

A NORWEGIAN ANTHOLOGY OF RUSSELL ON WAR, PEACE AND PACIFISM

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Øystein Hide, ed. *Bertrand Russell om krig, fred og pasifisme* [Bertrand Russell on war, peace and pacifism]. Oslo: Humanist Forlag, 2006. Pp. 261. ISBN 8292622101. 268 Kroner. Paperbound.

This is a selected anthology of Russell's writings and interviews on war, peace and pacifism edited by the Norwegian Øystein Hide, who was born in 1975 and has the equivalent of a MA in philosophy from a Norwegian university. He did graduate work at the University of Southampton in 2001–04. He has worked at the Wittgenstein Archives in Bergen and at the University of Bergen. He has done research at the Bertrand Russell Archives¹ and is a member of the Mind Association. He has translated Wittgenstein's *Zettel* and *Über Gewissheit* into Norwegian and has done other philosophically relevant work in both Norwegian and English.

Øystein Hide has supplied his anthology with an introduction that contains a number of minor factual mistakes that are a bit disturbing, but they do not overshadow his main message that Russell's writings on war, peace and pacifism are still worth reading. He starts out by distinguishing between "the two Bertrand Russells": the philosopher and what he calls "the political humanist". Although Hide does not spend much energy on explaining exactly what he means by it, I find this a thought-provoking expression that to me suggests a secular humanist who is prepared to act on his convictions. He compares Russell to the Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss, who also was a political activist and acted according to his deepest beliefs.

Hide says about Russell: "For many people Russell has become *the great philosopher* who also actively contributed to the general political debate and who, in the capacity of being a philosopher, gave the lovers of peace a philosophical and intellectual alibi with which they could decorate their struggles" (p. 11).

¹ Notably resulting in his article, "Wittgenstein's Books at the Bertrand Russell Archives and the Influence of Scientific Literature on Wittgenstein's Early Philosophy", *Philosophical Investigations*, 27 (Jan. 2004): 68–91.

Russell's position as a philosopher and political activist in Norway is more or less the same as in the other Nordic countries, and although Hide's book is Norwegian a lot of Swedes, Danes, Finns and Icelanders will be able to benefit from the collection. There is no mention, however, of Russell's only trip to Norway (in 1948), which had a political purpose.

Hide has divided his collection into two parts. The first part contains ten texts written between 1916 and 1920, and the second part contains five between 1950 and 1960. He does not say a lot about why he has included these texts and excluded others. These are the selections he offers:

Part 1:

- "War as an Institution", Chapter 3 from *Principles of Social Reconstruction* (1916)
- "Why the War Continues", *The UDC*, 2 (10 Feb. 1917); in *Papers* 14
- "National Service", *The Tribunal*, 47 (15 Feb. 1917); *Papers* 14
- "War and Individual Liberty", *The Tribunal*, 50 (8 March 1917); *Papers* 14
- "Pacifism and Revolution", *The Tribunal*, 67 (19 July 1917); *Papers* 14
- "The International Outlook", *The Pioneer*, 347 (10 Nov. 1917); *Papers* 14
- "Draft of Defence" (for Russell's 1918 trial); *Papers* 14
- "Government and Law", Chapter 5 from *Roads to Freedom* (1918)
- "The World as It Could be Made", Chapter 8 from *Roads to Freedom* (1918)
- "Bolshevik Criticism of Democracy", Chapter 3 of Part 2 of *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism* (1920)

Part 2:

- "Politically Important Desires", Chapter 2 of Part 2 of *Human Society in Ethics and Politics* (1954); Nobel Prize speech, 1950
- How Near Is War?* (London: Fleet Street Forum, 1952); interview
- "Man's Peril", *The Listener*, 52 (30 Dec. 1954); *Papers* 28
- "The Road to Peace", *The Bomb: Challenge and Answer* (London: Batsford, 1955); *Papers* 28
- "War and Pacifism", *Bertrand Russell Speaks His Mind* (1960); interview

Imagine that we had in front of us everything now available of what Russell had to say on war, peace and pacifism. Would this, then, be a good selection? Is anything superfluous? Is something missing? It is up to the reader to decide.

Two years ago David Blitz and I started work on a selection similar to that of Hide's and sent a proposal to Routledge. Ours looked very different from his. Although we included texts written between 1920 and 1950, we also included texts written about the Vietnam War, that is, after 1960. I think Hide should have included texts about the Vietnam War; that would have made this anthology rather more up to date.
