

# **BERTRAND RUSSELL SOCIETY ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

## **CONFERENCE THEME: BERTRAND RUSSELL, PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL**

**St. John Fisher College, June 24-26, 2016**

**Wilson Formal Lounge**

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**If you have any questions or concerns during the conference please call or text Tim Madigan at 585-415-5925 or email him at: [tmadigan@sjfc.edu](mailto:tmadigan@sjfc.edu)**

### **CONFERENCE SCHEDULE:**

#### **FRIDAY, JUNE 24, 2016**

3:00-5:00 PM	Arrival and Registration
5:00-6:00 PM	Dinner
6:00-7:30 PM	Panel Discussion: "Are Bertrand Russell's Social and Political Views Still Relevant in the 21st Century?" Thomas Riggins, Moderator. Tim Madigan: "Bertrand Russell and Twenty-First Century Public Intellectuals: How Might Russell Fare Today in the World of Television Pundits and Internet Bloggers?" Ray Perkins, Jr.: "Russell and the Nuclear Threat in the 21st Century" John Lenz: "Russell's Socialism"
7:30-9:00 PM	BRS Board of Directors Meeting

## SATURDAY, JUNE 25, 2016

8:00-9:00 AM	Continental Breakfast
9:00-9:30 AM	Russell Wahl: “Wittgenstein and Russell on Matter”
9:30-10:00 AM	Howard Blair: “Why We Don’t Need Grandmother Neurons”
10:00-10:15 AM	Break
10:15-10:45 AM	Gülberk Koç Maclean: “Russell’s Epistemological Journey”
10:45-11:15AM	Tony Simpson: “Russell and China”
11:15-11:30AM	Break
11:30-NOON	William “Bill” Bruneau: “Was Russell Child-Centred?”
NOON-12:30 PM	Robert Heineman: “The Virtue of Appeasement”
12:30-2:30 PM:	Lunch and Board Meeting
2:30-3:00 PM	David Blitz: “Bertrand Russell and the Cuban Missile Crisis”
3:00-3:30 PM	Michael Stevenson: “Monuments to Bertrand Russell and Fenner Brockway in London's Red Lion Square”
3:30-3:45 PM:	Break
3:45-4:15 PM	Tim Delaney: “Revisiting Bertrand Russell’s <i>Conquest of Happiness</i> ”
4:15-5:00 PM	Break
5:00-6:00 PM	Red Hackle Hour – Launch of New Book, <i>Bertrand Russell, Public Intellectual</i> , edited by Tim Madigan and Peter Stone (Tiger Bark Press)
6:00-8:00 PM	Dinner and Awards

Keynote Address: Rick Lewis: “*Philosophy Now at 25*”

For further information on *Philosophy Now* please go to its website:

<https://philosophynow.org/>

## SUNDAY, JUNE 26, 2016

8:00-9:00 AM	Continental Breakfast
9:00-9:30 AM	Landon Elkin: "A Theory of Infinity for <i>Principia Mathematica</i> "
9:30-10:00 AM	David Rolfe: "A Process-Oriented Definition of Number"
10:00-10:15 AM	Break
10:15-10:45 AM	David White: "Can't We All Get Along? Dewey and Russell on Logic"
10:45-11 AM:	Break
11:00-11:30 AM	Michael Potter: "Realizing the Principle of Growth through the Will to Power"
11:30-12:00 PM	Alan Schwerin: "Masterclass on <i>The Problems of Philosophy</i> "
NOON-2:00 PM:	Lunch and Annual Member Meeting

For further information on the Bertrand Russell Society, please go to its website:

<http://www.users.drew.edu/~jlenz/brs.html>

## CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS

### **Howard A. Blair, Syracuse University Why We Don't Need Grandmother Neurons**

"The relation 'north of' does not seem to exist in the same sense as Edinburgh and London exist. ... There is no place or time where we can find the relation 'north of'. It does not exist in Edinburgh any more than in London, for it relates the two and is neutral between them. Nor can we say that it exists at any particular time. ... It is neither in space nor in time, neither material nor mental; yet it is something." -- Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*.

I argue that the representations of such relations as 'north of' are direct physical instantiations of processes that are themselves not physical objects and more importantly have a complexity as a structure in spacetime that can far exceed the complexity of the physical substrate on which they supervene, that their complexity is due to robustly stable substructures embedded in the dynamics of the processes, and the right level of description for the representations is in mathematics. I will display moderately complex nonlinear dynamical phenomena emerging from simple processes supervening on simple graph structures and discuss the role of isomorphism in bridging the gap between the representations of relations and the relations themselves.

**David Blitz, Central Connecticut State University**  
**Bertrand Russell and the Cuban Missile Crisis**

We have now passed the 50th anniversary of the Cuban Missile Crisis, with new information made available on the risk of nuclear war at that time. Russell was very active in calling for a de-escalation of the conflict, and played a major public role that has at times been neglected, and at other times exaggerated. This paper will show how prescient Russell was in his view that the world was on the brink of nuclear war, based on our current knowledge, not available at the time, of Soviet tactical missiles on the island, besides the strategic ones which ignited the crisis, and Soviet submarines armed with nuclear torpedoes, one of which was almost launched against American ships. Documents since made available from former Soviet sources indicate the positive role Russell played in reassuring Khrushchev of western support for peacefully resolving the conflict. I will conclude with a discussion of Russell's strategy for reducing world tensions in a time of nuclear brinkmanship.

**William ("Bill") Bruneau, University of British Columbia**  
**Was Russell Child-Centred?**

Russell's educational theory and practice were often described as "child-centred." But were they? Emphasizing the period when Russell was co-administrator/owner of Beacon Hill School (1927-1931), I argue that Russell and BHS weren't child-centred (a) in the way Dora Russell was, or (b) in the way(s) of American and European progressive educators. The argument relies on primary evidence from BHS and from the Russell Archives, along with Russell's published and soon-to-be-published educational writings—for instance, his 1925 essay on "Socialism and Education" and his 1927 essay "On the Training of Young Children." Russell's dedication to the work of fatherhood might suggest a child-centred view of education and family life. But almost from the beginning, Russell's educational theory and practice point in another direction.

**Tim Delaney, SUNY Oswego**  
**Revisiting Bertrand Russell's *The Conquest of Happiness***

In 1930, Bertrand Russell published *The Conquest of Happiness*, a book that predates the contemporary obsession with self-help publications by decades and that was described by Russell in the Preface as "not addressed to highbrows, or to those who regard a practical problem merely as something to be talked about" (p.ix). Russell's use of the word "conquest" reinforces his primary contention that happiness, except in rare cases, is not something that simply presents itself to people but rather is something that must be achieved (conquered). The world is filled with avoidable and unavoidable misfortunes, psychological tangles, a struggle to attain financial security, and a number of other variables that contribute to unhappiness. In *Conquest*, Russell spends more time discussing the causes of unhappiness than he does the causes of happiness. Thus, one key aspect in attaining happiness is the elimination of sources of unhappiness. In this paper, a brief review of Russell's categories of the causes of unhappiness and happiness will be presented and its relevancy to contemporary society explored.

**Landon D. C. Elkind, University of Iowa**  
**A Theorem of Infinity for *Principia Mathematica***

I prove a theorem of infinity for *Principia Mathematica*. Proving this theorem requires altering the metatheory of the original work, but the adjustment is minor and supported by the informal conventions concerning types found in Volume II. The key idea is to allow for infinitely descending types, just as there are infinitely ascending types. With this adjustment, a core objection to the logicist program dissipates. I close by discussing the philosophical implications of the adjusted system.

**Robert Heineman, Alfred University**

**The Virtue of Appeasement: A Contextual Re-examination of Russell's Position**

Bertrand Russell's position on war underwent a variety of forms and until the horrors of WW II, remained consistently in the pacifist camp. His book *Which Way to Peace?* anticipated WW II but received and has received criticism for its advocacy of a thoroughly pacifist position in response to the Nazi threat. I shall argue that the arguments that Russell offered at that time reflected a failure to grasp the depth of the dangers to the West posed by the Nazis, but that his support of appeasement fit the mood of those opposing the Germans and that the appeasement of the 1930s in fact contributed significantly to eventual Allied victory. In conclusion I argue that the fundamental forces unleashed by the ideological and military hubris of the Nazis made appeasement a constructive strategy, but that Russell's approach was too narrow to convince others of this. Thus, the question of the role that appeasement played in producing defeat of the Nazis deserves re-examination and Russell's stance generally deserves more credit than it has received.

**Rick Lewis, Editor of *Philosophy Now* Magazine**  
**Keynote Address: *Philosophy Now* at 25**

Despite beginning his career in some of the most abstruse areas of the philosophy of mathematics, Bertrand Russell was unusual among the greats for the energy and skill he put into spreading an understanding of philosophy among the general public. *Philosophy Now* magazine attempts in its own modest way to carry on this good work. But why is it important to popularize philosophy? I shall argue that attempts by philosophical magazines, authors and societies to take philosophical debate to a wider public not only benefit the public but also contribute to the good health of academic philosophy itself.

**Gülberk Koç Maclean, Mount Royal University**  
**Russell's Epistemological Journey**

This paper investigates Russell's epistemological journey from *The Problems of Philosophy* (1912) to *Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* (1940) and *Human Knowledge* (1948). Russell, in *Human Knowledge*, still holds on to his epistemological view that knowledge cannot be defined merely as true belief, citing his example, from *The Problems of Philosophy* (1912), of the subject who had a true belief that the last Prime Minister's name began with a B, but did not have knowledge, because he had inferred the belief from a false one, namely, that the last PM was Balfour, when in fact it was Bannerman. The main points of difference we find in Russell's later epistemological views are that (i) knowledge is a vague term like baldness, for which we cannot, therefore, give a definite or unambiguous definition; (ii) animal knowledge is recognized as well as reflective human knowledge; and (iii) there is an appeal to expectations and appropriate behavior in explaining what it means to understand or believe a proposition. Because of (iii),

Russell might be seen to define knowledge in behaviourist terms, but I will argue that this is incorrect. Rather, Russell stands by a version of what Michael Clark (1963) calls a “no false grounds theory.”

**Michael K. Potter, University of Windsor**

**Realizing the Principle of Growth through the Will to Power**

Russell’s Principle of Growth, as I have argued elsewhere, is a concept of considerable explanatory utility, under-utilized and under-developed by Russell himself. Nietzsche’s Will to Power, on the other hand, while also useful, is over-extended and muddled in Nietzsche’s work, a collection of different conceptions under the same label. In this presentation I argue that the Principle of Growth and the Will to Power benefit from being seen as two explanations of the same psychological phenomenon. However, while Russell and Nietzsche both saw power as morally neutral in itself, Russell’s narrow conception of power in *Principles of Social Reconstruction* led him to classify the desire for power as necessarily possessive (and thus morally suspect), while Nietzsche saw the pursuit of at least some forms of power as a good. I argue that the broader understanding of power that Russell articulates in *Power: A New Social Analysis* not only sidesteps this conflict, but further reinforces my claim that he and Nietzsche were advancing similar psychological conclusions.

**Panel Discussion:**

**Are Bertrand Russell's Social and Political Views Still Relevant in the 21st Century?**

**Chair: Thomas Riggins, NYU**

**Tim Madigan, St. John Fisher:** “Bertrand Russell and Twenty-First Century Public Intellectuals” – How might Russell Fare Today in the World of Television Pundits and Internet Bloggers?”

**Ray Perkins, Jr., Plymouth State University:** "Russell and the Nuclear Threat in the 21st Century"

**John Lenz, Drew University:** "Russell's Socialism" - Is Russell a liberal or a socialist and what is the difference between the two? How is his criticism of capitalism relevant today and how does his socialism (for he was a socialist) compare with the democratic socialism of someone like Bernie Sanders? This is part of a long-term writing project about Russell's utopian ideal world.

**David Rolfe, Computer Systems Architect**

**A Process Oriented Definition of Number**

In this paper Russell’s definition of number is criticized. Russell’s assertion that a number is a particular kind of set implies that number has the properties of a set. It is argued that this would imply that a number contains elements and that this does not conform to our intuitive notion of number. An alternative definition is presented in which number is not seen as an object, but rather as a process and is related to the act of counting and is tightly bound up with the idea of time. Working from the idea that the description of a thing is not the thing itself, it is argued that a function should not be seen as a subset of the Cartesian product of two sets but can be described in this way. Number is then defined as a particular type of bijective function rather than a set. Definitions of equality and addition are developed. In defining addition an interesting error in Russell’s definition of addition is corrected.

**Alan Schwerin, Monmouth University**  
**Masterclass on *The Problems of Philosophy***

Russell had a number of reservations about the invitation to write *The Problems of Philosophy*. One of his letters to his editor, Gilbert Murray, presents us with some interesting insights into a few of the leading concerns that Russell expressed about this project. We will consider a transcript of the letter written on July 12, 1911 and explore a few of the issues that Russell was struggling with as the assignment progressed. (See Appendix below for the letter.)

**Tony Simpson, Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation**  
**China and Russell**

Bertie was invited to lecture in China in 1920-21. Thus began a long relationship with the country. Although he never returned, despite invitations, Russell retained an interest in China which can be traced through to the 1960s. He arrived at a time of great change in China. On arrival in Shanghai, Bertie and Dora visited Commercial Press, who already published Russell in translation. They continue to do so, almost a century later. A HISTORY OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY is on the reading list for students in China. 'What I Have Lived For' is especially popular with younger readers. Russell's popularity in China endures. China has nurtured Russell; what effect did China have on Russell? This slide presentation is based on my visit to Commercial Press in Beijing and to the Western Lake in Hangzhou, following in Bertie's footsteps, in September 2105.

**Michael D. Stevenson, Lakehead University**

**Monuments to Bertrand Russell and Fenner Brockway in London's Red Lion Square**

Bertrand Russell and Fenner Brockway were two of the leading progressive activists in twentieth century Britain. Both men played a conspicuous role in the No-Conscription Fellowship and were jailed for their principled opposition to the First World War, and they also played leading roles in the British peace and anti-nuclear movements of the 1950s and 1960s. Fittingly (though coincidentally), monuments to Russell and Brockway were unveiled in sight of each other in London's Red Lion Square—a bust of Russell in 1980 created by Marcelle Quinton and a statue of Brockway in 1985 designed by Ian Walters. This paper will provide an overview of the relationship between Russell and Brockway that spanned nearly six decades before discussing the campaigns to erect these public commemorative markers to the distinguished lives of the two men.

**Russell Wahl, Idaho State University**  
**Wittgenstein and Russell on Matter**

Wittgenstein and Russell were in close contact from late in 1911 to the fall of 1913 when Wittgenstein went to Norway. After that there was a brief contact on October when Wittgenstein dictated the Notes on Logic. We have also some correspondence between them, the notes dictated to Moore in 1914 and then the correspondence associated with the *Tractatus*, which Wittgenstein sent to Russell in 1918 and with which Russell worked to get published. Much attention has been focused on Wittgenstein's criticism of Russell's theory of judgment from 1913, and his disagreement with Russell over the nature of logic. What is less known is Wittgenstein's critique of Russell on matter. In this paper I wish to speculate on what

Wittgenstein's disagreement with Russell on matter might have been and look at Russell's reaction to Wittgenstein's criticism. This is speculative since, in contrast with the dispute in 1913, we do not have any letters between Russell and Wittgenstein which discuss these issues. We have only what Russell mentions to Ottoline in some letters and the heavily re-edited manuscript of "On Matter".

**David White, St. John Fisher College**

### **Can't We All Get Along? Dewey and Russell on Logic**

This paper imagines a committee of high school teachers who have been charged to come up with a logic curriculum. One member of the committee understands logic as John Dewey did. Logic is the methods of inquiry. Logic is a social discipline, and the only way to study logic is by studying the various cultures, the different languages, and the various scientific traditions. This social constructivist view makes sense, and enjoys community support. It is politically correct. The second teacher takes Russell's position, a position that can be stated simply and requires no knowledge of the technicalities of mathematical logic. Russell's view, so far as it concerns the committee, is that what is politically and socially correct may nevertheless not be true. The differences here make sense to the general public, but those who have read philosophy know that Dewey is unbothered by Russell's view since according to Dewey there is no truth in the sense Russell uses the term. The third teacher, whose patience has just about expired, is the art teacher. The art teacher is a connoisseur, that is, a trained professional who charges a fee for determining who really painted what. The practice of attribution has changed somewhat since the days of Russell's brother-in-law, Bernard Berenson, but the significance of the image as opposed to the proposition in the search for knowledge as if anything increased. At least in the past, and to some extent now, the conclusion of an attribution argument, .e.g., "Mark Rothko painted this picture," is clearly an empirical proposition which could easily be verified had there been observers in Rothko's studio. What the connoisseur uses as premises and as rules of inference are images as they appear to the expert eye and which cannot be translated into propositions. Thus the connoisseur logic differs essentially from Dewey logic and from Russell logic. Essentially different, yet all of importance in practice. How do we explain this to a class of high school kids?



## Appendix for Alan Schwerin's Master Class

What follows is a transcript of the letter from Russell to Murray written while Russell was working on *The Problems of Philosophy*. As with most of his letters, this letter is exceptionally clean and free of superfluous corrections and marginalia. This copy of the letter is stored in the Russell Archives, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario.

Address Trinity

The View, Upper Wyche, 80 Malvern

12. July. 1911

B. Russell

Dear Gilbert

I am writing my book for your series, & have written more than half of it. I find, however, that one or two things are happening to it which you may not desire. In the first place, I find it deals almost entirely with theory of knowledge, only occasionally arriving at metaphysics through theory of knowledge. This seems difficult to avoid, owing to the exclusion of religion & ethics. In the second place, I find that, quite contrary to my intention, it is an exposition of my own views, not an impartial account of what is thought by various philosophers. I found it impossible to write interestingly or freely or with conviction, unless I was trying to persuade the reader to agree with me. In the third place, I find that after the first four chapters it grows rather difficult. It remains quite easily intelligible, without trouble, to any educated man, however little he may know about philosophy; but it would be difficult for a shop-assistant unless he were unusually intelligent. I hardly know myself whether it is too difficult or not. If it is, I must re-write it.

Don't bother to answer if you think it will be all right. But if you really want stupid shop-assistants to be able to read it in armchairs, I must do it again. My chapters are so far:

- I. Appearance & Reality
- II. The existence of matter
- III. The nature of matter
- IV. Idealism
- V. Knowledge by acquaintance & knowledge by description
- VI. Induction
- VII. On our knowledge of general principles
- VIII. How a priori knowledge is possible
- IX. The world of universals [on Plato & Ideas]
- X. On our knowledge of universals
- XI. On intuitive knowledge.

The chapters grow naturally out of each other, & but for doubt about difficulty I should be satisfied with the stuff.

Love to Mary.

Yours affectionately,

B. Russell