Bertrand Russell in the Great Soviet Encyclopedia:
a translation from Russian

Bertrand (18.5.1872, Trelleck, Wales--2.2.1970, Penrhyneddraeth, Wales), English philosopher, logician, mathematician, sociologist, public figure. Between 1910 and 1916 Russell was a professor at Cambridge University, where he graduated in 1894. He was professor at various universities in Great Britain and the U.S. In 1908 he became a member of the Royal Society. In 1919 he visited Soviet Russia. In the field of philosophy he went through a complicated evolution, which he described as a transition from the Platonic interpretation of Pythagoreanism to Humism. After a brief enthusiasm for the English version of Neohegelianism Russell moved towards a Platonic version of Idealism, and then, under the influence of George Moore and Alfred Whitehead, he moved towards Neorealism. During the 1920's and 1930's, having embraced Neopositivism, Russell would only admit the reality of sense data. These were treated by employing the concept of "neutral monism", which considered the ideas "mind" and "matter" as logical constructions from sense data. In the 1940's and 1950's Russell turned to the ideas of David Hume: he admitted the existence of "facts", which, as distinct from "experience", are objective, while their objectivity is based only in a belief in the existence of an external world.

Russell's philosophical evolution led him into a broad program of research where he applied the resources of mathematical logic to theoretical inquiry. In the neorealist and neopositivist stages of Russell's evolution this program led to the formulating of his Theory of Knowledge, and from then on he again recognized the independent significance of philosophical problems. Russell created the concept of logical atomism and he founded logical analysis.

The working out of philosophical questions in mathematics occupies a large place in his works. One of the paradoxes in set theory (Russell's Paradox) led him to the formation of the original version of axiomatic set theory (see also Theory of Types) and to the consequent attempt at reducing mathematics to logic. Russell and Whitehead coauthored the 3-volume work "Principia Mathematica" (1910-1913). They systematized and developed the deductive-axiomatic formation of logic (see Logicism). Russell developed the original Theory of Descriptions.

In his sociological views Russell was close to Psychologism. According to him, at the foundations of the historical process and the behaviour of people lie instincts, passions. Russell said that from a combination of factors determining historical change it is impossible to pick out the main factor and establish objective historical laws. In ethics and politics Russell held the position of bourgeois liberalism, opposing theories which call for the absorption of the personality by society and the state. He had a negative regard for Christianity. He especially deplored the hypocrisy of religious morality and expressed his own beliefs in "A Free Man's Worship". Russell pursued an active struggle against Fascism and imperialism. He opposed war, violence, and aggressive methods in world politics. Russell was one of the founders of the Pugwash Movement. He came out on the side of progressive social forces for nuclear disarmament and peaceful coexistence. He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950.

1The article on Russell is from the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia, 3rd edn. (1975), Vol. 21. The author is I.S. Narskiy, who appears to be a leading Soviet writer on Russell's philosophy. (Trans.)

2Anyone who wishes to read the article on Russell in the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia, or who wishes to look up the name in a Russian card catalogue, should be warned about the transliteration of the name Russell from Roman letters to Cyrillic. The "u" sound in "Russell" is rendered by the Cyrillic letter "a" and not by the Cyrillic letter "y" as one might expect. Therefore the researcher will find Russell spelled "Rassel" (transliterator a transliteration). Curiously, Rutherford's name becomes "Rezerford" instead of "Razerford". (Trans.)

3The sentence "and from then on he again recognized..." is puzzling. Perhaps the Russian writer is suggesting that Russell now thought, as he once thought, that some problems are not reducible in a logical positivist way. (Trans.)

4The Russian term for "set theory" is "theory of quantities", patterned after the German term, "Mengenlehre". (Trans.)

5The Russian for this title is "Nauka Svobodnovo Razuma", literally "Science of Free Reason". Nicholas Griffin suggests this may refer to a pamphlet Russell wrote for the Rationalist Press Association, called "The Faith of a Rationalist" (1947). (Trans.)
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6The Bibliography does not include The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism (1920). (Trans.) The list of translations omits On Education, Especially in Early Childhood (Moscow, 1931). (Ed.)