

Bertrand Russell on Aesthetics

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Introduction

“What is your attitude toward art today?”

“I have no view about art today.”¹

That is Bertrand Russell’s reply when he was asked in 1929 to comment on modern art. It is a confession of ignorance and not false modesty. In contrast to his profound contributions to other areas of philosophy, he made no major attempt to answer the fundamental questions of aesthetics—questions such as: What is a work of art? What is the nature of beauty? What constitutes an aesthetic experience? What are the nature, function and justification of artistic criticism?

When we examine Russell’s correspondence of the 1950s and 1960s on this subject, we encounter statements such as the following:

I doubt whether I shall have an opinion of any value as regards your essay on beauty, for beauty is a subject about which I have never had any views whatever.²

I am not sufficiently competent to make judgments on painting.... I feel I cannot sponsor or publicly promote paintings because I do not have a professional knowledge of the field.³

I have no views whatsoever in connection with the graphic arts.... The philosophy of art is a subject which I have not studied, so that any views expressed by me would be of little value.⁴

You ask why I have not written on the subject of painting. The chief reason is that I suffer from an inadequate appreciation of pictures. I get very great delight from music and also from architecture, but for some reason I get much less from painting and sculpture. This inability makes me unable to form any judgment from the reproduction of the picture which you call my picture. This is in no way personal to your work, but applies to abstract art in general. In spite of this I find it extremely interesting that your work should be influenced by consideration of the sort of abstract relations with which my work deals, which makes me all the more deeply regret my aesthetic blind spot.⁵

In all these excerpts Russell apologizes for his inability to understand aesthetic experience related to the visual arts.

Of course one can find instances in his life when he stated his opinion about the merits of a particular work of art. For example, when *The Problems of Philosophy* was re-issued in paperback in 1967, Oxford University Press suggested that Feliks Topolski's spidery sketch of Russell should be reproduced on the front cover of the book. Russell was horrified by the prospect, and he completely rejected the suggestion.⁶ But, as a philosopher, Russell gave no systematic treatment to the problems of aesthetics. There is only one letter that I know of in which his explanation is not apologetic in character.

It is true that I have not written a separate book on the problems of aesthetics. I have never considered this was significantly different in its philosophical importance from problems in ethics and the general question of value statements. As for sense of "beauty", may I refer you to my books *Religion and Science*, *In Praise of Idleness* and my essay "A Free Man's Worship".⁷

I will not debate the question whether ethics and aesthetics share common problems which are susceptible to the same methods of analysis for their solution. Contrary to Russell's claim, the two books and the essay that he refers to scarcely discuss the nature of beauty. Although *In Praise of Idleness* has an essay on the social importance of architecture and another essay with a brief discussion on the role of art in a socialist state, the book actually says nothing about the nature of beauty. Russell's celebrated essay, "The Free Man's Worship", does not explicitly develop this theme except for a few rhapsodic lines such as: "from the freedom of our thoughts springs the whole world of art and philosophy, and the vision of beauty by which, at last, we half reconquer the reluctant world. But the vision of beauty is possible only to unfettered contemplation".⁸ *Religion and Science* contains only the suggestion of a theory; namely, that the word, "beautiful", like

"good" is to be interpreted subjectively as an attempt to universalize our desires.

It may appear that I have backed myself into a corner. If Russell said nothing significant about aesthetics, then a commentator can hardly provide enlightenment on his views. To paraphrase Wittgenstein, what Russell has not spoken about we must pass over in silence. But, in fact, Russell made several attempts to understand aesthetic experience. The best known attempt occurred around Christmas 1902 when with his first wife, Alys (née Pearsall Smith), he visited her sister, Mary, and her husband, the art critic Bernard Berenson, at their villa, I Tatti, in Settignano on the outskirts of Florence. No longer in love with Alys and beset by difficulties in his work on the foundations of mathematics, Russell had turned to imaginative and confessional writings as a form of catharsis, completing "The Free Man's Worship" at I Tatti. "The house has been furnished by Berenson with exquisite taste", Russell told his good friend, the classicist Gilbert Murray; "it has some very good pictures, and a most absorbing library. But the business of existing beautifully, except when it is hereditary, always slightly shocks my Puritan soul".⁹ Raised in the spartan atmosphere of Pembroke Lodge under the watchful care of his paternal grandmother and with the social conscience of the Russell family tradition, Russell found Berenson's pursuit of luxury repugnant. What divided the two men ultimately however was Russell's frank admission. "In my heart the whole business about art is external to me", he confided to Berenson. "I believe it with my intellect, but in feeling I am a good British Philistine."¹⁰

The reasons for Russell's inability to appreciate the visual arts and for his general failure to discuss aesthetic questions are to be found in his intellectual development around the turn of the century. During this period he read relevant literature on the topic, toured art galleries, arrived at a permanent theory to account for his lack of visual imagination, met Berenson and commented on his work, wrote a couple of essays in which aesthetics is the primary focus, and was influenced by Lady Ottoline Morrell. Consequently, this paper will examine Russell's earliest opinions, reactions, and arguments concerning the nature of aesthetics. The result of this inquiry will tell us why he never wrote a book on the subject.

1 *Nature Worship and Ruskin*

During his adolescence, Russell was influenced by romantic poetry and literature (primarily Wordsworth, Tennyson and Shelley), and he developed a keen appreciation of the beauty of nature.¹¹ God he interpreted pantheistically as a positive, creative force inherent in every aspect of the universe. In "Greek Exercises", a journal in which he secretly chronicled his

moral anxieties and religious doubts, Russell recorded in April 1889:

Herein indeed lies the beauty of nature, and the comfort it can afford when the spirit is vexed with doubt.... What is the beauty in art, in painting or sculpture, unless it be the soul that manifests itself in the canvas or the marble? And is not the same true of nature? Can inanimate speak to animate? Is not rather the soul which is manifested in nature as much more perfect than the soul of painter or sculptor, as nature is more perfect than art? In human handiwork perfection can never be attained; in nature, perfection appears at every turn, manifesting the perfect soul of the creator.¹²

This comfortable world-view was shattered after Russell read Mill on the First Cause argument. Notwithstanding the loss of religious belief, he retained throughout his life a profound appreciation of the beauty of nature. The fragrance and colours of wild flowers, the sea and the nightwind never failed to stir his imagination and memory, to heighten his perception of and wonder at the non-human world. In “Greek Exercises”, nature is regarded by Russell as the perfect work of art, and human handiwork is reckoned second-rate. This prejudice remained with Russell because he was a poor visualizer. Aesthetic judgment in painting and sculpture usually requires a leap in the imagination from the object in its natural setting to its representation, idealized or realistically portrayed. Unfortunately, it was this kind of visual imagination that Russell lacked.

Several months before he read Mill’s *Autobiography*, Russell read his first major discussion of aesthetic questions—John Ruskin’s monumental work, *Modern Painters*. In fact, according to Russell’s reading list (“What Shall I Read?”), Ruskin was the only author of an aesthetic character that he read before he turned to the formal study of philosophy in 1893. In 1892 Russell read three further works of Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, *Mornings in Florence*, and *St. Mark’s Rest*. Only his reaction to *Modern Painters* has been preserved.

In contrast to the careful, detailed drawing executed by Ruskin with near-scientific detachment, Ruskin’s prose is passionate and his descriptions of natural phenomena are vivid. With respect to Ruskin’s taste in architecture, Russell, for example, would later remark: “Thus Ruskin caused people to like Gothic architecture, not by argument, but by the moving effect of rhythmical prose.”¹³ Even though Ruskin was heralded as a prophet of his age, his influence was in decline by the time Russell read his books. In *Modern Painters*, he argued for objective standards in art, opposing the reduction of beauty to truth or usefulness and its dependence on custom or the association of ideas. For Ruskin, the moral and social stature of the artist is an essential ingredient of the quest for beauty.

“The book is *most* interesting to me as a study of mind”, Russell remarked in his diary on first reading *Modern Painters* on 20 May 1890:

his mind is so exactly the antitype of the mathematical that I have great difficulty in entering into it. He has a certain artistic want of sturdiness, which latter I should think must be inseparable from such a stationary pursuit as art appears to be, if not retrograde.... Of the purely artistic parts of the book I can of course say nothing.¹⁴

In his next diary entry on *Modern Painters* which occurs on 10 June, about three weeks later, Russell, however, objected to Ruskin’s “theory of suitably combined imperfections resulting in perfection”. Russell found the theory implausible and he offered several counterexamples to it—the beauty of a face or a landscape, he contended, is marred as a whole if any individual feature is ugly. Ruskin’s theory implies that “a simple gradation of colour without form, could not be beautiful”, Russell claimed.¹⁵ But, is not the blue of an evening sky or the sea at rest beautiful, Russell questioned? When he finished reading volume two of *Modern Painters* on 16 June 1890, he criticized the style for not being as good as Ruskin’s later books such as *Sesame and Lilies*. He was quite surprised that *Modern Painters* had sustained his interest and reversed his earlier opinion that Ruskin’s reasoning was deficient.¹⁶

2 *The Brief Influence of Logan Pearsall Smith*

Alys’s brother, Logan Pearsall Smith, was perhaps the first person who tried to exert an aesthetic influence on Russell. “Don’t be a Philistine!”, he told Russell. “Don’t let any opportunities of hearing good music, seeing good pictures or acting escape you.”¹⁷ An American expatriate who became more English than the English, Pearsall Smith sought out culture as his true life’s purpose, currying the favour of literary celebrities such as Henry James and visiting the haunts of famous French painters such as Giverny (the town where Monet lived) and Les Andelys (the birthplace of Poussin). Obsessed with the beauty and power of language, he became an impressive stylist, a minor writer of elegant phrases and vignettes carefully crafted with frequent revision. Even though Russell was never in need of it, Pearsall Smith offered him advice on the construction of prose, and, for a short time, Russell actually adapted his style to imitate that of the fashionable Oxford aesthete, Walter Pater, whom Pearsall Smith took as his model. In those who tried to copy it, however, Pater’s style often became overly self-conscious and sentimental—in Pearsall Smith’s own words, “a kind of melancholy bleat—a cooing, as of lugubrious doves moaning under depres-

sing circumstances a muffled kind of singsong".¹⁸

Like so many others before him, Pearsall Smith was irresistibly drawn to the bohemian life of Paris, the centre of artistic rejuvenation in the 1890s. His apartment was around the corner from Whistler's studio where he sat as a substitute for the great painter. In the Easter vacation of 1894, after travelling to Italy, Russell met Alys and Logan in Paris. "It was my first experience of the life of American art students in Paris", Russell later recalled, "and it all seemed to me very free and delightful."¹⁹ The Pearsall Smiths tried, unsuccessfully, to instill culture into Russell by taking him several times to see the Impressionist pictures in the Luxembourg. They also journeyed to Vétheuil where the lovely Kinsella sisters endlessly sat for their portraits with Whistler and the quiet Australian painter, Charles Conder. When Russell returned to Paris a few months later during his stay as honorary attaché at the British Embassy, he boasted to his good friend, C. P. Sanger: "I've made the acquaintance of Whistler, having an introduction from the Pearsall Smiths, which is also a score."²⁰

Pearsall Smith instructed Russell on the proper opinions one should hold: "I learned the right thing to say about Manet, and Monet, and Degas, who were in those days what Matisse and Picasso were at a later date."²¹ This reminiscence suggests that there was no real understanding by Russell of Pearsall Smith's informed opinions, and therefore no knowledge of why the love of nature inspired the Impressionists to go beyond the naturalist style. Russell cited Logan as an authority in urging Alys to assert her own intellectual independence; her sister, Mary, dominated conversations whenever the merits of pictures were being discussed.²² It was not for want of trying that Russell failed to appreciate Pearsall Smith's knowledgeable views. As he related to Alys, his lack of understanding did not mean that he cavalierly dismissed all artistic activity and discussion as a frivolous pastime:

I think I can't talk Art any better than Sport, and yet I never feel out of it among people talking Art.... And although I can't understand what they're doing, or why anybody paints, I feel the greatest sympathy with their aims and habits which I don't with the sporting man's.²³

In terms of Russell's education in art, his other brother-in-law, Bernard Berenson, played a more vigorous role, but, before discussing what role Berenson played, it would be best first to assess the extent to which Russell was exposed to aesthetics in the Moral Sciences Tripos at Cambridge.

3 The Cambridge Curriculum

Russell's philosophy courses at Cambridge offered no guidance to the problems of aesthetics. His lecture notebooks contain no references to such problems. In the assignment papers that he wrote for his courses, only one paper discusses aesthetics. Completed in July 1893 for Henry Sidgwick's course on ethics, Russell's paper entitled "On Pleasure" was his first philosophical essay. The discussion related to aesthetics is hardly crucial to the paper's main arguments and appears almost as an afterthought. In an attempt to place various pleasures in a hierarchy, Russell makes the following questionable observation; "[I]t would be difficult logically to separate a jackdaw's love of a gold coin from a painter's appreciation of the colouring of a Veronese."²⁴ Several lines later he expresses the opinion that in contrast to work in mathematics which is a purely cerebral enjoyment, aesthetic appreciation is a mixture of sensual and mental pleasures. He then differentiates the activity of art from its product. The greater knowledge one has of art, Russell claims, the more one appreciates the activity (i.e. artistic techniques) and less the enjoyment of the product (i.e. the work of art itself). Debatable as this last point may be, Russell adds that this explains why the connoisseur's pleasure is usually determined by the degree of the artist's skill and not by the intrinsic beauty or charm of the work of art.

In isolation, Russell's discussion reveals little about his attitude to the status of aesthetics. His opening remark is sceptical in character and suggests that aesthetic appreciation is on the same level as a bird's fascination with a pretty object. The book that Russell read in preparing "On Pleasure" was Sidgwick's *The Methods of Ethics*. For Sidgwick, who regarded the happiness of human beings as an ultimate end-in-itself, beauty is objective only to the extent that it is conducive to that end. "[W]hen beauty is maintained to be objective, it is not commonly meant that it exists as beauty out of relation to any mind whatsoever", Sidgwick argued; "but only that there is some standard of beauty valid for all minds."²⁵ Russell, who followed Sidgwick's utilitarian views fairly closely in "On Pleasure", probably also shared Sidgwick's view about the status of aesthetic pronouncements. It is interesting to note that it was precisely this view that G. E. Moore attacked in chapter three of *Principia Ethica*.

In this early paper, Russell's theory is that aesthetic appreciation is a mixture of physical and intellectual pleasures dependent for their enjoyment on one's knowledge and study of art. It is difficult to say how long he held the theory, especially since at this time he came under the influence of J. M. E. McTaggart, who convinced him of the errors of utilitarianism and of the soundness of Hegelian-inspired metaphysics. In a letter to one of his friends a few months later in 1893, he explained the theory in greater detail.

Are there not in all appreciation of art two distinct elements; first the enjoyment of a pleasant sensation of some sort (and this seems to me to make up the whole uneducated feeling about it); secondly the intellectual enjoyment of the art required to produce the sensation. (The first would of course have to be modified in the case of literary art, in which the appeal to the senses is usually very much in the background, being replaced by an appeal to sentiment and emotion). This second element seems to me with an artist or with any one acquainted with the technique [*sic*] of an art almost to supplant the first; though probably less in music than in any other art, as the passion there aroused is so tremendous. And that I should think is why savages and children appear to get almost as much out of music (though out of a different kind of music) as ordinary cultivated men, though not as much, or not the same, as a person acquainted with harmony and orchestration etc. What say you? This is a long discourse but the subject interests me.²⁶

There is no discussion in any of Russell's student essays of classics in the field of aesthetics—no mention, for example, of Plato's condemnation of the arts, the Aristotelian conception of tragedy, Kant's analysis of the sublime, or even Hegel's doctrine of the Absolute Idea aesthetically spiritualized in sensuous form. The philosopher that had the most profound influence on Russell during this early period was F. H. Bradley. Bradley defines beauty as "the self-existent pleasant", two characteristics which he pronounces contradictory.²⁷ The beautiful must be self-existent and independent but at the same time, pleasant for someone and therefore, determined by a quality of the observer. For Bradley, beauty and the aesthetic attitude are appearances of the Absolute, though he admits the question of degrees of beauty to be a possibility. Although Russell was intimately acquainted with Bradley's metaphysics, it is not clear that he accepted Bradley's dismissal of aesthetics. Another neo-Hegelian that Russell admired was Bernard Bosanquet who translated Hegel's *Aesthetik* in 1886 and published his own *A History of Aesthetic* in 1892, the year before Russell turned to philosophy. Unlike Bradley, Bosanquet does not condemn aesthetics as an illusory exercise. His *History* is a competent and thorough tome which examines the views of philosophers, critics and aesthetes, notably Ruskin, Morris, and Pater. There is no evidence, however, that Russell read Bosanquet's book though he probably read Bosanquet's article, "On the Nature of Aesthetic Emotion", which appeared in *Mind* in 1894. Russell's diary records an encounter with a philosopher whose contribution to aesthetics was greater than Bradley's or Bosanquet's: "Aug. 29. 1893. Lunched with Frank [Russell's older brother] and his Spanish-American friend [George] Santayana, a charming cosmopolitan with whom I discussed much philosophy, poetry and art."²⁸ Russell read Santayana's *The Sense of Beauty* in 1896, the year that the book was published. No doubt Russell was aware of Santayana's definition of beauty as pleasure objectified, and of Santayana's view that the activity of

art and its appreciation are often specialized and exclusive. However, we do not know how Russell reacted to Santayana's subjectivist position, and Russell's copy of the book gives no clues one way or another.

4 *James's Theory of Imagination*

During the Moral Sciences Tripos Russell read and annotated his copy of William James's *The Principles of Psychology*, a work which was revolutionary in its analysis of experience. In 1894–95, Russell regarded James's book to be important primarily for two reasons: the treatment of space which Russell refers to and acknowledges in his revised dissertation on non-Euclidean geometry;²⁹ and the view of imagination which provided Russell with a theory to account for his own inability to appreciate the visual arts.

According to James, who followed Gustav Fechner and Francis Galton, there is no such thing as a typical human mind where propositions hold universally for all faculties. Hence, there are many individual imaginations but not imagination *per se*. Galton conducted a series of questions, mainly to scientific people, related to illumination, definition, and colour of mental imagery. Quoted extensively by James, Galton concluded "that an over-ready perception of sharp mental pictures is antagonistic to the acquirement of habits and abstract thought".³⁰ James's experiments corroborated Galton's findings that abstract thinking as found in mathematics may be hindered by visual imagination. James himself, for example, was a good draughtsman and had a keen interest in the visual arts. But he admitted to being "an extremely poor visualizer", mentally unable to reproduce pictures just examined.³¹ He hypothesized that there are two types of imagination, the visual and the auditory, and that often a person excels in one type and is deficient in the other.

The marginalia in Russell's copy of James's book clearly show Russell's acceptance of James's distinction of the visual mind versus the auditory mind. Beside James's description of the non-visualizer, he wrote: "This would do for a description of my own case, except in the case of childish memories, and a few others of strong emotional interest."³² Russell's other marginal annotations are equally revealing: "Mine is the auditory. I never think except in words which I imagine spoken."³³ "I find in my own case that in the effort to imagine any visual or tactual sensation, the words which describe it intervene and baffle me—but if I mentally rehearse a conversation, so that my mind is intent on auditory images, I see and feel its appropriate background dimly, as I should in real conversation."³⁴

In his diary entry for 8 October 1894, Russell recorded: "I have discovered in reading James that almost of all my psychical life is carried on in auditory and tactile images—I suppose that is why I can't read without

pronouncing every word as I go. This has led me to a psychological generalization about aesthetics and intellect."³⁵ On James's theory which Russell adopted, "the temporal arts" (music and literature) appeal to the ear, whereas "the spatial arts" (painting and sculpture) appeal to the eye. Ordinarily the ear is not capable of differentiating many sounds occurring simultaneously but can only differentiate sounds occurring successively. In contrast, the eye can take in many simultaneous impressions. Accordingly, in order to appreciate music and literature, one must be able to coordinate and to remember each note in sequence or to attend to individual words and phrases which are combined into larger units of meaning and expression. To appreciate painting and sculpture, one must be able to concentrate one's present impressions so that the features of a work of art are unified by a single judgment. In his diary this is how Russell interpreted James's theory.

For our purposes, the question is not whether James's theory of imagination is true but to what extent did Russell believe it to be true. In the last line of his diary entry on James's book, Russell mused: "This idea strikes me as suggestive, but I suppose it is either false or old."³⁶ Whatever doubts about James's theory Russell might have harboured, he used this same theory more than sixty years later in explaining his lack of visual imagination to his biographer, Alan Wood, who pointed out:

[Russell] worked through the ear rather than [*sic*] the eye: with auditory images rather than visual ones.... He made it a criticism of Bergson that he was "a visualizer" (which Bergson denied); and he said that a man who could only think in terms of visual images would have difficulty in thinking about abstract things.³⁷

Being himself "an incorrigible visualizer", Wood thought Russell's psychological explanation dubious, and he cited the opinion of Russell's friend, the mathematician J. E. Littlewood, who denied that visualizing could harm one's mathematical work. Wood speculated: "perhaps the reason why he [Russell] had no instinct for setting out something in visual form was simply because he was bad at it: he once remarked that 'Whenever I try to draw a cow it looks like a horse'."³⁸

5 *The Berenson–Russell Interaction*

It is quite coincidental that Santayana, Pearsall Smith, and Berenson were all students of James at Harvard. The last of these three must now be brought into focus in terms of Russell's aesthetic education. Although their initial encounters were at Friday's Hill (the home of the Pearsall Smiths at Fernhurst, Sussex), Berenson and Russell probably did not interact

significantly until the spring of 1895, when Russell and his new bride, after staying in Berlin for the first three months of the year, travelled to Fiesole, outside Florence. There Berenson and Alys's sister, Mary Costelloe, had set up headquarters in separate villas for excursions to art galleries, churches and private collections. Berenson—a brilliant, young, ambitious art critic—was at the beginning of the road to connoisseurship. At the time he acted as an agent for Isabella Stewart Gardner in procuring masterpieces for her collection at Fenway Court in Boston.³⁹

Russell stayed for three weeks at Fiesole in April 1895 during which time he read Berenson's first book, *The Venetian Painters of the Renaissance* (1894).⁴⁰ Berenson introduced him to the riches of art in the Florentine environs. For Russell, it was the first of many trips to Italy in Berenson's company. Even though they grew to be good friends, their friendship exhibited considerable strain and their interests divided like oil and water. When Mary tried to make Berenson share her enthusiasm for metaphysics which she had acquired from Russell, Berenson exploded: "In Heaven's name, Mary, do drop all that transcendental nonsense. Philosophy is a pursuit for pretentious muddle-headed fools: it leads nowhere, and it is sheer waste of time to bother your head with it. Study the human mind if you will, but don't pretend to understand the mind of God."⁴¹ Stated in such blunt language, Berenson's opposition to metaphysics placed him at a disadvantage in gaining Russell's intellectual respect. "Metaphysics, not science, interest my soul", Russell declared.⁴² Though obviously an obstacle, this fundamental difference did not prevent both men from understanding each other's point of view. "Bertie I have been seeing a great deal, and I liked him better and better", Berenson wrote their mutual friend, the poet R. C. Trevelyan, on 6 November 1896. "His mind is exquisitely active. True it has as yet perhaps not got beyond picking up one moss-grown stone after the other to see what is under it, but that by itself is perfectly delightful. Were I interested in metaphysics or he in art, we would be super-humanly joined."⁴³

Despite their divided interests, Russell made some progress in understanding aesthetic appreciation. More than thirty years later, he recalled: "I spent a good deal of time among art connoisseurs in Florence, while I read Pater and Flaubert and the other gods of the cultured nineties."⁴⁴ We noted that at least for a short period, Russell adapted his style to imitate the writing of Pater. In contrast to Ruskin who regarded the Italian Renaissance as an age of moral and aesthetic decline, Pater considered it the crowning achievement of civilization. His writings, in particular *Marius The Epicurean* and *Studies in the History of The Renaissance*, advocated a refinement of sensitivity: "To burn always with this hard gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life."⁴⁵ This epitome of Pater's became Berenson's motto.⁴⁶ It demanded that aesthetic appreciation be direct and dis-

criminating without unprofitable inquiry into metaphysics. Contrary as this must have been to Russell's outlook, Pater's descriptions with their subtle blend of scientific exactness and poetic imagery initially evoked in Russell a sympathetic chord. Reading Pater's story "The Child in the House", for example, took Russell back to his adolescent days when he craved the beauty of nature. He told Alys:

I got into a dreamy mood from reading Pater: I was immensely impressed by it, indeed it seemed to me as beautiful as anything I had ever read.... [during my adolescence] I made a sort of religion of Beauty, such as Florian [the protagonist of Pater's story] might have had; I had a passionate desire to find some link between the true and the beautiful.⁴⁷

Flaubert's novels and also the short stories of Maupassant, frequently read by Russell in the 1890s, conveyed a similar message of art's ultimacy and in Pearsall Smith's opinion, combined with "the thrill of modernity.... produced by the high noon of impressionism".⁴⁸

In his recollection of "the cultured nineties", Russell mentions being in the company of art connoisseurs in Florence. Berenson, of course, was the principal figure, and no doubt the Pearsall Smith entourage were included. As Berenson's reputation grew, he was constantly sought out by visitors who made pilgrimages to Florence. There was Berenson's protégé, Roger Fry. An Apostle and good friend of McTaggart and G. L. Dickinson, Fry knew Russell independently of Berenson. He had designed the Russell's neoclassical book plate and one of Alys's dresses which she had worn at a dance with Russell in Paris.⁴⁹ As Andrew Brink has pointed out, once Fry began to establish himself as an art critic, "there was little common ground with Russell".⁵⁰ Yet Russell read Fry's *Giovanni Bellini* (1899) in March 1900. Moreover Fry regarded Russell as "one of the men of genius of our time",⁵¹ and he made a point of reading Russell's books on philosophy. In his edition of Sir Joshua Reynolds' *Discourses*, Fry acknowledges his indebtedness to Russell "in elucidating the philosophical ... ideas involved in Reynolds' conception of beauty as the common form".⁵² Quite obviously, Fry was unaware of Russell's inability to appreciate visual form. After reading and praising *Our Knowledge of the External World*, he asked Russell: "Will you ever turn to aesthetics or is that too complex even for your analysis?"⁵³ Russell's reply is not extant. If there was personal animosity between Russell and Fry, as Brink suspects, then it probably stemmed from Russell's side only. Two portraits of Russell by Fry have survived.

Another connoisseur that Russell probably met in Florence was Vernon Lee (pseud. Violet Paget). Russell first met her at Friday's Hill, and she later supported his pacifist campaigns in the First World War.⁵⁴ Soon after their initial meeting, Russell read two of her literary works—the novel

satirizing the "art for art's sake" movement, *Miss Brown*, and three short stories published under the title, *Vanitas*. With her collaborator, Kit Anstruther-Thomson, Vernon Lee restricted her interest in aesthetics primarily to the question of pleasure or displeasure in form or shape. Her theory, founded upon the James–Lange theory of emotions, maintained that the agreeableness of aesthetic experience in the perception of form is dependent on bodily functions such as respiration and equilibrium. Her mature views which were first put forward in 1897 prompted Berenson to accuse her of plagiarism.

One can only speculate how Russell might have reacted to various opinions on aesthetic questions expressed by members of Berenson's circle during the 1890s. An interesting comment made by Russell sometime between June and September 1895 is the following: "Morelli's canons of art-connoisseurship afford a good instance of analogy subsequently reinforced by teleology."⁵⁵ Russell's comment occurs in the marginalia of his copy of Bosanquet's *Logic or the Morphology of Knowledge*. In the passage which Russell annotated, Bosanquet distinguishes between teleology and analogy; the former, associated with purpose in activity, objects and institutions, involves a surer method of inference and knowledge than the latter. Bosanquet was claiming that there is a border area where teleology and analogy overlap, and Russell cited Morelli's canons as an example.

Russell's comment shows his acquaintance with the Italian innovator, Giovanni Morelli, a pioneer of the scientific study of art. Trained as a doctor in comparative anatomy, Morelli, with the help of his one-time secretary, Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle, led the way out of the chaos of mistaken attributions which plagued the European art world in the nineteenth century. His unique contribution was the view that authentication should approximate the work of the botanist or geologist and therefore, should be dependent on the formal study of morphological features—for example, the artist's treatment of certain parts of the body, the particular detailed way in which the eyes, ears, and hands are drawn, coloured and shaded. As an antidote to the sentimental attraction of Pater's aestheticism, Morelli's approach was wholeheartedly adopted by Berenson and refined into a theory of connoisseurship. It was from Berenson, of course, that Russell heard about Morelli. Unfortunately, aside from Russell's tantalizing comment in his copy of Bosanquet's *Logic*, we do not know how Russell was disposed to Morelli's techniques. It is likely that Russell saw the merit of Morelli's techniques for the purpose of authentication but disapproved of the scientific approach to appreciation. In 1913, Russell told his good friend, Lucy Martin Donnelly: "I feel sure learned aesthetics is rubbish, and that it ought to be a matter of literature and taste rather than science."⁵⁶

Concerning the earliest period of his interaction with Berenson, Russell told Sylvia Sprigge, Berenson's first biographer, in May 1954:

I remember I was amazed at his [Berenson's] reading. He it was who first put me on to Fustel de Coulanges' *La Cité Antique*, for which I have always been grateful, and he first put me on to reading Ranke. I read his *Venetian Painters* in manuscript and felt he was under a misapprehension in following Berkeley's mistaken theory of vision [that we see everything in two dimensions and ourselves supply a third]. I put B. B. on to William James's *Psychology* to dissuade him from this view, and he subsequently modified his theory and clarified it greatly.⁵⁷

Expanding on his recollection, Russell recalled that on a bicycle tour of Lombardy in 1894, he and Berenson argued about the basis of aesthetic experience with specific reference to Berkeley's theory of vision. Even though Russell's recollection, as reported by Sprigge, is basically correct, it is mistaken on a number of minor points. Russell travelled to Italy in 1894, but there is no evidence that he met Berenson in Lombardy anytime during that year. *Venetian Painters* was first published in 1894, but it is extremely unlikely that Russell could have read the book in manuscript in that year, especially since his reading list records that he read it in April 1895 during his stay in Fiesole. Furthermore, although Berenson makes a number of value judgments in *Venetian Painters* his book contains no exposition of a coherent aesthetic theory. What Russell actually read in manuscript was Berenson's second book of the projected series on the Italian painters, namely, *The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance*.

"Bertie and I are at it hammer and tongs over thy theory of 'pleasure'", Mary Costelloe wrote to Berenson on 1 August 1895.⁵⁸ Berenson had sent the completed manuscript of *Florentine Painters* to Mary for her to edit at Friday's Hill. Much to Berenson's annoyance, she had shown the manuscript to Russell who immediately inundated her with criticisms. Aside from the long list of works newly attributed to Florentine artists, *Florentine Painters* is famed for its theory of tactile values. The book begins with a discussion of Giotto who transformed Italian painting from a stagnant Byzantine tradition to a more realistic, solid style, conscious of perspective and human form. Berenson's opinion was that Giotto's originality was due to his ability to stimulate the tactile imagination, thereby conveying a more vivid sense of reality to the objects he depicted and our enjoyment of them. This explanation of Giotto's originality anticipates Berenson's theory of the appreciation of painting. Berenson conceded that there are often a variety of pleasures associated with the appreciation of pictures: dramatic effect, character illustration, amusement, for example. But whereas such pleasure-giving elements might explain our appreciation of literature or music, Berenson claimed that they do not distinguish our appreciation of painting. According to Berenson, the principal source of the enjoyment of the Florentine masters is form, not the art of colouring at which the

Venetians excelled. The work of art that succeeds in conveying a sense of form is said by Berenson to be "life-heightening" or "life-enhancing". The question remains: how does the artist impart this sense of form? Berenson's succinct answer is that the artist gives "tactile values to retinal impressions".⁵⁹ In other words, the degree to which we enjoy a work of art is determined by the artist's ability to transfer the third dimension, the sense of depth, to the sense of touch. A picture is a two-dimensional representation, and in order for the artist to construct the third dimension, he must provide the observer with the illusion of being able to touch the figures contained in the work. The transfer to touch increases our psychological capacity to enjoy the work of art, and the consequent pleasure evokes a greater realization of the work. "Our tactile imagination is put to play immediately", Berenson wrote of Giotto's frescoes.

Our palms and fingers accompany our eyes much more quickly than in the presence of real objects, the sensations varying constantly with the various projections represented, as of face, torso, knees; confirming in every way our feeling of capacity for coping with things,—for life, in short.⁶⁰

From Mary Costelloe's correspondence with Berenson, we are able to reconstruct Russell's critique of *Florentine Painters*. It appears that Russell made at least four objections: (1) he disputed Berenson's notion of pleasure as life-enhancing; (2) he considered Berenson's explanation of depth perception erroneous; (3) he claimed that Berenson illegitimately mixed psychology with biology; (4) and, lastly, he contended that Berenson's theory of tactile values at most explains the connoisseur's enjoyment of art but not the aesthetic appreciation of a normal person.⁶¹

Berenson maintained that when a picture succeeds in rousing the tactile imagination, pleasure results from the enhancement of the capacity for life. Russell countered that this was not specific enough and that capacity must involve capacity for something in particular. Russell's own view was that pleasure derived from the appreciation of art is simply the result of satisfaction of desire. Such a view denies the uniqueness of aesthetic pleasure in comparison to other pleasures. Russell also pointed out that heightened awareness can arise not only from the pleasure of life-enhancement but also from pain, for example, the torment of a toothache.

"Psychology", Berenson alleged, "has ascertained that sight alone gives us no accurate sense of the third dimension".⁶² In the unconscious years of infancy, we supposedly learn the perception of depth through touch aided by muscular feelings of movement. On this basis, Berenson believed that a painter must construct the third dimension in such a way that the observer unconsciously compensates for the failings of sight by resorting to the tactile

sense. As we have noted in the recollection provided by Sprigge, Russell regarded this as antiquated psychology stemming from Berkeley, and he suggested that Berenson read James's *The Principles of Psychology*. Quite ironically, it was precisely this book that Berenson had turned to for inspiration in formulating the theory of tactile values.

Berkeley's view, which can be found in *An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision*, is as follows: in the same way in which anger and shame are suggested by facial expressions and bodily behaviour, perception of distance is not immediately received by sight but is suggested partly from the movement of the eyes and mainly from the association and anticipation of touch.⁶³ Our field of vision, according to Berkeley, is fundamentally two-dimensional. Distances which seem dim and faraway are approximated from past experiences of approaching movement and touch. James, whom Russell recommended, called Berkeley's treatment "excessively vague",⁶⁴ and he cited experiments and counterexamples to disprove Berkeley's theory of vision—for example, persons born blind whose sight is restored report that they see everything much larger than was previously supposed by touch alone.

After Russell's critical prodding, Berenson reread James's *Psychology*, but he altered little of his theory of tactile values, in spite of James's sustained attack on Berkeley. It is interesting to note that in his short review of Berenson's *Florentine Painters*, James did not object strenuously to his former student's theory. Berenson's book, James admitted, was "charmingly written". Nevertheless, James thought that it was really an open question whether Berenson had probed "much deeper into the secrets of art-magic". He suggested that "spiritual significance" should be added to Berenson's term of "life-enhancing values".⁶⁵ Only in the last sentence of his review did James state that the aesthetic superiority of one picture over another is probably a matter of direct visual contact and not a matter of significance or tactile imagination.

Berenson's reaction to Russell's critique, it would appear, was one of mild annoyance. In part, this was due to Berenson's general antagonism to anything that smacked of philosophy. Russell, for example, objected to Berenson's mixing of psychology with biology. This objection probably stemmed from the fallacy of psychologism, that is, illegitimately mixing psychology with logic. In his *Logic* Bradley had argued that the traditional empiricist explanation of meaning was psychologistic in nature. Russell agreed with Bradley's argumentation against empiricism, and Russell probably thought that it was just as bad to mix psychology with biology. But Berenson did not regard the two sciences as mutually exclusive, "biology being after all nothing but psychology in a packed down form".⁶⁶

Berenson's annoyance, quite understandably, was also due to the fact that Russell was unable to appreciate painting and yet he still managed to

criticize a theory whose purpose was to explain visual appreciation. He had told Berenson after they had toured the Uffizi Gallery together: "I've looked at everything you wanted me to look at; I've listened to all you've said; but the pictures still don't give me the funny feeling in the stomach they give you."⁶⁷ Berenson instructed Mary Costelloe to make the fewest number of changes to the manuscript of *Florentine Painters* before sending it to the publisher. The dogmatic statements which Russell found objectionable would be corrected at the proof stage. Sufficiently unsettled by Russell's critique, Mary, nonetheless, wrote a colleague for advice, the German sculptor, Hermann Obrist. Berenson acknowledged to Mary that he had dealt with the problems Russell raised in a rather peremptory manner, but he promised that they would be answered in detail in his projected big book on aesthetics, a work which he never completed. He remained a lifelong adherent to his theory of tactile values, a position consistent with his abhorrence for surrealism and abstract expressionism.

In September 1898 the Russells travelled to Germany to meet Berenson, Mary and their companion, Herbert Horne, a critic and artist. Together they visited the important churches and galleries at Dresden, Leipzig, Altenberg, Nuremberg, and Munich. They reached Florence a month later stopping at various cities on the way. Berenson and Russell spent the next month constantly in each other's company, bicycling to Verona, Mantua, and Ravenna. From Berenson's perspective, Russell was a delightful companion, always "turning some fact or idea over and showing you a side that had not occurred to you".⁶⁸ Russell "would rhapsodize about mathematics in a way so poetical, so mystical, that I used to listen with rapture—*bouche bée*", Berenson later recalled.⁶⁹

This visit of 1898 was the high point of their relationship. The situation had certainly changed by January 1903 when Russell recorded in his journal upon returning from I Tatti: "The atmosphere of Art and luxury was rather trying to me, and at first I couldn't understand why I had liked B. B., but gradually I got to like him again."⁷⁰ Berenson had not changed significantly but Russell had. The details of the changes in Russell's views and character are too complex to describe at this point. Suffice it to say that his philosophical outlook, system of values and emotional life were transformed profoundly and irrevocably in the years between 1898 and 1903. Rather than drawing Russell and Berenson together, these changes accentuated their differences. Austere, non-human and eternal, these qualities Russell valued. He was repelled by Berenson's hedonistic aestheticism. Even though Berenson greatly encouraged Russell's imaginative ventures in the essay,⁷¹ he "had simply not experienced [as Russell had] the refiner's fire that burns away infatuation with the world".⁷² In later years Berenson was greatly disappointed that his interaction with Russell which initially had been so stimulating lapsed altogether.⁷³

6 *Two Essays on Aesthetics*

During the 1890s Russell wrote two essays on aesthetics that merit consideration. Both are serious in theme though rich in corrosive wit. In the first paper, “The Uses of Luxury”, dated 17 February 1896, he maintains that leisure is necessary for the pursuit of excellence and that the chief use of wealth should be the encouragement of art. His major argument is that since the artist can contribute to the desirable elements of society, artistic potential must not be jeopardized by the threat of poverty and the worry of daily cares. Money from the state should be allocated therefore to support the arts in order to allow the artist the comforts of life where his occupation can be freely pursued.

Russell divides the financial encouragement of art into direct and indirect uses. The direct way in which wealth encourages art, he claims, is that without a patron, an artist can hardly hope to make a living. He admits that a great part of patronage results in the support of bad art, but against this, he points out that most people have bad taste and that it is only by the encouragement of what is mainly bad art that chance triumphs so that the great artist is recognized for his talent. He also alleges that on the whole, the rich man will possess better taste than his poorer counterpart mainly because leisure is on the side of wealth where taste can be cultivated and new artists can be discovered. In Russell’s opinion, the indirect use of wealth’s encouragement of art is achieved partly by supplying the artist with material goods and partly by providing an atmosphere where artistic inspiration can flourish.

In “The Uses of Luxury”, Russell argues in favour of an élite of intellectuals and artists. The paper contains a number of interesting allusions which show Russell far from ignorant about artistic developments. In claiming that the majority of people encourage bad art, he refers to the construction of the Tate Gallery (built in 1897), insinuating by his disapproval that a lot of the painting in the Tate is not worth exhibiting, an opinion *au courant* in the 1890s. He draws attention to the sensation created by Whistler’s abstract work, and he instances Pater’s description of Watteau of how an artist’s work can be influenced by his milieu. Russell’s contention that artistic breakthroughs occur when nations have leisure and wealth is presented as an historical fact. “This is certainly true of Italy, Holland and Spain at their times of greatness”, he states, “but I know too little of the history of art to carry my argument further.”⁷⁴ Despite his belief that the artist “remind[s] us and bring[s] home to us ... the glories of that Kingdom of Heaven which *should* be the goal of all our actions”,⁷⁵ Russell’s paper borders on aesthetic relativism. Artistic excellence, in Russell’s opinion, is difficult to detect—taste being “a delicate and useless product ... incapable of surviving a very severe struggle for existence”.⁷⁶ Only after the artist is

long dead can his work be seriously appreciated. This position does not imply that aesthetic appreciation is completely subjective, only that true objectivity is rare. Nor does it imply a statement made by Russell a year later, namely—“For aesthetic satisfaction, intellectual conviction is unnecessary.”⁷⁷

The topic of the role of art in society had arisen several years earlier at a meeting of the Cambridge Apostles in 1894 when C. P. Sanger read a paper entitled “Which Wagner?”. The title refers to the dichotomy between the German economist, Adolph Wagner, and the composer, Richard Wagner. The choice presented by Sanger’s paper was economics or music, or more broadly interpreted, social responsibility or art. In Russell’s report of the paper’s reception, McTaggart resorted to the dialectic and “ran his [Hegelian] Absolute”.⁷⁸ G. E. Moore opted for art because according to Russell, Moore was a stoic and considered practical matters unimportant. Russell remarked: “Teach the East-ender to appreciate art and he will be happy. Moore is colossally ignorant of life.”⁷⁹ Russell tried to support a middle position although he felt the ensuing discussion hopelessly inadequate and resolved nothing due to the practical nature of the topic. Such discussions were quite typical of Apostle meetings. It was the first but not the last occasion when Russell and Moore disagreed about aesthetics.

Russell’s second paper, “Was the World Good before the Sixth Day?”, is theoretical in nature, being concerned with the status of aesthetic opinion. It is the only essay in his entire repertoire which focuses on this question. Read to the Apostles on 11 February 1899, it begins with a paragraph of brotherly banter in which Moore is gently taken to task for attempting to teach moral philosophy to “phenomena” (i.e. non-members of the Apostles). In the autumn of 1898, after being awarded a six-year prize Fellowship at Trinity College, Cambridge, Moore began two courses of lectures at the London School of Ethics and Social Philosophy. His first set of lectures, “The Elements of Ethics”, is extant and contains Russell’s marginalia.⁸⁰ These lectures formed the basis of Moore’s *Principia Ethica*, the inspiration of Bloomsbury ideals. Russell’s paper attempts to refute what he took to be the major aesthetic claim of Moore’s “The Elements of Ethics”—namely, that beauty has intrinsic value.⁸¹

Two arguments, in particular, can be found in Moore’s lectures to support the view that beauty has intrinsic value. Against Sidgwick’s claim that the production of beauty apart from human beings is not a rational aim, Moore in his fourth lecture presents a “two-worlds” argument. The most beautiful world is conjured up along side the ugliest world. Moore contended that the existence of the first world is preferable even without human beings to appreciate it. In the margin beside this argument, Russell penned: “I don’t agree, if both worlds are purely material.”⁸² Moore’s second argument occurs in his fifth lecture. The contemplation of beauty, he says,

is better in itself than the contemplation of ugliness. According to Moore, from this judgment it follows that beauty in itself must also be better than ugliness—that is, beauty has intrinsic value:

For whenever we contemplate a thing, then there is in us and in that thing something in common. In so far as we are really contemplating a beautiful thing, the qualities, which in it are beautiful, are also present in our contemplation. Such, at least, is the commonly accepted view.⁸³

In his paper Russell does not distinguish Moore's arguments. What he attacks can be regarded as an expansion of Moore's "two-worlds" argument. Russell's version of Moore's argument proceeds as follows. "It cannot be said ... that beauty is good only as a means to the production of emotion in us."⁸⁴ The man who recognizes beauty and is moved by it is judged to be better than the man who is moved equally by ugliness. Now this judgment can only be correct if beauty is good *in itself* since we praise the man of good taste and criticize the man of bad taste. If beauty were merely good *as a means*, it would not matter whether the aesthetic emotion produced in us was the result of beauty or ugliness, so long as the same effect was produced. But since it does make a difference how the emotion is produced, beauty cannot be a means, and of two worlds, with no one to contemplate either, the beautiful one is better than the ugly one. That is Russell's version of Moore's argument.

The fact that Russell wanted to disprove the position that beauty is an end in itself might be interpreted as an espousal of subjectivism, that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Russell, however, categorically denies any subjectivist allegiance in his paper. He compares subjectivism in aesthetics to Berkeley's theory of perception. Similarly, he disavows any connection of aesthetic appreciation with utilitarianism. The utilitarian (e.g. Sidgwick) would claim paradoxically that ugliness is just as good as beauty if the same amount of pleasure accrues. For the utilitarian, the man of abominable taste is put on an equal footing with the faultless critic, provided that the former enjoys bad art as much as the latter enjoys good art. Lastly, Russell dissociates himself from the puritanical view that beauty is neither an end nor a means but the devil's handiwork to entrap the virtuous.

Russell presupposes that beauty is a *quality* of beautiful objects. Although he does not commit himself as to whether the quality or property is a natural one, the suggestion of a naturalist theory is strongly present. When we "see" this quality, we immediately feel a specific aesthetic emotion, quite akin in Russell's opinion to the perception of redness when someone is looking at a red object. It is perhaps doubtful whether Russell intended this suggestion of naturalism because Moore in "The Elements of Ethics" attacked naturalism in ethics and the same argumentation could be suc-

cessfully applied to aesthetics as well. For Russell, in "Was the World Good before the Sixth Day?", beauty is nonetheless objective, intuitively known, and capable of producing the aesthetic emotion—though he quickly points out that this is not its definition.

Russell's argument against Moore's claim that beauty is not an intrinsic good is in fact derivative from Moore's criticism of Sidgwick's view that pleasure alone is good for its own sake. In both his lectures and *Principia Ethica*, Moore distinguishes pleasure from the consciousness of pleasure, maintaining that pleasure would be quite valueless without our consciousness of it.⁸⁵ From this distinction, he cogently concludes that pleasure cannot be an end in itself but only a means to the consciousness of pleasure. Russell's argument is similar to this, and it is rather odd that Moore did not recognize the parallel in reasoning. "[A]mong the things we know, Russell affirms, "there is nothing good or bad except psychological states."⁸⁶ Matter is consequently neither good nor bad in itself. It is the *consciousness* of matter that can be an end in itself. Beauty, even though it is said to be objective, is to be valued as a means to the aesthetic emotion which is good *per se*. Of two worlds, therefore, neither the beautiful one nor the ugly one would be preferable unless it affected our psychological states.

Did Russell's argument affect Moore's thinking when he revised his lectures for *Principia Ethica*? In his lectures, Moore had already admitted that in comparison to our consciousness of beauty, the mere existence of beauty is negligible in value. Nonetheless, in *Principia Ethica*, he retained the "two-worlds" argument with the conclusion that beauty has *some* intrinsic value. Notable in Moore's later work is the emphasis on organic unities in which the consciousness of beauty is said to be greater than the sum of its parts. A heavily revised part of Moore's lectures is the final chapter, which in *Principia Ethica* is titled "The Ideal". In *Principia Ethica*, he states: "By far the most valuable things, which we know or can imagine, are certain states of consciousness, which may be roughly described as the pleasures of human intercourse and the enjoyment of beautiful objects."⁸⁷ On the surface, this comes close to Russell's view, that only psychological states can be good in themselves. Yet, whereas Russell claimed beauty to be an objective property, Moore's subsequent treatment was unique since beauty is defined and found dependent on the supposedly sole unanalyzable predicate of value, "good". Beauty in *Principia Ethica* turns out to be not "*itself* good, but ... a necessary element in something which is: to prove that a thing is truly beautiful is to prove that a whole, to which it bears a particular relation as a part, is truly good."⁸⁸ This seems to be a denial of the position that beauty is an end in itself. If so, it is distinctly possible that Russell's paper caused Moore to alter his earlier view.

Russell's paper is also important for its explanations of bad taste and aesthetic disagreements. He offers the following model of aesthetic appreci-

ation: *A*, the man of perfect taste, perceives α , the beautiful object, and experiences the aesthetic emotion; *B*, the man of opposite taste, perceives β , the ugly object, and falsely judges β to be beautiful and also falsely feels the aesthetic emotion. On Russell's model, *B* never obtains the true aesthetic emotion. According to Russell, disputes about aesthetics occur in two ways: (1) lack of knowledge about the meaning of the word, "beauty", and consequent irrelevant misusage; (2) lack of personal capacity in perceiving the beauty of objects and the failure, as a result, to experience the aesthetic emotion. People of bad taste similarly fall into two classes. There are those who do not know what beauty means; being ignorant of their own ignorance, they can never experience the aesthetic emotion. Persons of the second class know the meaning of beauty and are less condemnable than those of the first class. Through defective perception, they either completely fail to recognize the property of beauty in objects, or when they do see the property, they do not recognize the feeling of aesthetic emotion for what it is and are guilty of intellectual error.

Containing an obvious autobiographical allusion, Russell's explanation of bad taste sounds fairly familiar. He was unable to experience the aesthetic emotion, he believed, not because he was ignorant of the meaning of beauty but because his perceptual capabilities were defective. At this time, for Russell, both truth and beauty are real and indefinable properties. Indefinables, he asserted, are to be intuited with the same kind of direct clarity as the mind's acquaintance "with redness or the taste of a pineapple".⁸⁹ Either you "see" beauty or you do not "see" it. The capability is something that one is born with rather than being dependent on patient labour or intellectual exercise.

"Was the World Good before the Sixth Day?" reflects Moore's new philosophy which Russell adopted in 1898. Although he attempted to refute Moore's position that beauty has intrinsic value, Russell in fact was very much indebted to him. In metaphysics, this new philosophy was both pluralistic and realistic—the world contains many objects, and any object of thought is real. The adoption of Moore's realism explains why Russell regarded beauty as an objective property. There are, of course, insuperable problems with Russell's realist theory of aesthetics. It is one thing to acknowledge that there are beauty-making characteristics. It is quite another thing altogether to say that beauty is a property of an object which is directly intuitable. Once all the properties of an object are accounted for, where can one find the property of beauty? Only the Platonist claims to know the answer. While admitting that Russell's realist theory is untenable, we may nevertheless find it worthwhile to explore the extent to which he accepted it.

7 *Mathematics and Lady Ottoline Morrell*

Austere, non-human and eternal—this is how I characterized Russell's aesthetic outlook in comparing it to Berenson's cult of sensuous beauty. Russell's outlook partially resulted from his adoption of Moore's metaphysics which bestowed reality on any object than can be mentioned or thought. It was also inspired by events in his personal life. Those events are painfully chronicled in the chapter on *Principia Mathematica* in the first volume of his *Autobiography*: the intellectual intoxication of solving difficult problems in the foundations of mathematics was followed by the discovery of the Contradiction; on the emotional level, there was his mystical experience in the Lent Term of 1901 and in the autumn of the same year, his falling out of love with his first wife.

"I found myself filled with semi-mystical feelings about beauty",⁹⁰ Russell recollected of his experience in the Lent Term of 1901 after hearing Murray's poetic translation of *The Hippolytus* and then, witnessing Mrs. Whitehead in severe pain. He channelled the results of this experience into doing mathematics and writing imaginative and confessional essays. His best-known essay of this period, "The Free Man's Worship", expresses the somber point of view that man is fundamentally impotent to effect change in a material world governed by chance. Only in our thoughts, in the contemplation of abstract objects not subject to time and change, can we liberate our true selves. Since ordinary life is at best a compromise, Russell advocates a retreat to the world of ideals where truth and beauty never tarnish: "To abandon the struggle for private happiness, to expel all eagerness of temporary desire, to burn with passion for eternal things—this is emancipation, and this is the free man's worship."⁹¹

For Russell, what chiefly resides in this realm of pure being is mathematics. The fact that mathematics is accessible to the mind but is independent of mind and the actual world signifies that it is the most important of all the arts:

Mathematics, rightly viewed, possesses not only truth, but supreme beauty—a beauty cold and austere, like that of sculpture, without appeal to any part of our weaker nature, without the gorgeous trappings of paintings or music, yet sublimely pure, and capable of stern perfection such as only the greatest art can show.⁹²

The revelation that logic is the foundation of mathematics is said to be like seeing "a palace emerging from the autumn mist as a traveller ascends an Italian hill-side."⁹³ To Helen Thomas Flexner, he explained his conception of beauty in the following terms:

There are great impersonal things—beauty and truth—which quite surpass in grandeur the attainment of those who struggle after fine feelings. Mathematics, as a form of art, is the very quintessential type of the classical spirit, cold, inhuman and sublime.... the true classical spirit loses itself in devotion to beauty, and forgets its relation to man. Human or inhuman, beauty is a source of simple and direct joy, and is not contrasted with the lot of man, but rejoiced in for its own sake.⁹⁴

In contrast to mathematics which “endeavours to present whatever is most general in its purity”, Russell held that “Literature embodies what is general in particular circumstances”.⁹⁵ He thought that the value of a piece of literature is enhanced if it has a good moral.⁹⁶ The most expressive of all the arts, literature, he believed, is dependent on the use of theme and rhythm to convey emotion.⁹⁷ History was also especially important to Russell during his realist period. Sharing Plato’s prejudice against the continual flux of the present, he argued that the past is more real than the present. What has passed, he rhapsodized, is fixed for eternity, its beauty “like the enchanted purity of late autumn”.⁹⁸

Notwithstanding the importance of literature and history in Russell’s outlook, it was mathematics that he regarded as the first among the arts. Although he championed mathematics in his semi-popular writings in purple passages of mystical piety, in practice his mathematical work often proved disillusioning. After approximately five years of work on *The Principles of Mathematics*, for example, Russell decided that the book could not be finished in style and that certain parts would have to be patched up for publication. The final product, he confessed, was “full of imperfections” and “not a work of art” as he had hoped.⁹⁹ *Principia Mathematica*, which contains the mathematical proof of Russell’s logicist programme, occupied the next ten years or so of his life. Though co-authored with Alfred North Whitehead, Russell’s work on *Principia* was very much a lonely endeavour, a mixture of love and frustraion. At that point in his life after the completion of *Principia*, he began his affair and friendship with Lady Ottoline Morrell and experienced an aesthetic rebirth.

“I have been ascetic and starved my love of beauty”, Russell told Lady Ottoline, “because I could not live otherwise the life I had to live.”¹⁰⁰ Prior to meeting Ottoline, he had modelled his life on the exactitude of mathematics, becoming “so rugged and ruthless, and so removed from the whole aesthetic side of life—a sort of logic machine warranted to destroy any idea that is not very robust.”¹⁰¹ He had admired mathematics for its austerity and non-human quality. “But mathematics is a cold and unresponsive love in the end”, he admitted.¹⁰² Within a few months of his intense affair with Ottoline, he sought to enlarge his imagination and felt liberated from the strictures of the past. “Nowadays I long to have beautiful things about me”,

he confided to Ottoline, “I used to be indifferent or even wish not to have anything nice—my life was so full of discords that it seemed a vain pretence.”¹⁰³ Of Russell’s aesthetic liberation, Brink has commented incisively:

Russell rightly believed that Ottoline’s attention to the arts (especially the visual arts) was far more finely attuned than his and that he stood to gain by refining his sensibility to match hers.... Together they cultivated feeling through reading Plato and Spinoza, Vaughan and Blake, among other philosophers and poets, in search of the enlargement vision brings. It was a reaching forward into the realm of the imagination drawn by the written word.... Enhancing appreciation of each other through art and nature—long hours in the beech woods with reading aloud—they became “twin souls”, attaining “sacred happiness”, as Ottoline put it early in the affair.¹⁰⁴

The years of loveless marriage when Russell worked diligently on *Principia* had been a prison. The theme of prisons is a constant one in his letters to Ottoline. He completed a manuscript on the subject of which only certain fragments and an article, “The Essence of Religion” (published in *The Hibbert Journal*), have survived. Like his early attempt in 1902–03, he wanted to say imaginatively what philosophy would not allow. Ottoline encouraged Russell’s literary pursuits. She relieved his pain and loneliness, rekindled his sensitivity, and helped to soften the harsh edges of his character.

With respect to the appreciation of literature and music, Ottoline greatly influenced and stimulated Russell. On reading Keats’s “Endymion”, for example, he related to her how the poem “sweeps away my pretence of being indifferent to beauty”.¹⁰⁵ In another letter, he tells her how moved he was on hearing Bach’s Passion Music at Ely Cathedral; the music was so uplifting that he was close to tears and could hardly bear it.¹⁰⁶ In perusing their correspondence, one is also aware that Russell’s love of nature was particularly heightened by their relationship. But was Ottoline successful in getting Russell to appreciate the visual arts? Clark suggests that Ottoline aroused in Russell feelings that Berenson failed to inspire. Brink goes a step further and asserts: “Lady Ottoline awakened Russell’s dormant capacity for liking the visual arts. It is interesting that she should succeed where Berenson failed.”¹⁰⁷ Russell’s correspondence with Ottoline indicates however that, despite Ottoline’s good intentions, there were aesthetic limitations to Russell’s character which even she could not unlock.

“I care for architecture quite enormously”, Russell informed Ottoline on visiting Verona in 1913—it moves and delights me as much as music.”¹⁰⁸ He considered Verona more beautiful than any other Italian city except

Venice, and he was quite impressed by its Italian Gothic cathedral, San Zeno. Nevertheless, with respect to painting, his attitude had not changed significantly in the intervening years. He confessed: “I am terribly deficient about pictures—hardly any pictures really move me—only just a few, such as the Castelfranco Giorgione.”¹⁰⁹ Though aware of Ottoline’s sponsorship of the post-Impressionism of Roger Fry and her interest in the artistic members of Bloomsbury, Russell could not identify with her endeavours in this direction and he felt very much an outsider. His love of beauty, he told her, was of a different nature—an emotional force checked by the sceptical intellect and restricted by a defect in visual imagination:

I do really realize and understand what you say about sensuous beauty. Certain kinds of it I do feel intensely—the beauty of Italy is a constant part of me and a good deal of the beauty of nature is very important to me. And altogether beauty is easy enough to feel in imagination even where I don’t feel it in fact—for instance in pictures.... I suppose one must submit to one’s limitations; after all I see intense beauty, and something of great importance, in good reasoning or any very clear thinking, which to most people seems arid and finite. I am not quite such a philistine as I sometimes say I am, but I feel my interest in visible beauty is what you feel to be “sentimental”—just as interest in thought seems to me when people look to its results and not to the thing itself. This makes me suspicious of my love of beauty such as it is. But I *do* understand that it is quite different from many others and that it is only my limitation.¹¹⁰

Conclusion

There are no major discussions by Russell on the nature of aesthetics after his interaction with Lady Ottoline Morrell. Although she made Russell realize the importance of aesthetic appreciation outside of mathematics, she did not dispel his belief in aesthetic realism where mathematics is the ultimate art form. Two different forces led to his rejection of that belief. In 1913, Santayana published *Winds of Doctrine* which attacked Russell’s views derived from Moore concerning the status of ethics. For Russell, the effect of this attack was shattering. A dichotomy occurred in his thinking between his technical philosophy and his popular writings, and, thereafter, with notable intellectual discomfort, he resorted to relativistic explanations of ethical opinion. If Santayana’s critique was valid with respect to ethics, there can be no doubt that it also discredited Russell’s view that aesthetic notions are objective properties. The other blow to Russell’s aesthetic realism occurred about the same time when Wittgenstein stated that

mathematics consists of tautologies. In retrospect, Russell regarded his philosophical development “as a gradual retreat from Pythagoras”, characterizing his former lofty passages about the beauty of mathematics as “largely nonsense”.¹¹¹

It is interesting to note that although in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein claimed that value transcends the world of “fact-stating” discourse and that aesthetics is ineffable,¹¹² he had definite views on architecture (which nonetheless appear to be related to his metaphysics). The metaphysics of the *Tractatus* which Russell supported with variations is that the logic of language reflects a spartan world of distinct atomic facts. When Wittgenstein became involved in 1926 with his architect friend, Paul Engelmann, to design a house for Wittgenstein’s older sister, he insisted on absolutely simple and precise specifications.¹¹³ Russell recorded the following encounter: “He [Wittgenstein] gave me a lecture on how furniture should be made—he dislikes all ornamentation that is not part of the construction, and can never find anything simple enough.”¹¹⁴ Russell however never shared Wittgenstein’s mania for architectural simplicity. At another one of their confrontations, Wittgenstein argued that “mathematics would promote good taste” to which Russell reacted “A very fine theory, but facts don’t bear it out.”¹¹⁵ One interpreter of Russell’s 1918 lectures “The Philosophy of Logical Atomism” suggests that his lectures can be viewed as an aesthetic treatise:

The aesthetics of logical atomism is reminiscent of the innovative art and literature in the early decades of the century, if not that of today. When Russell asks us to become attentive to the pure sense-datum in “This is white” and to forget that he is holding a piece of chalk, he is asking for an alteration in the way we see things very much like the art students who are obliged to see lines, colours or shadows in place of the accustomed objects. The two are not very different: Russell means to remind us that we do not perceive entities, the drawing master does not want a line where there is only a gradation.¹¹⁶

Interesting as this interpretation is of Russell’s 1918 lectures, Russell himself probably would have been appalled by the comparison of logical atomism to aesthetic exhortation.

With his abandonment of realism in 1913, Russell began to turn his attention to the relationship of science and philosophy. In an essay published in that year, “Science as an Element in Culture”, he contrasted science and art by saying that in the study of art we focus primarily on the achievements of the past and neglect those of the present. Whereas science is dependent for progress on cooperative accumulations of labour, good art, he argued, demands creativity and is a product of individual genius.¹¹⁷

Russell's essay which anticipates C. P. Snow's "Two Cultures", is interesting because he advocates the scientific method in philosophy, a position which he would not have subscribed to during his realist phase.

References to aesthetics after 1913 are scattered in Russell's writings and do not form a coherent body of opinion. In *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, for example, he maintains that "all art belongs to the life of the spirit, though its greatness is derived from its being intimately bound up with the life of instinct".¹¹⁸ In *On Education*, a work where one might expect to find something on the teaching of art to the young, there is only a paragraph on aesthetic accuracy. He tells us that acting, singing and dancing appear to be "the best methods of teaching aesthetic precision. Drawing is less good, because it is likely to be judged by its fidelity to the model, not by aesthetic standards."¹¹⁹ When Russell's friend, Gerald Brenan, asked Russell what he would have to say if he were to write a paper on aesthetics, Russell "replied that if he did he would have to start experimenting with babies and playing trumpets to them".¹²⁰ This facetious answer did not please Brenan who considered it "as exhibiting the shallowness of the rationalist mind".¹²¹

The chief claim of this paper has been that the reasons why Russell never wrote a book on aesthetics are to be found in his *intellectual* development around the turn of the century. One may be tempted to look for psychological causes to explain his failure in aesthetics. Orphaned in childhood he was raised by his grandmother who taught him to believe in austerity and the wickedness of earthly pleasures. But Russell quickly outgrew his grandmother's limitations. He interpreted his deficiency in visual imagination as physical in origin. As we have seen, it was not for lack of trying that he failed to overcome this deficiency. Unsure of his judgments in the visual arts, he thought it inappropriate to express an opinion, and eventually he became sceptical of the validity of aesthetic experience in general.

After Edith Russell's death in 1978, one of her husband's political admirers visited Plas Penrhyn, the Russells' home in North Wales, and was surprised by the lack of taste in the furnishings and decor: the ungainly furniture (some of which was sent to the Russell Archives at McMaster University to re-create an ugly shrine); the shabby buff-coloured walls; the vulgar wall hangings and embroidered tributes; the cold linoleum-floored bathroom with its chipped enamelled tub. Only a reproduction of Piero della Francesca's Holy Ghost, supposedly above Russell's bed, helped to relieve the cheerlessness. The visitor concluded that Russell's many struggles had not affected his brain but had dulled his eye.¹²² The philistine who appreciated literature (and music and architecture, to a lesser extent), loved nature, and revered mathematics might have accepted that conclusion.

Notes

- 1 [Answers to Questionnaire], *Little Review*, 12 (May 1929): 72–3.
- 2 Russell to H. Waterworth, 11 Oct. 1956.
- 3 Russell to J. Vivic, 20 June 1965.
- 4 Russell to Smeets Weert (Richard de Grab), 1 March 1963.
- 5 Russell to William W. Reid, 23 Nov. 1955.
- 6 Russell to Oxford University Press (Richard Brain), 20 Sept. 1966. "Thank you for sending me a copy of the Topolski drawing, which will certainly not do." Topolski had tried to get Russell's reaction to his sketches more than a decade earlier but Russell refused to state his opinion. Russell to Topolski, 7 April 1954. "I am sorry I cannot make any comment, either favourable or unfavourable, as I am quite incapable of appreciating visual art especially when it is modern."
- 7 Russell to David N. Peirce, 12 March 1963.
- 8 "The Free Man's Worship" in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, Vol. 12, eds. Andrew Brink, Margaret Moran and Richard A. Rempel (London: George Allen & Unwin, forthcoming), p. 69.
- 9 Russell to Murray, 28 Dec. 1902. In *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, 3 vols. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1967–9), 1: 162.
- 10 Russell to Berenson, 28 Feb. 1903, Biblioteca Berenson, Settignano, Italy. Quoted in Ernest Samuels, *Bernard Berenson: The Making of a Connoisseur* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 385. For further interesting observations, see Andrew Brink, "The Russell–Berenson Connection", review of Samuels, *Russell*, nos. 35–6 (Autumn–Winter 1979–80): 43–9.
- 11 *My Philosophical Development* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1959), p. 35. "I loved natural beauty with a wild passion; and I read with sympathetic feeling, though with very definite intellectual rejection, the sentimental apologies for religion of Wordsworth, Carlyle and Tennyson."
- 12 "Greek Exercises" in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, Vol. 1, eds. Kenneth Blackwell, Andrew Brink, Nicholas Griffin, Richard A. Rempel and John G. Slater (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), p. 21.
- 13 *Religion and Science* (London: Thornton Butterworth Ltd., 1935), p. 235.
- 14 "A Locked Diary" in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, 1: 44.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 50.
- 16 It was only a few days after completing Ruskin's book (20 June 1893) that Russell attended his first opera, a performance by the Royal Italian Opera Company of Charles François Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*. In his diary, he comments in a very matter of fact way that, of course, he thoroughly enjoyed the performance, implying that it was almost a foregone conclusion that opera as an art form would appeal to him.
- 17 Quoted in *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, 1: 89.
- 18 Logan Pearsall Smith, *Unforgotten Years* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1939), p. 228.
- 19 *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, 1: 83.
- 20 Russell to Sanger, 29 Sept. 1894.
- 21 *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, 1: 80.
- 22 See Russell to Alys Pearsall Smith, 22 Oct. 1894.
- 23 Russell to Alys Pearsall Smith, 16 Sept. 1894.
- 24 "On Pleasure" in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, 1: 202.
- 25 Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, 4th ed. (London: Macmillan, 1890), p. 114. (Russell's copy is signed on the half-title page, "B. Russell Trin. Coll. Camb. June 1893".)
- 26 Russell to Stanley Victor Makower, 8 Oct. 1893. Original in the possession of Mr. Peter Makower.

- 27 F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, 2nd ed. 9th impression corrected and reset (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), p. 411.
- 28 "A Locked Diary", p. 63.
- 29 *An Essay on the Foundations of Geometry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1897), preface, and pp. 55, 170–1, 197.
- 30 William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, Vol. 2 (London: Macmillan, 1891), quoted by James at p. 53 (Russell's library copy).
- 31 *Ibid.*
- 32 *Ibid.*, p. 57.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 60.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 68.
- 35 "A Locked Diary", p. 66.
- 36 *Ibid.*, p. 67.
- 37 Alan Wood, *Bertrand Russell, The Passionate Skeptic, A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958), p. 48.
- 38 *Ibid.*
- 39 Russell met Mrs. Gardner in the spring of 1914 when he gave the Lowell lectures in Boston. See Russell to Lady Ottoline Morrell, 23 March 1914 #1008. "Her house is arranged like an Italian palace, with a courtyard in the middle, and innumerable bits of actual Italian architecture torn from their setting. He showed us a few beautiful pictures, but not her gallery. She is a little wizened old woman, whose talk is a trifle foolish: but to my surprise I found she does really appreciate the beautiful things she possesses, and has a genuine delight in beauty, so on the whole I liked her."
- 40 "What Shall I Read?" records that Russell read this book again in Oct. 1897. Other books of Berenson that Russell read are: *The Central Italian Painters of the Renaissance* (1897) in Dec. 1897; and *The Study and Criticism of Italian Art* (1901) in Oct. 1901. Oddly enough, "What Shall I Read?" does not list Berenson's *The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance* (1896).
- 41 Quoted in Sylvia Sprigge, *Berenson: A Biography* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960), pp. 114–15.
- 42 Russell, "Self-Appreciations. I. Orlando", *The Golden Urn*, Fiesole, no. 1 (March 1897): 30. Reprinted in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, 1: 73.
- 43 Quoted in *The Selected Letters of Bernard Berenson*, ed. A. K. McComb (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1964), p. 65. Russell recalled meeting Berenson in Paris in 1894 during his time at the British Embassy. "[I] made the acquaintance of Berenson, whom I disliked: he began by telling me Alys was a snob, which though true was not exactly tactful, and was rather a case of pot and kettle." See Russell to Lady Ottoline Morrell, 12 May 1911 #64.
- 44 "What I Believe", *Forum*, 82 (Sept. 1929): 130.
- 45 Walter Pater, *The Renaissance, Studies in Art and Poetry* (originally titled *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, 1873), Vol. 1 of *The Works of Walter Pater* (London: Macmillan, 1900), p. 236. See Russell to Helen Thomas Flexner, 10 June 1902, Library of the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. "To burn always with a hard, gem-like flame' is not the purpose of life, in spite of the modern Athenians, who find the vices of antiquity more congenial than its virtues."
- 46 Pater's intensity, his emphasis on the importance of art in the conduct of life, is captured in the final paragraph of Berenson's *The Venetian Painters of the Renaissance*, 3rd ed. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1897), p. 70: "[T]he spirit that animates us is singularly like the better spirit of that epoch [Venice during the Renaissance]. We, too, have an almost intoxicating sense of human capacity. We, too, believe in a great future for humanity, and nothing has yet happened to check our delight in discovery of our faith in life."
- 47 Russell to Alys Pearsall Smith, 1 Sept. 1894. Quoted in *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, 1: 98.
- 48 Logan Pearsall Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 217.
- 49 Frances Spalding, *Roger Fry, Art and Life* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), p. 55; *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, 1: 83.
- 50 Brink, "The Education of Roger Fry", review of Spalding, *Russell*, n.s. 2 (Summer 1982): 75.
- 51 Fry to Marie Mauron, 3 July 1920. Quoted in *Letters of Roger Fry*, Vol. 2, ed. Denys Sutton (London: Chatto & Windus, 1972), p. 485.
- 52 Roger Fry, Preface to Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy* (London: Seeley & Co., 1905), p. v. Fry had access to Russell's "The Study of Mathematics" in which Russell wrote poetically about mathematics as a work of art (see p. 435). Written in 1902, Russell's paper was first published in 1907. I owe this citation to Professor S. P. Rosenbaum.
- 53 Fry to Russell, 7 April 1915.
- 54 Peter Gunn, *Vernon Lee: Violet Paget, 1856–1935* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 156, 206–7.
- 55 Quoted by Russell in his copy of Bernard Bosanquet's *Logic or the Morphology of Knowledge*, Vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888), p. 93.
- 56 Russell to Donnelly, 19 Oct. 1913.
- 57 Quoted by Sprigge, *op. cit.*, p. 140n.
- 58 Quoted by Samuels, *op. cit.*, p. 229; and by Barbara Strachey, *Remarkable Relations: The Story of the Pearsall Smith Family* (London: Gollancz, 1980), p. 175.
- 59 Berenson, *The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance*, 3rd ed., rev. and enl. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909), p. 4.
- 60 *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- 61 Russell's critique is briefly reported by Samuels, *op. cit.*, pp. 229–33. Samuels reports how Berenson reacted to Russell's objections, but Samuels does not explore the philosophical significance of Russell's objections.
- 62 Berenson, *The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance*, p. 3.
- 63 Berkeley's argumentation, originally brought against Descartes, assumes that since distance is a line directed to only one point in the eye and since the projection of the line remains the same whether the distance is long or short, difference of distances must make no difference to the retinal image. Berkeley's view is also contained in *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* which Russell read in Feb. 1894: "Sight therefore doth not suggest or any way inform you, that the visible object you immediately perceive, exists at a distance or will be perceived when you advance further onward, there being a continued series of visible objects succeeding each other during the whole time of your approach." See *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* in *The Works of George Berkeley*, Vol. 1., ed. G. N. Wright (London: Printed for Thomas Tegg, Cheapside, 1843), p. 177.
- 64 James, *op. cit.*, p. 212.
- 65 James, review of Berenson's *Florentine Painters*, *Science*, n.s. 4 (1896): 318. Santayana also reviewed *Florentine Painters*. To a psychologist, Berenson's theory of tactile values, Santayana pointed out, would appear "arbitrary and hasty" since Berenson did not support the theory with experimental evidence. Santayana thought that it was unfair to criticize Berenson's opinions along these lines, however, "as if they represented the author's complete theory of aesthetic values. But his views are worth considering as indications of the directions in which an intelligent connoisseur looks for an explanation of his own judgments." See Santayana, "Berenson's Florentine Painters", *Psychological Review*, 3 (1896): 678.
- 66 Quoted in Samuels, *op. cit.*, p. 232.
- 67 Quoted in Ronald W. Clark, *The Life of Bertrand Russell* (London: Jonathan Cape and Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1975), p. 60.

- 68 Quoted in Samuels, *op. cit.*, p. 323.
- 69 Quoted in Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 80.
- 70 Russell, "Journal [1902–05]" in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, 12: 17, entry for 14 Jan. 1903.
- 71 Berenson to Russell, 22 March 1903. Quoted in Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 95: "I have read your essay ["The Free Man's Worship"] three times, and liked it better and better. Perhaps the most flattering appreciation to be given of it is that the whole is neither out of tune with nor unworthy of the two splendid passages you wrote here." See also note 97.
- 72 Brink, "The Russell–Berenson Connection", p. 44.
- 73 See Alys Russell to Russell, 14 Feb. 1950. In *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, 3: 48. "He [Berenson] says there is no man alive whom he would rather be seeing and talking with than thee, and that he practically agrees with everything thee writes. He has asked me to lend thee his book on Aesthetics, which I will do, though I do not think thee will care for it."
- 74 "The Uses of Luxury" in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, 1: 322.
- 75 *Ibid.*, p. 323.
- 76 *Ibid.*, p. 322.
- 77 "Seems, Madam? Nay, It is" in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, 1: 110.
- 78 Russell to Alys Pearsall Smith, 25 Feb. 1894. Quoted in Paul Levy, *Moore: G. E. Moore and the Cambridge Apostles* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979), p. 127.
- 79 *Ibid.*
- 80 Moore gave the second course of lectures, "Kant's Metaphysics of Ethics", sometime before June 1899. It would appear that these lectures are not extant. See Moore, "An Autobiography" in *The Philosophy of G. E. Moore*, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University, 1942), pp. 23–4; and S. P. Rosenbaum, "G. E. Moore's *The Elements of Ethics*", *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 38 (April 1969): 214–32.
- 81 Levy wrongly analyses Russell's paper as a reply to Moore's "Do We Love Ourselves Best?", read to the Apostles on 4 Feb. 1899. See Levy, *op. cit.*, pp. 204–6; and Nicholas Griffin, "The Acts of the Apostles", review of Levy, *Russell*, n.s. 1 (Summer 1981): 71–82.
- 82 Moore, "The Elements of Ethics", p. 131, original corrected typescript at Cambridge University Library.
- 83 *Ibid.*, p. 162.
- 84 "Was the World Good before the Sixth Day?" in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, 1: 113.
- 85 Moore, "The Elements of Ethics", pp. 134–40; Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903), art. 52.
- 86 "Was the World Good before the Sixth Day?", p. 114.
- 87 Moore, *Principia Ethica*, p. 188.
- 88 *Ibid.*, p. 202.
- 89 *The Principles of Mathematics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903), p. v.
- 90 *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, 1: 146.
- 91 "The Free Man's Worship", p. 71.
- 92 "The Study of Mathematics" in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, 12: 86. This is the passage cited by Fry in his edition of Reynolds's *Discourses*. The beauty of the world of mathematics is expressed by the character of Forano in Russell's 1912 novella, "The Perplexities of John Forstice" in *The Collected Stories of Bertrand Russell*, ed. Barry Feinberg (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1972), pp. 25–7.
- 93 Russell, "The Study of Mathematics", p. 90.
- 94 Russell to Flexner, 10 June 1902.
- 95 "The Study of Mathematics", p. 87. See Margaret Moran, "Bertrand Russell's Early Approaches to Literature", *The University of Toronto Quarterly* (forthcoming).
- 96 "Journal [1902–05]", p. 8, entry for 12 Nov. 1902. "I reached home (after a wonderful sunset) about five, and found [Leo] Stein, with whom I talked aesthetics for a hour. He wishes to discover the part played by meaning in the beauty of literature; I tried, very successfully, to explain why I think it has an added beauty in literature if it has a good moral. I urged that the death of Socrates is better because we admire him, but I produced no valid argument for my main position."
- 97 Russell to Flexner, 2 Aug. 1902. "People who confound literature and painting sometimes permit themselves to say that the subject does not matter: this remark is quite absurd, indeed there is no valid distinction of subject and treatment. What is to be expressed is always emotion; and from this point of view r[h]ythm, for example, belongs essentially to the thing expressed. Thus the theme is all in all for literature. Berenson says that literature is the most expressive of the arts: this is a very profound remark to my mind."
- 98 "The Free Man's Worship", p. 71. See also "On History" in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, 12: 81–2.
- 99 Russell to Alys Russell, 16 May 1902.
- 100 Russell to Lady Ottoline Morrell, [30 March 1911] # 11.
- 101 Russell to Lady Ottoline Morrell, [March 1911] # 2. Quoted in Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 133.
- 102 Russell to Lady Ottoline Morrell, [4 March 1911] # 17.
- 103 Russell to Lady Ottoline Morrell, 19 May 1911 # 74. Quoted in Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 146.
- 104 Brink, "Russell to Lady Ottoline Morrell: The Letters of Transformation", *Russell*, nos. 21–22 (Spring–Summer 1976): 8–9.
- 105 Russell to Lady Ottoline Morrell, [c. 23 March 1912] # 399.
- 106 See Russell to Lady Ottoline Morrell, postmarked 4 March 1912 # 366. Quoted in Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 146. Russell's friend, Rupert Crawshay-Williams, who was a regular reviewer for *Gramophone Records*, described Russell's liking of music as "genuine but not urgent". Russell never felt an active need for music, but was happy to listen to it in company, especially in the company of a woman who loved music. When he was asked in the 1960s about his love of music and the purpose and place of music in culture, Russell replied that like mathematics, music provides a haven from the petty disputes of the world and should "avail to people the concern for beauty and knowledge". See Crawshay-Williams, *Russell Remembered* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 55–6; Russell, [letter to Dr. Jacques Singer, 7 Sept. 1963], *Portland [Oregon] Symphony Journal*, [17 Feb.] 1964, inside front cover.
- 107 Brink, "The Russell–Berenson Connection", p. 45.
- 108 Russell to Lady Ottoline Morrell, [?13 Aug. 1913] # 851.
- 109 Russell to Lady Ottoline Morrell, [15 April 1911] # 32.
- 110 Russell to Lady Ottoline Morrell, [c. 22 March 1912] # 398.
- 111 *My Philosophical Development*, pp. 208, 211. Russell continued to venerate mathematics even after he accepted Wittgenstein's view. Virginia Woolf, for example, recorded the following conversation with Russell in Dec. 1921: "God does mathematics. That's my feeling. It is the most exalted form of art. Art? I said. Well theres [sic] style in mathematics as there is in writing, he said. I get the keenest aesthetic pleasure from reading well written mathematics." See *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. 2, eds. Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie (London: The Hogarth Press, 1978), p. 147.
- 112 Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness with intro. by Russell (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), 4.003 and 6.421.
- 113 See Bernhard Leitner, *The Architecture of Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Documentation* (London: Studio International; Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1973) and Peter Leech, "Wittgenstein the Architect", review of Leitner, *Russell*, no. 11 (Autumn 1973): 13–14. Leech regards Wittgenstein's architecture "as an anticipation of

- the suprematist forms which later came to modify the linear repetitiveness of Cubism”.
- 114 Russell to Lady Ottoline Morrell, postmarked 5 Sept. 1912 #566. Quoted in Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 191.
- 115 Russell to Lady Ottoline Morrell, postmarked 17 May 1912 #455.
- 116 Stephen Alpert, “Aesthetics and Logical Atomism”, *Russell*, no. 10 (Summer 1973): 13.
- 117 Titled “The Place of Science in a Liberal Education” in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, 12: 390–7.
- 118 *Principles of Social Reconstruction* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1916), p. 207.
- 119 *On Education Especially in Early Childhood* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1926), p. 198.
- 120 Gerald Brenan, *Personal Record, 1920–1972* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), p. 269.
- 121 *Ibid.*
- 121 Leo Abse, “The Italian Job?”, *In Britain* (Oct. 1978): 26–9.