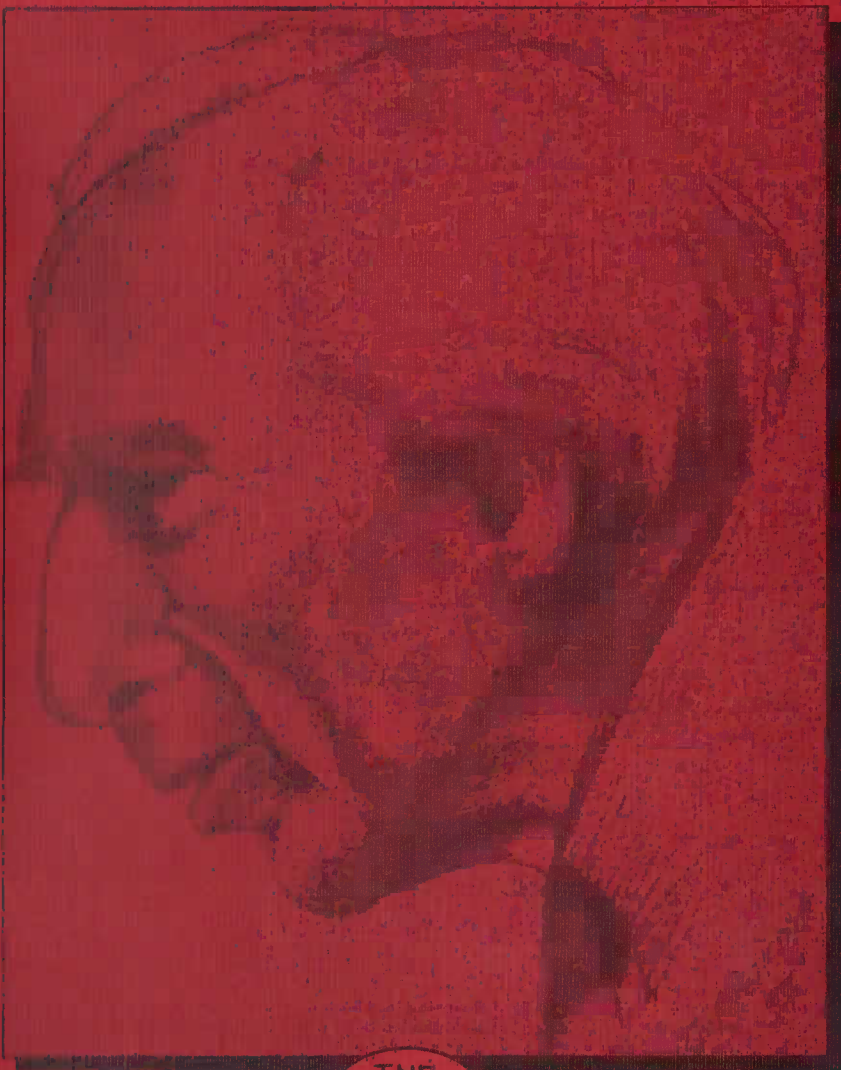


# The Bertrand Russell Society

August 1997

Quarterly

No. 95



*Bertrand Russell Society  
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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."

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

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**THE BERTRAND RUSSELL SOCIETY**  
**QUARTERLY**

*Newsletter of the Bertrand Russell Society*

August 1997

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**FROM THE EDITOR**  
**John E. Shosky**  
**American University**

This is my second issue as editor. Thanks to all those members who have helped make this issue possible. I especially welcome our those members who have just joined the Bertrand Russell Society.

Inside you will find a report about the last annual meeting by BRS President John Lenz.

There is a fascinating essay by Robert Barnard about Russell's relevance in a fast-growing field of philosophical interest: the issue of vagueness.

In addition, there is a report about Russell's influence on philosophy in Oxford from 1950 to the present, based on an interview with Rom Harre, Emeritus Fellow of Linacre College, Oxford, and former University Lecturer in the Philosophy of Science in Oxford.

Peter Stone presents his thoughts on "Intellectual Giants".

And, as always, a book review and a video review. This time we have a review of Volume 11 in the *Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*. Cliff Henke has examined the video "Carrington". In the next issue he will look back several years to "Reds".

In this issue we have some new features. First, you will find "Russell News", which will present short notes about recently published books, upcoming publications, interesting journal articles, television programs, or other pieces of interesting Russell trivia. This is an attempt to capture some of the information that used to be a central part of the old newsletter, but slipped through the cracks in the quarterly format.

Second, there is a new section about membership profiles. Several BRS members have asked for information about others in the Society. In each upcoming issue we will include three or four profiles to indicate the scope and breadth of members and their interest in Russell. A blank membership profile is included. If you haven't filled one out, please take the time to give us some information.

I hope you enjoy this issue. Again, I commend the cover drawing by Bulgarian Iva Petkova. I have received numerous favorable comments about the drawing. In fact, I liked it so much that a framed copy now hangs in my office. I have asked Iva for a new drawing for next year's four issues. Remember, we are going to have the same drawing for one year's set of issues, distinguishing the individual four issues within the year by different colored paper on the

cover.

I must thank Kathryn Jo Ottman for her invaluable assistance in preparing the Quarterly for publication. She formatted the copy pages and provided much-needed advice. Thank you, Kathryn.

Catharine Kendig and Robert Barnard continue as assistant editors. I hope you enjoy the *Quarterly*.

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**BERTRAND RUSSELL SOCIETY:  
Conference Report  
John Lenz, President**

The Bertrand Russell Society held its annual meeting on May 30-June 1 at the Center for Inquiry in Amherst, NY (outside Buffalo). This year we participated in a joint meeting of ourselves, the Humanist Association of Canada, and the Campus Freethought Alliance. The CFA represents student-groups at colleges and universities around the U.S. and Canada. It was wonderful to see such vitality among young people at this event entitled "Humanism: The Next Generation."

Several Russell-L subscribers were in attendance, among other BRS members. Here is a brief report of Russell-related events.

At the opening plenary session, the BRS President (myself) made short remarks about two messages "the good Lord" would send to us today (if spirits had e-mail): skepticism and hope. (By the way, I found a little known line of Russell's published for the first time in the "Bibliography" by Blackwell and Ruja: "... let us hope, for as yet there is no tax on hope.")

It was pleasing to see that two other speakers paid homage to Russell in the opening session. Derek Araujo, a student at Harvard, CFA President, and (we're proud to say) a BRS member, said Russell was a major influence on him. Jeff Lowder, President of Internet Infidels which maintains the Secular Web (this is fantastic! <http://www.infidels.org>), said that he was introduced to free thought in high school through reading "Why I Am Not a Christian" and "An Outline of Intellectual Rubbish." He actually gave pride of place to BR among the people he thanked at the beginning of his talk! (It was fascinating to hear about and to see the uses to which e-mail and the WWW are being out--whether or not "Principia Mathematica," a book which almost no one has read, had anything to do with computers!)

Friday, a luncheon was held at the home of Prometheus Books (like the

Center for Inquiry, founded by Paul Kurtz). All walked away with books they purchased. By the way, in connection with the activities of this formidable group in Buffalo, it was noted that the first line of the new blockbuster film, "The Lost World" (the sequel to Jurassic Park; but I would be pained if this mention caused anyone to go to see the film) mentions their periodical, "Skeptical Inquirer."

At the afternoon session Tim Madigan of *Free Inquiry* magazine and the BRS hosted the BRS session.

Thomas Magnell (chair of Philosophy at Drew University -- my colleague here in Madison, New Jersey) spoke on "Present Concerns and Future Interests." Tom has published on this topic in various ethics journals (he edits the *Journal of Value Inquiry*) but we asked him to explain it to us in view of the theme of the conference. He distinguished between the "politically enfranchised" and the "politically unenfranchised" futures and argued that ignoring the interests of the latter (say, for the sake of argument and example only, the future after 100 years from now) entails a new form of bigotry, "temporal bigotry."

Michael Rockler (BRS Chairman and Professor at National-Louis University in Washington, D.C.) and John Novak (of Brock University and editor of the John Dewey Society newsletter) staged another in their series of "Russell vs. Dewey" debates. This one the 6th or so, addressed "Dewey vs. Russell on Democracy." Their wide-ranging critiques embraced much more than democracy. There was no clear-cult winner.

On Saturday, the morning plenary session heard outstanding reports from student organizers and activists, notably Adam Butler from Alabama who is rallying troops against the "10 commandments" judge (and the governor). We were moved by (among others) Ibn Warraq on "Why I Am Not a Muslim"--this is also the Russell-inspired title of his book from Prometheus. He told me that BR is a pervasive influence in that work and that he intends to join the BRS.

At lunch we were treated to another delightful and well-informed performance by the good Lord himself, personified by Trevor Banks of the Humanist Association of Canada. Trevor comes to look more like BR all the time.

The afternoon session included four papers: James Alouf (Sweet Briar College) spoke on "Russell and the Teaching of History." He had new things to say even after old timers noted that this was the third BRS talk on this popular topic in the past 16 or 17 years.

John Shosky (American University) addressed "Bertrand Russell on Power," particularly discussing the contemporary relevance of his thinking about organizations. He acknowledged work on the book *Power* presented to the BRS in previous years by Peter Stone.

Catherine Kendig, a graduate student at American University, read Victoria Patton's paper on "Russell's Theory of Judgment." This paper won the

1997 BRS student paper prize, but Victoria could not attend from University of Western Australia. She is a student of Stewart Candish. We will publish this paper in the *BRS Quarterly* (under the new editorship of John Shosky).

Peter Stone (Univ. of Rochester) gave a stimulating talk on "Russell's Political Thought: What's Ethics Got to Do with It?" He examined the unified theory of ethics and politics that Russell offered in one of his last works of political theory, *Human Society in Ethics and Politics*. This theory is grounded in a theory of good very similar to utilitarianism. The primary difference is that Russell replaces "utility" with "desire satisfaction." Peter then examined both the coherence and the relevance of the theory of the good. While the conclusions he offers are rather preliminary, he believes that a coherent version of the theory runs the risk of irrelevancy. In other words, a coherent version of the theory might not be capable of providing guidance to a person as to how to act which any person (including Russell himself) might have reason to follow.

An annual highlight was the Red Hackle Hour preceding the banquet on Saturday night. Chairman Michael Rockier made some appropriate Russellian remarks in a brief after-dinner address.

On Sunday, the BRS conducted meetings of its Board and of the Society at which, among other things, it was resolved to plan a meeting for Tampa or St. Petersburg, Florida at the end of May 1998. That will be our 25th annual meeting. Jan Eisler will host this meeting.

The last official BRS presence at this joint gathering was when John Lenz was flattered to introduce Paul Kurtz for his valedictory address on "The Future of Humanism." Paul Kurtz (who is bouncing back from triple-bypass surgery) is a past recipient of the annual BRS Award for work in Russell's spirit.

It was a great pleasure as always to come together to express our shared values and interests. This event was largely organized by the indefatigable Tim Madigan of *Free Inquiry* magazine, whom we thank again along with the entire staff of the Center for Inquiry!

By the way, I should repeat that the BRS offers a half-price initial membership to anyone who attended this conference.

P.S. On a personal note, the presence of the CFA was a special delight to me. I was a founding faculty co-sponsor of the Agnostic and Atheist Student Group at Texas A&M University (where it was and still is sorely needed) and (anecdotes omitted) this group spawned the Internet Infidels now extremely ably run (elsewhere) by Jeff Lowder. (I knew my presence there was in line with some higher purpose . . . ) Check out their mega-resource, the Secular web, at: <http://www.infidels.org>.

## RUSSELL NEWS: Publications, etc.

➡ An article on Bertrand Russell ("Poor Bertie") appeared in *Radical Philosophy*, 81 (Jan./Feb. 1997). The article is inspired by the recent biography by Monk and Ironside's analysis of Russell's social thought.

➡ Indiana University has just published a book on Pierce: *Studies in the Logic of Charles Sanders Pierce*. It is edited by Nathan Houser, Don D. Roberts and James van Evra.

➡ Oxford University Press has just reissued Russell's *Religion and Science* with a new introduction by Michael Ruse.

➡ University of Chicago Press has published a book by William R. Everdell, *The First Moderns: Profiles in the Origins of Twentieth-Century Thought*. Among the moderns covered: Georg Cantor, Richard Dedekind, and Gottlob Frege. Chapter 12 is "Bertrand Russell and Edmund Husserl: Phenomenology, Number, and the Fall of Logic, 1901."

➡ Carl Rollyson's *Rebecca West: A Life*, published by Scribner in 1996, contains a major letter from Russell to West about his attitude on H.G. Wells.

➡ American University Press in Beirut has published an introduction to Russell's thought by Ibrahim Najjar. Translated, the title is *Bertrand Russell: His Thought and Place in Contemporary Philosophy*. Najjar was awarded his M.A. in Russell Studies at McMaster.

➡ Routledge has reissued Russell's *Principles of Social Reconstruction* (1916), with a new introduction by Richard A. Rempel.

➡ Four upcoming titles concerning Russell are: Ivor Grattan-Guinness' *The Search for Mathematical Roots, 1870-1930*, Princeton University Press, 1998?; Charles Pigden's (ed) *Russell on Ethics*, Routledge, 1998?; Nick Griffin's (ed) *Companion to Russell*, Cambridge University Press, 1998?; and Louis Greenspan and Stefan Andersson's (eds) *Russell on Religion*, Routledge, 1998?

➡ The BBC recently ran a two-part biography on Bertrand Russell as part of their "Reputations" television series. The series is a popular collection of historical biographies.

➡ A recent trip to Warfield's secondhand book store in Oxford uncovered a chestnut: the April 1970 issue of *Mind* (Volume LXXIX, No. 314), the philosophical quarterly then edited by Gilbert Ryle. There is a frontpiece photograph commemorating the life of Bertrand Russell. The photo is by Allan Chappelow, taken in Russell's study at his home in North Wales.



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## RUSSELL ON VAGUENESS

Robert Barnard  
University of Memphis

In recent years philosophers in the analytic tradition have been returning to an old and recurring problem: the *Sorites* paradox (from the Greek term for 'heap'). Today this paradox and related issues are considered under the general term 'vagueness'. The problem is basically this: If a pile of sand with 10,000 grains is a heap, and a pile of sand with only 1 grain is not a heap, then it stands to reason that there is a point between these extremes where by removing 1 grain of sand at a time from the former pile, the removal of 1 specific grain of sand will make the difference between the pile being a heap or not being a heap. However, there is no such point; there seems to be nothing about our concept of heap that tells us what that point of transition is. The attempt to proceed from the definite heap to the definite non-heap by means of small changes seems to erase the difference between the heap and the non-heap. Hence the paradox -- we lack a firm basis for asserting that a pile with 5,000 grains is a heap as opposed to a non-heap, and again have no reason not to assert both heap-ness and non-heap-ness of this pile, inviting contradiction. It is a curious problem, but upon further reflection we recognize that it is a common affliction: there are a large number of words which share this kind of indeterminacy.

In his 1923 paper *Vagueness*<sup>1</sup>, Russell made one of the first attempts to resolve this problem in a manner informed by the then recent advances in formal logic. Accordingly, Russell's paper is often cited as a *locus classicus* in contemporary discussions of vagueness. Thus it seems apt that we should take the time to reexamine Russell's approach as a way of grounding our further speculation upon the issue. Therefore, I will both present and pose a problem for Russell's account of the nature of vagueness as a way of testing its theoretical mettle.

Russell argues that vagueness paradoxes form a species of philosophical puzzle which falls under the larger genus of problems associated with our use of symbolism. While the use of complex symbolism is unavoidable in abstract and philosophical reasoning, problems arise in those cases where features of these symbolic signs are attributed incorrectly and unconsciously to the things symbolized and signified. In the case of vagueness, when we expect ordinary language to exhibit the determinacy of quantified predicate logic. Casting the

problem as one of conceptual clarification, Russell notes: "I do not think that the study of principles of symbolism will yield any *positive* results in metaphysics, but I do think it will yield a great many negative results by enabling us to avoid fallacious inferences from symbols to things." Vagueness, for Russell, is an illustrative case study in the larger problematic of correct and incorrect symbolization.

Illustrative or not, vagueness is a problem. Russell argues that vagueness like precision is a feature of our representations. In ordinary practice, we represent objects and the world using symbolism which is inadequate to a logically rigorous carving up of the world, but which usually allows us to get by. Knowledge too can be vague, but again this vagueness is a feature of the way our knowledge is represented in the mind, and not a feature of what is known. This suggests that objects of knowledge must be determinate for Russell.

Russell also points out the distinguishing feature of vagueness: the presence of borderline cases. He illustrates this notion in terms of color recognition. The color red, for instance, falls within a continuum between what is certainly purple and what is certainly orange. Red appears when we remove blue gradually from purple, and disappears as we gradually add yellow to red. Borderline cases are those where a shade is not definitely red, and not definitely non-red. We experience this sense of doubt about whether to apply the term 'red', "not because we are ignorant of the meaning of the word 'red', but because it is a word the extent of whose application is essentially doubtful." Vagueness and borderline cases, therefore, occur when symbolism is imprecise. But this has the strange consequence of there being colors which are neither definitely red nor definitely not-red.

Our philosophically informed conception of how words work, following Frege, holds that the meaning of terms is tied, in at least some sense, to their intension and extension. What Russell is pointing to here, is that in the case of vague words and concepts, e.g. 'heap', 'bald', 'tall', 'red', and a million more, the intension underdetermines the extension of the word or concept, the extension of vague terms is not clear. And this has an important logical consequence: "The law of the excluded middle is true when precise symbols are employed, but it is not true when symbols are vague, as, in fact, all symbols are." Here Russell marks an important distinction between natural languages and the formal systems we employ in our attempts to order natural language. This brings Russell's thesis that the nature of vagueness is rooted in the nature of symbolism into sharp focus.

Consider the paradox of Elvis Vaguely, a hypothetical singer, who started his career a thin man, but gaining a pound at a time eventually became not-thin. Naturally we suppose that there was some point where he became heavy, and that this point corresponds to having gained of some specific amount of weight. But,

if we proceed by interrogating our representations of Elvis as each pound is gained, we find that our attempts at classification fail in borderline cases; there is no one point which we can confidently point to as THE transition point between the THIN Elvis and the NOT-THIN Elvis. Should we therefore say that there is no difference between the two Elvi? Assuredly not, surrender to paradox was never an option for Russell. Russell's usual approach to paradox, as in *Principia Mathematica* for example, would seem to require that we attempt to discern the logical form of the paradox. But this paradox is strange in that, if Russell is right, paradox is what results from the unconscious attempt to logically discipline our ordinary talk!

Let  $H(10,000)$  designate a heap with 10,000 grains of sand. We also observe that piles with 9,999 or 9,998 or 9,997 grains are also heaps. The natural language term 'heap' has borderline cases, the logic of our predicate  $H$  therefore needs to include the principle that if  $H(n)$  then  $H(n-1)$ . Starting with  $H(10,000)$ , 9,999 applications of this principle's conclusion we get: if  $H(1)$  then  $H(0)$  (a pile with no sand is still a heap), and by seemingly unimpeachable reasoning! This is a classic formal paradox, where true premises and valid reasoning lead to false conclusions. But if Russell is right, the mistake is in the attempt to logically discipline the term 'heap', or any other vague term, and the solution is to leave the informal paradox alone. Logical thinking insists upon precise symbolism, ordinary language does not, and need not. Russell therefore is telling us, more or less, to *mind our p's and q's* (a familiar theme, though in this case we should try not to confuse our peas and queues with our p's and q's).

Let me now indicate the kind of vagueness which would be problematic for Russell's account. In more contemporary discussions of vagueness there is also a consideration of so-called vague objects. Paradigm cases of vague objects include clouds (where precisely is the edge of a cloud?) and mountains (where precisely is the base of a mountain?), though we might add things like metropolitan areas, or even tables (if we take modern accounts of wayward electrons seriously). Russell's view seems to be that objects cannot be vague, therefore if our language were a precise there would be no problem of vagueness. It would be an analytic truth, e.g. that 'Heap' means 'more than 765 grains', and that 'if  $H(766)$  then  $H(765)$ ' would be an obvious contradiction, indicating the rejection of borderline cases. Russell seems to agree with this when he writes that precise symbolism is, "not applicable to this terrestrial life, but only to an imagined celestial existence. Where, however, this celestial existence would differ from ours, so far as logic is concerned, would not be in the nature of what is known, but only in the accuracy of our knowledge," that is, in the precision of our representations. But in what sense would a precise representation of an "ideal cloud" be precise? Precision might follow from stipulation, but to represent a

vague object in a precise way would itself be to draw an inaccurate picture, suggesting (paradoxically) that precise representation may in some cases *require* vague symbolism. This suggests that an imprecise symbolism is capable of precise representation, which would be the denial of Russell's thesis. Further, any stipulation would beg the question of which limit to stipulate and how to justify one stipulated limit in contradistinction to other equally plausible alternatives.

But this is the nature of a true philosophical problem, its ability to resist solutions. While Russell's solution may not be the final word on vagueness, Russell's article is noteworthy for many reasons, not the least of which are the provocative claims he makes distancing logic and ordinary language and limiting the scope of the law of the excluded middle. From the standpoint those hunting for philosophical problems, vagueness is a worthy quarry--for just when it seems you have caught it in a logical net, it escapes to become a different but related problem in epistemology or ontology. In a way, philosophy would be poorer if the problems of vagueness were resolved, or to paraphrase Elvis Vaguely: "*Viva Las Vagueness!*"

1. Bertrand Russell, "Vagueness," *Australasian Journal of Psychology and Philosophy*, 1 (June 1923), pp. 84-92; reprinted in *Collected Papers*, vol. 9, pp. 147-154.

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## CONVERSATION WITH ROM HARRE

John E. Shosky  
American University

In April 1997, I asked Rom Harre, Emeritus Fellow of Linacre College, Oxford, and former University Lecturer in the Philosophy of Science, to reflect upon Russell's influence at Oxford from 1950-1997. Harre is now a professor of psychology at Georgetown University, where he still lectures on Wittgenstein. Our conversation builds upon an earlier discussion with Antony Flew, who outlined Russell's influence in the 1940s. My goal is to capture the personal impressions of Russell and his influence upon some of the later generations of philosophers in Oxford and elsewhere.

While Flew found Russell was admired and often assigned reading, Harre



found the situation much different upon his own arrival at Oxford. Harre explained that "The intellectual climate at Oxford was chilly toward Russell. He was widely read but not widely admired. The orthodoxy was that, like Descartes, Russell was someone who made flagrant errors, the kind of errors that were interesting to undergraduates. So, *The Problems of Philosophy* was assigned to most philosophy students, but essentially so they could understand its weaknesses. It was used as a stalking horse."

One influential voice against Russell was Peter Strawson, who was Harre's tutor. Strawson shared Wittgenstein's view that Russell was not a great logician, in part because Russell did not understand the nature of logical truth. In addition, Strawson had engaged Russell's theory of descriptions in the now famous "On Referring", drawing Russell's vigorous, sometimes vindictive reply. Strawson's *An Introduction to Logical Theory* was directed against the kind of logic practiced by Russell, especially the discussions on logical truth, logical connectives and induction. As well, Strawson was at the forefront of the movement toward philosophical logic, which was often at odds with Russell's development of formal logic in *Principia Mathematica* and elsewhere.

Another voice that challenged Russell was J.L. Austin, who was also Harre's Supervisor. Austin thought that the entire sense-data view was "crazy -- not just wrong, but wrong headed in a serious way." At that time *Our Knowledge of the External World* was much read, and Harre also read *The Analysis of Mind* and *The Analysis of Matter* "on the quiet." Russell was a silent foil in Austin's seminars, in much the same way that Russell is the foil of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Of course, Austin's major target was A.J. Ayer, who "reproduced Russell's philosophical views." In 1953, Harre remembers Austin walking into a room of philosophy students, holding at arms length and with obvious displeasure Ayer's *The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge*. Austin told them "I'm not going to argue with Professor Ayer, I'm going to shred him." And it was a "massacre." Austin was at the height of his powers, and the sense-data view was decimated in his seminars. For Harre, the atmosphere in Austin's lectures was electric, challenging fundamental, cardinal assumptions of philosophy. Harre and other students of Austin felt that they were hearing something historic and vital to the successful practice of philosophy.

Strawson and Austin represented a dominant strand in logic at Oxford, those who developed the discipline of philosophical logic. The subdominant strand was represented by William Kneale and Hao Wang. Most of the philosophers found themselves sharing some of the views of both strands. Kneale gave lectures, attended by Harre, that were later published as *The Development of Logic*, perhaps the best history of logic to date. In Kneale's classes, Russell's use of quantifiers, the theory of descriptions, the nature of

numbers, set paradoxes, and the theory of types were much discussed. Another supporter of Russell's was Hao Wang, who was considered a logical superstar. Wang spent a great amount of time examining and criticizing Russell's theory of types. For him, Russell "stood larger" than with other lecturers in Oxford. Wang used Russell extensively in his presentations. Wang offered extremely detailed lectures, writing countless equations on the blackboard while his students drank tea and tried to decipher the equations. Kneale and Wang were joined by Arthur Prior, who came to Oxford in the mid-1950s. His students worked through the first part of *Principia Mathematica*. Other logicians studied included Jan Lukasiewicz, Willard Quine, and Gerhard Gentzen. Prior gave the first systematic lectures in logic on modal logic.

During Harre's four decades at Oxford, the influence of Ludwig Wittgenstein has become enormous. At that time, the *Tractatus* was often read as if it was in the Russellian tradition. Harre remembers that the *Tractatus* occupied a place right next to Russell's *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism* on his bookshelf. All of that began to slowly change in the 1950s. Gilbert Ryle gave a seminar on the *Tractatus* every Thursday night (Harre still has the notes from these lectures, and he should publish them. Of interest, Ryle's book are now part of the Linacre College Library and his copies of the *Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations* are much annotated). Ryle knew Wittgenstein rather well. He did not give a traditional Russellian reading of the *Tractatus* -- quite the opposite. Ryle's reading was, in large measure, an attempt to show how Wittgenstein differed from Russell. The now-standard reading of Wittgenstein, which shows the anti-Russellian tenor of the *Tractatus*, has become the "canon", thanks to the work at Oxford of David Pears, Peter Hacker, George Baker, and Harre.

However, *An Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* and *An Exposition on Leibniz* two books that were held in high admiration. In fact, lectures were given by Baker in Oxford during the last academic year on *An Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*. Ryle gave lectures on this book in the 1950s, and it has held in higher regard than Russell's other logical works. This was the book that "pinned together" those who took Russell seriously as a logician ( the subdominant strand ) and those who did not ( the dominant strand). The Leibniz book has been in constant use in Oxford. Harre has found it to be "absolutely superb."

Harre also got to know Russell personally as a neighbor in Wales. Harre was friendly with Rupert Crawshay-Williams (author of *Russell Remembered*) and others in the Russellian Welsh circle. Harre found Russell's last years to be very sad. Russell would come to lunches hosted by Crawshay-Williams and was willing to talk about philosophy, but he would mostly reflect on political issues, personalities, and his family. At that time he was under the influence of Ralph

Schoenman, who Harre believed had captured Russell and wanted him "to be pure", in the same way Wittgenstein wanted Russell to be pure. Schoenman most disapproved of Russell's reading materials, which included detective novels. Crawshay-Williams would sneak up to Russell's house each morning and hide some detective thrillers behind the milk bottles. Russell would come out before Schoenman was awake and secure the novels. It was strange to see a Nobel prize winner hiding his reading from his secretary.

For Harre, Russell's legacy will be limited. His political and moral philosophy is already seriously dated. His work in logic, especially his work on set theoretical paradoxes and the theory of descriptions, will be studied for a long time to come. Harre predicted that "no matter where you start, the truth or falsity of self-referential propositions will be on the agenda." The theory of descriptions simply "has to be studied." In terms of Russell's general philosophy, Harre believes that Russell's influence will quickly wain. In terms of sense-data, Harre thinks H.H. Price and Ayer will be more widely read than Russell. Logical atomism will "not be taken seriously by the profession, giving way to the *Tractatus*."

In the future, Russell will probably be most remembered for his long life, his eccentricities, his collaboration with Whitehead and Wittgenstein, and, perhaps most importantly, his philosophical style. Russell brought enthusiasm and energy to philosophy, his relentless search for the truth. Harre predicts Russell will probably have several biographers in the future, because he knew important people (the Bloomsbury group, T.S. Eliot, and others) and was in the center of many of the historical movements of our century.

Russell has also been an inspirational figure for many people, becoming a beacon of rationality and hope. Russell inspired many philosophers, including Quine and Ayer. But he also inspired many non-philosophers to become more thoughtful and compassionate. While Harre believes that Russell's place in philosophy and logic may become minor in the years to come, his place in culture will probably remain a major contribution to future generations.

## INTELLECTUAL GIANTS

Peter Stone

University of Rochester

In a recent issue of the *Quarterly* (February 1997), former Editor Michael Rockler asked readers to consider "who today can we consider as intellectual giants on the same level" as Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein -- two of the brightest lights of the early twentieth century. I would like to respond to Michael's query by pointing to two outstanding individuals whom I believe deserve to be ranked with Russell and Einstein. These two men--Noam Chomsky and Jurgen Habermas--both share Russell's passionate commitment to politics as well as his scientific curiosity and analytical rigor.

That I would suggest Noam Chomsky should come as no surprise to anyone who knows me. Chomsky has spent decades trying to explain the fundamental rules employed by the mind when a person learns a language. His claim that there are such rules --and his attempts to formulate them in such works as *Syntactic Structures* and *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* --have revolutionized the field of linguistics, transforming it from a more or less anthropological exercise in cataloging individual languages into a scientific field which promises to explain the nature of one of humanity's fundamental abilities (See *Introducing Chomsky* (Totem Books) for a good introduction to Chomsky's approach to this important field of study).

At the same time Chomsky has reconstructed the way people study language, he has contributed extensively to debates over U.S. foreign and domestic policy, earning himself praise from millions and scorn and abuse from individuals in power. Like Russell, he has produced many books on politics, including *American Power and the New Mandarins*, *On Power and Ideology*, *Deterring Democracy*, *Year 501*, and most recently *Power and Prospects*. Unlike Russell, Chomsky meticulously documents all of his conclusions, providing a treasury of resources upon which others can draw. Indeed, one reviewer took him to task for his "turgid" writing style because of his extensive documentation. That a social critic could be taken to task for backing up his arguments with facts is a sign of how low our current intellectual standards are, and how far Chomsky rises above these standards (See Milan Rai's book *Chomsky's Politics* (Verso) for a recent discussion of Chomsky's work as a social critic).

Many scholars and activists have attempted to draw links between Chomsky's linguistics and his politics. Chomsky himself is unsure how tight the

links are. But with Jurgen Habermas, social criticism and academic study are never too far apart. For years Habermas has been attempting to reconstruct the project of historical materialism. Whatever historical materialism's failings, it offers an explanation of social events with an eye to influencing those events. Inexplicably, few social theorists do this. They ignore the profound epistemological revolutions of the past century. Once one neglects a naive correspondence theory of truth, then the only realistic alternative is to judge the adequacies of social theories by their usefulness at fulfilling human purposes (See Eugene Meehan's excellent *Social Inquiry: Needs, Possibilities, Limits* (Chatham House) on this point). Otherwise, one constructs theories willy-nilly, and debate can get rather ethereal (an accurate description of more than one debate in political theory today).

Habermas' reconstruction of historical materialism shares many features with Chomsky's reconstruction of linguistics. Whereas Chomsky seeks the underlying rules that all competent language-users employ in forming grammatical sentences, Habermas investigates the conditions all language-users must meet if they are to employ language to reach understanding with others. In such works as *Communication and the Evolution of Society* and *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas has applied his theories about communication to the study of history, seeking to show what is happening to the public's ability to use reason in its affairs and how this ability might be rescued and expanded in the face of the threats posed to it by markets and bureaucracies. Here Habermas' project links up with Dewey's; his earliest extended work, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, resembles in many ways Dewey's classic work of democratic theory, *The Public and its Problems*.

And Habermas has not remained in the ivory tower while conducting his immense task of theoretical reconstruction. He has engaged himself in some of the more important political debates within Germany today—debates in which the German New Right attempt to reconstruct history to the benefit of the Third Reich. In attempting to keep alive the horror which generations have felt towards the Nazis since WW II, Habermas' polemics make possible the maintenance and improvement of a democratic order in Germany.

Chomsky and Habermas both come from a long tradition of intellectuals, a tradition that included both Russell and Einstein. For them, whom intense academic study never precluded efforts to understand and change the world. Would that more intellectuals could combine their formidable academic work with social commitments. I hope that the next century witnesses the continuing vibrancy of this tradition.

## **“Carrington” (1995) UNENVIABLE LOVE SPLENDIDLY PORTRAYED: A Video Review Clifford Henke**

I must confess a distaste for the point of view espoused by the protagonists in this film, but the film overpowers this natural urge to retreat with clever, often hilarious dialogue, wonderful performances and lush production values. On balance, I recommend “Carrington,” especially on video. More about that point later.

“Carrington” is not really in the conventional sense of plot and theme about Dora Carrington, the Bloomsbury-era artist. It is rather about the life of Lytton Strachey, the social satirist and trendsetter in England's post-Victorian era. Christopher Hampton's script (who also directed) is based on Michael Holroyd's biography of Strachey, and both derive much of their sparkling dialogue from Strachey's more personal writings. More to the point, however, is Jonathan Pryce's riveting portrayal of the celebrated man. In the best tradition of biographical acting, he gets Lytton's essence without caricature. Pryce demonstrates an enormous range in this demanding role, and why he has not found a mass audience beyond “Miss Saigon” and his luxury-car commercials in America is beyond me.

Pryce/Strachey is also the centerpiece of a detailed ensemble of supporting characters and the actors who breathe life into them, location, sets, and decor, all splendidly pulled together by director Hampton. He and production designer Caroline Amies even use Carrington's paintings in various stages of completion, some of which are real, some of which are doctored by Jane Gifford to match Pryce instead of the real Lytton. Denis Lenoir's photography and Michael Nyman's musical score are both up to this level of detail in enhancing the mood and illuminating these times. George Akers' editing drags a bit, but its pace is probably more due to the stately feel Hampton seems to have intended.

Regarding the ensemble, Virginia Woolf, Bertrand Russell and other luminaries of the time are even more obliquely referenced than in “Tom & Viv.” Yet their spirits, what the whole scene stood for, lives throughout this story.

Certainly first among the ensemble pieces is Emma Thompson's Dora Carrington. Thompson has always played a good wallflower, and she convincingly finds title role's motivation to be led around by the rather weird charisma of Pryce's Lytton here, as well. The best actors portray their subjects' inner conflicts without unintended inconsistency, and this feat towers

in realizing such complex characters as these.

Yet the complexities are what makes this movie both repugnant as well as interesting and, ultimately, rewarding. Hampton cleverly lays out all of the Bloomsbury enticements of free love (read sex), (well almost all: While quite certain in revealing Lytton's homosexuality, he is uncharacteristically squeamish in refraining from Carrington's encounters with other women, documented by Holroyd and others.) He traps you in their world: how fun it must have all been. And how possible this point of view seems at first. Yet without overtly changing sympathies, Hampton shifts ground. Carrington's and Lytton's lives and life together become hollow and lonely and eventually unsatisfactory.

This treatment becomes even more effective on video, for it is a different medium from film in one important respect that is especially pointed up by this movie. Both media are works in time, but with video, as with novels, the viewer can actively manage the time in which this story unfolds. There were times because of various distractions in my life but also out of momentary loss of interest when I simply shut off the machine. I then picked up the story often days later when the mood to watch struck again. With movies that have such measured pace and deep character transformation as these, such an active and leisurely departure from conventional viewing allows audiences to absorb more organically the characters' feelings and points of view -- allowing, in short, time to *think*. This just is not as possible for audiences in theaters for whom watching a movie is a passive, more controlled experience.

Finally, on his deathbed Lytton confesses in a demented outburst that despite his protests throughout he could only love Carrington. This revelation, and its exposure of the fraud that has transpired for the 20-odd years in life compressed into nearly two hours on screen before it, is enough to finish both her and Hampton's sympathies with the free-love point of view.

And from this viewer's vantage point, it is true love appropriately vindicated.

## Last Philosophical Testament 1943-68: THE COLLECTED PAPERS OF BERTRAND RUSSELL VOLUME 11 BOOK REVIEW

John E. Shosky

Bertrand Russell. *Last Philosophical Testament 1943-68: The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell Volume 11*. Edited by John G. Slater, with the assistance of Peter Kollner. London: Routledge, 1997. ISBN 0-415-09409-7. 878 pages. Approximately US \$185, Canadian \$259.

In later life, Russell was viewed by many critics as an historical relic, rather than as a contributing, active philosopher. He often complained that his later philosophical work was unjustifiably ignored. At a time when logical positivism, and then linguistic philosophy, dominated Angle-American thought, Russell was unfashionable. But this volume demonstrates that he was far from finished.

*Last Philosophical Testament* is a companion piece to Volume 10 of the *Collected Papers*, which covers the years 1927-42, also prepared by Slater and Kollner. Both works are part of the projected 30 volume edition of Russell's collected articles and other shorter written pieces, published and unpublished. About half of these volumes have been finished or are underway, with some volumes already available: Volumes 1-4 and 6-9 (Russell's philosophical writings through 1926), 12-14 (political writings from 1902 through 1918), and a three volume bibliography prepared by Ken Blackwell, Harry Ruja, and Sheila Turcon.

So far, 13 volumes have been finished and are available for purchase, with three more in progress, and the rest planned with completion dates by the end of 2007.

Volume 11 is sub-divided into eleven major parts. Part I concerns "Autobiographical and Self-Critical Writings." Here the editors include Russell's contributions to the *Library of Living Philosophers* volume on his work, as well as several essays about Russell's interest in philosophy. Some of these essays have been unpublished or very hard to get. One of them is quite good: "My Own Philosophy" of 1946, which contains a clear methodological statement of the power and promise of analytical philosophy.

Part II is a collection of Russell's writings on "Non-Demonstrative Inference." Many philosophers have found Russell's work on inference to be scandalous and bizarre. But Russell's views are more cogent than often painted by critics, especially when explained in a 1948 essay, "The Nature and Origin of Scientific Method." Russell the philosopher understood the importance of rational

inquiry and the need to leave philosophical propositions open for future examination. No scientific proposition was to be regarded as universally true. Russell the logician well-knew the limits of logic, and the need for rational, defensible starting points for any logical system. Deductive reasoning is attractive, but limited by the power and scope of the chosen beginning axioms. In this essay, Russell speaks with a clear, contemporary voice about philosophy's constant war against complete skepticism, and the difficulty of philosophical progress. Yet, piecemeal progress is possible, even if it is tentative, limited, and subject to future change.

Part III features Russell's comments on "Younger Philosophical Contemporaries," such as A.J. Ayer and Ludwig Wittgenstein. All but one of the essays in this section concern Ayer, whom in many ways was Russell's empiricist and ideological successor. Russell's now famous review of Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic* is here, and bears re-reading. Russell was not a logical positivist, but he was the movement's Godfather. He had an obvious sympathy. But his delight was tempered by his understanding of the flaws in the verification principle, Ayer's reliance on phenomenalism, and the movement's heavy-handed rejection of metaphysics. Russell's analysis of logical positivism is a most cogent response, providing insight into both Russell and Ayer. A brief tribute to Wittgenstein, published in *Mind* in 1951, is included.

Part IV collects several papers on Russell's "Older Contemporaries." The essays include comments on Peirce, McTaggart, Santayana, Moore, and Nicod. But the three papers on Whitehead are a real treat, showing Russell's respect for his former collaborator and understanding of Whitehead's post-*Principia* philosophy.

The remaining seven sections contains papers on various philosophical or logical topics. Part V has papers on "Metaphysics and Epistemology." Part VI groups essays on "Logic and the Philosophy of Mathematics" (including the powerful 1950 essay 'Is Mathematics Purely Linguistic'). Part VII concerns "Ethics and Politics." Part VIII is on John Stuart Mill. Part IX is Russell's "Critique of Religion." Part X gathers several essays on Albert Einstein. Part XI presents the harsh "Critique of Ordinary Language Philosophy." Seven appendices are added, one of which is "Russell's Last Philosophical Writing" from 1968.

Scattered throughout the volume are headnote explanations by Slater and Kollner of historical or philosophical issues, such as Russell's reaction to logical positivism, interest in Mill, admiration for Einstein, or disgust with ordinary language philosophy. I found the headnotes to be most helpful, and urge a similar approach to upcoming volumes.

This is an extraordinary volume, highly recommended. This is an epic

effort, fulfilling the need for one work which captures Russell's later philosophical views. It convincingly documents the lasting value and merit of Russell's return to philosophy after a premature (and mistaken) retirement from serious philosophical work in 1927. In combination with volume 10, Slater and Kollner have provided an encyclopedic collection of Russell's shorter philosophical writings over a forty-year period. These two volumes fill a gigantic void in Russell scholarship.

A fair warning: the price of this volume is steep. It will dent the wallet. However, each volume of *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell* are indispensable to any serious student of Russell. When I attended the Russell Conference in Southampton two years ago, ("Russell and the Origins of Analytic Philosophy"), I realized these volumes of collected papers are extremely influential and important. They were the center-piece of almost every paper and discussion.

*The Collected Papers* are now the cutting-edge, and may become the final word. I congratulate Slater and Kollner on a job well-done, obviously motivated by admiration and respect for the subject, unlike some recent Russell commentators. Volume 11 in the *Collected Papers* is a worthy, well-presented, and compelling addition to the Russell corpus.

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## 20th WORLD CONGRESS OF PHILOSOPHY to be held in Boston, August 19, 1997

The Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy will be held in Boston on 10-16 August 1998. That's the first American one since 1927, so it may be a once in a lifetime event for many list members. The theme is broad: "Paideia: Philosophy Educating Humanity."

There is a call for papers 10 pages long (3000 words) typewritten, double spaced with a 20-line abstract, due September 1, 1997. My understanding is that papers which are accepted will also be published in "Proceedings of the Congress" if the author desires. If possible, papers should also be sent on 3.5 inch disks in ASCII.

Among the areas of interest to Russell scholars, papers may be in metaphysics, ontology, logic and philosophy of logic, philosophy of mathematics, philosophy of language, theoretical ethics, philosophy of values,

## BERTRAND RUSSELL SOCIETY

### Membership Profiles

BRS members have asked for information about other members in the Society. Here are just a few profiles. If you haven't yet sent yours in, please take a few moments when you finish this issue of the *Quarterly* and send yours in.

**Name:** Whitfield Cobb, Ph.D.  
**Address:** 800 Cupp Street  
Blacksburg, VA 24060  
**e\_mail:** N/A

**First book of Russell's I read was:** *What I Believe*, soon followed by *Mysticism and Logic* (when I was 16).

**Latest book of Russell's I read was:** *Rereading from Skeptical Essays and Human Society in Ethics and Politics*.

**Favorite Russell Quotation:** The BRS motto. But 30 years before BRS was founded, our wedding vows and wedding rings included the phrase "... the inspiration of love and the guidance of knowledge..." And 45 years later, I quoted the complete sentence on the brochure I prepared for my wife's memorial service.

**Reason for joining BRS:** In 1978 (?) As soon as I heard there was a BRS, I needed no special reason to join. But I was pleased to learn that both professional philosophers and those who are not are welcomed as members.

**Recent applications of Russell's views to your own life:** I joined the American Humanist Association.

**Additional Comments:** In 1951, I heard Russell speak on "Is Happiness Still Possible?"

**Name:** Theo Meijer  
**Address:** P.O. Box 93  
Abbotsford, B.C. Canada V2S 4N8  
**e\_mail:** theom@mindlink.bc.ca

**First book of Russell's I read was:** *Why I Am Not a Christian*.

**Latest book of Russell's I read was:** *Caroline Moorehead's biography of BR and Lee Eizler's The Quotable Bertrand Russell*.

**Favorite Russell Quotation:** "A good world needs knowledge, kindness, and courage; it does not need a regretful hankering after the past or a fettering of the free intelligence by the words uttered long ago by ignorant men."

**Reason for joining BRS:** To support an organization making BR's ideas more generally known.

**Recent applications of Russell's views to your own life:** As a

humanist/agnostic/skeptic, BR's words are a source of ongoing support.

**Name:** Tim St. Vincent  
**Address:** 276 Albion Street, #23  
Wakefield, MA 01880  
**e\_mail:** N/A

**First book of Russell's I read was:** *Religion & Science*

**Latest book of Russell's I read was:** *Authority & the Individual*

**Favorite Russell Quotation:** "... utilitarianism, while it conceded no absolute 'rights' to the individual, gave the same weight to one man's happiness as to another's..." from *The Ancestry of Fascism*

**Reason for joining BRS:** None given.

**Recent applications of Russell's views to your own life:** The idea that one should be compassionate, but also allow for self-interest, spontaneous expression, etc.

**Additional Comments:** In my opinion, the above mentioned quotation is tied for first place with other Russell quotes, such as the Russell Society motto. My above cited Russell quotation is relevant today because it provides an intellectual foundation for the idea that some forms of self-esteem/respect should be unconditional, i.e. not dependent on achievement, good grades, etc. A variation of the idea behind this quote is that not all good things in life are rewards for good behavior. (Not all bad things in life are punishments for bad behavior.) For example, a child who finds a dollar bill on the sidewalk should not turn it over to a friend who has better grades. Perhaps students should be temporarily shamed for goofing off in school (but not for lacking academic talent). But, at other times, teachers should point out that everyone has an equal right to non-reward goods (and an equal right to avoid non-punishment evils).

**Name:** Ruili Ye  
**Address:** P.O. Box 683  
New York, NY 10185  
**e\_mail:** rye@it.brooklyn.cuny.edu

**First book of Russell's I read was:** his *Autobiography*.

**Latest book of Russell's I read was:** *Mortals and Others*.

**Favorite Russell Quotation:** "I say people who feel that are showing a kind of cowardice, ... To say you can't face life without this or that." From *Bertrand Russell Speaks His Mind*.

**Reason for joining BRS:** To be close to Bertie.

**Recent applications of Russell's views to your own life:** (Seems to have absorbed too much to be able to distinguish his views from mine -- sorry, all mixed up!)



**BERTRAND RUSSELL SOCIETY  
Membership Profile Form**

Please fill out the following questionnaire and return it to:

John E. Shosky  
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: \_\_\_\_\_

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Reason(s) for Joining BRS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

**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.

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

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