

CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS

Ken Blackwell, McMaster University

Bertrand Russell's Revised Editions

Bertrand Russell revised more than a few of his books, and I propose taking the audience through the major revised editions. The talk isn't so much for collectors as it is for students of his thought. It's a pity when they miss his revised thoughts on a wide range of topics. A "revised" book, for my purposes, will be one in which he revised the text or supplied a new introduction or preface. Sometimes the revised edition is the default edition, sometimes it's one you must search high and low for, especially if it's in another language. What we need is a collected edition of Russell's books. He told Stanley Unwin he'd welcome that.

David Blitz, Central Connecticut State University;

William ("Bill") Bruneau, University of British Columbia;

Tim Madigan, St. John Fisher College;

Michael K. Potter, University of Windsor

D'Juan Eastman (CCSU)

Panel Discussion: The Centenary of *Principles of Social Reconstruction*

In his 1916/17 book *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, Russell aimed (a) to show how international relations had gone off the rails, and (b) how society could and should be reconceived and reconstructed. He argued that such reconstruction would mean a new approach to finance, labor relations, the family, and education. The panel will discuss the reasons why Russell felt impelled to write such a book in light of the crisis of the First World War, as well as its relevance to the present day.

Cameron Brewer, Central Connecticut State University

Russell, Hume and the Passage of Time

According to the B-theory of time, tensed concepts like past, present, and future have no mind independent reality; all points in time are equally real, and the experience of the passage of time is an illusion. The B-Theory fits with important aspects of our current physical theory (specifically special relativity), but not with our everyday experience of the world. Thus, it is important for the B-theorist to explain how the illusion of passage arises. In part I, I outline a strategy for explaining the passage of time that relies on two components: 1) a static theory of motion and 2) an account of apparent motion. The static theory of motion provides a description of motion that lacks animation or "flow," while the phenomenon of apparent motion helps ground the claim that we can experience the "flow" of motion, even when that "flow" is merely an illusion. As some scholars have noted, Russell provides us with a helpful account of the static theory of motion in *The Principles of Mathematics*. Though he is often mentioned in the context of the B-theory of time, Russell's account is rarely explained. Thus in part II, I provide his account, examine how he uses the theory to overcome Zeno's Arrow paradox, and explain the theory's relevance to the B-theory of time. In part III, I consider the phenomenon of apparent motion and consider a challenge to using apparent motion to explain how time's passage could be illusory. Finally, I highlight how claims Hume makes in *A Treatise of Human Nature* can be used to

better understand the phenomenon of apparent motion and overcome the challenge presented in part III.

William ("Bill") Bruneau, University of British Columbia

Bertie and Dora on the Education of Grown-Ups

Bertrand and Dora Russell became parents in the early 1920s. From then on, both wrote often about parenthood, childhood, and schooling. Bertie's education books (1926, 1932) and Dora's analogous writings on childhood, family, and sex (especially 1927 *The Right to be Happy* and 1932 *In Defence of Children*) were partly intended to encourage enrollment at Beacon Hill School [BHS], the Russells' private liberal experiment. But the authors had in mind more than the interests of their school. Their books formed part of a larger and longer campaign for democratic-socialist politics, for a humane and liberal understanding of education and family life, and for a new internationalism. Their broad goal was the reconstruction of *adulthood*, not just of the way children are raised and taught. In short, they were in the business of what we might now call adult education. Studies of the Russells' work on the family, on education, and politics have usually dealt separately with Bertie's and Dora's strategies and methods. In the field of adult education, comparative work is overdue.

Landon D. C. Elkind, University of Iowa

The Nature of Russell's Sense Data

Russell explicitly asserts that sense-data are physical in his 1914 "The Relation of Sense-Data to Physics" (RSDP). There is reason to believe this view is also held in Russell's *Our Knowledge of the External World*: both RSDP and *Our Knowledge* were written around the same time, and it was only after both were written that Russell presented either work publicly in his guest lecture tour of America in the spring of 1914; moreover, RSDP was published one month before *Our Knowledge*. Matters are less clear in Russell's 1912 *The Problems of Philosophy*. Russell does not explicitly say whether sense-data are mental or physical in *Problems*, and there are significant differences of the sense-data theory advocated in RSDP and *Our Knowledge* from the one advocated in *Problems*. I will argue that, though there is no decisive consideration either way, Russell's sense-data are likely physical even in *Problems*. For his sense-data theory in *Problems* is consistent with sense-data being physical, there is no evidence that Russell changed his mind on this score, and some strong indirect evidence supports the claim sense-data are physical in *Problems*.

Kevin Klement, UMass Amherst

Russell on Ontological Fundamentality and Existence

Russell is often taken as a forerunner of the Quinean position that "to be is to be the value of a bound variable", whereupon the ontological commitment of a theory is given by what it quantifies over. Among other reasons, Russell was among the first to suggest that all existence statements should be analyzed by means of existential quantification. That there was more to Russell's metaphysics than what existential quantifications come out as true is obvious in the earlier period where Russell still made a distinction between existence and being/subsistence. But even the later Russell, including that of the Logical Atomism lectures period, would not have understood ontological questions to be first and foremost questions of quantification. He would take fundamentality to be important too, which explains in part his assertions to the effect the values of individual variables have a reality not

attributable to values of higher-order variables, even ineliminable higher-order variables.

John Ongley, Lehman College, CUNY

ARE PEOPLE RATIONAL? BERTRAND RUSSELL ON HUMAN REASON

It is common for Russell's fans to repeat his many quips about other people's lack of good sense, for example, "most people would rather die than think – in fact, they do so." ¹ But it is less common to hear them assert that this is one of Russell's basic assumptions about human nature and at the core of his serious moral, social, and political thought. This talk aims to show that scepticism about human reason is a core assumption of Russell's public philosophy throughout his life. Even if one accepts this, however, one can still ask: but is it true? It will be argued that there is much support for Russell's view of human reason in recent psychology. Examples of how this assumption affects Russell's social and political thought are then indicated.

¹ The full quote is: "We all have a tendency to think that the world must conform to our prejudices. The opposite view involves some effort of thought, and most people would die sooner than think – in fact they do so."

Michael K. Potter, University of Windsor

The Principle of Growth in the Alt-Right Era

The "alt-right" is a political movement of motivations, allegiances, and ideologies held together by common grievances and frustrations. Since 2010 it has emerged as a surprisingly powerful force in Western politics -- one that many underestimated until the 2016 US presidential election. It can no longer be ignored or merely condemned. It must be understood. If we sought to understand the alt-right, instead of merely abhorring it, where could we begin? I argue that a synthesis of Russell's moral psychology -- as articulated, primarily, in *Principles of Social Reconstruction* -- with Nietzsche's *Will to Power* provides a useful starting point. Treating the behaviours associated with the alt-right as thwarted expressions of creative and possessive impulses reveals potentially practical strategies for limiting the growth of this powerful new political force through education.

Cara Rice, Independent Scholar

By Any Other Name: Bertrand Russell and Joseph Conrad

Bertrand Russell felt a distinctive regard for the novelist Joseph Conrad since he named not only one but both of his sons after the famous author. Russell had access to many great minds through friendship and study, so his choice to connect Joseph Conrad with his bloodline in such a manner merits examination. Both Bertrand Russell and Joseph Conrad describe their first meeting, in rather visceral terms, as an experience that created the strongest of bonds. The connection was, in part, instinctive. Russell was such a champion of logic, however, that we can still consider the lines of reasoning that may have contributed to the high esteem in which he held Joseph Conrad. The work of both men communicate that humanity can strongly mitigate its own suffering by dispensing with comforting superstitions and facing painful realities. This essay will present the manner in which Bertrand Russell and Joseph Conrad present these ideas and how their similar viewpoints may have contributed to their camaraderie.

Thomas Riggins, NYU

Russell as a Closet Bolshevik

It has been ninety-seven years since Bertrand Russell's visit to Soviet Russia and his interview with V.I. Lenin. His impressions of Russia, the Bolsheviks, and the revolutionary process enfolding around him was the subject of his book *Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*. This book has long been considered a "classic" of anti-communism and a statement of Russell's rejection of Soviet Marxism. A close reading however, shows that it is actually an endorsement of what later became known as Leninism. In this talk, covering the first part of the two parts of Russell's book, I will present the evidence for the conclusion that whatever may have been Russell's subjective intent his book is objectively an endorsement of the application of Bolshevik principles to particular historical circumstances in which revolutionaries are likely to find themselves.

Alan Schwerin, Monmouth University

Masterclass on "Some Remarks on Russell's Account of Vagueness"

According to Russell, the notation in *Principia Mathematica* has been designed to avoid the vagueness endemic to our natural language. But what does Russell think vagueness is? My argument is an attempt to show that his views on vagueness evolved and that the final conception he adopts is not coherent. Three phases of his conception of vagueness are identified, the most significant being the view that he articulates on vagueness in his 1923 address to the Jowett Society. My central thesis is that the 1912 conception of vagueness -- what I characterize as "semantic egalitarianism" -- seriously conflicts with the later paradoxical account of vagueness.

Carl Spadoni, Member, Bertrand Russell Research Center

An Editorial Perspective on vol. 30 of the *Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell, The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, 1957-1959*

In this presentation I highlight the contents of vol. 30 of the *Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, and I also discuss some of the editorial difficulties that I've encountered and the archival labyrinths that I've experienced. This is an extremely interesting period of Russell's life. At the age of 85, he is a veritable titan: hale and hearty, engaged on the world stage, prolific as an insightful and scintillating author, and sought out for his opinions by the television media, the newspaper press, and the public at large. The volume begins with Russell's "Open Letter to Eisenhower and Khrushchev", an appeal to end the Cold War and for both world powers to stop nuclear testing and to agree on a *modus vivendi* for the resolution of international disputes. This extraordinary document and the formation of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament set the tone for the volume which consists of more than 90 papers grouped together into nine parts with the addition of more than forty diverse appendices (newspaper reports, debates, and interviews). The political subjects of Russell's shorter publications focus on détente, disarmament, scientists and peace, and world government, but in his writings during this period of his life as *divertissement*, he also embarks on autobiography, biographical endeavours, philosophical musings and controversy, fiction, and humour.

Michael D. Stevenson, Lakehead University

Personalities and Politics: Bertrand Russell and the 1935 International Congress for Scientific

Philosophy

As part of his “return to philosophy” in the mid-1930s, Bertrand Russell attended the International Congress for Scientific Philosophy held in Paris from 15-19 September 1935. Previous knowledge of Russell’s activities in Paris has been limited to a single account written by Russell himself after the congress concluded and published in the meeting’s proceedings (see *Collected Papers* 10, Paper 20).

Extensive correspondence exchanged between Russell and Patricia Spence—his lover and future third wife—while Russell attended the congress does exist, however, and the embargo on these letters has been recently lifted. This paper will provide an overview of the contents of these letters emphasizing Russell’s observations about congress participants, his views about international affairs, particularly the impending conflict between Italy and Abyssinia, and the nature of his relationship with Spence.

Laurie Endicott Thomas, Independent Scholar

Why Johnny Can’t Read Russell

Millions of adults who grew up in the United States cannot read well enough to read even the books that Russell wrote for a lay audience. This problem is due in part to the legacy of John Dewey. Dewey discouraged teachers from using an effective method of teaching reading. He also discouraged teachers from providing direct instruction in other kinds of foundational knowledge and skills, such as grammar lessons. So even though Americans generally spend up to 13 years in public school, millions have never learned to read, and millions more have not learned to parse and reason. This deprivation of fundamental knowledge and skills has been described as academic child abuse. The effects of this deprivation can be seen even in graduate schools. To be effective as a teacher, you may have to provide remedial education before you begin teaching the material that you had intended to teach. For a social movement to be effective, it must likewise provide the basic education that people should have learned in school.

Chad Trainer, Independent Scholar

Bertrand Russell’s *Analysis of Matter* Ninety Years Later: How Dated a Document Is It?

We do well to understand the various assumptions and points of departure much science adopts *uncritically* that if addressed *critically* is philosophic territory. There are assumptions and tenets as basic and uncontroversial as belief in an external world and that our sensory perception has causes. And yet various stages of respected sciences have been dismissive of something as basic as *causation*. The degree to which the substance/attribute dichotomy is antiquated or still useful is also a matter where science is frequently a party to the issue without explicitly acknowledging, let alone defending, its postulates. In an age when mass opinion still subscribes to the idea of mind and matter being different, irreducible orders of being, the progress in psychology and physics alike has important implications. The ability of energy and matter to convert into one another makes mind and matter seem to have a closer relation. Finally, as much as Newtonian physics was compatible with deterministic physics, quantum physics has resurrected *chance* as something to be viewed as objective rather than a symptom of areas where we are simply ignorant.

As much as science appears to advance in comparison with philosophy, how much progress has science made in addressing these foregoing philosophically laden assumptions and tenets? I argue the progress has been small enough that Russell’s *Analysis of Matter* still has relevance ninety years after its

publication.

Sheila Turcon, Member, Bertrand Russell Research Center

Russell's American Homes

Sheila Turcon began her series on Russell's homes in 2012. She will mention that series and her discovery of the Leonard Woolf quotation about the importance of homes when she was researching Telegraph House. Her talk will touch on all the houses that Russell lived in while in America. It will be illustrated by photographs of some of the homes. She will spend most of her time on Russell in Los Angeles. The home movie "Sundays at Malibu Encinal" will be shown; she will also talk about a picnic that Russell went on with Aldous Huxley, the movie stars Greta Garbo and Charlie Chaplin, and others.

Here is the introductory paragraph for my article on *Russell's American Homes*: "Russell arrived in America in September 1938. He had accepted a temporary position at the University of Chicago in order to support his family. After a year at Oxford, he had been unable to find suitable employment either there or elsewhere in the UK. He was to spend five years in America because of the outbreak of World War II. He lived in the Midwest as well as on both coasts. During this time he had three major residences, all rentals, as well as a number of others where his stays were shorter. He never really felt at home in America and eventually was able to leave for England in June 1944, with World War II still underway."

Lianghua Zhou, University of Virginia

Russell's Two Lectures on Mathematical Logic in China

In March 1921, Russell gave two lectures on Mathematical Logic in China. Two versions of notes taken by two Chinese students were published in the same year and have been republished in China in recent years. However, they have not been translated into English until now. Since Russell's manuscripts for these lectures are not found (he probably used some brief notes when he gave these lectures), translating the Chinese versions of these lectures into English will be of assistance to scholars and readers in the English-speaking world. Those who are interested in history of logic might find this piece of work particularly interesting.