

**The 30th Annual Meeting  
of  
The Bertrand Russell Society: Abstracts of Papers**

at

**Lake Forest College  
555 N. Sheridan Road  
Lake Forest, IL 60045**

**May 30 - June 1, 2003**

**Speaker:** Tim Madigan, University of Rochester Press

**Title:** "Warrant Report: The Philosophical Analysis of 'The Warrant Report' by Bertrand Russell, Josiah Thompson, and Richard Popkin."

**Abstract:**

"The official version of the assassination of President Kennedy has been so riddled with contradictions that it has been abandoned and rewritten no less than three times. Blatant fabrications have received very widespread coverage by the mass media, but denials of these same lies have gone unpublished. Photographs, evidence, and affidavits have been doctored out of recognition." (From Bertrand Russell's "Sixteen Questions on the Assassination.")

It is a remarkable fact that three of the earliest and most influential critics of the Warren Commission's Report on the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy were professional philosophers. Bertrand Russell, in early 1964, organized the "Who Killed Kennedy Committee", and befriended Mark Lane, author of the first serious critique of the Warrant Report, *Rush to Judgment*; Josiah Thompson, an assistant professor of philosophy at Haverford College, in 1965 wrote *Seven Seconds in Dallas*, which postulated the existence of a second gunman in the Dealey Plaza in Dallas; and Richard Popkin, the foremost authority on philosophical skepticism, in 1966 wrote *The Second Oswald*, which showed, using only the Warren Report itself as evidence, that there must have been at least two Lee Harvey Oswalds if all the various stories told by witnesses were to somehow make sense.

These three philosophers, because of their reputable standing, played a significant role in causing the American public to doubt the findings of the Warren Report, but they also experienced their own strange tales due to their advocacy. Russell became intimately involved with the controversial Lane, whose accusations against the U.S. Government became shriller and stranger as the years went on; Thompson ended up abandoning academic philosophy altogether and became a private detective, applying his Wittgensteinian training to become a philosophical investigator of cheating spouses; and Popkin suffered a nervous breakdown after becoming convinced that he had discovered the true assassins of JFK – zombies trained to kill by the Central Intelligence Agency.

The influence of these three men came together in the Oliver Stone film *JFK*, which attempted to make a coherent story out of their disparate (and mutually exclusive) hypotheses as to who killed Kennedy. In this paper, I will describe the philosophical analyses each made of the Warren Report, and compare them to the defense of the Report as given in Gerald Posner's book *Case Closed*. Forty years after the tragic event of November 22, 1963, the controversy sparked by these philosophical investigations seems no closer to being solved to everyone's satisfaction.

**Speaker:** Gregory Landini, Department of Philosophy, University of Iowa

**Title:** "Tractarian Logicism"

**Abstract:**

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein held the dogma that identity is not a relation and that logical truths are tautologies. Though Wittgenstein never worked out a theory, he felt that his replacement of identity with exclusive quantifiers was among his greatest triumphs. This paper argues that the Tractarian construction of numbers as "exponents of operations" was invented to preserve the logicism of *Principia Mathematica* in a way which avoids the Reducibility Axiom and rejects identity as a relation.

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Wittgenstein knew his construction meant facing the daunting task of rewriting *Principia*. In a discussion with Ramsey, Wittgenstein chided Russell's second-edition for ignoring his rejection of identity and not facing up to the task. But it will be found that Wittgenstein was chagrined when Ramsey also came to think the approach unworkable. Ramsey's nominalistic semantics of "propositional functions in extension" aimed at a compromise concerning identity. Arithmetic truths are tautologies, and Reducibility can be avoided without a radical reformulation of *Principia*. Ramsey's nominalism is, however, unacceptable; and logic does not consist of tautologies. But I shall suggest that the logic of exclusive quantifiers does assure the infinity of the Fregean numbers as second-level functions. If one can accept the metaphysical reality of one-one correlation without adopting an identity relation, then a version of Frege's logicism is saved.

**Speaker:** David Blitz, Department of Philosophy, Central Connecticut State University

**Title:** "Kant and Russell on the Transition from Just War to World Peace":

**Abstract:**

I argue that philosophy of war and peace has been central to the work of both Kant and Russell, in the following sense:

(a) Kant's concept of "perpetual peace", rather than being a side issue of his old age, is essential even to the *Critique of Pure Reason*. There (at A751-2) Kant considered the strife between conflicting dogmatic claims, and the rejection of all such claims by skepticism, as a war-like stage of philosophy, to be resolved by determining both the scope and limits of reason -- the project of the critique of pure reason. Such a transcendence of the war-like state of the strife of systems would lead to a "perpetual peace" of the mind.

(b) The notion of "perpetual peace" plays a crucial role as the end of cosmopolitan right in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, where Kant formulated the important notion of "jus post bellum". This supplements the traditional "jus ad bellum" and "jus in bellum" of just war theory, with the establishment of just peace treaties after wars which prepare the conditions for lasting world peace; thereby providing a bridge between just war and world peace. (The problem of unjust peace treaties leading to renewed war can be instanced today in the case of Iraq and Afghanistan).

(c) Russell's non-absolute pacifism provides a similar bridge between the widely accepted just war doctrine, and the less widely accepted, but more important notion of world peace. Russell did not reject just war theory in its entirety, since his non-absolute pacifism required criteria for the justification of those exceptional conflicts whose necessity he admitted. However, Russell strengthened the criteria so as to exclude the vast majority of wars, and recognized that even those wars that are justified result, as in the case of the Second World War, from failure to establish lasting conditions of peace (the failure of the Versailles Treaty, ending the First World War) -- an obvious link to Kant's "jus post bellum". As a result of these considerations, I argue that both Kant and Russell should be studied for their philosophies of war and peace, each of which is central to their overall work, and each of which essentially contains a project of transition from just war to world peace, projects which, moreover, are internally related. At a time when talk of "preventive war" has become dominant, it is all the more important to return to the projects of Kant and Russell, and update them for the 21st Century.

**Joint Discussion Speakers:** Peter Stone, Political Science Department, the University of Rochester and David White, Department of Philosophy, St. John Fisher College

**Title:** "Is This Game Played? A Conversation on Wittgenstein's Poker"

**Abstract:**

The recent best-seller *Wittgenstein's Poker* may be good journalism, but that does not mean it is even minimally decent philosophical journalism. .... Whatever one thinks of Russell's popular works, they are still less misleading and less harmful than superficially similar works by non-philosophers.

Just how bad *Wittgenstein's Poker* is can best be shown not by arguing with it but rather by setting along side it writings from within a few years of the incident that, tell the interested lay reader all that needs to be known about what Popper, Wittgenstein and Russell thought of each other. For this purpose we begin with (1) Popper's "The Nature of Philosophical Problems and Their Roots in Science." (1952) [reprinted in *Conjectures and Refutations*]....

What did Wittgenstein think of Popper and of Russell in the post-war period? Is brandishing a poker an appropriate expression of what he thought? We (interested lay readers) can get a decent idea of what Wittgenstein should have said to Russell and Popper by reading reviews of Russell and Popper written by disciples of Wittgenstein....Malcolm's piece is particularly instructive since it makes clear that while a Wittgensteinian would disagree with Russell's philosophical position and would disapprove of Russell's style in doing philosophy, it is only the latter that is treated with scorn....As C. D. Rollins put it, Wittgenstein was for many the model of "passionate dedication to honest struggle." (Review of Malcolm's Memoir, JP 56 (1959) 283.)

What did Russell and Moore think of Wittgenstein during this period? Russell was certainly not ignorant of the later Wittgenstein since he studied Wittgenstein's unpublished work prior to writing in support of Wittgenstein's appeal for funding from Cambridge....Various commentators have stressed how difficult it is to concentrate as intensely as Wittgenstein required and how important it was to Wittgenstein that philosophy be taken seriously. By this standard, Russell and Popper were neither concentrating hard enough nor taking philosophy seriously enough. To the extent there was an emotional clash it was because of this difference and not because they disagreed over the use of such words as "problem" and "puzzle."

Just because certain philosophers cooperated in the writing of *Wittgenstein's Poker*, it does not follow that *Wittgenstein's Poker* is a philosophy book as the publisher claims nor does it follow even that the book is at worst harmless. We can see the harm it has done already by looking at what is said in the numerous reviews that have appeared in the popular press, and we can infer its non-philosophical nature by noting that only one review of *Wittgenstein's Poker* is listed in *Philosopher's Index*.

*Speaker:* Anthony Anderson, Dept. of Philosophy, University of California, Santa Barbara.

*Title:* "The Axiom of Infinity in Russellian Intensional Logic"

*Abstract:*

In *Principles of Mathematics* Russell thought he could prove that there are infinite classes. In section 339 he boldly declares "That there are infinite classes is so evident that it will scarcely be denied. Since, however, it is capable of formal proof, it may be as well to prove it." He goes on to cite an argument in Plato's *Parmenides* and arguments by Bernard Bolzano and Richard Dedekind which purport to demonstrate the existence of infinite classes. Things have changed. To many it is certainly not evident that there are infinite classes. And many would question the cogency of the arguments Russell urges in *Principles*. Indeed, Russell himself would soon reject the alleged proofs and in *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* he offers some detailed criticisms of the reasoning accepted by Plato, Bolzano, Dedekind, and by the earlier person stage of that improbable sequence of events we have learned to call "Bertrand Russell."

One thing I will do in this paper is to try to determine exactly what the arguments of Bolzano and Dedekind were, making such improvements as seem advisable, and to assess them from the point of view of the Russell of *Principles of Mathematics*....Actually I will be reconstructing the arguments in "Russellian Intensional Logic" -- the intensional logic implicit in *Principles of Mathematics* but emended to take account of developments in *Principia Mathematica*. It was Alonzo Church who began this project. It enunciates a logic which Russell probably never actually held -- but could have and, perhaps, should have. This work is therefore an example of what Robert Sleigh (in Leibniz and Arnauld) calls "philosophical history." .... But my goal in trying to further develop Church's Russellian reconstruction is pretty clear to me -- I think that there is some appreciable chance that the resulting logic will turn out to be the correct way to do intensional logic -- or at least a correct way to do it. I am even more confident that some of the distinctively Russellian ideas will be part of an adequate intensional logic although I believe that some of Frege's conceptions will also play a role in the finished product. ....

First I will sketch the Russellian Intensional Logic proposed by Church -- with some modifications designed to avoid paradox and which in fact accord better with Russell's intentions. It turns out to be possible to prove Axioms of Infinity (in every type except the type of individuals) already in the system as thus reconstructed. So Russell was right. But, I have argued elsewhere, the intensional logic contains principles which it should not -- it's not sufficiently general in a way which I will briefly recount. (Here then I have definitely urged a departure from Russell.) If the offending principles are dropped, the proof of the Axiom of Infinity fails. So Russell was wrong. However, if we develop the logic by adding some principles which the Russell of *Principles* would clearly accept, we can formalize a version of Bolzano's proof that there are infinite classes and so once more prove the Axiom(s?) of Infinity. So Russell was right after all.... A Dedekind-type argument for the infinite also has a plausible reconstruction in Russellian Intensional Logic and is suggestive both on the formal and strictly philosophical sides. I will defend the reconstructions of Bolzano, Dedekind, and the *Principles* Russell against

the criticisms of the later Russell. Moreover, the reconstruction of Dedekind's argument is, I think, no longer subject to Patrick Suppes's observation that "In no sense does this proof satisfy modern canons." (*Axiomatic Set Theory*, New York, Dover publications, 1972, p. 138) ....

*Speaker:* Cara Rice, Independent Scholar

*Title:* "The Beacon Light of Beacon Hill Shines On"

*Abstract:*

The ease with which the Russells were often able to operate their school could easily surprise a skeptical observer or reader. Although Beacon Hill eventually closed, this was arguably due to circumstances beyond the Russells' control. The ideas on which the school was based were sound. This paper begins with a discussion of my personal experience at an inner-city high school that was notably lacking in the conditions that Russell deemed necessary for a school such as Beacon Hill to succeed. I then speak of how what I witnessed at this inner-city high school was, if anything, a more urgent need for the humanizing effects of ideals and the beauty of the arts. I argue that there is little hope of teaching someone a trade if they are so distressed and demoralized they do not have the mental energy to learn. This paper then turns to A.S. Neill's creation of a school considered by most to be even more libertarian than Beacon Hill. The school's operations are quite similar to those of Beacon Hill, and many of the Russell's principles and theories are still in practice. I consider the possibility that the survival of Summerhill is one of the best indicators that the ideals behind Beacon Hill can survive.

*Speaker:* Chad Trainer, Independent Scholar

*Title:* "Bertrand Russell's Assessments of René Descartes' Philosophy"

*Abstract:*

Bertrand Russell typically mentions René Descartes in a favorable context. But a case can be made that there are some aspects of Descartes' philosophy that Russell overrates and some that he underrates. Some of Russell's assessments are predictable enough, such as his praise of Descartes' critical doubt and his charge that Descartes' Scholasticism was irreconcilable with what Descartes had learned from the contemporary science. But Russell seems to underrate Descartes' philosophy of universals and their metaphysical status. He also appears to short-change some aspects of Descartes' philosophy of "soul" as substance. Russell, along with most historians of philosophy, overrates Descartes' "I think, therefore I am" argument when hailing it as "the kernel of Descartes' theory of knowledge" and that which contains "what is most important in his philosophy." Russell also refers to Descartes as "the first man of high philosophic capacity whose outlook is profoundly affected by the new physics and astronomy." This overlooks much headway made by some of Descartes' formidable predecessors. I conclude with speculation on the reasons for Russell's assessments of Descartes, as well as some general remarks on Descartes and Russell.

*Speaker:* Kevin C. Klement, University of Massachusetts

*Title:* "Russell and Wittgenstein on Type-Theory and Russell's Paradox"

*Abstract:*

Many interpreters the *Tractatus* read it as critical of Russell's type-theory and suggest that it offers a rival 'solution' to Russell's paradox. This prompts several questions. Is Wittgenstein's solution then not a type-theoretic solution? Is it of a totally different stripe than Russell's? If Wittgenstein's solution was different, why did Russell himself seem to think that Wittgenstein's work provided help for the theory of types? If instead, Wittgenstein's solution is broadly the same as Russell's, what precisely was Wittgenstein criticizing about Russell's type-theory? In this paper, I argue that Wittgenstein's solution is, formally speaking, almost identical to Russell's. The apparent criticisms of Russell's type-theory must be understood as internal criticisms that deal more peripheral issues regarding the nature of symbolism, the relative priority of linguistic and mental representation, and more general meta-philosophical differences, not the underlying core of Russell's position. While Wittgenstein did not believe in a hierarchy of different 'types' of entities, in the relevant sense, neither did Russell. For both, the hierarchy was one of types of meaningful expressions. This was true even of the type theory of *Principia*, developed before Russell met Wittgenstein.

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**Symposium: Russell's Philosophical Development 1906-1918****Speaker #1: Rosalind Carey, Lake Forest College****Title: The Intertwining of Logic and Psychology in Russell's Doctrine of Belief: An Overview and a Special Case****Abstract:**

The goal of this talk is to show that an overlooked source of Russell's turn to bipolarity and negative facts lies in his 1913 reduction of not-aRb to disbelief in aRb, a view he publicly rejects in 1918 as being too psychological and not tied to a fact. Russell's turn to bipolarity marks one instance of a long evolution in his thought in which changes in his conception of the nature of logic and psychology intertwine with his evolving theory of belief. Thus a general goal of this talk is simply to display that interrelationship throughout its various stages (1906, 1908, 1911, 1912, 1913, and 1918) in Russell's thought.

**Speaker #2: John Ongley, Northwestern University****Title: "Russell's Slow Progress to Realism"****Abstract:**

One hundred years ago, Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore took a public turn away from idealism and towards realism, in "The Principles of Mathematics" and "The Refutation of Idealism" respectively, both published in 1903. This marked the beginning of analytic philosophy. This turn is usually understood as having occurred suddenly and just this once. However, a careful look at Russell's writings between 1906 and 1918 will show that the turn for him was gradual, and that he was still slowly progressing towards a more and more realist position throughout the course of the nineteen-teens. A focus on the development of Russell's theory of belief will neatly illustrate this point.

**Speaker: David Taylor, University of Iowa, Winner of the Russell Paper Prize****Title: "Causal Processes: A Realist Approach".****Abstract:**

In recent years Wesley Salmon and Phil Dowe have developed an account of causation which takes the primary causal notion to be that of causal processes. This account, which is a descendant of the account developed by Russell in *Our Knowledge of the External World*, rejects in important ways traditional Humean assumptions about the nature of causation, most importantly by subsuming causation under the category of process as opposed to relation. Problems with the account, however, are generated by Russellian reductionism about processes, which sees them as mere series of events, and in particular by the "at-at" theory of motion. I suggest that if we reject such reductionism, we get a much more viable account of causation, though one which may be in tension with empiricist epistemology.