious and his fear that the forces may lead to irrational acts that endanger humankind; to lampoon notions that he holds to be ridiculous; and to create a variety of fanciful situations that allow him to present the dual perspective of his characteristic, ironic vision. In the large sense, they display Russell's optimism: the ability to treat the anxieties and fears of our time with creativity and wit.

The Quotable Bertrand Russell

Edited by Lee Eisler

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Lee Eisler used a question and answer format to highlight Bertrand Russell's views on many topics. The topics were selected by Lee and he wrote the questions. The answers are direct quotes from Russell, taken from his writings.

AGGRESSION

What happened when our aggressive impulses are ignored?

People who live a life which is unnatural beyond a point are likely to be filled with envy, malice and all uncharitableness. They may develop strains of cruelty, or, on the other hand, they may so completely lose all joy in life that they have no longer any capacity for effort.

This latter result has been observed among savages brought suddenly in contact with modern civilization.

Anthropologists have described how Papuan head hunters, deprived by white authority of their habitual sport, lose all zest, and are no longer able to be interested in anything.

I do not wish to infer that they should be allowed to go on hunting heads, but I do mean that it would have been worthwhile if psychologists had taken some trouble to find some innocent substitute activity.

Civilized man everywhere is, to some degree, in the position of Papuan victims of virtue.

We have all kinds of aggressive impulses, and also creative impulses, which society forbids us to indulge, and the alternative that it supplies in the shape of football matches and all-in wrestling are hardly adequate.

Anyone who hopes that in time it may be possible to abolish war should give serious thought to the problem of satisfying harmlessly the instincts that we inherit from long generations of savages.

for my part I find sufficient outlet in detective stories, where I alternately identify myself with the murderer and the huntsman-detective, but I know that there are those for whom this vicarious outlet is too mild, and for them something stronger should be provided.

AMERICA

In what way was America important during the nineteenth century?

America remained a land of promise for lovers of freedom.

Even Byron, at a moment when he was disgusted with Napoleon

for not committing suicide, wrote an eloquent stanza in praise of Washington.

Admiration of America as the land of democracy survived through the greater part of the nineteenth century.

Richard Cobden, who was in most respects the opposite of a romantic, cherished illusions about the United States, when admirers presented him with a large sum of money: he invested it in the Illinois Central Railroad and lost every penny.

When my parents visited America in 1867, it still had for them a halo of romance.

This survived even for me through Walt Whitman, whose house was the first place I visited when I went to America. (FF 17)

How did Andrew Jackson change the American presidency?

American democracy underwent a great transformation when Andrew Jackson became president.

Until his time, presidents had been cultivated gentlemen, mostly with a settled position as landowners.

Andrew Jackson represented a rebellion against these men on the part of pioneers and immigrants.

He did not like culture and was suspicious of educated men since they understood things that puzzled him.

This element of hostility to culture had persisted in American democracy ever since, and has made it difficult for America to make the best use of its experts.

What was the result in America of electing state judges?

In America, when people in Jackson's time became conscious of this danger [of judges who thwarted the popular will], they decided that state judges, though not federal judges, should be elected.

This remedy, however, proved worse than the disease.

It increased the power of the political boss who had secured the election of his favorites to judgeships and could be tolerably certain that his favorites would decide cases as he wished, and not in accordance with the law.

In fact, the political boss acquired a position not wholly unlike that of the Greek tyrant.

There was, however, an important difference.

It was possible to remedy the evil by wholly constitutional methods without the need of revolution or assassination.

ARISTOTLE

What were Aristotle's innovations? His merits and demerits?

In reading any important philosopher, but most of all in reading Aristotle, it is necessary to study him in two ways: with reference to his predecessors, and with reference to his successors.

In the former aspect, Aristotle's merits are enormous; in the latter, his demerits are equally enormous. For his demerits, however, his successors are more responsible than he is.

He came at the end of the creative period in Greek thought, and after his death it was two thousand years before the world produced any philosopher who could be regarded as approximately his equal.

Toward the end of this long period his authority had become almost as unquestioned as that of the Church, and in science, as well as in philosophy, had become a serious obstacle to progress.

Ever since the beginning of the seventeenth century, almost every serious intellectual advance has had to begin with an attack on some Aristotelian doctrine; in logic, this is still true at the present day.

But it would have been at least as disastrous if any of his predecessors (except perhaps Democritus) had acquired equal authority.

To do him justice, we must, to begin with, forget his excessive posthumous fame, and the equally excessive posthumous condemnation to which it led.

At about the age of eighteen, Aristotle came to Athens and became a pupil of Plato; he remained in the academy for nearly twenty years, until the death of Plato in 348-47 B.C.

Aristotle, as a philosopher, is in many ways very different from all his predecessors.

He is the first to write like a professor: his treatises are systematic, his discussions are divided into heads, he is a professional teacher, not an inspired prophet.

His work is critical, careful, pedestrian, without any trace of Bacchic enthusiasm.

The Orphic elements in Plato are watered down in Aristotle, and mixed with a strong dose of common sense; where he is Platonic, one feels that his natural temperament has been overpowered by the teaching to which he has been subjected.

He is not passionate, or in any sense religious.

The errors of his predecessors were the glorious errors of youth attempting the impossible; his errors are those of age which cannot free itself from habitual prejudices. He is best in detail and in criticism; he fails in large construction, for lack of fundamental clarity Titanic fire.

What is Russell's advice to students studying logic?

Logic was practically invented by Aristotle.

For nearly two thousand years, his authority in logic was unquestioned.

To this day teachers in Catholic educational institutions are not allowed to admit that his logic has defects, and any non-Catholic who criticizes it incurs the bitter hostility of the Roman Church.

I once ventured to do so on the radio, and the organizers who had invited me were inundated with protests against the broadcasting of such heretical doctrines.

Undue respect for Aristotle, however, is not confined to Catholic institutions.

In most universities, the beginner in logic is still taught the doctrine of the syllogism, which is useless and complicated, and an obstacle to a sound understanding of logic.

If you wish to become a logician, there is one piece of advice that I cannot urge too strongly, and that is, DO NOT learn the traditional formal logic.

In Aristotle's day, it was a creditable effort, but so was Ptolemaic astronomy. To teach either in the present day is a ridiculous piece of antiquarianism.

How should Aristotelian logic be viewed today?

Aristotle's influence, which was very great in many different fields, was greatest of all in logic.

In late antiquity, when Plato was still supreme in metaphysics, Aristotle was the recognized authority in logic, and he retained this position throughout the Middle Ages.

Even at the present day, all Catholic teachers of philosophy and many others still obstinately reject the discoveries of modern logic, and adhere with strange tenacity to a system which is as definitely antiquated as Ptolemaic astronomy.

This makes it difficult to do historical justice to Aristotle. His present-day influence is so inimical to clear thinking that it is hard to remember how great an advance he made upon all his predecessor (including Plato), or how admirable his logical work would still seem if it had been a stage in continual progress, instead of being (as in fact is was) a dead end, followed by over two thousand years of stagnation.

Aristotle is still, especially in logic, a battleground, and cannot be treated in a purely historical spirit.

[We will not go into Russell's analysis of Aristotle's logic (on pp. 196-202); it is quite technical. Here is his conclusion (on p. 202):]

I conclude that the Aristotelian doctrines with which we have been concerned are wholly false, with the exception of the formal theory of the syllogism, which is unimportant.

Any person in the present day who wishes to learn logic will be wasting his time if he reads Aristotle or any of his disciples.

Nonetheless, Aristotle's logical writings show great ability, and would have been useful to mankind if they had appeared at a time when intellectual originality was still active.

Unfortunately they appeared at the very end of the creative period of Greek thought, and therefore came to be accepted as authoritative.

By the time that logical originality revived, a reign of two thousand years made Aristotle very difficult to dethrone. Throughout modern times, practically every advance in science, in logic, or in philosophy has had to be made in the teeth of the opposition from Aristotle's disciples.

How much was Alexander influenced by his tutor, Aristotle?

A great deal of nonsense has been written about Aristotle and Alexander, because, as both were great men, and Aristotle was Alexander's tutor, it is supposed that the tutor must have greatly influenced the pupil.

Hegel goes so far as to say that Alexander's career shows the value of philosophy, since his practical wisdom may be attributed to his teacher.

In fact there is not the faintest evidence that Aristotle had any effect at all on Alexander, who hated his father, and was rebellious against everyone whom his father set in authority over him.

There are certain letters professing to be from Alexander to Aristotle, but they are generally considered spurious.

In fact the two men ignored each other.

While Alexander was conquering the East, Aristotle continued to write treatises on politics which never mentioned what was taking place, but discussed minutely the constitutions of various cities which were not longer important.

It is a mistake to suppose that great men who are contemporaries are likely to be quick to recognize each other's greatness; the opposite happens much more frequently.

Why did Aristotle call man a rational animal?

His reason for this view was one which does not now seem very impressive; it was that some people can do sums.

It is in virtue of the intellect that man is a rational animal.

The intellect is shown in various ways, but most emphatically by mastery of arithmetic.

The Greek system of numerals was very bad, so that the multiplication table was quite difficult, and complicated calculations could be made only by very clever people.

Nowadays, however, calculating machines do sums better than even the cleverest people.

As arithmetic has grown easier, it has come to be less respected.

Why did Russell call Aristotle one of philosophy's misfortunes?

He came at the end of the creative period in Greek thought, and after his death it was two thousand years before the world produced any philosopher who could be regarded as approximately his equal.

Toward the end of this long period his authority had become almost as unquestioned as that of the church, and in science, as well as in philosophy, had become a serious obstacle to progress.

Ever since the beginning of the seventeenth century, almost every serious intellectual advance has had to begin with an attack on some Aristotelian doctrine; in logic, this is still true at the present day.

Continuity and Change in the Development of Russell's Philosophy by Paul Hager Reviewed by John Laurent

EDITOR'S NOTE: Paul Hager has received the 1996 Book Award. A review of his book appeared in BRS Quarterly 89. This is a second review by John Laurent--Reprinted from CAMPUS REVIEW with permission.

Curiously, Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), who is described in a book published in Australia in the 1960s (J. Stephens, *Ten Articulate Men*) as "considered by some to be the greatest logician since Aristotle", seems to have become little more than an important historical figure in philosophical circles.

Certainly he is not often quoted today in books on philosophy of science, possibly because of what would now be regarded as his somewhat naive, rather Victorian, view of the subject.

There is no denying, as Hager acknowledges in this attractively produced and very readable volume, Russell's "belief in science as the best source of truth", and that for Russell "one had to begin [philosophical discussion] with actual scientific results".

But as Hager shows, Russell's position was more sophisticated than has hitherto been recognised. What Russell meant by "best" could be described as *the best that we have*, given the limitation of the human mind. Our brain and perceptual apparatus have evolved in certain ways given their physiological capacities and environmental pressure, and "science" is that knowledge which this equipment allows.

As Russell once put it in *Mysticism and Logic and Other Essays*: "We have not the means of ascertaining how things appear from places not surrounded by brain and nerves and sense organs, because we cannot leave the body. . . What the mind adds to sensibilia, in fact, is merely awareness; everything else is physical or physiological."

Nevertheless, Russell believed that we can have some confidence in our view of the world around us, and to some extent beyond it, and as Hager shows, Russell's arguments here, seemingly paradoxically, owed a great deal to the German idealist philosopher Kant.

For Kant, our conceptions of space and time were *a priori*, and had a "transcendental" origin--that is they came from God. Russell agreed that these "categories" of thought seemed to be built in, but he rejected Kant's explanation.

Russell believed that the human mind was as much as product of the physical universe as any other phenomenon, and was bound to be shaped by the forces that produced it; and it followed that human *knowledge* ulti-

mately had the same origins. As Russell expressed it: "Cosmically and casually, knowledge is an unimportant feature of the universe."

Russell believed that he was thus able to dethrone 'man' from the centre of things in Kantian Idealism. As Hager quotes Russell's *My Philosophical Development*: "I reverse the process which has been common in philosophy since Kant . . . [and which] tends to give to knowing a cosmic importance which it by no means deserves, and thus prepares the philosophical student for the belief that mind has some kind of supremacy over the non-mental universe, or even that the non-mental universe is nothing but a nightmare dreamt by mind in its un-philosophical moments."

Russell, then, was no solipsist; and if mind was a product of the physical universe, rather than the reverse, we can place some reliance on our perceptions.

Kant's weakness, Russell argued in *History of Western Philosophy*, was that he allows "that the mind orders the raw material of sensation, but never thinks it necessary to say why it orders it as it does and not otherwise". The answer must be, according to Russell, that the way things are ordered in the mind more or less corresponds to the order of things in reality--that is, the external source of mental sensations--since survival in the material world requires such a match.

One is reminded of one of H.G. Well's characters' remarks in *The Soul of a Bishop* (1917): "There must be a measure of truth in our illusions, a working measure of truth, otherwise the creature would smash itself up and put an end to itself."

On questions of "ultimate" truth, however, Russell did not feel such confidence. The problem for him here was that he could not see how it could be given to humans to have access to such knowledge (since, presumably, it need not be built into our brains for everyday needs). Similarly, cosmological theories, for Russell, had their limitations and were subject to constant revision for the same reasons.

Russell was, in fact, acutely aware of this difficulty--as Hager convincingly demonstrates--since such theories tended to change frequently and dramatically during Russell's lifetime. Thus, Russell's view of Einstein's theory of relativity, which created problems for his reformulation of the Kantian position, was finally that the theory "does not affect the space and time of [everyday] perception" (*Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits*).

By contrast, Russell was convinced that the human presence in the universe was "insignificant", and that "the great processes of nebular and stellar evolution proceed according to laws in which mind play no part". Presumably, Russell would also have been profoundly out of sympathy with Paul Davies and others views concerning the universe as a reflection of "the mind of God' (unless in the most figurative sense).