

Bertrand Russell's Crisis of Faith

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“Aye, but it hath a sting,
To come to reason”.¹

Philosophers, Russell once wrote, view the world in one of two ways: either as a jelly or as a pile of shot. Russell himself, in the closing years of the nineteenth century, abandoned the jelly in favour of the shot. This was the most radical of all the intellectual changes Russell went through in his career. Since it led directly to the writing of his greatest philosophical works, and, in general, to much of what is distinctive and best in Russell's mature philosophy, the change has usually been presented as an intellectual liberation: an escape from nineteenth-century philosophical muddle to twentieth-century analytical rigour; from the Victorian parlour to the Bauhaus. There was, indeed, much of this in it; but also there was a more distressing aspect. The Victorian parlour offered a comfortable cosiness not available in the bleak, hard light of the Bauhaus interior. The change, I think, also had its impact on Russell's personal life, on his moral thinking, and, in particular, on the way he regarded human relationships. I shall do what I can in this paper to bring out these interconnections. But, first, I want to describe the Victorian parlour in a little more detail, for, while the Bauhaus is sufficiently well known for my present purposes, the parlour was not so dark and cobwebby as it has sometimes appeared in retrospect.

The British neo-Hegelian movement, in which Russell did his first philosophical work, embraced a fairly wide range of positions with only a few clear theses in common. Of these, I want to draw attention to two: the idealist thesis, that (ultimately) spirit alone is real; and the unity thesis, that (ultimately) either all relations are internal or else there are no relations at all. The disjunction in the unity thesis admits the distinction between the

two main brands of neo-Hegelianism: The Absolute idealism of Bradley and Bosanquet which rejected relations altogether, holding that ultimate reality, the Absolute, was a single, relationless whole; and the personal idealism of McTaggart, Seth and Howison, which held that the Absolute was a community of spirits linked by internal relations. Even though Russell says virtually nothing about the nature of the Absolute, it is clear that he held the idealist thesis.² It is clear also that he held the unity thesis, but it is not clear whether he held it in its monist or its pluralist form.³ It is possible, in fact, that Russell never decided between the two. There is a good deal of discussion in his early work on the nature of relations, and it was the failure of neo-Hegelianism to provide a satisfactory theory of relations which eventually led him to break with the movement.

The neo-Hegelian movement dominated British philosophy in the last quarter of the nineteenth century partly for narrowly philosophical reasons: the transmission of Kant's and Hegel's thought to Britain, and the decline of British empiricism as represented by Mill; but partly, also, for wider intellectual and social reasons. The neo-Hegelian movement was, in part, a conservative reaction among intellectuals (especially those from Evangelical backgrounds) to the breakdown in social relations under capitalism. The neo-Hegelian dialectic ensures, through the unity thesis, that the antagonistic atomism of social relations under capitalism is transcended in the Absolute, in which individual and class conflicts will be submerged in an organic unity. This much, of course, was provided by dialectical materialism, but neo-Hegelianism had, for nineteenth-century bourgeois purposes, the important advantage of offering relief from bourgeois society without the need to change the social and economic relations which had brought it into being.⁴ Indeed, the neo-Hegelians tended to claim that such a bourgeois society had already been transcended, for the Absolute was real and all else mere appearance.

Bradley and McTaggart, the two neo-Hegelians by whom Russell was most influenced, were both strongly conservative. Russell, by contrast, coming from a liberal background, was little impressed by this aspect of British idealism. Even as a neo-Hegelian he had noted to Alys Pearsall Smith how "the Absolute ... always goes against the *Chronicle*."⁵ And the view that the Absolute was entirely good and thus that evil was unreal was the occasion of Russell's earliest dissent from neo-Hegelianism in 1897. Russell summed up his objection: "God's in his heaven, all's wrong with the world."⁶ To call evil "appearance" and maintain that in reality it was good, did not improve conditions as they were experienced in human life. Nonetheless, if the comforts of the Absolute were overrated, they were not entirely absent. Even if one could not maintain that evil, suffering and conflict were illusory, one could still hold that, in addition to them, there was in the world some source of infinite, indestructible good. The world, if

not entirely good through and through, at least contained only defeasible evil.⁷ I think these considerations appealed to Russell up to 1897, but possibly not thereafter.

A second reason for the dominance of neo-Hegelianism towards the end of the nineteenth century was that it appeared to provide an answer to the Victorian crisis of faith. At the very least, the idealist thesis provided the irreligious with some alternative to scientific materialism. Moreover, neo-Hegelianism as, in many forms, an evolutionary doctrine was not susceptible to undercutting by Darwin's theory in the way that Christian belief had been. Some neo-Hegelians, rather shamelessly, even co-opted Darwin as a sort of half-hearted Hegelian. Beyond that, however, the Absolute provided an object of veneration every bit as serviceable as the Christian God, without any of the latter's intellectual defects. The neo-Hegelians cheerfully acknowledged these matters. Thus Stirling, one of the founders of the movement, said his metaphysics had "no object but to restore faith";⁸ and Edward Caird said the task of philosophy was "to regain such a view of things as shall reconcile us to the world and to ourselves. The need for philosophy arises out of the broken harmony of a spiritual life."⁹

It would be an error, however, to suppose that the neo-Hegelians, recognizing the quasi-religious consolations of their philosophy, were indulging in mere intellectual wish-fulfilment. After all, even religion, to be consoling, had to be convincing first. And by the standards of the time, neo-Hegelian arguments were not bad; indeed, some of the chief practitioners developed a reputation for a rigorous scepticism. Bradley, in particular, developed his position through a radical critique of all aspects of human knowledge, coming to the conclusion that nothing we claim to know could be wholly true, and that the Absolute, although required if anything was to exist at all, was necessarily beyond propositional articulation.¹⁰

In McTaggart's outline¹¹ of a three-part idealist programme, Bradley could be held to have accomplished the first two stages: the critique of non-idealist philosophies and the proof of the idealist thesis. The third stage, "to determine what is the fundamental nature of spirit", had been essentially written off by Bradley, who opened himself thereby to the charge of scepticism. McTaggart, however, devoted himself to the determination of the nature of spirit with impressive continuity of purpose from his earliest publication, *The Further Determination of the Absolute* (1893), to his *magnum opus*, *The Nature of Existence* (1921, 1927), the second volume of which was posthumously published. Yet despite the fact that McTaggart was aiming in advance to establish a particular claim about the nature of the Absolute, he imposed high standards of rigour on his arguments, with the result that some of the arguments can still be taken seriously, even by those entirely out of sympathy with his metaphysical programme.¹² As Geach says "There will be general agreement that [McTaggart's] conclusion is false, but little

agreement about what is wrong with the argument."¹³

Russell's work as a neo-Hegelian can be located within the third stage of McTaggart's programme. But Russell, unlike McTaggart, never tackled the Absolute head-on, and consequently the content of Russell's views about the Absolute remains obscure. Instead, Russell tended to follow Bradley in approach, only with a great deal more care and attention to detail. Bradley's metaphysical work can be seen as a large-scale transcendental deduction of the Absolute—it was to be demonstrated that the Absolute was necessary if anything was to exist at all, and (equivalently) if there was to be any experience at all.¹⁴ The transcendental argument was particularly coarse-grained, however, in that it provided virtually no information about the entity whose existence was transcendently deduced. I think, though it is hard to be sure, that Russell intended to uncover the true nature of the Absolute by means of a series of more detailed transcendental deductions. It was his aim, I believe, to establish a metaphysical science of the Absolute. In keeping with Russell's epistemological motives,¹⁵ this science was to be the end result of a dialectical encyclopedia of the sciences. This was the first half of Russell's Tiergarten programme which he describes in his *Autobiography* as follows:

I remember a cold, bright day in early spring [1895] when I walked by myself in the Tiergarten, and made projects for future work. I thought that I would write one series of books on the philosophy of the sciences from pure mathematics to physiology, and another series of books on social questions. I hoped that the two series might ultimately meet in a synthesis at once scientific and practical.¹⁶

His procedure was to take each of the sciences in turn for analysis, the aim of which was to establish (by transcendental arguments) the basic principles on which it was dependent, and the fundamental contradictions to which it gave rise. Russell's expectation was that each of the special sciences would be irreducibly inconsistent, since, following Bradley, he believed that only a comprehensive description of reality could be consistent.¹⁷ At each stage the contradictions of the special sciences would be removed by a dialectical supersession (*Aufhebung*) to a wider science. Russell started, as is well known, with geometry. There he found contradictions between the relativity of space and the Axiom of Free Mobility, which he thought could be removed by a transition to a kinematic definition of matter. This led him to physics where he encountered further contradictions arising from the use of the calculus to treat infinitely small quantities. This in turn led him to pure mathematics and to further contradictions in the mathematical continuum. This led him to Cantor's transfinite arithmetic and ultimately to set theory. One feature of this procedure can be immediately appreciated: the discov-

ery of a contradiction in any of the special sciences is not necessarily a cause for alarm, since such contradictions are expected and, it is anticipated, will disappear as the intellectual framework is widened.

Russell had originally intended the encyclopedia of the sciences to end with psychology (there are hints of this terminus throughout his work in the period 1896–98). But very little was done on the psychological side, since the Tiergarten programme came unstuck before psychology could be reached.¹⁸ The problem came from the unsatisfactory idealist theory of relations. This is not the place to go into details¹⁹ but in outline what happened was the following: Russell discovered that relations, in particular ordering relations, were essential for mathematics. In studying Leibniz²⁰ Russell had become aware of the importance of relations, and had traced the problems in Leibniz's logic to the doctrine that all propositions were of subject-predicate form. It seemed to Russell that neo-Hegelianism could do no better, since the neo-Hegelians either rejected relations altogether, or else insisted that all relations were internal relations, a view which Russell took to be tantamount to their rejection in favour of properties.

Faced with the impossibility of pursuing his analysis of mathematics without relations, Russell broke with neo-Hegelianism. In its place Russell adopted a position which can aptly be described as "absolute realism", an extreme form of pluralism.²¹ Whereas previously he had believed that only the Absolute was real, now his ontology expanded to include everything that could be thought of or mentioned. Russell experienced the change "as a great liberation, as if I had escaped from a hot-house on to a wind-swept headland."²² And, once the change in metaphysics was supplemented by his discovery in 1900 of Peano's new method of symbolic logic, important results, which had eluded him for years, suddenly appeared almost effortlessly:

I spent September [1900] in extending [Peano's] methods to the logic of relations. It seems to me in retrospect that, through that month, every day was warm and sunny. The Whiteheads stayed with us at Fernhurst, and I explained my new ideas to him. Every evening the discussion ended with some difficulty, and every morning I found that the difficulty of the previous evening had solved itself while I slept. The time was one of intellectual intoxication. My sensations resembled those one has after climbing a mountain in a mist, when, on reaching the summit, the mist suddenly clears, and the country becomes visible for forty miles in every direction. For years I had been endeavouring to analyse the fundamental notions of mathematics, such as order and cardinal numbers. Suddenly in the space of a few weeks, I discovered what appeared to be definitive answers to the problems which had baffled me for years. And in the course of discovering these answers, I

was introducing a new mathematical technique, by which regions formerly abandoned to the vagueness of philosophers were conquered for the precision of exact formulae. Intellectually, the month of September 1900 was the highest point of my life.²³

Working within this euphoria Russell finished *The Principles of Mathematics* by the end of the year. From then on, however, the euphoria failed and Russell “began to be assailed simultaneously by intellectual and emotional problems which plunged me into the darkest despair I have ever known.”²⁴

The problems were three-fold. First, in February 1901, came his mystical experience. Prior to that time, he informs us, his emotional life had been “calm and superficial. I had forgotten all the deeper issues, and had been content with flippant cleverness.”²⁵ Then, in the face of Evelyn Whitehead’s pain,

the ground seemed to give way beneath me, and I found myself in quite another region. Within five minutes I went through some such reflections as the following: the loneliness of the human soul is unendurable; nothing can penetrate it except the highest intensity of the sort of love that religious leaders have preached; what does not spring from this motive is harmful, or at best useless ... in human relations one should penetrate to the core of loneliness in each person and speak to that.²⁶

Second, in May 1901, he came upon his famous class paradox, which threatened his entire reconstruction of mathematics with inconsistency. Third, and undoubtedly most important, came the realization that he no longer loved his wife, with which began the protracted and agonized break-up of his marriage. In the next few years one finds his writings littered with references to his despair: he talks repeatedly of the loneliness of human life, of trying to penetrate the walls of the self, and of the insignificance of human life when viewed against a cosmic backdrop. He tries, with scant success one imagines, to find meaning for human life in simple endurance in this vale of tears; in the heroic achievements of the noble few; in trying to alleviate the distress of others; in the search for truth; in remembrance of things past; and in man’s ability to defy his fate in an indifferent universe.²⁷

My claim, in what follows, is that all three of Russell’s crises of 1901 were connected in some way with his abandonment of neo-Hegelianism; that, by mid-winter, the wind-swept headland had ceased to be so bracing and had become distinctly bleak and cold. I am not, of course, going to claim that the break-up of his marriage is to be explained by the fact that he could no longer identify Alys as one of the aspects of the Absolute, nor that Alys’s clumsiness and her mother had nothing to do with his growing disenchantment with her. What I do want to argue is that his change in metaphysics

entailed a change in what he thought was possible in human relationships, and that this in turn led to a change in what he thought was possible within his marriage. Before attempting this task, let us briefly review what Russell had lost when he ceased to be a neo-Hegelian. As a neo-Hegelian Russell had believed that reality was either a single, relationless whole, or else a whole composed of parts related internally to each other, that is, each part would condition, and be conditioned by, all the others. Moreover, this reality consisted entirely of mind or minds. He thus had a guarantee that reality was in some sense commensurate with human beings: that the stuff of which, in the Cartesian tradition, human beings were characteristically thought to be, was also the stuff of which the universe was entirely composed. In addition, either the bounds of the finite mental self would (as on Bradley’s theory) fade away into a union with the entire cosmos, or else (on McTaggart’s theory) would be broken by an indissoluble union with all the other parts of the cosmos, such that any change to any part would affect the very nature of all the others. Two other features of the Absolute deserve notice here, both stemming from its ability to harmonize the disparate. First, it offered a blank cheque against any contradictions that might be turned up by a special science. Second, it promised a complete supersession of evil, for reality was good and completely harmonious. Russell seems never to have accepted this latter doctrine whole-heartedly, but his efforts circa 1896–97 to found a theory of morals on the notion of harmonious desire²⁸ reveal its influence; and his hopes of three years earlier for a metaphysical union of desire and knowledge,²⁹ although somewhat doubting, are even more optimistic.

Of Russell’s three-fold crisis, let me deal first with the contradiction because that is by far the most straightforward. In May 1901 Russell discovered the class of all classes which are not members of themselves, and that, according to then-current set-theoretic principles, it was and was not a member of itself. The discovery of the contradiction was an enormous intellectual blow: Russell spent years (until 1908) trying to solve it. There was no other intellectual problem that Russell ever faced that took him so long to resolve: he was a thinker of great flexibility, willing to replace an entire system of thought in order to remove a problem which did not lend itself to solution within the system. Such changes often took place with dazzling rapidity, over and over again. Yet with the contradiction he was deadlocked for seven years. Again, no other logician or mathematician took the contradiction and others like it as seriously as Russell.³⁰ Why then was Russell so exercised by the contradiction?

Part of the answer can be found, I think, in his early intellectual debts to Bradley. His early study of Bradley had made him especially sensitive to the importance of contradictions, which played a dominant role in Bradley’s methodology. Bradley proceeded almost entirely by arguing that certain

concepts (e.g. those of space, time and relation) were inherently contradictory, and thus were applicable only to appearance. Reality, by contrast, was completely free from contradiction and could be characterized negatively by means of these *reductio* arguments. The search for, and removal of, contradictions was a staple part of Bradley's philosophy, and it became a staple part of Russell's too. Thus to find an irremediable contradiction in science would show that the Absolute was forever beyond our intellectual grasp; that Bradley was right: Thought and reality were not identical. Thus the second of the questions for which Russell sought an answer in philosophy—could anything be known with certainty?—would have to be answered in the negative. But had Russell discovered the contradiction as a neo-Hegelian he would have had recourse to less draconian resolutions. He had, after all, dealt with many contradictions before: they followed fast and free in his neo-Hegelian writings, each one resolved by a move to a wider intellectual point of view. Nor was it just that, having found a contradiction in set theory, he had reached the widest available point of view. He had already turned up contradictions which he thought were pervasive in mathematics and even a contradiction—that between quality and quantity—which infected logic as well.³¹ None of these had caused him too much disquiet. And the reason was that, in those days, he could still hope for a resolution through a full science of the Absolute: the Absolute had provided unlimited credit for the resolution of intellectual problems. When this source of credit, which we see Russell drawing on repeatedly during his neo-Hegelian period dried up, his intellectual enterprise was in serious trouble. There was an irony in all this, for he had abandoned neo-Hegelianism in order to be able to develop an adequate account of arithmetic, and now the account of arithmetic developed seemed to be ineradicably defective and inconsistent. The sense of liberation he had experienced as his research programme flourished once neo-Hegelianism had been abandoned was abruptly lost. "Never glad confident morning again", quoted Whitehead.³²

Russell's account of his mystical experience is not without some (superficial) paradoxes either. As a result of it, he says he felt "that I know the innermost thoughts of everybody that I met in the street", that he found himself "in far closer touch than previously with all my friends, and many of my acquaintances", that he was "filled with semi-mystical feelings about beauty" and that it left "a certain emotional tone in all my human relations".³³ On the very next page, he describes all this as a "set-back". It is clear, however, that his mystic illumination was a tragic and not an ecstatic vision. Its central theme seems to have been the loneliness of the human condition: "the loneliness of the human soul is unendurable" and impenetrable except by the highest intensity of religious love. "[I]n human relations one should penetrate to the core of loneliness in each person and speak to

that." "I found myself filled ... with a desire almost as profound as that of the Buddha to find some philosophy which should make human life endurable."³⁴ In a series of fragments collected under the title "The Pilgrimage of Life", in which he explores the world this tragic vision has revealed, it becomes clear that loneliness is one of the main problems:

We are all born into the world single, separate, imprisoned as in a dungeon by strong walls of Self.³⁵

We are all orphans and exiles, lost children wandering in the night, with hopes, ideals, aspirations that must not be choked by a heartless world.³⁶

Each human being is born single, separate, enclosed as in a dungeon by strong walls of egotism.³⁷

a solitude so absolute and terrible that death itself seems a welcome escape.³⁸

In "Pilgrimage" the "walls of Self" metaphor is used repeatedly,³⁹ and in "Prisons" the self as dungeon is the title metaphor.⁴⁰ If, as Blackwell has argued extensively,⁴¹ one can see Russell's attempt to break down the walls of self in Spinozistic terms, it is quite natural to see imprisonment within the self in Leibnizian ones. His spiritual task in "Pilgrimage" and in "Prisons" was to find the window in the monad. The conclusion he comes to in "Pilgrimage", as in his mystical experience, is that "Through love the walls of self may be broken down."⁴²

Such beliefs about the loneliness of the human soul would have been quite impossible for him as a neo-Hegelian, for neo-Hegelian souls are not lonely—in McTaggart's version they are integrally related to each other. Nor do they have walls—they are, in Bradley's phrase, "finite centres of feeling", and even then are ultimately coalesced in the Absolute.⁴³ Russell's absolute realist souls, by contrast, were lonely, irremediably so. Their relations with each other, as with everything else, were external—the relations might change without affecting the nature of the relata. This atomist view of the world deeply affected his view of human relations. Previously these could be taken pretty much for granted, but now they became a rather desperate matter, requiring almost superhuman efforts of love and sympathy. It is significant that when, in *My Philosophical Development*, Russell casts around for a plausible example of an internal relation, the relation he chooses is "loves".⁴⁴ For it was only through love, he came to think, that the intolerable loneliness of the human soul could be overcome.⁴⁵ It is as if he were desperately trying to preserve love as an

internal relation because without some such internal relation the isolation of the individual would be ineradicable, and human life unendurable and without recourse.

As time went by, love lost its uniqueness in being able to breach the walls of the self. In "Prisons" love, knowledge and service are given as forms of union with the world, of the self with the not-self.⁴⁶ Even so, love remains pre-eminent among the windows of the soul. It is so even in the Prologue to his *Autobiography* where love relieves "that terrible loneliness in which one shivering consciousness looks over the rim of the world into the cold unfathomable lifeless abyss" and the union of love presents "in a mystic miniature, the prefiguring vision of the heaven that saints and poets have imagined."⁴⁷ In assigning such a role to love, Russell, of course, was not alone, and notable among his immediate predecessors was McTaggart.

This alarmist view of human relations took its toll on Russell's marriage. The belief that whatever does not spring from the highest intensity of religious love is "harmful, or at best useless" imposes rather a high value threshold and does not augur well for an eight-year old marriage.⁴⁸ There were, of course, a great many factors involved in the break-up of Russell's marriage. But it is not without significance that Russell had wooed Alys with McTaggart's *Further Determination of the Absolute*, a work in which it is argued that reality consists of a community of spirits united by bonds of love:

We have now determined, as well as we can, the nature of perfected knowledge and volition, as far as the formal conditions of perfection will allow us to go. What is the concrete and material content of such a life as this? What does it come to? I believe it means one thing, and one thing only—love. When I have explained that I do not mean benevolence, even in its most impassioned form, not even the feeling of St. Francis, I shall have cut off a probable explanation of my meaning. When I add that I do not mean the love of Truth, or Virtue, or Beauty, or any other word that can be found in the dictionary, I shall have made confusion worse confounded. When I continue by saying that I mean passionate, all-absorbing, all-consuming love, I shall have become scandalous....

For let us consider. We should find ourselves in a world composed of nothing but individuals like ourselves. With these individuals we should have been brought into the closest of all relations, we should see them, each of them, to be rational and righteous. And we should know that in and through these individuals our own highest aims and ends were realized. What else does it come to? To know another person thoroughly, to know that he conforms to one's highest standards, to feel that through him the end of one's own life is realized—is this anything but love?⁴⁹

It is not clear to what extent Russell accepted this as metaphysics, but it is not impossible that he believed it for a while when the pamphlet first came out in the summer of 1893. He talked to Alys of the work's importance (letter of 5 September 1893); he accepted McTaggart's proof that there was no place for virtue in a state of perfection (letter of 19 August 1893); and (for a time) McTaggart's proof of immortality (letter of 29 October 1894). Moreover, the dialectical union of knowledge and desire on which McTaggart bases his argument for the importance of love was something that Russell felt attracted toward even though he felt uncertain of its justification.⁵⁰ Finally, he confided to his journal on 12 August 1893 that he had planned to show Alys "some of the more intelligible passages in McTaggart's paper, about love in its philosophical aspect."⁵¹ The months after McTaggart's pamphlet was published were crucial, early months in his relationship with Alys. Alys had expressed a strong desire for independence, which she felt would be compromised by marriage. Russell, in reply, criticized independence as an end in itself, and compared Alys's view with the old atomistic social philosophy in contrast to "the modern, which regards the only reality as Spirit, and the whole Universe as a unity of Spirits, connected as the members of the body are in working together for a common aim."⁵² After Russell had read the pamphlet for a second time he sent it to Alys, apparently in the hope it would further his romantic aspirations. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that he saw in his relationship to Alys some sort of anticipation of the spiritual state that McTaggart envisaged, intensified and on a cosmic scale, in the Absolute.⁵³

In Russell's mystical experience, a view of the world which he thought was a consequence of his metaphysical position was brought home to him in an emotionally disturbing way. It could of course have been brought home to him at any time after his abandonment of neo-Hegelianism. That it was somewhat postponed was partly due to the fact that no one draws all the consequences of his position at once, and partly due to the euphoria he felt at the new direction his work had taken. The mystical experience occurred only after his initial burst of work on the new philosophy had abated. I have no reflections to offer on why it should have been Evelyn Whitehead's attack of angina that provoked it.⁵⁴ And I have nothing to say against the view that, as an orphan brought up with few childhood friends in a high bourgeois Victorian household, Russell was especially prone to loneliness. My point is that before he abandoned neo-Hegelianism Russell could not have had *that* mystical experience, for the beliefs about the human condition on which it was based were beliefs he would have rejected as a neo-Hegelian. A mystic intuition of the loneliness of the human soul is not available to neo-Hegelians.

In this I am not, of course, claiming that neo-Hegelians cannot feel lonely, but merely that they cannot see loneliness as part of the human

condition. There is a wider point involved here. It is a mistake to treat many emotions purely experientially: in particular, mystical experiences have a cognitive or intellectual component. Equally, it is a mistake to treat belief as mere assent to a proposition; beliefs carry commitment and frequently emotional weight as well. This was certainly the case with neo-Hegelian doctrine among its adherents. Thus the occurrence of certain emotions can produce cognitive dissonance with certain systems of belief. Given some limitation on the degree of explicit cognitive dissonance an individual can tolerate, the impossibility of certain emotional experiences for individuals who continue to hold a given system of beliefs follows. As a neo-Hegelian Russell could have had intense experiences on the occasion of Mrs. Whitehead's angina attack, but these experiences could hardly have been seen by him as a revelation of human loneliness. Experientially, the event could have been the same, but its cognitive component would have been different. Had the cognitive component remained the same as well, the experience would have been a *conversion* experience, bringing to an end his neo-Hegelian beliefs.

In addition to this striking change in his attitude to personal relationships, Russell's attitude to social relationships underwent, by his own account, an equally important change in this dramatic five minutes.⁵⁵ The social complacency that marked the neo-Hegelian movement was swept away: "Having been an Imperialist, I became during those five minutes a pro-Boer and a Pacifist."⁵⁶ With the previous organic view of social relationships gone, the fabric of society became a much more delicate thing, requiring love and care for its preservation. Social groupings took on less importance, for the basic fact was that each human being was alone in a dangerous, painful and, above all, indifferent universe. Whatever might be achieved in the way of society had to be achieved in despite of this fact. Nor could the pain and suffering be in some way discounted as steps on the route to some higher fulfilment in the Absolute. Russell, it is true, had for long been sceptical of these neo-Hegelian pieties, as he had of organic social relationships, but it is not difficult to detect in his neo-Hegelian writings some hopes along these lines.

Another permanent consequence of Russell's crisis of faith was his expectation that rational inquiry would reveal an inhospitable world. To believe otherwise was to indulge in wishful thinking, the gravest of intellectual sins. I know of no other philosopher who emphasized this so much or repeated it so often. "Truth", we are told, "is a stern and pitiless God ... his cold commentary freezes the blood."⁵⁷ Again, truth, this time "a ruthless taskmaster", "permits no legitimate consolation, not even the belief that human greatness is truly great."⁵⁸ This is a view already familiar from the "Greek Exercises",⁵⁹ from an earlier period of Russell's life when the corruscating effects of reason had destroyed comfortable beliefs. The neo-

Hegelian period can be seen as an interlude in which, for once, reason itself seemed capable of delivering a satisfying vision of the world. After that, however, he seems to have remained firm in the conviction that reason cannot support any opinion which might be regarded as comfortable.⁶⁰ Few, outside existentialism, have insisted so strongly on the bleakness of their world-view. The truth, it seems, is bound to be unpalatable. We see this in his extreme contempt for those whom he considered to have let wishful thinking get in the way of reason. Thus, the following comment on Bosanquet in a letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell: "What *is* one to do with such a resolute confusion between what the world is and what one would like it to be? Bosanquet is typical among philosophers in having never felt the pure intellectual impulse, which merely wants to understand. The vice in philosophers is due to their determination to find religion."⁶¹ Having so painfully emancipated himself from neo-Hegelianism Russell was contemptuous of those who did not have the hardihood to follow him. Bosanquet, he thought, could only believe in the concrete universal (the occasion for the above outburst) because it was such a pleasant thing to have in one's ontology.⁶² The same contempt, I think, informs his splendid demolition of pragmatism, which had attempted to keep the consolations of philosophy by redefining truth as what it pays to believe.⁶³

Russell's intellectual response to his crisis of faith developed in two stages during the years before the First World War. The first response, roughly contemporaneous with the early years of the break-up of his marriage, was the bleak existentialism of "The Free Man's Worship". The second, coinciding with his relationship with Lady Ottoline Morrell, was an attempt to find some mystical faith by which this bleakness might be overcome.⁶⁴ The first paragraph of "The Free Man's Worship" (after Mephistopheles's history of the world) contains, in brief summary, many of the points used by existentialists to establish the absurdity of life: the universe is an "accidental collocation of atoms" doomed to extinction, and human life along with it is the product of purposeless and meaningless processes likewise doomed to "be buried beneath the débris of a universe in ruins". "Only within the scaffolding of these truths", Russell concludes, "only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built."⁶⁵ As a neo-Hegelian Russell would have found this picture of the world in error on all points. To take one point not adequately emphasized in the paragraph cited: as a neo-Hegelian Russell denied the reality of matter; after his mystical experience Russell saw matter, often personified, as a great source of evil.⁶⁶ The late-nineteenth century scientific world-view had claimed Russell by the time he wrote "The Free Man's Worship", a world-view often thought to be directly opposed to neo-Hegelianism.⁶⁷ In "The Free Man's Worship" Russell runs through the gamut of existentialist responses to this sort of universe: from the assertion of human freedom,

through Promethean defiance to resignation. The last is what he advocates.

These consolations are rather minor, though there are two respects in which his metaphysical position might have offered him more. First, although he had abandoned idealism he was not, at this time, a materialist. Thus it would have been possible for him to exempt the mental or spiritual world from the domination of matter. He made use of this point in connection with free will. The world of matter he regarded as determined, yet in thought the will was free.⁶⁸ But this seems to have been the only use he made of his dualism—beyond the freedom of the will in thought, the mental world did not seem to offer much consolation to the free man, whose hopes, fears, loves and beliefs identified with “the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms”.⁶⁹ Second, Russell had not yet espoused a reduction of values to psychological states—a view he was to adopt during the First World War.⁷⁰ It is this reduction which makes the problem of the meaning of life insoluble.⁷¹ Between 1903 and 1910, under the influence of G. E. Moore's *Principia Ethica* (1903), he held that goodness was a non-natural property. It might be thought his position in “The Free Man's Worship” was inconsistent on this point. For if goodness was a non-natural property then no characterization of the non-natural features of the world such as Russell attempted at the outset of “The Free Man's Worship” would be sufficient to draw any consequences as to the moral nature of the universe. On the other hand, Moore had claimed that most of the good things in the world were in fact human psychological states.⁷² Even so, in a dualistic universe with a meaningless materialist component, such as Russell envisaged in 1903, such psychological states as were good would still be possible—*unless* in order to be good a psychological state required a valuable (or meaningful) material universe for its object, a principle which is not only false, but was not held by Russell, so far as I can tell. But even Mooreans may find life meaningless, provided that the things which are of value are sufficiently few or insufficiently valuable or simply too remote from human concerns to make much difference to human life. And this could be the case whether or not value was mainly to be found in psychological states.

What Russell seems to be missing are sufficient, other, independent sources of value, such as neo-Hegelianism provided. While Russell could (and in the end, even in this piece of despair, probably does) admit that there are things of value in the world, he could still argue that they were insufficient to make life wholly worthwhile, though possibly enough to make it endurable. This certainly seems to be the case in the first “Pilgrimage” fragment.⁷³ There the existence of things of value is admitted, though their transience is deplored (especially that of human beings, which are “the best of all” good things).⁷⁴ The real trouble seems to be that the pursuit of the good requires so much suffering, self-sacrifice, courage, isolation and

endurance, all undertaken without any hope of reward or compensation. In a later fragment, after a number of sources of value have been considered and found inadequate, Russell reaches a position much closer to that of “The Free Man's Worship”. At its end, in a striking passage, Russell concedes that what good there is in the world (not much, since “the world is bad”) is simply too remote from human concerns to make our lives worthwhile:

[T]he universe pursues its course regardless of good and evil. This is the last cruellest irony, that the knowledge of good and evil is confined to beings powerless to produce the one or destroy the other. Virtue requires renunciation, requires a life of pain and effort and repression; and the result, in the end, is trivial. But little as it is, it is the greatest thing permitted to poor humanity by the purposeless but omnipotent procession of fleeting worlds. And the desire that virtue should not be trivial is merely the last refuge of self-love. This too must be renounced; virtue is painful and transitory, but still it remains virtue; and beyond this we must ask nothing.⁷⁵

None of this could be true *without* the independence of values, yet the existence of things of independent value does not suffice to save human life from tragedy.⁷⁶

In the years which followed the composition of “The Free Man's Worship” Russell's purely negative view of the human condition was somewhat alleviated, and he attempted to construct a philosophy with rather more of the positive virtues of neo-Hegelianism. This effort coincided with his affair with Lady Ottoline Morrell and was in part inspired by an attempt to find common ground between her religious faith and his own lack of it. In fact, there were a variety of attempts, each issuing in failure. The early efforts, “Prisons” and “The Essence of Religion”, attempted the formulation of a non-dogmatic religion. Both were rapidly judged to be failures by Russell. In their place, Russell attempted to develop a view of philosophy which would afford a place to the sort of mystical insight which he had come to think was necessary for a meaningful life.

In “Mysticism and Logic” Russell claimed that the greatest philosophers had combined scientific knowledge with mystical insight—he gives Plato and Heraclitus as examples. The problem that Russell faced was that, in his view, “science” (in particular logic, as applied to philosophical problems) had rendered untenable those doctrines which could, with general agreement, be labelled “mystical”. Russell gives four such doctrines.

- I. Knowledge may be obtained by (mystical) insight as well as by reason.
- II. Plurality and division are illusory.

- III. Time is unreal.
 IV. Evil is illusory.⁷⁷

As a definition of mysticism, these four theses, though not so wildly idiosyncratic as to be unrecognizable, are certainly eccentric. Most notably, mysticism is usually defined experientially, rather than doctrinally.⁷⁸ Moreover, it is not difficult to find mysticisms which deny one or more of Russell's theses: Jainist and early Buddhist mysticism were pluralist; Christian mysticism (at least in most forms) does not deny the reality of evil; and the unreality of time, where it is asserted, is usually regarded as a consequence rather than a first principle. Of Russell's four theses only the first seems to be universally held by mystics; and even then Russell's formulation is too weak. For it is characteristic of mystical positions that knowledge of some (usually important) aspects of reality is held to be attainable *only* by means of mystical insight. Such knowledge is held to be beyond propositional articulation (the mystic's ineffability thesis, which Russell completely ignores). The eccentricities of Russell's account, however, become immediately intelligible when it is realized that all but the first of the four theses were prominent features of neo-Hegelianism. It seems that in 1914 Russell regarded the neo-Hegelian programme as an attempt to achieve mystical ends by rational means.⁷⁹

Russell is not impressed with mysticism as doctrine. "[F]ully developed mysticism," he says, "seems to me mistaken" on all four points.⁸⁰ Nonetheless, it is clear that Russell seeks to incorporate mysticism in some way into philosophy. One might have expected, therefore, that he would attempt to identify other mystical doctrines which were, in his view, defensible. But this he does not do. It seems that the type of mysticism he wants is still that which is consistent with neo-Hegelianism. He claims that "by sufficient restraint, there is an element of wisdom to be learned from the mystical way of feeling, which does not seem to be attainable in any other manner. If this is the truth, mysticism is to be commended as an attitude towards life, not as a creed about the world."⁸¹ But this does little to clarify the way in which he hopes to incorporate mysticism into his philosophy as, he claims, was done by the very greatest philosophers. Having defined mysticism as a creed, which he believes to be false, Russell then says that it contains a wisdom and an attitude to life which is valuable and which can be obtained from mysticism and in no other way. This attitude to life must, therefore, be the attitude which comes from believing the four errors listed. Why an attitude to life which is based on these four false beliefs is to be commended is not made clear. Nor is it explained how error can be an integral part of any sort of wisdom.

At best, Russell's project cannot be completed because the conditions for completion have been insufficiently specified. At worst the project is a total

muddle. Wisdom involves knowledge, and unless *knowledge* is to be obtained by mystic insight (i.e., unless the mystic's first thesis is correct), then such insight cannot contribute to wisdom. But if (I) is correct then Russell is wrong in saying that mysticism is mistaken on all four points. On the other hand, if theses (II)–(IV), which are what mystic insight supposedly establishes, are false, then mystic insight can hardly be taken as a source of knowledge, so (I) is false.⁸² Unless mystical insight is a way to achieve knowledge, the best mystical experiences can do is to provide a "certain emotional tone" to one's view of the world (as Russell) said his own mystical experience did⁸³ or possibly to suggest ideas—which, so Russell's account of the record suggests, will usually turn out to be mistakes. But in this there is no scope for a new philosophical synthesis.⁸⁴

Russell's efforts to find common philosophical ground between himself and Ottoline Morrell were, happily, soon abandoned. Russell's atomistic picture of the world as a pile of shot was not. What of the long term consequences of this picture for Russell's view of the human condition? In terms of philosophical doctrine Russell's world-view got steadily bleaker as his various reduction programmes developed. Matter was reduced to sense-data before the First World War, and shortly thereafter both matter and mind were reduced to neutral events. Most important was the psychological reduction of values which took place during the war. With values knocked out of the picture, the problems of the meaning of life with which Russell opened the century moved beyond the possibility of intellectual solution. He explicitly notes the fact in his unpublished piece "Why Do Men Persist in Living?" (1917) where the question of whether life has meaning is answered in terms of Russell's new theory of impulse: if impulse is dead or thwarted, life becomes meaningless, a condition for which there is no intellectual relief.⁸⁵ Russell's practical solution was not unlike Sartre's: political activism. It had been effective to some degree during the tariff and women's suffrage controversies. During periods of political activity the intellectual problem of life's meaning did not arise for Russell. Since the problem was insoluble within his philosophy, it is perhaps as well that it did not. Meanwhile, the political activity was a source of much of the value and meaning that his life had—a meaning that, perhaps, when he reflected on it, he could not himself detect.

Notes

- 1 Euripides, *Hippolytus*, trans. Gilbert Murray, in Murray *et al.*, *Fifteen Greek Plays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1943), p. 504.
- 2 Cf. *My Philosophical Development* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1959), pp. 32–3; “Various Notes on Mathematical Philosophy [1896–98]” (Notes IV, VII) and “Four Notes on Dynamics” (Note IV) in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, Vol. 2, ed. Griffin (in progress).
- 3 Russell does claim that the paradoxes of geometry arise from hypostasizing space, which is purely relational. But it is not clear whether the problems arise as a result of treating relations, which are not real, as if they were; or whether spatial relations cannot be internal for, if space is relational, there can be nothing for them to be internal to. In either case, it is clear that the solution is to come from a dialectical *Aufhebung* in which either relations *tout court*, or the merely external relations (*sc.* spatial relations), are transcended in the Absolute. See *An Essay on the Foundations of Geometry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1897), pp. 189 ff; *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), pp. 276, 285–6, 304.
- 4 With the honourable exceptions of Green and Bosanquet, the neo-Hegelian movement was politically conservative. For some swingeing criticism, see L. T. Hobhouse, *Democracy and Reaction* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1904) and also his *The Metaphysical Theory of the State* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1918). But the point had been made even earlier by Mark Pattison in his *Memoirs* (London: Macmillan, 1885). Green’s early death, as Pattison in effect points out, deprived the movement of its left-wing. (When there was talk of forming a rifle corps in Oxford to suppress a possible Chartist insurrection, Green considered joining it for the purpose of deserting well-trained to the other side! Cf. *The Works of Thomas Hill Green*, Vol. 3, ed. R. L. Nettleship [London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1885], p. xxiv.)
- 5 Russell to Alys Pearsall Smith, 25 Feb. 1894.
- 6 “Seems, Madam? Nay, It Is” in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, 1: 106. The two quoted remarks were directly, respectively, at McTaggart and Bradley. Bradley was less inclined than McTaggart to treat the Absolute as a personal friend; while McTaggart took the problem of evil somewhat more seriously than Bradley.
- 7 One is reminded of Bradley’s ironical aphorism, “The world is the best of all possible worlds, and everything in it is a necessary evil.” *Appearance and Reality*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1897, 9th impression [corrected and reset], 1930), p. xix.
- 8 J. H. Stirling, *The Secret of Hegel* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts & Green, 1865), p. xxii.
- 9 Caird, *Essays in Literature* (Glasgow: Maclehoose, 1892), p. 191.
- 10 Cf. Griffin, “What’s Wrong with Bradley’s Theory of Judgment?”, *Idealistic Studies*, 13 (1983): 199–225.
- 11 J. M. E. McTaggart, “The Further Determination of the Absolute” in McTaggart, *Philosophical Studies*, ed. S. V. Keeling (New York: Books for Libraries, 1968), pp. 210–1.
- 12 Cf. P. T. Geach, *Truth, Love and Immortality, An Introduction to McTaggart’s Philosophy* (London: Hutchinson, 1979) and Michael Dummett, “A Defence of McTaggart’s Proof of the Unreality of Time”, *Philosophical Review*, 69 (1960): 497–504.
- 13 Geach, *op. cit.*, p. 74.
- 14 Bradley also employed an ontological argument for the Absolute, one not much better than the standard ontological arguments for God, but to which Russell, nevertheless, gave credence. Cf. *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, 3 vols. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1967–9), 1: 63 and Carl Spadoni, “‘Great God in Boots!’—The Ontological Argument Is Sound!”, *Russell*, nos. 23–4 (Autumn–Winter 1976): 37–41.
- 15 “I have throughout been anxious to discover how much we can be said to know and with what degree of certainty or doubtfulness.... My original interest in philosophy had two sources. On the one hand, I was anxious to discover whether philosophy would provide any defence for anything that could be called religious belief, however vague; on the other hand, I wished to persuade myself that something could be known, in pure mathematics, if not elsewhere.” *My Philosophical Development*, p. 9.
- 16 *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, 1: 125.
- 17 See “Paper on Epistemology I” in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, 1: 121 for a statement along these lines as early as 1893. For later programmatic remarks, see also “Note on the Logic of the Sciences” and “Various Notes on Mathematical Philosophy” (Note XIII) in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, Vol. 2. The Absolute idealists tended not to draw a careful distinction between inconsistency and incompleteness. Their theory of inference might provide some warrant for what, otherwise, appears to be confusion on this point.
- 18 At least in its neo-Hegelian form. I have argued elsewhere that the programme continued, using other means, after Russell abandoned neo-Hegelianism. See Griffin, “Two Myths about Russell” (paper given at the Canadian Philosophical Association Conference, University of Ottawa, June 1982).
- 19 See Griffin and Spadoni, *Russell’s Idealist Apprenticeship* (in progress). In addition to the points mentioned in the text above, there was a connection also to Russell theory of geometry, which was being overhauled 1898–1900. Cf. “Why Do We Regard Time, But Not Space, as Necessarily a Plenum?” and Part III, B (tentatively titled “The Absolute Theory of Space and Time”) in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, Vol. 2.
- 20 In preparation for writing *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz* (1900), see *My Philosophical Development*, p. 48.
- 21 See *The Principles of Mathematics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903), especially Part I.
- 22 *My Philosophical Development*, p. 61.
- 23 *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, 1: 144–5.
- 24 *Ibid.*
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 146.
- 26 *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, 1: 146. Evelyn Whitehead’s angina attack was preceded by a reading by Gilbert Murray of his translation of the *Hippolytus* up to the point at which Phaedra commits suicide. This work, whose power Russell felt “most keenly”, seemed to him to fulfil perfectly “the purpose of bringing out whatever is noble and beautiful in sorrow” (letter to Murray, 26 Feb. 1901). There are many literary and ideological connections between Russell’s account of his mystical experience and Murray’s translation (especially in the speeches of Phaedra and her nurse) including at least one fairly direct literary borrowing: Murray’s “walls of pain” becomes Russell’s “walls of agony”. See *Hippolytus*, p. 504 and *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, 1: 146.
- 27 See variously the papers of Part II (titled “Refuge in Pure Contemplation”) of *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, Vol. 12, eds. Andrew Brink, Margaret Moran, and Richard A. Rempel (London: George Allen & Unwin, forthcoming).
- 28 See “Is Ethics a Branch of Empirical Psychology?”, “Note on Ethical Theory”, and “Are All Desires Equally Moral?” in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, 1.
- 29 “Cleopatra or Maggie Tulliver” in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, 1: 97–8.
- 30 Except possibly Frege who, having declared the contradiction “has shaken the basis on which I intended to build arithmetic”, sought an alternative in geometry. See Jean van Heijenoort, *From Frege to Gödel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 127.
- 31 See “Various Notes in Mathematical Philosophy” (Notes XIV, XV).

- 32 *My Philosophical Development*, p. 75.
- 33 *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, 1: 146.
- 34 *Ibid.*
- 35 "The Return to the Cave" (in "The Pilgrimage of Life") in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, 12: 40.
- 36 *Ibid.*, p. 42.
- 37 "Austerity" (in "The Pilgrimage of Life"), p. 49.
- 38 "Gentleness" (in "The Pilgrimage of Life"), p. 51.
- 39 "The Return to the Cave", [2b untitled], and "Austerity" (all in "The Pilgrimage of Life"), pp. 40, 42 and 49 respectively.
- 40 See *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, 12: 102–9.
- 41 Kenneth Blackwell, *The Spinozistic Ethic of Bertrand Russell* (London: George Allen & Unwin, forthcoming).
- 42 "Austerity", p. 49.
- 43 Bradley, *op. cit.*, p. 464.
- 44 *My Philosophical Development*, p. 42. There is a manifestly unsatisfactory attempt to preserve some of the benefits of monism: in the theory of "monist emotions" ("Prisons", *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell* 12: 106–7). Monistic love is there said to "unite the world".
- 45 Cf. *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, 1: 146.
- 46 "The Good" (in "Prisons") in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, 12: 105–9.
- 47 *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, 1: 13.
- 48 *Ibid.*, p. 146.
- 49 McTaggart, *op. cit.*, pp. 223–4.
- 50 "Cleopatra or Maggie Tulliver", pp. 97–8.
- 51 "A Locked Diary" in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, 1: 62–3.
- 52 Russell to Alys Pearsall Smith, 19 Aug. 1893.
- 53 If this seems far fetched, consider also the fact that McTaggart's pamphlet was written immediately after the trip to New Zealand in which he met the woman he fell in love with and whom he returned seven years later to marry; and that in the preface to the original publication he suggested that the work may well be thought to deal with "things which should not be spoken, or at any rate written about", a view with which McTaggart was "very much inclined to agree". McTaggart, *op. cit.*, p. 211n.
- 54 It may be that Bennett and Nancy Simon are correct in their conjecture that it triggered unconscious memories of the death of his own mother. (Since Russell was not present at the latter event, this conjecture is not so strong as it might appear.) See Bennett and Nancy Simon, "The Pacifist Turn: An Episode of Mystic Illumination in Russell's Life", *Russell*, no. 13 (Spring 1974): 11–12, 17–24. More plausible is the suggestion that Russell identified Evelyn Whitehead, with whom his is rumoured to have been in love, with Phaedra, whose love for her step-son, Hippolytus, is the focus of Euripides' drama.
- 55 In fact, Russell characteristically overemphasizes the suddenness of this change in his thought. His correspondence with Louis Couturat reveals him still an Imperialist in June 1902; and in a late interview with Royden Harrison he admitted to having been a pacifist prior to 1901. See Harrison, "Bertrand Russell and the Webbs: An Interview", *Russell* (forthcoming). It is quite mistaken, therefore, to view Russell's experience as a genuine conversion experience. The point is well brought out in Richard Rempel's "From Imperialism to Free Trade: Couturat, Halévy and Russell's First Crusade", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 39 (1979): 423–43.
- 56 *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, 1: 146.
- 57 "The Worship of Truth" (in "The Pilgrimage of Life"), p. 43.
- 58 "Austerity", p. 50.
- 59 See *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, 1: 5, 16–17, 19.
- 60 Cf. *My Own Philosophy* (Hamilton, Ont.: McMaster University Library Press, 1972), p. 5; *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, 3: 222.
- 61 Russell to Lady Ottoline Morrell, postmarked 13 Oct. 1912 #602.
- 62 Russell did exempt Bradley from his contempt for neo-Hegelians, partly because he felt that Bradley (plagued by ill-health and unhappy love) shared his own tragic vision of the world. Compare the respectful portrait of Bradley ("Journal [1902–05]" in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, 12: 13, entry for 1 Dec. 1902) with his description of Bosanquet, again to Lady Ottoline Morrell, as "a perpetually smiling ass" (3 May 1911 #51). Bradley's epistemology, significantly, was much more pessimistic than Bosanquet's. Bosanquet believed, with Hegel, in the identity of thought and reality. Bradley denied this and came to the conclusion, essentially as a result of sceptical argument, that the Absolute was largely ineffable.
- 63 For James's explicit use of pragmatism in these ways, see his *Pragmatism* (Cleveland and New York: Meidian, [1907], 1969), chap. 1; and for Russell's criticisms, see chaps. 4 and 5 of *Philosophical Essays* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1910). Note also the ferocity of Russell's attack on Schiller reported in "Journal [1902–05]", pp. 13–14.
- 64 See "Prisons", "The Essence of Religion" and "The Perplexities of John Forstice" in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, Vol. 12.
- 65 "The Free Man's Worship" in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, 12: 67.
- 66 See *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, 12: 50, 55, 104, 119, 139, 152.
- 67 Cf. Antonio Aliotta, *The Idealistic Reaction against Science*, trans. Agnes McCaskill (London: Macmillan, 1914).
- 68 "The Free Man's Worship", p. 67.
- 69 *Ibid.* p. 66.
- 70 "The Ethics of War", *The International Journal of Ethics*, 25 (Jan. 1915): 127–42; see also *Religion and Science* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1935), chap. 9.
- 71 As is argued in Richard Routley and Nicholas Griffin, *Unravelling the Meanings of Life?* Discussion Papers in Environmental Philosophy No. 3 (Canberra: Australian National University, 1982).
- 72 G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903), p. 188; if Russell's "Was the World Good before the Sixth Day?" (in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, 1: 113–16) is anything to go by, Russell may have gone further on this point than Moore did.
- 73 "The Return to the Cave", pp. 35–42.
- 74 *Ibid.*, p. 40.
- 75 "Austerity", p. 50.
- 76 Russell takes up the same theme in the fragment entitled "Religion" (pp. 53–55) where, significantly, he says that "some kind of mysticism" is required to support the attitude toward life which he identifies with religion, namely the feeling that virtue is important (p. 50). See also the discussion of "Mysticism and Logic" which concludes my paper.
- 77 "Mysticism and Logic" in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, 12: 164.
- 78 See for example, William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1902); Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* (London: Methuen, [1911], 1960); and R. W. Hepburn, "Mysticism, Nature and Assessment of" in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards, Vol. 4 (New York: Macmillan & The Free Press, 1967), pp. 429–34.
- 79 There is evidence that Bradley would have accepted all four claims, together with a strong ineffability thesis. In consequence, some have identified him as a mystic. See, for example, S. K. Saxena, *Studies in the Metaphysics of Bradley* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1967), pp. 17–18, as Russell does in "Philosophy in the Twentieth Century" in *Sceptical Essays* (London: George Allen & Unwin 1935), p. 56. The same could not be said of McTaggart

who sought to give a precise and demonstrable account of the nature of the Absolute. Russell's neo-Hegelianism, as suggested above, belongs with McTaggart's on the question of the ineffability of the Absolute.

80 "Mysticism and Logic", p. 164.

81 *Ibid.*

82 In other words, granting assumptions which are implicit in Russell's essay, (I) implies the disjunction of (II)–(IV).

83 *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, 1: 146.

84 For further relevant criticisms of non-credal religions generally, see C. G. Prado, *Illusions of Faith: A Critique of Non-credal Religions* (Toronto: Kendall-Hart, 1980).

85 See also "The Place of Science in a Liberal Education" in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, 12: 390–7.