

Review of Bertrand Russell's *Autobiography* (1967-69, Routledge Edition 2000)

Roger Kingdon
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Read-through quotes and notes

Quotations from Bertrand Russell's *Autobiography* are delimited using < >, while quotations from elsewhere are delimited using ' ' or " ".

p.9: <Three passions, simple but overwhelmingly strong, have governed my life: the longing for love, the search for knowledge, and unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind.> This opening sentence is a succinct and accurate summary of the subsequent 720 pages. Furthermore it is a fitting confirmation of the opening sentence to Michael Foot's <Introduction>: <A particular, persistent reason why Bertrand Russell had such appeal, throughout his ninety odd years, especially to the young, was the trouble he took to write plain English.>

p.71: <Cambridge was important in my life through the fact that it gave me friends, and experience of intellectual discussion, but it was not important through the actual academic instruction. Of the mathematical teaching I have already spoken. Most of what I learned in philosophy has come to seem to me erroneous, and I spent many subsequent years in gradually unlearning the habits of thought which I had there acquired. The one habit of thought of real value that I acquired there was intellectual honesty. This virtue certainly existed not only among my friends, but among my teachers. I cannot remember any instance of a teacher resenting it when one of his pupils showed him to be in error, though I can remember quite a number of occasions on which pupils succeeded in performing this feat.> Like Russell I place a high value on <intellectual honesty>, however I suspect that I acquired this behaviour not at university but during and as a necessary consequence of my "conventional family-and-school upbringing", see Review05.pdf p.5.

p.148, Russell's research that resulted in *The Principles of Mathematics* and (with A N Whitehead) *Principia Mathematica*: <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 vaguenesses of philosophers were conquered for the precision of exact formulae. Intellectually, the month of September 1900 was the highest point of my life. I went about saying to myself that now at last I had done something worth doing, and I had the feeling that I must be careful not to be run over in the street before I had written it down.> I too have known such <intellectual intoxication>, see *How to Make a Mind* (HMM) pp.37-38 and p.45, where I refer to it as a state of 'universal enlightenment', and my comments on HWPNotes.pdf p.7 regarding *History of Western Philosophy* (HWP) pp.138-139.

pp.148-149: <Oddly enough, the end of the century marked the end of this sense of triumph, and from that moment onwards I began to be assailed simultaneously by intellectual and emotional problems which plunged me into the darkest despair that I have ever known. | During the Lent Term of 1901, we joined with the Whiteheads in taking Professor Maitland's house in Downing College. Professor Maitland had had to go to Madeira for his health. His housekeeper informed us that he

had 'dried himself up eating dry toast', but I imagine this was not the medical diagnosis. Mrs Whitehead was at this time becoming more and more of an invalid, and used to have intense pain owing to heart trouble. Whitehead and Alys and I were all filled with anxiety about her. He was not only deeply devoted to her but also very dependent upon her, and it seemed doubtful whether he would ever achieve any more good work if she were to die. One day, Gilbert Murray came to Newnham to read part of his translation of *The Hippolytus*, then unpublished. Alys and I went to hear him, and I was profoundly stirred by the beauty of the poetry. When we came home, we found Mrs Whitehead undergoing an unusually severe bout of pain. She seemed cut off from everyone and everything by walls of agony, and the sense of the solitude of each human soul suddenly overwhelmed me. Ever since my marriage, my emotional life had been calm and superficial. I had forgotten all the deeper issues, and had been content with flippant cleverness. Suddenly 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 teachers have preached; whatever does not spring from this motive is harmful, or at best useless; it follows that war is wrong, that a public school education is abominable, that the use of force is to be deprecated, and that in human relations one should penetrate to the core of loneliness in each person and speak to that. The Whitehead's youngest boy, aged three, was in the room. I had previously taken no notice of him, nor he of me. He had to be prevented from troubling his mother in the middle of her paroxysms of pain. I took his hand and led him away. He came willingly, and felt at home with me. From that day to his death in the War in 1918, we were close friends. | At the end of those five minutes, I had become a completely different person. For a time, a sort of mystic illumination possessed me. I felt that I knew the inmost thoughts of everybody that I met in the street, and though this was, no doubt, a delusion, I did in actual fact find myself in far closer touch than previously with all my friends, and many of my acquaintances. Having been an Imperialist, I became during those five minutes a pro-Boer and a Pacifist. Having for years cared only for exactness and analysis, I found myself filled with semi-mystical feelings about beauty, with an intense interest in children, and with a desire almost as profound as that of the Buddha to find some philosophy which should make human life endurable. A strange excitement possessed me, containing intense pain but also some element of triumph through the fact that I could dominate pain, and make it, as I thought, a gateway to wisdom. The mystic insight which I then imagined myself to possess has largely faded, and the habit of analysis has reasserted itself. But something of what I thought I saw in that moment has remained always with me, causing my attitude during the first war, my interest in children, my indifference to minor misfortunes, and a certain emotional tone in all my human relations.> This story demonstrates Russell's extraordinary ability to describe and analyse his own self, indicative of Empiricist and Theorist learning styles respectively. See *Principia Intellegentia* (PI) pp.7-13 and MyPhilosophy03.pdf pp.4-5.

pp.149-150: <At the end of the Lent Term, Alys and I went back to Fernhurst, where I set to work to write out the logical deduction of mathematics which afterwards became *Principia Mathematica*. I thought the work was nearly finished, but in the month of May I had an intellectual set-back almost as severe as the emotional set-back which I had had in February. Cantor had a proof that there is no greatest number, and it seemed to me that the number of all the things in the world ought to be the greatest possible. Accordingly, I examined his proof with some minuteness, and endeavoured to apply it to the class of all the things there are. This led me to consider those classes which are not members of themselves, and to ask whether the class of such classes is or is not a member of itself. I found that either answer implies its contradictory. At first I supposed that I should be able to overcome the contradiction quite easily, and that probably there was some trivial error in the reasoning. Gradually, however, it became clear that this was not the case. Burali-Forti had already discovered a similar contradiction, and it turned out on logical analysis that there was an affinity with the ancient Greek contradiction about Epimenides the Cretan, who said that all Cretans are liars. A contradiction essentially similar to that of Epimenides can be created by giving

a person a piece of paper on which is written: 'The statement on the other side of this paper is false.' The person turns the paper over, and finds on the other side: 'The statement on the other side of this paper is true.' It seemed unworthy of a grown man to spend his time on such trivialities, but what was I to do? There was something wrong, since such contradictions were unavoidable on ordinary premisses. Trivial or not, the matter was a challenge.> In my view the discovery of this paradox is Russell's greatest achievement as an academic philosopher. See also my summary observations to his book *My Philosophical Development*, MPDNotes.pdf p.7.

pp.154-155: <At Broadway I devoted myself to the mathematical elaboration which was to become *Principia Mathematica*. By this time I had secured Whitehead's co-operation in this task, but the unreal, insincere, and sentimental frame of mind into which I had allowed myself to fall affected even my mathematical work. I remember sending Whitehead a draft of the beginning, and his reply: 'Everything, even the object of the book, has been sacrificed to making proofs look short and neat.' This defect in my work was due to a moral defect in my state of mind. ... The strain of unhappiness combined with very severe intellectual work, in the years from 1902 till 1910, was very great. At the time I often wondered whether I should ever come out at the other end of the tunnel in which I seemed to be. I used to stand on the footbridge at Kennington, near Oxford, watching the trains go by, and determining that tomorrow I would place myself under one of them. But when the morrow came I always found myself hoping that perhaps *Principia Mathematica* would be finished some day. Moreover the difficulties appeared to me in the nature of a challenge, which it would be pusillanimous not to meet and overcome. So I persisted, and in the end the work was finished, but my intellect never quite recovered from the strain. I have been ever since definitely less capable of dealing with difficult abstractions than I was before. This is part, though by no means the whole, of the reason for the change in the nature of my work.> I too have been permanently disabled by <very severe intellectual work>, see HMM pp.33-34.

p.172, Russell writing to Lucy Donnelly, 1902: <I have been trying to be interested in Politics, but in vain: the British Empire is unreal to me, I visualise the Mother Country and the Colonies as an old hen clucking to her chickens, and the whole thing strikes me as laughable. I know that grave men take it seriously, but it all seems to me so unimportant compared to the great eternal facts. And London people, to whom the Eternal is represented by the Monthlies, to which they rise with difficulty from the daily papers, strike me as all puppets, blind embodiments of the forces of nature, never achieving the liberation that comes to man when he ceases to desire and learns at last to contemplate. Only in thought is man a God; in action and desire we are the slaves of circumstance.> 'Universal enlightenment' again. Russell the omniscient Idealist.

pp.177-178, Russell writing to Lucy Donnelly, 1904: <Yesterday I stayed at a place called Mevagissey, where there was a Parish Council Election going on. The landlady's daughter was laying my dinner when I asked her if it was a contest of Liberal and Tory. | 'Oh no, Sir, it's only some of them wanted to put up a Doctor, and others said he wasn't a Mevagissey man, and had only lived 6 or 7 years in the place.' | 'Disgraceful,' I said. | 'Yes it is, Sir, ain't it? And they had a show of hands and he got the worst of it, but he demanded a poll and now the fishermen hope he'll be turned out.' | 'Well,' I said, 'he doesn't seem to have much chance.' | 'You see, Sir, the people who are backing him are powerful people, they're fish-buyers, and some of the fishermen get their nets from them. Then he's backed up by what they call the Christians, the people who are against us poor innkeepers.' | Oho, I thought, now I'm getting it. 'Is he a Nonconformist?' I asked. | 'Oh yes, Sir, he's not a churchman' – in a tone of great contempt. | Then I found his backers were also Nonconformists, that they had made their own money, were very kind to sober men, but very hard on drunkards; and that several pubs had been annoyed by them. I was interested to find that, in the common parlance of church-people 'Christian' is the antithesis to 'Churchman'. I found further from the Landlady that these monsters in human shape actually proposed a new drainage scheme and a new water supply, although the rates were already dreadfully high. | 'How high?' I asked. |

'I couldn't say, Sir, but I know they're dreadfully high.' | The Doctor was not elected; but I was consoled to learn that the parson had also been turned out. – These little distractions keep me from having a moment's boredom. ...> Prominent amongst the <fish-buyers> would have been the Pawlyn Brothers, see PFB3.pdf. Having visited Mevagissey a few years ago, to enquire about my mother's forefathers, I can confirm that the social discord observed by Russell has not abated.

p.190, Russell writing to Lucy Donnelly, 1906: <As for fame, which you speak of, I have no consciousness of possessing it – certainly at Oxford they regard me as a conceited and soulless formalist. But I do not now care greatly what other people think of my work. I did care, until I had enough confidence that it was worth doing to be independent of praise. Now it gives me rather less pleasure than a fine day. I feel better able than anyone else to judge what my work is worth; besides, praise from the learned public is necessarily for things written some time ago, which probably now seem to me so full of imperfections that I hardly like to remember them. Work, when it goes well, is in itself a great delight; and after any considerable achievement I look back at it with the sort of placid satisfaction one has after climbing a mountain. What is absolutely vital to me is the self-respect I get from work – when (as often) I have done something for which I feel remorse, work restores me to a belief that it is better I should exist than not exist. And another thing I greatly value is the kind of communion with past and future discoverers. I often have imaginary conversations with Leibniz, in which I tell him how fruitful his ideas have proved, and how much more beautiful the result is than he could have foreseen; and in moments of self-confidence, I imagine students hereafter having similar thoughts about me. There is a 'communion of philosophers' as well as a 'communion of saints', and it is largely that that keeps me from feeling lonely.> I too have known such <self-respect>, see MyPhilosophy03.pdf p.2.

pp.193-194, Russell writing to Lowes Dickinson, 1903: <I am glad you are writing on Religion. It is quite time to have things said that all of us know, but that are not generally known. It seems to me that our attitude on religious subjects is one which we ought as far as possible to preach, and which is not the same as that of any of the well-known opponents of Christianity. There is the Voltaire tradition, which makes fun of the whole thing from a common-sense, semi-historical, semi-literary point of view; this of course, is hopelessly inadequate, because it only gets hold of the accidents and excrescences of historical systems. Then there is the scientific, Darwin–Huxley attitude, which seems to me perfectly true, and quite fatal, if rightly carried out, to all the usual arguments for religion. But it is too external, too coldly critical, too remote from the emotions; moreover, it cannot get to the root of the matter without the help of philosophy. Then there are the philosophers, like Bradley, who keep a shadow of religion, too little for comfort, but quite enough to ruin their systems intellectually. But what we have to do, and what privately we do do, is to treat the religious instinct with profound respect, but to insist that there is no shred or particle of truth in any of the metaphysics it has suggested: to palliate this by trying to bring out the beauty of the world and of life, so far as it exists, and above all to insist upon preserving the seriousness of the religious attitude and its habit of asking ultimate questions. And if good lives are the best thing we know, the loss of religion gives new scope for courage and fortitude, and so may make good lives better than any that there was room for while religion afforded a drug in misfortune. | And often I feel that religion, like the sun, has extinguished the stars of less brilliancy but not less beauty, which shine upon us out of the darkness of a godless universe. The splendour of human life, I feel sure, is greater to those who are not dazzled by the divine radiance; and human comradeship seems to grow more intimate and more tender from the sense that we are all exiles on an inhospitable shore.> I agree. Indeed, in this passage Russell has expressed my thoughts and feelings on <Religion> far more clearly and precisely than I've ever done. I suppose that makes me his disciple?

p.240: <Although I did not foresee anything like the full disaster of the [First World] War, I foresaw a great deal more than most people did. The prospect filled me with horror, but what filled me with even more horror was the fact that the anticipation of carnage was delightful to something

like ninety per cent of the population. I had to revise my views on human nature. At that time I was wholly ignorant of psycho-analysis, but I arrived for myself at a view of human passions not unlike that of the psycho-analysts. I arrived at this view in an endeavour to understand popular feeling about the War. I had supposed until that time that it was quite common for parents to love their children, but the War persuaded me that it is a rare exception. I had supposed that most people liked money better than almost anything else, but I discovered that they liked destruction even better. I had supposed that intellectuals frequently loved truth, but I found here again that not ten per cent of them prefer truth to popularity. Gilbert Murray, who had been a close friend of mine since 1902, was a pro-Boer when I was not. I therefore naturally expected that he would again be on the side of peace; yet he went out of his way to write about the wickedness of the Germans, and the superhuman virtue of Sir Edward Grey. I became filled with despairing tenderness towards the young men who were to be slaughtered, and with rage against all the statesmen of Europe. For several weeks I felt that if I should happen to meet Asquith or Grey I should be unable to refrain from murder. Gradually, however, these personal feelings disappeared. They were swallowed up by the magnitude of the tragedy, and by the realisation of the popular forces which the statesmen merely let loose.> This is a System 2 paradigm shift, see HMM chapter 3.

pp.260-261: <I came out of prison in September 1918, when it was already clear that the War was ending. During the last weeks, in common with most other people, I based my hopes upon Woodrow Wilson. The end of the War was so swift and dramatic that no one had time to adjust feelings to changed circumstances. I learned on the morning of November 11th, a few hours in advance of the general public, that the Armistice was coming. I went out into the street, and told a Belgian soldier, who said: '*Tiens, c'est chic!*' I went into a tobacconist's and told the lady who served me. 'I am glad of that', she said, 'because now we shall be able to get rid of the interned Germans.' At eleven o'clock, when the Armistice was announced, I was in Tottenham Court Road. Within two minutes everybody in all the shops and offices had come into the street. They commandeered the buses, and made them go where they liked. I saw a man and woman, complete strangers to each other, meet in the middle of the road and kiss as they passed. | Late into the night I stayed alone in the streets, watching the temper of the crowd, as I had done in the August days four years before. The crowd was frivolous still, and had learned nothing during the period of horror, except to snatch at pleasure more recklessly than before. I felt strangely solitary amid the rejoicings, like a ghost dropped by accident from some other planet. True, I rejoiced also, but I could find nothing in common between my rejoicing and that of the crowd. Throughout my life I have longed to feel that oneness with large bodies of human beings that is experienced by the members of enthusiastic crowds. The longing has often been strong enough to lead me into self-deception. I have imagined myself in turn a Liberal, a Socialist, or a Pacifist, but I have never been any of these things, in any profound sense. Always the sceptical intellect, when I have most wished it silent, has whispered doubts to me, has cut me off from the facile enthusiasms of others, and has transported me into a desolate solitude. During the War, while I worked with Quakers, non-resisters, and socialists, while I was willing to accept the unpopularity and the inconvenience belonging to unpopular opinions, I would tell the Quakers that I thought many wars in history had been justified, and the socialists that I dreaded the tyranny of the State. They would look askance at me, and while continuing to accept my help would feel that I was not one of them.> Russell the free-thinking Theorist, an inveterate wanderer in the wilderness of intellectual endeavour. See HMM chapter 7, MyPhilosophy03.pdf p.1, and Review05.pdf p.3, for my descriptions of this intellectual state.

p.263: <When the War was over, I saw that all I had done had been totally useless except to myself. I had not saved a single life or shortened the War by a minute. I had not succeeded in doing anything to diminish the bitterness which caused the Treaty of Versailles. But at any rate I had not been an accomplice in the crime of all the belligerent nations, and for myself I had acquired a new philosophy and a new youth. I had got rid of the don and the Puritan. I had learned an understanding of instinctive processes which I had not possessed before, and I had acquired a certain poise from

having stood so long alone. In the days of the Armistice men had high hopes of Wilson. Other men found their inspiration in Bolshevik Russia. But when I found that neither of these sources of optimism was available for me, I was nevertheless able not to despair. It is my deliberate expectation that the worst is to come,[Footnote: <This passage was written in 1931.>] but I do not on that account cease to believe that men and women will ultimately learn the simple secret of instinctive joy.> Russell has acquired the detachment that comes with the Theorist learning style and its consequent System 2 mode of thinking, see Review05.pdf p.1.

p.282, Russell writing to Ottoline Morrell, 1916: <Ever since the time when I was at Garsington last, I have been quite happy as far as personal things are concerned. Do you remember that at the time when you were seeing Vittoz [a Swiss physician who treated her] I wrote a lot of stuff about Theory of Knowledge, which Wittgenstein criticised with the greatest severity? His criticism, tho' I don't think you realised it at the time, was an event of first-rate importance in my life, and affected everything I have done since. I saw he was right, and I saw that I could not hope ever again to do fundamental work in philosophy. My impulse was shattered, like a wave dashed to pieces against a breakwater. I became filled with utter despair, and tried to turn to you for consolation. But you were occupied with Vittoz and could not give me time. So I took to casual philandering, and that increased my despair. I had to produce lectures for America, but I took a metaphysical subject although I was and am convinced that all fundamental work in philosophy is logical. My reason was that Wittgenstein persuaded me that what wanted doing in logic was too difficult for me. So there was no really vital satisfaction of my philosophical impulse in that work, and philosophy lost its hold on me. That was due to Wittgenstein more than to the war. What the war has done is to give me a new and less difficult ambition, which seems to me quite as good as the old one. My lectures have persuaded me that there is a possible life and activity in the new ambition. So I want to work quietly, and I feel more at peace as regards work than I have ever done since Wittgenstein's onslaught.> I suspect that this negativity from Wittgenstein was a major reason why Russell didn't make any significant contribution to epistemology. See also MPDNotes.pdf p.7.

p.285, Russell writing to Lucy Donnelly, 1916: <My ambitions are more vast & less immediate than my friends' ambitions for me. I don't care for the applause one gets by saying what others are thinking; I want actually to *change* people's thoughts. Power over people's minds is the main personal desire of my life; & this sort of power is not acquired by saying popular things. In philosophy, when I was young, my views were as unpopular & strange as they could be; yet I have had a very great measure of success. Now I have started on a new career, & if I live & keep my faculties, I shall probably be equally successful.> Russell the highly-motivated Activist.

pp.286-287, Russell writing to Ottoline Morrell, 1916: <I believe I forgot to tell you I was coming here for the week-end. I came to speak to the 'Indian Majliss' a Club of Indian students here. They were having their annual dinner, about 100 of them, and they asked me to propose the toast of 'India'. Your friend Professor Shaheed Suhrawardy was there, and spoke extraordinarily well. They had asked me because of the line I have taken about the war – at least I suppose so. But when I came to speak an odd sense of responsibility came over me. I remembered that after all I don't want the Germans to win, and I don't want India to rebel at this moment. I said that if I were a native of India I did not think I should desire a German victory. This was received in dead silence, and subsequent speeches said that was the only thing in my speech that they disagreed with. Their nationalism was impressive. They spoke of unity between Moslems and Hindoos, of the oppressiveness of England, of sharp defeat as the only way of checking tyrants. Many of them were able, very earnest, quite civilised. The man who spoke last was a biologist, full of passion for science, just going to return to India. 'I am going', he said, 'from this land of prosperity to the land of plague and famine, from this land of freedom to the land where if I am truthful I am disloyal, if I am honest I am seditious; from this land of enlightenment to the land of religious bigotry, the land that I love, my country. A man must be more than human to love such a country; but those who

would serve it have become more than human.' What a waste to make such men fight political battles! In a happier world, he would probably discover preventives for cholera; as it is, his life will be full of strife and bitterness, resisting evil, not creating good. All of them were fearless and thoughtful; most of them were very bitter. Mixed in with it all was an odd strain of undergraduate fun and banter, jibes about the relative merits of Oxford and Cambridge, and such talk as amuses the English youth in quiet times. The mixture, which was in each separate speech, was very curious. | Tonight I meet them again, or some of them, and give them my lecture on education. I am very glad indeed to have got to know their point of view and their character. It must be appallingly tragic to be civilised and educated and belong to such a country as India.> Russell the open-minded Empiricist.

pp.288-289, George Bernard Shaw writing to Russell, 1916: <Yeats wrote to me about Chappelow [a conscientious objector], enclosing a letter from a lady, a cousin of his. But I really don't see what is to be done. The Act has been passed; and he must either serve or go through with his martyrdom. There is no ground on which exemption can be demanded for him: he seems to have just let things slide, like a child unable to conceive that the law had anything to do with him personally, instead of appealing or taking advice. I have no private influence; and exfluence, which I probably have, would not help him. | His letter is not that of a man made of martyr-stuff. He seems to be, like many literary people, helpless in practical affairs and the army is in some ways the very place for him; for he will be trained to face the inevitable, and yet have no responsibilities. He will be fed and clothed and exercised and told what to do; and he will have unlimited opportunities for thinking about other things. He will not be asked to kill anybody for a year to come; and if he finds his conscience insuperably averse, he can throw down his arms and take his two years hard labour then if he must, and be in much better condition for it. But by that time he will either have been discharged as unfit for service or else have realised that a man living in society must act according to the collective conscience under whatever protest his individual conscience may impel him to make. I think that is what we are bound to tell all the pacific young men who apply to us. Martyrdom is a matter for the individual soul: you can't advise a man to undertake it. | I do not blame any intelligent man for trying to dodge the atrocious boredom of soldiering if it can be dodged; but Chappelow seems to have been too helpless to make any attempt to dodge it: he simply stood gaping in the path of the steamroller. I am sorry for him; but I can only advise him to serve. Can you suggest anything better?> My attachment to Article 29(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (see MyPhilosophy03.pdf p.4) leads me to agree with Shaw here. And like him I respect the right of others (in this case, Chappelow and Russell) to take a different view.

p.294, Russell writing to Ottoline Morrell, 1916: <I shall be very poor, having lost America and probably Trinity. I shall have to find some other way of making money. I think if Trinity turns me out I shall advertise academic lectures in London on philosophical subjects. It would be delightful if they succeeded, as they wouldn't interfere with political work. I have often dreamt of having an independent school like Abelard. It might lead to great things. I feel I am only on the threshold of life – the rest has been preparation – I mean as far as work is concerned. Quite lately I have somehow found myself – I have poise and sanity – I no longer have the feeling of powers unrealised within me, which used to be a perpetual torture. I don't care what the authorities do to me, they can't stop me long. Before I have felt either wicked or passively resigned – now I feel fully active and contented with my activity – I have no inward discords any more – and nothing ever really troubles me.> Russell the detached Theorist.

pp.295-296, advice to Russell from his brother Frank, 1916: <I can't attempt to shape your career for you – you must be the only guide and the only judge of your own actions – but don't finally cut yourself off too rashly and above all beware of popular audiences. The average [man] is such a fool that any able man who can talk can sway him for a time. What the world wants of first class intellects like yours is not action – for which the ordinary politician or demagogue is good enough –

but thought, a much more rare quality. Think out our problems, embody the result in writing, and let it slowly percolate through the teachers of the next generation. And don't suppose the people you meet are as earnest, as deep or as sincere as you are.> Good advice, I reckon.

p.302, Russell writing to Ottoline Morrell, 1916: <The rare moments of mystic insight that I have had have been when I was free from the will to succeed. But they have brought a new kind of success, which I have at once noticed and wanted, and so my will has drifted back into the old ways. And I don't believe I should do anything worth doing without that sort of will.> The Idealist/Activist dichotomy.

p.317, Russell writing to 'Colette' (Constance Malleson), 1918: <The other thing I long for with you – which we can get sooner – is the Atlantic – the Connemara coast – driving mist – rain – waves that moan on the rocks – flocks of sea-birds with wild notes that seem the very soul of the restless sadness of the sea – and gleams of sun, unreal, like glimpses into another world – and wild wild wind, free and strong and fierce – There, there is life – and there, I feel, I could stand with you and let our love commune with the western storm – for the same spirit is in both. My Colette, my Soul, I feel the breath of greatness inspiring me through our love – I want to put the spirit of the Atlantic into words – I must, I *must*, before I die, find some way to say the essential thing that is in me, that I have never said yet – a thing that is not love or hate or pity or scorn, but the very breath of life, fierce, and coming from far away, bringing into human life the vastness and the fearful passionless force of non-human things.> Russell the romantic Idealist.

p.320, Russell writing to Ottoline Morrell, 1918: <A good social system is not to be secured by making people unselfish, but by making their own vital impulses fit in with other people's. This is feasible. Our present system makes self-preservation only possible at the expense of others. The system is at fault; but it is a weakness to be disgusted with people because they aim at self-preservation. One's idealism needs to be too robust for such weaknesses. It doesn't do to forget or deny the animal in man. The God in man will not be visible, as a rule, while the animal is thwarted. Those who have produced stoic philosophies have all had enough to eat and drink. The sum total of the matter is that one's idealism must be robust and must fit in with the facts of nature; and that which is horrible in the actual world is mainly due to a bad system. Spinoza, always, is right in all these things, to my mind.> Russell the analytical Theorist.

p.364, Russell nearly dies of pneumonia, China, 1921: <Lying in my bed feeling that I was not going to die was surprisingly delightful. I had always imagined until then that I was fundamentally pessimistic and did not greatly value being alive. I discovered that in this I had been completely mistaken, and that life was infinitely sweet to me. Rain in Peking is rare, but during my convalescence there came heavy rains bringing the delicious smell of damp earth through the windows, and I used to think how dreadful it would have been to have never smelt that smell again. I had the same feeling about the light of the sun, and the sound of the wind. Just outside my windows were some very beautiful acacia trees, which came into blossom at the first moment when I was well enough to enjoy them. I have known ever since that at bottom I am glad to be alive. Most people, no doubt, always know this, but I did not.> Russell the immersed Empiricist.

p.385: <With my return from China in September 1921, my life entered upon a less dramatic phase, with a new emotional centre. From adolescence until the completion of *Principia Mathematica*, my fundamental pre-occupation had been intellectual. I wanted to understand and to make others understand; also I wished to raise a monument by which I might be remembered, and on account of which I might feel that I had not lived in vain. From the outbreak of the First World War until my return from China, social questions occupied the centre of my emotions: the War and Soviet Russia alike gave me a sense of tragedy, and I had hopes that mankind might learn to live in some less painful way. I tried to discover some secret of wisdom, and to proclaim it with such

persuasiveness that the world should listen and agree. But, gradually, the ardour cooled and the hope grew less; I did not change my views as to how men should live, but I held them with less of prophetic ardour and with less expectation of success in my campaigns. | Ever since the day, in the summer of 1894, when I walked with Alys on Richmond Green after hearing the medical verdict, I had tried to suppress my desire for children. It had, however, grown continually stronger, until it had become almost insupportable. When my first child was born, in November 1921, I felt an immense release of pent-up emotion, and during the next ten years my main purposes were parental. Parental feeling, as I have experienced it, is very complex. There is, first and foremost, sheer animal affection, and delight in watching what is charming in the ways of the young. Next, there is the sense of inescapable responsibility, providing a purpose for daily activities which scepticism does not easily question. Then there is an egoistic element, which is very dangerous: the hope that one's children may succeed where one has failed, that they may carry on one's work when death or senility puts an end to one's own efforts, and, in any case, that they will supply a biological escape from death, making one's own life part of the whole stream, and not a mere stagnant puddle without any overflow into the future. All this I experienced, and for some years it filled my life with happiness and peace.> In this passage Russell describes his successive manias for discovery (Empiricist), wisdom (Idealist), proclamation (Activist), and parenthood (Conformist); and of course he couldn't have seen it in this way without his propensity for self-analysis (Theorist). To me it's significant that these learning styles are in the same sequence as the central five of Shakespeare's 'seven ages of man', see PI pp.15-19 or HMM p.175.

p.392, from <Christmas at Sea>, 1931: <Time, they say, makes a man mellow. I do not believe it. Time makes a man afraid, and fear makes him conciliatory, and being conciliatory he endeavours to appear to others what they will think mellow. And with fear comes the need of affection, of some human warmth to keep away the chill of the cold universe. When I speak of fear, I do not mean merely or mainly personal fear: the fear of death or decrepitude or penury or any such merely mundane misfortune. I am thinking of a more metaphysical fear. I am thinking of the fear that enters the soul through experience of the major evils to which life is subject: the treachery of friends, the death of those whom we love, the discovery of the cruelty that lurks in average human nature.> Existential angst.

p.393, <Modern Physics>, 1931: <Alone in my tower at midnight, I remember the woods and downs, the sea and sky, that daylight showed. Now, as I look through each of the four windows, north, south, east and west, I see only myself dimly reflected, or shadowed in monstrous opacity upon the fog. What matter? Tomorrow's sunrise will give me back the beauty of the outer world as I wake from sleep. | But the mental night that has descended upon me is less brief, and promises no awakening after sleep. Formerly, the cruelty, the meanness, the dusty fretful passion of human life seemed to me a little thing, set, like some resolved discord in music, amid the splendour of the stars and the stately procession of geological ages. What if the universe was to end in universal death? It was none the less unruffled and magnificent. But now all this has shrunk to be no more than my own reflection in the windows of the soul through which I look out upon the night of nothingness. The revolutions of nebulae, the birth and death of stars, are no more than convenient fictions in the trivial work of linking together my own sensations, and perhaps those of other men not much better than myself. No dungeon was ever constructed so dark and narrow as that in which the shadow physics of our time imprisons us, for every prisoner has believed that outside his walls a free world existed; but now the prison has become the whole universe. There is darkness without, and when I die there will be darkness within. There is no splendour, no vastness, anywhere; only triviality for a moment, and then nothing. | Why live in such a world? Why even die?> More existential angst. See HMM chapter 7 and Review05.pdf pp.3-4 for my positive solutions to these negative doubts.

p.395, from the <Epilogue> to Russell's draft <short autobiography>, 1931: <When I survey my life, it seems to me to be a useless one, devoted to impossible ideals. I have not found in the post-war world any attainable ideals to replace those which I have come to think unattainable. So far as the things I have cared for are concerned, the world seems to me to be entering upon a period of darkness. When Rome fell, St Augustine, a Bolshevik of the period, could console himself with a new hope, but my outlook upon my own time is less like his than like that of the unfortunate Pagan philosophers of the time of Justinian, whom Gibbon describes as seeking asylum in Persia, but so disgusted by what they saw there that they returned to Athens, in spite of the Christian bigotry which forbade them to teach. Even they were more fortunate than I am in one respect, for they had an intellectual faith which remained firm. They entertained no doubt as to the greatness of Plato. For my part, I find in the most modern thought a corrosive solvent of the great systems of even the recent past, and I do not believe that the constructive efforts of present-day philosophers and men of science have anything approaching the validity that attaches to their destructive criticism.> More existential angst, as before. In addition Russell's last sentence anticipates my criticism of his method of analysis, which I find to be "entirely negative", with the effect that "his main contributions to philosophy were also negative", see MPDNotes.pdf p.7.

p.396, Joseph Conrad writing to Russell, 1922: <He who does not see the truth of your deductions can only be he who does not want to see. They strike a chill into one's soul especially when you deal with the American element. That would indeed be a dreadful fate for China or any other country. I feel your book the more because the only ray of hope you allow is the advent of international socialism, the sort of thing to which I cannot attach any sort of definite meaning. I have never been able to find in any man's book or any man's talk anything convincing enough to stand up for a moment against my deep-seated sense of fatality governing this man-inhabited world. After all it is but a system, not very recondite and not very plausible. As a mere reverie it is not of a very high order and wears a strange resemblance to a hungry man's dream of a gorgeous feast guarded by a lot of beadles in cocked hats. But I know you wouldn't expect me to put faith in *any* system. The only remedy for Chinamen and for the rest of us is the change of hearts, but looking at the history of the last 2000 years there is not much reason to expect that thing, even if man has taken to flying – a great 'uplift', no doubt, but no great change. He doesn't fly like an eagle; he flies like a beetle. And you must have noticed how ugly, ridiculous and fatuous is the flight of a beetle.> In my view "one person's Utopia is another person's Hell", see Review05.pdf p.5.

pp.430-432: <After settling again at Telegraph House [in 1932], without the school, I went for a holiday to the Canary Islands. On returning, I found myself, though sane, quite devoid of creative impulse, and at a loss to know what work to do. For about two months, purely to afford myself distraction, I worked on the problem of the twenty-seven straight lines on a cubic surface. But this would never do, as it was totally useless and I was living on capital saved during the successful years that ended in 1932. I decided to write a book on the daily increasing menace of war. I called this book *Which Way to Peace?* and maintained in it the pacifist position that I had taken up during the First War. I did, it is true, make an exception: I held that, if ever a world government were established, it would be desirable to support it by force against rebels. But as regards the war to be feared in the immediate future, I urged conscientious objection. | This attitude, however, had become unconsciously insincere. I had been able to view with reluctant acquiescence the possibility of the supremacy of the Kaiser's Germany; I thought that, although this would be an evil, it would not be so great an evil as a world war and its aftermath. But Hitler's Germany was a different matter. I found the Nazis utterly revolting – cruel, bigoted, and stupid. Morally and intellectually they were alike odious to me. Although I clung to my pacifist convictions, I did so with increasing difficulty. When, in 1940, England was threatened with invasion, I realised that, throughout the First War, I had never seriously envisaged the possibility of utter defeat. I found this possibility unbearable, and at last consciously and definitely decided that I must support what was necessary for victory in the Second War, however difficult victory might be to achieve, and however painful

in its consequences. | This was the last stage in the slow abandonment of many of the beliefs that had come to me in the moment of ‘conversion’ in 1901. I had never been a complete adherent of the doctrine of non-resistance; I had always recognised the necessity of the police and the criminal law, and even during the First War I had maintained publicly that some wars are justifiable. But I had allowed a larger sphere to the method of non-resistance – or, rather, non-violent resistance – than later experience seemed to warrant. It certainly has an important sphere; as against the British in India, Gandhi led it to triumph. But it depends upon the existence of certain virtues in those against whom it is employed. When Indians lay down on railways, and challenged the authorities to crush them under trains, the British found such cruelty intolerable. But the Nazis had no scruples in analogous situations. The doctrine which Tolstoy preached with great persuasive force, that the holders of power could be morally regenerated if met by non-resistance, was obviously untrue in Germany after 1933. Clearly Tolstoy was right only when the holders of power were not ruthless beyond a point, and clearly the Nazis went beyond this point. | But private experience had almost as much to do with changing my beliefs as had the state of the world. In the school, I found a very definite and forceful exercise of authority necessary if the weak were not to be oppressed. Such instances as the hatpin in the soup could not be left to the slow operation of a good environment, since the need for action was immediate and imperative. In my second marriage, I had tried to preserve that respect for my wife’s liberty which I thought that my creed enjoined. I found, however, that my capacity for forgiveness and what may be called Christian love was not equal to the demands that I was making on it, and that persistence in a hopeless endeavour would do much harm to me, while not achieving the intended good to others. Anybody else could have told me this in advance, but I was blinded by theory. | I do not wish to exaggerate. The gradual change in my views, from 1932 to 1940, was not a revolution; it was only a quantitative change and a shift of emphasis. I had never held the non-resistance creed absolutely, and I did not now reject it absolutely. But the practical difference, between opposing the First War and supporting the Second, was so great as to mask the considerable degree of theoretical consistency that in fact existed. | Although my reason was wholly convinced, my emotions followed with reluctance. My whole nature had been involved in my opposition to the First War, whereas it was a divided self that favoured the Second. I have never since 1940 recovered the same degree of unity between opinion and emotion as I had possessed from 1914 to 1918. I think that, in permitting myself that unity, I had allowed myself more of a creed than scientific intelligence can justify. To follow scientific intelligence wherever it may lead me had always seemed to me the most imperative of moral precepts for me, and I have followed this precept even when it has involved a loss of what I myself had taken for deep spiritual insight.> This passage has the most insightful analysis of <non-violent resistance> that I’ve seen. Furthermore, Russell’s assertion that <The gradual change in my views, from 1932 to 1940, was not a revolution; it was only a quantitative change and a shift of emphasis> is simply what I call ‘iterative development’. For example, it is strikingly similar to the following description of the development of IDEAL, from HMM p.64: “I must emphasize that IDEAL did not come to me completely out of the blue, with no close precursors. Its discovery was not the result of a mysterious, inexplicable flash of inspiration or any other revelatory process”. Because of this, in HMM and subsequently I’ve identified ‘iterative development’ as a key component of ‘scientific method’. Perhaps if Wittgenstein hadn’t trashed the <Theory of Knowledge> (see above, p.282) then Russell would’ve beaten me to it by a century or more? His loss is my gain, I suppose.

p.432: <My next piece of work was *Power, a new social analysis* [1938]. In this book I maintained that a sphere of freedom is still desirable even in a socialist state, but this sphere has to be defined afresh and not in liberal terms. This doctrine I still hold. The thesis of this book seems to me important, and I hoped that it would attract more attention than it has done. It was intended as a refutation both of Marx and of the classical economists, not on a point of detail, but on the fundamental assumptions that they shared. I argued that power, rather than wealth, should be the basic concept in social theory, and that social justice should consist in equalisation of power to the greatest practicable degree. It followed that State ownership of land and capital was no advance

unless the State was democratic, and even then only if methods were devised for curbing the power of officials. A part of my thesis was taken up and popularised in Burnham's *Managerial Revolution*, but otherwise the book fell rather flat. I still hold, however, that what it has to say is of very great importance if the evils of totalitarianism are to be avoided, particularly under a Socialist régime.> In my view "one person's Utopia is another person's Hell".

p.439, Russell writing to G E Moore, 1930: <I find I can only understand Wittgenstein when I am in good health, which I am not at the present moment.> Irrespective of my state of health I've never been able to understand Wittgenstein, see HMM p.123 or MPDNotes.pdf p.4.

pp.463-464: <My duties with Dr Barnes began at the New Year of 1941. ... I was warned before accepting his offer that he always tired of people before long, so I exacted a five-year contract from him. On December 28th, 1942, I got a letter from him informing me that my appointment was terminated as from January 1st. I was thus reduced once again from affluence to destitution. True, I had my contract, and the lawyer whom I consulted assured me that there was no doubt whatever of my getting full redress from the courts. ... When my case came into court, Dr Barnes complained that I had done insufficient work for my lectures, and that they were superficial and perfunctory. So far as they had gone, they consisted of the first two-thirds of my *History of Western Philosophy*, of which I submitted the manuscript to the judge, though I scarcely suppose he read it. Dr Barnes complained of my treatment of the men whom he called Pither-gawras and Empi-Dokkles. I observed the judge taking notice, and I won my case. Dr Barnes, of course, appealed as often as he could, and it was not until I was back in England that I actually got the money. Meanwhile he had sent a printed document concerning my sins to the Master and each of the Fellows of Trinity College, to warn them of their folly in inviting me back. I never read this document, but I have no doubt it was good reading.> Hilarious!

pp.465-466: <The *History of Western Philosophy* began by accident and proved the main source of my income for many years. I had no idea, when I embarked upon this project, that it would have a success which none of my other books have had, even, for a time, shining high upon the American list of Best Sellers. While I was still concerned with ancient times, Barnes had told me that he had no further need of me, and my lectures stopped. I found the work exceedingly interesting, especially the parts that I knew least about beforehand, the early Medieval part and the Jewish part just before the birth of Christ, so I continued the work till I had completed the survey. I was grateful to Bryn Mawr College for allowing me the use of its library which I found excellent, especially as it provided me with the invaluable work of the Rev. Charles who published translations of Jewish works written shortly before the time of Christ and in a great degree anticipating His teaching. | I was pleased to be writing this history because I had always believed that history should be written in the large. I had always held, for example, that the subject matter of which Gibbon treats could not be adequately treated in a shorter book or several books. I regarded the early part of my *History of Western Philosophy* as a history of culture, but in the later parts, where science becomes important, it is more difficult to fit into this framework. I did my best, but I am not at all sure that I succeeded. I was sometimes accused by reviewers of writing not a true history but a biased account of the events that I arbitrarily chose to write of. But to my mind, a man without a bias cannot write interesting history – if, indeed, such a man exists. I regard it as mere humbug to pretend to lack of bias. Moreover, a book, like any other work, should be held together by its point of view. This is why a book made up of essays by various authors is apt to be less interesting as an entity than a book by one man. Since I do not admit that a person without bias exists, I think the best that can be done with a large-scale history is to admit one's bias and for dissatisfied readers to look for other writers to express an opposite bias. Which bias is nearer to the truth must be left to posterity. This point of view on the writing of history makes me prefer my *History of Western Philosophy* to the *Wisdom of the West* which was taken from the former, but ironed out and tamed – although I like the illustrations of *Wisdom of the West*.> I agree. Specifically, as well as sharing Russell's evident

enthusiasm for <the invaluable work of the Rev. Charles>, I note that his view that <a man without a bias cannot write interesting history> anticipates my own, as expressed in ideas3.doc 24/1/16: “I prefer the historian to take a fixed point of view, and then to interpret the evidence from that perspective. Then, I may or may not agree with the point of view, but at least I’ll be able to understand it. Without that clear perspective, it’s just a load of interesting anecdotes, with no obvious connection between them.”

p.466: <The last part of our time in America was spent at Princeton, where we had a little house on the shores of the lake. While in Princeton, I came to know Einstein fairly well. I used to go to his house once a week to discuss with him and Gödel and Pauli. These discussions were in some ways disappointing, for, although all three of them were Jews and exiles and, in intention, cosmopolitans, I found that they all had a German bias towards metaphysics, and in spite of our utmost endeavours we never arrived at common premises from which to argue. Gödel turned out to be an unadulterated Platonist, and apparently believed that an eternal ‘not’ was laid up in heaven, where virtuous logicians might hope to meet it hereafter.> I’m with Russell. Specifically, for my rejection of Gödel’s interpretation of his own incompleteness theorems see HMM pp.115-120, and for my rejection of Plato’s ‘forms’ see MyPhilosophy03.pdf p.4.

p.486, Russell writing to Robert Trevelyan, 1941: <What led you to Montaigne? Do you disapprove of Florio? I was pleased to find that ‘Lead Kindly Light’, vulgarly attributed to Newman, was really written by Cleanthes in the 3rd century BC. There are whole chunks of the New Testament in the Stoics.> As I comment on HWPNotes.pdf p.21 in relation to HWP pp.275-276, “I get the strong impression that most or all of the intellectual content of Christianity has been plagiarised from ancient Greek philosophy.”

p.491, Russell writing to Gilbert Murray, 1939: <Thank you for your letter of January 5th. I think a book about how to think clearly might be very useful, but I do not think I could write it. First, for external reasons, that I have several books contracted for, which I am anxious to write and which will take me some years. Secondly – and this is more important – because I haven’t the vaguest idea either how I think or how one ought to think. The process, so far as I know it, is as instinctive and unconscious as digestion. I fill my mind with whatever relevant knowledge I can find, and just wait. With luck, there comes a moment when the work is done, but in the meantime my conscious mind has been occupied with other things. This sort of thing won’t do for a book.> Again, Russell is describing a rudimentary form of ‘iterative development’ without calling it that or subjecting his description to any serious analysis. See my comments to pp.430-432 above.

pp.494-495, Russell writing to Gilbert Murray, 1941: <I am giving a 4-year course of lectures on history of philosophy in relation to culture and social circumstances, from Thales to Dewey. As I can’t read Greek, this is rather cheek; but anyway I enjoy it. I divide it into 3 cycles, Greek, Catholic, Protestant. In each case the gradual decay of an irrational dogma leads to anarchy, and thence to dictatorship. I like the growth of Catholicism out of Greek decadence, and of Luther out of Machiavelli’s outlook. ... It seems to me that everything good in Christianity comes from either Plato or the Stoics. The Jews contributed bad history; the Romans, Church Government and Canon Law. I like the Church of England because it is the most purely Platonic form of Christianity. Catholicism is too Roman, Puritanism too Judaic.> As above, pp.465-466 and p.486.

pp.512-513: <When I had returned to England in 1944, I found that in certain ways my outlook had changed. I enjoyed once more the freedom of discussion that prevailed in England, but not in America. In America, if a policeman addressed us, my young son burst into tears; and the same was true (*mutatis mutandis*) of university professors accused of speeding. The less fanatical attitude of English people diminished my own fanaticism, and I rejoiced in the feeling of home. This feeling was enhanced at the end of the forties when I was invited by the BBC to give the first course of

Reith lectures, instead of being treated as a malefactor and allowed only limited access to the young. I admired more than ever the atmosphere of free discussion, and this influenced my choice of subject for the lectures, which was 'Authority and the Individual'. They were published in 1949 under that title and were concerned very largely with the lessening of individual freedom which tends to accompany increase of industrialism. But, although this danger was acknowledged, very little was done either then or since to diminish the evils that it was bringing. | I proposed in these lectures to consider how we could combine that degree of individual initiative which is necessary for progress with the degree of social cohesion that is necessary for survival. This is a large subject, and the remarks that I shall make upon it here are no more than annotations on the lectures and sometimes expansions of subjects that have interested me since writing the book. | The problem comes down, in my view, to the fact that society should strive to obtain security and justice for human beings and, also, progress. To obtain these it is necessary to have an established framework, the State, but, also, individual freedom. And in order to obtain the latter, it is necessary to separate cultural matters from the Establishment. The chief matter in which security is desirable now is security of nations against hostile enemies, and to achieve this a world government must be established that is strong enough to hold sway over national governments in international matters. | Since no defence is possible for a single nation against a more powerful nation or a group of such nations, a nation's safety in international matters must depend upon outside protection. Aggression against a single nation by another nation or group of nations must be opposed by international law and not left to the wilful initiative of some warlike State. If this is not done, any State may at any moment be totally destroyed. Changes in weapons may frequently alter the balance of power. It happened, for example, between France and England in the fifteenth century when the Powers ceased to defend castles and came to depend upon moving armies with artillery. This put an end to the feudal anarchy which had until then been common. In like manner, nuclear weapons must, if peace is to exist, put an end to war between nations and introduce the practical certainty of victory for an international force in any possible contest. The introduction of such a reform is difficult since it requires that the international Power should be so armed as to be fairly certain of victory in warfare with any single State. | Apart from this connection with the dangers of war now that weapons of mass destruction were being developed, these lectures were important in my own life because they give the background of a subject which has absorbed me in one way and another, especially since 1914: the relation of an individual to the State, conscientious objection, civil disobedience.> In my view society doesn't progress, it churns. See Review05.pdf p.5.

pp.522-524: <What led me to write about ethics was the accusation frequently brought against me that, while I had made a more or less sceptical inquiry into other branches of knowledge, I had avoided the subject of ethics except in an early essay expounding Moore's *Principia Ethica*. My reply is that ethics is not a branch of knowledge. I now, therefore, set about the task in a different way. ... I adopted as my guiding thought the principle that ethics is derived from passions and that there is no valid method of travelling from passion to what ought to be done. I adopted David Hume's maxim that 'Reason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions'. I am not satisfied with this, but it is the best that I can do. Critics are fond of charging me with being wholly rational and this, at least, proves that I am not entirely so. The practical distinction among passions comes as regards their success: some passions lead to success in what is desired; others, to failure. If you pursue the former, you will be happy; if the latter, unhappy. Such, at least, will be the broad general rule. This may seem a poor and tawdry result of researches into such sublime concepts as 'duty', 'self-denial', 'ought', and so forth, but I am persuaded that it is the total of the valid outcome, except in one particular: we feel that the man who brings widespread happiness at the expense of misery to himself is a better man than the man who brings unhappiness to others and happiness to himself. I do not know any rational ground for this view, or perhaps, for the somewhat more rational view that whatever the majority desires is preferable to what the minority desires. These are truly ethical problems, but I do not know of any way in which they can be solved except by politics or war. All that I can find to say on this subject is that an ethical opinion can only be defended by an

ethical axiom, but, if the axiom is not accepted, there is no way of reaching a rational conclusion.>
In my view it's not just ethical opinions and axioms that have their own exclusive language and logic, but also factual opinions and axioms, relational opinions and axioms, political opinions and axioms, and practical opinions and axioms. As I comment on HWPNotes.pdf p.29 in relation to HWP pp.410-411, "you can no more get an 'is' from a 'may' or a 'must' than you can from a 'has' or an 'ought'; and indeed my Review05.pdf analysis treats these (five) grammatical operators as distinct and incommensurable."

p.559, Russell's relationship with his fourth wife, Edith: <These small adventures sound trivial in retrospect, but everything at that time was bathed in the radiant light of mutual discovery and of joy in each other. Happiness caused us for the moment to forget the dreadful outer world, and to think only about ourselves and each other. We found that we not only loved each other entirely, but, equally important, we learned gradually that our tastes and feelings were deeply sympathetic and our interests for the most part marched together. Edith had no knowledge of philosophy or mathematics; there were things that she knew of which I was ignorant. But our attitude towards people and the world is similar. The satisfaction that we felt then in our companionship has grown, and grows seemingly without limit, into an abiding and secure happiness and is the basis of our lives. Most that I have to relate henceforth may be taken, therefore, to include her participation.>
See also the link below for this book's poetic dedication, *To Edith*. I recognise this type of love as *philia*, see HMM pp.179-181. It comes at the end, for those that endure with patience.

pp.560-561: <In the spring of fifty-two we visited Greece where we spent some time in Athens and then ten days or so driving through the Peloponnesus. ... I had never before been in Greece and I found what I saw exceedingly interesting. In one respect, however, I was surprised. After being impressed by the great solid achievements which everybody admires, I found myself in a little church belonging to the days when Greece was part of the Byzantine Empire. To my astonishment, I felt more at home in this little church than I did in the Parthenon or in any of the other Greek buildings of Pagan times. I realised then that the Christian outlook had a firmer hold upon me than I had imagined. The hold was not upon my beliefs, but upon my feelings. It seemed to me that where the Greeks differed from the modern world it was chiefly through the absence of a sense of sin, and I realised with some astonishment that I, myself, am powerfully affected by this sense in my feelings though not in my beliefs. Some ancient Greek things, however, did touch me deeply. Among these, I was most impressed by the beautiful and compassionate Hermes at Olympia.>
Another instance of Russell's extraordinary ability to describe and analyse his own self.

p.587, Ernest Jones writing to Russell, 1955: <What pleasure you have given to a host of people by your characteristically courageous, forthright and penetrating observations in today's *Observer*. You and W. K. Clifford greatly resemble each other in these attributes. I wonder how much the study of mathematics conduced to them in both of you. Your concluding paragraph might be a paraphrase of the concluding one in his *Lectures and Essays*, a copy of which I enclose in case you have mislaid his book. Many of his Essays could very well be reprinted to-day. It is sad to think that the eighty years since he wrote them have shown such little progress in the apprehension of the clear principles he enunciated. | By the way, he quotes elsewhere Coleridge's pungent aphorism: 'He who begins by loving Christianity better than Truth, will proceed by loving his own sect or Church better than Christianity, and end in loving himself better than all.'> For another comment on William *Kingdon* Clifford see MPDNotes.pdf p.2.

p.621, Ernest Jones writing to Russell, 1957: <I am a little surprised that you should find the Anglican's letter at all odd. I should have thought you received many such, and indeed I even wonder how many masses are already being said for your soul. | The interest of such letters is of course the calm identification of wickedness with sexual activity. Freud used to think that the main function of religion was to check man's innate aggressivity (the obvious source of all wickedness),

but it is curious how often religious teachers bring it back again to sexuality. That makes one think there must be some deep connection between the two, and we believe nowadays that much aggressivity, possibly all, can ultimately be traced to the innumerable forms of sexual frustration. It remains noteworthy, however, that you, our leading apostle of true morality (love, charity, tolerance, etc.) should be cast into perdition for not accepting the Catholic view of marriage. | If you want a psycho-analytic comment on the letter there is a clue in the omnipotence he attributes to you (ability to stop wars, etc.). That can only point to a gigantic father figure (an earthly God), whose only sin, much resented by the son, was his sleeping with the mother. It is curious that such people are never shocked at God's adulterous behaviour with the Virgin Mary. It needs a lot of purification.> Hilarious!

p.629, from <Pros and Cons of Reaching Ninety>, 1962: <The way in which the world has developed during the last fifty years has brought about in me changes opposite to those which are supposed to be typical of old age. One is frequently assured by men who have no doubt of their own wisdom that old age should bring serenity and a larger vision in which seeming evils are viewed as means to ultimate good. I cannot accept any such view. Serenity, in the present world, can only be achieved through blindness or brutality. Unlike what is conventionally expected, I become gradually more and more of a rebel. I was not born rebellious. Until 1914, I fitted more or less comfortably into the world as I found it. There were evils – great evils – but there was reason to think that they would grow less. Without having the temperament of a rebel, the course of events has made me gradually less and less able to acquiesce patiently in what is happening. A minority, though a growing one, feels as I do, and, so long as I live, it is with them that I must work.> “Rage, rage against the dying of the light.”

pp.652-653: <The nuclear peril represented a danger which was likely to last as long as governments possessed nuclear weapons, and perhaps even longer if such destructive objects get into private hands. At first I imagined that the task of awakening people to the dangers should not be very difficult. I shared the general belief that the motive of self-preservation is a very powerful one which, when it comes into operation, generally overrides all others. I thought that people would not like the prospect of being fried with their families and their neighbours and every living person that they had heard of. I thought it would only be necessary to make the danger known and that, when this had been done, men of all parties would unite to restore previous safety. I found that this was a mistake. There is a motive which is stronger than self-preservation: it is the desire to get the better of the other fellow. I have discovered an important political fact that is often overlooked, as it had been by me: people do not care so much for their own survival – or, indeed, that of the human race – as for the extermination of their enemies. The world in which we live is one in which there is constant risk of universal death. The methods of putting an end to this risk are obvious to all, but they involve a very tiny chance that someone may play the traitor, and this is so galling that almost everybody prefers running the risk of nuclear war to securing safety. I thought, and I still think, that, if the risk of total destruction were made sufficiently vivid, it would have the desired effect. But how was an individual, or a collection of individuals, to bring about this vividness? In company with those who thought like me, I tried various methods with varying degrees of success. I tried first the method of reason: I compared the danger of nuclear weapons with the danger of the Black Death. Everybody said, ‘How true,’ and did nothing. I tried alerting a particular group, but though this had a limited success, it had little effect on the general public or Governments. I next tried the popular appeal of marches of large numbers. Everybody said, ‘These marchers are a nuisance’. Then I tried methods of civil disobedience, but they, too, failed to succeed. All these methods continue to be used, and I support them all when possible, but none has proved more than partially efficacious. I am now engaged in a new attempt which consists of a mixed appeal to Governments and public. So long as I live, I shall continue the search and in all probability I shall leave the work to be continued by others. But whether mankind will think itself worth preserving remains a doubtful question.> Since this was written the world has moved on, and in my opinion it's not

nuclear weapons but global overpopulation “which threatens our very existence as a species”, see MyPhilosophy03.pdf p.2. This is the threat ‘that dare not speak its name’, but I’ve been aware of it from my earliest childhood. Since that time I’ve had a vivid recollection of this Peanuts cartoon:



And since that time a subversive little voice in my head has been whispering, softly but insistently, “I love people ... it’s mankind I can’t stand!!” The fact is, given the devastation we’re wreaking on the planet, I simply don’t share Russell’s <unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind>. For my closing words on this matter see my “glorious specimen of hubristic bombast” on HMM p.191.

p.671, Russell writing to Julian Huxley, 1963: <Thank you very much for sending me your three papers which I have read with very great interest. I loved your paper about psychometabolism, explaining why peacocks dance and women use lipstick, both of which had hitherto been mysterious to me. I do not know enough about the matters of which this paper treats to be able to offer any criticism. You touch occasionally on the mind-body problem as to which I have very definite views which are acceptable to some physiologists but are rejected with scorn and contempt by practically all philosophers, none of whom know either physics or physiology. You might find it worth your while to read a short essay of mine called ‘Mind and Matter’ in *Portraits from Memory*. | What you say about eugenics has my approval up to a certain point, but no further. You seem to think that governments will be enlightened and that the kind of human being they will wish to produce will be an improvement on the haphazard work of nature. If a sperm-bank, such as you envisage, had existed during the régime of Hitler, Hitler would have been the sire of all babies born in his time in Germany. Exceptional merit is, and always has been, disliked by Authority; and obviously Authority would control the sperm-bank. Consequently, in the degree to which eugenics was efficient, exceptional merit would disappear. I am entirely with you as to what eugenics *could* achieve, but I disagree as to what it would achieve. | I have somewhat similar criticisms to make on what you say about education. For example: you dismiss silly myths which make up orthodox religion, and you do not mention that throughout the Western world nobody who openly rejects them can be a schoolmaster. To take another point: education has enormously facilitated total war. Owing to the fact that people can read, while educators have been at pains to prevent them from thinking, warlike ferocity is now much more easily spread than it was in former times. | You seem to think that governments will be composed of wise and enlightened persons who will have

standards of value not unlike yours and mine. This is against all the evidence. Pythagoras was an exile because Policrates disliked him; Socrates was put to death; Aristotle had to fly from Athens as soon as Alexander died. In ancient Greece it was not hard to escape from Greece. In the modern world it is much more difficult; and that is one reason why there are fewer great men than there were in Greece.> Education is not a universal good. Educators please note.

pp.725-728, <Postscript [Footnote:] Published separately as 'Reflections on my Eightieth Birthday' in *Portraits from Memory*>: <The serious part of my life ever since boyhood has been devoted to two different objects which for a long time remained separate and have only in recent years united into a single whole. I wanted, on the one hand, to find out whether anything could be known; and, on the other hand, to do whatever might be possible toward creating a happier world. Up to the age of thirty-eight I gave most of my energies to the first of these tasks. I was troubled by scepticism and unwillingly forced to the conclusion that most of what passes for knowledge is open to reasonable doubt. I wanted certainty in the kind of way in which people want religious faith. I thought that certainty is more likely to be found in mathematics than elsewhere. But I discovered that many mathematical demonstrations, which my teachers expected me to accept, were full of fallacies, and that, if certainty were indeed discoverable in mathematics, it would be in a new kind of mathematics, with more solid foundations than those that had hitherto been thought secure. But as the work proceeded, I was continually reminded of the fable about the elephant and the tortoise. Having constructed an elephant upon which the mathematical world could rest, I found the elephant tottering, and proceeded to construct a tortoise to keep the elephant from falling. But the tortoise was no more secure than the elephant, and after some twenty years of very arduous toil, I came to the conclusion that there was nothing more that I could do in the way of making mathematical knowledge indubitable. Then came the First World War, and my thoughts became concentrated on human misery and folly. Neither misery nor folly seems to me any part of the inevitable lot of man. And I am convinced that intelligence, patience, and eloquence can, sooner or later, lead the human race out of its self-imposed tortures provided it does not exterminate itself meanwhile. | On the basis of this belief, I have had always a certain degree of optimism, although, as I have grown older, the optimism has grown more sober and the happy issue more distant. But I remain completely incapable of agreeing with those who accept fatalistically the view that man is born to trouble. The causes of unhappiness in the past and in the present are not difficult to ascertain. There have been poverty, pestilence, and famine, which were due to man's inadequate mastery of nature. There have been wars, oppressions and tortures which have been due to men's hostility to their fellow men. And there have been morbid miseries fostered by gloomy creeds, which have led men into profound inner discords that made all outward prosperity of no avail. All these are unnecessary. In regard to all of them, means are known by which they can be overcome. In the modern world, if communities are unhappy, it is often because they have ignorances, habits, beliefs, and passions, which are dearer to them than happiness or even life. I find many men in our dangerous age who seem to be in love with misery and death, and who grow angry when hopes are suggested to them. They think hope is irrational and that, in sitting down to lazy despair, they are merely facing facts. I cannot agree with these men. To preserve hope in our world makes calls upon our intelligence and our energy. In those who despair it is frequently the energy that is lacking. | The last half of my life has been lived in one of those painful epochs of human history during which the world is getting worse, and past victories which had seemed to be definitive have turned out to be only temporary. When I was young, Victorian optimism was taken for granted. It was thought that freedom and prosperity would spread gradually throughout the world by an orderly process, and it was hoped that cruelty, tyranny, and injustice would continually diminish. Hardly anyone was haunted by the fear of great wars. Hardly anyone thought of the nineteenth century as a brief interlude between past and future barbarism. For those who grew up in that atmosphere, adjustment to the world of the present has been difficult. It has been difficult not only emotionally but intellectually. Ideas that had been thought adequate have proved inadequate. In some directions valuable freedoms have proved very hard to preserve. In other directions, especially as regards relations between nations, freedoms

formerly valued have proved potent sources of disaster. New thoughts, new hopes, new freedoms, and new restrictions upon freedom are needed if the world is to emerge from its present perilous state. | I cannot pretend that what I have done in regard to social and political problems has had any great importance. It is comparatively easy to have an immense effect by means of a dogmatic and precise gospel, such as that of Communism. But for my part I cannot believe that what mankind needs is anything either precise or dogmatic. Nor can I believe with any wholeheartedness in any partial doctrine which deals only with some part or aspect of human life. There are those who hold that everything depends upon institutions, and that good institutions will inevitably bring the millennium. And, on the other hand, there are those who believe that what is needed is a change of heart, and that, in comparison, institutions are of little account. I cannot accept either view. Institutions mould character, and character transforms institutions. Reforms in both must march hand in hand. And if individuals are to retain that measure of initiative and flexibility which they ought to have, they must not be all forced into one rigid mould; or, to change the metaphor, all drilled into one army. Diversity is essential in spite of the fact that it precludes universal acceptance of a single gospel. But to preach such a doctrine is difficult especially in arduous times. And perhaps it cannot be effective until some bitter lessons have been learned by tragic experience. | My work is near its end, and the time has come when I can survey it as a whole. How far have I succeeded, and how far have I failed? From an early age I thought of myself as dedicated to great and arduous tasks. Nearly three-quarters of a century ago, walking alone in the Tiergarten through melting snow under the coldly glittering March sun, I determined to write two series of books: one abstract, growing gradually more concrete; the other concrete, growing gradually more abstract. They were to be crowned by a synthesis, combining pure theory with a practical social philosophy. Except for the final synthesis, which still eludes me, I have written these books. They have been acclaimed and praised, and the thoughts of many men and women have been affected by them. To this extent I have succeeded. | But as against this must be set two kinds of failure, one outward, one inward. | To begin with the outward failure: the Tiergarten has become a desert; the Brandenburger Tor, through which I entered it on that March morning, has become the boundary of two hostile empires, glaring at each other across a barrier, and grimly preparing the ruin of mankind. Communists, Fascists, and Nazis have successfully challenged all that I thought good, and in defeating them much of what their opponents have sought to preserve is being lost. Freedom has come to be thought weakness, and tolerance has been compelled to wear the garb of treachery. Old ideals are judged irrelevant, and no doctrine free from harshness commands respect. | The inner failure, though of little moment to the world, has made my mental life a perpetual battle. I set out with a more or less religious belief in a Platonic eternal world, in which mathematics shone with a beauty like that of the last Cantos of the *Paradiso*. I came to the conclusion that the eternal world is trivial, and that mathematics is only the art of saying the same thing in different words. I set out with a belief that love, free and courageous, could conquer the world without fighting. I came to support a bitter and terrible war. In these respects there was failure. | But beneath all this load of failure I am still conscious of something that I feel to be victory. I may have conceived theoretical truth wrongly, but I was not wrong in thinking that there is such a thing, and that it deserves our allegiance. I may have thought the road to a world of free and happy human beings shorter than it is proving to be, but I was not wrong in thinking that such a world is possible, and that it is worth while to live with a view to bringing it nearer. I have lived in the pursuit of a vision, both personal and social. Personal: to care for what is noble, for what is beautiful, for what is gentle: to allow moments of insight to give wisdom at more mundane times. Social: to see in imagination the society that is to be created, where individuals grow freely, and where hate and greed and envy die because there is nothing to nourish them. These things I believe, and the world, for all its horrors, has left me unshaken.> I've copied this <Postscript> in full because the brilliance of Russell's writing moves me to the core. I'm not sure I agree with everything he says, but the way he says it is incomparable.

Summary observations and conclusions

Usually I don't go in for autobiographies, but in this case I felt I should give it a try, on the basis of my positive impressions of *History of Western Philosophy* ("This is the best philosophy book I've ever read") and *My Philosophical Development* ("I identify strongly with Russell because our philosophical journeys started in a similar way, and because I too have struggled with the fundamental questions that he raises in this book"). Having now read this autobiography, I can report that these heightened expectations have not been disappointed. This book is full of wonders. The passages I've copied out are a small fraction of those that I found to be exciting, challenging, interesting, moving, or simply incredible. It is brilliant, brilliant, brilliant, and so is its author.

References

References to unpublished notes in .doc format are for my own use, if ever I'd need to trace back my thought processes, so they can be safely ignored with no loss of information. References to online resources, including .pdf documents available on my website, are as follows:

HWPNotes.pdf: <https://idealectic.com/idealectic/HWPNotes.pdf>

MPDNotes.pdf: <https://idealectic.com/idealectic/MPDNotes.pdf>

MyPhilosophy03.pdf: <https://idealectic.com/idealectic/MyPhilosophy03.pdf>

PFB3.pdf: <https://idealectic.com/idealectic/PFB3.pdf>

Review05.pdf: <https://idealectic.com/idealectic/Review05.pdf>

To Edith: https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/The_Autobiography_of_Bertrand_Russell