Introduction

The papers in this collection on Bertrand Russell's non-technical work before 1918 were presented at a conference held at McMaster University on 24–26 June 1983. Reserved for a second conference, located at the University of Toronto in 1984, are detailed analyses of Russell's work in the foundations of mathematics and in philosophy up to 1924. This division allows the first set of papers to emphasize Russell's personal concerns, to gauge their effect on his professional accomplishments, and to assess his less formal contributions to the early twentieth century. In these papers, Russell's views of the arts, religion and ethics are discussed, and his participation in social and political controversies is examined.

When Russell encountered problems in any of these normative fields, he often employed his finely honed logician's talents to attempt a solution. But it is also not unusual to observe him seeking answers and forming opinions on a more emotional basis. If a favourite poet had to be selected for this rationalist, then Shelley might have seemed among the least likely of candidates. Yet Gladys Garner Leithauser shows the intensity of this admiration and evaluates the result in Russell's imaginative writing. Notwithstanding his reservations about its glorification of personality, Russell read literature widely with spontaneous pleasure. Yet he had no natural capacity for comparable responses to painting or other visual arts. His blindness may explain the fact that his philosophy, though intended to be all-encompassing, offered virtually nothing to the study of aesthetics beyond the reiteration of Keats' message about the equation of Truth and Beauty. Carl Spadoni's "Bertrand Russell on Aesthetics" considers why his contributions to this area of philosophy were so minimal. "The reasoner and the artist are curiously opposed", Russell noted, as if to justify that lacuna in his rational structure. But his fear that reasoning often "misses the mark" gave him an inducement to strive for patience when in the company of artists, writers and critics. Considerable forbearance must have been required on all sides when Russell found himself in the company of the Bloomsbury Group. Although there were many areas of disagreement, S. P. Rosenbaum's "Bertrand Russell in Bloomsbury" demonstrates that certain important aspects of his thought were found congenial. Russell's major effect on art and literature occurred indirectly—in ways he would not always have welcomed—through his influence on the imagination of others, within Bloomsbury and elsewhere.

Paradoxically, one of Russell's most constant characteristics may have

been his readiness to sacrifice his comfort by reconsidering his most essential assumptions. Of all the changes in his outlook, the one that looms largest in these papers is the event Russell described as his "conversion" of 1901. Though deeply sceptical about mystical revelations, Russell attributed the revision of his personal and political beliefs to five minutes of insight that flashed before him at the age of twenty-nine. In his *Autobiography*, the experience is presented in such a cryptic way as to invite considerable speculation. An essay by Andrew Brink explores this enigma of Russell's life by the application of the psychoanalytical theory of "creative illness". By contrast, Nicholas Griffin interprets the "conversion" in terms of Russell's realist metaphysics and his abandonment of neo-Hegelian idealism. Though without the dramatic suddenness Russell claimed for his "conversion", the erosion of his Christian beliefs during adolescence also had important consequences. His later criticisms of Christianity are now so well known that the upheaval caused by his initial loss of certainty can be minimized. In "The Adolescent Russell and the Victorian Crisis of Faith", Kirk Willis describes the causes and the results of this first transformation. The search for justification of religious belief led Russell to inquire about the basis of ethical opinion. Harry Ruja's paper, "Russell on the Meaning of 'Good'", examines Russell's earliest essays on moral philosophy and the impact of George Santayana's critique in *Winds of Doctrine*.

For yet another change, Russell used theatrical language, comparing himself to "a non-supernatural Faust for whom Mephistopheles was represented by the Great War". This analogy cannot be extended very far: whereas the self-condemned Faust squandered his extraordinary powers on caprice, Russell devoted himself to strenuous opposition to the conflict. The significance of his protest against the First World War is assessed by Thomas C. Kennedy. Until the war engaged his sustained protest, Russell had tended to resist the impulse to become involved in current political and social disputes. One notable exception was his active support for women's suffrage between 1906 and 1910. Brian Harrison places Russell's championing of women's rights against the background of his complex relationships with women. Peter Clarke describes Russell's defense of the Liberal doctrine of free trade and his two attempts (in 1907 and 1910) to gain political office. While essentially content in the Edwardian period with his hereditary affiliation to the party, Russell did not endorse all aspects of New Liberal theory.

Although these conference proceedings are confined to the first half of Russell's life and, in the main, to his non-technical thinking, they indicate a remarkable diversity of approaches to their multidimensional subject. The chief stimulus for these proceedings has been the publication of initial volumes of *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*.

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