

In the Canadian context the acquisition of the Russell Archives by McMaster University is roughly analogous to the improbable event of Reed College, say, acquiring the complete papers of William James. McMaster is always said to be in Hamilton, Ontario, but fortunately it is sufficiently removed from the center of that gloomy, desolate city as to have a most pleasant campus. It is a very good small University still with evidence of its Scottish and religious origins. Indeed the area of the Library housing the Russell collection overlooks the Divinity School. I might say that during the entire time I spent at McMaster I never saw anyone either enter or leave the Divinity School. I came to believe they must feel themselves hopelessly intimidated. Hamilton--a Pittsburgh of the north--is only 40 miles from Toronto and reasonably near Buffalo.

Here, then, is where Russell may most truly be said to have come to rest.

The best guide as to what the Archives contain is the Detailed Catalogue of the Archives of Bertrand Russell, a volume produced by Russell's literary agents which anyone going to McMaster would find it profitable to consult before arrival. As it would be futile to attempt a survey of the trunk loads of documents which lie behind the entries in this 343 page volume, I shall try to convey, through quotation and comment, some of the flavor of Russell's correspondence.¹

My selection inevitably reflects my prejudice and ignorance. For instance, I had been inclined to suppose from the general tenor of the published dispute between F.H. Bradley and Russell about internal-external relations that Bradley probably regarded Russell as an arrogant upstart whereas Russell likely dismissed Bradley as a tiresome anachronism. But neither of these suppositions is in the least correct. One finds, on the contrary, both mutual admiration and respect. Their correspondence begins in 1900 and continues up through 1914. Bradley repeatedly expresses great difficulty in understanding Russell. In connection with the latter's 1901 paper "On the Notion of Order" he tells Russell that he has engaged "an unemployed mathematician" to work on it, but to date with little result. In another letter at this time Bradley confesses "...an irremovable incapacity for abstract reasoning" which might be taken as the reason for engaging the unemployed mathematician. However, one must suppose that by "abstract reasoning" Bradley meant mathematical or logical reasoning involving technical notation. Appearance and Reality, after all, is not exactly a laundry list. Bradley's distaste for special symbols emerges in a 1904 letter to Russell which begins:

My brother told me that you have been convicting me of error as to the 'possible' in the Athenaeum. I have looked it up and find you endorse the verdict of a Mr. MacColl who however, I find, is unintelligible to me.

Mr. MacColl is unintelligible, it turns out, because of his symbolism. Bradley says he has nothing against symbols, but he thinks Mr. MacColl could use fewer words more effectively. Happily Mr. MacColl has sent a printed statement of his technicalities, and promises to write.

There is a fair amount of hard philosophical discussion in the Bradley-Russell correspondence, but little if any of it struck me as going beyond what each of them has said in print. Some of the more interesting assertions are simply made without argument. For instance, Russell at one point tells Bradley:

...I should like to say that disjunctions are facts, and deduci-

bilities likewise.
This is not the view he prefers in the 1918 lectures on The Philosophy of Logical Atomism.

At one point Russell gives Bradley a succinct and satisfactory explanation of his use of the word 'implies'.

I say that one proposition "implies" another whenever the first is false or the second true (not excluding both). I do not pretend that this is the usual meaning of the word, but it is a relation for which I need a name, and no other name occurred to me. (1910)

In virtually all of Bradley's letters to Russell he both complains of his health, and says Russell need not reply. Russell always replies, but never mentions Bradley's health. In a 1907 letter to Bradley, however, he pays him a very fine tribute. Russell writes:

Will you pardon me if I say that I learnt more from your works than from those of any other philosopher of our time, and that in ceasing to agree with your system I have not lost any portion of the high respect which I have always felt for your thought?

Quite likely the most frequently requested file in the Russell correspondence is that containing the Wittgenstein letters. I would say that the existing letters merit, or even demand, the attention of a serious research scholar in this field. I will quote from several letters in the hope that this will assist you in forming your own opinion. To begin, here is a line from a 1912 letter:

The sign $(x) \cdot \phi x$ is not a complete symbol but has meaning only in an inference of the kind: from $\vdash \phi x \supset \psi x \cdot \phi(a)$ follows ψa .

In a 1913 letter Wittgenstein writes to Russell,
You say, you thought that Bedeutung was the "fact." This is quite true, but remember that there are no such Things as facts and that therefore this proposition itself wants analyzing! If we speak of "die Bedeutung" we seem to be speaking of a Thing with a proper name. Of course the symbol for "a fact" is a proposition and this is no incomplete symbol.

There are many much longer and more technical philosophical passages than these in the letters. In all there are over 50 communications from Wittgenstein, many in German. Some comment upon famous contemporaries. About G. E. Moore, whose Principia Ethica he had been reading with distaste, Wittgenstein writes (1912):

Moore repeats himself dozens of times, what he says in three pages could--I believe--easily be expressed in half a page.

Unclear statements don't get a bit clearer by being repeated!!

In 1919 Wittgenstein sent the Ms of the Tractatus to Frege.

Frege replies to Wittgenstein, but of his reply Wittgenstein writes to Russell "...I gather that he [Frege] doesn't understand a word of it all." Some of us may be glad to take comfort in Frege's perplexity.

As you would expect, there are letters in the Archives from both Moore and Frege themselves, though only a handful in each instance. This may seem surprising in the case of Moore, but one must remember he and Russell saw each other often during the time their interests were in common. One unexpected short note from Moore, written in 1957, is as follows:

Dear Russell,

We are very anxious that you should come, if you possibly can, to address a meeting at Cambridge against the continuance of the H-bomb tests. Could you possibly come to Cambridge for this purpose?

Few of us, probably, have thought of Moore as a campus activist. Here he is, however, at the age of 83 engaging in a conspiracy with his 85 year old Cambridge school mate with the expressed purpose

of protesting the strong possibility that the world might blow itself to pieces.

There are several letters from Frege between 1902 and 1904. Most are detailed and technical. None of Russell's letters to Frege are available.² There is also correspondence from many other logicians and mathematicians including Bernays, Cantor, Burali-Forti, G.H. Hardy, P.E.B. Jourdain, Hilbert, Peano, Quine, and Ramsey.

At this point, however, I would like to turn to some of Russell's correspondence with his life-long friends, most of whom were non-philosophers. As you would expect, Russell the person emerges much more fully in these letters, and is revealed also in what his friends say to him. One of the most attractive persons to emerge from this area of the correspondence is the classicist Gilbert Murray. The Murray-Russell correspondence is delightfully informal. It does not contain arguments, but rather observations, some surprising and nearly all of interest. Here are a few from Russell:

I certainly believe in the reality of matter -- or rather, I believe philosophy has nothing to say against its reality. All questions of actual existence, in my opinion, belong to science, and I endeavour to have no opinion about them. (1901)

In another letter he says (paraphrasing a little),

All morality must be based (as is evident) on immediate moral intuitions. (1902)

Murray, on the other hand, defends a rather liberal utilitarianism from the attacks of Russell the intuitionist. The same theme appears in a letter written soon after, where Russell says,

I have come to believe that platitudes embody such profound truths that very few people are capable of really understanding them.

And in a later letter (1914) Russell observes simply that,

"Love one another" seems to me the whole of ethics, and I don't believe in the possibility of a good life from any self-centred motive, such as the wish to be "good".

Murray has amusing things to say about some of Russell's books. Regarding The Problems of Philosophy, which Murray read in Ms for the publisher, he says,

One impression that the book makes on me is that philosophy is a nice simple subject just fit for treatment in 50,000 words and completely unlike Ancient Greece.

Years later Russell sent Murray a copy of Meaning and Truth. Murray congratulates Russell and says (1941),

In fact, the only point on which I differ or which I accept as a challenge is your statement that "Quadruplicity drinks procrastination" is meaningless. What do you say to the following?

I have every respect for our Food Controllers as individuals. . . I do not accuse them personally of procrastination, but there is procrastination in the air, and as when there is humidity in the air a sponge or piece of blotting paper drinks the humidity, so inevitably quadruplicity drinks procrastination.

Russell replied saying,

I humbly acknowledge my error about quadruplicity!

I will close this brief sampling of Russell's correspondence with a few short passages from his letters to Lucy Donnelly. Lucy Donnelly was a teacher at Bryn Mawr. She was a close friend of a cousin of Russell's first wife. This is a very large correspondence, numbering over two hundred letters. A few of them are in Volume I of Russell's Autobiography. I might here take the opportunity of

mentioning to any present or future Russell scholars not to discount the philosophical interest of Russell's letters to women. Women tended to call up from Russell a general expansiveness in which he felt free to express opinions he otherwise kept to himself. I have been told that this is very much the case as concerns the enormous correspondence with Lady Ottoline Morrell--nearly two thousand letters--and to a lesser extent in the correspondence with Lady Constance Malleson. At present these letters, along with a much smaller group of letters to recent heads of State, are under an embargo which will not be lifted at least until 1975, and in many cases much later.

What a great thinker does not do may on occasion be as revealing of a point of view as an explicit statement. A case in point is the absence from the Russell corpus of either essays or books on aesthetics. I never could accept that this omission was due to lack of aesthetic interest or feeling--witness, for instance, his great admiration for Shelley--nor is it satisfactory to say he just never got around to it. He certainly would have had he thought it important. So it was with some satisfaction I came across the following line in a 1913 letter to Lucy Donnelly. Russell writes,

I feel sure learned aesthetics is rubbish, and that it ought to be a matter literature and taste rather than science.

Needless to say the pedagogical importance of logic is another matter. In a 1907 letter to Lucy Donnelly he writes:

I think a philosophy course without logic is an absurdity--you might as well have a medical course without physiology. All philosophy is based on logic consciously or unconsciously; and it seems to me one of the chief purposes of a philosophical education to make people conscious of their logic and of how it affects their general views.

To conclude, here is a report of a remarkable scene involving Wittgenstein (1913). Russell writes to Lucy Donnelly as follows:

Then my Austrian, Wittgenstein, burst in like a whirlwind, just back from Norway, and determined to return there at once, to live in complete solitude until he has solved all the problems of logic. I said it would be dark, and he said he hated daylight. I said it would be lonely, and he said he prostituted his mind talking to intelligent people. I said he was mad, and he said God preserve him from sanity. God certainly will. Now Wittgenstein, during August and September, had done work on logic, still rather in the rough, but as good, in my opinion, as any work that ever has been done in logic by any one. But his artistic conscience prevents him from writing anything until he has got it perfect, and I am persuaded he will commit suicide in February. What was I to do? He told me his ideas, but they were so subtle that I kept on forgetting them. I begged him to write them out, and he tried, but after much groaning said it was absolutely impossible. At last I made him talk in the presence of a short-hand writer, and so secured some record of his ideas. This business took up the whole of my time and thought for about a week.

It is with great reluctance that I refrain from commenting on other features of the Archives--the manuscripts, the family papers, the documents of the peace activities. For what one finds at the Archives is a form of life--a tapestry with a richness of detail that makes even the first volume of Russell's Autobiography appear lean and skimpy. The Archives are the capstone of what may be Russell's greatest gift to us, his own life. The Archives are not a shrine; they

are not a museum; they are more like a moving picture, a cinema. And they are a very good show indeed.

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*A longer version of this paper was read to the Fullerton State College symposium on Russell in May 1971. Professor Pitt visited the Russell Archives in 1969.

¹Quotations from unpublished letters of Bertrand Russell are in the copyright of McMaster University.

²Photocopies of the originals are now available. (Ed.)