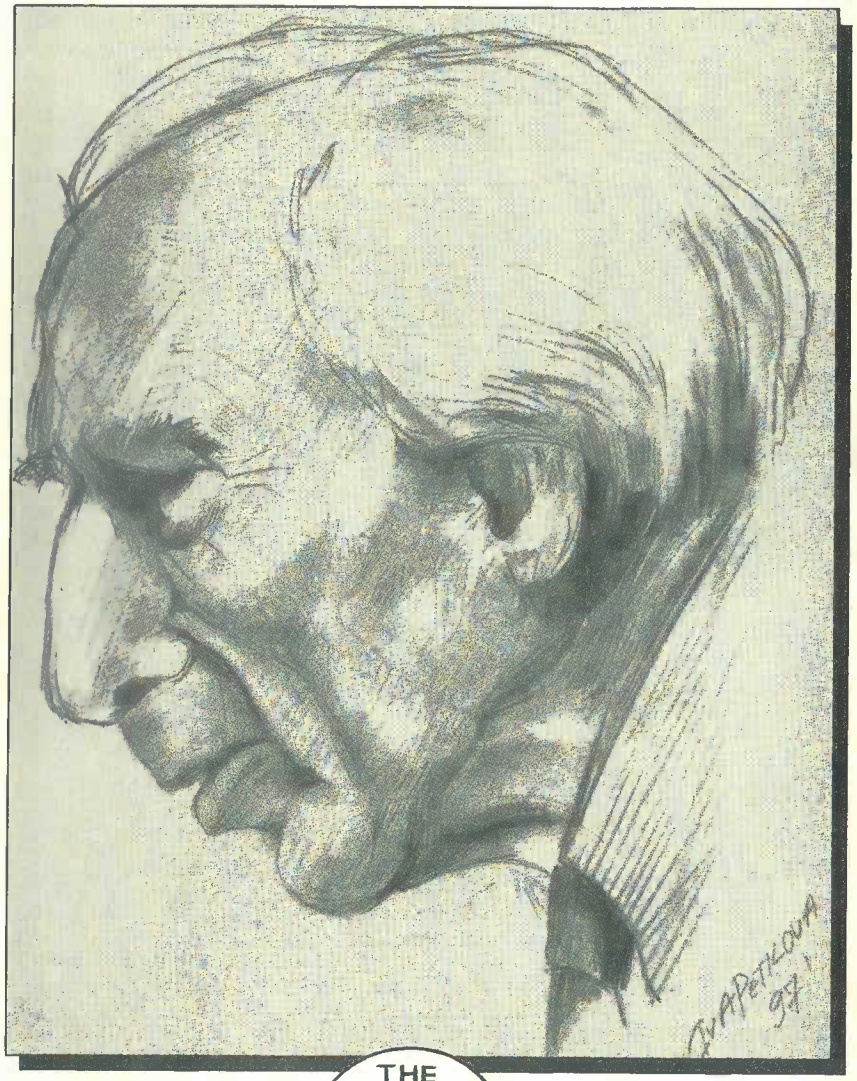
The Bertrand Russell Society

May 1997 Quarterly No. 94



THE BRS

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The Bertrand Russell Society

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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."

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THE BERTRAND RUSSELL SOCIETY
QUARTERLY
Newsletter of the Bertrand Russell Society

May 1997 **No. 94**

FROM THE EDITOR

John E. Shosky, Ph.D.
American University

Please allow me to introduce myself as the new editor of the *BRS Quarterly*. I am pleased to be able to serve the society in this capacity. I look forward to providing you with information, comments, stories, and reviews concerning the life and thought of this century's greatest philosopher.

For past readers, the *Quarterly* has been a dramatic change from the old *Newsletter*. I personally approved of the new direction taken by Michael Rockler, immediate past editor, but I also found the *Newsletter* to be a warm and accessible link to other members. During my tenure as editor, I hope to combine the best of both approaches.

I have begun by commissioning a cover drawing by Iva Petkova, a talented and well-regarded animator and artist from Sophia, Bulgaria. She is the daughter of one of Bulgaria's most famous artists, Ilya Petkov. Iva's fine drawing will be a welcome addition to the Russell corpus. In order to indicate consistency over the four issues within each calendar year, I will use a commissioned work four times, changing the color of the *Quarterly* with each issue. So, in 1998, I will commission a new drawing for the year.

I ask you to fill out and return the membership profile. In future issues we will feature three profiles, highlighting the members of the BRS and the many reasons for making "Bertie" a part of our lives.

I have also added a video review to each issue. Here I have called upon the services of a longtime friend and movie critic, Clifford Henke. Cliff is not a professional movie critic. He is an opinionated, knowledgeable, thoughtful, and funny guy. This issue he has reviewed "Tom & Viv." In the next issue, he will take up "Carrington." I urge you to rent these movies because of their interest in Russell, his time, and his circle of friends. Each movie will be selected because of its topical relevance to Russell.

I would also like to increase the number of book reviews. This is vital for two reasons. First, the number of fine works on Russell is rapidly increasing, sure evidence of a "Russell Renaissance." Second, I believe it would serve a tremendous educational function if we could use these pages to share our thoughts on what we read. For example, I would be very interested to know what Nick Griffin thought of Grayling's recent survey of Russell, or what John Lenz has to say about Martha Nussbaum's work on literature and the law. We have a deep, powerful braintrust in the BRS -- hundreds of well-educated, compassionate, and intellectual activists. The *Quarterly* should be a forum for the exchange of ideas

-- a marketplace of the mind.

To assist me in gathering and editing materials, I have added two assistant editors: Robert Barnard and Catherine Kendig. Robert lives in Memphis and is finishing a Ph.D. in philosophy at the University of Memphis. He is a former graduate student of mine at American University. I wanted to include Bob because he is unbelievably brilliant and on top of cutting-edge trends in philosophy. Catherine is also a former and very successful student at American, and is now beginning graduate study at King's College, University of London. Catherine has repeatedly worked with me in the past, producing minor miracle achievements in the most difficult and thankless circumstances. She will be well-placed to help us generate more interest in the BRS in the United Kingdom and Europe. I would like to find an assistant editor in Asia. Any ideas?

In the next issue I will offer an extensive report of the recent annual meeting. But here I will indicate that there were some changes in the constitution of our society officers. I stepped down as Vice President and was replaced by the energetic and gung-ho Jan Eisler. Longtime Secretary Don Jackanicz was succeeded by one of the greatest names in Russellian scholarship, Ken Blackwell. John Lenz remains President and Michael Rockler the Chairman of the Board. Lee Eisler is still Vice President/Information Emeritus and the always capable Dennis Darland still guards the treasury. The BRS is in good hands for the coming year.

I hope you enjoy the *Quarterly*.

John Shosky

BERTRAND RUSSELL'S NIGHTMARES

David F. T. Rodier, Ph.D.
American University

In the modern period certain political and ethical topics regularly have been discussed by philosophers in narrative prose as the examples of Thomas More, Francis Bacon and Cyrano de Bergerac readily show. In the Enlightenment while some writers like Dr. Johnson and Rousseau continued the use of the philosophic topics which were primarily ethical or political, others - most notably Voltaire - developed the philosophic tale as a vehicle for the treatment of other kinds of philosophic topics including metaphysics. Contemporary readers are

perhaps most familiar with Voltaire's Micromegas and Candide as examples of the philosophic prose tale which explores metaphysical issues; however, the genre of the philosophic tale has continued to be a significant vehicle into the twentieth century as the well-known instances of Luis Borges and Bertrand Russell show.

Unfortunately, Russell's various prose fictions have been underrated, and even largely ignored by even his more devoted readers. I think this neglect is largely unjustified. Perhaps the neglect is due to an unconscious but deep-seated prejudice against fiction. Although Russell's followers readily accept his strictures against Plato in the areas of mathematical and political philosophy, when it comes to judging the value of Russell's own works they seem to show an uneradicated Platonic prejudice against the makers of fictions, even if the maker in questions is their own favorite philosopher. It would be ironic if such an unacknowledged Platonism actually is the source of the belief that if Russell really is doing philosophy, then he should write technical philosophic tales.

This neglect of Russell's fiction cannot be due to their style. It is obviously the case that some twentieth-century philosophers have written tedious works of fiction in an attempt to make popular theories turgidly, but unclearly, developed in their prose treatises - the examples of J. P. Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir come immediately to mind. However, unlike these continental philosophers, Russell's fiction is as clearly written as his philosophy. His fiction exhibits the same brilliance of style and sharp wit which his readers have come to expect in any of his writings. So the neglect of Russell's fiction can only be due to its form. However, philosophers trained in the tradition of English philosophy should remember that there are other reasons for a philosopher to write fiction than the effort to secure a popular hearing for theories which are not presented intelligibly elsewhere. As David Hume reminds us:

> Any point of doctrine, which is so obvious, that it scarcely admits of dispute, but at the same time so important, that it cannot be too often inculcated, seems to require some such method of handling it; where the novelty of the manner may compensate the triteness of the subject, where the vivacity of conversation may enforce the precept, and where the variety of lights, presented by various personages and characters, may appear neither tedious nor redundant.
>
> Any question of philosophy, on the other hand, which is so obscure and uncertain that human reason can reach no fixed determination with regard to it - if it should be treated at all - seems to lead us naturally into the style of dialogue and conversation.[1]

Among Russell's various fictions, Nightmares [2] stands out as a work which almost perfectly fits Hume's description. The topics of the Nightmares perfectly fit Hume's requirement. The majority of the philosophic topics treated, whether ethical or logical, are ones which Russell, at least, would regard as so obvious that they "scarcely admit of dispute." The philosophic precepts, as Russell presents them, are "neither tedious nor redundant" since each tale is carefully organized and sharply focused. Each "nightmare" is short - most running to only two or three pages. The individuals having the nightmares range from historical figures Mr. Bowdler, Stalin, Eisenhower, Dean Acheson, and Dr. Vulpes (who seems to be a thinly disguised Klaus Fuchs) to individuals creatively named by Russell but identified in the titles of the stories only by their occupations (the metaphysician, existentialist, mathematician, fisherman and theologian) to the Queen of Sheba and a psychoanalyst who remains anonymous. In terms of the philosophic issues presented, the nightmares may be grouped as dealing with (1) political philosophy (the nightmares of Eisenhower, Dean Acheson, and Dr. Southport Vulpes); (2) ethics (those of the Queen of Sheba, Mr. Bowdler, the psychoanalyst and Stalin); and (3) metaphysics or logic (the nightmares of the metaphysician, the existentialist, the mathematician and the theologian).

Each of the "nightmares" appears to have the same format: a specifically identified person has a dream in which his ruling passion is reflected in an exaggerated form and a philosophic point is made. This accords with Russell's own account of the tales:

> The following 'Nightmares' might be called 'Signposts to Sanity'. Every isolated passion is, in isolation, insane' sanity may be defined as a synthesis of insanities. Every dominant passion generates a dominant fear, the fear of its nonfulfillment. Every dominant fear generates a nightmare, sometimes in the form of an explicit and conscious fanaticism, sometimes in a paralyzing timidity, sometimes in an unconscious or subconscious terror which finds expression only in dreams (p. 211).

However, a careful reading of these tales and an analysis of the specific differences in narrative structure reveals a rather more complex presentation than a simple condemnation of fanaticism or paralyzing timidity. The different narrative structures which Russell adopts in presenting the various nightmares allows him to make far more complex philosophic points than the simple recommendation of 'Signposts to Sanity'. The importance of narrative structure

can be seen by noting the different ways the various nightmares are narrated and the quite different ways in which the various tales are concluded. As we shall see, the differences in narrator and the differences in conclusion have quite different functions in understanding Russell's philosophic points and how he makes them in the various tales.

First of all, from a formal point of view, the narrator of the various nightmares differs. Of the twelve tales, five have a brief description of the character and then the dream is directly narrated. In five other stories, the entire tale is presented from the point of view of the omniscient narrator and the dream sequence is part of the tale. The remaining two tales have a brief introduction describing the protagonist and then the nightmare is repeated as it had been told to the narrator reminiscent of the earlier Platonic dialogues. The function of these different ways of presenting the nightmares seems to be used only to allow Russell to maintain the reader's interest in the narrative by varying what would otherwise be the too rigid formula which his introduction leads the reader to expect. The variation in narrators maintains the reader's interest and allows Russell to make his implicit but crucial philosophic points in a variety of ways.

The variation in the ending of each tale is of far greater importance. The way Russell concludes each tale has a philosophic rather than merely rhetorical significance. In nine of the twelve tales the narrators awake from their nightmares. Significantly, in three crucial tales the dream never ends. The difference is not a simple one of the narrators who awaken are to be seen as those who have learned the lesson of their nightmares. While some of the characters have profited by their dreams, others have not. Certainly the existentialist who abandons philosophy as he understood it, for what we must assume is to be a purely literary career, and the metaphysician, who reforms his language along Russellian logical lines, are completely changed by their nightmares. Perhaps even more significant is the mathematician who has his firm rejection of Platonic realism triumphantly vindicated by his nightmare. But other characters who awaken seem not to have profited at all by their experience. We are not at all sure what the Queen of Sheba has learned from her dream. The theologian entirely misses the point of his dream. Even more to the point is the case of Stalin. In the introduction we are told:

> Stalin, after copious draughts of vodka mixed with red pepper, had fallen asleep in his chair. Molotov, Malenkov and Beria, with fingers on their lips, warned off intrusive domestics who might interfere with the great man's repose. While they guarded him, he had a dream . . . (p. 240)

The conclusion of the tale shows Stalin quite unchanged by his nightmare:

> In a paroxysm of rage Stalin awoke. For a moment the rage continued and vented itself upon Molotov, Malenkov and Beria, who trembled and turned pale. But as the clouds of sleep cleared away, his rage evaporated, and he found contentment in a deep draught of vodka and red pepper. (p. 242)

But if the difference between the tales in which the dreamers awaken and the tales where the dream does not end are not to be explained in terms of whether or not the dreamers profit from their nightmares, then we must look elsewhere for the reason for the difference in endings. A clue may be found in the occupations of the dreamers. The dreamers who never awaken are: Mr. Bowdler, and unnamed psychoanalyst, and President Eisenhower. Unlike all the other characters in the collection these dreamers do not return to the normalcy of waking life. Dr. Bowdler dreams that his wife overhears the forbidden word "parthenogenesis" - a word which his censorship holds unsuited for a female ear. In the effort to discover the definition of this unknown word Mrs. Bowdler reads the unexpurgated version of Shakespeare. The result is that ultimately she is "seized with an ungovernable frenzy, and had to be taken to the asylum, shouting Shakespearean obscenities to the whole street as she was borne away. (p. 221)" The tale concludes with Mr. Bowdler "asking his Maker for what sin he was thus punished. Unlike you and me, he was unable to find the answer. (p. 221)"

In Eisenhower's nightmare McCarthy and Malenkov conclude a pact which established peace between the United States and the Soviet Union by dividing the world and imposing total control over the population and a total censorship of books and ideas. The result is an enduring peace and a new world order in which there "was much material comfort, but there was no art, no new thought, and little new science. Nuclear physics of course was wholly forbidden. All books dealing with it were burnt, and persons showing any knowledge of it were condemned to forced labour. Some misguided romantics looked back with regret to the centuries when there had been great individuals, but if they were prudent they kept their regret to themselves. (p. 247)"

"The Psychoanalyst's nightmare" is the most complex of the three tales in which the dreamer does not awaken. In it we are presented with a meeting of the "Limbo Rotary Club" attended by Hamlet, Lear, Macbeth, Othello, Mark Antony and Romeo. All have been successfully psychoanalyzed and now are not the characters which Shakespeare depicted but rather are normal well-adjusted Rotarians. As each tells how much better off he now is than he would have been

if he were the "maladjusted" figure Shakespeare presented, a bust of Shakespeare comments on the new, well-adjusted person with lines from the appropriate play. In the end we discover that the voice speaking through the bust of Shakespeare is that of the characters' psychoanalyst who has been condemned to Hell to "remain imprisoned in an endless vortex of insane commonplace" for "preferring subservience to glory; for thinking better of servility than of splendour; for seeking smoothness rather than the lightning-flash; for fearing thunder so much that I preferred a damp unending drizzle" (p. 228).

The common thread which seems to be present in each of these stories is that the danger represented by the protagonist - sexual repression in the case of Mr. Bowdler, political regimentation in the case of Eisenhower, and imposition of a bland normalcy in the case of the psychoanalyst - all are very real tendencies in contemporary culture as Russell saw it. In these cases the nightmares were the waking reality. For this reason, those who dream these particular nightmares never awaken.

If I am correct in my analysis of the reason for the different ending in these three stories, I will have shown that Russell is making more philosophic points in these stories than may be immediately apparent. In doing this I will also have made at least a plausible case for reading Russell's fiction as something other that works which merely repeat what Russell elsewhere states more "philosophically". I may even have raised the suspicion that Russell's fiction contains interesting developments and presentations of topics about which Russell felt deeply and reasoned cogently. At the very least I hope that I may have persuaded at least some of Russell's readers that his fictional writings have been unjustly neglected.

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[1] Hume, David *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* ed. Richard M. Popkin. (Hackett Publishing Company. Indianapolis, 1980) p.1

[2] In my discussion I shall include all of the stories Russell wrote under this name rather than limiting myself to those published in the 1954 collection. I shall use the text and quote the pagination of Barry Feinberg's *The Collected Stories of Bertrand Russell* (Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1972)

RUSSELL'S PARADOX AND RUSSELL'S ERROR

David Rafferty

In *The Principles of Mathematics*, Bertrand Russell misstated the paradox that bears his name. Russell drew the proper conclusion from his flawed discussion, and he could have corrected the mistake simply by adding two words: "do not." Nevertheless, the error should be noted to avoid any unnecessary confusion about an already complex topic.

Russell's paradox arises from certain predicates, class-concepts, and classes. Although those special cases appear unobjectionable, Russell discovered that they lead to contradiction. Thus, one must conclude that the apparent predicate, class-concept, or class in question is not, in fact, a predicate, class-concept, or class. Russell stated the contradiction in terms of all three categories. The discussion of the contradiction in terms of classes bears the flaw. In section 101 of *Principles*, Russell wrote

> [l]et us . . . attempt the exact statement of the contradiction itself. We have first the statement in terms of predicates, which has been given already. If x be a predicate, x may or may not be predicable of itself. Let us assume that "not-predicable of itself" is a predicate. Then to suppose either that this predicate is, or that it is not, predicable of itself, is self-contradictory. The conclusion, in this case, seems obvious: "not-predicable of oneself" is not a predicate.
>
> Let us now state the same contradiction in terms of class-concepts. A class-concept may or may not be a term of its own extension. "Class-concept which is not a term of its own extent" appears to be a class-concept. But if it is a term of its own extension, it is a class-concept which is not a term of its own extension, and *vice versa*. Thus we must conclude, against appearances, that "class-concept which is not a term of its own extension" is not a class-concept.
>
> In terms of classes the contradiction appears even more extraordinary. A class as one may be a term of itself as many. Thus the class of all classes is a class; the class of all the terms that are not men is not a man, and so on. Do all the classes that have this property form a class? If so, is it as one a member of

itself as many or not? If it is, then it is one of the classes which, as ones, are not members of themselves as many and *vice versa*. Thus we must conclude again that the classes which as ones are not members of themselves as many do not form a class -- or rather, that they do not form a class as one, for the argument cannot show that they do not form a class as many.[1]

Let us now examine each formulation of the contradiction to discover Russell's error and its solution.

In section 101 of *Principles*, Russell first discussed the contradiction in terms of predicates. Russell described the contradiction in terms of predicates in two other places: section 78 of *Principles* and his first letter to Frege.[2] In all three cases, Russell considered predicates that are *not* predicable of themselves. Russell supposed that those predicates form a class with a defining predicate. He then asked whether or not that defining predicate itself belongs to the class. Both alternatives, Russell discovered, lead to self-contradiction. Russell concluded that the predicate "*not*-predicable of oneself" is not in fact a predicate.

Russell next considered the contradiction in terms of class-concepts. He reached a similar conclusion: "class-concept which is *not* a term of its own extension" is not a class-concept. The problematic predicate and class-concept he considered share the crucial feature, we can say, of being *not*-self-applicable: the predicate is *not* predicable of itself and the class-concept is *not* a member of its own extension.

Russell's third formulation of the contradiction is in terms of classes. He reached the same conclusion that an apparently unobjectionable entity, in this case a certain class, cannot be what it seems to be. Russell's exact words are important here. The seventh sentence of the third paragraph of section 101 states: "[t]hus we must conclude again that the classes which as ones are *not* members of themselves as many do not form a class -- or rather, that they do not form a class as one, for the argument cannot show that they do not form a class as many."[3,4] The problematic case again has the feature of *non*-self-applicability. Russell's conclusion is absolutely correct. But the sentences leading up to this conclusion do not support it.

The second through sixth sentences of the third paragraph of section 101 state: "(2) A class as one may be a term of itself as many. (3) Thus the class of all classes is a class; the class of all the terms that are not men is not a man, and so on. (4) Do all the classes that have this property form a class? (5) If so, is it as one a member of itself as many or not? (6) If it is, then it is one of the classes which, as ones, are not members of themselves as many, and *vice versa*."[5] The sixth sentence would be absolutely correct if it were about the class of classes that

are *not* members of themselves. But the sixth sentence is absolutely wrong because it is in fact about class of classes that *are* members of themselves.

The "it" that is the subject of the sixth sentence refers to the class of classes under consideration in sentence (4). But from sentences (2) and (3), it is clear that the class of classes in sentence (4) is the class of classes that *are* as one terms of themselves as many. For a moment, let us take Russell at his word and consider all of the classes that as one are terms of themselves as many (for example, the class of all classes is a class, and the class of all the terms that are not men is not a man). Imagine that all of the classes with that property form the class *w*. Is *w* as one a member of itself as many? If it is, then it is. If it is not, then it is not. That is not a contradiction. That is a tautology. The only thing paradoxical about that conclusion is that Russell did not reach it himself.

What is going on here? Clearly, Russell made an editorial error. Russell could have corrected the error by adding the words "do not" to the fourth sentence of the paragraph: "do all the classes that *do not* have this property form a class?" If he had done so, sentence (4) would have asked about the existence of the class of *non*-self-applicable classes, sentence (6) would have been correct, and the conclusion in sentence (7) would have followed.

Nothing that has been said here in any way detracts from the power or scope of Russell's paradox. Russell drew the correct conclusion about classes even in the flawed paragraph. And in many places, including elsewhere in *Principles* itself, he correctly explained the complicated reasoning leading to the conclusion. Hopefully, by pointing out and correcting a minor editorial error in the middle of a passage of some significance, this has helped fellow students who have also struggled to understand Russell's paradox.

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[1] Russell, Bertrand. *The Principles of Mathematics* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1903), p. 102. The second edition has the same pagination.

[2] The two logicians corresponded for nearly a decade. All but two of their letters are published in: Gabriel, Gottfried, et al, eds., *Gottlob Frege: Philosophical and Mathematical Correspondence* (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1980).

[3] Ibid., p. 102. Emphasis added.

[4] Likewise, in his letter to Frege, Russell wrote that "there is no class of those classes which, are *not* members of themselves." See: Gabriel, Gottfried, et al, eds., *Gottlob Frege: Philosophical and Mathematical Correspondence* (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1980) p. 131. Emphasis added.

[5] Russell, Bertrand. *The Principles of Mathematics* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1903), p. 102.

THE CARL SAGAN MEMORIAL
Warren Allen Smith

An atheist's memorial service held in a cathedral? Yes, Carl Sagan's was held February 27th at New York City's Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, the one featuring a statue of God (a bearded Caucasian with His arms outstretched) on the front facade. The former dean, James Parke Morton referred to "Carl the great atheist," and Sagan's non-theism was also cited by Harry H. Pritchett, the present dean, and Joan Brown Campbell, the general secretary of the National Council of Churches in the U.S.A.. The cathedral was chosen because of Sagan's record of having successfully worked with church leaders on environmental matters.

MIT physicist Philip Morrison, who is confined to an electric wheelchair, related how at the age of six Sagan had been told that you can always add one to a number, that Carl had tested this by laboriously writing all the numbers from one to 1,000, stopping only because he had to sleep.

Sagan's curiosity never diminished, for he went on to solve the mysteries of the high temperature of Venus (i.e., a massive greenhouse effect), the seasonal changes on Mars (i.e., windblown dust), and the reddish haze of Titan (i.e., complex organic molecules).

Harvard paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould, a member with Sagan of the International Academy of Humanism, remarked that unlike the Brooklyn garment worker's son who turned his eyes upward to the skies, he as a boy in Queens had turned his eyes downward to the ground. He added that the two New Yorkers had not known each other until much later. Ending an eloquent summary of how important Sagan had been to the entire scientific community, as well as the world's other peoples, Gould paraphrased Longfellow, saying Sagan had turned the spheres and left no hell below.

Roald Sagdeev, who had been Gorbachev's adviser and Director of the USSR's Space Research Institute, called Sagan a citizen of the world, one who was against the false promises of the Star Wars defense, and said "the Cold War was ended because of Carl Sagan and his friends."

Other speakers included Irwin Rediener, a pediatrician-friend who called attention to Carl's passion, humor, and forgiveness. Neil deGrasse Tyson, Director of New York City's Hayden Planetarium, told of Sagan's consideration when, as a young black college student, he had first gone to Cornell for an interview. Frank H. T. Rhodes, who had been President of Cornell University during much of the time Sagan headed Cornell's Laboratory for Planetary Studies, called Carl "a scientist but a humanist at heart," one who was comfortable with

philosophy.

One of Carl's daughters, Sasha, described how her father had taught logic, critical reasoning, and (to the large audience's amusement) the importance of questioning authority. Carl's son, Jeremy, said that his agnostic father was a warrior for the world, an avid anti-racist, an evolutionist rather than a creationist, and one who disapproved of anyone who masked ignorance by using jargon.

Carl's wife, Ann Druyan, Secretary of the Federation of American Scientists, told of his and her exuberance at having included an interstellar message along with Bach, Beethoven, and other music in two NASA Voyager spacecrafts now beyond the outer solar system. At a speed of 40,000 miles per hour, the objects are traveling in space and have a projected life of a billion years.

Vice-President Al Gore, noted that he the believer and Carl, the non-believer, had no problems whatsoever working together upon the behalf of Earth's environment. The two were instrumental in getting scientific and religious leaders to unite on issues of environmental protection. Carl had shown him we are no longer central to the universe, that therefore we must do something significant if "the blue dot" as seen from space is to flourish. Gore was both folksy and eloquent in relating his warm memories of Sagan.

The most eloquent of all, however, was Carl Sagan himself. A taped excerpt of his "Pale Blue Dot: A Vision of the Human Future in Space" resounded over the loudspeakers, reverberating throughout the nave, the transepts, the sacristy, the apse.

A LETTER FROM INDIA
Chandrakala Padia, Ph.D.

Dear Professor Rockler:

This makes us extremely happy to inform you that the B.R.S.B.C. held its annual conference on December 28, 1996 with immense zeal and fervour.

A number of celebrated intellectuals, journalist, dignitaries and students attended the meeting and took part in the succeeding question-answer session. The outstanding point which must be mentioned here is that a huge number of people who are not acquainted with Russell evinced a deep enthusiasm to hear the key address delivered by Dr. Arun Shourie, an internationally esteemed journalist

and scholar who has become a paradigm of commitment to human rights and justice.

The message conveyed by the eminent speaker on this occasion reiterated the value of selfless work for the suffering people in society. He stressed the need of fusing such acts of service with an intense sense of love and compassion. The need of the day is to volunteer one's entire capacity to social welfare even if one has to make the effort on a lonely path.

Mr. Shourie referred to the mode of action adopted by B. Russell and Mahatma Gandhi who have been identified as the lonely men of the century because of their effort to translate their revolutionary ideas into action with utmost sincerity.

Speaking on this occasion, the Speaker highlighted this acute hardship of the disabled and handicapped children in our world who needed our sympathy and help. In this context he cited some outstanding instances of the totally committed people serving the cause of spastic children almost single-handedly. The topic of his lecture was: "What a Lone Individual Can Do in India Today" and the speaker did full justice to it by stimulating the whole gathering.

I am sending herewith the bilingual newsletter published by Benaras Chapter along with other members have worked on this newsletter very hard. The cost of each copy is only $3. I request you all to purchase as many copies as possible. This will help the Society in recovering the cost spent on publishing this newsletter. Since this newsletter is bilingual, it will reach a number of Hindi speaking people in India. Kindly order copies for other members.

I shall miss you all on the occasion of the annual conference. Kindly remember me to all the members present on this occasion. Also thank them for electing me one of the Directors of the Society. Let me give you some happy news! I have now joined as Professor. With love and warm personal regards,

Sincerely Yours,

Chandrakala Padia
Director, Bertrand Russell Society
Benaras Chapter
India

"Tom & Viv" (Miramax, 1995)
LOST OPPORTUNITIES HERE: A Video Review
Clifford Henke

Tom E.'s wife suffers from hormonal-induced fits of distemper that, in another era, were called "moral insanity." Didn't know about it before he married her. Does it matter? What to do about it now? Especially when she's hobbling his climb up the social ladder?

Such is the ethical dilemma posed in the engaging film "Tom & Viv," a film about the relationship - or, more accurately, non-relationship - between T. S. Eliot and his first wife, Vivienne Haigh-Wood. Unfortunately, the movie insufficiently addresses its interesting, profoundly promising story premise.

After all, the story is set in a time and place where great minds - Russell, the early century's great writers, et al - are asking great questions about great issues: war, liberty, social responsibility, equality. Russell, for instance, is merely a bit character in this drama, little said of his real relationship with Vivienne. Here, he is merely a mentor to Tom and friend, and a one-time landlord to them both.

Everything else, though, is first-rate. Willem Dafoe's portrait of arguably the twentieth century's greatest bard is beautiful; though even his voice uncannily gets the famous man, it is not caricature. Miranda Richardson is extraordinary as Viv (a performance for which she was nominated for an Academy Award), demonstrating the wit, charm, and breeding that must have attracted the real Eliot, as well as the tragic pain over decades coping with her disease. Director Brian Gilbert skillfully guides the drawing-room and pastoral pace between the actors that evokes what England in the first half of the century must have been like. Tim Dutton and Rosemary Harris, as the bride's feckless but genial brother and feckless but opinionated mother (the latter was also nominated for an Academy Award) are also on-target. So is the look, both in cinematography and set design.

A minor problem is Debbie Shelton's music. While the intimate, stately piano and chamber-orchestra pieces within the picture get the feel correctly, the composer misses an opportunity to set the emotional stage at both ends of the presentation, as both sets of credits roll. The swelling, stirring sounds of a fuller orchestra belie what this movie really is: An intimate portrait of tragedy between two people that can occur in a lifetime.

But the real problem with "Tom & Viv" is Michael Hastings' and Adrian Hodges' writing. Start with the title itself: Is this to be a jolly roll with two lovers? Like the contradictory opening overture, is this an ironic moniker of what is to come? Or did the writers or producer just give up on a better one? One will

never know, because the movie was based on Hastings' play of the same title. (Nowhere is it written, except in contracts, that the derivative work *has* to be titled the same.)

Of course this is symptomatic of more fundamental problems. Back to the original questions.

The movie's plot splendidly shifts its sympathies back and forth, pointing at various times throughout the story at the reasons for Tom and Viv's troubles: British turn-of-the-century society for not discussing "female troubles," Viv's parents, Viv, then Tom. But then there are scenes, though laden with tragic power, that let Tom off the hook as well, pointing to imperfect knowledge of medicine at any one time, and the recognition we all know -- that medicine's marvelous march toward successive discovery could have saved so many in the past.

But after what we already know, then what? That is the real lost opportunity here. What of an ethic that simply buries mentally loved ones when we all know that cures might later be found to reverse ugly but necessary past decisions -- especially in the fast-moving field of mental illness? Without giving the ending away, Tom refuses to answer that question for himself. But what of the others? Including Viv, who learns with us that her condition might have been treated sufficiently to free her from commitment to an asylum?

This is the ultimate problem with "Tom & Viv": The script illogically forgets Viv's active zest for life and societal recognition of her own talent and personality. It is simply inconsistent that she could be freed with science, then stand and wave as her visiting brother depart, stoically advising, "Chin up."

Oh, there is on explanation. She went through menopause? Feminists might have a field day with this one.

Boring is one sin this otherwise terrific movie does avoid committing. What keeps it from greatness are the ethical punches it pulls in the end. With so much terrific material at hand, and otherwise exquisitely executed, this lost opportunity is almost unforgivable.

LOGIC AND MR. LIMBAUGH
BOOK REVIEW
John E. Shosky, Ph.D.

Ray Perkins, Jr. *Logic and Mr. Limbaugh.* Open Court, 1995. ISBN 0-8126-9294-2.

Critical thinking is one of the most important classes offered by our educational institutions. Yet, since the time of the Roman rhetoricians, it has been repeatedly characterized as a playground for the intellectual "nabobs" who never leave the ivory towers or for the children of rich nobles who have nothing better to do. Some see critical thinking as a survey of the verbal tricks used by politicians and lawyers.

But critical thinking is important for all of us -- one of the most important activities we can learn and practice. It is difficult. But as Russell once said: "Many people would rather die than think. In fact, they do."

Many philosophers have tried to make critical thinking fun, hoping that humor can transmit the immense value of good thinking. Over the years I have tried to find a book that will connect with students: Copi and Cohen, Flew, Damer, Soccio and Barry, Sainsbury, Churchill, Hughes, and many others. This year I tried Perkins, who is an active member of the BRS. I had mixed results.

Perkins found that students of argumentation relate well to the real-life arguments of daily discourse. He has also found that Rush Limbaugh has become an opinion-leader for millions of people, including a large number of college students. Perkins does not doubt Limbaugh's sincerity; but he does question his "logical correctness."

This book teaches the principles of good informal reasoning by using Limbaugh's influential and controversial comments to illustrate the nature and permutations of fallacious reasoning. Perkins begins with a chapter on "Basic Logic," followed by a great chapter on "How to Spot Fallacies." These two chapters are illustrations in applied logic, or rather, illogic. Then, in succesive chapters, Perkins groups fallacious arguments used by Limbaugh against environmentalists, multiculturists, animal rights activists, sex educators, the criminal justice system, the media, and liberals. The examples are usually humorous and the issues topical.

Perkins adds much discussion about each fallacy in action, with comments that are insightful, clever, and provocative. This is a very well-written book, which is rare in the critical thinking field. And, this is one critical thinking book that does not dummy up for students, but makes the material so accessible

that you are mistakenly deceived by its simplicity (which is a fallacy yet to be named -- perhaps the "simpleton's fallacy").

My students were put off by a few things. They didn't like Perkins repeatedly referring to his readers as "dittoheads." Maybe we lacked the necessary sense of humor, but I do think that joke was overdone. Also, the grouping of fallacies by political topic, rather than fallacy type, made the book seem repetitive. I'm not sure that it is repetitive, because Perkins illustrates a wide-range of fallacies. But there is quite a bit of overlap and this gives an appearance of covering much the same ground chapter after chapter. Finally, my students found it to be most valuable when read in conjunction with other books on informal reasoning (in our case Flew's magnificent *Thinking Straight* and Copi and Cohen's famous *Introduction to Logic*).

However, with these difficulties noted, I like the book very much. It made for some memorable and witty classroom discussions. Many of the students took the book home to share with their parents, and after Spring Break I received reports of the parental responses (mostly favorable). When was the last time students and parents talked about critical thinking over hamburgers or spaghetti?

Perkins provides a valuable service with this book: he brings logic to the people, challenging the sloppy thinking of our opinion-leaders, talk show hosts, and public gasbags. Good for Perkins! He makes philosophy, especially critical thinking, a dangerous, necessary, and eternally vigilant enterprise. I recommend *Logic and Mr. Limbaugh* as a good read, an important catalogue of common fallacies, and a public service to again warn us about the bad thinking that often shapes our world. I hope that all members of the BRS will add this work to their logical arsenal.

THE BERTRAND RUSSELL SOCIETY
Membership Profile

Please fill out the following questionnaire and return it to:

John E. Shosky, Ph.D.
BRS Editor
1806 Rollins Drive
Alexandria, VA 22307

NAME:_____

ADDRESS:_____

E_MAIL:_____

First book of Russell's I read was _____

_____

Last book of Russell's I read was_____

_____

Favorite Russell Quotation:_____

_____

_____

Reason(s) for Joining BRS:_____

_____

Recent Applications of Russell's Views to Your Own Life:_____

_____

Additional Comments:_____

THE BERTRAND RUSSELL SOCIETY
1997 Membership Renewal Form

This is the final notice to renew BRS membership for 1997.

- If you have already renewed for 1997 or have joined the BRS in 1997, please accept our thanks once again for participating in the BRS.
- If you have **not** yet renewed your membership for 1997 -- or if you would like to join the BRS for the first time -- please mail the form below along with the appropriate payment TODAY. Thanks!

Please mail this form and payment to:

Dennis Darland
BRS Treasurer
1965 Winding Hills Road, #1304
Davenport, IA 52807
U.S.A.

I have looked at the membership categories below and have checked the appropriate category for my circumstances. I have enclosed my 1997 dues in U.S. funds payable to "Bertrand Russell Society". (Please print clearly.)

❑ Individual $35	❑ Couple $40
❑ Student $20	❑ Limited Income Individual $20
❑ Limited Income Couple $25	❑ Contributor $50 and up
❑ Sustainer $75 and up	❑ Sponsor $100 and up
❑ Patron $250 and up	❑ Benefactor $500 and up
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❑ PLUS $10 if outside U.S.A., Canada, and Mexico
❑ PLUS $4 if in Canada or Mexico

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TREASURER'S REPORT
Dennis Darland

JANUARY 1, 1996 - DECEMBER 31, 1996 submitted March 17, 1997
BRS -- Bank, Cash, CC Accounts

BALANCE DECEMBER 31, 1995		$ 1,430.95
INFLOWS:		
Contributions--BRS	$ 462.00	
Total Contributions		462.00
Dues		
New Members	1,113.67	
Renewals	6,317.00	
Total Dues		7,430.67
Int. Inc.		5.96
Library Inc.		142.20
Meeting Inc.		75.00
From Don Jackanicz		2,403.50
Total Inflows		$10,519.33
OUTFLOWS:		
BRS Award		730.00
Library Exp.		67.89
Newsletter		4,850.00
Other Exp.		416.09
Russell Sub.		4,887.50
Uncategorized Outflows		25.00
Total Outflows		$10,976.48
OVERALL TOTAL:		($ 457.15)
BALANCE DECEMBER 31, 1996		$ 973.80

Notes: Liability to Don Jackanicz is $2,403.50.