

# THE BERTRAND RUSSELL SOCIETY QUARTERLY

Number 124 / November 2004

## BERTRAND RUSSELL IS ALIVE

**Reports of His Death Are Denied by  
a Japanese Paper.**

Recent issues of the Japan Advertiser, arriving yesterday, set at rest the rumors of the death of Bertrand Russell, the English pacifist, mathematician and sociologist. The same paper, which had previously published an account of his death in Peking on March 28, now gives an account of his recovery from the supposedly fatal attack of pneumonia.

Mr. Russell's wife, who was Miss Alys Pearsall Smith of Philadelphia, obtained a divorce in England last Thursday. The Japan Advertiser states that he had arranged to marry, on the termination of this English action, his secretary, Miss Belloc, who was with him in China during his lecture tour and had nursed him in his illness there.

*New York Times* May 9, 1921

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THE BERTRAND RUSSELL SOCIETY QUARTERLY is the official organ of the Bertrand Russell Society. It publishes Society News and Proceedings, and articles on the history of analytic philosophy, especially those pertaining to Russell's life and works, including historical materials and reviews of recent work on Russell. Scholarly articles appearing in the *Quarterly* are peer-reviewed.

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THE  
32<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL MEETING  
OF THE  
BERTRAND RUSSELL SOCIETY

May 13 - 15, 2005

McMaster University  
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<http://russell.mcmaster.ca/brsmeeting.htm>

AND

A CALL FOR PAPERS

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## IN THIS ISSUE

BERTRAND RUSSELL is often viewed as having been a phenomenalist in, as well as after, his 1914 work *Our Knowledge of the External World*. Yet in an interview with Elisabeth Ramsden Eames, Russell declared that he had never given up either realism or the causal theory of perception. IREM KURTSAL STEEN explains how these two facts can be reconciled in her article 'Russell on Matter and Our Knowledge of the External World', which she first presented at the BRS annual meeting this past June in Plymouth, New Hampshire. The article carefully disentangles several of the threads running through Russell's work in those years to clarify what Russell was up to in his 1914 work. Whether this is your first reading of *Our Knowledge of the External World* or your fiftieth, you will find this article useful for understanding what is going on in this text.

While Ms. Steen debunks the charge of phenomenism in Russell's 1914 work, RAY PERKINS selects and introduces another of RUSSELL'S LETTERS TO THE EDITOR—this one, a previously unpublished letter to the *London Times* written in May 1960. The letter contains one of Russell's earliest proposals that Britain unilaterally give up its nuclear weapons. Some scholars—for example, Ray Monk—have said that Russell advocated unilateralism only under the "pernicious" influence of Ralph Schoenman. But Russell wrote this letter before he had met Schoenman, a fact that tells against the view that without Schoenman's influence, Russell would not have adopted unilateralism. As an added bonus, Russell's devastating wit is on full display in this letter.

LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN'S VIEWS ON ART have in the past been a small sideshow in the long-running Wittgenstein circus—little-studied, and poorly understood. Several recent anthologies on Wittgenstein and aesthetics have attempted to rectify this situation and move the sideshow closer to the main ring in the Big Top. In this issue, ERAN GUTER reviews one of those recent anthologies, *Wittgenstein, Aesthetics, and Philosophy* (edited by Peter Lewis), clarifies some of the reasons why scholars have tended to mishandle the notion of aesthetics in Wittgenstein's early and late works, gives

us a good survey of the articles in the anthology, and points us in the direction he feels the field needs to go next.

IS THE INTELLECTUALISM AND RATIONALITY that characterizes Russell's familiar objections to religious and Christian belief necessarily hostile to a treatment of religious belief styled after William James? This is the question that lies behind 'At Cross Purposes: Atheism and Christianity', a review of Michael Martin's recent book *Atheism, Morality, and Meaning*. In this review, ROSALIND CAREY muses over the role of meta-beliefs—beliefs about believing—in shaping the seemingly peculiar way beliefs are sometimes held by religious believers as she reflects on the current state of the dialogue between theists and atheists.

Finally, CHAD TRAINER REVIEWS ALAN SCHWERIN'S RECENT COLLECTION OF ESSAYS ON RUSSELL, *Bertrand Russell on Nuclear War, Peace, and Language*. Those who have not yet seen Alan's book will get a very clear picture of its content in Chad's survey of its articles here. And rounding out this issue of the *Quarterly* is information on next spring's BRS Annual Meeting, news of the recent Society election for BRS Board of Directors, Nick Griffin's 'On Denoting' conference report on the centennial celebration conference for 'On Denoting', the Traveler's Diary/Conference Report, Treasurer's Reports, and other Society News.

## SOCIETY NEWS

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There is much Society News this issue—details of the 2005 BRS Annual Meeting, a call for papers for the Annual Meeting, election results for BRS Board of Directors, details of the conference celebrating the centenary anniversary of 'On Denoting' that is to be held in conjunction with this year's BRS Annual Meeting, a list of donors to the BRS this year, an end-of-the-year membership report, sad news of recently deceased friends of the BRS, and information on BRS sessions at the APA—but first we need to say:

### IT'S TIME TO RENEW

REGULAR MEMBERSHIPS IN THE BERTRAND RUSSELL SOCIETY EXPIRE AT YEAR'S END. For those who have not yet done so, now is the time to renew your membership. Instructions are on page 4.

### BRS 2005 ANNUAL MEETING NEWS

THE BERTRAND RUSSELL SOCIETY will hold its 32nd Annual Meeting this coming May 13-15, 2005, at McMaster University in Hamilton Ontario—home of the Bertrand Russell Archives and Bertrand Russell Research Centre. BRS members and their friends are urged not to miss this year's BRS Annual Meeting, as it promises to be an extra special one. The meeting will take place in conjunction with a second conference at McMaster University celebrating the centenary anniversary of Russell's landmark paper 'On Denoting'. Organized by Nicholas Griffin and Dale Jacquette, this second conference will take place May 14-18, 2005, allowing those who attend the BRS Annual Meeting to attend the 'On Denoting' conference as well. To encourage conference crossover attendance, there will be a special reduced registration fee for those wishing to attend both conferences, and those registered for the BRS meeting will be able to attend papers at the 'On Denoting' conference for free prior to the BRS farewell luncheon on Sunday afternoon. Registration details for the annual meeting can be found on pages 2 and 3, and also on the web at URL <http://russell.mcmaster.ca/brsmeeting.htm>. Nick Griffin provides details of the centenary conference in his conference report for the BRSQ, to be found in the back of this issue. Details of that conference can also be found online at <http://denoting.mcmaster.ca>.

CALL FOR PAPERS. You can't have a BRS Annual Meeting without a lot of good talks on Russell. If you are working on, or planning to work on a paper on Russell's thought or his life, please submit an abstract of around 150 words to BRS President, Dr Alan Schwerin, at: [aschweri@monmouth.edu](mailto:aschweri@monmouth.edu).

At the last annual meeting, the Society held "master's classes"—seminars for which members had read material before hand. If you would like to lead such a master's class at the next annual meeting, send Alan Schwerin an email expressing your interest.

BRS BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION RESULTS. The 2004 election for three year positions on the BRS Board of Directors was a lively one, with 11 nominees for 8 seats. Fifty members cast votes in this election, more than have voted in a BRS Board election in recent years. The nominees, with the votes each received, were: Kevin Brodie-32, Rosalind Carey-44, Tim Madigan-39, Ray Perkins-40, Alan Schwerin-37, Warren Allen Smith-33, Chad Trainer-39, Thom Weidlich-36, John Fitzgerald-10, Kevin Klement-1, Marvin Kohl-23, Gregory Landini-23

The eight winners were: Kevin Brodie, Rosalind Carey, Tim Madigan, Ray Perkins, Alan Schwerin, Warren Allen Smith, Chad Trainer, and Thom Weidlich. We thank all who voted in the election this year, and especially all who ran as candidates.

SPECIAL THANKS TO BRS SUPPORTERS. The following people made donations to the Bertrand Russell Society in 2004 beyond their regular membership fees. The Russell Society gratefully thanks them for their generosity and support. (Members please note: though dues are not tax-deductible, contributions are.) The donors were:

*PATRONS* (\$250 and up) David S. Goldman, Frank Jenkins

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END-OF-THE-YEAR MEMBERSHIP REPORT, by BRS Treasurer, Dennis Darland. At the end of 2004, the BRS had 165 members, up from 150 members at the end of 2003. For this report, couples were counted as 2 people (in some reports, including the mid-year report, couples have been counted as 1). Honorary members (13) are included in these numbers as well. The number of donors to the BRS also increased this year, from 20 donors in 2003 to 24 in 2004.

THE BRS AT THE APA. The BRS sponsors sessions at each of the division meetings of the American Philosophical Association. This past December, the BRS met at the Eastern division meeting of the APA in Boston with good talks and discussions (see the Traveler's Diary in the back for details).

This spring, the BRS, in conjunction with HEAPS (the new History of Early Analytic Philosophy Society), will be sponsoring talks at the Pacific and Central division meetings of the APA. The Pacific division will meet in San Francisco this year, March 22-27, 2005 at the Westin St. Francis Hotel, Union Square. (The Pacific APA program only calls it a HEAPS session rather than the joint BRS and HEAPS session that it actually is. Nevertheless, the BRS will be there!) Bay Area BRSer Peter Stone will chair the session at the Pacific, Jane Duran will deliver her Annual Meeting talk on Russell on History and Intrinsic Value, with comments by Rosalind Carey, Bruce Frazier will speak on How Analytic Philosophy Inspired the Chomskian Revolution, with comments by Robert Riemenschneider, and finally, Sandra Lapointe will speak on Bolzano On Axioms, 'Grounding', and Synthetic a priori Knowledge (commentator TBA). The Bay Area Russell Society (BARS) will meet there at the same time. If you are in the area, please show your support for the BRS by attending.

The Central APA will meet in Chicago this year, April 27-30, 2005, at the Palmer House Hilton Hotel, and the BRS will be sponsoring talks there as well. Details will be provided in the next issue of the *Quarterly*.

## IN MEMORIAM

We note with sadness the recent passing of three very good friends of the Bertrand Russell Society: OMAR RUMI in Kuala Lumpur, PAUL EDWARDS in New York City, and CONRAD RUSSELL in London.

OMAR RUMI, earlier known as Ralph Gainey, a frequent and welcome contributor to the online Bertrand Russell discussion group russell-1, died of a heart attack on October 6, 2004 in Kuala Lumpur, where he lived in retirement. He was 67 years old. Omar stood out in the Russell discussion group as reasonable, skeptical and open-minded, always willing to examine the rationale for any claim until a clear and satisfactory understanding of it had been reached. He was a true Russellian. He is survived by his wife, Somsiah Parman, and his five year old son, Latyn Gainey. Omar is said to be buried in a grove of trees on a hill overlooking a valley. He is missed on the Russell list.

DR. PAUL EDWARDS, editor of *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* and honorary member of the Bertrand Russell Society, died in his Manhattan home early in the morning of December 9, 2004. He was 81 years old. With nearly 1,500 entries by over 500 contributors, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, published in 1967 by Macmillan, is one of the monumental works of twentieth century philosophy. Published when analytic philosophy was at its peak, it exhibits all the robust muscularity of a great work created at the highpoint of a movement. Edwards' editing, especially his famous intolerance of "confused thinking", contributed much to the power of the work.

The greatness of the *Encyclopedia* became especially apparent after 1998, Routledge published its own *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. The only good way to judge an encyclopedia or dictionary is by comparing its entries with those of a competitor. (Try this for yourself next time you go to Borders to buy a translating dictionary and you will see what I mean.) Though the *Routledge Encyclopedia* is a larger work (10 volumes instead of 8; 2000 entries instead of 1500) on which a great deal of money was spent, and though it sold at a magisterial price (\$3,775.00), it soon became clear, after one compared a few dozen entries in the two en-

cyclopedias, that despite all its efforts to replace Edwards' Macmillan *Encyclopedia*, the *Routledge Encyclopedia* is an ordinary work and the Edwards' *Encyclopedia* is not. The *Routledge Encyclopedia* simply had the effect of increasing the appreciation of Edwards' *Encyclopedia* among philosophers.

Dr. Edwards was a critic of religion, and as well as editing the Macmillan *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, he wrote several entries related to religion for it, including 'Atheism', 'Atheismusstreit', 'Common Consent Arguments for the Existence of God', 'Why', parts of the entry on Russell, and, most intriguingly, an entry entitled 'My Death'. In that last essay, Edwards examined the common view that one cannot imagine or conceive of one's own death though one can imagine and conceive of the death of others, and after careful analysis found the idea "confused" and wanting. He concluded:

It seems quite plain that human beings not infrequently imagine and conceive of their own deaths without the least difficulty, as, for example, when they take out life insurance or when they admonish themselves to drive more carefully. Nor is it at all difficult to explain what a person imagines when he thinks of his own death. "When I die," wrote Bertrand Russell in a famous passage (in *What I Believe*), "I shall rot and nothing of my ego will survive"; and it is surely this that people wish to avoid or put off. A person thinking of his own death is thinking of the destruction or disintegration of his body and the cessation of his experiences.

As well as editing *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edwards was the author of several books, including *Reincarnation: A Critical Examination*, *The Logic of Moral Discourse*, *Heidegger's Confusions*, and numerous articles. Additionally, he is responsible for having collected a number of Russell's writings on religion and publishing them under the title *Why I Am Not a Christian*. In so doing, he changed the lives of thousands of people around the world, including the lives of many in the BRS.

Born in Vienna on September 2, 1923 to Jewish parents, Edwards' family fled to Australia with Hitler's rise to power. Edwards received his B.A. and M.A. from the University of Melbourne, and then moved to Manhattan and received a Ph.D. in



philosophy from Columbia University in 1951. He was a professor at New York University in the 1960s and Brooklyn College from 1966 to 1986, and lecturer at the New School for Social Research from the 1960s to the late 1990s. He also taught at the University of Melbourne, Columbia University, City College of New York, and the University of California, Berkeley.

CONRAD RUSSELL, son of Bertrand Russell and Patricia Spence, and great grandson of Lord John Russell, Liberal Prime Minister of England 1846-52 and 1865-66, died on October 10, 2004 at the age of 67. He had been ill for some time. A professor, author, and member of the House of Lords, the fifth Earl Russell published numerous books and was active in politics as a Liberal Democrat leader. His field of study was primarily 17th century English political and parliamentary history. His publications include *The Crisis of Parliaments: English History 1509 – 1660* (1971), *The Causes of the English Civil War* (1990), and *The Fall of the British Monarchies* (1991). As a revisionist historian of the English civil war, he tended to be skeptical of accounts that explained the civil war in terms of grand sweeping forces. Conrad Russell is survived by his sons Nicholas and John Russell.

## FEATURES

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### RUSSELL ON MATTER AND OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE EXTERNAL WORLD \*

IREM KURTSAL STEEN

Bertrand Russell's philosophy around 1914 is often interpreted as phenomenism, the view that sensations are not caused by but rather constitute ordinary objects. Indeed, *prima facie*, his 1914 *Our Knowledge of the External World* reduces objects to sense-data. However, Russell did not think his view was phenomenalist, and he said that he never gave up either the causal theory of perception or a realist understanding of objects.<sup>1</sup> In this paper I offer an explanation of why Russell might have undertaken the constructionist project of his 1914 work while not considering the resulting position that objects can be constructed out of sense-data to be phenomenalist.

In *Our Knowledge of the External World*, Russell calls all the sense-data of a given subject at a given time a *perspective*. At any point of view which is not occupied by a subject, there still is a perspective such that had some subject been there, she would have been given that aspect of the world. A momentary state of a common sense thing is a similarity class of sensibilia belonging to different perspectives. Russell tells us that although these sensibilia are real, the momentary object they are supposed to constitute is *just a logical construction*. (Russell 1914a, pp. 95-96)

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\* I am thankful to Dean Zimmerman for his substantial comments on an ancestor of this paper. Ishani Maitra and my fellow graduate students at Syracuse University have given me helpful comments on earlier drafts. And I thank the Bertrand Russell Society both for the opportunity to discuss the ideas presented here with the participants of the society's 31st Annual Meeting in Plymouth State University, NH, and for the award which made it possible for me to travel there.

<sup>1</sup> Elisabeth Ramsden Eames (1967) describes her interview with Russell, where he told Eames that he never gave up realism or the causal theory of perception.



But then, Russell asks: "This hypothetical picture of the world is free from logical impossibility, and it doesn't conflict with any known facts, but is there any reason to suppose it is *real*?" (Russell 1914a, p. 101) This is a strange question when asked of a construction. Constructions need only to replicate the logical relations between the elements of the system they are substituted for, and those that can do that are all equally good. There is no question as to their reality, as long as the building blocks are real.

Space, on this view, comes in two kinds. Each perspective has its own *private space*. There is also one all-embracing *perspective space* where each perspective is located in a configuration determined by the similarities between perspectives. A momentary thing is likewise located in perspective space, at the intersection of different similarity-series of perspectives. A penny, for example, looks like a thick line in some perspectives, and it looks circular in others. These two kinds of perspectives form two distinct similarity-series. Where these two series intersect in perspective space is the place where the penny is. (Russell 1914a, p. 98)

We are familiar with the sense in which a penny appears circular in some perspective. In Russell's terms, a particular circular appearance of a penny in a particular perspective is an *aspect* of the penny. For every aspect of a thing, two places in perspective space are salient: the place *at* which the aspect appears (the place of the thing in perspective space), and the place *from* which it appears (the place of the perspective of which the aspect is a part). (Russell 1914a, p. 100) Each aspect is a member of two classes: the various aspects of the thing it is an aspect of, and the perspective it belongs to. Physics is occupied with the first kind of classification of aspects, and psychology is occupied with the second kind. Physics and psychology do not have different substances as their subjects, but different organizations of the same substance. (Ibid, p. 100)

Persistence and change are treated in a manner similar to contemporary four-dimensionalist views. A persisting thing is defined as "a certain series of appearances, connected with each other by continuity and by certain causal laws." (Russell 1914a, p. 111)

Soon after the publication of *Problems of Philosophy*, in May 1912, Russell delivered a paper titled 'On Matter'. 'On Matter' is concerned with the question of whether (and how) we can know the existence of matter even though we are not acquainted with it.

(Russell 1912a, p. 81) The view Russell defends in this paper is strikingly similar to his view in *Our Knowledge of the External World*.

Matter is to be understood as that which physics is about. So, matter must be such that the physicist can know its existence. In other words, what physical science is concerned with and makes discoveries about must be a function of the physicist's sense-data. What could that function be? There are only two ways in which we can know the existence of something. "(1) immediate acquaintance, which assures us of the existence of our thoughts, feelings, and sense-data,... (2) general principles according to which the existence of one thing can be inferred from that of another." (Russell 1912a, p. 80)

The bridge which relates the physicist's sense-data to matter must correspond to one of these ways of knowing that something exists. If our knowledge of matter can be reduced to what we know by acquaintance, then matter should be understood as a logical construction out of sense-data. Otherwise, it must be by inference that we know the existence of matter. So, according to Russell, the bridge between sense-data and matter is either inference or logical construction. (Russell 1912a, pp. 84-85)

Russell thinks that there is a fact of the matter here, as to what type of bridge really exists between sense-data and matter, and that we can discover what that bridge is. In order to discover what kind of function relates sense-data to the matter of physics, we must examine the ontological commitments of physics, i.e., the entities or values physics endorses as real. If some of those entities or values are not given in our experience, but nevertheless are necessary for the truth of physical hypotheses, then we cannot know the existence of matter by acquaintance alone, and so, inference must be the function that relates physics to matter. If physics is not committed to anything beyond what we are acquainted with, then matter can be constructed from sense-data, and no inference is needed.

Russell explains that physics *does* attribute to matter qualities which are not given in our experience, for example, the distance of a star from the observer. Since the visual sense-datum as of observing a star in the sky does not contain an element corresponding to a distance, distance is not a sensible coordinate. (Russell 1912a, pp. 88-89)

What then is the self-evident principle based on which this coordinate is postulated? Russell thinks that, vaguely put, that principle seems to be *different effects, different causes*. Suppose the physicist were to observe two discs, one red and one yellow, moving on a straight line backwards and forwards from each other, with periodically changing velocities. When they reach the same line of sight, sometimes the red disc disappears and sometimes the yellow one does. The physicist would most likely hypothesize that these sense-data are of two spheres moving in ellipses about their common center of gravity in the same plane as the observer. The observable difference between the case where the red disc disappears and the case where the yellow one does is explained by an unobserved difference in their causes. Russell thinks that a precise version of the *different effects, different causes* principle may just be the principle which justifies the inference from sense-data to matter. (Russell 1912a, pp. 90-91)

All this entails that matter cannot be logically constructed out of our sense-data in a way which would make physics true. "Matter, if it is to be known to exist at all, must be known through some a priori principle assuring us that our sensations in some way 'correspond' with things which can exist without our sensations." (Russell 1912a, p. 92) This means that the gap between sense-data and physics is bridged by inference. But we still need a theory which explains the sense in which our sensations "correspond" with things independent from them. This requires a certain kind of understanding about sense-data.

The first question for Russell is: Can sense-data exist when they are not perceived? Russell never held that for sense-data, to be is to be perceived. In his 1910 essay 'On the Nature of Truth and Falsehood' he states that there is logical room to regard sense-data as mind-independent entities. If a sense-datum is perceived, necessarily it exists, but if a sense-datum exists, it is not necessarily perceived. In his 1911 essay 'Analytic Realism', he holds that, *as a matter of fact*, sense-data never exist when they are not perceived, because their existence seems to require them to be in a causal relationship of acquaintance with a subject. Finally, in 'On Matter' he considers a sense-datum to be an existent in its own right, as an entity that, at a given time, may or may not be causally related to a subject. To become data, they need to be causally related to a subject; but to exist, they need not. (Russell 1912a, p. 85)

Since sense-data give conflicting information about objects, matter cannot be simply identified with sense-data. Neither can we hope to infer the existence of matter as the cause of our sense-data by appeal to the simplicity argument of *Problems of Philosophy*, which relied on the fact that realism is the simplest explanation of the coherence and unity of our sense-data. Russell now thinks that since the principle that simpler hypotheses are more likely to be true is not self-evident or *a priori*, the simplicity argument has no force against skepticism. (Russell 1912a, p. 86)

Next, to understand how our sensations "correspond" with things independent of them, Russell considers naïve realism, which is the direct realist theory of perception. According to this view, experience puts us in direct contact with the external world, instead of providing us with "representations" which mediate between the external world and our knowledge of it. Most epistemology literature identifies naïve realism as the denouncement of "sense-data", where sense-data are commonly understood as being mental and subjective representations of a mind-independent reality. A very clear indication that Russell does not think of sense-data as mind-dependent is the way in which he describes naïve realism.

Both in 'Analytic Realism' and here in 'On Matter' Russell says that naïve realism is *the view which identifies matter with collections of sense-data*. Now, no naïve realist would describe her view in this way. The view which identifies matter with collections of mind-dependent sense-data is phenomenalism, which is as far from naïve realism as any position can be. But Russell did not confuse naïve realism with phenomenalism, because by 'sense-data' he does not mean necessarily mind-dependent things. Russellian sense-data are the real qualities of real things which we directly know.

Sensation appears to be a relation between a subject and a sense-datum, which is the same thing as a "quality"; we know that the subject can exist at times when it is not sensating the particular quality in question, and we naturally assume that the quality can exist at times when the subject is not sensating it. This is the essential axiom of naïve realism. Its difficulties come chiefly, I think, from an assumption which is *not* essential to it, namely that two qualities of the same kind—e.g. two colours cannot coexist in the same thing at the same time. (Russell 1912a, p. 94)

So a tenable naïve realism would be one which affirms both that sense-data are mind-independent qualities of objects, and that conflicting qualities may be at the same place at the same time. (Russell 1912a, p. 93) Such a naïve realism would be “a theory which regards a piece of matter as consisting entirely of constituents of the nature of sense-data, by including everything that could be a sense-datum to any possible observer.” (Russell 1912a, p. 85-86)

The similarities to *Our Knowledge of the External World* are obvious. Although many have regarded the position in *Our Knowledge of the External World* as a form of phenomenalism, surely its precursor, ‘On Matter’, defends a realist, in fact a naïve realist position. In ‘On Matter’, matter is constituted by sense-data and unsensed sensibilia, which are not mind-dependent phenomenal entities. That is, even though Russell reduces the objects of common sense and science to entities like sense-data, he does that not by phenomenalizing the objects, but by objectifying the phenomena. Furthermore, matter is not understood as a mere logical fiction constructed out of sense-data and unsensed sensibilia, but rather is composed of and constituted by them. The mind-independent existence of matter is known by inference, and perception relates us to matter directly.

Before writing his posthumously published 1913 manuscript *Theory of Knowledge*, Russell continued his work on the “problem of matter”. Some of the extant manuscripts of this brief period describe logical constructions very similar to the ones in *Our Knowledge of the External World*. In these manuscripts though, his account of our knowledge of the things of common sense and the matter of physics involve both constructions and inferences.

Letters Russell wrote after he finished ‘On Matter’ show that he worked on the subject for a while, but eventually decided to first work on theory of knowledge. He thought that an adequate treatment of matter requires the treatment of knowledge. Russell might have planned *Theory of Knowledge* to ground the amended naïve realism of ‘On Matter’, the inference of physical objects from sense-data. On the other hand, he also wanted to construct the physical world out of sense-data in order to make physical hypotheses verifiable. The problem of matter had become two-fold: that of explaining how sense-data give us knowledge of mind-independent objects, and that of defining “matter” as a function of sense-data so

that physical hypotheses would be verifiable. Inference is more suitable for the first, and constructions are more suitable for the second.

This hypothesis, that Russell wanted to employ the technique of inference to explain *our* knowledge of the external world and the technique of construction to explain the *physicist's* ability to verify her hypotheses, fits Russell's descriptions of the *Theory of Knowledge* project. Originally, the book was supposed to have two sections, an analytic section on acquaintance, judgment, and inference; and a constructive section where Russell would explain the construction of the world of physics.

Shortly after he described the book project this way, he decided that *Theory of Knowledge* would consist only of the analytic section. However, after he wrote the sections on acquaintance and judgment, and before he began the section on inference, Russell dropped the project because of the criticisms of his theory of judgment made by Ludwig Wittgenstein. He published the chapters about acquaintance in various journals, he never published the chapters on judgment, and he never wrote the chapters about inference. It is most likely that in the face of the failure of his theory of judgment, Russell was unable to give an account of inference.<sup>2</sup>

It is generally held that the constructionist view which Russell originally planned *Theory of Knowledge* to include later became *Our Knowledge of the External World*. The failure of *Theory of Knowledge* to explain judgment, and thus inference, did not pose a threat to his project of constructing the “world of physics” out of sensed and unsensed particulars, simply because constructions are not inferences. These constructions were originally meant only to be substitutes for the hypothetical objects of physics, so that the hypotheses about these objects would be translated into propositions which are in principle verifiable. When he had to give up the project of showing how we can infer the existence of matter, the constructions had to also take the place of the inferences. That is, the constructions had to explain not just the verifiability of the physicist's hypotheses but also our knowledge of the external world.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed description of the *Theory of Knowledge* project and its collapse, see E.R. Eames' “Introduction” to *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, Vol. 7.

In *Our Knowledge of the External World*, Russell says:

[C]an we know that other objects, inferable from objects of sense but not necessarily resembling them, exist either when we are perceiving the objects of sense or at any other time? This latter problem arises in philosophy as the problem of the “thing in itself,” and in science as the problem of matter as assumed in physics. (Russell 1914a, pp. 82-83)

He has now come to identify the problem of “thing in itself” with the problem of what physics is committed to when it puts forth hypotheses about matter. The thing-in-itself (if there is such a thing) is “something quite unlike [the sensible object we perceive], something which, together with us, and our sense-organs, causes our sensations, but is never itself given in sensation.” (Ibid, p. 92)

Identifying the reasons for believing in the existence of a thing-in-itself thus described would fall under the project of providing an explanation for our knowledge of the external world. The *inferred* naïve realism Russell defended in ‘On Matter’ was a candidate for such an explanation. But in *Our Knowledge of the External World*, the problems of matter and thing-in-itself are addressed all at once, with the method of logical construction. “The supreme maxim in scientific philosophizing” is born: “Wherever possible, logical constructions are to be substituted for inferred entities.” (Russell 1914b, p. 155)

This new dual role for constructions gives rise to the phenomenalist feel of *Our Knowledge of the External World*, stemming from the reduction of physical objects into sensed and unsensed sensibilia which, in parts of the text, appear to be merely phenomenal. But in the book, Russell also says that although we must admit that the existence of sense-data depend upon the physiology of their subject, and the colored surfaces we see cease to exist when we close our eyes, we should not jump to the conclusion that sense-data are mind-dependent. (Russell 1914a, p. 71)

Again, in writings of the same period Russell says that sense-data are not only mind-independent, but also physical. (Russell 1914b, p. 151) They are among the constituents of the external world of which we happen to be immediately aware. They are not mental except in the sense that we are aware of them. (Russell

1915, p. 143) In ‘The Relation of Sense-Data to Physics’ Russell states that because sense-data are data, they are important to epistemology. But from the point of metaphysics, sensed and unsensed particulars are all on a par with each other. (Russell 1914b, p. 148)

*Our Knowledge of the External World* contains a passage where Russell says that there is a sense in which unsensed appearances are merely ideal. (Russell 1914a, p. 117) This claim would seem to entail that a large part of the constructed world is ideal and mind-dependent, and Russell here seems to paint a phenomenalist picture of the world. However, “ideal” turns out not to mean mind-dependent or even mental. Unsensed appearances are “ideal” only in the sense that they are calculated as functions of the sensed appearances. Russell grants this only to secure the verifiability of physics, that is, to show that knowing causal laws does not require knowledge of anything but sense-data. But the world which those laws are about, the world they describe truly need not contain anything ideal. (Russell 1914b, p. 157)

My thesis explains why Russell goes back and forth, calling the logical constructions fictional on one page and talking about them as real entities on another. The pieces of matter that science needed in order to be verifiable could afford to be fictional, in the sense that they were only *logically* constructed, because the objects for which they were substitutes were also going to be inferred, in the manner suggested in ‘On Matter’. When the inferences could not be provided, the constructions were left in a limbo between the real world and the logical space. *Our Knowledge of the External World* is Russell’s attempt to have the constructions do the job of both the inference-based project of ‘On Matter’ and the constructionist project that was originally designed only to supply physics with knowable objects. Rereading *Our Knowledge of the External World* with this mind, we should be able to dispel the thesis that when Russell wrote it, he was trying on phenomenism.

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## "HYSTERICAL EMOTIONALISM"

LETTER TO THE LONDON *TIMES*, 8 MAY 1960

by BERTRAND RUSSELL

## INTRODUCTION

By RAY PERKINS, JR.

The unpublished letter that follows (in Edith's hand, dated 8 May 1960), from Russell to the London *Times*, is interesting in several respects. It is one of Russell's earliest public proposals of what came to be known as 'unilateralism', i.e., the idea that Britain should unilaterally give up its nuclear weapons and its membership in NATO as a way to stimulate an agreement on nuclear abolition between the super powers. Unilateralism was an idea that Russell vigorously defended later that year (1960) against both Prime Minister Macmillan and the British Labour Party leader, Hugh Gaitskell (see *Yours Faithfully, Bertrand Russell*, pp. 227-29, 235-37). The timing of the letter is also significant, because it was written two months before Russell met Ralph Schoenman, the young American radical whom some Russell scholars see as filling the great old man's head with radical mush. For example, Ray Monk, noticing that there were no signs of unilateralism in Russell's 1959 *Common Sense and Nuclear Warfare*, concludes (*post hoc, ergo propter hoc*) that the idea which appeared in Russell's writings the next year must have come from Schoenman, who entered Russell's life in the summer of 1960 (see *The Ghost of Madness*, Cape, 2000, p. 406). Another reason that this letter is noteworthy is that Russell's Swiftian wit is much in evidence as he responds to the all too common charge that his antinuclear ideas were riddled with hysteria and emotionalism. (Come on, if one can't get emotional over nuclear war, then when and over what can one get emotional? For a more extended discussion of the place of emotion in nuclear politics, see Russell's 1963 letter to the *Times* "Sense and Sensibility" in *Yours Faithfully*, p. 339.)

8 May 1960

To the Editor of *The Times*:

Sir—I find that a desire for one's children to live out the normal span of human life is regarded as hysterical emotionalism. For the purposes of the present letter I shall, therefore, assume that I am devoid of human affection and consequently worthy to be listened to. Two policies are open to the Powers of NATO and the Warsaw Pact: one is to go on with present policies and thereby ensure, sooner or later, the extinction of the human race; the other is to seek enforceable agreements for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Both groups of Powers profess to adopt the second policy, but, in fact, whenever there is a prospect of agreement, one side or the other injects some new matter of disagreement as to which it is convinced that agreement is impossible. This shows that both groups of Powers are, in fact, in favour of the first policy, which gets the name of "realism". Some people think that if one important nation were to abandon the alliance to which it belongs and decide neither to have nuclear weapons nor to seek the protection of other Powers which have them, this might induce, among the Powers of the side which is being deserted, a greater readiness to enter into genuine negotiations for disarmament. This is called hysterical emotionalism. As a person devoid of emotion, I am for the present expressing no preference among these policies. I merely ask myself what motive, other than emotion, can induce anybody to prefer anything to anything else. In making a choice, cold reason offers no help.

Russell

## AT CROSS-PURPOSES: ATHEISM AND CHRISTIANITY

ROSALIND CAREY

Review of Michael Martin, *Atheism, Morality, and Meaning* (Prometheus Lecture Series). Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 2003. Pp. 330. US \$21.00

### I

In *On Liberty*, having observed that people tend to abort a chain of thought whose consequences they fear, John Stuart Mill claims that to be genuinely intellectual a person must be willing "to follow his intellect to whatever conclusions it may lead."<sup>1</sup> Michael Martin no doubt agrees with Mill's conception of the qualities of an intellectual, and his new book gives ample occasion to reflect on exactly what is involved in pursuing the consequences of a chain of thought, come what may. These are issues of method, however, and any discussion of them presupposes a grasp on the thesis of his book, which can be summed up as follows.

First, Martin presents atheism as (1) able to provide a theoretical basis for a belief in the existence of objective standards of morality, and (2) able to give good grounds for the possibility of living a life that, though finite, has genuine purpose and meaning. Facing him is the contrary Christian claim that atheists—because they deny an almighty Lawgiver whose authority establishes judgments as true or false and a future life which gives their lives meaning—are in danger of becoming ethical relativists and nihilists, people who admit no objective moral standards and for whom life has no purpose or meaning, people for whom nothing matters. Second, Martin upends this Christian argument by saying that it is the *Christian* who is unable to support, and in danger of losing her grip on the notion of an objective morality, and it is the *Christian* who is incapable of explaining how an infinite life has purpose or meaning.

These are strong claims—bound to irritate many believers in the unlikely case that any take up this book and read it—and they need a strong defense. Martin gives one, always exonerating the

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<sup>1</sup> J. S. Mill, *On Liberty*, (New York: Penguin, 1975), pp. 81-82, 95.



atheist and incriminating the theist, first on the issue of morality (Part I of his book) and then on the matter of life's purpose or meaning (Part II).

## II

In Part I, Martin defends non-theistic morality by means of an Ideal Observer theory. This doctrine refers moral decisions (e.g. "Shall I cheat on my taxes?") to the actions of an imaginary or hypothetical moral agent whose moral emotions and reactions (e.g. disapproval) are trustworthy guides to right and wrong because we have supposed her to possess all of the properties (rationality, objectivity, empathy, relevant knowledge and so forth) of a perfect moral agent. Martin denies that his account involves reasoning in a circle. Though that would be the case if moral beliefs were explained in terms of an Ideal Observer's moral beliefs, his theory explains moral beliefs in terms of an Ideal Observer's moral feelings, and is therefore immune to the charge of circularity.

Martin holds up divine command theory as the main Christian alternative to his atheistic account of what grounds the objectivity of moral beliefs. According to divine command theory, "cheating is wrong" is true because God has commanded us not to cheat. Putting aside for now the difficulty of understanding how a non-spatial, non-temporal deity can give commands, Martin objects that a theist cannot avoid the snare of voluntarism: Is cheating wrong because God commands it, or does God command us not to cheat because it is wrong?

If a Christian chooses the former alternative, Martin says, she leaves open the possibility that God might command what we think is wrong, e.g. to kill our children. Presumably we would then *not* be able to endorse the view that what God commands us to do is right. The other alternative leaves us unable to explain why God has moral authority or is conceived of as the source of moral law, since it places laws above and prior to God, who is reduced to the role of a messenger. Readers who doubt whether Christians really emphasize divine command theory as much as Martin seems to think should ask themselves whether Christians can provide any *other* equally clear account on which to base their claim that only they possess the keys to a moral life.

## III

The possibility of living a life that has purpose and meaning is the topic of the second portion of the book. Martin begins by asking, what do we mean by saying life has no meaning? In an attempt to get a grasp on this elusive idea, Martin analyzes the notion of life's meaningfulness into one of *purpose* and one of *value*. He proceeds to define the idea, *the meaning of life*, either to signify a life of purpose, or to signify a life of value (he accepts both definitions).

To begin with, purposes must be significant, non-arbitrary, and gratifying, but need not be lasting or even completed in one's lifetime. (Martin does not explain the concept of value so carefully as that of purpose.) Despite disbelief in eternal life, an atheist can live a meaningful life, he argues, if she has a purpose in the above sense. For example, a palliative care nurse, on this view, may have a life of purpose, hence a meaningful life, even if she believes neither in her own nor her patients' eternal life.

The Christian supposes that only belief in an afterlife makes life meaningful, but on Martin's analysis, extension of life is irrelevant to the purpose (or value) of a life, since an eternal life could be without purpose. Indeed, since religious concepts of eternal life do not stand up well under scrutiny, Martin believes that a truly meaningful life is possible *only* when such ideas are excluded from our system of beliefs. He thus rejects Richard Taylor's analysis (in "The Meaning of Life") of Camus' 'Myth of Sisyphus' that life is meaningful only if it results in something of never-ending value, or alternatively, only if it consists in creative activity. Martin asks, is a chef's life without meaning because her products are not lasting? Is a mother's life without meaning?

Moreover, he argues that part of what gives meaning to a Christian is dedication to living a Christ-like life; and in a portion of the book that may make even some atheists wince, Martin argues that it is impossible to derive meaning this way, one, because it is impossible to determine exactly what Christ's standards of behavior are, and two, because his behavior often seems *unworthy* of imitation. (Martin has in mind indications that Jesus indulged in fits of rage, was dismissive of his mother, and so on.) Any conceit that only as a Christian can life can have meaning, he concludes, evaporates upon examination of the grounds—eternal life, a Christ-like life—on which it is based.

## IV

J. S. Mill, I remarked above, advocates following a line of reasoning to its conclusion, no matter what the consequences may turn out to be. If we judge by his method in this book, Martin, like Mill, also places a high value on fearless rationality. Yet some readers may see his approach in a less flattering light, as a relentless, pitiless, rational process paired with obtuse literalism. One of Martin's most frequent strategies is to nail down the emptiness of a religious notion by strenuously attempting to make it clear. For example, he points out that a command, divine or otherwise, is a speech act, and speech implies a mouth. But God can't actually give commands since he isn't in space/time, doesn't have a mouth, and can't engage in or make another engage in speech acts. This difficulty applies to any supposed transmission of God's commands to a prophet, and so the Divine Command theory has no way of getting going.

At such points in Martin's text even a hard-core atheist may feel inclined to shout, "Oh come on!" Even Socrates irritates us after awhile with his pursuit of clarity and his stating of the obvious, and, in time, Martin's arguments begin to read as disingenuous, and at fault for being grossly, indeed deliberately, insensitive to symbolic meaning. A religious reader will be even less charitable, and she will, more than likely, take Martin's arguments as evidence of colossal stupidity. "Of course", such a believer might say, "If you think of commands as *literally* as you do, you'll find the whole idea puzzling. But when I say that *God issues commands* I for heaven's sake don't mean that God opens a *big mouth, with teeth behind and so on!*" But to take Martin's side again, what exactly *is* meant by the notion (say) of a *divine command*? And if, at the end of the day, the Christian can't say what she means by it, so much the worse for Christianity and for her claims about it.

What *exactly* do you mean, Martin asks over and over, for he knows that the demand for clarity is a powerful strategy. By insisting on clarity and exactness, Martin wins his case against the Christian every time. On the other hand, despite impeccable reasoning and indubitable evidence, he has *not* won his case where it counts most, for before we open his book we know—and *he* knows—that it has absolutely no persuasive power for a theist.

## V

...  
Then I'm walking in Memphis  
Walking with my feet ten feet off of Beale  
Walking in Memphis  
But do I really feel the way I feel?

Now Muriel plays piano  
Every Friday at the Hollywood  
And they brought me down to see her  
And they asked me if I would—  
Do a little number  
And I sang with all my might  
And she said—  
"Tell me are you a Christian child?"  
And I said "Ma'am I am tonight"

...  
*Walking in Memphis*, Marc Cohn—1991

Recall Mill's observation that people often cut short a chain of reasoning if they fear the conclusion to which it may lead. Freud makes a related point when he raises the suspicion that tactics, such as being forbidden "to raise the question of ... [a religious belief's] authenticity" are reserved for beliefs that one suspects will *not* withstand scrutiny.<sup>2</sup> Such behavior implies that the believer is in the curious epistemic position of believing that what she sincerely believes is true is very likely false. That she has external reasons for refusing to question her religious beliefs—out of concern for social welfare in the absence of religious belief, or perhaps because life seems disappointing without them—makes the matter worse for Freud, since to justify religious belief in this fashion underscores how little genuine belief is involved in the first place.

<sup>2</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Future of an Illusion* (New York: Norton, 1989), p. 33.

Mill and Freud seem puzzled, incredulous, and more than a little disgusted by this sort of behavior. Though they are right to notice this behavior as typical of religious believers, its very frequency makes me hesitate to applaud their dismissive reaction to it. The fact that many people behave in a certain way does nothing to commend that behavior to us, but it does mean that we should look very carefully at what they are doing. And this we do not find in Freud and Mill.

Many atheists might attribute this peculiar quality of religious belief to weakness in character, irrationality, stupidity, lack of education, or to tradition, culture, and family. But this doesn't match up with the qualities possessed by many of the believers whose beliefs—and whose way of believing—seems utterly foreign to one's own. On the contrary, one often finds behind their passionate defense of particular religious beliefs an equally strong conviction about the value of the way in which they believe. What one finds, I suggest, is a moral stance about belief, a belief about the way belief should be exercised.

What Freud and Mill have noticed is behavior that is explicable in terms of how differing value judgments about the use of belief shape the nature of our particular beliefs in different ways. William James' discussion of the will to believe comes closest to articulating this point. James' examples of two such divergent value judgments *about* belief are "believe truth" and "shun error":<sup>3</sup>

"Believe truth! Shun error!—These, we see, are two materially different laws; and by choosing between them we may end by coloring differently our whole intellectual life. We may regard the chase for truth as paramount, and the avoidance of error as secondary; or we may, on the other hand, treat the avoidance of error as more imperative, and let truth take its chance."

I would expand on James' point in the following way. What people judge to be of value about belief comes to the surface when some of their particular beliefs are under attack. Many of my religious

<sup>3</sup> William James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays* (Dover, 1956), p. 18.

students, for example, under pressure to defend their religious beliefs, identify allowing that some things are impossible with close-mindedness and value being conceptually open to all possibilities.

Though my students are mature adults, something not unlike this attitude is vividly displayed by the young child who resists the idea that something (an infinite universe, a square circle) is impossible: "But maybe it *could happen*, you don't know!" What this type of thinker believes is *both* that there is value in thinking of all things as possibilities *and* that when setting limits to human knowledge it is wise to be extremely skeptical. Their mantra might be, "we can't know for sure".

To dismiss such attitudes as indulgent or irrational is to fail to see, or to ignore, exactly how believing is ethically constrained for the religious person. It's not that "anything goes" in their intellectual life, but the very opposite is true: their conception of belief is highly constrained by, say, the intellectual value of wonder and humility. If you want to address them successfully, I suggest that you address their beliefs about reasoning and do so without condescension or moral superiority, for otherwise you might simply fail to understand what goes on in the mind of the theist and fail to address them at all.

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**BOOK REVIEW**

FROM PACIFISM TO LOGICISM: SAMPLES OF RUSSELL'S  
DIVERSE AREAS OF INTEREST AND INFLUENCE

CHAD TRAINER

Review of *Bertrand Russell on Nuclear War, Peace, and Language*.  
Alan Schwerin. Westport: Praeger 2002. Pp. xxv, 144

This book is a compilation of papers from two Bertrand Russell Society annual meetings, and a Russell/Wittgenstein conference.<sup>1</sup> The book's editor, Alan Schwerin, harbors no illusions about the general quality of such work: "Papers presented at academic conferences are notoriously dull, tedious and sordid affairs." It is Schwerin's express hope, however, that "the reader will not say the same about the contributions to this volume." And as its title implies, the range of topics addressed is indeed diverse and the papers engaging.

Ray Perkins' piece discusses 'Bertrand Russell and Preventive War'. Perkins concedes that Russell publicly advocated preventive war in early post-World War II years, but hastens to attribute to him a more benign policy than that conventionally ascribed, by emphasizing the *conditional* nature of Russell's preventive war policy. Perkins argues that Russell, unlike other advocates of preventive war, believed the Soviets would probably accede to international controls of weaponry, thereby rendering preventive war unnecessary to actually conduct (a point overlooked by Alan Ryan, Perkins claims, in Ryan's book *Bertrand Russell: A Political Life*). However, a private 1954 letter is mentioned by Perkins in which Russell certainly sounds as though he was advocating a more extremist policy, and there is the acknowledgement that "Russell's embarrassment concerning his ... letter and its harsh recommendation may have caused him to obscure the record regarding its content in his later years."

<sup>1</sup> The Russell Society annual meetings were both held at Monmouth University, NJ, June 4-6, 1999 and June 2-4, 2000. The Russell-Wittgenstein conference was held at Oxford University, UK, March 25-26, 2000.

After the Soviet rejection of the Baruch Plan in 1946 (the American proposal at the UN for international control of atomic energy), the fate of world peace was anyone's guess, especially as long as more effort was being channeled into propaganda than good-natured resolution of the problems. Andrew Bone, in 'Russell and the Communist-aligned Peace Movement in the Mid-1950s', explains how the organizers of the 1957 Pugwash conference (founded to support the 1955 Russell-Einstein manifesto to promote nuclear disarmament as a first step towards ending war) knew that, in order to have credibility, they would have to preserve an appearance of being impartial and above the fray. As the author of the 1920 anti-communist work, *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*, Russell was better situated than many and had "no embarrassing record of fellow traveling to disavow." For example, Russell was careful to rebuff certain overtures of the communist Frédéric Joliot-Curie's World Peace Council. Still, this did not prevent the likes of Sidney Hook, one of America's more aggressive intellectual cold warriors, from thinking that the communists manipulated Russell. Russell's political acumen is apparent from his sensitivity to the need for ensuring that no peace pact be perceived as being in the pocket of predominantly Western or Soviet interests.

In 'Russell on Happiness', José Idler-Acosta notes some parallels between Russell and John Stuart Mill, such as their commitment to individuality and their common conviction that unhappiness is located in "selfishness and the lack of a cultivated mind." This contribution is basically an overview of the relevant portions of Russell's *Conquest of Happiness* and *Authority and the Individual*. Idler-Acosta also appropriately draws attention to the latter work's prescience in appreciating the merits of environmentalism.

The latter half of the book is concerned with the subject of language. In Antony Flew's essay, 'Russell, Wittgenstein, and *Cogito ergo sum*', Russell is said to have exaggerated the influence of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* on Oxford linguistic philosophy. What is more, he claims that Russell's criticisms of that movement are partially due to Russell having taken Ernest Gellner's *Words and Things* (a famous diatribe against linguistic philosophy to which Russell contributed a foreword) "as if that polemic actually provides both a faithful representation and a devastating critique of what it purported to represent and to criticize." (p.60)

Far from dealing with trivial matters, Flew argues that the Oxford linguistic philosophy school made relevant contributions to the handling of Kant's "three great questions of philosophy," namely, God, Freedom, and Immortality. The Socratic Club at Oxford, originally founded and chaired by C.S. Lewis, is cited as the catalyst for many pieces in the *New Essays in Philosophical Theology* collection that Flew published in 1955 with Alasdair MacIntyre. The basic thesis of Gilbert Ryle's *The Concept of Mind* is hailed as "crucially relevant to the question of a future life." Then an apparently ill-tempered quip from Wittgenstein about the peculiarity of the sentence "*Cogito ergo sum*" is proposed by Flew for analysis as a possibly "radical and totally devastating objection to the position that Descartes had reached in the second paragraph of Part IV of his *Discourse on the Method*."

Rom Harré's 'Reference Revisited' is more technical. Ostension had a crucial role in Russell's philosophy of knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description. While Harré agrees about ostension's importance, his concern here is to stress the vital function demonstratives (pronouns like 'this' or 'that' which point to an intended referent) serve as "indexicals" (words whose meaning is determined by the context of their utterance, such as 'I', 'you', 'here', 'now', 'this', 'that', etc.) in existence demonstrations. As Harré will have it, Russell not only failed to grasp the importance of the statement/sentence distinction, but the very type of issue that was an impetus for Russell's attempt to "outflank Alexius Meinong's ontologizing" arises in the realm of statements only. And yet "[i]f...we were to follow Russell in restricting genuine pure acts of reference to those that can be performed by the use of 'this', noting the shift in article as we moved from 'This is...' to 'There are...', we would land ourselves in a positivism of the most extreme sort."

For guidance here, Harré cites the work of Czeslaw Lejewski based on the insights of Stanislaw Lesniewski according to which an overhauling of scientific realism is recommended in which genuine instances of certain types of entities are initially ascertained and then symbols, or variables, to stand for them are concocted. In such a scheme, "the question of the truth-values of any given sentence arises only when a sentence is used to make a statement about the world. And this is how it should be."

In 'Our Statements Are Likely to Be Wrong: On Russell's Big Thesis', Alan Schwerin takes Russell to task for his statement toward the very beginning of his 1912 *Problems of Philosophy* that "In our search for certainty, it is natural to begin with our present experiences, and in some sense, no doubt, knowledge is to be derived from them. But any statement as to what it is that our immediate experiences make us know is very likely to be wrong." Schwerin argues that the discussion following Russell's mention of this view makes it "abundantly clear" that Russell is committed to what Schwerin calls (with "deliberate irreverence") "Russell's Big Thesis," namely, that "Any ordinary language statement as to what it is that our immediate experiences make us know is very likely to be wrong." Schwerin thinks that this introductory statement is either unimportant as "mere complaints, not to be taken too seriously," or misguided as too dismissive of the possibility that at least some of our ordinary assertions can be correct.

Schwerin not only thinks it significant that the "Big Thesis" is neither repeated nor referred to in the rest of the book but notes how "Russell is clearly impressed by the prospect that multiple observation reports are possible in any observation instance." But "[h]is argument does not preclude the possibility that at least one ordinary language observation report can be true. Ironically, the stress in his argument on the *multiplicity* of the possibilities ought to have alerted him to this distinct possibility."

Schwerin also cites Ken Blackwell's research on the "intimacy" between the ideas expounded in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* and Russell's *Problems of Philosophy*, and how the dismissive treatment of skepticism in paragraph 6.51 of the *Tractatus* quite likely has Russell as its target.<sup>2</sup>

The final paper featured is Nicholas Griffin's 'Russell, Logicism, and "If-thenism".' "If-thenism" is the doctrine that "all mathematical statements are conditional in form", a view asserted by Russell in the very first sentence of his 1903 *Principles of Mathematics*, when he says: "Pure mathematics is the class of all propositions of the form 'p implies q'." (Russell 1903, p.3) While a

<sup>2</sup> Ken Blackwell, 'The Early Wittgenstein and the Middle Russell', in *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, pp. 1-30, Irving Block (ed.), Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981.

step in the direction of logicism, "if-thenism" is to be understood as quite distinct from it. Griffin acknowledges that there are indeed elements of "if-thenism" in Russell's *Principles of Mathematics*. He contends, however, that such elements are (i) narrower in scope than supposed by the "if-thenist" interpretation proponents, (ii) remain present in *Principia Mathematica*, and (iii) are evidence of Russell's failed hopes for the logicist project. Griffin argues that, while Russell's *Principles of Mathematics* views all mathematical statements as taking conditional form, this was not derived from "if-thenism."

Griffin criticizes Hilary Putnam's interpretations of Russell in this matter as being wholly destitute of a textual basis and utterly alien to anything Russell ever intended. Griffin also criticizes Alberto Coffa's attribution to Russell of "if-thenism," saying that there are no logistically significant differences in doctrine between *The Principles of Mathematics* and *Principia Mathematica* as Coffa supposes. In any case, "It defies belief that his (Russell's) thinking about the nature of mathematics should have undergone so striking a change without his having commented upon it."

The contributions to this volume vary in readability, which is to be expected in any attempt at surveying the thought of an author like Russell who involved himself in subjects of such vastly varying levels of accessibility. Overall, the diversity of topics addressed in this book is one of its assets, and it better reflects the range of Russell's interests than something more specialized in scope.

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## END MATTER

### 100 YEARS OF DENOTING

In 1905 Bertrand Russell published 'On Denoting' in the journal *Mind*. To state its topic as starkly as possible, the paper proposed a way of treating definite descriptions (singular referential expressions beginning with 'the') within the resources of what is now known as classical predicate logic (a branch of logic created by Gottlob Frege in 1879 which Russell had discovered in 1902) without treating them as names. In the course of doing so Russell provided an answer to the question he made famous: Is it true that the present king of France is bald? And, if it is not, do we conclude that he has a full head of hair? This may seem at best like an arcanelly technical topic in formal logic and, at worse, the sort of concern with mere puzzles that can get philosophy a bad name, but the ramifications of Russell's theory of definite descriptions—in logic, philosophy of language, metaphysics and epistemology, even in the way it was thought philosophy ought to be conducted—were enormous. Some people see the paper as inaugurating analytic philosophy; others as the paper in which analytic philosophy came of age; almost everyone would list it as one of the five most important philosophy papers written in the twentieth century.

The centenary of Russell's paper is being widely recognized: by a special issue of *Mind*; by a conference in Spain; by a new collection of articles on the theory; but above all by a major international conference at The Bertrand Russell Research Centre at McMaster University—home of the Bertrand Russell Archives. When Russell's theory was published, among its many achievements one of the most definitive was taken to be its demolition of an alternative treatment of definite descriptions, the theory of objects of the Austrian philosopher and psychologist, Alexius Meinong. If Russell became notorious for suggesting that it was false both that the present king of France was bald and that he was not bald; Meinong became notorious for suggesting that it was true both that the round square was round and also that it was square. For many decades after 1905, Meinong's theory of objects was widely held to have been completely discredited by Russell. Since the 1970's, however,

Meinong's theory has staged a comeback, so that it (or some variant of it) is now quite widely regarded as a serious competitor to Russell's theory. The Russell Centre decided, therefore, to focus its conference on the Russell-Meinong debate and to invite both Russellians and Meinongians to the Centre to hash it out.

The conference, 'Russell v Meinong: 100 Years after *On Denoting*', is being jointly organized by Dale Jacquette, a prominent contributor to the Meinong revival at Pennsylvania State University, and myself, another Meinongian I hesitate to confess in this journal. We have a stellar line-up of speakers from both sides of the debate, including Alasdair Urquhart, who edited Volume 4 of *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell* (1994) which includes 'On Denoting' as well as Russell's much more extensive pre-'On Denoting' manuscripts. On the other side, we have Rudolf Haller, one of the editors of Meinong's collected works, the 7 volume *Gesamtausgabe* (1969-73), and one of the leading interpreters of Meinong's philosophy. The publication of the collected works of both philosophers has played an important role in framing the recent debate between their respective proponents. In particular, the pre-'On Denoting' manuscripts make it clear that Russell's motivation in creating the theory and his view of the theory's importance were quite different from what they had been supposed to be. There can be few theories in the history of philosophy that have been so widely accepted and so evidently misunderstood. No one has made this clearer than another speaker at the conference, Gideon Makin in his wonderfully revisionary book, *The Metaphysicians of Meaning: Russell and Frege on Sense and Denotation* (2000). And lest readers fear that two cunning Meinongians have contrived to bring only Russell exegetes to a contest about the current value of the 2 theories, we also have Stephen Neale, the author of *Descriptions* (1990), for my money the best book on contemporary description theory and a *tour de force* from the Russellian point of view.

The conference's objectives are thus both systematic and historical. It will review what has been learnt in the last few decades about the origins of Russell's theory, as well as reassessing the relative merits of Russellian and Meinongian approaches. But, because the impact of Russell's theory of descriptions was felt so widely throughout analytic philosophy, the conference will take a wider view as well. For example, Russell's initial engagement with defin-



ite descriptions was in many ways just a preliminary to a hoped-for paradox-free analysis of classes which would thus remove the last blockage on the road to a logicist analysis of number. David Bos-tock, the author of a 2 volume work on *Logic and Arithmetic* (1973, 1979), will speak on the development of Russell's views on classes before and after the theory of descriptions. Ruth Barcan Marcus, the creator of quantified modal logic which is now seen as the obvious theory for dealing with some of the puzzles Russell attempted to solve by means of the theory of descriptions, will consider whether Russell remained as faithful as he claimed to the theory of descriptions in his later philosophy. Again, in 'On Denoting' Russell not only criticized Meinong's theory of objects but also Frege's theory of sense and reference. Jeffrey Pelletier and Bernard Linsky in a joint paper will discuss Frege's theory, and Nathan Salmon will discuss Russell's main argument against that theory. The conference will thus explore some of the wider issues associated with the theory of descriptions. The ramifications of Russell's theory are so extensive that it will be impossible for all of them to be addressed in the conference. We hope we will be able to achieve a good balance between specialized topics of current research on the theory, and papers on broader, related issues which will attract an audience beyond those working directly on the theory.

Many other philosophers from around the world have also agreed to give papers. It has been thirty-two years since a conference of this size and importance was held in conjunction with the Russell Archives, the last one was to celebrate the centenary of Russell's birth. The conference will be held on 14-18 May 2005, starting the same weekend that the Bertrand Russell Society holds its annual meeting at McMaster. It's hoped that even the non-philosophers in the BRS will drop in for at least session or two to see what all the fuss is about. For further details of the centenary conference, see <http://denoting.mcmaster.ca>

—Nicholas Griffin

*Traveler's Diary / Conference Report*

When a big snowstorm hits Boston as it often does in December, narrow streets become medieval footpaths and traffic laws are abandoned. When, in addition, the air is so cold that grey cracks appear in the pavement and it hurts to breath, then it must be time for the Eastern APA to come to town. The event took place this year within the Boston Copley Marriot, a hotel housed inside an up-up-up-market indoor mall. Not that I was there to shop: I was expected to be responsible for three groups sessions, two by HEAPS, the new History of Early Analytic Philosophy Society, and one by our own BRS. As host of the party, so to speak, I was especially pleased at the turn out for the BRS group session.

The Bertrand Russell Society met on Tuesday evening and was attended by about 15 people, who remained for all three talks. This was a good turnout for a group session at the Eastern APA, especially given the last minute withdrawal of one speaker (Henrique Ribeiro) and a mistake in the program that led some to expect Nick Griffin (McMaster University), who was in Australia, to put in an appearance. The first paper of the evening, 'Psychologism and the Development of Russell's Theory of Propositions', delivered by David Godden (University of Winnipeg) and co-written with Nick, concerned the evolution of Russell's thought towards psychologism in the teens and early twenties. Gary Hardcastle (Bloomsburg University), who had served as moderator of an earlier HEAPS session, gave a largely sympathetic response; and because this subject is of particular interest to me, I shamelessly abused my power as Chair to hog the question and answer period.

In the next talk, titled 'The Significance of Moore's Theory of Judgment for an Understanding of the Analytic-Synthetic Distinction', Consuelo Preti (College of New Jersey) outlined what she sees as important anticipations in the early G. E. Moore of externalist views of semantic content (where a part of the meaning of a belief is a function of the believer's physical environment). In his commentary, John Ongley (Edinboro University of PA) discussed Consuelo's evidence for this view and presented evidence for an alternative interpretation of Moore. The two of them then engaged in a brief debate over the nature of Moore's extra-mental objects. Standing in for the absent Henrique Ribeiro, David White (St. John

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by Dennis J. Darland (who scanned them)

Note: Treasurer's Reports in Issues 120-127 contained errors introduced in the editing process.  
Corrected reports were included in combined issue 128-129. This is noted on page 7 of that issue.

Fisher College) delivered the final talk on Russell's work of fiction *Satan in the Suburbs*, after wisely distributing copies of the little known piece to the audience to peruse. The session was attended by some of the audience from the two HEAPS sessions that met earlier that day, confirming my belief that the two groups will benefit each other.

The first HEAPS group took place in the morning and addressed the theme, *Frege, Husserl, and Analysis*. Sanford Shieh (Wesleyan University) chaired as Michael Beaney (Open University-U.K.) spoke on 'Frege and the Paradox of Analysis', Sandra LaPointe (Concordia University) discussed 'Frege and Husserl on Signs and Linguistic Behavior', and Matthew Morgan (Duquesne University) explored 'A Graphic Display of Sinn: Frege and Husserl on Sense and Meaning'. In commentary, Sanford Shieh raised several objections to Beaney's talk, Ed Boedecker (University of Northern Iowa) used symbolic logic to address LaPointe, and Mirja Hartimo (Boston University) doubted the wisdom of Morgan's emphasis on Frege's theory of *sinn*.

The second HEAPS session, chaired by Gary Hardcastle, turned to the theme of Logical Positivism. Michael Stoelzner (University of Bielefeld) presented 'Quantum Mechanics without Indeterminism: On the Surprising Strength of Verificationism within Schlick's 2nd Theory of Causality', Uljana Feest (Max Planck Institute—History of Science) spoke on 'Meaningful Structures: Placing the *Aufbau* in the Context of Holistic Science', and Mazi Allen (Binghamton University-SUNY) concluded with 'A Road Less Traveled: The Lasting Significance of Waismann's "How I See Philosophy"'. Melanie Frappier (University of Western Ontario), Chris Pincock (Purdue University), and David Godden delivered comments. Though with an audience of 10, this session of HEAPS drew fewer than the 22 people attending the morning one, the turnout was nevertheless fair to good for the vastly over-booked Eastern APA.

—Rosalind Carey

**Bertrand Russell Society, Inc.**  
**3rd Quarter 2004 Treasurer's Report**  
**Cash Flow**  
**7/1/04 - 9/30/04**

<b>BALANCE 6/30/04</b>	<b>9,515.75</b>
<hr/>	
<b>INFLOWS</b>	
Contributions	
BRS	430.00
TOTAL Contributions	430.00
Dues	
New Members	59.28
Renewals	430.00
TOTAL Dues	489.28
Meeting Income*	1,578.00
<b>TOTAL INFLOWS</b>	<b>2,497.28</b>
<b>OUTFLOWS</b>	
Bank Charges	19.71
Library Expenses	5.30
Meeting Expenses	3,564.22
BRSQ	356.60
Other Expenses	5.00
<b>TOTAL OUTFLOWS</b>	<b>3,950.83</b>
 <b>TOTAL OVERALL</b>	 <b>-1,453.55</b>
<hr/>	
<b>BALANCE 9/30/04</b>	<b>8,062.20</b>
<hr/>	

\*Some of the meeting income was in the 2nd Quarter

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**Bertrand Russell Society, Inc.**  
**4th Quarter 2004 Treasurer's Report**  
**Cash Flow**  
**10/1/04 - 12/31/04**

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<b>BALANCE 9/30/04</b>	<b>8,062.20</b>
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**INFLOWS**

Contributions	
BRS	100.00
TOTAL Contributions	100.00
Dues	
New Members	101.86
Renewals	41.68*
TOTAL Dues	143.54
<b>TOTAL INFLOWS</b>	<b>243.54</b>

**OUTFLOWS**

Bank Charges	16.70
<b>TOTAL OUTFLOWS</b>	<b>16.70</b>

<b>TOTAL OVERALL</b>	<b>-1,453.55</b>
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<b>BALANCE 12/31/04</b>	<b>8,289.04</b>
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\* Renewals for 2005 will mostly appear in 2005

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**Bertrand Russell Society, Inc.**  
**2004 Annual Treasurer's Report**  
**Cash Flow**  
**10/1/04 - 12/31/04**

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<b>BALANCE 12/31/03</b>	<b>5,440.32</b>
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**INFLOWS**

Contributions	
BRS	1,344.15
<i>BRS Quarterly</i>	950.00
TOTAL Contributions	2,294.15
Dues	
New Members	538.94
Renewals	3,805.81
TOTAL Dues	4,344.75
Meeting Income	4,568.65
<b>TOTAL INFLOWS</b>	<b>11,207.55</b>

**OUTFLOWS**

Bank Charges	84.10
BRS Paper Award	400.00
Library Expenses	5.30
Meeting Expenses	3,564.22
<i>BRS Quarterly</i>	1,988.21
Other Expenses	5.00
<i>RUSSELL Sub</i>	2,312.00

<b>TOTAL OUTFLOWS</b>	<b>8,358.83</b>
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<b>TOTAL OVERALL</b>	<b>2,848.72</b>
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<b>BALANCE 12/31/04</b>	<b>8,289.04</b>
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THE  
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RUSSELL SET

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- Jan. 13 Howard Blair: BR on *Mathematical Philosophy*  
Feb. 10 Tim Madigan: Russell and Fiction  
Mar. 10 Linda White: Lady John Russell  
Apr. 14 Alan Bock: BR's essay "On Catholic and  
Protestant Skepticism"  
May 12 Panel on Bertrand Russell: Apostle of Reason  
Jun. 09 Panel: Bertrand Russell's Continuing Relevance  
for Philosophy and Public Affairs  
Jul. 14 Phil Ebersole: BR's essay "Philosophy and  
Politics"  
Aug. 11 Joint meeting with Chesterton Society of  
Rochester  
Sep. 08 David White: *Beyond Wittgenstein's Poker* by  
Peter Munz  
Oct. 13 George Campbell McDade: *The Prospects of  
Industrial Civilization* by Bertrand & Dora Russell  
Nov. 10 Gerry Wildenberg: BR's short story "The  
Theologian's Nightmare"  
Dec. 08 Phil Ebersole: BR's essay "The Essence of  
Religion"

*\*Topics & dates are subject to change\**

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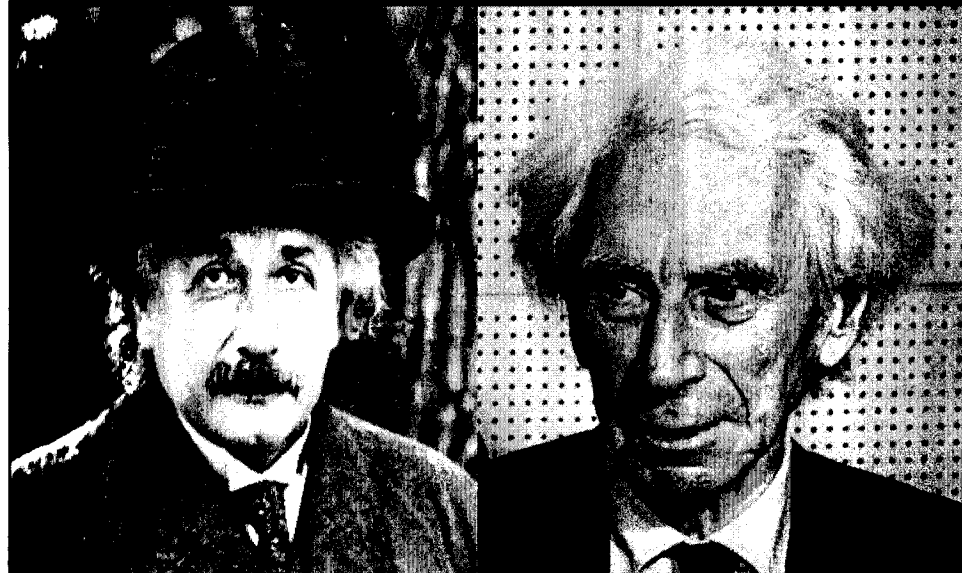
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