

## FROM A SWEDISH POINT OF VIEW

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Gunnar Fredriksson. *Wittgenstein*. Stockholm: Albert Bonniers Förlag, 1993. Pp. 274. 60 kronor.

Svante Nordin. *Filosofernas Krig* [The Philosopher's War: European Philosophy during the First World War]. Nora: Bokförlaget Nya Doxa, 1998. Pp. 265. 170 kronor.

Bertrand Russell plays an important part in Gunnar Fredriksson's book about Ludwig Wittgenstein; this review will concentrate on what the author has to say about their relationship. Fredriksson wrote a book about Russell in 1984 called *Bertrand Russell: en intellektuell i politiken*, which I reviewed in *Russell* (n.s. 5 [1985]). In it he showed that he is no stranger to philosophical thought. Fredriksson studied philosophy at Lund University and at Oxford in the early '60s, when he met Russell and had an interview with him. Instead of pursuing an academic career, Fredriksson went into journalism. He wrote a book in 1962 called *Det politiska språket* [The Language of Politics] that has become something of a minor classic in its field in Sweden. Twenty years later he wrote a book about Joseph Conrad, and after the book about Wittgenstein one about Arthur Schopenhauer. Fredriksson is a rare phenomenon in Swedish cultural journalism. His book about Wittgenstein shows that he is capable of explaining complicated philosophical problems in a way that a non-specialist can understand.

Fredriksson keeps emphasizing that much of what Wittgenstein wrote should be considered as mystical poetry rather than as attempts to solve philosophical problems in the traditional sense. In Wittgenstein's thinking there is an important connection between logic, ethics and mysticism; what they amount to cannot be *said*—it can only *show itself*. Fredriksson claims that Russell never really understood the importance of this distinction between what can be said about the world and what can only be shown. I think Russell understood what Wittgenstein was trying to say. He realized that if Wittgenstein was right, much of what he himself had written was an attempt to say the unsayable. Instead of allowing different hierarchies of language and thus opening up the possibility of an infinite progress, Wittgenstein outlawed all levels of metalanguages. Russell preferred some kind of type theory and meta-talk to silence and did not think that Wittgenstein's solution to the problem of the relationship between language and reality was valid. He thought there was something paradoxical in Wittgenstein's theory, since he had succeeded in saying quite a lot about what cannot be talked about.

When they met after the First World War Russell thought that Wittgenstein had turned into a "complete mystic". It's hard to say exactly what Russell had in mind when he referred to Wittgenstein as "a mystic", but it must have been a somewhat different kind of mysticism than the one Russell had outlined in his essay "Mysticism and Logic", where he gives it four defining characteristics (a special way of knowing, the unity of the world, the unreality of time and of evil) that in parts fit well with his chosen examples of Parmenides, Heraclitus, Plato, Spinoza, Hegel and Bergson, but would not fit well with Wittgenstein except for some parallels with Spinoza's views.

I have written about the difference between Wittgenstein and Russell's mysticism earlier (*Russell*, n.s. 18 [1998]) and will not repeat that discussion except by emphasizing some similarities in their different approaches. Neither of them saw traditional Christian mysticism as an answer to their questions about God and the meaning of life, but neither of them could totally free himself from the anthropomorphism of Christian theology. The major difference was that while Wittgenstein kept struggling with religious and existential questions, trying to find ways of somehow expressing his deepest insights, Russell did not have much more to say about his mysticism after 1914 and instead did what he could to create a more peaceful and loving world.

Mysticism and the importance of seeing Wittgenstein as a literary writer, a poet and a mystic rather than a traditional philosopher, run through Fredriksson's book. He has many interesting comments to make. The development of Wittgenstein's relationship with Russell is described far better than by Ray Monk in his *Ludwig Wittgenstein* (1990). Monk tries to give the impression that Wittgenstein was superior to Russell in just about every res-

pect. Fredriksson gives a truer depiction of their relationship and shows that Russell kept supporting Wittgenstein even in disagreement with him.

Fredriksson's book is a good introduction to Wittgenstein's life and philosophical thinking aimed at the educated layman. At the same time it is a book about the history of analytic philosophy and the history of the twentieth century. There is no doubt that Fredriksson is as much an admirer of Wittgenstein as he is of Russell, and he has succeeded in giving them the credit they deserve. The book is worth translating into English.

Svante Nordin is a professor in the history of ideas at Lund University. He has written extensively about the history of Swedish philosophy and has also written a book about the history of western philosophy from Socrates to the present, something which few Swedes have managed to do. In his latest book, *Filosofernas Krig*, he focuses his attention on how philosophers in Great Britain, France, Germany and Austria-Hungary reacted to World War I. After a general introduction about the war and its radical influence on the cultural and intellectual development in Europe and the rest of the world, Nordin devotes a chapter to each year of the war. Russell and Wittgenstein are two of the main characters of the book, and we can follow the development of their views as the war went on. Their different reactions to the outbreak of the war mirrors their different attitudes to life in general. Russell was against it from the beginning and did what he could to inform the general public about his reasons for opposing it. Wittgenstein volunteered for the Austrian army. Exactly what his motives were is hard to say, but they had very little to do with politics.

Nordin makes it clear that Russell was one of very few European philosophers who, from the beginning, realized the wickedness of the war and its supporters. Although Russell was patriotically inclined and had very strong feelings for England, he was not swept away by strong nationalistic emotions like most other philosophers, who used their talents to debunk the enemy. Russell said that it was as if he had heard the voice of God telling him to protest against the war. Wittgenstein seems to have used the war as an opportunity to get closer to God and reach some clarity about the meaning of life.

Nordin's book is well written and informative. My only objection is to his description of Russell's relationships with Helen Dudley and Vivienne Eliot, both of whom Russell "seduced", according to Nordin. It is obvious that the truth is more complicated than that. I do not really understand why Russell is being singled out in this way since his affairs had very little to do with his attitude towards the war. No other philosopher's love life is mentioned, but I find it hard to imagine that Russell was the only philosopher during this period who had extramarital affairs. Apart from that, Nordin has written an engaging book that is also worth translating into English.

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