

RUSSELL'S ABORTED BOOK ON FASCISM

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In December 1933 Russell initiated a new project that by late 1934 was under the working title "The Revolt Against Reason". It was to be a book that analyzed the intellectual and cultural ancestry of fascism. It was never completed, yet Russell left us many fascinating textual artifacts that give us some sense of what he intended to do. Three documents of special importance are presented in their full form in this paper. These documents, together with the work he did publish on fascism and also the books *Power* and *A History of Western Philosophy*, demonstrate that Russell was an insightful thinker on the topic. His analysis placed him outside the major interpretations of fascism in the interwar period.

Bertrand Russell wrote on a very diverse variety of topics in the 1930s in several different forums, such as his own books, in journals, and in the popular press. Despite this, he wrote comparatively little on the dominant political issue facing Europe and the world, the spread and rise to prominence of fascist movements. Russell had for several years planned to turn his thoughts on this political phenomenon, especially its intellectual origins, into a book-length project with the working title "The Revolt Against Reason". The book was never finished despite a preliminary essay on this topic published in 1935 and evidence of continued work on the project after the writing of that essay. The project never left the stage of preliminary research. Yet it is possible to see what he planned to do based on his outline and notes. The book's study of fascism would have been unique for the mid-1930s, eschewing the

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dominant Marxist analysis for something quite different. Although this project was not completed, there is still some work that Russell did publish on fascism in the interwar period. By looking at the various pieces one can see Russell as a thoughtful and prescient analyst of fascism.

This is especially true given the intellectual climate in Britain during this era. Russell was swimming against the tide of the political left in his analysis of fascism, something that he openly acknowledged. Following a brief discussion of this intellectual context this paper will discuss at length the “Revolt Against Reason” project and ponder the issue of why it did not come to fruition. Subsequent to this will be an analysis of some of what Russell did publish on fascism, specifically on its intellectual origins. Finally there are two book projects from this era that Russell did finish and that do have some bearing on his fascism work and “The Revolt Against Reason”. *Power* (1938) and *A History of Western Philosophy* (1945) both have elements that relate to his notions of fascism and which serve as partial summations of his work on the topic. *Power* has a direct relationship, and while *A History of Western Philosophy* does not, a reading of it with Russell’s work on fascism in mind reveals that it may be more closely connected than might be supposed at first glance,

As stated above, Russell was rather isolated in his analysis of fascism. Like most intellectuals, though, he was opposed to it and repulsed by it. There were those, especially amongst literary intellectuals, who found an appeal in fascist movements.¹ Many writers of the era were aesthetically attracted to fascism, especially the seeming strength and virility of the leaders and their nations.² The interwar period was a time when democracy seemed unable to cope with the problems of modern society, and fascism claimed to offer a bold new alternative (Griffiths, p. 13). Russell was friends with some of these people, yet this was in no way his intellectual milieu.³ Among liberals and those on the left the most widespread and deeply rooted understanding of fascism was the agency theory—that fascism acted on behalf of a capitalist system that was entering its final

¹ Richard Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers of the Right: British Enthusiasts for Nazi Germany, 1933–1939* (London: Constable, 1980), p. 20.

² Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties* (Oxford: Oxford U. P., 1988), pp. 182–3.

³ George Bernard Shaw was one such person. After Shaw had made comments in 1927 that amounted to, in Russell’s words, a whitewash of Mussolini’s regime, Russell could only say that “Shaw is getting very old” (“Shaw’s Growing Very Old”, Russell’s Explanation of Defense of Fascism”, *The New Leader*, New York, 8 (22 Oct. 1927), p. 8.

stages, and that fascism was the last, violent, dictatorial, and ultimately futile attempt to stave off the impending rise of socialism. Such a view was the official line of the Third International, which promoted this dogma from the earliest days of Mussolini's regime in 1922.⁴ The Communist Party of Great Britain, under direct control from Moscow in this era, also officially promoted the agency theory.⁵

One of the most influential and prominent books that promoted this line of thought was R. Palme Dutt's *Fascism and Social Revolution*, first published in 1934 with a second edition in 1935. Dutt, a leading member of the Communist Party of Great Britain, described fascism as a "desperate attempt to throw up a dam against the advancing social revolution... Fascism is likely to be remembered only as an episode in the long-drawn class-war advancing to the final victory of the socialist revolution."⁶ He saw little substance in the fascist claim of a new order, and stated that it can only be defined in class terms and its role in class relations (*ibid.*, pp. 95–6). Lest anyone think that only dogmatic Marxists held this view, it was present and quite common among more independent and moderate leftists. George Orwell, known for his animosity toward dogma and his dislike of many aspects of socialist practice in Britain, agreed with the basics of the analysis of Dutt and the Communists. In a letter from September 1937, a time when he was certainly not given to Communist sympathies after his time in Spain, he wrote that "Fascism after all is only a development of capitalism, and the mildest democracy, so-called, is liable to turn into Fascism when the pinch comes."⁷ Although the Labour Party did not promote this interpretation and publicly denounced all dictatorships, including the Soviet one,⁸ individual members and leaders propagated the agency theory. Harold Laski, a neo-Marxist in the 1930s, accepted it right up to the outbreak of war, when he finally realized that fascism was perhaps something different from bourgeois

⁴ Martin Kitchen, *Fascism* (London: Macmillan, 1976), p. 1.

⁵ Kevin Morgan, *Against Fascism and War: Ruptures and Continuities in British Communist Politics, 1935–1941* (Manchester: Manchester U. P., 1989), p. 23.

⁶ R. Palme Dutt, *Fascism and Social Revolution*, 2nd edn. (New York: International Publishers, 1935), p. 243.

⁷ Quoted in Michael Sheldon, *Orwell: the Authorised Biography* (London: Minerva, 1991), p. 239.

⁸ G. D. H. Cole, *A History of the Labour Party from 1914* (London: Routledge, 1948), p. 286.

capitalism.⁹ The agency theory held a broad appeal and was accepted by many, if not the majority, on the left in Britain. As we will see, however, Bertrand Russell was not one of those people, and he consciously sought to counteract this intellectual trend.

The centrepiece of his argument was supposed to be a book to be entitled variously “The Revolt Against Reason”, “The Cult of Feeling” or “The Diagnosis of Fascism”. Instead we have one substantial essay and a number of short articles. It is therefore worthwhile to go over the story of the genesis and ultimate death of the “Revolt” project. There are three key documents. Russell made his proposal in December 1933 in a letter to Stanley Unwin, his British publisher.

DOCUMENT I. LETTER TO STANLEY UNWIN, DECEMBER 1933

[F]or 1936 I have in mind another big book such as I am doing now, on “The Cult of Feeling”, from Rousseau to Hitler: the break-up of 18th-century rationalism, Wesley, Romantic movement, mediaevalism (Scott, Coleridge, Tractarians, Dizzy); irrationalism in philosophy (Carlyle, Nietzsche, James, Bergson) and its connection with violence in politics. There should be an intellectual development accompanied, throughout, by appropriate events, from Marie Antionette’s Fêtes Champêtres to Hitler’s pogroms, all of which spring from the cult of the heart as opposed to the head. There is a lot of material which I am having to leave out of my present book but which belongs to 19th-century development.¹⁰

Although the title would change, much of this proposal would remain intact throughout the project. Russell had a fairly clear vision of what he wanted to accomplish from the outset. Two months later he wrote to Unwin on how eager he was to write about Hitler, so much so that he found himself wanting to extend *Freedom and Organization* into the twentieth century.¹¹ In an interview given in 1934, before he started

⁹ Herbert A. Deane, *The Political Ideas of Harold Laski* (New York: Columbia U. P., 1955), pp. 163, 229.

¹⁰ RA3 REC. ACQ. 70, box 6.42. Russell to Stanley Unwin, 16 Dec. 1933; quoted in Clark, p. 449. The book Russell refers to in the first sentence is *Freedom and Organization, 1814–1914*.

¹¹ RA3 REC. ACQ. 70, box 6.42. Russell to Stanley Unwin, 25 Feb. 1934.

serious work on “The Revolt Against Reason”, Russell was very upbeat about the prospects of this project. In answering a question as to whether he had considered fascism in his latest writings, he responded:

Not directly, but in my latest book, *Freedom and Organization, 1814–1914*, I have amongst other things examined the question of the historical preconditions of fascism—and this is something I would like to consider further, for example in the form of a sweeping examination of fascism’s intellectual forbears: Fichte, Guiseppe Mazzini, Napoleon the First and Third, etc. It is quite amazing how much German Nazi-ideology can be traced back to Fichte and of course Nietzsche. By the way, it is my intention to treat the question on a more up-to-date way.¹²

Later in 1934 Russell delivered a lecture to the Fabian Society entitled “The Revolt Against Reason”. It was published in 1935 as “The Ancestry of Fascism” in his collection of essays *In Praise of Idleness*.

By August 1935 Russell was finished another project (the book *Religion and Science*) and “The Revolt Against Reason” was to be his next major task. He was, however, never very confident about finishing it. He often wrote of his dire outlook on how long the book would take to finish. On 22 August 1935 he wrote to Miriam Reichl, “I plan a book on the origins of fascism, but that will take a long time ...” (REC. ACQ. 1,104). A few days before, W. W. Norton, his American publisher, wrote to offer an advance on the “Revolt” book.¹³ On 28 August Russell replied with appreciative thanks for the offer. Still he was not sure about his timeline: “I shall be very glad of it if I can get the book done in time. But I can’t be sure of finishing it soon enough” (REC. ACQ. 1a).

Based on his initial proposal for “The Cult of Feeling”, it seems that he wanted to finish the book during 1936. A number of things intervened to keep the project lower on Russell’s list of priorities. Just a month later Norton wrote to send best wishes to “Peter” (Patricia Spence, who was to become Russell’s third wife), who had recently been afflicted with appendicitis. Norton also wrote that “it is too bad that these circumstances have lost some time on “The Revolt Against Reason”. Norton offered to delay the drawing up of a contract for the book.¹⁴ Later in September

¹² “En Santale med Bertrand Russell”, *Politiken*, Copenhagen, 6 Oct. 1935, p. 1; reprinted in *Papers* 21: 537–9 (at 538).

¹³ RA3 REC. ACQ. 1a, box 6.36. W.W. Norton to Russell, 16 Aug. 1935.

¹⁴ RA3 REC. ACQ. 1a, box 6.36. W.W. Norton to Russell, 5 Sept. 1935.

Russell responded to say that a contract could be done by Christmas, “by then the whole thing will be clearer.”¹⁵ By the early months of 1936 the project had still not got along very well. On 28 February Norton wrote with some concern over how the “Revolt” project was progressing amidst his other work, concern that was quite valid given how extraordinarily busy Russell was during these years. The reply was not heartening. Although he had nearly finished editing his parents’ papers (*The Amberley Papers*), “The Revolt Against Reason, alas, will have to wait ... it will take a long time.”¹⁶ Russell gave the same news to Stanley Unwin in March:

The book on the philosophy of unreason has not got on because of the editing of my parents’ papers ... which has proved a much bigger job than I expected. It is now finished, so the other book can be worked at; but it will take a good long time, probably till 1938. (25 March 1936)

On 2 April 1936 Norton told Russell that he understood that the project would have to be held off for at least a year.

After this point there is no further discussion of the project in correspondence with his publishers from 1936. During the rest of that year Russell was still busy, writing another book at the end of the summer entitled *Which Way to Peace?* The “Revolt” project seemed to have disappeared. Then on 16 February 1937 Stanley Unwin wrote Russell and attached a note from an anonymous person at the publisher’s office. This person had suggested a book on fascism with the title “The Diagnosis of Fascism”. Unwin felt that the fascism essay from *In Praise of Idleness* could easily be expanded. He also issued something of a veiled challenge to Russell: Unwin wanted Russell to come out and make a clear statement on fascism. Would Russell resist it despite his pacifism? Unwin thought that he might. Russell replied that he was up to the idea of the book, although worried that his essay on the topic would be a hindrance to its success. He also gave Unwin a clear statement of purpose:

I should, however, emphatically combat the view that fascism is “the last stand of capitalism.” Peisistratus, Caesar and Napoleon were fascists of the Mussolini sort; Fichte was of the Hitler sort. Communists have hypnotized everybody with

¹⁵ RA3 REC. ACQ. 1a, box 6.36. Russell to W.W. Norton, 22 Sept. 1935.

¹⁶ RA3 REC. ACQ. 1a, box 6.36. Russell to W.W. Norton, 25 March 1936.

a quite false analysis of fascism, which is a very ancient phenomenon.

(17 Feb. 1937)

Although Unwin's original proposal was perhaps for a more contemporary treatment of fascism, Russell was looking to the past again. This new book, now under the working title "The Diagnosis of Fascism," would have been largely on the same topic as "The Revolt Against Reason". Again there were complications. Norton had written to Unwin with the following on 10 March 1937:

Of course we will be glad to do the proposed book on Fascism, which sounds interesting and important. The only problem I have is with reference to date of publication. I have recently commissioned two of the so-called University in Exile scholars to do a book analyzing German and Italian Fascism.... They are to deliver a manuscript in December and we are to publish in February, 1938. While Russell's book would be quite a different book as theirs would deal more with contemporary phenomena, it would be difficult for a firm such as ours to do two books on Fascism in the same season.

Russell informed Unwin of yet another delay on 15 May. He had been offered an academic position at the University of Chicago, which would cause him to spend less time on the current project. On 21 May he wrote again to say that "The Fascist book, I fear, must wait" due to Chicago. Russell was falling into the same pattern that he had in late 1935 and early 1936, regularly writing to explain why the "Revolt" project was not getting on.

His already heavy workload did not stop Russell from taking on yet another project, even though the proposed fascism book had made barely any progress. On 10 July 1937 he wrote to Unwin with this news:

It turns out that I have *three* books on hand, not *two*. I am giving 9 lectures at the School of Economics in the autumn on "The Science of Power".... For the purpose of the lectures I shall have to do most of the work involved in doing a book, and I *believe* the book can be interesting.... If I make a book of them ... I think of it as founding a new science, like Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations".¹⁷

¹⁷ The other books Russell refers to are *A History of Western Philosophy* and *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*. Given this, it is possible that by summer 1937 the fascism book had been totally abandoned.

His progress was very quick. By October he claimed to have 50,000 words completed and believed the book could be finished before the autumn of 1938.¹⁸ By January 1938 he was actually moving that date forward considerably. He wrote to Unwin with the news that he felt “fairly confident of being able to finish the book in June.”¹⁹ When it came to the *Power* there were no continual delays or pleadings that other matters had interfered. The book was indeed published in 1938. The fascist project, long in gestation, had still not progressed any further. In that dormant state it would remain, as after the publication of *Power* it appears that Russell abandoned the book for good. There are no notes or correspondence that indicate any work during or after 1938.

The question remains why Russell did not complete this book. It was not a project thought up on a whim, as he had planned for it a year before the initial “Revolt Against Reason” lecture and two years before beginning new research for the book. Nor was it due to a lack of initiative in general, as he completed several large projects in this era, some started and completed after he ostensibly began working on the fascism book. It was therefore something specific to this project that gave him trouble. In his recent biography of Russell Ray Monk has written some brief thoughts on this subject. The fascism book, he writes, “was never written, perhaps because *Freedom and Organization* was neither a critical nor a commercial success, or perhaps because Russell’s thoughts on the subject could never quite cohere sufficiently for him to make them the theme of a large book” (Monk, 2: 176). These are both good points, especially the financial one. Although the “Revolt” book was about the origins of fascism, one look at Document 2, Russell’s outline of the project (which will be discussed further below), shows that it was not as contemporary as perhaps an interested reading public would have liked. Other projects such as *Which Way to Peace?* and *Power* were far more contemporary, and as such were more likely to get the attention of the book-buying public. Monk’s point on Russell not being able to collect his thoughts sufficiently for a book are also worth pondering. There is no doubt that Russell was not confident about this book being completed, although he never said exactly why his outlook was so dire. There are a number of possibilities. One is that Russell was unsure that he could turn his thoughts on the topic into a full book. He had written the essay and

¹⁸ RA3 REC. ACQ. 1a, box 6.36. Russell to W.W. Norton, 23 Oct. 1937.

¹⁹ RA3 REC. ACQ. 70, box 6.42. Russell to Stanley Unwin, 27 Jan. 1938.

given the lecture, and perhaps he thought a book would be a matter of him merely repeating himself less concisely. Another possibility relates to Russell's notion that fascism would pass away if approached in a sensible manner by the democracies.²⁰ It could have been that once he started researching he thought such a transient phenomenon was not worth the work put into book when a perfectly serviceable essay already existed. There is no one answer, as unfortunately Russell has not left us a specific statement as to why he aborted the book.

Despite its stillborn status, we can still fashion a reasonable picture of what the book was to be about. A preview was provided by "The Ancestry of Fascism" essay from 1935. The lecture of October 1934 had been published in a periodical the next January as "The Revolt Against Reason". In the essay Russell concerned himself with the intellectual origins of fascism. He did not deny that there were more immediate political origins, but argued that one cannot understand the contemporary without the longer-term intellectual trends that had contributed to the political climate between the wars.²¹ He traced the climate of unreason back to David Hume, arguing that the Scottish philosopher's extreme scepticism began undermining the "Temple of Reason" with ideas such as a denial of causation (*ibid.*). From Hume he followed the revolt through Rousseau and Wesley. Russell then came to Fichte, whose nationalism and philosophy of German superiority added much to the revolt (pp. 92–3). Russell carried on to Thomas Carlyle, Nietzsche, and the promoters of social Darwinism to round out his club of proto-fascist philosophers (pp. 92, 99, 100). Russell did not say that these men were the reason that fascism existed in the interwar years, but that they contributed greatly to the ideologies and beliefs that defined the fascist movements.

Russell began work on the book in 1935. In his notes there is a detailed outline of the proposed book, Document 2 below. Based on the new size of manuscript paper used by Russell, we judge that the outline was probably not written before 1935. It is worth reproducing at length, as it is the only document in his notes that gives an overall picture of what Russell was planning. It has six sections.

²⁰ See "Dictatorships that Pass in the Night", *The Sunday Referee*, 9 Aug. 1936, p. 14; "Hitler's Thirteen Points", *The Sunday Referee*, 26 May 1935, p. 12. This point was made most strongly (and embarrassingly) in *Which Way to Peace?* (London: Michael Joseph, 1936).

²¹ "The Ancestry of Fascism", *IPI*, p. 84.

DOCUMENT 2. OUTLINE & PURPOSES

The Revolt Against Reason.

- Part I. The Newtonian Synthesis.
- Part II. Sensibility and Revivalism: Rousseau and Wesley.
- Part III. The Rights of Man.
- Part IV. Mediaevalism and the Romantic Movement.
- Part V. Power-Morality and Idealistic Philosophy.
- Part VI. ~~Causes of Belief in the modern world.~~ Individual and Social Elements in Belief.

- Part I. A. Newton's Cosmos
- B. Pope, Addison, Locke, Montesquieu, Physiocrats
- C. Internal Decay: Berkeley, Hume; Condillac; ~~Materialism~~ Sensationalism.
- Part II. A. Beginnings within Newton: Instinct admired because regular.
- B. The heart: dislike of formalism, natural goodness, natural theology, natural everything—Rousseau. Noble Savage.
- C. Religious emotionalism: German influences, Wesley.
- D. Growth of individualism in creeds and morals.
- Part III. A. Cromwellian Independents; Quakers; Religious Toleration.
- B. American and French Revolutions.
- C. "Liberty" as an ideal—Byron etc.
- D. Women's Rights.
- Part IV. A. Scott, Coleridge, Percy's Reliques, 18th-century Gothic.
- B. English, French, German Romantics.
- C. Tractarians, Dizzy, Ruskin; Revolt against modern ugliness. Handicrafts.
- Part V. A. Kant; Fichte-Schelling-Hegel.
- B. Carlyle, Nietzsche, etc. The Hero.
- C. Nationalism.
- Part VI. A. Reason, individual or social, Galileo-*v*-Inquisition or lunatic-*v*-medical authorities?
- B. Public authorities as dictators of truth.
- C. Private initiative, public decision: is reason possible?

N.B. Reason depends on the state of the art of war; it flourishes when the defence is stronger than the attack. *Or* Reason flourishes when the means by which I grow rich enrich others; unreason, when I can only grow rich by impoverishing others.

[On a second sheet Russell provided four points on the purpose of the book:]

The Revolt Against Reason.

The purposes of this book are:

- A. To understand intellectually the anti-rational doctrines of our time
 - B. To understand the mood from which they spring
 - C. To understand the social causes of the prevalence of this mood
 - D. To investigate the social changes needed to dispel this prevalence
- N.B.* Don't underestimate decay of religion as cause of fascism.²²

This book would have covered the same ground as the essay (which explains Russell's reticence about repeating himself), but it also would have expanded his analysis into several other areas.

Other than this outline there is nothing in Russell's extant notes that fleshes out the project, although there are some sheets with them that repeat the main purposes. The rest of the "Revolt Against Reason" file in the Russell Archives consists of typed notes on various books, handwritten notes by both Russell and Peter, and newspaper clippings on topics such as a Reichstag speech by Hitler in 1938 and the influence of Wagner in Nazi Germany.²³ Russell was working in collaboration with Peter on the project, as is evidenced by her own handwritten notes on various books (her writing tends to be scrawled on odd scraps of paper in pencil and is very difficult to read) and her typed notes. It is most likely that the typed notes were made from Peter's research on Russell's behalf. The typed notes that are present in the Archives tend to be nothing more than verbatim quotes from various sources with no commentary added. This appears to be very preliminary work and as such not too much can be drawn out of these pages. However, based on the books that were

²² RAI 220.016140, box 3.45.

²³ RAI 220.016150, box 3.45.

used, we can see that they reflect the outline Russell prepared. As well, the books cover topics that were not present in the original “Ancestry” essay. The notes are difficult to date based on the paper, but given their content they are likely from 1935–36 as they correspond with the outline from that era and touch on areas not present in the essay written in 1934.

In these notes Russell used two books on Evangelicalism and Protestant Revivalism. There are typed notes on *The Evangelical Revival* by S. Baring-Gould which contain passages on Wesley and examples of scenes of intense religious emotion. There are also typed pages on *A Short History of the Evangelical Movement* by George W. E. Russell. It is apparent that Russell was linking Revivalist Christianity with the “cult of feeling” that he felt was so important in the lineage of unreason. Also present are typed notes on Treitschke’s *History of Germany in the Nineteenth Century*. The quoted passages deal with the German historian’s views on the period between the Battle of Jena in 1806 and the Congress of Vienna in 1815. This was the era when Fichte made a name for himself as a philosophical nationalist with his *Addresses to the German Nation*. It was also the time when modern German nationalism had its most tangible beginnings.²⁴ There are also more notes on Nietzsche, such as typed notes on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and Russell’s own handwritten notes on *The Genealogy of Morals, Human, All Too Human*, and the idea of the Will to Power. In addition there are typed pages on two biographies of Nietzsche.²⁵ Russell had also written notes on Schopenhauer’s *World as Will and Idea* and two small pages that are merely titled “Spengler 1”. Although the book is not present in Russell’s library in the Russell Archives, it is most likely that Russell was working from Volume 1 of Oswald Spengler’s *The Decline of the West*. The notes he took are on Spengler’s views of Kant, Rousseau, and Nietzsche. Finally there are typed notes on Houston Stewart Chamberlain’s *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, where particular attention is paid to what Chamberlain wrote on Kant,²⁶ and a page on Santayana’s *Egotism in German Philosophy* which contains a couple of quotations on Fichte.²⁷

There are two oddities mixed in with these notes that are of considerable interest. One is a single-leaf manuscript without a title or date.

²⁴ RAI 220.016160, box 3.45.

²⁵ RAI 220.016170, box 3.45.

²⁶ RAI 220.016180, box 3.45.

²⁷ RAI 220.016190, box 3.45.

Based on the size of the paper stock it was probably written in 1935 or 1936. It is a strange piece, as it has elements without any connection to the rest of the "Revolt" notes and directly addresses an aspect of fascism that Russell only obliquely discussed elsewhere.

DOCUMENT 3. FRAGMENT ON DESPAIR

The mood of unreason arises from despair, and despair has different causes, as well as different forms, in different pursuits. The sort of despair that concerns us arose first in philosophy, as a result of Hume; hence Kant's emphasis on the unknowability of things-in-themselves, and hence Fichte's subjectivism. (This differed from Berkeley's, which was cheerful and honest.)

Artistically, the mood begins with Dostoevsky, in whom it is due to Christian morality and Sin, together with Siberia. In him, also, it has its political beginning (Pobiedonostsev).²⁸

In more modern artists, rage results from disgust at the chaos and hideousness of industrialism, together with a diabolistic worship of machines.²⁹ (For a similar mood with different politics, cf. Goya.)

In science, the mood is only just beginning; here its source is scepticism as to scientific knowledge, and collapse of stately intellectual edifices.

In politics and economics it arises from the spectacle of the evils resulting from intelligence—war, unemployment, etc.

Everywhere there is impatience of the elaborate technique demanded by rationality, and the wish to find a short cut to achievement. This is as regards leading men.

In followers, there is discomfort due to the change of habits suddenly brought about in recent times.

The main cause, everywhere, is rapidity of change, without internal or external adjustment to new conditions.³⁰

²⁸ This odd reference is most likely to Konstantin Pobiedonostsev (1826–1907), a high-ranking Russian statesman in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

²⁹ Russell in this sentence may be referring to Futurism, the turn of the century Italian artistic movement that did much to inspire the ethos of postwar Italian Fascism. Russell certainly was familiar with the idea of Futurism. He referred to it in a 1922 piece reviewing a book on Bergson: "The Christian Warrior" (*Papers* 15: 378).

³⁰ RAI 220.016160, box 3.45.

Hume, Kant, and Fichte were common in Russell's work on this topic, but his discussion of the idea of despair is unexpected. The reference to a disgust with industrialism that was combined with a worship of machines is an especially good point by Russell, and it would have been fascinating to see him develop this germ of an idea. Why this is such a noteworthy and ultimately frustrating sentence is that Russell's understanding of the mood of despair was fairly advanced. People were not raging against all things modern, but merely the unhappy detritus of modern industrial society. The causes of this for the general public are well known. Industrialism brought about decreased independence in the workplace, which led to a lack of a sense of purpose and an increased sense of being a small and insignificant part of a much larger machine, both at work and in society in general. Urbanization created urban alienation. Although modern society had brought many great advances in the standard of living, it had also brought what the French would term *anomie*, a sense of a general decay of society and its cohesive structures. It is what German historian Detlev Peukert called "the crisis of classical modernity" in the 1980s. Russell understood that there was something quite different about the sense of despair in the period of high industrialism, hence his comment about the revulsion at the consequences of industry but a love of the machinery. Peukert, in his book *Inside Nazi Germany*, has a passage with some bearing in this discussion. Nazism came about in an era of rapid modernization and social upheaval, which

... led to a complex sense of crisis, particularly among the disoriented new and old middle classes, the unemployed, and *declassés*, and a younger generation deprived of secure prospects for the future. The response to the crisis, however, was no longer couched merely in the conservative or traditionalist plebeian terms that had characterized the critique of modernity up to the middle of the nineteenth century, but took on utopian and reactionary features as well as ideas from the prevailing cultural pessimism and from schemes for reform based on social biology.³¹

Historians since Peukert have taken his ideas further, arguing that fascists were the modernists *par excellence*, an idea most prominent in the work of Modris Eksteins³² and Roger Griffin. The latter has argued that fascists

³¹ Detlev J. K. Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life*, trans. Richard Deveson (New Haven: Yale U. P., 1987), p. 245.

³² Modris Eksteins, *The Rites of Spring: the Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*

did not seek to revert to a pre-industrial society, but wanted to create an “alternate modernity”.³³ Russell did not go this far, and ultimately saw fascism as an archaic creed that sought a return to a supposedly “nobler” past.³⁴ However, Russell, despite this settled opinion of his, expressed thoughts in this manuscript fragment that anticipated what some modern scholarship says about fascism. He understood the sense of crisis that underlay the ideologies of unreason that fascism represented, and also understood that people affected by such a mood were not blind reactionaries, but rather had a complex relationship with modernity. Sadly Russell never published anything related to this untitled manuscript, which is a shame, as he was working on ideas that would not become prominent in the historiography of fascism until nearly 50 years later.

The last item of interest in the “Revolt Against Reason” notes is several handwritten pages by Russell on the works on Kant, taken from his own copies of the German’s collected works in his personal library. They are on a larger size of paper that matches the size Russell began using with increasing frequency from early 1937, although the earliest positively dated instance of its use is May 1936. The notes on Kant are not philosophical but are rather political in nature, suggesting that they were for the fascism book.³⁵ There is no doubt that Kant would have featured heavily in the “Revolt Against Reason” project. In a 1937 article entitled “Philosophy’s Ulterior Motives” Russell wrote that the philosophy of Kant had been “proclaimed the official philosophy of the Nazi State” (*Papers* 10: 341). As will be discussed further below, Russell blamed German Idealists for much of the modern revolt against reason, with Kant being an important progenitor of that movement. It also seems likely that these notes were for the “Revolt” project based on the attention paid to Kant in Document 2.

There are many compelling items scattered in Russell’s notes for this book, but in the end they remained nothing more than that. Yet the story of Russell’s interest in fascism is not entirely wrapped up with the unwritten book. Russell did elucidate his thoughts in “The Ancestry of

(Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989).

³³ Roger Griffin. *Modernism and Fascism: the Sense of a Beginning Under Mussolini and Hitler* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 2.

³⁴ “Why I Am Neither a Communist Nor a Fascist”, *New Britain*, London, 31 Jan. 1934, p. 311.

³⁵ RAI 220.016170, box 3.45.

Fascism” essay and in other press articles. We now turn to these in an effort to better understand what Russell thought were the origins of fascism.

Russell saw both long- and short-term causes of fascism. Although he spent more time and thought on the longer-term intellectual origins, he did write on the more recent causes in the popular press, a forum that was more amenable to topical discussions. Like many people at the time and in the decades since, Russell put much of the immediate blame on the Treaty of Versailles. In April 1933, just over two months after the Nazi accession to power, Russell wrote an article in which he criticized the victors of the Great War more than the Nazis. He wrote that

The Nazi mentality is an outcome of the unjust treatment of Germany ever since the Armistice in 1918.... It must be said, therefore, that the Nazis, whatever we may think of them, have adopted the only method of obtaining justice from France and England. It is, therefore, France and England that are morally responsible for whatever appears hysterical in the Nazi movement.³⁶

As well, Britain had no business being self-righteous: “In India we are carrying out a persecution quite as widespread and quite as unjustifiable as the persecution of Jews in Germany.... No country has a right to feel itself morally superior to Germany.”³⁷ Later that month in a personal letter Russell wrote that

At the moment, the forces of reaction are in power in Germany, mainly owing to the brutal treatment of Germany ever since the Armistice.... The Germans have not the power to wreak vengeance on their foreign opponents, and the Nazis have therefore turned their hate upon those whom they regard as allies of the foreigner.... No good purpose will be served by anti-German agitation. (Russell to David Ewen, 17 July 1933; *SLBR* 1: 325)

Russell blaming Nazism on Versailles and, by extension, the War, fit perfectly well for a man who had so vocally opposed that conflict. The War had created greater political problems than had existed before.

Moving beyond the problems of Versailles and interwar statecraft,

³⁶ “History’s Lesson for the Nazis”, *The Sunday Referee*, 9 April 1933, p. 6.

³⁷ *Ibid.* Russell often linked the British rule in India to that of the Nazis in Germany, e.g. in an article entitled “British in India like Nazis, Bertrand Russell Charges”, *New York Post*, 6 July 1934.

Russell also made occasional reference to the particular malaise of modern industrial society. In "The Ancestry of Fascism" he mentioned that fascism attracted those who no longer had any *raison d'être* in modern society (*IPI*, p. 40). The role of the alienation of the modern individual is not something he focusses on in his published work. In the unpublished sources there is the single leaf presented in Document 3. There is also another item of note, an article that was written and completed yet not published called "What Is Happening to the World". In it Russell noted that the Western world, despite unprecedented wealth and productivity, suffered from a depression (in the emotional sense rather than the economic). "The ultimate cause of the trouble is psychological: it lies in the fact that social psychology is not adjusted to industrial technique.... If political organization is to be stable, it must reflect economic facts, more particularly facts of economic technique."³⁸ Russell was describing a disconnect between a rapidly modernizing economy and a political system and societal structure mired in the past. It is in this fissure that the common person was trapped. He elsewhere noted how unhappiness could breed political strife, specifically economic unhappiness.³⁹ Although Russell alluded to the role of modernity in the "Ancestry" essay, he never made a statement as clearly as he did in his notes and in the unpublished article.

Russell's thoughts on Versailles are not unique, nor are those on the effect of modernization, even though he was considerably ahead of his time on that score. Where Russell becomes fascinating on the causes of fascism is on the longer-term intellectual origins of the mood of unreason that he thought had given fascist ideologies their particular world view. The theme of all this work was the anti-rationalism of fascism and its philosophical forbears (hence the title "The Revolt Against Reason"). Russell had been concerned about this before he started writing about it in the context of fascism. In *Sceptical Essays* (1928) Russell reprinted a short 1923 essay called "Can Men Be Rational?" In it he worried about the declining stock of reason in the world and said quite flatly that there are facts, they can be known, and that pragmatists only espouse whatever truth will lead to their own prosperity (*SE*, pp. 47–8). He described an irrational man as one who will act to please his short-term passions at the expense of his long-term interests (p. 38). Russell would continue on this

³⁸ RAI 220.013480, box 3.42. "What Is Happening to the World" (1933), p. 1.

³⁹ "What Is Happiness?" (1938), *Papers* 21: 271.

theme, applying it to fascism and its lineage.

It was not long after the rise to power of the Nazis that Russell proposed his “Cult of Feeling” project. By late 1934 he had delivered the “Revolt Against Reason” lecture, i.e. “The Ancestry of Fascism”. It is Russell’s only published work that deals directly and at length with the idea of the philosophical revolt against reason. Rationalism was what most defined Russell and his views, and he was therefore fascinated and disturbed by the “revolt” against it. Russell started by providing his reasons for writing the essay:

A widespread political doctrine has, as a rule, two very different kinds of causes. On the one hand, there are intellectual antecedents: men who have advanced theories which have grown, by development or reaction, from previous theories. On the other hand, there are economic and political circumstances which predispose people to accept views that minister to certain moods. These alone do not give a complete explanation when, as too often happens, intellectual antecedents are neglected. In the particular case that concerns us, various sections of the post-war world have certain grounds of discontent which have made them sympathetic to a certain general philosophy invented at a much earlier date. (“Ancestry”, *IPI*, p. 83)

He then described what reason in political practice entails. First is persuasion over force, second is persuasion by valid arguments, and third is that opinions are formed through observation and induction, not intuition (*ibid.*, pp. 86–7). The splintered political climate of the post-war world made it harder to appeal to reason in politics, “since there are fewer universally conceded assumptions from which agreement can start” (p. 88). For Russell the anti-rational doctrines of the past had combined to make a vile brew with the strained political and economic circumstances of the postwar world. As mentioned above, Russell began with Hume, whose scepticism and arguments against causation started the trend of unreason, or subjectivism (p. 84). Throughout his work Russell often stressed that fascism was an ancient phenomenon, even if the mood of unreason had made the contemporary version a unique variant. He argued in addition that revolts against reason were also nothing new. However, “the modern revolt against reason differs in an important respect from most of its predecessors ... the usual aim in the past was salvation.... The irrationalists of our time aim, not at salvation, but at power” (p. 58). Russell’s point can be seen in his plans to discuss revivalism in the “Revolt” book. Those Christians eschewed reason to gain their

personal salvation. Hitler and Mussolini used unreason for the basest end of personal power.

Russell briefly mentioned Rousseau and Wesley, but provided no further explanation as to why he placed them in the fascist lineage (p. 88). He turned next to Fichte, a man whose role in the advent of fascism had not been acknowledged enough, according to Russell. Fichte believed the Germans to be pure and noble, and that the best path for them was to be militaristic and autarchic (pp. 92–3). The connection between economic isolation and dictatorship was one that Russell made fairly often. In a 1927 essay he noted that in history the great commercial states were the first to emerge from religious intolerance, as prejudice did not pay when one's trading partners were of different faiths.⁴⁰ The connection was that commerce would lead to tolerance. Conversely, the kind of autarchy proposed by Fichte would lead to further intolerance. Russell had made a similar point in a February 1934 article.⁴¹ He saw very little of substance in the movement that Fichte started with his *Addresses to the German Nation* in 1807–08, statements that extolled the superiority of the German nation over all others:

The whole movement, from Fichte onwards, is a method of bolstering up self-esteem and lust for power by means of beliefs which have nothing in their favour except that they are flattering ... the Hitlerite madness of our time is a mantle of myth in which the German ego keeps itself warm against the cold blasts of Versailles. No man thinks sanely when his self-esteem has suffered a mortal wound, and those who deliberately humiliate a nation have only themselves to thank it if becomes a nation of lunatics. (“Ancestry”, *IPI*, p. 99)

Russell was again criticizing Versailles and the victorious powers, but also in a way mocking the Egotist philosophy of Fichte, who believed that the Ego exists through its own will, and that the rest of the universe emanates from it. It is subjectivism at its extreme. It is this belief that Russell viewed as particularly poisonous and as having much to do with the irrational form of fascist belief (*ibid.*, p. 92). Fichte was not the first, of course, and Russell does blame Kant for starting the movement, but Fichte and later Hegel (who oddly is not mentioned in the “Ancestry”

⁴⁰ “The Danger of Creed Wars”, *SE*, pp. 215–16.

⁴¹ “They Are Beating the Cross into a Swastika in Germany”, *The Sunday Referee*, 4 Feb. 1934, p. 6.

essay) are the philosophers who gave it its dangerously political edge. He saw Thomas Carlyle as next in line after Fichte. He was a man who had duped many into thinking he was a democrat; in fact he was nothing more than a hero-worshipping autocrat (pp. 95–6). The ideas of these philosophers were quite abstract. Russell argued that what gave them their practical political edge was the late nineteenth-century concept of “race”, which he described as “pseudo-Darwinian” (p. 97). Those who argued from this standpoint (here he mentioned Houston Stewart Chamberlain and Rudyard Kipling) had spread unscientific nonsense through their racial jargon (pp. 98–9). Russell came finally to Nietzsche in his list of the philosophers of unreason. He wrote that the Nietzschean philosophy was “psychologically adapted” to suit the needs of those who were powerful in a former time but had lost out in the expansion of industrialism (p. 101). He did not go into much detail on this, typical of many whom he mentioned in his relatively short essay.

Russell had written Unwin in 1934 that he wanted to continue *Freedom and Organization* into the twentieth century. One can see why, as many of the ideas that he links with fascism in “The Ancestry of Fascism” essay had featured in that book. He discussed Mazzini in Italy (who was briefly mentioned in the essay) and his notion that the nation is more than individuals, a mystical aggregate.⁴² Fichte was important in spreading this idea through literature. This myth was furthered in Germany when its “nationalism was perfected, in the time of Bismarck, by a number of professors, among whom the most important, perhaps, was the historian Treitschke” (*ibid.*, p. 410). These doctrines are also to be found in Carlyle. Russell also mentioned Byron and romanticism as an essential link in the irrational nationalist chain (pp. 391–2). In 1938 Russell would write a piece on “Aristocratic Rebels” like Byron who reacted against the reason and progress of the nineteenth century. The aristocratic revolt was based on power and not any higher ideals. He suggested that Hitler was a similar character.⁴³

To return to *Freedom and Organization*, that these statements are present in the book shows that Russell certainly had these ideas in mind before he began his fascism essay. Not only that, but it helps to shed more light on the “Revolt Against Reason” notes. Many of the people he

⁴² *Freedom and Organization, 1814–1914* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1934), p. 399.

⁴³ “Aristocratic Rebels: Byron and the Modern World”, *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 17 (12 Feb. 1938): 8; *Papers* 21: 257.

mentioned only briefly (Chamberlain, Treitschke, Wesley) in the essay and in *Freedom and Organization* were the subject of more extensive notes for the planned book. As an interesting example of the point Russell was trying to make about Carlyle, in the typed notes there is a comment that the sales figures of Carlyle's works in Germany should be investigated.⁴⁴

Although "The Ancestry of Fascism" was his clearest expression of the philosophical lineage of fascism, preparation for "The Revolt against Reason" book permeated much of his other work in the 1930s. In the conclusion of an article from 1937 he again assaulted subjectivist philosophy, which was another term of his for these proto-fascist philosophers. He described pragmatists as those who think that "truth is whatever it pays to believe" and that the movement of subjectivity had gone entirely too far. "The subjectivity of truth is a hasty doctrine ... the habits of centuries have made many things seem dependent upon theological belief which in fact are not so. Men lived with one kind of illusion, and when they lost it they fell into another." Objectivity can still exist in a non-theological system.⁴⁵ Reading this leads one back to the outline in Document 2: that the decay of religion in the rise of fascism cannot be underestimated. Perhaps he was thinking along the lines that he was in this article, that the decay of theological belief led men to other irrational beliefs. Although Russell did not mention fascism in this article, if read with his work on fascism in mind it is very much in the same vein. Russell was not just concerned about fascism as an aberrant political ideology. He was concerned that reason was being undermined in every way, not just in politics. In the 1930s he wrote a number of articles on science in which he decried the impact that modern physics had had on belief in scientific laws and an ordered universe.⁴⁶ It is important to remember that Russell's discussions of fascism were only one part of a larger problem that he was attempting to counteract. In Document 3 Russell connected the growth of irrationalism in science with the rise of despair in art, politics, and society.

There is one last article on the philosophical heritage of fascism that

⁴⁴ RAI 220.016180, box 3.45.

⁴⁵ "On Being Modern Minded", *The Nation* 144 (9 Jan. 1937): 48; *UE*, p. 93; *Papers* 21: 244.

⁴⁶ "Science Is Tottering" (1935), *Papers* 15: 275-7; "Determinism and Physics" (1936), *Papers* 10: 67-80.

is worth mentioning. In November 1944, after he had come around to being a forceful advocate for the war against the fascist powers, Russell wrote an article called “The Thinkers behind Germany’s Sins”, in which he argued what he had ten years prior but in a much more condemning form, quite naturally due to the circumstances of the war. He opened with this statement: “Are nineteenth-century Germans responsible for the sins of the Nazis? To some extent, yes.” The three men he targeted were Fichte, Hegel, and Nietzsche. Their philosophies “combined and vulgarized make up most of what is distinctive in Nazi political theory. The first of the three is fanatical nationalism, as taught by Fichte; the second is state worship, as inculcated by Hegel; and the third is the superman ethic of Nietzsche.” On their own these theories might not have caused much damage, but when combined and used together they had had a terrible effect.⁴⁷

Thus we have Russell’s opinions on the roots of fascism. While it is not unique to see links between fascism and Nietzsche, or Houston Stewart Chamberlain, it is less common to see mention of Hume, Rousseau, Wesley, William James and others in that intellectual heritage. Monk argues that “seeking the intellectual roots of Fascism in the adoption of a pragmatist theory of truth seems almost breathtakingly naive and implausible” (Monk, 2: 177). Monk finds Russell’s starting with Hume to be bizarre, stating that the notion that Hitler would act the way he did due to a rejection of objective truth “seems astonishingly out of touch with political reality” (*ibid.*) Perhaps Russell was putting too much stock in the ability of intellectuals and philosophers to influence practical politics, but he certainly was not saying that Hume was the sole inspiration of fascism. Russell had merely traced a line back through the pragmatist philosophers. In reverse, it follows Hegel, Carlyle, Fichte, Kant, Hume (elsewhere he would even go back to Descartes). There is no denying the impact that Fichte and Hegel had on German nationalism and the German sense of self in the nineteenth century. Similarly their philosophy did flow from Kant who himself was inspired by Hume. For Russell this was only one part of the story of fascism, although being a philosopher himself he was obviously more likely to be interested in it and spend time on it. He saw other intellectual roots, such as the separate power philosophy of Nietzsche and the racial theories of the latter half

⁴⁷ “The Thinkers behind Germany’s Sins”, *Leader Magazine*, no. 15 (18 Nov. 1944): 6; *Papers* II: 368–70.

of the nineteenth century. Russell believed in the impact that the intellectual could have on practical politics. A 1939 article argued in part that “German intellectuals had a great deal of influence. The whole of the present situation in Germany would have been impossible except for the pioneering work of men of learning.”⁴⁸ He also argued for a number of much more practical political and economic reasons for fascism. He believed that fascism had always existed. What had made the interwar variety different were the intellectual trends that informed its beliefs.

Russell, despite not carrying out the book-length project, did write a fair amount on fascism. He wrote only a little each time, but when his pieces on the subject from the 1930s are viewed in the aggregate they make a fairly clear picture of what he thought. Much of what he planned to put in the “Revolt Against Reason” book was mentioned in these pieces, such as in “Aristocratic Rebels”, off-hand references to religious revivalism, and, of course, “The Ancestry of Fascism”. Some of his ideas for the planned book ended up elsewhere, most notably in *Power*. He started this book when he was still ostensibly working on the “Revolt” project, and *Power* was not meant to be a replacement for it. Although it was a separate project on a quite different topic, it did achieve something of what Russell had intended for his aborted book. As has been made very clear, one of Russell’s bugbears was the Marxist analysis of fascism. In *Power* Russell expanded this to criticize the Marxist interpretation of history in general, although he still had the goal of making a political statement on contemporary fascism and Marxism. In a letter to Unwin of 1 March 1938 Russell explained that “a large part of the purpose of the book is to combat this Marxian thesis; another is to suggest that Fascism is . . . an infantile disease of democracy, not the last stage of capitalism, as is proved by its prevalence in Greek City States.” It was indeed an ambitious book. He would prove that “the fundamental concept in social science is Power” and not economics.⁴⁹ If we think back to Russell’s understanding of the history of fascism we can see why he would discount economic considerations. Fascism had existed since the classical period and had continued to exist under any number of different economic systems and conditions. This idea of “Power”, a nebulous concept despite Russell’s attempts to systematize it, is the base upon which

⁴⁸ “The Role of the Intellectual in the Modern World”, *The American Journal of Sociology* 44 (Jan. 1939): 492.

⁴⁹ Russell, *Power* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1938), p. 10.

all else is built. Different economic systems are merely the superstructure. Russell inverted Marx's analysis. The chapter "The Biology of Organizations" stated quite flatly that business did not control the government in either Germany or Italy; "[o]n the contrary, in Italy and Germany the state has used the fear of Communism to make itself felt supreme over big business as over everything else" (*ibid.*, p. 179).

Power was a very contemporary book. Even when Russell discussed the past it was very much in reference to the politics of the 1930s. It attempted to achieve what was perhaps the prime goal of the "Revolt" project: to undercut the Marxist conception of history and especially its analysis of fascism. Still, the book did not cover any of the actual topics of "The Revolt Against Reason."

Ten years after he began work on that book Russell published another that in part did achieve, perhaps unintentionally, what he had hoped to do with that project. *A History of Western Philosophy* was published in 1945 in the United States and a year later in Britain, and it would prove to be a large commercial success and a very influential text. He spent the first two of the volume's three books on classical and scholastic philosophy. When he got to modern philosophy in book three one notices how similar it is to the original outline of "The Revolt Against Reason" in Document 2. There are chapters on Hume, Romanticism, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Byron, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche. He more or less did what he had planned to do in 1935: he traced the revolt against reason, this time going back to Descartes' scepticism⁵⁰ and followed the same philosophical progression that he had in his 1930s work on unreason. There are some noteworthy differences. Rousseau, although mentioned, had never figured heavily in Russell's 1930s writings on fascism. Based on Russell's outline of the proposed book, Rousseau would have been prominent. From what he wrote on Rousseau in *A History of Western Philosophy* we can get a sense of what Russell would have written in "The Revolt Against Reason" book. Russell's opinion of Rousseau was not flattering. To link Rousseau to contemporary politics Russell wrote: "Hitler is an outcome of Rousseau; Roosevelt and Churchill, of Locke."⁵¹ Rousseau believed in the heart over the mind. His *Social Contract* "doctrines, though they pay lip-service to democracy, tend to the justification of the

⁵⁰ *HWP*, p. 563; *HWP*₄, pp. 515–16.

⁵¹ *HWP*, p. 685; *HWP*₄, p. 623.

totalitarian State.”⁵² Russell justified this by noting that Rousseau argued that anyone who disobeys the general will shall be forced to obey it. People are literally “forced to be free”.⁵³ The only result of an application of the general will as Rousseau described it would be a corporate or totalitarian state where the individual is powerless.⁵⁴ Rousseau is often seen as a great democrat; Russell saw him as the father of totalitarianism. Exactly what he would have written about Rousseau in 1935 may have been different, as Russell became more interested in the idea of totalitarianism as covering both fascism and communism in the later 1930s and into the 1940s.⁵⁵

Another figure who was present in Russell's 1930s analysis of fascism but who received only cursory treatment is Kant. He admitted that Kant himself is not politically important, but he did influence Fichte and Hegel, both of whom are of great importance. Kant himself was influenced by Hume and Rousseau.⁵⁶ Russell in his *History of Western Philosophy* made the same connections he had a decade prior in his research on fascism. Kant is to blame for the subjectivism of Fichte, even though it was the latter who took it to an extreme that neared insanity.⁵⁷ The chapter on Hegel adds more to a picture that was left unclear in the 1930s. Hegel's conception of freedom was particularly important to Russell. He argued that Hegel saw freedom as the right to obey. He promoted a Rousseauesque general will that is embodied in the monarch.⁵⁸ Hegel elevated the state to the highest possible plateau and promoted warfare

⁵² *HWP*, p. 694; *HWP*₃, p. 631.

⁵³ *HWP*, p. 697; *HWP*₃, p. 633.

⁵⁴ *HWP*, p. 699; *HWP*₄, p. 635.

⁵⁵ Although it is more prominent in his work of the late 1930s and 1940s, Russell had been thinking of the totalitarian concept since the very early days of the Soviet Union and Fascist Italy. In 1923 he commented on the similarities between Italian Fascism and the practice of Soviet Communism (“Posibilidades del Fascismo”, *La Nación*, 1 Aug. 1923, sec. 1, p. 4). By 1939 he was commenting on how “extraordinarily similar” Soviet Communists were to Nazis and Fascists (*Papers* 10: 18). There is another connection that Russell made between Communists, fascists and, interestingly, Plato. In a 1937 book review he wrote: “When I visited Russia in 1920, I remarked, to the indignation of Communists and Platonists alike, that the aims of the Soviet State were almost the same as Plato's. Since then, in re-reading him, it is more the resemblances with Fascism that have impressed me” (*Papers* 10: 469). He did write about the transient fascism of the Greek city-states.

⁵⁶ *HWP*, p. 704; *HWP*₄, p. 639.

⁵⁷ *HWP*, p. 718; *HWP*₄, p. 651.

⁵⁸ *HWP*, p. 737; *HWP*₄, p. 667.

as the means of maintaining the vitality of the state and the nation.⁵⁹ In this way Russell managed to some extent to round out his analysis of the intellectual heritage of fascism, although this is not the specific intent of the book. It is, more or less, what the title says it is, a history of western philosophy. The section on modern philosophy is not directly about the revolt against reason, nor is there anything in it to tell the reader that it may be a critique of fascism and its ideological forbears. Yet when one takes all of what Russell wrote in the 1930s, including the unpublished items, the similarities with the third book of *A History of Western Philosophy* are striking.

Although both *Power* and *A History of Western Philosophy* were about much more than fascism (especially so in the latter book), certain elements bear the distinct mark of Russell's analysis of fascism. *Power* was used to attack the Marxist focus on economic concerns. *A History of Western Philosophy* carried on his criticism of the modern philosophers he blamed for anti-rationalism and totalitarianism. One gets the impression that Russell was loathe to waste a good concept, and since, for whatever reason, he could not proceed with "The Revolt Against Reason", he was eager to work elements of that book into others he was working on in that era. The result is that Russell's thoughts on fascism are scattered across a broad swathe of articles, essays, and books from the interwar period (and a couple during the war years). What he did write was often insightful and demonstrated that he was a keen observer of political events. His analyses of the longer-term intellectual origins of fascism and the more contemporary cultural causes are still worth taking into consideration. The foundation of all his work on this would have been "The Revolt Against Reason" book. So many of the off-hand references Russell made in his shorter works would have been explained in more detail had that book been written. This may be a case where what Russell did not write is more interesting than what he did.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ *HWP*, pp. 740–1; *HWP*, pp. 669–70.

⁶⁰ This paper began as a M.A. research project in History at McMaster University. My supervisor, Andrew Bone, provided invaluable advice and help, as did the Editor in suggesting the link with *A History of Western Philosophy*.
