

Nicholas Griffin (editor), *The Selected Letters of Bertrand Russell*, volume I: *The Private Years, 1884 – 1914*. Boston/New York/London, Houghton Mifflin, 1992. xxii + 553 pp.

Reviewed by

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This is a sizable tome — more than 500 pages long, containing only Bertrand Russell's letters to others over a short but extremely busy and important period of his life. The editor estimates that there are "forty to fifty thousand" letters in the Russell Archives. One can only wonder at how Russell found the time and energy to write such an abundance of letters.

The editor, Nicholas Griffin, is undisputedly one of the leading scholars of Russellian philosophy in the world today, and one can only marvel at the enormous expenditure of research and time that went into the preparation of this one volume alone. Certainly the time and patience that went into preparing this volume requires an *appreciation* for Russell the man; a scholarly interest alone cannot suffice to account for this effort. In fact, to appreciate the motivation of these efforts, we must consider two aspects of Griffin's work, the personal and the philosophical. The personal dates from Griffin's childhood in Britain, when he wrote a letter to Russell (if memory serves, it chided Russell for his anti-Americanism during the period of the war in Vietnam) and which Russell deigned to answer, despite the correspondent's obvious youth. When, as a Russell scholar, Griffin took up his research at the Bertrand Russell Archives at McMaster University, he was pleased to find his youthful letter to Russell among the Russell papers. At the professional level, Griffin was associated with the Bertrand Russell Editioal Project (BREP) for much of its existence. In preparation of BREP's edition of *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, material from the Russell correspondence is frequently used to provide historical background information for the writings included in the BREP volumes.