

A FRENCH PERSPECTIVE ON RUSSELL

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The new journal *Hermès*, which first appeared in 1988, bears the subtitle "Cognition, Communication, Politique" and has set itself the admirable goal of introducing French readers to analytic philosophy, theories of ethics, and systems theory, in order to rescue internal French debate from the bog in which it is stuck. The publication of the present volume, containing a varied

collection of essays on both the technical and political writings of Russell, testifies to increasing French interest in Russell, an interest shown also in the recent publication of a collection of Russell's writings on philosophical logic (introduced and translated by J. M. Roy), and of new translations (by François Rivenc) of *The Problems of Philosophy* and *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*.

The first part of the collection is devoted to philosophy and logic. In the opening section of this part, on logic and ontology, Philippe de Rouilhan attempts to clarify Russell's early doctrine of classes as one and many, though the "ontological/ontic" distinction on which he rests his critique seems far from clear. François Rivenc contributes a useful discussion of the ontology of Russell's propositional functions. The best essay of this section is the lucid exposition by Jules Vuillemin of the philosophical background to *Principia Mathematica*; the problems arising from the second edition are related to Russell's later attempts at a theory of meaning and truth.

The second section, on philosophy of language, contains two essays. The first, by Stephen Neale, is based on the second chapter of his book *Descriptions* (MIT Press, 1989); it is a vigorous defence of an extended and improved version of Russell's theory. Neale is especially good on the role of descriptive phrases containing free variables, and their use in explaining anaphora. The article by Francis Jacques is ostensibly on the Russell–Strawson debate, but the author seems more interested in advocating his own programme of pragmatics than in elucidating the issues.

The third section, on general epistemology, contains articles by Christopher Hookway on Russell and scepticism, by Mark Sainsbury on knowledge by acquaintance, Andrew Woodfield on neutral monism and Michael Lockwood on Russell's relation to Berkeley and the representative theory of perception. All of these are translated from the English, and represent familiar veins of Anglo-American philosophizing. Hookway's article is an interesting interpretation of the later Russell, showing how Russell's essentially empiricist background leads him to a sophisticated form of scepticism. (I learnt from it that the French translation of Goodman's "grue" is "vreau".) Sainsbury's article is a partial translation of an earlier one of 1986; Sainsbury attempts to explicate the notion of a constituent of a proposition by truth-conditions. Woodfield's destructive critique of neutral monism is fair and to the point. Lockwood's article turns around the causal theory of perception and the problem of identifying mental events with brain events, in the light of the later Russell. A useful glossary of technical terms concludes this part of the volume; it seems surprising that the translators have not found a French equivalent for the basic term "sense-datum".

The second part is devoted to Russell's political activities and writings. It

opens with an admirable essay by Alan Ryan; this is not a summary of his recent book, but a clearly written critical discussion of the philosophical background of Russell's political writings, his ambivalence towards pacifism, and his relationship with his public. Adam Stephenson expresses dissatisfaction that Russell never produced his grand work of Hegelian synthesis; this failure is blamed on Russell's atomism and individualism, which leave man a "metaphysical orphan". Dominique Colas provides a brief and sympathetic note on Russell's trip to the Soviet Union. Anne-Françoise Schmid's long and detailed essay attempts to trace a unity between Russell's political writings and his strictly philosophical work, which she finds in Russell's belief in the objectivity of truth, his respect for facts, and his faith in the value of philosophy in areas falling outside the competence of natural science. A short but graceful essay on Russell's life by Francis Jacques follows. The second part concludes with two previously unpublished letters from Russell to Louis Couturat (one of which is reproduced in facsimile). These whet the appetite for more of this very rich collection of letters; the complete correspondence is to appear under the editorship of Anne-Françoise Schmid. A brief political chronology by Kenneth Blackwell, a biographical chronology and a partial list of Russell's books complete the volume.

An interesting contrast emerges between the French and English contributors; the former seem more inclined to perceive common themes in Russell's diverse activities. The English (following Russell himself) tend to deny any deep connection between his strictly philosophical work and his politics. Perhaps the unity of Russell's thought appears more clearly from the other side of the English Channel.

It is disappointing to note that of the fourteen essays in the volume, six are translations of pieces by English writers. Anglophone readers familiar with recent work in the analytic tradition will not find a great deal that is new here. However, the generally high quality of the French contributions leads one to hope that this volume will help to arouse interest in a philosopher whose broad range of interests and political engagement should make him congenial to a French audience.

There are rather a lot of typographical mistakes, and the bibliographies accompanying the essays are often incomplete or inaccurate (for instance, the bibliography to Hookway's essay makes Quine the author of *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits*). However, François Clementz and Anne-Françoise Schmid are to be congratulated on their enterprise in assembling an interesting collection of articles.