RUSSELL, CREXELLS, AND D'ORS: BARCELONA, 1920

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Bertrand Russell was never to forget the course he gave in Barcelona in the spring of 1920. In the bitter title-page of *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* (1940), after the legal ruling which had suspended him from teaching at the City College of New York, he expressly mentions his lectures in Barcelona, along with those he had given at the Universities of Uppsala and Copenhagen and at the Sorbonne. He also alludes briefly to them in his *Autobiography* (2: 101), but their circumstances and import have received no attention to date. The aim of this paper is to bring to light the available information on this subject in the Russell Archives (McMaster University, Canada) and the papers left by Joan Crexells (1896–1926) and Eugenio d'Ors (1881–1954), the two Catalan philosophers behind Russell's visit, and to put forward an assessment of Russell's influence on Spanish philosophy.[1]

1. CREXELLS AND RUSSELL

In *Quaderns d'Estudi* for April and May 1919, Joan Crexells, a young lecturer in Eugenio d'Ors's Philosophy Department in the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, published a lucid essay in Catalan entitled "La filosofia de Bertrand Russell", in which he displays a sound knowledge of Russell.

[1] I owe special thanks to Eugenia Crexells, who keeps her father's library and documentation, to Angel d'Ors, who is well versed in the thinking and writings of his grandfather, Eugenio, and to Kenneth Blackwell, who provided me with a copy of the letters preserved in the Russell Archives. This paper was presented in Spanish at the 1st Spanish Congress of the Society of Logic, Methodology and Philosophy of Science in Madrid, December 1993. I owe special gratitude to Ruth Breeze for the English translation.

This was the first account of Russell's thought to be written in Spain. In his essay of twenty-seven pages, Crexells draws attention to the presence of Leibniz in Russell, whose critical exposition of Leibniz's philosophy he describes as "masterly", and identifies some of the fundamental characteristics of what was in time to become analytical philosophy. Crexells emphasizes the "scientific attitude" with which Russell approached philosophical problems, which made it possible to provide exact solutions to a small number of clearly outlined problems,[2] and explains in some detail Russell's handling of the concepts of space, time and number, and his theses concerning the relations, types and meaning of the idea of class. Jardí has suggested that this essay may have been written on d'Ors's recommendation in order to inform scholars who might attend the talks,[3] but careful reading of these pages reveals that this is no occasional piece. During these months, Crexells was preparing his doctoral dissertation, "Las verdades absolutas" ("Absolute truths"), which furnishes ample evidence of a sound knowledge of the philosophy and writings of Bolzano, Meinong, Husserl, the pragmatism of James and Schiller, and the mathematical logic of Schröder and Russell.

In order to write this essay, Crexells used the first volume of *Principia Mathematica* and Russell's books *Our Knowledge of the External World* (1914), *Mysticism and Logic* (1918), and *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* (1919). He had also written to Russell asking for a portrait, an outline biography and a summary of his philosophical position.[4] Russell's reply does not survive, but the photograph is preserved, as are the books Crexells used when working on his essay, and the biographical information included in the first four pages of the published account.

In October 1919, Crexells wrote to Russell again, telling him that he would like to go to England to study logic and mathematics under his supervision. He explained that he had just finished his university studies, that he had always been particularly interested in mathematical logic, that he had read Couturat's work, some studies by the Peano school, some Schröder, and Russell's three books named above, and that he had been studying *Principia* for some time (letter of 22 Oct. 1919). Russell's reply to this letter has not been kept, either, but Crexells's application to

[2] "La filosofia de Bertrand Russell", *Quaderns d'Estudi*, 2 (1919): 173–90, 245–52.
[3] Enric Jardí, *Eugenio d'Ors. Obra y vida* (Barcelona: Aymá, 1976), p. 216.
[4] Letter of 15 March 1919, RA1 710.

the Junta de Ampliación de Estudios (Higher Education Board) still survives. In it he asks for a grant to go to Cambridge in order to complete his studies in mathematical logic under Russell. We read in the application that by way of endorsement, Crexells enclosed Russell's reply of November 1919 suggesting that he might attend a private course and sending him the programme of a further course, also in London, that he was going to give.

The application was turned down, and Crexells changed his professional direction towards statistics and journalism. But his drafted doctoral thesis (1919) and his philosophical articles[5] suffice for us to credit him with introducing the early stages of analytical philosophy to Spain: his 1919 account of Russell's philosophy, his commentaries on Peano and Frege, who was still alive at that date, and his work making contemporary English thought accessible to a wider readership have been said to constitute his main contribution to philosophy.[6]

2. RUSSELL'S COURSE IN BARCELONA

The formal invitation to visit Barcelona was issued by Eugenio d'Ors, Director of the Philosophy Department at the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, who was strongly sympathetic to Russell as both men had been militant pacifists during the First World War, and both had been outlawed from academic and political life.[7] Russell travelled to Spain from Paris accompanied by Dora Black. The course consisted of five lectures in French under the general title of "Matter and Mind. The System of Logical Atomism", held from 29 March to 3 April.[8] A tiny audience, numbers probably amounting to under half a dozen,[9] heard Russell expound the principles of logical atomism and its applications to physics and psychology. What he delivered was a small part of the material

[5] Collected posthumously in Joan Crexells, *Primers assaigs*, ed. J. Estelrich and C. Riba (Barcelona: Catalonia, 1933), and *La historia a l'inrevés*, ed. J. Palau (Barcelona: A. C., 1968).
[6] Norbert Bilbeny, *Joan Crexells en la filosofia del Noucents* (Barcelona: Dopesa, 1979), p. 149.
[7] Jardí, *Eugenio d'Ors*, p. 210.
[8] [Russell saved the printed syllabus, *Matèria i Esperit*, published for the course (B&R A33).—Ed.]
[9] Eugenio d'Ors, *La palabra en la onda* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1950), p. 99.

published in *Our Knowledge of the External World*, and in particular a presentation which Russell was working on for *The Analysis of Mind* (1921). Following William James, John Watson and the American New Realists to a fair extent, Russell aspired to making a materialist perspective of psychology compatible with the then very new anti-materialist perspective of relativist physics. Andreu Muntaner published daily reports of the lectures in *La Veu de Catalunya*, which were later collected in *Quaderns d'Estudi*.[10] Russell also gave a talk at the Ateneo Barcelonés on 4 April on the international political situation, and granted a lengthy interview to the press.[11] He left Barcelona for Majorca to spend a short holiday in Soller with Dora.[12]

Crexells did not attend Russell's lectures, as he had arrived in Berlin on 27 March to take up a post as correspondent for the newspaper *La Publicitat*; on 6 April Crexells's first report from Berlin was published under the heading, "The Political Situation in Germany".

3. D'ORS AND RUSSELL

When Eugenio d'Ors received Russell in Barcelona in the spring of 1920, he had just been forced to resign as Secretary of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, as a consequence of his dismissal three months previously from the position of Director of the Education Ministry of the regional government of Catalonia. For this reason, in his journalistic commentary on the occasion of the inauguration of Russell's course, he wrote that both were outcasts who were "thrown together by chance, but whom an underlying historical law had given parallel destinies".[13] Eugenio d'Ors had been a professor of logic and methodology of science at the Institut; he had studied both subjects in Paris between 1906 and 1908, and was personally acquainted with Bergson, Couturat, Padoa, Poincaré, Vailati and many other European mathematicians and philosophers of the day. He and Giuseppe Peano had jointly chaired a session at the

[10] 12 (1920): 131–8.

[11] José Artís, "Hablando con Bertrand Russell: un filósofo pacifista", *El Día Gráfico*, 8 April 1920, p. 9 (illustrated with a photograph of Russell and d'Ors).

[12] Dora Russell, *The Tamarisk Tree. My Quest for Liberty and Love* (New York: Putnam, 1975), pp. 81–2.

[13] D'Ors, *Nuevo glosario*, Vol. 1 (Madrid: Aguilar, 1947), p. 82.

International Philosophical Congress in Bologna (1911). Perhaps on account of his original training in pragmatism, which bore a Peircean stamp, d'Ors sought to create a synthesis of mathematical formalism and phenomenological vitalism, despite the fact that in the early decades of the twentieth century these two currents of thought were envisaged by their main proponents as being diametrically opposed.

Russell and d'Ors were in broad agreement in advocating a close connection between philosophy and science, but on this more fundamental issue they differed. A contemporary account said of Russell that "He flitted through our scientific landscape, sending out ideas like sparks, and stirring the untroubled waters of a pretentious absence of culture. He perhaps failed to convince everyone, but this had never been his intention".[14] The affinity between these two philosophers is accurately conveyed by the label "intellectualism", which d'Ors used of Russell[15] and which, with the addition of the adjective "post-pragmatic", he had also applied to his own philosophical position,[16] but the distance between them was considerable. Eugenio d'Ors rejected Russell's "extreme rationalism", his "theoretical separation between the real world ... and the world of the possible, subject to the pure legality of reason." This separation moved Russell to combat fiercely the generalization of the theory of evolution being worked out by the science of his time. D'Ors, on the other hand, considered that evolutionism was a vision of life which "judges Russell and includes him."[17]

In the face of mathematical logic, d'Ors defended a *biological* formula of logic which was capable of expressing the vitality of the intelligence. The "Logistic" which comes under fire from d'Ors is not mathematical logic, which he values as "a constituted scientific organism", but the philosophical claim, stemming from advances in mathematical logic, "to constitute an order of knowledge, so distant from the empirical that its source would lie in deduction alone: an analytical and formalistic area of knowledge, utterly divorced from any consideration of objectivity".[18]

[14] *Estudio*, 7 (1920): 183.

[15] *Nuevo glosario*, p. 460.

[16] D'Ors, *La filosofía del hombre que trabaja y que juega* (Tip. Murguía (s.l): Cultura, 1921), p. 32.

[17] *Nuevo glosario*, p. 85.

[18] D'Ors, *El secreto de la filosofía* (Barcelona: Iberia, 1947), p. 366.

This order of knowledge would banish intuition from the scientific sphere. If Eugenio d'Ors had to choose between Russell and Poincaré, between logicism and intuitionism, he would have no qualms about sacrificing his friendship with the British philosopher in favour of a philosophy open to life.[19]

Eugenio d'Ors was to allude on several occasions[20] to a letter which Dora Black had written to him from China in the year after her visit. Still preserved is d'Ors's letter of 1 August 1924, sent to Russell along with a copy of Viscount Güell's book *Espacio, relación y posición (Ensayo sobre los fundamentos de la Geometría)*, on which d'Ors seeks Russell's opinion. Russell noted at the foot of the page that it was d'Ors who had been responsible for the 1920 Barcelona lectures. No information exists as to further personal contact between the two thinkers, but just as Russell was never to forget the lectures he gave in Barcelona, both the British philosopher and the question as to the scope of logistic were a constant presence throughout d'Ors's work.

4. CONCLUSION

The slow and difficult reception which mathematical logic met with in the Spanish philosophy of our century is clearly reflected in the faint reverberations and scant influence of Russell's Barcelona lectures in 1920. Joan Crexells's initial interest in Russell and mathematical logic foundered as he chose to move towards journalism and statistics, before his early death in 1926. Eugenio d'Ors's refractory attitude towards logistic was rooted in his pragmatist, vitalist background. None the less, the fact that the two heads in a row, to borrow Bilbeny's felicitous expression[21] of the vanguard of philosophical thought in Catalonia in the first quarter of this century were actively interested in Bertrand Russell demonstrates that the image sometimes presented of the development of twentieth-century philosophy in Spain is misleadingly simplistic.

Joan Crexells's early essay on Russell, published in 1919, today still serves as an acceptable presentation of Russell's philosophy. Despite the translation of Bertrand Russell's books and articles into Spanish and

[19] d'Ors, *Nuevo glosario*, p. 406; *El secreto de la filosofía*, pp. 366–8.
[20] *Nuevo glosario*, pp. 582, 1,059; *La palabra en la onda*, p. 100.
[21] Bilbeny, *Joan Crexells en la filosofía del Noucents*, p. 86.

Catalan[22] and the work of García Bacca in the 1930s, Russell's effective influence seems to have been very limited in scope. The slow process by which Spanish philosophy began to absorb mathematical logic, or "logistic", as it was then generally known, merits an in-depth study on the basis of the exhaustive material gathered by Muñoz Delgado,[23] in order that a greater understanding of the many factors involved may be reached.

[22] Francisco Rodríguez Consuegra, "Bibliografía de Bertrand Russell en español (primaria y secundaria)", *Mathesis*, 3 (1987): 183–97.
[23] Vicente Muñoz Delgado, "Notas para la historia de la lógica durante la Segunda República Española (1931–1939)", *Religion y Cultura*, 26 (1980): 893–931; "Para la historia de la lógica en España e Iberoamérica (1939–1969)", in A. Heredia, ed., *Actas del II Seminario de Historia de la Filosofía Española* (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1982), pp. 213–328.