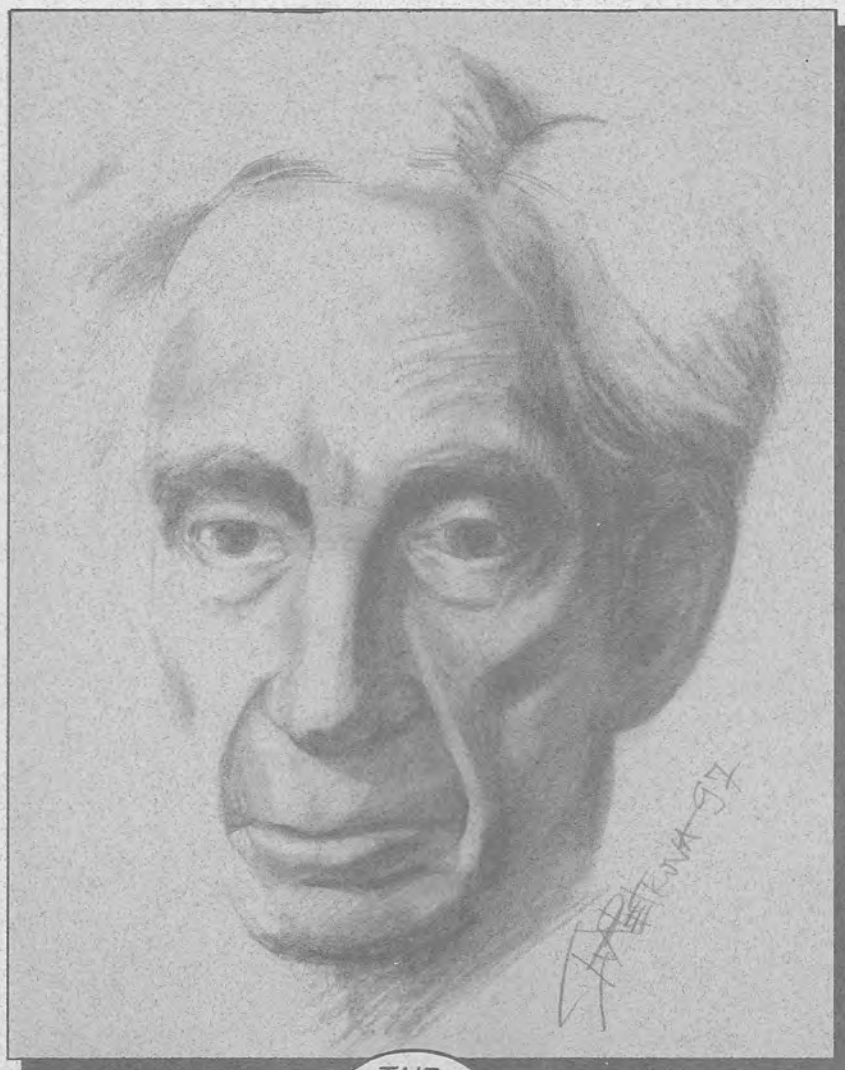


THE BERTRAND RUSSELL SOCIETY QUARTERLY

November, 1998

No. 100



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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November, 1998

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- ◆ If you have **not** yet renewed your membership for 1999 -- or if you would like to join the BRS for the first time -- **please mail the form on the next page along with your payment TODAY.** Thank you.

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THE BERTRAND RUSSELL SOCIETY
QUARTERLY

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FROM THE EDITOR
JOHN SHOSKY
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

This is the 100th edition of what began as a newsletter and became as a quarterly. Over the last 25 years, the BRS has benefitted from the good work of previous editors Lee Eisler, Don Jackanicz, Dennis Darland, and Michael Rockler. Now, after this issue, we will turn the editorship over to Tim Madigan, a long-time member of the BRS who is well-known to most of you. Tim has been editor of *Free Inquiry* and is now with the University of Rochester Press. He is extremely competent as an editor and scholar. Tim will vigorously promote Russell Studies. I am very pleased that he will be the new editor. My tenure has been marked, some would say "blighted", by the late appearance of issues. Tim is much more conscientious and dedicated than I am, so I believe we will soon we producing our issues on time, rather than a few months late.

Since this is my last *Quarterly*, I would like to thank my Assistant Editors, Bob Barnard and Katie Kendig. They have been of tremendous help. I also thank John Lenz and Ken Blackwell for their interest in the *Quarterly* and their patience. I have been proud of the *Quarterly* the past two years, but I am especially pleased to have produced two issues from Prague. The May, 1998 issue was memorable for me because of the articles by Barnard, Tim Childers, and myself on Russell's following in Eastern and Central Europe. Also, I have been very happy with Cliff Henke's video reviews, but the one in the May issue was particularly good. Cliff is a life-long friend and brother. I'm proud to have included him in this project. Trevor Banks has a valuable comment on the May video review at the end of this issue.

Perhaps I might be allowed one observation about how to improve the *Quarterly*. Over the two years of my editorship, there have been precious few contributions from the membership. This is a strange thing because most of our members are opinion leaders, thoughtful advocates of Russell's work, good writers, and eager communicators. Surely we could see more in the way of essays, reviews, and other commentary from the membership. I include the BRS leadership in this comment, because we need our officers and board members to set a high standard of participation. We especially need more comments from our European and Asian members. We need to know what is happening in France, Germany, Portugal, Spain, Yugoslavia, the Philippines, India, China, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea and many other countries where we have members. I would also be interested in comments from our members in Mexico and Puerto Rico. I strongly urge our members to support Tim Madigan and the *Quarterly* with submissions on Russell Studies and related areas of interest. I hope that the members continue to express themselves in greater numbers through essays, reports of important conferences and

events, video reviews, contemporary re-considerations of Russell's books, reviews of new secondary literature on Russell, and other comments that keep Russell's views at the fore-front of modern thought.

I thank all of those who have submitted work during my time as editor. You've made my life easier and I have enjoyed being associated with your fine efforts.

In this issue, our centenary issue, we have more commentary from the Annual Meeting last June at the University of South Florida. BRS President John Lenz has a report for our membership.

Then, we have another addition of "Russell News", talking points for cutting-edge study of Russell.

Two papers read at that conference by Alan Schwerin and Mitchell Haney follow. Schwerin's concerns Russell and critical thinking. Haney has some critical insight on Ray Monk's biography of Russell.

We also have another conversation with a famous philosopher about Russell. This time it is Sir Peter Strawson, interviewed in Oxford last year.

There are two books reviews. One is by Matt McKeon, reviewing a new volume of collected essays by Antony Flew, an honorary member of our society. The other is by Bob Barnard, examining a book by Jan Dejnozka, a member of the BRS.

Finally, there are two membership profiles. These profiles help us learn about each other. Please take the time to fill in a form if you haven't done so in the past.

And don't forget to renew your membership for 1999!!!

Cheers.

**REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT
JOHN LENZ
DREW UNIVERSITY**

The 1998 Annual Meeting

We had a most successful and productive BRS Annual Meeting at the Ethics Center of the University of South Florida, in St. Petersburg, on June 19-21, 1998.

Attendees came from as far afield as Portugal; Caracas, Venezuela; Ontario; and many parts of the United States. We saw some BRS members who live in Florida and our meeting at the Ethics Center also enabled us to meet a number of the members of the Humanist Association of St. Petersburg (or HASP). Steve Reinhardt, we discovered, is the only person who has attended all 25 annual meetings (this brought him a small reward).

I wish to thank, besides all who attended and participated, Jan Eisler, Mitchell Haney, and John Shosky for helping with essential work in the preparation of the meeting, and Don Jackanicz for generously supplying a jug of the quasi-sacramental Red Hackle. Financially, the meeting almost broke even, and it would have done so, but for one recalcitrant individual who refuses to pay the registration fee.

The program was varied and, I thought, very rich and well balanced. We had talks by new (to us) philosophers, such as Bob Barnard, Henrique Ribeiro, and Alan Schwerin, presentations by old favorites such as Stefan Anderson and Trevor Banks, and a good audience composed of persons of varied interests and backgrounds, all united by their passion for Russell and what he stands for.

The meeting served as a poignant memorial for Lee Eisler. Jan Eisler, Lee's wife, distributed beautiful postcard reproductions of Lee by her friend (and attendee and new BRS member) Carol Dameron, and hosted a lovely memorial luncheon on Sunday (which happened to be World Humanist Day).

Javier Bonet (from Caracas) took photos of the meeting (including the star, the bottle of Red Hackle) with his digital camera and posted them to the WWW at: members.tripod.com/jbonet/brs98.

BRS Business

At this meeting we began to address some business crucial to the continuing future vitality of the BRS. New officers were elected, as previously reported in the Quarterly. Next year, it will be important to elect a new president. It is not good for an organization to have the same persons serve too long as officers. I see this year as a transition period.

The new Chairman of the Board is Kenneth Blackwell, the founding editor of Russell and former long-term Russell Archivist. Besides his duties as Chair -- such as coordinating committees and Board discussions -- Ken will also oversee Memberships and Renewals.

Ken, Jan, and myself have been gathering information about a crucial decision facing us: the status of our incorporation. Currently, the BRS is incorporated in

Illinois, with Don Jackanicz as our Registered Agent and his address as our Registered Office. Don is a lifetime member but, after having held virtually every BRS office and over some 20 years, he very reasonably wishes to pass on these particular duties to someone else. Two possibilities are on the table: we can pay a company to serve as our Registered Agent and Registered Office in Illinois (for \$125 a year) or we can move to the Center for Inquiry in Amherst, New York (near Buffalo), as an affiliated group. We will be collecting more details and presenting them to the Board of Directors for discussion and a vote.

Myself, I am doubling as Acting Treasurer since Dennis Darland, the BRS Treasurer for the past 20 years, is temporarily disabled. Dennis will be undergoing medical treatment for the next six to nine months. You may send him your wishes at 9000 Rockville Pike, 4E, Bethesda, Maryland 20892.

For 1999, we accepted Alan Schwerin's kind offer to host the BRS Annual Meeting at Monmouth University, located on the New Jersey coast not far south of New York City and Newark airport.

Alan also plans to revive the BRS session at the Annual Meeting of the American Philosophical Society, Eastern Division, held every December.

I will also be improving and updating the BRS Home Page and planning the next Annual Meeting.

As usual, please send your ideas for the BRS and contributions to the *Quarterly*. Beginning with the next issue, Tim Madigan will be the new editor. Please send your contributions to him.

RUSSELL NEWS

Tim Madigan has been named the new editor of the BRS *Quarterly*. He will begin his editorship with the next issue, February, 1999, Number 101.

Alan Schwerin, David Rodier and John Shosky spoke at the Russell Session of the Eastern Division Meeting of the American Philosophical Association, December 29, 1998 in Washington, D.C. Schwerin lectured on Ottoline Morrell and Bertrand Russell ("A Lady, Her Philosopher, and a Contradiction"). Rodier spoke about Russell's comments on a paper by Victor Lenzen at Harvard in 1914. Shosky discussed Russell's introduction to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. The session was well-attended and thanks go to Alan for arranging it.

Whittier Publications has announced *Reason and Belief: Great Issues in*

Philosophy, edited by Alan Schwerin of the BRS. In addition to essays by Russell, Wittgenstein, Popper, Ryle, Ayer, and others, one treat are the photographs taken by Schwerin. Look for his essay, "On the Assertion: 'I Am My Brain.'" ISBN 1-57604-075-5.

Routledge has announced the publication of a new edition of Russell's *Autobiography*, with an introduction by Michael Foot. The ISBN is 0-415-18985-3. It is available in hardcover and contains the entirety of the three volume work within one single cover. Routledge is advertising a 20 percent discount, which presumably would include purchases by BRS members. There is no information about the duration of the discount.

Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico announces the publication of Guillermo Hurtado's *Proposiciones Russellianas*, with an expected publication date of 1999. Dr. Hurtado is a Research Fellow at the Instituto de Investigaciones Filossficas de la Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico and in 1998 was a Visiting Fellow at the Instituto de Filosofma, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientmficas, Madrid.

Oxford University Press has published BRS member Greg Landini's *Russell's Hidden Substitution Theory*. No additional information was available to the *Quarterly*.

Ashgate Publishers has announced a new book by Jan Dejnozka entitled *Bertrand Russell on Modality and Logical Relevance* (ISBN 1-84014-981-7, hardcover only). Dejnozka is Visiting Scholar in Law and Philosophy in the Rackham School of Graduate Studies, University of Michigan. He is the author of *The Ontology of the Analytic Tradition and Its Origins: Realism and Identity in Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, and Quine*, reviewed in this issue of the *Quarterly*.

Cambridge University Press has published Jaakko Hintikka's *The Principles of Mathematics Revisited* (1996 in hardcover, 1998 in paperback).

**CRITICAL THINKING AND PHILOSOPHY:
SOME REMARKS ON RUSSELL'S VIEWS
ALAN SCHWERIN
MONMOUTH UNIVERSITY**

[Editor's Note: This paper was read at the 25th Annual Meeting of the BRS.]

It looks as though I could lay down the general rule: whatever
I perceive very clearly and distinctly is true. *Descartes*

Bertrand Russell's letter, written towards the end of 1911 to his confidant and lover, Lady Ottoline Morrell, is characteristically candid: his most recent manuscript is a "shilling shocker." No, this is not a steamy novel from the pen of (arguably) the world's greatest thinker, but a modest collection of fifteen essays on a variety of philosophical issues that would hopefully have mass appeal.¹ Russell clearly hoped that his text would sell well -- among both academics and non-academics. But this is not all Russell hoped to accomplish with his book. His earlier heroic struggle with the monumental *Principia Mathematica* -- the daunting three volume investigation of the foundations of mathematics, co-authored with Alfred North Whitehead -- had taken its toll: "my intellect never quite recovered from the strain. I have been ever since definitely less capable of dealing with difficult abstractions than I was before."² To regain his strength, and to refine some of his ideas on less technical philosophical matters, Russell accepted Gilbert Murray's invitation to write *The Problems of Philosophy*.

Put broadly, *The Problems of Philosophy* enabled Russell to accomplish three tasks: to present his analysis of the ideas of other philosophers in an accessible package, to outline his own philosophical positions, and to consider the value of philosophical investigations such as his and those of other thinkers. Now there can be little doubt that *The Problems of Philosophy* has been influential, at least among philosophers. For one thing, the positions staked out in this "shilling shocker" play a pivotal role in the propagation of a leading movement in Western philosophy.

¹ At only a shilling, Russell's inexpensive text could reach a wide audience. However, this attempt to popularize philosophy did not sit well with his contemporaries. Ludwig Wittgenstein, for one, despised this move by Russell: "People who like philosophy will pursue it, and others won't, and there is an end to it." See Ray Monk in his excellent biography, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*, Free Press, 1990, p. 45.

² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

The arguments in this text form a significant part of the foundation of analytic philosophy -- an approach to philosophical investigations rooted in Gottlob Frege's contributions to theories on meaning, and subsequently elaborated on by philosophers such as Ayer, Wittgenstein, and Quine.¹ History, however, shows that Russell's "shilling shocker" has had broad appeal -- it certainly has had an appeal far wider than that of Russell's other, more technical bequests, such as *Principia Mathematica*.²

Russell's views have influenced, and continue to be of consequence, for many non-philosophers. As I shall demonstrate in this paper, his ideas can be put to practical use as well, serving as an invaluable resource for instructors engaged in teaching critical thinking. I shall explore two sets of issues. In Section One, I outline the central strands of Russell's conception of philosophy and critically consider his rationale for this conception. My thesis is that he identifies philosophical thought with critical thinking in *The Problems of Philosophy*. With this theoretical analysis behind us, in Section Two I consider a few of the practical applications of Russell's conception of critical thinking in the classroom. My hope is that this composite account of Russell's conception of philosophy will be of some value to instructors in their attempts to challenge students to think critically. If nothing else, this discussion should encourage some instructors and students to reflect on the rationale for higher education in the liberal American tradition. For surely we need, at some point, to reflect on the following basic question: "Why teach students to think critically?" My paper can be seen as a modest contribution to this important question. To begin, consider Russell's views on the nature of philosophical thought.

Section One: Philosophy as Critical Thinking

Readers of *The Problems of Philosophy* might find some of Russell's comments in philosophy disconcerting, if not disingenuous. In the final essay in the collection, entitled "The Value of Philosophy," he asserts that philosophical

¹ The paper that encapsulates Frege's foundational work on the analysis of meaning is his "On Sense and Reference, in *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*, Peter Geach and Max Black (eds.), 1977. Ludwig Wittgenstein's contributions to analytic philosophy center around two (arguably disparate) texts: *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1921, and *Philosophical Investigations*, Blackwell, 1953. Two important texts from Willard Van Orman Quine that have furthered analytic philosophy are *Mathematical Logic*, Harvard, 1940, and *Word and Object*, Harvard, 1960.

² This accomplishment is perhaps not too impressive when we recall that on Russell's own estimation only six individuals had managed to read *Principia Mathematica* in its entirety: three Poles and three Texans. And by the end of World War II, three of them were presumed dead by Russell. Monk, *Bertrand Russell: The Spirit of Solitude*, Jonathan Cape, 1996, p. 193.

reflections are valuable. Unlike the so-called practical man "who recognizes only material needs," students of philosophy are immeasurably enriched by their intellectual endeavors. The philosophically inclined work with so-called goods of the mind, and "even in the existing world the goods of the mind are at least as important as the goods of the body."¹ However, Russell introduces a discordant note into his discussion -- nothing precise is to be gained from philosophy:

Philosophy is to be studied, not for the sake of any definite answers to its questions, since no definite answers can, as a rule, be known to be true, but rather for the sake of the questions themselves.²

These concluding comments must come as a surprise to the readers of a text ostensibly devoted to an analysis of the problems of philosophy. For that matter, *anyone* troubled by a philosophical problem is likely to be surprised that a leading philosopher such as Russell could espouse this view. In advising us to stop looking for definite answers to our philosophical questions, and directing us to the questions themselves, Russell offers what appears to be counter-intuitive advice.

What he appears to suggest here can be characterized as follows. Imagine an enthusiastic tourist about to journey by car to some spectacular resort. Before she leaves, we advise her to cancel the trip and stay home. Furthermore, our advice is that she devote her energy to inspecting her car, rather than driving it. Just as this tourist is likely to be taken aback by our advice, so Russell's proposal that we redirect our efforts and focus on the philosophical questions we are interested in, is bound to raise an eyebrow or two. Notwithstanding their problems, cars, as with questions, surely have their uses -- and the problems that might arise when these devices are used surely ought not detract from the overall enterprise that gave rise to these devices in the first place. Individuals who raise philosophical questions seek solutions to their problems, and they are unlikely to be mollified by a mere analysis of the questions themselves. How else are we to placate the powerful desire we have for solutions to their philosophical problems? All of which raises an important question: Why does Russell suggest we reassign our labor to an investigation of the philosophical questions, rather than search for definite solutions to these questions?

To answer this question, it might be useful to briefly consider the views of one of the students who had a significant influence on Russell after the time he wrote *The*

¹ Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, 1912, p. 89.

² *Ibid.*, p. 93.

Problems of Philosophy: namely, Ludwig Wittgenstein. At this early stage of his career, Wittgenstein also thought that the philosophically perplexed ought to focus on their questions, rather than on the possible answers to these questions. As he insists in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, we must refrain from seeking answers for philosophical questions *because these responses will be meaningless*. Toward the end of his analysis Wittgenstein issues the following advice:

6.53 The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science -- i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy -- and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical [i.e. philosophical] to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his propositions. Although it would not be satisfying to the other person -- he would not have the feelings that we were teaching him philosophy -- *this method would be the only strictly correct one*.¹

Attempts to appease the philosophically perplexed by inviting them to abstain from philosophical reflection will meet with resistance, concedes Wittgenstein. Unfortunately, as Wittgenstein sees it, it is not possible to get around this difficulty, given the essentially nonsensical nature of philosophical questions and their possible answers. This last judgment points to an important difference between the two thinkers who share a common concern about the assumption that we take philosophical questions at face value.

While both Russell and Wittgenstein have serious qualms about everyday philosophical questions, it would be a mistake to infer from this that their views overlap entirely on this issue. Nothing could be further from the truth! Wittgenstein thinks that the answers (i.e. philosophical propositions) we might be tempted to offer in response to the philosophical questions are *nonsensical*, and thus that these questions are nonsensical. As he bluntly put it in the *Tractatus*:

6.5 When the answer cannot be put into words, neither can the question be put into words. *The riddle does not exist*. If a question can be framed at all, it is also *possible* to answer it.²

Unlike Wittgenstein, Russell holds that the answers to philosophical questions are

¹ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, p. 74. My italics.

² *Ibid.*, p. 73.

indeterminate (i.e. uncertain, but *not* nonsensical), thereby implying that these questions are not nonsensical, but merely in need of clarification. In short, Russell appears to maintain that philosophical questions are initially unclear, but that critical analysis of these questions -- i.e. some critical thinking on the meaning of these questions -- can help clarify matters, and possibly lead to determinate results. But why are philosophical questions in need of clarification? And are only philosophical questions beset with this defect?

Are philosophical questions inherently impossible to work with, as Wittgenstein seems to suggest in the *Tractatus*? This is not Russell's position as a consideration of *The Problems of Philosophy* shows. While Russell does not provide us with an explicit answer to this important issue, his text does contain the ingredients for a plausible response. In his analysis Russell is candid about the past successes of philosophers -- their accomplishments are few and far between:

...it cannot be maintained that philosophy has had any very great measure of success in its attempts to provide definite answers to its questions.¹

Of course, one might argue that this shortcoming is a function of the questions themselves, not of the philosophers attempting to answer them. Russell implicitly rejects this suggestion of the inherent problems with philosophical questions, constantly urging us to persist with the *same* questions in our analysis. To the best of my knowledge, on no occasion does she invite us to jettison the (problematic) question under consideration. While Wittgenstein -- at least in the *Tractatus* -- insists that we turn to a *different* set of questions and pursue meaningful scientific, rather than meaningless philosophical questions, Russell doggedly suggests that we clarify the questions that puzzle us. What is more, as the passage just provided intimates, Russell concedes that there has been at least some progress in philosophy -- unfortunately, not the "great measure of success" one might expect, but success nevertheless. This modest progress would not have been possible had the philosophical questions been inherently impossible to work with.² So if

¹ Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, p. 90.

² Russell's colleague, Alfred North Whitehead, would later endorse this view on the scant progress made by philosophers:

The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato. I do not mean the systematic scheme of thought which scholars have doubtfully extracted from his writings. I allude to the wealth of general ideas scattered through them.

Process and Reality, Macmillan Company (New York), 1929, p. 63.

philosophical questions are amenable to meaningful treatment, why do problems arise when we attempt to solve these questions?

Once again, *The Problems of Philosophy* is silent on this important issue. But an explanation can be constructed. Although Russell has not given an explicit explanation of the need to clarify our philosophical questions, his text does contain the necessary ingredients for a plausible explanation. In the opening sections of his analysis, Russell defends a thesis that turns out to be central to his enterprise: namely, the view that our ideas are logically defective. More specifically, Russell argues that our *ordinary* ideas are logically defective. Furthermore, he suggests that philosophical inquiry will help us realize just how unsatisfactory our normal ideas are. In his view, "all vagueness and confusion that underlies our *ordinary* ideas" will become apparent when we do philosophy.¹ This last strongly suggests that Russell attributes the problems with philosophical questions to our ordinary (i.e. non-philosophical) ideas. As he sees it, philosophical questions are puzzling and in need of clarification by virtue of the defective ideas we rely on in non-philosophical contexts. But these, presumably, are the very same ideas that inform our non-philosophical questions. So, for Russell, there appears to be little, if any, difference between our philosophical ideas and our ordinary ideas. For all intents and purposes, they are one and the same.

However, there is more to this suggestion than meets the eye! If my thesis on Russell's view of the relationship between philosophical and non-philosophical ideas is correct, an interesting proposal follows for exponents of critical thinking. If our allegedly defective ordinary ideas function as the basis of both our philosophical and non-philosophical questions, it seems reasonable to conclude that for Russell *all* of our questions are initially obscure, and that they all need to be clarified. So Russell's injunction that we reflect critically on the ideas that inform our philosophical questions in the end amounts to the suggestion that all questions must be critically evaluated. From this it follows that for Russell there can be little difference between philosophy and critical thinking: both activities require close scrutiny of our questions. As they stand, these questions apparently mask defective (ordinary) ideas. And unless we undertake a careful critical analysis of our non-philosophical questions, we will discover that we are without "any very great measure of success in [our] attempts to provide definite answers to [our] questions." In short, we will be in the very same predicament that philosophers, apparently, have been in! But what leads Russell to conclude that our ordinary ideas are problematic? I would like to briefly address this critical question before outlining a few practical implications of Russell's views for the classroom.

¹ Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, p. 123. (My emphasis)

Russell's argument for the thesis that our ordinary ideas are logically defective, or "vague and confused," is a variant of the argument from illusion. It proceeds along the following lines. Suppose that Jack is looking at an object in the sky. When we ask him to tell us what it is that he is looking at, he might reply as follows: "I am looking at the moon." But Jack's assessment of the properties of the object that he apparently is looking at will be significantly influenced by a number of factors. To mention a few: he might be drunk and lying beneath a street light, under the impression that it is the moon he is looking at; or he might be sick, and conclude that the moon has a yellow tint, while another person with a different ocular condition might conclude that the moon is pink; someone with poor vision might see a fuzzy soft object in space, while another sees a sharp, precisely defined object; Jack might see a spherical moon, while a friend in a different country on the other side of the globe might see a crescent object. Talking about observations of color, Russell maintains that

...color is not something which is inherent in the table, but something depending upon the [object] and the spectator and the way the light falls on the [object]. When, in ordinary life, we speak of *the* colour of the table, we only mean the sort of colour which it will seem to have to a normal spectator from an ordinary point of view under usual conditions of light. But the other colours which appear under other conditions have just a good a right to be considered real...¹

The diversity of possible observations leads Russell to conclude that our grasp of reality is not as sure as we initially thought. Our ideas of reality -- both philosophical and non-philosophical -- are obscure. This fundamental shortcoming manifests itself most forcefully when we attempt to articulate them. The multiplicity of the possible answers one can produce in response to questions on our observations leads Russell to conclude that "any statement as to what it is that our immediate experiences make us know is very likely to be wrong."² This philosophical observation is highly significant for the classroom.

Let us now turn to the practical consequences of Russell's views on philosophy.

Section Two: Some Practical Suggestions

While Russell has not provided any specific proposals, the presentation in *The*

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

² *Ibid.*, p. 1.

Problems of Philosophy clearly has a number of practical implications for philosophers and non-philosophers alike. I want to identify and briefly discuss a few of these implications for the classroom.

As we have seen, Russell's view of philosophy, and by implication, his account of critical thinking rests full square on the suggestion that our ordinary ideas are vague and confused.¹ As teachers of critical thinking, we need to develop techniques that enable our students to recognize this shortcoming. By encouraging our students to reflect on their ideas and on the relationships between them, we show the class the obscurity and imprecision of our ideas. For example, the invitation to consider the conception or idea of happiness that underlies a particular novel may lead students to explore a variety of ideas. To begin with, students are likely to discover that the class has diverse views on the idea of happiness. So, they have a lot to learn from the comparison of *different* ideas, e.g. in comparing one's idea of happiness with the idea of pleasure, a deeper understanding emerges of the two ideas. A careful analysis and comparison of ideas will thus heighten a student's appreciation of the subtleties of the text under consideration.

But precisely how do we encourage the class to reflect on their ideas and compare them with one another? Russell's text suggests an answer: get students to write out their views on the issues under consideration. If Russell is correct, the statements that students will initially produce in class are likely to be misleading, vague, and more than likely false. The instructor, perhaps with the assistance of the class, must encourage recognition of these shortcomings. One way to do this is to get the class to present their individual statements to the class. The display of preferably short statements from a variety of sources in the classroom will alert students to the need to think more critically on their own ideas. And the warning will come from within their own ranks. If we admit that the production of a false statement is proof positive that the ideas that inform the statement are logically defective, there surely can be no better way to show the defects with our ideas than to write them out.

Having shown that our ordinary ideas are vague and confused, Russell highlights some of the problems that arise when we attempt to articulate these (confused) ideas. Most importantly, as we saw above, his view is that our explanatory statements will probably be unsatisfactory, i.e. they are "very likely to be wrong."² While we need to encourage students to express their ideas, we must strive to

¹ As Russell put it, "...philosophy is merely the attempt to answer...ultimate questions...critically, after exploring all that makes such questions puzzling, and after realizing all the vagueness and confusion that underlie our ordinary ideas." *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

produce clear and precise expressions of these ideas in the classroom. Confusing statements must be isolated and carefully analyzed. Students and teachers alike need to develop an intolerance for obscure and confusing statements. It is not a sign of failure for a student or the teacher to declare that a text or a specific statement in a text appears difficult, if not impossible, to understand. If Russell is correct about the general inadequacy of our ideas, these explicit acknowledgements of incomprehension will not be infrequent in the classroom.

In this situation, the teacher needs to take the initiative and serve as a role model for the class. When students discover that their teacher willingly reveals his or her difficulties with the texts, they will be prepared to raise their own critical questions about the questions and statements under consideration. Unless the teacher shows the way, students are unlikely to openly declare that they do not understand the material. For instance, how many of us have not had the experience of teaching a text to a class, only to discover, almost by accident, that most of the students don't understand some of the basic terms used in the text? We should all strive to clarify the texts we read and discuss: this objective will remain out of reach unless we analyze the concepts articulated by the texts.

Initially, students are likely to be surprised by this candor. Surely the teacher, as a trained profession, possibly with ample experience with these texts, already understands the material being taught? Students need to learn that their teacher is not as confident as they might have thought. That is to say, the class needs to appreciate that *both* student and teacher are often engaged in a joint venture to discover the full import of a text. In this environment there can be no room for dogmatic pronouncements about the texts studied by the class. The more reflective, cautious attitude engendered by this realization of "learned ignorance," which is central to Russell's conception of philosophy, is surely one of the primary objectives of any course in critical thinking.

In advising us to reconsider the questions that arise in philosophy and ordinary life, and in pointing out the shortcomings endemic to initial uncritical statements of our ideas, Russell is alluding to the primary value of philosophy, and, by implication, critical thinking. This is the recognition and possible elimination of our prejudices. For Russell, the critical investigation of the questions of philosophy, rather than the search for (indefinite) answers to these questions, widens our mental horizons, thereby enabling us to discover previously hidden presuppositions of our views:

...these questions enlarge our conception of what is possible,
enrich our intellectual imagination, and diminish the dogmatic

assurance which closes the mind against speculation..."¹

By retreating from the search for answers to our questions to a consideration of the questions themselves, we pre-empt the restrictive perspective that the philosophical answers could impose on us. In short, we become less dogmatic -- for now our task is not to merely assess competing answers to our philosophical questions, but to begin afresh, i.e. to confront the prejudices endemic to these initial philosophical questions. Naturally, this confrontation of the established perspective is not without risk, but as Russell sees it, the benefits far outweigh the costs involved. While philosophy -- any by implication, critical thinking -- cannot provide us with certain views on the issues we consider, it can "suggest many possibilities which enlarge our thoughts and free them from the tyranny of custom."² Philosophy and critical thinking can, therefore, keep "alive our sense of wonder by showing familiar things in an unfamiliar aspect."³ If we do not explore our ideas, these new, exciting vistas will not emerge. As Russell has shown, this journey must begin with a critical investigation of the devices we rely on to articulate these ideas. Our journey must begin with a scrutiny of our questions and statements.⁴

**SUITABLE MEMORIES:
A META-ETHICAL REFLECTION
ON MONK'S *BERTRAND RUSSELL*
MITCHELL HANEY
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA**

[Editor's Note: This paper was read at the 25th Annual Meeting of the BRS.]

What is so interesting about another story of a privileged, white, male whose neuroses are portrayed as the driving force of his brilliance? I would say, "Very little!" In a day when the general premises of psychoanalysis are part and parcel of many people's unanalyzed folk psychology, an exegesis of anyone's life that

¹ *Ibid*, p. 94.

² *Ibid*, p. 91.

³ *Ibid*.

⁴ This project has been made possible by the generosity of a grant from the Aid-To-Creativity Committee at Monmouth University, West Long Branch, New Jersey. I also want to thank two individuals for their invaluable suggestions on earlier drafts of this paper: my wife, Helen, and a good friend, Guy Oakes. Their critical responses helped me clarify and improve my thoughts.

seeks such a deep analysis is, at best, cliché. Now although it is not my aim to critique Monk's latent psychoanalytic presuppositions (although it would certainly be one worthy way of responding to his work),¹ we should nevertheless note that this latent psychoanalysis provides us with a highly reductive account of the persona of Bertrand Russell.

Monk clearly presents, and supports with a quotation from Russell's *Autobiography* (xiii), what he believes are the three essential drives underlying Russell's life and work:

In each of their various ways, Russell's three great passions were attempts by him to overcome his solitariness through contact with something outside himself: another individual, humanity at large, or the external world. The first comprised by his terror of madness, which led him to fear the depth of his emotions; the second by his discovery that he felt alone even in a crowd; and the third by the progressive scepticism, the increasing loss of faith, that characterized his philosophical development.²

From the very first page, Monk masterfully intertwines the everyday and the philosophical moments of Russell's life so that we may see the grounds of his reductive analysis. What we acquire is a picture of Russell that may be believable to anyone who has uncritically internalized basic psychoanalytic premises concerning the force of unconscious drives (whether libidinal or vital) into their daily folk psychological explanations. I know that some commentators have been repelled at Monk's portrayal of Russell. These critics, however, have not been repelled by its underlying, unanalyzed Freudian presuppositions, but due to the fact that the portrayal of Russell is incessantly dark and dismal -- to the point of being 'wicked'.

Monk's book is not exactly the portrayal of a 'hero'. Irrespective of whether or not readers are attracted or repelled by Monk's 'Russell', I think that both reactions are explicable. To explain both the praise and the denunciation of Monk's book is the central aim of my commentary.

However, before entering the body of my essay, I must make a confession. It

¹ Ken Blackwell, at the recent Annual Meeting of the BRS, chided Monk for interpreting every instance that Russell speaks of 'love' and meaning 'sex'. If this is even largely the case, and it seems that it is, then Monk could surely be taken to task, because even for Freud 'love' is sometimes just love just as sometimes a 'cigar' is just a cigar.

² Ray Monk, *Bertrand Russell: The Spirit of Solitude*, Jonathan Cape, 1996, p. xix.

doesn't upset me in the least to believe that a philosophical hero and world citizen, such as Russell, may have had deep neuroses stemming from his childhood that darkened every moment of his life. Analogously, it didn't upset me to find out that Michel Foucault, a philosophical giant and world citizen in another (The Other) tradition, struggled throughout much of his life with his homosexuality. My general reaction to both of these biographical illuminations has been, 'So what! Does it really matter?' I offer you this confession so that you may know that the criticism of Monk's work that I will forward below is largely motivated independently of whether or not I accept Monk's portrayal of Russell. What does irk me, and it is a problem for any biographical story-telling, is Monk's reduction of Russell's persona to some core digestible description as outlined above (regardless of the fact that it relies upon some dubious and trite psychoanalytic presuppositions). In order to flesh out my worry, I will forward a general meta-ethical account of biographical discourse.¹

The Meta-Ethics of Biography

I suggest that the notion of 'persona' is irreducibly a normative concept. As a result of this irreducible normativity, a person's persona is neither an object capable of a pure description nor is it an object of which we can have knowledge -- either by acquaintance or description. The persona, I suggest, is a construction or presentation that *endorses* either a suitable or an unsuitable memory of the person in question. The suitability of a memory prescribes to others how they ought to think, feel, and/or react to the person being presented. In addition, the memory being prescribed can either be short-term (as in a first impression) or long-term (as in a legacy). In either case, we portray ourselves and others via depictions that attempt to highlight characteristics that are either favorable or unfavorable by our own lights. As we intuitively know, the presentations we make concerning the characteristics of ourselves and others will generally be favorable in the case of ourselves, our families, and our compatriots, and unfavorable in the case of our expatriots and our foes. As a result, most (interesting) portrayals of ourselves and others in autobiographies and biographies will have evaluations nested into the depiction of the persona in question. (I take it that -- in part -- the role of 'Thick Moral Concepts' -- as Bernard Williams has described them -- is to capture how depictions of ourselves and others can be evaluative.) However, insofar as the attempt to capture any persona in an autobiography or biography has this normative dimension, I believe, we must begin to worry about the descriptive adequacy of any reductive biographical analysis.

¹ Monk even suggests -- but never develops -- that Russell saw a close affinity between ethical discourse and biographical discourse. Monk states: "Without going into the details, but in a way that showed that, in (Russell's) mind, moral theory and autobiography were closely linked..." (146). I thank Bob Barnard for reminding me of this brief comment.

What I want to suggest is that any reduction of a human persona (whether to deep unmet desires or to the noblest of passions, or some other reduction) commits G.E. Moore's naturalistic fallacy. As we all know, Moore argued in *Principia Ethica* that naturalistic definitions of the good could be undermined by the 'Open-Question' argument. The argument states: if a naturalistic definition of the good, e.g., 'pleasure is the good', is adequate, then it would not strike us as a legitimate, i.e., open, question to ask 'Is *X* feature really the good?', e.g. 'Is pleasure really the good?' Moore suggested, and I think rightly, that if we question the descriptive adequacy of a naturalistic definition of the good, the question will be open rather than closed. Now, if Monk's reduction of Russell's persona into the three drives to overcome solitude is *the* 'Bertrand Russell', then the question 'Are the three drives to overcome solitude *really* the Bertrand Russell?' should be closed. However, it is my intuition that this question is open even after we provide for all the 'evidence' Monk presents to us in 600 plus pages portraying Russell's life from 1872-1921.

If I correct that the 'persona' cannot be given a reductive, naturalistic definition without thereby committing the naturalistic fallacy, thus suggesting another reason for believing that it is a normative concept, then what can we say of the depiction of anyone's persona? Well, at this point, there are two ways we can go: 1) We can argue, analogously to Moore, that the persona is a non-natural property of each person, or, 2) We can argue that the persona is irrealist, and it actually reflects something non-cognitive about the agent or biographer providing the depiction.

I think that there are good reasons for taking the second option.

If we were to argue that the persona is a non-natural property, then we have to embrace two anti-naturalistic propositions. First, we would have to accept that either there are persons who can track the true persona of individuals or all people can track this property; that such persons or all people have an interpersonal sense analogous to a moral sense. Second, and most obvious, we would have to accept that the persona is some property in the world that is irreducible to any set of natural properties. I will not argue for it here, but, generally speaking, if one desires to remain within the bounds of a metaphysical naturalism ('what is' is within the bounds of natural science), then these two propositions are *prima facie* untenable. As a result, I believe the second option is the favorable course. In addition, I believe that the expressivist option I will outline below also provides a more plausible explanation of how we can have strong opposing emotional reactions to the same depiction of a persona.

It is my belief that biographical depictions of persona are largely expressivist in nature. The characteristics that are presented as relevant to others express the emotional response, e.g. the like or dislike, that a biographer has towards her

subject. In addition, the depiction she offers prescribes to the reader that they ought to share the same affective response towards the person being depicted. Certainly, there are statements inside of any biographical depiction that are either true or false, but many of the statements, I suggest, are expressive of the respect or disdain felt by the presenter and they are an attempt to lure the reader to accept a similar stance towards the subject. The expressive nature of a biographical presentation, I believe, will be reflected in the number of linguistic, epistemic, and literary devices aimed at prescribing a suitable or unsuitable memory of the person being portrayed. The devices I include: direct evaluative utterances, the features of the person's life that are deemed salient (as opposed to those that are not), the historical causal explanations depicted (as opposed to those that are not), as well as the simple tone of the language employed in describing the person being depicted. Hence, I suggest that biographies constitute prescriptions to the reader to accept suitable or unsuitable memories.

Conclusions

If I am correct about my meta-ethical analysis of the nature of the persona and the normative dimension of biographical writing, then there are three conclusions that I would think follow concerning Monk's Russell. First, he should have avoided any attempt to reduce Russell to any specific naturalistic description, because such a description commits the naturalistic fallacy (apart from concerns about the adequacy of pop-psychoanalytic explanations). He is not describing; he is prescribing. Second, it offers us a plausible explanation for why different readers of Monk's book react favorably or unfavorably to the same depiction. Opposing readers have opposing emotional stances toward the memory of Russell. Some readers are already pre-disposed to have suitable memories of Russell and others unsuitable. Third, it also suggests that, in many cases where we have readers who are familiar with Russell's life and work, arguing over the facts will not likely alter the emotional stances of those who are in opposition. Suitable and unsuitable memories cannot be altered or constructed on merely cognitive grounds.

As a result, I believe that the real issue underlying both favorable and unfavorable reactions to Monk's biography is whether or not his depiction will be allowed to guide future students to a memory of Russell. Will future students receive a suitable or unsuitable memory of one of this century's leading philosophical figures?

CONVERSATION WITH SIR PETER STRAWSON
JOHN SHOSKY
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

This is the third short report prepared on Russell's influence in Oxford. Previous interviews were with Antony Flew and Rom Harré.

On March 4, 1997, I met with Sir Peter Strawson at University College, Oxford, where he has an office next to Ronald Dworkin, the famous jurisprudence scholar. Strawson, Waynflete Professor of Metaphysical Philosophy, Emeritus, and a Fellow of Magdalen College and of University College, is best known to Russell scholars for "On Referring", his famous reply to Russell's theory of descriptions. First published in *Mind*,¹ and reprinted with additional footnotes in Flew's *Essays in Conceptual Analysis*² and in Strawson's *Logico-Linguistic Papers*.³ This article may be Strawson's most famous short essay. Russell's response was "Mr. Strawson On Referring," published in *Mind* in 1957,⁴ which was extremely critical of ordinary language philosophy and often personal in his comments on Strawson. The response was later included in Russell's *My Philosophical Development*⁵ and in the *Last Philosophical Testament, 1943-68, Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*.⁶ Since it has been almost fifty years since "On Referring" was printed, and now over forty years since Russell's reply, I wanted to discuss this historic exchange with Strawson. Rom Harré kindly made some initial contacts on my behalf and then a date was arranged. I arrived at University College to find Strawson in his office, several books open and scattered around the room, tea cups in evidence, an ash tray filled with butts and a strong smell of smoke in the room, and half empty bookshelves, for this clearly was an office for working and meeting people, and not the repository of the Strawson library. He reminded me of Basil Rathbone's characterization of Sherlock Holmes and the office had the look of the Baker Street apartment in old movies.

¹ Vol. LIX, N.S. 1950.

² St. Martin's, 1963, pp. 21-52.

³ Methuen, 1971.

⁴ *Mind*, N.S. 66, July 1957, pp. 385-9. Quotations below will be from a reprinted version found in *Essays in Analysis*, Douglas Lackey (ed.), George Braziller, 1973, pp. 120-126.

⁵ Unwin, 1959, pp. 175-180.

⁶ Volume 11, edited by John Slater and Peter Kollner, Routledge, 1997, pp. 630-35.

But this Holmes is a philosophical sleuth. Strawson is a key, central figure in Twentieth Century philosophy. He is well known for his *Introduction to Logical Theory* and *Individuals*.¹ I have used his edited collection, *Philosophical Logic*,² when I have taught classes on philosophical argumentation in the United States and in the Czech Republic. He also edited another important collection of lectures delivered to the British Academy entitled *Studies in the Philosophy of Thought and Action*.³ Many philosophers have consulted his great book on Kant, *The Bounds of Sense*.⁴ His lectures in 1987 at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., have been published as *Analysis and Metaphysics*.⁵ Along with so many philosophers, I have vast admiration for his work in logic and epistemology. Still philosophically active at eighty, he graciously set aside time to discuss Russell.

For those who haven't had the chance to meet him, Strawson is the quintessential British gentleman. He is tall, elegant, charming, and graceful. He is one of the most polite, gracious, and attentive people I've met, whether in academia, politics, or business. As I staggered through my questions he was unfailingly decent and fair in providing honest and careful answers.

I asked what books of Russell's Strawson read. The first was probably *The Problems in Philosophy*. Strawson also read "On Denoting" and subsequent developments of the theory of descriptions. He was a keen student of *An Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*, and read the "Introduction" to *Principia Mathematica*, *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*, and *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits*. He greatly admired Russell's "Lectures on Logical Atomism." He did not read *The Analysis of Mind* or *The Analysis of Matter*, unlike many of his contemporaries.

During Strawson's time, from the late 1940s to the present, Russell's influence in Oxford was not direct, "although we all read Russell. We all knew him -- he was inescapable." But there was little agreement with his positions. Even in the 1940s, Russell was more of an historical figure. He "didn't write much that was new."

¹ Methuen, 1952 and 1959, respectfully.

² Oxford, 1967.

³ Oxford, 1968.

⁴ Methuen, 1966.

⁵ Oxford, 1992.

While Ayer was an avid defender of Russell, particularly the theory of descriptions, Strawson believes that the major influences in Oxford "were local": J.L. Austin and Gilbert Ryle. But Strawson also noted that "everyone admired Russell's fertility, lucidity, and elegance of writing."

Russell did visit Oxford once during Strawson's early years there. He spoke about linguistic philosophy and his unfavorable view of it. Russell took some questions, mostly from J.O. Urmson. Strawson remembers that Russell displayed "wit, elegance, and acerbic charm." Later, Russell asked H.L.A. Hart, "Did I win?" However, as far as Strawson remembers, Russell didn't convince anyone in the audience to abandon linguistic philosophy.

One of my objectives was to learn more about the genesis and purpose of "On Referring." This work is a landmark in philosophical logic, a field Strawson credits, in part, to Russell. Philosophical logic is the study of "the way constituents (of logical form) are put together."¹ It is "the business of philosophical logic to extract (knowledge of logical forms in discourse) from its concrete integuments, and to render it explicit and pure."² Strawson believed that philosophical logic must look at issues involving the general form of the proposition, reference and predication, truth-functions and conditionals, meaning and use, meaning and necessity, truth, categories, and other issues.³

I should preface by saying that there are many people who believe that philosophical logic is hostile to Russell's work, partly because of Russell's dislike of "On Referring." It is true that philosophical logic is often at odds with Russell, but primarily because he often didn't see the difference with traditional logic. Yet, Russell is certainly the "godfather" of philosophical logic, as I learned examining Ryle's copy of the *Principles of Mathematics*, housed in the Linacre College Library at Oxford. Ryle notes in the margins that Russell is laying the groundwork for philosophical logic from the very beginning of that masterpiece. Strawson found Russell an inspiration, with Strawson often expanding or developing ideas suggested by Russell. In fact, I would argue that there are four philosophers who have proven worthy and influential advocates for Russell's contributions in logic: Quine, Strawson, Carnap, and Ayer. Each were intrigued by Russell's work, developed overlapping interests to Russell, often showing Russell's initial positions to be in error, and then taking portions of Russell's logical writings in new

¹ Bertrand Russell, *Our Knowledge of the External World*, George Allen & Unwin, 1914, p. 52

² *Ibid.*, p. 53.

³ See Strawson's "Introduction," *Philosophical Logic*, pp. 1-16.

directions. I would add Wittgenstein to that list, but hesitate because he so often disparaged Russell, while at the same time benefitting greatly from Russell's personal and professional assistance. Strawson readily acknowledges Russell's importance in the development of philosophical logic, even though Russell strongly disliked its reliance on ordinary language. In fact, one could argue that Russell never understood the full significance of philosophical logic, even though he was so important to its development.

Strawson originally came up with his objections to the theory of descriptions in 1946 and 1947, when he was "teaching in the provinces."¹ Upon arriving back in Oxford, he offered lectures in 1948 or 1949 on "Nouns and Descriptions" to some visiting Americans which touched on Russell's theory. Ryle, upon hearing Strawson's view on referring, said "We've got to have that." And in 1950 the article appeared in *Mind*, which was edited by Ryle.

Strawson had some very pointed criticisms of Russell. He sees Russell as advocating two positions: 1) that sentences which are about some particular person or individual object are significant when the logical form is analyzable as a special kind of existential statement, and, 2) they are significant when the grammatical subject is a logically proper name, of which the meaning is the individual thing is designates.

Strawson reasoned that:

...Russell is unquestionably wrong in this, and that sentences which are significant, and which begin with an expression used in the uniquely referring way, fall into neither of these two classes. Expressions used in the uniquely referring way are never either logically proper names or descriptions, if what is meant by calling them 'descriptions' is that they are to be analyzed in accordance with the model provided by Russell's Theory of Descriptions.

There are no logically proper names and there are no descriptions (in this sense).²

Instead, Strawson argued that referring was not inherently part of a proposition. Instead, it was something that a proposition accomplished within a contextual use.

¹ While perhaps not the best statement, Russell's most famous articulation of the theory of descriptions was in "On Denoting," *Mind*, N.S. 14, 1906, pp. 479-93.

² "On Referring," *Logico-Linguistic Papers*, Methuen, 1971, p. 5.

He claimed "‘Mentioning’, or ‘referring’, is not something an expression does; it is something that someone can use an expression to do. Mentioning, or referring to, something is a characteristic of *a use* of an expression, just as ‘being about’ something, and truth-or-falsity, are characteristics of *a use* of a sentence."¹ In addition, the meaning of a sentence is not the same thing as the proposition itself. Meaning is wrapped up in "rules, habits, conventions governing its correct use, on all occasions, to refer or to assert."² Context matters, and so does convention. Hence, "[t]he source of Russell’s mistake was that he thought that referring or mentioning, if it occurred at all, must be meaning."³

Strawson also worried about "the troublesome mythology of the logically proper name."⁴

The late Sybil Wolfram, in her wonderful book *Philosophical Logic: An Introduction*,⁵ explained the difference. For her, Russell’s theory of descriptions, in analyzing the proposition ‘The King of France is wise’, would be said to claim

- (1) There is a King of France and
- (2) There is not more than one King of France, and
- (3) There is nothing which is both King of France and not wise.

For Russell, when there is no King of France the proposition is false because a conjunction is false when one conjunct is false, and (1) is false.

Alternatively, Strawson found that the theory of descriptions views such a proposition as ‘The King of France is wise’ as a complex existential proposition. For Wolfram, Strawson claimed that

¹ *Ibid*, p. 8.

² *Ibid*, p. 9.

³ *Ibid*.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 10.

⁵ Routledge, 1989, pp. 42-3. Wolfram was University Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Oxford. I have used this book in a class on "Advanced Modern Logic" at American University and in a graduate class entitled "Philosophical Logic" in Prague. While it has some shortcomings for serious advanced students, the book is till one of the best available texts on philosophical logic. I highly recommend it to the reader, especially if examined in conjunction with Strawson’s (ed.) *Philosophical Logic*.

The *sentence* 'The King of France' has a meaning. When there is no King of France it does not make a true or false *statement*.

Strawson believed that the conjunctive approach by Russell was a mis-statement. The first two conjuncts are not stated, but assumed. If they are not true, then the result is not that 'the King of France is wise' is false but that it is neither true nor false. Wolfram argues that Strawson has a theory of presupposition, where relevant concepts are not entailed or stated, but act as given before being analyzed. The presupposed concepts are in italics and best unpacked in the following way:

The King of France is wise does not state or entail that there is a King of France.

It *presupposes* that there is a King of France.

If *There is a King of France* is false, then *The King of France is wise* is neither true nor false.

So someone using the theory of descriptions approach is not making a true or false claim with 'The King of France is wise'.

For Strawson, "[t]he important point is that the question of whether the sentence is significant or not is quite independent of the question that can be raised about a particular use of it....The question whether the sentence is significant or not is the question whether there exists such language habits, conventions or rules that the sentence logically could be used to talk about something; and is hence quite independent of the question whether it is being so used on a particular occasion."¹

In conversation, Strawson told me that "I simply didn't know what he was trying to accomplish." There was a "dis-regard for pragmatics and the operation of speech." Russell's view "seemed wholly implausible." Strawson was bewildered because Russell simply did not count "how definite descriptions worked in ordinary language." And Strawson politely added that "This is all I can say -- I don't know enough about his own thinking."

Russell bitterly replied to Strawson's criticisms in "Mr Strawson 'On Referring'". One major complaint was that Strawson ignored Russell's many writings on egocentricity, and that Russell himself had grasped the problems already. Russell argued that many examples had nothing to do with egocentric words, such as mathematical propositions, and that others may be bound within an historical context, such as 'The King of France is bald', as uttered in 1905. Another complaint was that Strawson did not sufficiently explain his objections to logically

¹ Strawson, *Logico-Linguistic Papers*, p. 11.

proper names. Russell claimed that logically proper names were linked with ostensive definitions. Words in language must designate something, and logically proper names are designations of experience.

But Russell was most bitter about Strawson's reliance on ordinary language. It is ordinary language that "is full of vagueness and inaccuracy, and ...any attempt to be precise and accurate requires modification of common speech both as regards vocabulary and as regards syntax."¹ The attempt by Strawson to distinguish a case where 'The King of France is wise' could be significant, not true, and not false was a misuse of the term 'false'. This was a "purely verbal question."²

In the end, both Strawson and Russell seemed to agree that ordinary language had no exact logic, but where Strawson believed that ordinary language should be our guide, and can be our only guide, Russell maintained that ordinary language should give way to logical improvements.

The exchange was laced by bitter personal attacks by Russell: "I am totally unable to see any validity whatever in any of Mr. Strawson's arguments;"³ "Mr. Strawson (pretended) that I overlooked the problem of egocentricity;"⁴ "He is helped in this pretense by a careful selection of material;"⁵ and "Mr. Strawson, in spite of his very real logical competence, has a curious prejudice against logic."⁶

Strawson did not respond to "Mr. Strawson On Referring" in print, which disappointed Russell, anxious for further exchange. Strawson felt the article "unworthy of him" and wanted to avoid further embarrassment. Russell evidently felt ignored by this inattention and conveyed his disappointment to Freddie Ayer. Through Ayer, Strawson learned of Russell's feelings and responded with a letter dated February 26, 1962:

¹ "Mr. Strawson On Referring," as reprinted in *Essays in Analysis*, p. 123.

² *Ibid.*, p. 125.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

Ayer told me recently that you would like to know what my reactions were to your comments in *Mind* on my criticisms of the Theory of Descriptions. Though I still think that my account of definite descriptions comes nearer to the facts as far as the "pragmatics" of ordinary speech-situations are concerned, I must acknowledge that I was wrong not to refer to your own account of the egocentric element in many ordinary empirical statements; and, of course, my criticism of your theory does not bear on its merits as a technical proposals.

I hesitate to inflict philosophical writings upon you at a time when you are concerned with matters of greater importance. But I should be very glad if you would accept the enclosed copy of my recent book as a small tribute from one who has admired your writings ever since he began to read philosophy and has learned more about philosophical logic from them than from any other source.

Russell replied on March 6, 1962: "Thanks for your kind letter and for your book *Individuals*. I am glad to know that we do not differ as much as had seemed to be the case."¹

Later, Strawson received an invitation to the dinner honoring Russell on his 90th birthday, and he went. This was the only time Strawson and Russell met. Arranged by Ayer, speakers included Julian Huxley, E.M. Forster, the Duke of Bedford, Ayer, and Russell. It was a grand affair at the Savoy Hotel, although most of Russell's contemporaries were dead.

I am pleased that Strawson was so forthcoming with his views and memories. He is one of the most important philosophers of our time because of his strong and lasting accomplishments in analysis, language, and logic. Like his good friends, Quine and Ayer, Strawson has long been an advocate for Russell's work in logic. Like them, he found Russell's contributions were not the last word on any subject, but rather a point of departure. Like them, he appreciated Russell without becoming a disciple. Unlike them, Russell attacked him professionally and personally, even though I know of no instance where Strawson reacted in kind. Of course, those who haven't looked at Strawson's work in logic may think that "On Referring" is his only discussion of Russell. Others who somehow associate Strawson with ordinary language philosophers like Ryle and Austin have completely missed his vast, landmark legacies in logic and epistemology. I would

¹ Both letters were reprinted in Volume 11 of the *Collected Papers*, p. 603.

add that Ryle had great admiration for Russell, and Austin did in his early years. The dislike of ordinary language philosophy was more one-sided than the record bears out, and it was Russell who made it extremely personal.

Strawson had some wonderful things to say about other philosophers. We spoke of G.E. Moore, whom Strawson met once in old age. He has "the greatest, unqualified respect for Moore," whom he described as "intellectually virtuous." We also spoke of Ayer, who was "a good friend" and "great epistemologist. Strawson believes that Ayer will ultimately be regarded as "a better epistemologist than Russell." We spoke of Quine, "his decency, brilliance, and accessibility." We also discussed Kant, who Strawson sees as "the great modern philosopher."

BOOK REVIEW
BY MATTHEW McKEON
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA
OF ANTONY FLEW'S
PHILOSOPHICAL ESSAYS

Antony Flew, *Philosophical Essays*, edited by John Shosky, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998. ISBN 0-8476-8578-0 (hardback) and 0-8476-8579-9 (paperback).

This is a well-organized collection of ten essays written by Antony Flew that also includes an autobiographical sketch especially written for the book. The material is refreshing for both its clarity of exposition and depth of philosophical insight. This review is primarily a short report on several of the essays. My brief evaluative remarks are merely suggestive.

The first two essays, "Oxford Linguistic Philosophy" and "Philosophy and Language" present the well-known methodology characterized by Flew as 'Oxford Linguistic Philosophy' or 'philosophy of ordinary language'. The articles are excellent introductions to the ordinary language approach to philosophy.

Extensional characterizations of ordinary language philosophy which simply name alleged practitioners are more frequent than intensional characterizations. Indeed, as Dummett points out,¹ one is hard pressed to produce the uniquely defining characteristics of this approach. Certainly, the ordinary language approach to a philosophical issue places great emphasis on meticulous study of the uses and

¹ Michael Dummett, "Oxford Philosophy," in *Truth and Other Enigmas*, Harvard University Press, 1978, pp. 431-436.

usages of the key words and the terms logically associated with them. According to Flew, this is (quoting Austin), "if not the be and end all, at least the begin all of philosophy." (36) Indeed, if philosophy is conceptual inquiry and the only epistemic access to concepts is the understanding of the correct usage of the words through which these concepts are expressed (two claims accepted by Flew -- see 196), then the methods of ordinary language philosophy are paradigmatic of philosophical analysis. While many are skeptical of this study constituting proper philosophical analysis, it is common to regard attentiveness to ordinary language as at least the begin all of philosophy.

One may say that 'inattentiveness to language' is the mantra of critical study in the ordinary language style of philosophy. Flew writes that, "When philosophers are attacked for misusing an ordinary or even an extraordinary word...the point is that they [have] been somehow misled into misusing a word in a way which generates paradox, confusion, and perplexity." (33) Briefly, if the meaning of a word *X* is (or can be) taught by reference to paradigm cases, then there can be no valid skepticism of the existence of things of type *X*. Let *X* be 'free will' or 'knowledge,' and this style of argument is a means for claiming that the denials of free will and knowledge are meaningless.

A nice feature of this collection is the inclusion of several essays in which Professor Flew deftly applies the methodology sketched in the first two essays to a wide range of philosophically interesting issues. For example, in the popular "Theology and Falsification," Flew argues that in order for an individual to know the meaning of his assertion, he must be aware of circumstances which would falsify the assertion. The theist asserts that God exists. What would it take for him to withdraw the assertion? If the theist has no answer, it is doubtful that his assertion is meaningful to him. The force of Flew's thesis is, of course, that theists are unwilling to identify such circumstances in advance. Perhaps the theist need only be aware of what would count against (in the sense of conflict with) his assertion in order for it to be meaningful to him.¹

In "Against Indoctrination," Flew first defines 'indoctrination' as "the implanting, with the backing of some sort of special authority, of a firm conviction of the truth of doctrines either not known to be true or even known to be false." (46) The indoctrination of children is always morally wrong because "...it deprives the child (or at least tries) of the possibility of developing into a person with the capacity and the duty of making such fundamental life-shaping judgments for himself, according to his own conscience..." (51)

¹ See Basil Mitchell's response to Flew in *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, edited by Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre, Macmillan, 1955.

Flew then spends the second half of the essay arguing that Roman Catholic education is an institutionalized form of indoctrination and is, therefore, morally wrong. He makes the argument turn on the epistemological status of Church doctrine as 'not known to be true'. However, it appears that the alleged immorality of indoctrination turns on neither the epistemic status nor the actual truth-values of the relevant doctrines, but on the fact that they are forced upon youth who are not given a chance to make up their own minds. The gist of the problem is not the implanting of falsehoods, but the very implanting itself; it is this which turns youth into automata. Hence, the inference from *X* is a form of indoctrination to *X* is immoral does not depend on *X* satisfying the last third of Flew's definition of 'indoctrination'.

In "Locke and the Problem of Personal Identity," Flew's critique of Locke's account of personal identity focuses on Locke's inattentiveness to ordinary usage of person words. For example, Locke intends his account to be a descriptive analysis of 'same person'. Flew argues that 'person' is ordinarily used to refer to very special creatures of flesh and blood, and hence Locke is leaving ordinary usage and abandoning his descriptive analysis when he distinguishes persons from their physical bodies. Flew's criticism of Locke is developed into a positive consideration for the bodily criterion of personal identity: same body, same person. However, the problem with this criterion, perceived by Locke and not acknowledged by Flew in his essay, is that it fails to ground the individual's certainty of his identity prior to the recognition of his body. Self-consciousness makes the later recognition unnecessary in establishing one's identity.

Very quickly, "Private Images and Public Language" and "What Impressions of Necessity?" give the reader a taste of Flew's well-known scholarship in Hume Studies. "Communism: The Philosophical Foundations" argues that such foundations are shaky. Russell fans will like "Russell's Judgment on Bolshevism." In "Responding to Thrasymachus," Flew argues that in accordance with common usage of 'justice', the word cannot be defined in terms of the interests or prescriptions of any particular power group. Finally, Flew assesses the import of the cosmological question, 'Why is there something rather than nothing?', in "Stephen Hawking and the Mind of God."

To end on a methodological note, the significance of the common usage of terms in philosophical analysis is unclear. Russell's dis-satisfaction with those practicing 'Oxford philosophy' was based in part on his view that attentiveness to ordinary language encumbers philosophical analysis. In his critique of Strawson, Russell writes:

They are persuaded that common speech is good enough not only for daily life, but also for philosophy. I, on the contrary, am persuaded that common speech is full of vagueness and inaccuracy, and any attempt to be precise and accurate requires modification of common speech both as regards vocabulary and as regards syntax.¹

Interestingly, Flew's argument for his definition of 'indoctrination' departs from ordinary usage, appealing to considerations of economy, clarity, and utility. This is good in this case because "[ordinary] usage seems...to be somewhat untidy and even inconsistent...In so far as there is any such untidiness and inconsistency in present usage any definition determining a philosophically satisfactory concept of indoctrination must be to some extent prescriptive (or stipulative), as opposed to purely descriptive (or lexical)." (47) This is a somewhat mitigated emphasis on ordinary usage from an ordinary language philosopher! But then we must attend to previous usage because:

(I) examination of existing usage may well reveal subtleties of which the wiser reformer will wish to take into account;

(II) it is foolish unnecessarily to try to go against the grain of well-established speech habits;

(III) a reformed concept can only be any sort of concept of indoctrination in so far as there really is some substantial overlap between new and the old use of the term.

Are (I)-(III) good reasons for always attending to previous usage in philosophical analysis? (I) is fairly harmless, nothing in Russell's remark denies it. With respect to (II), it is far from obvious that philosophical analysis should be steered by the speech habits of the common man. As Russell points out, they are not relevant to the study of, say, light in physics. Furthermore, there is tension between (II) and (III): in those cases where usage of the term expressing the old concept is particularly untidy the overlap between the old and the new should not be substantial.²

At any rate, the import of (III) as a reason to attend to the common usage of terms

¹ Bertrand Russell, *My Philosophical Development*, Routledge, 1959, p. 78.

² Indeed, there is not substantial overlap between Flew's definition of "indoctrination" and the one in my Webster's *New World Dictionary*, which defines the word as "the instruction of doctrines, theories, or beliefs, as of a sect."

in philosophical analysis is unclear. For example, I do not see how the claim that there is substantial overlap between Flew's definition of indoctrination and the ordinary one adds in any way to his persuasive argument that indoctrination is always wrong. Let Flew's definition be for the new word, 'schmedtrination'. Then we may argue that Catholic education is morally wrong because it is a form of schmedtrination. What exactly is lost from Flew's original argument?

In conclusion, this stimulating collection is of value to novice and expert alike. To the mind of this reader, it prompts serious reflection on the nature of philosophical methodology and on the web of issues connected to this topic. Surely, how philosophy should be practiced is a central concern to anybody working in the field.

BOOK REVIEW
BY BOB BARNARD
UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS
OF
JAN DEJNOZKA'S
THE ONTOLOGY OF THE ANALYTIC TRADITION
AND ITS ORIGIN:
REALISM IN FREGE, RUSSELL, WITTMENSTEIN,
AND QUINE

Jan Dejnozka, *The Ontology of the Analytic Tradition and its Origin: Realism in Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, and Quine*, Littlefield Adams Books, 1996. ISBN 0-8226-3053-1 (paperback).

The repudiation of the metaphysics of substance is a received dogma for contemporary analytic philosophers. Ever since Berkeley and Hume, the notion that there are in some sense deep ideal real essences of things has been subject to varying degrees of scorn. In this book, Dejnozka argues that this dogma has been accepted too quickly and uncritically. He advances the thesis that, instead of being exiled, substance -- robustly metaphysical Aristotelian substance -- has been, perhaps unwittingly, retained by analytic philosophy under the guise of identity (e.g., Quine's "No entity without identity"), even in the face of currently fashionable claims to conceptual and ontological relativity. The author claims that there is a fundamental approach to ontology shared by all the "great analytics": modified realism, which holds that there are both "real distinctions and distinctions in reason," "real and rational (or linguistic) identities." Thus, the view advanced seems to be that there is at least one "real" or "self-identical" entity, and that the entities countenanced by shifting conceptualizations of object, or number, are in

some sense modifications of the first entity.

Dejnozka's broader strategy emerges in the global structure of the text. The first chapter introduces the particular conceptions of ontology, metaphysics, and realism, including modified realism. More particularly, it is in the context of these preliminaries that the author analyzes Aristotle's conception of substance in terms of seven themes which ultimately reduce to one: the unity or identity of substances. The second and third chapters deal with Frege. Chapter Two considers the question of whether Frege is an ontological relativist. Chapter Three develops a reading of Frege according to which objects must be identifiable. Chapters Four and Five focus on Russell, the former looking into Russell's basic "robust" conception of reality, and latter considering the development of Russell's metaphysics over time, and through his "forty-four 'No entity without identity' theories. Chapter Six returns to Aristotle, arguing that Aristotelian metaphysics manifests a form of conceptual relativity, e.g., that Socrates is a man qua rational animal, but that Socrates is an animal qua animal, where what a thing is said to be varies with the specific modifications of substance one imagines. Finally, the seventh chapter draws the several threads together to argue that if identity is sufficient for existence, specifically the existence of substance (theses developed in chapters 1, 3, 4, and 5) and if the fact that a view entails conceptual relativity does not entail the denial of substance (chapter 6), then both critically and analogically, Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, and Quine may all plausibly be taken as espousing, like Aristotle, varieties of modified realism.

I feel I must briefly comment before proceeding on the strangeness of Dejnozka's use of some terms, for instance, 'theory'. The author advances an interpretation according to which each distinct expression by a philosopher, even briefly quoted passages, of a "no entity with identity" thesis counts as a so-called theory. To me, it would have seemed far more natural, and far clearer, to have pointed to 44 instances where Russell endorse the "no entity without identity" thesis, rather than foisting 44 competing theories upon Russell. I say this because it is not clear in context whether the reader needs to keep track of each theory. This may be a case where moderation demands that parsimony should prevail over full precision.

Throughout the text, Dejnozka exhibits both a broad appreciation of ontological issues, and an even deeper appreciation of the primary and secondary literature. Indeed, any exhaustive assessment of Dejnozka's scholarship would far outrun the scope of this review. Instead, I wish merely to raise a traditional objection to Dejnozka's definition of existence. I think my worry can take two forms. First, following Russell and Quine, we could try to understand the claim that identity is the criterion of existence as the claim that if anything exists, then it is identifiable. But a canonical (in Quine's sense) expression of this claim would require that we existentially quantify over some collection of objects in order to determine if they have the property of (self-) identity. Since this does not seem an entirely

implausible exercise (the ascription of identity to an object does not strike one as obviously redundant), one might infer that identity is merely a sufficient condition for existence, but not a necessary condition. Further, one cannot legitimately argue from the conceptual claim that all existing things are self-identical, to the existential claim that something self-identical exists. Indeed, to reverse the force of Quine's famous argument against Meinong, there is no identity condition for subsisting possible fat men in doorways, therefore if subsistence counts as existential then existence is not synonymous with identity. Second, following G.E. Moore, we might ask 'Does what is (self-) identical exist?' According to Moore's famous treatment of such questions, if the previous question 'Does what is self-identical exist?' is recognized as obviously affirmative, then the question is closed. Alternatively, if our question, like the question 'Is pleasure good?', does not have an obvious affirmative answer, then the question is open and the definition should be rejected as there is no necessary conceptual connection between the two terms of the proposed definition. Both arguments weigh in against the necessary conceptual linkage of existence and identity. In the end, however, this is not a real indictment of Dejnozka's book. Rather, it is only a prima facie case that the view he attributes to the "great analytics" begs certain questions. Still, I am in total agreement with Dejnozka that a serious discussion of these issues is needed.

In conclusion, it is more than fair to say that in this book Dejnozka offers a daring re-reading of the analytic tradition which, if it stands in the face of inevitable scholarly criticism, could force both a long overdue reassessment of how analytic philosophy since Frege relates to the historical and contemporary continental traditions, and a reconsideration of the prevailing analytic conception of metaphysics as dependent on semantics. However, I found Dejnozka's prose to be very demanding, often so dense and prone to digress that the continuity of the main argument suffered. Though for my part I am prepared to forgive this stylistic failing because so many challenging ideas and innovative interpretations await the earnest reader on each page.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR
TREVOR BANKS

via e-mail
August 10, 1998

To The Editor:

I enjoyed Cliff Henke's video review of *The Great War and the Shaping of the Twentieth Century* (BRS Quarterly, No. 98, May, 1998) and agree entirely with the sentiments he expresses.

Mr. Henke rightly notes that the poet Siegfried Sassoon wrote "some of the most eloquent opposition to the war." But in a review "examining a work that touches on themes raised by Russell's life and work" it is surprising that Mr. Henke doesn't mention Russell's involvement.

Sassoon asked Russell (in July, 1917) to help him draft a denunciation of the war. This provided Russell with "another opportunity to act unilaterally and potentially, to bring off a very valuable propaganda coup," according to Ray Monk in his recent biography (*Bertrand Russell: The Spirit of Solitude*, Jonathan Cape, 1996, p. 500.).

Russell complied with Sassoon's request, but their combined effort to embarrass the War Office was unfortunately thwarted by novelist Robert Graves, Sassoon's C.O. For a detailed account, see Ronald Clark's biography of Russell (*The Life of Bertrand Russell*, Knopf, 1975), especially pages 320-24.

Sincerely,

Trevor Banks

RECENT MEMBERSHIP PROFILES

Name: *Albert P.D. Ku, Ph.D.*

Address: *5430 Birdwood Road, #412, Houston, Texas 77096, e-mail pdku@aol.com*

First Book of Russell's I read: *Why I Am Not A Christian*

Last Book of Russell's I read: *The Conquest of Happiness*

Favorite Russell Quotation: *"To like many people spontaneously and without effort is perhaps the greatest of all sources of personal happiness." The Conquest of Happiness*

Reason(s) for Joining BRS: *Bertrand Russell is my first teacher on rational thinking, and I am deeply grateful for that.*

Recent Applications of Russell's Views to Your Own Life: *"The man who can center his thoughts and hopes upon something transcending self can find a certain peace in the ordinary troubles of life which is impossible to the pure egoist."*

Additional Comments: *When I first came from Taiwan to the United States as a graduate student of civil engineering in 1993, I was persuaded to join a Christian church. Soon after I came across Russell's book Why I Am Not A Christian. Nearly one year later, I decided not to continue going to church. Now when I occasionally hear the interesting comments uttered by the Christian Coalition and other religious right organizations, I know I made the right decision. I enjoy my current rationality and sanity, with a lot of thanks to Russell's writings.*

Name: *Charles L. Weyand*

Address: *17066 Los Modelos Street, Fountain Valley, California 92708*

First Book of Russell's I Read: *The ABC of Relativity and The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell, both concurrently in the late 1950s or early 1960s.*

Last Book of Russell's I read: *(can't remember)*

Favorite Russell Quotation: *words to the effect that "There are two commandments: 1) Love the truth and 2) Be kind." I don't recall from which*

work I read this or the exact wording.

Reason(s) for Joining BRS: *Bertrand Russell's clear thinking and command of the English language.*

Recent Applications of Russell's Views to Your Own Life: *Clear Thought! Always!*

Additional Comments: *Should have another West Coast meeting. I'll try to attend.*

**THE BERTRAND RUSSELL SOCIETY
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John Shosky
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