

Discussion

The review of *Dear Russell—Dear Fourdain*

by I. Grattan-Guinness

DR. GRIFFIN'S REVIEW (in *Russell*, nos. 37–40) of my *Dear Russell—Dear Fourdain* reveals a detail of consideration which a book rarely receives, especially one which is dense in philosophical and technical matters. I am most grateful for his efforts, which extend even to a list of errata. (The length of this list distressed me; some of the errata, especially those involving the insertion of italics, were caused by the indifferent quality of the photocopies obtained from the Institut Mittag-Leffler. This was also the reason why, to answer Griffin's comment on p. 79, I did not include a copy of a letter in the book.) In these comments I am not concerned to swap disagreements over details, but primarily to deal further with the question of editorial policy, which is *au courant* with the preparation of Russell's *Collected Papers*.

Griffin says that I have grouped topics within each section, "excerpts from two letters a few months apart being often juxtaposed" (p. 75). Had he examined the last column of my calendar of publication of letters of pp. 214–17, he would have recognized that "*I have preserved as far as possible the overall chronological order of the correspondence*" (my p. 8; italics in original); for the page numbers on which the letters are described and/or quoted form a virtually monotonic sequence. Apart from very few specific instances such as on p. 44, the occasions when months-long jumps occur usually correspond to such gaps in the surviving correspondence; and I am not responsible for them. *If* in fact "the reader gets very little of the nature of the correspondence itself" (Griffin, p. 77), the calendar will help him. This was why it was prepared.

Griffin accurately described my editorial practices on p. 81; he might have mentioned that I described them myself on p. 9. The policies adopted were chosen to attune with the likely readers of the book, which would be philosophers, logicians or mathematicians wanting to pick up

some data. While rendering a text as *verbatim* as possible, I wanted to provide them with a pretty *clean* text; not, for example, with the bracket-laden unreadability of the Bolzano *Gesamtausgabe*. The atrocious state of the Jourdain letters was decisive in choosing the “silent” alterations. (It also determined the unavoidable omissions, although I have no idea what Jourdainiana is missing on p. 56 [Griffin, p. 79].) To respond to Griffin’s surprise on p. 79, I preferred Jourdain’s holograph over amanuensis versions when only it contained the mathematical expressions—which leads to my last point.

Of the readership mentioned above, in fact only professional philosophers are likely to look at the book. They will doubtless share Griffin’s dismay (p. 80) at the treatment which philosophical questions receive from me (although, instead of missing Bradley, I mentioned him on p. 20). I hope they will grasp the *central* importance of *mathematical* questions in the correspondence, and indeed in all of Russell’s logicist writings, which are sadly neglected; but I fear that even with such a genuinely busy reviewer as Griffin, the importance has not been fully granted. For example, I *still* doubt that the loss of the letters of 1910s will “seriously affect the history of mathematical logic” (my p. 7); the topics to which Griffin refers on p. 77 are epistemological, and only very marginally related to mathematical logic. Of course, the loss “is a misfortune for the history of Russell’s *philosophical* development during the 1910s” (my p. 7; italics inserted). Many of Russell’s concerns rest on mathematical problems and distinctions—for example, existence, which is discussed in an article in the same issue of *Russell* as Griffin’s review without attention to the varied and confusing uses to which Russell put the word, as I described them on my pp. 71–4.

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