

【論文】

Cult Studies: Walter Russell

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Abstract: Walter Russell was a New Age philosopher and founder of the University of Science and Philosophy. He developed his ideas about the true nature of the universe and God, which he named the Russell Cosmogony. His followers continue to run the school with a home course and a selection of books and pamphlets written by Russell. Adherents of other New Age philosophies have found much in Russell's work to admire and use for their own purposes.

Key words: Russell Cosmogony, metaphysics, cult, new age, refolded

Walter Russell, who was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1871, was a successful artist and business consultant who developed a pseudo-scientific explanation of the universe and founded a cult-like school called the University of Science and Philosophy to teach his beliefs. At the height of his influence in the 1950s, Russell directed operations from a refurbished nineteenth-century mansion called Swannanoa on a hilltop in rural Waynesboro, Virginia. Upon his death in 1963, his wife Lao continued as head of the group. After Lao's death in 1971, the organization began to lose some of its vigor and was forced to give up its headquarters in 1998. The group now uses a post office box in Waynesboro as its address but its work continues primarily through the Internet. All of Russell's

books and the relatively expensive *Home Course* are offered through the University's Internet site, which is located at <<http://www.philosophy.org>>.

Russell is an example of a cult leader in the field of New Age metaphysics rather than religion. His personal charisma gave him success in the art world as a painter and sculptor as well as success in the business world as an architectural designer, motivational speaker, and consultant to corporations like IBM.

Russell grew up in a poor family and had to quit school at age ten to work at odd jobs to help out his family. Energetic and personable, Russell made friends and contacts in business, while also developing his natural talent in painting and sculpture. In his 20s, Russell worked for *Collier's* magazine as an artist and correspondent, and covered the Spanish-American War during the battle for Cuba. He also made a living painting commissioned portraits, including those of the children of President Theodore Roosevelt. Russell developed contacts with the political and business elite of America and, from the 1920s on, was involved in securing financing to build apartment buildings in New York City.⁽¹⁾

As a young man, Russell had joined an organization called the Twilight Club, which was a forerunner of such business and philanthropy groups as Rotary and the Lions, and continued to be active in its meetings in New York, rising to leadership positions during the 1920s and 1930s. He worked closely with Thomas Watson, the president of International Business Machines, in the Twilight Club and also ran motivational seminars for IBM employees, as a favor to his friend Watson.⁽²⁾

Russell's busy social life and business activity did not monopolize all his time. From the early 1920s on, Russell developed and refined his ideas about what he called the "Russell Cosmogony" in a stream of books and lectures. His first book called *The Universal One*, published in 1926, set out his beliefs on space, matter, and energy:

"The greatest error of science is in relation to space. Science thinks of space

either as a void or as an ether through which solids of matter travel. The fact is that space travels with its solids, for each solid is surrounded by a minus zero equal-and-opposite vacuity of the plus zero which we call matter. Matter floats in these insulating spatial counterparts. Positive electricity is accountable for the solids and negative electricity is accountable for the space. All matter comes out of space by the action of positive electricity and is returned to space by the action of negative electricity. White-hot suns come from the blackness of cold space and cold space radiates from hot suns. The matter of space consists of holes surrounded by corpuscular solids, while the matter of solids consists of small dense cores surrounded by vast tenuous holes of space. The very purpose of the hot suns is to act as crucibles for melting the raw materials which the Creator needs for expressing the idea of the universe. Contrarily, the very purpose of space is to cool the melted matter set out in order that it may become conditioned for the complex expressions of Creation. The two-way interchange between spatial holes and material solids is continuous."⁽³⁾

If the reader is not particularly grounded in a comprehensive knowledge of science, the preceding quote may seem to make some sort of sense. We are all familiar with such concepts as space, matter, electricity, density, and black holes from popular science as it is disseminated by the media and science fiction. We also realize that scientific ideas and theories must be backed up by experiments that can be replicated by other scientists. As Michael Shermer, the publisher of *Skeptic* magazine, points out:

"Dressing up a belief system in the trappings of science by using scientific language and jargon, as in 'creation-science,' means nothing without evidence, experimental testing, and corroboration. Because science has such a powerful mystique in our society, those who wish to gain respectability but do not have evidence try to do an end run around the missing evidence by looking and sounding 'scientific.'"⁽⁴⁾

Russell addressed the problem of proving his ideas by publishing incredibly detailed and complicated drawings of his ideas about light waves and described various experiments with electric coils. Russell's group publishes a quarterly magazine called *Fulcrum: The Science Journal of The University of Science and Philosophy*. On the first page, the editor and current president of the university, Dr. Timothy A. Binder spells out the purpose of the journal: to act as a forum for those interested in publishing their own interpretations and experiments relating to the Russell Cosmogony. The table of contents lists such articles as *Unusual Reactions of Mass 5 With Helium and Catalytic Metals*, *Scalar Magnetic Cooling in Plants and Vortex Generators of Water* and *Geometry For An Oral Tradition*.⁽⁵⁾ These three articles are filled with drawings of diagrams and mathematical formulas and look, at first glance, to be perfectly rigorous works of scientific thinking. We would probably need to ask recognized authorities to comment on whether these articles actually make any sense or not. Martin Gardner, perhaps the premier debunker of pseudo-science in a long career of writing, admitted in an interview that a lot of what he had written about bad science had been a waste of time. Gardner is concerned that the public wants to believe in all kinds of absurd things regardless of what scientists say and write, but he is glad that some scientists do speak up about such current pseudo-scientific ideas as "creation science", which is an attempt by fundamentalist Christians to prove through scientific-sounding explanations that God created the universe.⁽⁶⁾

It is interesting to note that Dr. Binder, the editor of *Fulcrum*, mentions in the monthly newsletter of the university that a student attempted to replicate one of Walter Russell's experiments but was not able to do it. Dr. Binder suggests that Russell's theory itself may be missing some small element which needs to be discovered in order to make the experiment work. Dr. Binder also refers to experiments Russell made at the Westinghouse Company's laboratory:

"In 1927, Walter Russell experimented with transmutations at the

Westinghouse Lamp Labs. Our own Russell Science Research team has done transmutations based on his principles. For some reason not explained, Dr. Russell was unable to repeat his transmutation experiment while at Swannanoa in the 1950's, according to scientist Dr. Shigeo Okubo, who was working with him.

This year the Russell Science Research team will reproduce Walter Russell's 1927 experiments as closely as we can interpret and duplicate them. His descriptions of how he did these are given in *A New Concept of the Universe* [1953]. As he was not a trained researcher, Walter Russell's descriptions as well as his lab notes leave much room for interpretation."⁽⁷⁾

The University of Science and Philosophy literature often mentions that Russell predicted the existence of plutonium before it was officially discovered and produced in the 1940s to create the first atomic bombs, and also notes that Russell did work for Westinghouse, a big American company known for its scientific research in connection with its business of manufacturing and selling consumer electrical appliances and also in producing nuclear fuel and building nuclear power plants. Dr. Binder also mentions that a general from the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) came to Swannanoa to consult with Russell on some issue of radar technology. Where and when did Walter Russell actually receive an education in science? It seems that everything he knew was self-taught, much like one of his heroes, Thomas Edison. However, Russell claimed that his knowledge came from a religious experience he had in 1921. He revealed the details to Glenn Clark as follows:

"In May of 1921 God took me up into a high mountain of inspiration and intense ecstasy. A brilliant flash like lightning severed my bodily sensation from my consciousness and I found myself freed from my body and wholly in the Mind universe of Light, which is God. And then God said to me, 'Behold thou the unity of all things in Light of Me, and the seeming separateness of all

things in the two lights of my divided thinking. See thou that I, the Undivided, Unchanging One, am within all divided things, centering them, and I am without all changing things, controlling them.' And the secrets of the universe were unfolded to me in their great simplicity as the doors to the Light opened fully to my consciousness. In less time than it takes to put it into words, I knew all there was to know of the CAUSE of all effect...Thus knowing the static Light of God, and the two dynamic lights of His thinking, and the electric processes by means of which His thinking is recorded in 'matter' I at once had the key to all the sciences, mathematics, chemistry, astronomy and mechanics, likewise all the underlying principles of creation...For very many days and nights I was made to write down all these things which I knew in 'The Divine Iliad,' which is my record of my teachings while in the Light."⁽⁸⁾

This experience in 1921, when he was fifty years of age, is referred to as the "39-day illumination" by Russell's followers. In fact, Russell revealed in *The Book of Early Whisperings* that he had been receiving word from God from the age of seven. In the foreword to his book he says: "These writings are the whispering of God's Voice to me during those early periods of illumination which occurred in May of every year of my life from the age of seven. These periods of ecstasy—which always characterize Cosmic illumination—lasted from 10 to 14 days, during which time I was obliged to seek solitude and aloneness in the forests. I endeavored to express the thoughts and moods of these periods of ecstasy as my varying lack of body awareness balanced with my ever increasing cosmic God-consciousness with God and Nature."⁽⁹⁾

Russell obviously was tapping into the field of metaphysics as well as pure religion in his teachings. In the early part of the twentieth century, Albert Einstein and other thinkers in the realm of physics were speculating on areas that were considered metaphysical and hence unproven and yet gave promise that they could be scientifically proven some day. Russell took every opportunity

to give talks and lectures to any group of people who might be receptive to his ideas. In one such talk given at a convention of astrologers in 1936, he thanked the group for inviting him to give a lecture for a second time and also admitted that although he knew nothing about the techniques of astrology, he had great respect for it. He then went on to present his ideas on space, matter, and thought:

"All thought occurs in measureless space and is recorded in measurable electric patterns. It is then suspended in space, the material forms of spiritual thought. We then term those forms the 'created' universe...The 'created' universe is but the record of a thinking universe. It is made up of the thought forms of the One Intelligence flowing through its many material thought forms, such as we are, and all engaged in the creative act of thinking."⁽¹⁰⁾

We can see something of Russell's motivational speaking experience in his comments to Glenn Clark on the potential within each person: "I believe sincerely that every man has consummate genius within him. Some appear to have it more than others only because they are aware of it more than others are, and the awareness or unawareness of it is what makes each one of them into masters or holds them down to mediocrity. I believe that mediocrity is self-inflicted and that genius is self bestowed."⁽¹¹⁾ How does one access that inner potential that we all possess? It all seems to come down to balance and rhythm in one's daily life:

"Everything in Nature is expressed by rhythmic waves of light. Every thought and action is a light-wave of thought and action. If one interprets that God within one, one's thoughts and actions must be balanced rhythmic waves. Ugliness, fears, failures and diseases arise from unbalanced thoughts and actions. Therefore think beauty always if one desires vitality of body and happiness."⁽¹²⁾ And since "all energy is the thought-energy of the universal Creative Force and that never lessens, the Universal Intelligence is constant and forever balanced."⁽¹³⁾

How does one achieve this oneness with the Universal Creative Force or

Universal Intelligence that we think of as God? Russell's Home Course of Study, available from the University of Science and Philosophy, covers lessons on meditation and prayer, awakening one's genius, how to think scientifically, and explanations of the true meanings of such concepts as gravity, light, solar energy, photosynthesis, the geometry of space, and a host of other spiritual and scientific topics.⁽¹⁴⁾

Students of the University of Science and Philosophy are not restricted to the otherworldly teachings of Walter Russell. Walter's wife, Lao added another dimension to the Russell Cosmogony by writing books and giving lectures on such topics as love, sex, and reincarnation. After Walter "refolded" (the term the Russells coined for dying or passing away), Lao kept the university going successfully until she herself "refolded" in 1971. Additions to the literature of the University of Science and Philosophy include books and pamphlets by Dr. Timothy A. Binder and a Nigerian government official named Melford Okilo whose book *The Law of Life* combines "the teachings of Walter and Lao Russell with the practical teachings of Olumba Olumba Obu."⁽¹⁵⁾

Who is Olumba Olumba Obu? A look at the Midnight Salvation Times Internet site tells us that he is a religious leader in Nigeria who claims to be God and leads a group called the Brotherhood of the Cross and Star. The web site quotes a number of verses in the Bible to advance the idea that Olumba Olumba Obu is the leader prophesied in the Book of Revelation who will come in the last days to fulfill the promises of Jesus and God.⁽¹⁶⁾ There does not seem to be any real intersection of interests between Melford Okilo's book and the works of Walter and Leo Russell, but we can see here how Russell's teachings are being used by adherents of other religions or philosophies.

Joey and Jill Korn have an Internet web site called dowers.com which mentions the teachings of Walter Russell. It is very evident that the Korns have a very different orientation from the Russells. First of all an explanation of

dowsing is called for. Here is Joey Korn explaining what he means by the term:

"When most people think of dowsing, or divining, they think of using a forked tree branch to find a place to drill a water well. This is how dowsing started, but dowsing has gone far beyond looking for water. Dowsing can be used to find many things besides water, such as pipes, wiring, lost objects, and buried treasure. However, I use dowsing, combined with prayer and blessing, to help people grow spiritually and take charge of their lives—to find the treasure buried within.

We are energy beings living in a world of energy. We change the subtle energy around and within us with every thought, action, and emotion. With negative thoughts and emotions, we bring detrimental energies into our living environments and into our beings. We literally surround and fill ourselves with our fears, our anger, our resentment, and other negative emotions that hold us back in life and can make us sick. With positive, joy-filled thoughts and emotions and with prayer and blessing, we surround and fill ourselves with living beneficial energies that bring us more joy, healing, prosperity, and success. You can find these energies with dowsing".⁽¹⁷⁾ The Korn run retreats and study sessions as well as offering a "Remote spiritual housecleaning service" that will remove "geopathic stress zones" from your home or office."⁽¹⁸⁾

Since Walter Russell's books make absolutely no mention of dowsing in any way, how does Joey Korn connect the teachings of Walter Russell to his dowsing activities? He explains it this way:

"I discovered dowsing in 1986, just a few months after I discovered Russell's teachings. These were two seemingly separate paths I was following along my spiritual journey. It never occurred to me that they would one day join together.

In 1986, I was dowsing with a friend, exploring the energy field of a power spot in my back yard. As we approached this special place in the earth from any direction, our L-rods would open and cross repeatedly until we reached the

center of the spot. We noticed the same reaction when we dowsed the energy fields of people, plants, trees, and animals. We decided to map out the energy field of this power spot by approaching from many different directions and marking on the ground, with chalk powder, each place we got dowsing reactions. Then we simply connected the dots. We expected to find a series of concentric circles, but instead ended up with a beautiful pattern of two interrelated spirals. We used blue and red chalk to differentiate the two spirals, one we considered to be yin, or negative, and the other yang, or positive. I knew what this was as soon as I saw it; Walter Russell had said that the two interrelated spirals are the source of all creation. What we were seeing was a slice of a vortex, a portion of what Russell called "the wave." I now see the vortex to be characteristic of most, if not all, natural energy fields, including those of people, plants, and animals."⁽¹⁹⁾

Walter Russell was a man of his time. In the early part of the twentieth century, America and its people were energetically exploring their potential for a bright new future with advances in technology. Wedding the new advances in science to the metaphysical questions of philosophy and religion was the way to obtain the best from both old and new ways of thinking. Walter Russell's legacy may well be his influence on many forms of New Age thinking in the twenty-first century rather than the cult-like organization he formed to spread his teachings.

Notes

- (1) Glenn Clark, *The Man Who Tapped the Secrets of the Universe*, The University of Science and Philosophy, 1946, pages 11-16.
- (2) Laara Lindo, History of the Twilight Club.
<http://www.twilightclub.org/history_all.html>
- (3) Walter Russell, Space and the Hydrogen Age.
<http://www.frank.germano.com/walter_russell.htm>
- (4) Michael Shermer, *Why People Believe Weird Things*, W. H. Freeman and Company, 1997, page 49.
- (5) *Fulcrum: The Science Journal of The University of Science and Philosophy*. Vol. 5, No. 1. May, 1997.

- (6) Martin Gardner Interview, *A Mind at Play: An Interview with Martin Gardner* by Kendrick Frazier, *Skeptical Inquirer*, March 1998.
<<http://www.csicop.org/si/9803/gardner.html>>
- (7) Dr. Timothy A. Binder, "President's Message," *University of Science and Philosophy Newsletter*. June, 1997, page 1.
- (8) Clark, pages 34-35.
- (9) Walter Russell, *The Book of Early Whisperings*. The University of Science and Philosophy, 1949. From *the Catalog of the University of Science and Philosophy*.
- (10) Walter Russell, *The Electric Nature of the Universe: A Talk Given to the Astrologers' Guild of America*, June 1936, The University of Science and Philosophy, 1991, page 3.
- (11) Clark, pages 6-7.
- (12) Clark, page 30.
- (13) Clark, page 8.
- (14) *The Catalog of the University of Science and Philosophy*. The University of Science and Philosophy, page 21.
- (15) *The Catalog of the University of Science and Philosophy*. The University of Science and Philosophy, page 17.
- (16) HIS MAN, OLUMBA OLUMBA OBU?
<<http://www.salvationtimes.org/olumba.php>>
- (17) Dowsing, Spirituality, & the Kabbalah Connection.
< <http://dowsers.com/>>
- (18) Space Clearing for Geopathic Stress Zones. Remote Spiritual Housecleaning Services.
< <http://dowsers.com/page49.html>>
- (19) Quest For the Blue Books & The Russell Connection to Dowsing.
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