DISCUSSION

BERTRAND RUSSELL'S FIRST FORTY-TWO YEARS, IN SELF-PORTRAITURE[1]

THIS BOOK, the autobiography of the first forty-two years of an extremely full and varied life, is published when Lord Russell, still in remarkable vigor, is ninety-five. In the remarks that follow I shall refer to him as "Bertrand Russell" or as plain "Russell," since he did not succeed to the peerage until the death of his elder brother, John Francis, the second Earl Russell, in 1931.

I shall deal in turn with the following topics: ancestry and blood-relations, boyhood, early years at Cambridge, first marriage, subsequent extramarital relations, mysticism, and philosophical work.

I. Ancestry and Blood-Relations

Russell's grandfather on the paternal side was the Whig statesman Lord John Russell (1792-1878). The latter was a younger son of the sixth Duke of Bedford (1766-1839). He was created Earl Russell and Viscount Amberley in 1861. His eldest son (by his second wife, Frances Anna Maria Elliot, daughter of the Earl of Minto) was John Russell (1842-1876). The latter bore the courtesy title of Viscount Amberley, but, dying before his father, never became Earl Russell. He married in 1864 and became the father in 1865 of Bertrand Russell's elder brother, John Francis Stanley Russell (1865-1931) and of Bertrand Russell in 1872. The former became second Earl Russell in 1878, on the death of their grandfather. He died, much married but without legitimate male issue, in 1931, whereupon Bertrand Russell succeeded as third Earl. Two of the younger children of his Russell grandparents, his Uncle Rollo and his maiden Aunt Agatha, were closely associated with him in his earlier years. His paternal grandmother, *née* Frances Elliot, born in 1815, lived until 1898, and there was a strong bond between them.

Passing to the maternal side, we note that Bertrand Russell's mother was Katherine Louisa Stanley (1842-1874). She was a daughter of the

[1] *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell, 1872-1914.* (Boston and Toronto, Little, Brown & Company, 1967. Pp. 356.)

second Lord Stanley of Alderley (1802-1869) and Henrietta Maria Dillon (1807-1895). The former was a descendant of Gibbon's Lord Sheffield (1735-1821), and the latter was a very individual and outspoken member of a noble family of Irish Jacobites. She had much to do with Girton College in its early days, and during her lifetime prevented the building of a chapel there. She had a large family of very diverse and mutually contentious children with a wide variety of religious beliefs and non-beliefs. Through his mother Russell was nephew to Rosalind Stanley, who became Countess of Carlisle, and was a notorious and highly cranky *grande dame* in her day. Through her he became related in marriage to that eminent classical scholar and many-sided man, Gilbert Murray (1866-1957), whose wife, Lady Mary, was a daughter of Lady Carlisle.

It is interesting, and perhaps significant, to remark that, although Russell's parents both died young, instances of remarkable longevity are not uncommon on both sides of his family. On the paternal side, for example, his grandfather lived to eighty-six and his grandmother to eighty-three, while on the maternal side his grandmother lived to eighty-eight.

II. Boyhood

Lord Amberley, Russell's father, seems to have been an able and a personally amiable man. He might be described as an outstanding instance of the male variety of high-minded prig, with many absurd cranks which he conscientiously put into practice in his home, but with certain sensible ideas, particularly about religion and about birth control, now commonplace but then deemed revolutionary and bitterly opposed by almost all respectable persons.

The Amberleys obtained for their elder son a tutor of some scientific eminence, who was a Darwinian and an atheist and also in an advanced stage of tuberculosis. According to Russell, Lady Amberley (on the highest moral grounds) allowed or enjoined this man to sleep with her during the last few years of her life. Lord Amberley left in his will as guardians of his two sons this tutor and another atheist, T. J. Cobden-Sanderson (1840-1922), the eminent bookbinder. The Russell grandparents very naturally objected to this arrangement, and managed to get it legally set aside and the boys made wards in chancery. In that capacity Russell was brought up in early boyhood by his grandparents at their house, Pembroke Lodge, in Richmond Park, which had been presented for life to Lord John in the 1840's by

Queen Victoria. In this connection it is worth noting that Lord Amberley, in a letter which he wrote to his mother a few days before his own death, remarks *inter alia* that he hopes that she will see as much as possible of his sons and that they may look upon her as a mother, and that he has met with nothing but kindness and gentleness from his father.

Bertrand Russell began to live at Pembroke Lodge at the age of four. Two years afterward his grandfather died as a very old man. Henceforth the two relatives in the home who may be said to have stood *in loco parentis* to him were his grandmother, fifty-seven years older than he, and subordinately to her, her daughter Agatha Russell. The latter was only twenty years older than he. But she had, presumably, retained a considerable measure of eccentricity from the period when she had been temporarily engaged to a curate and had then been definitely more or less insane. Russell's elder brother, Francis, was sent in the normal way to boarding schools, but he himself was educated within the home by a sequence of governesses and tutors until the age of sixteen.

It is plain that his upbringing in these early years was extremely peculiar in at least the following respects—namely, (1) that there was this great disparity in age between him and those who stood *in loco parentis* to him; (2) that the latter were women, and that the family life at Pembroke Lodge was entirely under female control; and (3) that he had exceptionally few opportunities for associating with, learning from, and "rubbing off corners" against, other boys of his own age and social position. This quite unusual concatenation of circumstances, acting on a boy of exceptional gifts, intellectual, emotional, and imaginative, naturally produced a very solitary and a very self-centered and withdrawn adolescent.

As was almost invariable at that period and for many years later among the vast majority of decent normal English families, Protestant Christianity was taken for granted as unquestionably true, and was inculcated from infancy. Often, no doubt, neither the parents nor their offspring (at any rate, after attaining what Gibbon calls "the age of puberty and of reason") allowed the religious principles, which they outwardly expressed and inwardly never contemplated and explicitly questioned, seriously to "cramp their style." But Protestant Christianity *was* taken in many families and by many individuals as a deeply serious matter, and these strove anxiously and conscientiously to live up to it as they understood it. It was so taken by Russell's paternal grandmother throughout her life (though she moved from Presbyte-

rianism to a kind of Unitarianism) and by Russell himself, under her influence, as a young boy.

From the age of about fourteen to sixteen Russell, as a result of much reading and reflection, came to reject first revealed religion, and then the standard philosophical arguments for theism, for human survival of bodily death, and for free will. Naturally, he felt obliged to conceal all this from his grandmother and his Aunt Agatha. It could only hurt their feelings, would be quite outside their range of understanding and sympathy, and would lead to painful and useless recriminations in the home. Russell sums up the situation in the remark, "After the age of fourteen I found living at home only endurable at the cost of complete silence about everything that interested me." Undoubtedly, somewhat analogous causes must have produced, and probably still produce, somewhat similar effects in a good many adolescents *vis-à-vis* their elders and betters. But seldom if ever can there have been such a peculiar combination of background conditions as existed in Russell's case.

Simultaneously with this came the usual disturbances of puberty. Russell, like the vast majority of boys, began to masturbate at the age of about fourteen. Since this was one of the topics on which even highly intelligent Victorians held views which seem to most sensible people nowadays little short of crazy, he was ashamed of, and very likely frightened by, the practice. Unlike a considerable proportion of unmarried males, he discontinued it at the age of twenty, the occasion in his case being his falling in love with Alys Pearsall Smith.

Just at the beginning of his seventeenth year Russell was sent away from home for educational purposes for the first time. It was not to an ordinary school, but to a cramming establishment at Southgate in Middlesex, where he was to be specially prepared for the Entrance Scholarship Examination at Trinity College, Cambridge.

Most of the pupils were rather stupid and backward young men, with few interests except sport and sex, being crammed for entrance examinations which were a necessary hurdle to be surmounted on the way to becoming professional officers in the army. It is not surprising that Russell should have felt himself a fish out of water in these surroundings. The general tone of conversation shocked him far more than it would have done to a boy of his age with a more normal upbringing. He was subjected, especially at first, to a certain amount of rough teasing and minor bullying. He managed outwardly to keep his end up and eventually to be let alone, but he could do this only at the cost of very severe internal strain. At this and at certain later periods

of his life he had serious thoughts of committing suicide. We may congratulate ourselves on the fact that the facilities available at the time were far more restricted than they have since been made by the advances of applied science.

III. Early Years at Cambridge

In the December of 1889 Russell took the Entrance Scholarship Examination at Trinity College, Cambridge. He was awarded a minor scholarship in mathematics. In October, 1890, he took up residence as a freshman in Whewell's Court. The Master of the College at the time was H. M. Butler (1833-1918). A. N. Whitehead (1861-1947) had been one of Russell's examiners. He had noted the outstanding ability of Russell and of another successful candidate, C. P. Sanger, who became one of Russell's closest friends. He had therefore recommended both of them very strongly (without their knowledge, of course) to those running the ancient Cambridge society of intellectual *élites* known to those of the outer world who were aware of its existence as "The Apostles." Russell was elected to this at the beginning of 1892, and it played a great part in his early life in Cambridge. Among the members slightly older than he we may mention the philosopher J. E. McTaggart (1866-1925), and among those slightly younger the philosopher G. E. Moore (1873-1958) and the historian George Trevelyan (1876-1962), who later became Master of Trinity. A few years after them two of the most influential members were G. L. Strachey (1880-1932) and John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946). With these there entered a considerable element of homosexuality, which, according to Russell, had been absent in his time.

I think it is fair to say that Russell's years as an undergraduate, a B.A., and a young Fellow of Trinity were those when the colleges of Trinity and of King's included among their Scholars and Fellows an extraordinarily high proportion of men outstanding for their intellectual gifts and for the richness of their personalities. Russell was himself one of the very ablest of these; he was well acquainted with almost all of them; and he was united by ties of deep mutual affection to several. He gives very delightful pictures, not only of those, like Whitehead and Moore, who are widely known for their published works, but also of some who remained unknown outside their particular restricted fields, such as his great friends, C. P. Sanger and the brothers Crompton and Theodore Llewellyn-Davies.

In contrast with their present-day successors these men enjoyed all

the following advantages. In the first place, the total membership of the University was still reasonably small, and neither the national government nor the local authorities were involved. Consequently, the dons were not overloaded with teaching, and still less with endless administrative red tape and paperwork. Secondly, there was still an abundant supply of cheap labor available for domestic service both in the colleges and in the private houses of the married dons. The worsening of the domestic amenities of life among the successors of men like Russell, and of their wives, owing to the almost complete cessation of this, is hardly calculable. Thirdly, intelligent men of good will could and did feel an optimism about the foreseeable future of the human race, which, although later events have proved it to be almost ludicrously mistaken, was not unreasonable in the light of the facts most familiar to them. Lastly, the discoveries of natural science and their practical application could still not unreasonably be viewed with almost unqualified enthusiasm by persons who were neither knaves nor fools. It is now long since anyone in his senses could take that attitude. For these reasons, ignoring individual sorrows and tragedies, one might fairly apply to Russell and his friends in those early Cambridge days the lines:

> "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
> But to be young was very heaven!"

IV. First Marriage

In 1883 Russell's paternal Uncle Rollo took a house on the slopes of Hindhead in Surrey. Russell used to spend long and happy summer holidays there, exploring the beautiful and then unspoiled country around. In 1889 a family of Pennsylvania Quakers, the Pearsall Smiths, took up residence in the neighborhood. They were persons of ample means, who derived their income largely from a family glass manufactory at Millville, managed by a near relative named Bond Thomas. They consisted of the mother, the son Logan, and of two daughters, Mary and Alys. Mary, then Mrs. Costelloe, later married the art-collector Bernard Berenson (1865-1959). Logan (1865-1946) was then an undergraduate at Balliol College, Oxford. Later he became well known as the author of *Trivia*. Alys was at that time a student at Bryn Mawr College in the United States, of which her aunt, Carey Thomas, a sister of the above-mentioned Bond Thomas, was principal.

Rollo Russell and Bertrand called on the Pearsall Smiths. Alys was

at home on vacation from Bryn Mawr. Born in 1867, she was then twenty-two. Russell was seventeen. He at once fell head-over-heels in love with her.

Russell found the kind of talk that went on among the Pearsall Smiths and their guests an agreeable contrast both to that of Pembroke Lodge and that of Southgate. He met there a number of interesting persons of importance in their day whom he would never have met at Pembroke Lodge, such as the Sidney Webbs, of whom he gives an amusing and on the whole attractive picture. He came to spend more and more of his time there.

Russell became legally independent in June, 1893, and he at the same time came into control of the £20,000 (a tidy sum in those days) which he had inherited from his father. In September, 1893, he proposed to Alys and was neither accepted nor rejected. He continued to see a great deal of her and of her family, both in England and in Paris, where Logan was then living. Late in 1894 Alys decided to become engaged to him.

His family were, very naturally as it seems to me, strongly opposed to the match. As it must have appeared to them, it was a case of a very young man, of brilliant gifts, connections, and prospects, but quite exceptionally innocent and inexperienced, being committed, before he had had any opportunity to make himself acquainted with other and probably more eligible alternatives, to a lifelong union with a young woman five years older than himself, of a foreign land, an utterly different background and an extremely odd religion, and a prig of the first water.

The Russell family induced Lord Dufferein (then British ambassador in Paris) to offer to Bertrand a job as honorary attaché. He was out of England in that capacity for about three months in the latter part of 1894. As might be expected, he thoroughly disliked the life, and of course the separation from Alys which it involved. At his grandmother's wish his elder brother came out to Paris in order to judge the situation. As a result he came down strongly on Bertrand's side, and on November 17, 1894, the latter left the embassy for good and returned to England. Before his departure to France he had been living with the Pearsall Smiths, working at his fellowship dissertation, and after his return he settled down with them again and resumed his work.

Russell and Alys were married on December 13, 1894, at the Quaker Meetinghouse in St. Martin's Lane in London. Neither of them had had any previous experience of sexual intercourse. At the beginning of the engagement the Russell family doctor had revealed to Russell

(truly, but perhaps injudiciously) several instances of lunacy, complete or partial, among his collateral paternal ancestry. In view of this, he and Alys decided at first to have no children. After they had been married about two years they altered their minds on this point. This proved, however, to be irrelevant, since she was incapable of having children, at any rate by him.

The marriage was for a considerable time a happy and successful one. Russell states that the early part was intellectually the most fruitful part of his life, and says, "I owe a debt of gratitude to my first wife for having made it possible." It was during this period that he completed his fellowship dissertation, published in 1896 as *An Essay on the Foundations of Geometry*, and his *Lectures on German Socialism*, published in the same year. In the spring of that year the Russells took a laborer's cottage at Fernhurst in Surrey and greatly enlarged it. Russell says, "In this cottage many of the happiest times of my life were passed."

There must, however, have been from the beginning intense sources of irritation in the background. Russell very early decided that his mother-in-law was an evil and odious woman whom he could not tolerate, while Alys and Logan upheld her through thick and thin. Alys, on her part, seems to have treated Russell's paternal grandmother with extreme unkindness and heartlessness and to have tried (in vain) to put Russell against her. And of his brother-in-law, Logan, Russell writes that he was "the most malicious scandal-monger I have ever known."

In the autumn of 1896 Russell had the opportunity of becoming well acquainted with his wife's relatives on their native ground. He and Alys spent about three months in the United States. They visited in turn Alys' cousin Bond Thomas at Millville; Carey Thomas at Bryn Mawr, where she was the principal; and Dr. Thomas, the father of these, at Baltimore. At Bryn Mawr Russell lectured on non-Euclidean geometry, while Alys threw her weight about on the endowment of motherhood and similar topics. Russell liked and respected Helen (afterward Mrs. Flexner), one of the Thomas sisters, who was unfortunately very deaf. But his comment on the setup as a whole is: "My impression of the old families of Philadelphia Quakers was that they had all the effeteness of a small aristocracy."

From 1898 to 1902 the Russells used to spend the term times of each year in Cambridge, where Russell gave the lectures which were published in 1900 as *Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz* and during which period he completed the book published in 1903 as *The*

Principles of Mathematics. On these occasions they generally shared a house with the Whiteheads.

Early in 1901, when the two families were living in the house in Downing College which was Professor Maitland's official residence, Russell had a "mystical" experience which played an important part in his life. I shall consider this in some detail later in another context. Here I mention it only in order to suggest that, at this period of his life at any rate, during which he was under extreme stress with intellectual problems in connection with his work, changes might have been taking place for some time unnoticed at a subconscious level, and then quite suddenly have manifested themselves in his consciousness in a spectacular way on some particular occasion.

This leads up to Russell's ostensibly sudden breach with Alys, which was thereafter permanent. His own account is as follows. In the early months of 1902 the Russells were living with the Whiteheads in the latter's home, The Mill House, Grantchester, near Cambridge. One afternoon, when out cycling, Russell suddenly became aware that he "no longer loved Alys." On getting back he did not at once inform her, but she sensed that something was amiss. She retired for some months for a rest cure. On her return from this he told her, and she was naturally extremely distressed.

Russell tried at the time to justify to himself this emotional *volte-face* by outspoken criticisms on her defects of character. Though he now thinks that he "forgot the great virtues that she did in fact possess," and that in any case the expression of such criticisms by him to her was indefensible, he still considers that she *had* great faults. In essence, as it seems to me, she was a prize prig. She was, according to Russell, like her brother Logan, malicious; and she liked in a high-minded way to make people think ill of each other by going through the motions of praising them with faint damns. Often malice made her untruthful as when she told Mrs. Whitehead that Russell, who adored children, could not bear them, and that the Whitehead children should therefore be kept out of his way; and when she equally falsely told Russell that Mrs. Whitehead was a bad mother who deliberately neglected her own children. I may perhaps add, in general confirmation, an incidental remark of Whitehead's to me about her one summer soon after the first World War, when I was on a visit. "She was such an awful liar!" said that kindest of men reminiscently.

Whatever may have been her faults, her situation thenceforth was a most unhappy one, and she is greatly to be pitied. This was felt by some of Russell's friends, and is expressed in a moving and tactful

letter from Beatrice Webb, which he quotes. The Russells lived together for another nine years. At times she would implore him, and he would consent out of pity, to sleep with her. Russell says that during this period he had no other sexual relations, and he adds that she never then nor afterward became sexually interested in any other man. Of course, there was never for either of them the complications or the consolations which children might have provided. He had at any rate his intellectual interests, trials, and triumphs. But all her eggs were in one basket, and that was irretrievably smashed.

V. Subsequent Extramarital Relations

Under this heading the first and much the most important is Russell's relationship with Lady Ottoline Morell, which he describes in considerable detail.

Lady Ottoline Morell (1873-1938) was born a Cavendish-Bentinck and was sister to the head of that family, the Duke of Portland. She had married a commoner, Philip Morell, a wealthy man and an active Liberal politician, and they entertained profusely at their various houses. Russell had not been at all well acquainted with either of them, though Philip had in fact been a contemporary with Logan Pearsall Smith at Oxford and they had been intimate friends. As an active member of the Liberal Party, however, Russell had worked in Morell's support during the general election of January, 1910, at which the latter lost his seat. In this connection he had come to know the Morells fairly well but not particularly intimately.

In March, 1911, Russell was invited to give three lectures in Paris. He had to spend the night of March 19 in London, and he knew the Morells well enough to ask them to put him up for the night in their London house. They agreed. But Philip had unexpectedly to be away that night on political business in the north of England, and so Russell dined alone with Lady Ottoline. He gradually made love to her, and found that she returned his feelings. They agreed to become lovers, and it was arranged that Russell, after his return from Paris, should join her for three days at Studland in Dorsetshire, where she would be staying.

The weekend immediately before this visit to Studland was spent by Russell with Alys at Fernhurst. It was an extraordinary mixture of highly disagreeable experiences. It began with a tragedy of errors. Russell visited his dentist professionally.[1] The dentist told his patient that he suspected (quite mistakenly, as it turned out afterward) that

the latter had cancer, and advised him to consult a specialist. It being Easter, the specialist was away on holiday, so Russell was left on tenterhooks as to this vital matter for some three weeks.

On returning from this inauspicious session in the dental chair, Russell informed Alys of the affair with Lady Ottoline. Alys, not surprisingly, cut up very rough indeed. She lost her temper and insisted that she would institute divorce proceedings, bringing in Lady Ottoline's name. Russell, rather rashly in view of Alys' very hostile state of mind at the time, informed her that he would commit suicide if she did so. Most fortunately, the threat proved effective. At the conclusion of this scene Russell rode away on his bicycle, a machine which thus for the second time played a vital part in his matrimonial Odyssey. He did not see Alys again to speak to until 1950, some forty years later, when they met as friendly acquaintances. It was the Whiteheads who finally persuaded her not to institute such proceedings as she had contemplated. In the end, she did not at the time take any legal action. The divorce which she sought and obtained from Russell in 1921 was on quite different grounds.

Russell proceeded to Studland and the arms of Lady Ottoline, believing that he had cancer. He naturally concealed that belief from her. Either already, or at any rate somewhat later, he did in fact suffer, unknown to himself, from pyorrhea. This made his breath smell offensive. When, considerably later, this was discovered and cured, he informed Lady Ottoline. He found that she had been well aware of the condition and had tactfully suffered it in silence.

Passing, with a smile or a sigh, from these homely incidents of our common mortality, I quote Russell's verdict on his visit to Studland: "The three days and nights that I spent at Studland remain in my memory as among the few moments when life seemed all that it might be, but hardly ever is." Russell later spent periods with Lady Ottoline on several occasions, generally at various houses of hers in the country or in London or at hotels on the Continent. They ceased to be lovers in 1916, but remained thereafter close friends.

Russell says, and I find it easy to believe, that Lady Ottoline had a great influence on him and that it was wholly for good. She was a highly intelligent, sensible, and kindly, though unconventional, woman of the world. She belonged to the same social class as Russell, but had had an enormously wider experience of life. I cannot do better than summarize Russell's own considered judgment. Ottoline had a strong sense of humor. She laughed at him in a kindly but effective way when he behaved like a don or a prig. She cured him of his belief that he

was seething inside with appalling wickedness which could be kept under only by iron self-control. And she made him much less of a Puritan and much less censorious.

Lady Ottoline, though far from monogamic in her sexual relations, was attached to her husband, her children, her homes, and her possessions. She had not the slightest intention of leaving them in order to live with Russell, as he would have wished.

In the spring of 1914, Russell was in Boston, Massachusetts, giving the Lowell Lectures, which were later published as *Our Knowledge of the External World*. While staying in Chicago at the home of an eminent gynecologist, he was—I think one may fairly put it—"seduced" by one of the latter's daughters. At any rate, at her instigation he slept with her at her parents' house, while her sisters kept watch in order that the parents might remain in ignorance. He fell in love with what I, in my Victorian way, can only describe as this "forward minx," and he proposed to marry her. It seems a terrible falling-off from Lady Ottoline, but in such matters there is no accounting for taste.

On his way back to England he wrote to Lady Ottoline to inform her, and it happened that his letter crossed one from her saying that she wished their relations henceforth to be Platonic. In such matters, however, man proposes and God (or whoever it may be) disposes. On Russell's return to England in June, 1914, Lady Ottoline altered her mind, and the two spent many happy times that summer at Burnham Beeches on the Thames. Russell writes: "The last of these expeditions was on the day on which Austria declared war on Serbia. Ottoline was at her best."

Later in 1914, the Chicago young woman induced her still ignorant gynecological father to bring her to England in order to continue what she had so efficiently begun. On August 14, England declared war on Germany, and henceforth Russell's interests and activities were mainly engaged in agitating against that war. I continue in his own words: "She stayed in England and I had relations with her from time to time, but the shock of the war killed my passion for her, and I broke her heart." Later she contracted a disease which first paralyzed her and then made her insane. In the shadow of this tragedy, any comments which one might otherwise be inclined to make on the incident as a whole would be impertinent.

VI. Mysticism

I have already briefly referred to the "mystical" experience which Russell had some time in February, 1901, in the house in Downing

College which the Russells were then sharing with the Whiteheads. The occasion was his presence at an agonizing heart attack suffered by Mrs. Whitehead. Such an experience as Russell's cannot be described in terms recognizable to one, like myself, who has never had anything of the kind. It must suffice for me to report Russell's statement: "Suddenly the ground seemed to give way beneath me, and I found myself in quite another region." But what came immediately before the experience, and seemed to Russell to be the occasion of it, is quite intelligible. So too are certain convictions which arose in him then or immediately afterward, seemed at the time to be made evidently true by the experience, and persisted thenceforth.

The preliminary was his realization of the general human condition, of which Mrs. Whitehead's then agony was a present and a palmary instance—namely, that the worst sufferings of each of us are something private and not appreciably mitigable by anything that others can do. I take it that the essential feature was this. Russell must have for long been aware of this fact as a verbalized proposition accepted intellectually. He now had it forced concretely upon him by actually perceiving a highly relevant instance involving an old and valued friend. It must have been like the difference between knowing and accepting all that the dental manuals tell us, and actually experiencing a severe attack of toothache.

As regards the immediate sequel to the experience, I would distinguish sharply between the two following kinds of effect which Russell records. The first is that for some time afterward, he seemed to himself to know intuitively the inmost thoughts and feelings of everyone whom he met. This seems to me to be a very natural sequel to the experience, and I can well believe that his insight into the inner lives of others may really have been abnormally sharpened.

The second is stated to be that the experience turned him, within five minutes, from being a Liberal Imperialist to a pro-Boer and a pacifist; convinced him "that war is wrong, that a public school education is abominable"; and so on. Naturally, I do not doubt that the experience may have been the occasion of these convictions becoming conscious, though I suspect that a great deal, highly relevant, must have been going on in him below the level of consciousness for a long time before. Nor do I doubt that Russell may have believed then, and may still believe, that the experience provided an adequate *reason* for such convictions on these matters. But when I consider the complexity of these topics, the varying nature of the relevant contemporary situations (for example, those of the first and of the second war of

England against Germany), the relevance of the possible remote consequences of each and of the various alternatives to it, and so on, I find it quite incredible that any *one* experience, no matter how impressive at the time, could possibly suffice to *justify* any general conviction as to any of these matters.

Russell's attitude as to the relevance and the irrelevance of mystical experience is, I think, a complex and unusual one, and I should like to make some comments on it. Before doing so, I would refer to his essay "Mysticism and Logic," first published in *The Hibbert Journal* in 1901, and to that entitled "The Free Man's Worship," first published in 1903. These have since been reprinted again and again in various contexts. They are concerned with a much more cosmic and impersonal aspect of the universe than is the experience occasioned by Mrs. Whitehead's heart attack.

His view, as I understand it, is roughly the following. A person who has a mystical experience has a very strong tendency to regard it as *cognitive*, and as revealing certain facts about the fundamental nature of the universe, of man, and of the ultimate relation between the two. The propositions which seem at the time to be warranted by the experience are of the same tenor as those which are common to and characteristic of the higher religions of mankind. Now, as regards these propositions, Russell holds the following unusual combination of views —namely, that they are almost certainly false; that they are such as he would like to believe himself if he could honestly do so; and that a heartfelt acceptance of them by a person (provided that he does not realize that they are false and groundless and is not deliberately or unwittingly hiding his head in the sand) is likely to have uniquely good effects on his character and conduct. And, as regards this kind of experience itself, Russell appears to think that it is *intrinsically* of the highest value, whatever may be the goodness or badness of its remoter *consequences*. If that be Russell's view, I think that it is a consistent, if very unusual, position.

Russell's reasons for thinking that the propositions which a person who has a mystical experience almost inevitably takes to be established by it are almost certainly false, are these. On the one hand, he holds that natural science practically compels any reasonable man, who faces the relevant facts, to accept the epiphenomenalist account of consciousness—that is, to hold that any human experience is one-sidedly dependent, both for its occurrence and for all its characteristics, on processes in the brain and nervous system of the body of the individual who has it. On the other hand, he thinks that this is plainly

incompatible with those beliefs about human nature and human destiny which mystical experience seems to those who have it to reveal and to justify.

As to this dilemma, there are three comments I would make. (1) The ultimate source of the contents of all natural science is a certain very restricted region of human experience—namely, sensations and sense perceptions, and in particular those of sight, touch, and hearing. These are, however, experiences which everyone is constantly having during his waking life. Its success in correlating these, making predictions about them which are afterward verified, and thus obtaining practical control over matter—and particularly inorganic matter—is astonishing. But the certainty, and the sense of power, which this gives us within this field may easily blind us to the extremely narrow, though highly pervasive, range of human experience on which it is all based. (2) There appear to be far-reaching similarities in the view of the universe and of man and his position in it which mystical experience in persons of different races, periods, and social backgrounds seems to such experients to reveal to them. On the other hand, these experiences have been had by only a comparatively few persons at any time, and only occasionally by most of these. (The availability and the common use of psychedelic drugs may in future alter this.) (3) The occurrence of the humblest and most widespread kind of experience is just as completely an ultimate brute fact for the epiphenomenalist as is that of the rarest and most exalted mystical or aesthetic experience. He has not the least reason antecedently to suspect that there would be any experiences at all, or that experiences of such and such a kind would arise in a person when and only when such and such a state of his brain or nervous system occurred.

Speaking for myself, it would not surprise me in the least if the world, as it really is, were a very much odder and more complicated place than the simple-minded old-fashioned natural scientist, as interpreted by his epiphenomenalist expositors, unhesitatingly believes it to be. And I have very little doubt that it in fact is so. Whether it is a less nasty place, and whether it is much like what the mystics tell us, is of course quite another question.

VII. Philosophical Work

During the latter part of the period covered by this book Russell was engaged, with extraordinary passion and persistence, on the work which has unquestionably made him one of the great philosophers, not

only of his own time but of all times. Much the most characteristic and important part of this was concerned with formal logic and its generalization, with the nature of pure mathematics and the grounds for it, and with the intimate connection between these two subjects. Contributions to epistemology in general, and to the philosophy of sense perception in particular, belong mainly to the end of the period. Thus, the little book, *The Problems of Philosophy* (which Russell used to call his "shilling shocker"), was published in 1912, and the Lowell Lectures on "Our Knowledge of the External World" in 1914.

In the early days of Russell's philosophical development, his slightly younger contemporary G. E. Moore played a most important part, which is well and generously described in the book. Both of them began by accepting from their teachers principles which may roughly be called "neo-Kantian." (It is fair to say that Sidgwick [1838-1900] explicitly rejected these, and that Ward [1843-1925] accepted them only in a highly personal form.) Russell's fellowship dissertation, rewritten and published in 1897 as *The Foundations of Geometry*, is still quite definitely neo-Kantian in principle.

Russell when in his third year at Cambridge met Moore, then a freshman at Trinity, and was immensely impressed by him both as a person and as a thinker. Moore was for awhile under the influence of McTaggart, a kind of Hegelian. (McTaggart's Hegelianism was of a kind which made most Hegelians go cold all over.) Moore emerged from this position, through his own reflections, earlier than Russell, and it was through Moore's conversation that the latter came to abandon that point of view. This change seems to have been immediately followed in Russell's case by a rather crude naïve "realism," in the medieval sense, concerning universals and their necessary connections and disconnections, knowable a priori either by direct inspection or indirectly by demonstration.

Ever after his first intoxication with Euclid at the age of twelve, what Russell passionately desired was to find a satisfactory reason for believing pure mathematics to be true. "From that moment until Whitehead and I finished *Principia Mathematica*, when I was thirty-eight, mathematics was my chief interest, and my chief source of happiness." During his fourth year at Cambridge (beginning in October, 1893) Russell read many books on the philosophy of mathematics, but found little satisfaction in any of them. Soon after he became a Fellow of Trinity (October, 1895), James Ward happened to hand over to him two books in German, neither of which Ward supposed to be of any value. They were Cantor's *Mannichfaltigkeitslehre*

and Frege's *Begriffsschrift*. They in fact contained the gist of what he had been seeking, but he did not recognize this at the time.

The decisive moment came in July, 1900, when he and Whitehead attended the International Conference of Philosophy in Paris. The Italian mathematical logician Peano was there. Russell met him for the first time, and Peano introduced him to his own system of symbolic logic and its application to arithmetic. Russell found in this the clue that he needed. He made an intensive study of the system, and in October, 1900, began to write the book which was published in 1903 as *The Principles of Mathematics*. He completed Part III ("Quantity"), Part IV ("Order"), Part V ("Infinity and Continuity"), and Part VI ("Space"); and he wrote drafts, which he later modified, of Part I ("The Indefinables of Mathematics"), Part II ("Number"), and Part VII ("Matter and Motion").

Everything seemed to be going swimmingly. But in May, 1901, he discovered for himself what at first he thought merely a trivial curiosity —namely, the contradictory properties of the class of all classes which are not members of themselves. He soon found that others—for example, Buralli-Forti—had discovered somewhat similar paradoxes. By the end of the year he concluded that any solution would be a major intellectual task, and he decided to complete *The Principles of Mathematics*, leaving this question in abeyance. (In the published form, the book is provided with two appendixes bearing closely on this topic. The first is entitled "The Logical and Arithmetical Doctrines of Frege" and the second "The Doctrine of Types.")

Russell states (p. 229) that he discovered the Theory of Types in 1906. Since his book, published in 1903, contains an appendix entitled "The Doctrine of Types," I conclude that it was not until 1906 that he had constructed a detailed, and to him satisfactory, theory of what he had already adumbrated in general terms three years earlier. Already in 1905, he had worked out his Theory of Descriptions, which is another of his great contributions to logic. Both of these were essential to the solution of the logical paradoxes which had worried him so long and so severely.

In September, 1900, the Whiteheads stayed with the Russells at Fernhurst, and it was there, as I understand, that Russell and Whitehead first planned what became *Principia Mathematica*. At the end of the Lent term, 1901, the Russells returned from Cambridge to Fernhurst, and Russell began to work on what afterward became his contribution to the joint work. As can be imagined, the actual drudgery of writing the manuscript of a book, mostly in symbols of an unfamiliar

kind, had to be done by one or other of the authors in his own hand. Whitehead's teaching work left him little time for this. So from 1907 to 1910, Russell spent about eight to ten hours a day for eight months in each year in this grinding labor. Volume I of *Principia Mathematica* was published by the Cambridge University Press in 1910, Volume II in 1912, and Volume III in 1913. There was to have been a fourth volume, on geometry, by Whitehead, but this was never written. The Press estimated that there would be a loss of £600 on the publication of the three volumes. They took upon themselves £300 of this. The Royal Society contributed £200. The remaining £100 was supplied by the authors equally out of their own pockets. Their financial reward was thus, as Russell points out, *minus* £50 each.

Russell gives a fascinating picture of his older friend and co-author, A. N. Whitehead. He brings out Whitehead's intellectual eminence, his devotion to his work, his extraordinary power of concentration, and his fundamental goodness and niceness. None of this is news to me, who had the privilege, as an undergraduate, of being personally taught by Whitehead and later of knowing him and his family fairly well and staying with them several times when on holiday in the early 1920's. But Russell also reveals certain facts about the inner tension, near to madness, and the financial embarrassments, which were the dark background in the early 1900's of Whitehead's outwardly cheery and cherubic façade. This, and Russell's substantial and secret contributions to relieving the financial difficulties without upsetting the mental balance of his beneficiary, is completely new to me, and highly illuminating. I knew Whitehead best when he was professor in London, and was writing such books as *The Principles of Natural Knowledge*. This was intermediate between the phase which Russell describes and the long final period in Harvard as a Major Prophet.

In connection with his logico-mathematical work, Russell made the acquaintance of the Frenchman Couturat and the German Cantor, and he has some interesting and amusing stories to tell of them both. Cantor was a genius who was most of the time and in most capacities quite definitely mad. One of the convictions, which he shared with a number of persons who were not mostly men of mathematical genius, was that Francis Bacon wrote the works which are commonly ascribed to Shakespeare. Since Russell does not relate the following story, which he used to be fond of telling, and which I suspect is true only in a higher sense than that of mere history, I will recall it from memory. According to it, the editor of a celebrated French mathematical journal had promised to publish in it any papers which Cantor might submit.

A number of epoch-making mathematical essays had been received and published. But, in the end, the editor was not a little embarrassed on receiving from Cantor for publication a paper proving, by the method of reciprocal radii, that Jesus Christ was the son of Joseph of Arimathaea.

One could go on writing indefinitely, but it is high time to stop. There are, as the reader will have gathered, certain respects in which the book might recall Rousseau's *Confessions*. But the contrasts are very much more important than the likenesses. Rousseau was fundamentally a nasty bit of work, and Russell is fundamentally a very nice one. Rousseau was a second-rate thinker who had an immense practical influence (mostly for evil) directly on the public affairs of his own country and indirectly (through Napoleon Bonaparte) on those of the world. Russell is a first-rate philosophical thinker who has had an immense influence on the development of mathematical logic and the philosophy of mathematics. He has also striven long and passionately to influence public affairs in the direction which he profoundly believes to be right. Here, so far as I can see, he has had practically no effect.

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