

## THE IDEA OF A NATION

Winthrop Pickard Bell (1915 or 1916)

Edited, with an Introduction, by Ian Angus (Simon Fraser University)

In memory of José Huertas-Jourda (1931–2007)  
Philosopher/Teacher/Friend

*Winthrop Pickard Bell (1884–1965), a Canadian who studied with Husserl in Göttingen from 1911 to 1914, was arrested after the outbreak of World War I and interred at Ruhleben Prison Camp for the duration of the war. In 1915 or 1916 he presented a lecture titled “Canadian Problems and Possibilities” to other internees at the prison camp. This is the first time Bell’s lecture has appeared in print. Even though the lecture was given to a general audience and thus makes no explicit reference to Husserl or phenomenology, it is a systematic phenomenological analysis of the national form of group belonging and, as such, makes a substantial contribution to phenomenological sociology and political science, grounding that contribution in phenomenological philosophy. Bell describes the essence of the nation as an organic spiritual unity that grows or develops, and is thus not a product of will, and which becomes a unity by surmounting its parts. This unity is instantiated in a given nation by tradition. The particular character of a nation’s tradition gives it a tendency to act in one way rather than another.*

### Editor’s Introduction

#### 1. Winthrop Pickard Bell: A Biographical Sketch

Winthrop Pickard Bell (1884–1965) was the only Canadian student of Edmund Husserl.<sup>1</sup> Born in Halifax, he completed a BA (Mathematics, 1904) at the University of Mount Allison College, which is today known

<sup>1</sup> An outline of W. P. Bell’s life and writings, as well as the archival holdings, are available in the section of the Mount Allison University Archives website devoted to Bell, which can be found at [<http://www.mta.ca/wpbell/>].

as Mount Allison University, and received an MA (Philosophy, 1909) from Harvard University, where he studied under Josiah Royce. A gift from his mother’s inheritance allowed Bell to continue his education, so that in the fall of 1909 he attended lectures at Emmanuel College, Cambridge University, and, after an operation for pleurisy, the next year studied at the University of Leipzig under Professors Richter, Volkelt, Brahn, Wundt, Eulenberg and Barth. It was in Leipzig that he heard about Husserl’s work and in 1911 he went to Göttingen University to pursue doctoral studies with Husserl himself. With the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, the condition of a Canadian foreign student in Germany changed dramatically.<sup>2</sup> Bell was placed under house arrest and, on 12 January 1915, was transferred to Ruhleben Prison Camp, from which he was released after the end of the war in late 1918.<sup>3</sup> Bell had completed all the requirements for his PhD, including his dissertation on Josiah Royce (a topic which Husserl insisted upon), prior to his arrest. Since Bell was denied permission to leave the camp for his dissertation defence, Husserl took the examining committee into the camp to conduct it.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The archival holding claims that it was following a report by another student that Bell had criticised the Kaiser that he was interned, whereas L. D. McCann, in his introduction to the Centre for Canadian Studies at Mount Allison University reprint edition of *The “Foreign Protestants” and the Settlement of Nova Scotia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961, reprint 1990) states that “Bell’s movements in Germany, particularly his photography outings, had created suspicions that led to his wartime internment as a British spy.” (viii) In her autobiography, Edith Stein supports the first account, though suggesting that it was based on an exaggerated report of a remark made by Bell from the window of his apartment concerning the advantage the declaration of war by Japan would mean “for us.” Edith Stein, *Life in a Jewish Family*, (ed.) Dr. L. Gelber and Romaeus Leuven, (tr.) Josephine Koeppel (Washington: ICS Publications, 1986), 301.

<sup>3</sup> Ruhleben was a civilian prison camp located 10 kilometres west of Berlin. It contained between 4,000 and 5,500 mostly British prisoners. The Geneva Convention was observed and the internal affairs of the camp—such as arts, music, sports and academic lectures—were organised by prisoners. See the website *The Ruhleben Story* at [<http://ruhleben.tripod.com/index.html>], which gives a list of prisoners that includes Winthrop Pickard Bell’s name.

<sup>4</sup> Both the archival account and that of Dorion Cairns concur that Bell’s dissertation defence was undertaken in Ruhleben prison camp. See Dorion Cairns, “My Own Life,” in *Phenomenology: Continuation and Criticism, Essays in Memory of Dorion Cairns*, (ed.) F. Kersten and R. Zaner (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), 5. However, Edith Stein presents another version. She recounts that Bell was in “protective custody” in his own home at the time and that his teachers gave him the examination there. She reports that the nationalist faculty at the university declared both the examination and the previously accepted thesis invalid. She notes that Bell was moved to a temporary lock-up in the Auditorium of the Uni-

In the period immediately after the war, Bell stayed in Germany on a Canadian government information-gathering mission, during which time he also filed reports for Reuters press agency. Later, he taught philosophy at the University of Toronto (1921–22)<sup>5</sup> and, after the reinstatement of his 1914 PhD degree in 1921<sup>6</sup>, at Harvard University (1922–27). While at Harvard, Bell concentrated on teaching Husserl's phenomenology and working on the philosophy of value.<sup>7</sup> The phenomenology of value was Bell's main philosophical interest, about which he wrote two unpublished manuscripts, and which ties his work to the preoccupations of phenomenology in the Göttingen period.<sup>8</sup> Bell

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versity of Göttingen afterward and then transferred to Ruhleben at a later date. Given that Stein knew Bell well during this period, and that she visited him at the Auditorium, it seems likely that this first-hand account is more accurate in its chronology than later reconstructions. However this may be, taking the university committee either into a prison or to a prisoner under house arrest was in either case a remarkable act of university independence from the state, even though it would probably have been more possible on or near university grounds than in Ruhleben. Stein also notes that the conservative newspaper *Schlesischen Zeitung* had previously published an article referring to an "anti-German Englishman" (Bell) and the "unpatriotic attitude" of some professors (Husserl). See Edith Stein, *Life in a Jewish Family*, 301–03. I was told at some time during the 1980s by my teacher in phenomenology, José Huertas-Jourda, that Husserl accompanied this remarkable act of university autonomy with the statement that "the world of science knows no national boundaries," but I have not been able to confirm this claim.

<sup>5</sup> Bell is not mentioned in "Appendix B – Faculty in Philosophy" of John G. Slater's comprehensive *Minerva's Aviary: Philosophy at Toronto, 1843–2003* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005). However, in an email correspondence to me (12 November 2010), Dr. Slater suggested that "Bell may have taught in one of the unaffiliated colleges, such as Wycliff (low Anglican) or Knox (Presbyterian)." Or he might have taught at McMaster University, which "was founded by the Baptists in Toronto and later moved to Hamilton."

<sup>6</sup> I have not been able to find out when Bell's PhD was revoked, or indeed, whether it was actually conferred after the successful defence, but he formally applied for its reinstatement while he was teaching at the University of Toronto.

<sup>7</sup> Bell taught a graduate course on "Philosophy of Values" in 1924–25 and a graduate course on "Husserl and the 'Phenomenological' Movement" in 1926–27. No data is available from this source for other years. See Harvard Presidents' Reports, available at: [<http://hul.harvard.edu/huarc/refshelf/AnnualReportsCites.htm#tar> HarvardPresidents]. Dorion Cairns was introduced to Husserl's work in Bell's Harvard course on the Philosophy of Value in 1923–24 and later provided with a letter of introduction to Husserl for his own studies in Freiberg (Cairns, "My Own Life," 5–6).

<sup>8</sup> I am referring here to two works available in the Mount Allison University Library Bell archives. (1) 6501/11/2 – File 26. Harvard University. "An Essay in the Philosophy of Values." It consists of about 292 pages written in minute script, including additions, emendations, repetitions, and redraftings. (2) 6501/9/2.

remained in regular correspondence with Husserl, sent him books on the British Idealists (Whitehead and Alexander) and was asked to translate the lectures that Husserl gave in England in 1922.<sup>9</sup> Bell declined Husserl's invitation to have his dissertation printed in volume VI of the *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und Phänomenologische Forschung*.<sup>10</sup>

In 1927, Bell returned to Canada to work in the family business and reside in Chester Basin, Nova Scotia. During this latter period, Bell conducted historical research and in 1951 was elected as President of the Nova Scotia Historical Society. His most extensive and best-known historical work is *The "Foreign Protestants" and the Settlement of Nova Scotia: The History of a Piece of Arrested British Colonial Policy in the Eighteenth Century* (University of Toronto Press, 1961). Bell's historical research on Atlantic Canada was the inspiration behind the 1967 creation of the Winthrop Pickard Bell Collection of Acadiana at Mount Allison University, which includes his personal library, and the 1977 establishment of The Winthrop Pickard Bell Chair in Maritime Studies at the same university. In Atlantic Canada, Bell is primarily known as a historian and a benefactor of Mount Allison University. He died at his home "Drumnaha" in Chester, Nova Scotia, on 4 April 1965.

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Ruhleben notebooks: Notebooks 27, 28 and 29, which were the basis for a series of lectures, can be referred to as the "Ruhleben Notebooks on the Philosophy of Value." These notebooks contain approximately 300 pages of small handwritten text, including revisions, additions and corrections. These are the two most extensive philosophical manuscripts in the archive, indicating that this topic was Bell's main philosophical interest. As late as 1950, he reviewed a book on the philosophy of values for *The Dalhousie Review*, vol. 29, no. 1, 104–05.

<sup>9</sup> The Mount Allison University Archives Winthrop Pickard Bell Fonds contains a large correspondence, mainly on postcards, from Husserl between 1918 and 1925. These are stored in the Series T – Postcards section of the Fonds under reference to Professor Edmund Husserl, number 6501/1/20. The books are mentioned in a postcard from Prof. Edmund Husserl to Dr. Winthrop Bell, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1922. Possible translation of Husserl's lectures is mentioned in two postcards dated May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1922 and September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1922. It is not certain that Bell did indeed translate these lectures but it seems likely. Karl Schumann's *Husserl-Chronik: Denk- und Lebensweg Edmund Husserls* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), 259, refers to an American friend as translator with a query as to whether this refers to Bell. Bell was variously referred to at the time as English or American as well as Canadian, especially by people who knew him less well.

<sup>10</sup> The invitation to publish in the *Yearbook* is in a postcard in Series T – Postcards, number 6501/1/20 of the fonds and is dated May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1922. Karl Schumann, in "Husserl's Yearbook," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 50, supplement, Autumn 1990, 14, also mentions this invitation, citing a letter from Husserl to Bell of 15 May 1922 in section R 1 of the Husserl archives in Louvain.

## 2. W. P. Bell's Ruhleben Lecture on Canada

The W. P. Bell collection in the Mount Allison University archives contains a considerable amount of material of philosophical interest. While in Ruhleben prison camp, Bell gave a lecture, "Canadian Problems and Possibilities," to other internees at the camp. It cannot be dated exactly but, given its placing in his Ruhleben notebooks, it was likely given in 1915 or 1916. The lecture was given to a general audience and thus makes no explicit reference to Husserl or phenomenology. The present publication of this lecture is the first time it has appeared before the public since its oral delivery.<sup>11</sup> It is the purpose of this editor's introduction to show that the lecture makes a significant contribution to a phenomenological definition of the spiritual essence of the nation, with specific reference to whether Canada was at that time a nation or was capable of becoming one.

As Carl Berger has shown, the period of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in Canadian intellectual life consisted of an opposition between the camps of imperialism and nationalism.<sup>12</sup> Advocates of imperialism thought that Canada's future lay with the British Empire and in attaining influence within it. Nationalists thought that the Empire belonged to Canada's past and that the future lay in the development of a distinct and unique nation. The question then becomes, of course, "Does Canada have what it takes to make a nation?" and, for those more philosophically inclined, "What is a nation?" Bell's exposition clearly takes the latter route: he begins by castigating British misunderstandings of Canada, stating baldly at one point that "the Canadian is surely and irrevocably a different man from the Englishman," attends to the difficulties which were then holding Canada back from becoming a nation, and ends by posing the question of what constitutes a nation as such.

The nature of Bell's intervention depended upon his study of Husserlian phenomenology and thus represents a significant, indeed

unique, contribution to Canadian intellectual life.<sup>13</sup> The nature of Bell's contribution can be clarified with reference to Leslie Armour and Elizabeth Trott's general characterisation of English-Canadian philosophy: "Canadian philosophers ... have tended both to reject technological and formal reason as incomplete, misleading, and inadequate and to make use of reason in quite other guises."<sup>14</sup> They refer to Husserlian phenomenology as an exception to the European revolt against reason that makes it kin to Canadian philosophy in this regard. Bell's contribution is thus an exemplary case of the application of phenomenological material reason to Canadian issues that deserves finally to find its place within these two traditions.

The notion of the "spiritual world," in German philosophical terminology, refers not to "spirits" in the mystical sense, but to the way in which the human world is invested with meaning that is not merely material but an expression of persons. Thus, Husserl says, "[w]e are all human beings, similar to each other, capable as such of entering into commerce with each other and establishing human relations. All this is accomplished in the spiritual attitude, without any 'naturalizing.'"<sup>15</sup> Phenomenological investigations of this sort are oriented toward what is specifically human about the human world in distinction from material nature. The human world has the fundamental characteristic that it is based on "*practical formations* in relation to valuations and settings of goals" that inform human motivation.<sup>16</sup> Bell received from

<sup>13</sup> Leslie Armour and Elizabeth Trott, *The Faces of Reason: An Essay on Philosophy and Culture in English Canada 1850–1950* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1981). This extensive historical study of English Canadian philosophy discovers no influence of Husserlian phenomenology in Canada during its period of study. Herbert Spiegelberg, in his similarly extensive historical study of phenomenological philosophy, does not mention Canada in his survey of countries and regions where it has gained an influence, though he does devote two sentences to Canada in the section on Great Britain, and Bell, though identified as a Canadian, is mentioned in the U.S. section. See H. Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction, 2 volumes* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), 626, 627. The evidence of these two comprehensive histories is conclusive in establishing that no major Canadian philosopher or school derived from Husserl prior to 1950. As far as current evidence suggests, Bell's philosophical work represents a unique instance of Canadian phenomenological philosophy prior to 1950.

<sup>14</sup> Armour and Trott, *The Faces of Reason*, 516.

<sup>15</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, (tr.) Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer, in *Collected Works, Vol. III* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989), 254.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 230. On the notion that the natural world is without such values, see pages 3–4.

<sup>11</sup> The lecture is available in the Winthrop Pickard Bell collection of the Mount Allison University Archives, Series J – Ruhleben Prison Camp, number 6501/9/2, Ruhleben notebooks, No. 11. I would like to express my thanks to Rhianna Edwards, Mount Allison University Archivist, for her generous aid in locating and copying this manuscript and to Viviana Elsztein Angus for her transcription of the photocopies into electronic format.

<sup>12</sup> Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867–1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970) and Carl Berger, ed., *Imperialism and Nationalism, 1884–1914: A Conflict in Canadian Thought* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1969).

Husserl a philosophical method for inquiring into human valuation in practical contexts and used it, in his lecture on Canada, to investigate the foundations of Canadian practical life from the viewpoint of whether it could constitute a nation.

Bell's preliminary remarks on the short-sighted and materialistic character of education should be seen in this context. He was convinced that a nation does not exist in order to create wealth, but rather the reverse. It may be called an Aristotelian ideal: material wealth is a necessary foundation, but it exists in order to create the good society, which constitutes the highest self-understanding and self-development of its citizens. If the higher purpose is not conveyed by education, then the nation loses its sense of purpose. The practical index of this issue is pursued through the issue of agricultural credits. Through credits for wealth in agricultural land, a society of farmers could acquire a good education, a sense of higher purpose, which would allow it to crystallise into a nation in the proper sense.

Bell's comments on immigration are bound to be the most controversial. There are two issues here. The first is largely, though not completely, terminological, though the second goes to the heart not only of social policy but of the idea of a nation. Bell discusses both immigrant and established groups through the concept of "race." It should first be noted that race was used at the time as a term for different groups in a manner that did not necessarily imply any overt racism, roughly in the same manner that we would now use the term "ethnic group," on the understanding that differences between such groups are historical-cultural and not natural. Bell did think, however, that different ethnic groups did have different characteristics. Many people today find such an assumption abhorrent since they believe that it leads to stereotyping and discrimination. However, to deny that there are *any* perceptible differences between groups would lead to an undifferentiated individualism in which society is seen as a simple aggregate of atoms. Surely there *are* perceptible differences between groups and, if it is understood that they are historical-cultural, then there is no *necessary* discriminatory implication.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> A more complete discussion could analyse the usage of the concept of race in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as a *topos* of debate and interpretation. Some writers seem to have held on to a biologicistic account of race that would qualify as racism, whereas in others "this idea of cultural hierarchy took the place of a belief in biological or racial hierarchy." S. E. D. Shortt, *The Search for an Ideal: Six Canadian Intellectuals and their Convictions in an Age of Transition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 73. Notice also that cultural *difference* does not mean, or necessarily imply, a cultural *hierarchy*, even though in this historical period it tended to take on that meaning. All of these issues deserve much more treatment

However, it is not so simple to keep such a discourse from sliding in such a direction, because it cannot be distanced from questions of value. A common argument of the time was that the Anglo-Saxon race had the characteristic of civilised behaviour and democratic governance, which clearly casts a shadow over those who come from different backgrounds. The terminology of race in Canada in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was heavily laden with the idea of a "northern" climate and a character built on that climate, which grounded a belief in the superiority of the "Anglo-Saxon race" and led to a certain accommodation of French Canadians, as well as to an advocacy of northern European immigration, though it necessarily implied that southern and eastern European immigration was less desirable.<sup>18</sup> Bell's remarks on immigration should be read in this context. If it is true that a "peculiar capacity of Anglo-Saxons for absorbing heterogeneous elements has had its advantages," then "if it [i.e., Southern and Eastern European immigration] increases, as seems likely, we are faced with the problem of whether we *shall* be able to assimilate it without risk of materially altering the type of our race." Several comments can be made about this argument.

First, one should notice that there is no mention of native people at all, or of the fact that Canada is a settler society based upon the dispossession of prior peoples. The problematic relation to native people inside and outside Canada had not yet become an issue, for Bell no less than for other writers of the time. Second, though the language of race is objectionable, flirting as it does with the naturalisation of human culture, Bell's conception is cultural. This becomes clear at the point where he inserts "don't misunderstand me" (where I have appended a footnote) and his conception is succinctly expressed in his concluding remark to this section that it is the songs of a people that are most relevant. Third, Bell's analysis assumes without discussion that it is the government's right and duty to oversee the mixture that will become the Canadian people, which implies that some foreknowledge of which cultural groups will mix, and what the mixture will be, is possible. This assumption should be held up to scrutiny. Assuming that groups have characteristics based on their history and culture, it is still a leap to suppose that those characteristics also define the limits

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that can be devoted to them in this context. Regarding Bell, it seems clear that his concept is one of cultural difference, which takes on tones of better or worse, though not a full-blown cultural hierarchy, in the specific context of an ability to mix with other cultures, that is to say, to contribute to Canada becoming a nation.

<sup>18</sup> For an excellent overview of this whole matter, see Berger, *The Sense of Power*, ch. 5.

of their capacity to mix without taking into account what is new about their situation in Canada. Correlatively, such assumed foreknowledge suggests that the essential characteristics of the mixture are already evident, which is to deny the newer groups the possibility of really mixing by confusing mixture with assimilation (to a prior, already-formed identity). Finally, and most basically, Bell assumes that for Canada to be a nation it must be a people and that to be a people is to be a certain kind of *unity*. Since Canadians were not originally a people, such a people can only be created by a *mixture*, and a mixture implies a homogeneity and thus a rejection of all that cannot, or will not, mix.

This issue attains greater clarity when Bell comes to define the essence of a nation, which is the main contribution of the lecture. Bell's reflections on the idea of a nation are imbedded within a discussion of whether Canada is a nation and, following his judgement that it is not yet a nation but may be growing into one, what its relations with the British Empire and the U.S.A. will likely become after the First World War. He argues that the divergence of Canada from Britain is already an accomplished fact and suggests, in conclusion, that it is possible that Canada will become one of many nations within the Empire based upon common traditions and spiritual life. Otherwise, if Canada does not become a nation, it is likely to be absorbed into the U.S.A. as Canada is very much like the U.S.A. in seeking to become a new nation through a mixture from diverse sources, a goal that the United States has achieved and that remains a question for Canada. These astute judgements are underpinned by his theoretical analysis of what constitutes a nation such that he can describe Canada as a process-information whose future is as yet unknown. There is thus a double focus in the lecture on the question of whether Canada is a nation and on defining the essence of a nation. Canada is taken as an example upon which essential variations are performed in order to decide both whether Canada is a nation and what defines a nation as such. To be sure, the latter, more purely formal concern sometimes seems buried under the more pungent comments about the former. In the realm of the spiritual-historical sciences, such examples are the essential route through which the formal issue can be approached. However, Bell's task is complicated by the fact that he takes not an incontrovertible example of a nation as his starting point for variations, but an example that may or may not fit the essence that he seeks.

### 3. W. P. Bell's Phenomenological Studies as Contributions to the Phenomenology of Value

The essence of a nation is in its surmounting of differences to constitute a spiritual, organic unity formed through a tradition. As Husserl claims, a key aspect of the domain of spiritual-cultural unities is that objects in the surrounding world appear not only as objects but also as objects of value. "There is built, upon the substratum of mere intuitive representing, an evaluating which, if we presuppose it, plays, in the immediacy of its lively motivation, the role of value-'perception' (in our terms, a value-reception) in which the value character itself is given in immediate intuition."<sup>19</sup> The nation is thus a value-laden unity that confers value on objects in the surrounding world and lays the groundwork for "abstractions such as honor, fidelity, and fame which have been able to fire men to the noblest heroisms and the greatest sacrifices."<sup>20</sup> Bell's lecture on Canada does not follow up the question of value beyond mentioning its relevance. However, in a contemporaneous lecture titled "The Work of Philosophy" (1915), also given at Ruhleben prison camp, he points out that such a phenomenological "pure apriori *material* science of values" whose "rules of what ought to be presuppose some characterisation of that-which-ought-to-be as such" is denied by both sensualistic and rational-formal (Kantian) theories of value. Laws of "the positive being" of value grounded in essential intuition yield insight into the being of value. Such insight grounds a hierarchy of values.<sup>21</sup>

Quite independent of the question whether there is any possibility of noble things or pleasant things in the world, and prior to the question of what definite deeds or things *are* noble or pleasant, it is an absolute law in the realm of these value-qualities themselves that the *noble* is a higher quality than the *pleasant*, that *rationality* (with the rationality, as we say, not of the theoretical but the practical reason) the noble is to be *preferred* to the pleasant. Whatever is intrinsically noble is already therein *higher* than the pleasant. This may serve as a rough type of the fundamental set of laws of this kind. Then there are definite relations between value-qualities

<sup>19</sup> Husserl, *Ideas II*, 196.

<sup>20</sup> W. P. Bell, "Canadian Problems and Possibilities," p. 56 below.

<sup>21</sup> For general overviews of Husserl's work on value, see J. N. Mohany, *The Philosophy of Edmund Husserl* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), ch. 15, and Janet Donohoe, *Husserl on Ethics and Intersubjectivity* (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2004), ch. 4.

and the *objects to which* they may belong. The *pleasant* is essentially a value in the realm of sense-qualities, the *good* in that of actions of rational beings. Such a value as usefulness or success is necessarily relative or consecutive to some prior value-quality which gives its sense. Again, *enjoyment* is specifically a *function* of that which is pleasant and not, let us say, of that which is just, or holy.<sup>22</sup>

The philosophical elaboration of a hierarchy of values can guide practical ethical judgements, but that is not to say that it makes practical judgements straightforward or uncomplicated. As he clarifies in the Ruhleben Notebooks on the Philosophy of Value:

Objects have for us in direct intuition values according to their specific natures.... Now, the concrete natures of our objects are by no means always fully grasped by us adequately enough for the evident performance of clear value intuitions. The *a priori* laws and conditions of the “forms” and “modes” of being of any kind will condition essential distinctions in possible or intrinsic values of being of that kind. For each general sphere of valuation then there are many relevant questions which are not directly questions of values at all but questions of essential conditions for the realization of kinds of values on types of objects.<sup>23</sup>

In the same place, he makes the connection between the nation—cultural unities as involving value-characters—and the problem of history.

For one thing history is concerned with processes of development in entities which are in part value-constituted. The apprehension of these entities involves evaluation in the sense in which we have always used the word so far. The apprehension of such an object as a culture—or as a man or nation of any *kind*—anything more than a mere “X,” involves such apprehension of value-characters of these

<sup>22</sup> All of these quotations from Bell on the phenomenology of value come from the Ruhleben lecture “The Work of Philosophy,” Mount Allison University Library Bell archives, 6501/9/2 – No. 28. Specifically, the quotations are from the long paragraph on pages 24–25, in which Bell sketches “two other of the most important and most *practically* interesting regions of philosophical work.” The previous bulk of the manuscript is an introduction to the Husserlian theory of essential insight and law. It seems likely that in this lecture Bell was concerned to show the relation of his own anticipated contribution to phenomenology to its grounding in the key theses of Husserl as elaborated in the Göttingen period.

<sup>23</sup> Winthrop Pickard Bell, Ruhleben Notebooks on the Philosophy of Value. Mount Allison University Library Archives, 6501/9/2. Notebook 29 at Lecture IX, page 4.

objects. And it is only in so far as you *have* something more than such “X’s” that your history, i.e. history as ordered knowledge of historical reality, is anything beyond a table of names and dates, is in fact *history* at all.<sup>24</sup>

It is this still underdeveloped focus on history through the phenomenology of value, based in the spiritual-cultural analyses of the Göttingen period of phenomenology, which justifies the attempt to restore Bell’s role in the history of phenomenology by bringing the archival manuscripts, beginning with this lecture, before the public.<sup>25</sup>

#### 4. Note on the Preparation of the Manuscript for Publication

The original manuscript of Bell’s Ruhleben lecture “Canadian Problems and Possibilities” that now resides in the Mount Allison University archives consists of 35 pages of written text that was intended as the basis for an oral address. It is thus not in polished written form. The manuscript is made up largely of continuous text, including some point-form notes, phrasings and lists apparently intended to jog the speaker’s mind, with numerous marginal additions of differing length and interest. Since paragraph breaks are rare, I have at times introduced such breaks into the text for clarity.

A note on changes made to the original manuscript: Short elision of phrases whose meaning was not discernible, small changes or elisions in punctuation, spelling and phrasing in order to correct minor errors, to conform to present usage (e.g., to-day has been changed to today), or for readability of a manuscript prepared as notes for oral presentation, have not been marked in the present text. Marginal comments have been integrated into the text where possible; their locations were clearly marked by Bell. Where this was not possible, I have occasional-

<sup>24</sup> Winthrop Pickard Bell, Ruhleben Notebooks on the Philosophy of Value. Mount Allison University Library Archives, 6501/9/2. Notebook 29 at Lecture X, page 1.

<sup>25</sup> As one example of how this might add to the history of phenomenology, note that Dorion Cairns attended Bell’s course on phenomenology at Harvard in 1923–24. Bell’s manuscript “An Essay in the Philosophy of Values” was written while he was teaching at Harvard and his interest in the problem of value may be presumed to have influenced the version of phenomenology that he taught there. Dorion Cairns regularly taught a course on “The General Theory of Value” at the New School for Social Research in the 1950s and ’60s (Cairns, “My Own Life,” 13). Cairns’ later course suggests that the influence of Bell’s introduction to Husserl at Harvard was retained in Cairns’ mature interpretation of Husserl’s phenomenology.

ly used footnotes. The original underlining for emphasis has been retained in italic form. Interpolations for the purpose of elision or clarification by the editor have been marked by square brackets. All footnotes have been added by the editor.

While there are no section breaks in the original, the manuscript does fall into three easily recognisable parts: A first introductory part (pages 1–6), which reads in nearly final form and is marked by its ending with almost a full blank page, deals with the general situation of Canada and common views of Canada in Great Britain. This part has been included in its entirety as section I of the present edited version. The next part (pages 7–30) is the largest and most interesting section of the manuscript. Part three (pages 31–35) consists of notes taken after the lecture regarding clarifications, additions, etc., and has not been included in this edited version.

Editorial preparation has thus centred on the identifiable middle part of the manuscript. The first part of this section (pages 7–8) consists of fragmentary notes, probably intended to jog the speaker's mind during oral delivery, that have not been included here. The second part (pages 8–18, with extensive marginal additions) deals in summary, overlapping and sometimes fragmentary form with various topics, such as education in a materialistic society, immigration, banking and investment, natural resources, railways and transportation. Selections from this part have been used as section II and given a generic title with a list of the topics selected to give an overview of the sorts of issues that Bell considered important at the time of writing. The third part (pages 18–30) focusses on the issue of whether Canada is a nation and includes theoretical reflections on what defines a nation as such. This is the most valuable part of the manuscript and what justifies bringing it before a contemporary readership. It is included here in as complete a form as possible as section III. I have thus used the topic of this section as the title of this entire journal presentation (including the introduction, the note on the preparation of the manuscript for publication, and Bell's edited manuscript) for scholarly reference, even though I have retained the original title immediately below for Bell's lecture itself.

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## CANADIAN PROBLEMS AND POSSIBILITIES

Winthrop Pickard Bell (1915 or 1916)

### I. Introduction

The information about Canada which is most assiduously circulated on this side of the water concerns the material resources of the country, the allurements and openings for prospective settlers, and statistics of produce, trade and the like. I have had my lecture this evening announced as a lecture on "Canadian Problems and Possibilities." Now problems and possibilities—or perhaps, in reverse order: possibilities *and problems!*—cover fairly inclusively the material of the average old-country man's knowledge of our country. But this is usually knowledge of the possibilities of the new land for him as an individual—of the problems as difficulties which he, or any one else, the individual settler or investor, might expect to encounter in the course of his own personal struggle for existence and something more. Now all that (the kind of information which is nowadays so abundantly circulated by legitimate and illegitimate sources, and usually with a greater or lesser emphasis on the rosy and the golden in the prospect) I shall tonight only touch [upon] incidentally and unintentionally. What I have to say to you will be of a nature that ought to be of *interest*, indeed, to any prospective settler, but nonetheless to any intelligent citizen of the British Empire. For it is not of the possibilities and problems of the *individual in* Canada that I intend to speak, but of the problems and possibilities (here I place the words in *this* order) of Canada itself—as a land, a people, a potential nation, a unit of Empire. Some of these problems are urgent and not all of them are being grappled with adequately; the possibilities are by no means all of a material nature, and some of them are by no means golden.

When I have been in the United Kingdom I have been sometimes amused, sometimes annoyed, at the ideas on Canada which I have found current there. One favourite picture seemed to be composed of vast sketches of unbelievably fertile wheat-grown prairie, bounded by mountain ranges beside whose grandeur the Alps would be insignificant; somewhere in the picture was an indefinite space filled with inexhaustible forests, and underground (especially in the mountainous region) was mineral wealth. Of course there was a frozen north in the background, but even that the fancy peopled with prosperous fur-

hunters and adventurous gold-diggers. And the one real cloud on the horizon was a somewhat skeptical doubt of the assurance that one could live comfortably through a winter where the temperature was anything from zero downward to 50 or 60 degrees below. The pictures weren't all as glowing as this, of course, and details varied. But they nearly all agreed in certain fundamental points: In their composition out of the material elements of the situation, and even where the life, the feelings, aspirations, problems, policies of the people were taken into consideration, characteristic was the lack of historical perspective for the consideration of these; and then too the elements out of which the picture was constructed bore reference almost entirely to *Western* Canada. This is, of course, quite intelligible. It is about Western Canada that government and railway immigration literature has been let loose in a flood over Great Britain. It is *Western* Canada *alone* which, in the overwhelming number of cases, came into consideration for any individual thinking of settling in Canada. It is Western Canada which offers the most picturesque features of Canadian life and where the effects of growth of population and material development are most rapid and dramatic. And, finally, if the person in question had friends who had gone out to Canada, and from whose letters he had formed his ideas, this friend was naturally usually in Western Canada.

I think the real cause of the trouble, in cases where people who have taken the trouble to inform themselves at all about Canada still have materially false ideas of the land, is nearly always the same: *True information* producing a *false impression*. The details which one reads or hears concerning a foreign land will deal only with specific and limited features of the same. One instinctively supplements these in one's imagination to complete a unitary picture. And one does not always realise the limits of that which really may justly be taken for granted in respect to another land, or how much of one's ideas are not the product of definite information at all.

I have sketched here some rough maps of Canada, to convey to you graphically an idea of the real Canada as regards topography, resources, transportation, population and so on. There are, then, as you see, of course, certain parts of Canada with continuous and fairly thick settlement. These as a rule offer little inducement to the adventurous immigrant anxious to better his condition through hard work in a new land. Even they are, of course, capable of growth in population and development of industry and the like. But it will be a process of gradual and normal *intensive* economic growth, presenting no problems very peculiar to a *new* country. The towns grow gradually with the demands of business or manufacturing and gradually acquire fixed

wealth in the forms of street paving, lighting, public buildings, etc. The farmers are mostly well-to-do, almost all owners of their own land, able to afford their sons a good education. The typical wooden farm-houses with their background of barns and stables, which every visitor to the prosperous agricultural sections of Eastern Canada and the United States knows so well, are comfortable; their owners are apt to be intelligent and industrious with an average working education. They have comfortable carriages or autos; they read a good deal in a miscellaneous fashion—often the current magazines, which in America vie with one another in interesting and at the same time accurate and adequate articles on current problems. They have their church interests and their local social diversions. To be sure, the scattered nature of *all* farming settlement in America brings minor problems of school management and equipment with it. But the educational difficulties in such districts which really need to be regarded as serious are shared by the country as a whole. I am speaking now of the prosperous agricultural districts of the older and most thickly settled parts of the land, and I dwell for a moment on these because this is really a considerable section of our country. When one passes from these sections, however, one immediately encounters pressing problems.

## II. Problems of Canadian Society: Education, Agricultural Credits, Immigration

[There is a] short-sighted materialism in education [that is] always with us [and is] to be combated. Peculiar Canadian circumstances<sup>26</sup>, [such as] unwillingness to pay teachers well, lack of insight into the need for thoroughly trained teachers even for elementary branches (Germany as example of contrary), and a peculiar social attitude [which has kept] the teaching profession not in high estimation, combined with brilliant opportunities for men gifted enough to be good teachers, have brought about this state of affairs: Outside of the very thickest settled parts, the young women teachers [who predominate are] often temporary. This, of course, reacts in turn on the standard of teaching and on the general attitude to, estimation of, and prestige of the teaching profession. [It is a] problem whether nothing can be done to accelerate a remedy (which would itself come in time) [through the]

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<sup>26</sup> Bell adds the following marginal comment here. "Local appointments; thus [they were] looked upon as a better sort of employee of all parents, etc. Injuriousness of the same attitude towards civil service and only there [it is a] bit better because appointments are not local."



overcoming of materialism. This is partly an old problem of whether, with increase of the wealth necessary as the material basis for culture, one *can* succeed in developing a powerful enough interest for *that* [improvement of education] within the nation as a whole. *This* problem is general; [it is the] old problem of luxury, culture and decadence, [and only a] special Canadian problem inasmuch as even in older sections more than half the population is still rural. Educational problems [are] of course everywhere. *Here*, however, [they occur] in connection with internal movements of population of national significance. Rule: once urban, always urban, even in Canada.

There is a short-sighted attitude toward education over a surprisingly large part of the country, education with no direct points of contact with farmers' daily life, [added to an] incapacity of teachers which scattered farming settlements could employ to give anything to bring it into such contact. Farmers are therefore at first not ready either by education or capital to avail themselves of [the] results of central institutions of boards of agriculture, etc. Up till very recently, [there has been a] wide-spread lack of proper sense for experimenting, lack of general *business* training and acumen, and of capital to make use of either. [There is] great hope for betterment here in new schemes of agricultural education, etc. [We are still] too close to it to see the full effects yet: whether it will succeed in altering entirely the general outlook of farm life, especially in putting within command of young men from poorer farming districts such an educational basis as will enable them to bring more intelligent knowledge of agricultural science and business to bear on their work, so that the poor and uneconomical farm will be [become] the sign of laziness or stupidity. The work of government agricultural departments is excellent from the scientific point of view, [but it is unclear] whether government will take the steps necessary to counteract the tendency for most enterprising boys to leave farms—the question of agricultural credits comes up here. [I am] personally a great believer in the vital strength for a people of a numerous, sturdy, intelligent and prosperous class of independent farmers.

The general problem of agricultural credits ought to receive more attention [than it does]. Economists long ago recognised that the purposes for which a farmer needs capital come under three categories fundamentally different from one another as regards their *natural* period and method of return for investment, such that circumstances render ordinary bank credits an utterly unsuitable means of making the sources of stored-up capital of the nation available for furthering agriculture as well as industry and trade. Between personal credits of banks, [which are] suitable only for seasonal movements—really

agricultural *business*—and mortgages, another source and method is necessary. Capital follows the lines of least resistance. [There is a] necessity for government action (e.g., German models such as *Land-schaften*, *Raiffeisen* Banks, etc.). [There is also the] difficulty that farmers have never learned to cooperate in recognising and forcing their own interests. A feature of democratic government as we have it in America [is] that it puts a premium on government taking no real far-seeing initiative measures, but wait[s] for demands from public opinion (but not waiting till this gets too loud, of course). It attempts *just* to anticipate popular demands. Now, the average man is of course *not* in a position to weigh the needs and dangers of questions of public policy from a far-seeing national standpoint, as a statesman *ought* by tradition and training to be able to. The average man is engrossed with his own business and feels all problems and lines of policy only if they *perceptibly* affect *him*. How this plays into [the] hands of “special interests”! The policies necessary for the country as whole but which would hit certain special interests hard without *benefitting* any special group in any very striking way are very difficult of realisation. This is one of the failings of *all* democratic systems, but especially noticeable in a new land without a politically educated and more or less leisured class with a hereditary inclination to political life and popular prestige as an election asset. Many of our most difficult problems may be shown to be just special cases of this general rule.

[With regard to the] immigration problem<sup>27</sup>: the Canadian government has, it is true, sifted immigration to certain extent, but the half-

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<sup>27</sup> At this point, Bell makes reference to a writer whom he simply calls “Ross,” which probably refers to Prof. Edward Alsworth Ross, since Bell quotes from an article by this person titled “Origins of the American People,” dated January 1914, and noted as “Century” (though it is not clear whether this is the journal’s name) on the back of one of the pages opposite the lecture’s text. The quotation reads as follows: “I do not maintain that life in America has added any new traits to the descendents [sic] of transplanted Europeans, nor has it filled them all with pioneer virtues. What I do mean is that, owing to the progressive peopling of the fertile wilderness, certain valuable strains that once were represented in, say, a sixth of the population, might come to be represented in a quarter of it; and the timid, inert sort might shrivel from a fifth of the population to a tenth. Such a shifting in the numerical strength of types would account both for the large contingent of the forceful in the normal American community, and for the prevalence of the ruthless, high pressure, get there at any cost spirit which leaves in its wake achievement, prosperity, neurasthema [sic], Bright’s disease, heart failure, and shattered moral standards.” The next few fragmentary sentences in the main text of the lecture take off from what Bell thinks valuable in Ross’ work so that the transition to Bell’s own thoughts is unclear. The edited version resumes only at the point where it is certain that Bell is speaking in his own voice. The elided sentences, in

million people from Southern and Eastern Europe are already a problem whether we are sensible of it or not. (The C.P.R. line to Trieste as a symptom of this tendency.) The types of these people; their thrift, etc.; the alarming growth of the Jewish population of cities. There is a slowness to realise this problem so long as these people give little or no economic trouble. [There is] even the argument that their descendants [sic] will mix with the other population. [This is] just the crucial point! [Canada] probably could assimilate the present proportion of these peoples without difficulty. And Teutonic immigration [is] always to our advantage, [since] for one thing [it presents] no religious and cultural barriers—especially Scandinavian with their inimitably high *Volks-Kultur*. Too bad we can't get more of it. But if it [i.e., Southern and Eastern European immigration]<sup>28</sup> increases, as seems likely, we are faced with the problem of whether we *shall* be able to assimilate it without risk of materially altering the type of our race. [There are] problems now facing the U.S.A. [which] has let in so much.

Don't misunderstand me, etc.<sup>29</sup> [There is] no answer to questions and doubts re Slavic, Jewish, etc., immigration that these people are industrious, sober and the like. The question is what sort of a *people* will the mixture produce, or if no *mixture* results, what effect will this body of people with diverging types of feeling and thinking have on

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edited form, read as follows: "The only qualified man who has tackled the problem of real definite effects traceable to emigration is Ross. Much of the technique of science consists in discovering just which factors of a given situation are determinative for others. [Consider] his [Ross'] reasons for thinking [that the] time is pressingly ripe for a vigorous restriction and sifting of immigration. The types apt to be predominant in immigration today, and cessation of circumstances which try out the unfit. The same is applicable to us if we want to save Canada from some of [the] problems now weighing on national life in U.S.A." It is not likely, given the quotation from Edward Alsworth Ross, that Bell is referring to George Ross, whose *Addresses Delivered by Hon. G.W. Ross During His Recent Visit to England and at the Meeting on His Return* (1910, n.p.) was a major reference point for debates on immigration during the period. See Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power*, 149–52.

<sup>28</sup> It is clear that the "it" in this sentence refers back to the immigrant groups that have been added parenthetically because the previous two sentences are subsequent marginal additions.

<sup>29</sup> This sentence is an addition written in the space between the paragraphs. It is important to include because it indicates that Bell anticipated some negative reaction to his remarks from the mixed national group to whom he was speaking in Ruhleben. The paragraph goes on to say that it is not a matter of whether immigrant groups in themselves possess the good qualities desirable for immigration, but whether they are likely to mix into the already-existing Canadian population and what characteristics such a mixture will produce. I take it that this is the understanding that he wanted to promote as against the misunderstanding that he was ranking potential immigrant groups based on their separate characteristics.

questions where the common sentiment and united communal instinct of the nation are thought to be the deciding factors.

The peculiar capacity of Anglo-Saxons for absorbing heterogeneous elements has had its advantages but promises to become a real problem in Canada. I have indicated the economic reasons why the simple expedient of refusing admission to such immigration has today absolutely no prospect of being carried into effect, [which is] an example of the complication of such problems under a *laissez-faire* system of democratic government. But it is also not certain what effect drastic action would have on international relations. The endless difficulties with Japan [are still] fresh in everyone's memories. [There is a] difficulty of making *general*, not definitely nationally discriminating, regulations which will keep out those we don't want and won't keep out those we do want. [What is] certain is that increasing pressure of the tide from the South and East of Europe. (The effects of war [1914–18] are unforeseeable, but I doubt whether it will greatly change the *proportions* of immigration.) And just at present we have got ourselves into an economic situation where we need settlers. Direct barriers are impossible. It is a question whether the Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic type can retain its dominance by supplying the necessary expansion and supplying it of such a quality that we could raise requirements and keep out these elements. Let me remind you that if the Boer War had any wider moral justification at all it was as a protest that those *able* and willing to occupy, settle and people a land should not be kept out by a handful which merely happened to come first, and which was itself not capable of resisting pressure from without through pressure of its own expansion from within. Application of this maxim to the case of Canada is obvious: [Whether the] chance of history has given the Anglo-Saxons Canada, whether the Anglo-Saxon people have a strong enough racial instinct for expansion, occupation, etc., to direct the opportunity which the chance of history has thrown in their way.

Unfortunately, the question of a sense for the racial results of immigration [has] not [been a] question of practical politics and discussion. However much the Anglo-Saxon may *feel* other factors and motives, he is peculiarly apt to *realise* only the *economic* ones in formulating his public problems. This is on occasion a source of strength [since it] assures a sort of sober business consideration of problems even in cases where tides of passion run high. But it is perhaps even more a failing and source of weakness. For the economic factors of a situation are never the final arguments in any great question. Even with nations there are motives, prejudices, instincts, sympathies and interests which lie much deeper, and which tell in determining attitudes on vital points. And it is not well if we are (as a race or nation) slow to recog-

nise the abstract forces tremendously at work in social reality: the nature and bearing of concrete situations when reduced to general terms, or the potency of the almost unrealised *tendencies* in national life and development. I forget who it was who said: "Let me make the songs of a people and I care not who makes its laws," but whoever it was, he found a very striking expression for the fact which I am trying to emphasise now. All history bears witness.

### III. The Idea of a Nation

Let me, for the interest of my professional colleagues [i.e., philosophers] here, just add the philosophical claim that all such instances (in Canadian history, such as Loyalism, the contingents in the Boer War, the elections of 1911)<sup>30</sup> are only striking examples of a broad scale of laws which govern the motivation of all human action, not as a merely factual order of things to be empirically determined, but as *apriori* relations of the eternal nature of the structure of any intelligible universe—in this case, essential relations between value-qualities as such—which are necessary norms for any rational choice (volition). Consider the bi-racial problem in Canada, where race, language and religious divisions coincide. There is a *diversity* here of just that tradition which could really act as a binding force. There is [in French Canada] no tendency to fusion, only with other Catholic elements and even there [with remaining] differences. My sober judgment is that any apparent *unity* of the two elements is really only a coincidence of interests. There is petty friction and especially jealousy between the two elements always; it is always a question of finding a *modus vivendi*.

There is [a] great deal of loose talk in Canadian papers and from public speakers about Canada being a *nation*, which perhaps appeals to the vanity of Canadians. There is a vague recognition of nationality as a stage or goal, or form of development, necessary for the fulfilment of certain hopes, aims, aspirations, dreams, tendencies more or less vividly felt and shared by [the] people of Canada today. This, of course, opens up [the] whole question of what a nation is, in what nationality consists, which is one of the most puzzling questions of political philosophy and of the philosophy of history. A nation is not a mere sum of individuals, not merely a *total* but a *whole*. Strange as it may sound to the casual thinker who has never delved into the problem, it is nevertheless impossible to *define* a nation as a group of

beings with such and such characteristics. An illustration: one can give *national* characteristics, but these pertain to smaller groups of people of that nation. One can characterise each *nationality* but never adequately define a Nation. It is always a circular definition.<sup>31</sup> What we are forced to recognise as the unity of national being has shown itself historically capable of *surmounting differences* of race and of languages, and national *diversity* is clearly capable of resisting the unifying tendencies of both. A nation is clearly something which *grows* into being. You can't take a chance collection of individuals and put them together under a single system of law or government and expect them to be at once a nation. In the miscellaneous collection of peoples, races and tribes contained within the Turkish Empire, especially in its former extent, one could never recognise that form of life which we feel under the word "national," any more than we would naturally speak of the inhabitants of India as a nation.

On the other hand, one does feel justified in speaking of the "American Nation." The United States is not merely a political structure, a state, but exhibits those phenomena (at least in great measure) that lead us to recognise that form of super-individual life known as a nation, however many of the *possible* functions of nationality may still be in the U.S.A. somewhat difficult. In contrast, one might hesitate to speak of the Mexican or the Liberian nation. Size, and form of government, have little or nothing to do with it. There are very small yet intensely genuine nations (Scandinavians, Swiss, e.g.) without unity of either race or language, uniformity of government or law, or great size! Yet the Swiss undoubtedly deserve the title of nation and also Belgium probably after this war [1914–18]. As little as smallness hinders national unity does greatness insure it. The greatest empires of history, most uniform in their institutions and longest established in imperial dominion, have failed to weld constituent elements into *nation*, but only into state. [Note the difference between the] "Roman Empire" versus the "Roman people," or the "British Empire" and "British nation." Indeed, I often hesitate over the British *nation*, due to the Irish question and just that colonial question that I am about to try to analyse in [the] case of Canada. For, gentlemen, whether the concept of the British nation shall include the colonies or not, or whether these shall grow to be sister nations within a common bond of race and language and empire, is something which historical events and

<sup>30</sup> This parenthetical reference is interpolated here from a fragmentary sentence prior to this one in the manuscript.

<sup>31</sup> This enigmatic but illuminating sentence is inserted here: "If: group of people so and so – must always add – with that form of collective organic life or activity or the like peculiar to nations."

government policies may hinder or further, but which no human *decision* can determine.

A nation is a living organism, as truly as any plant or individual animal. Break a stone and you have stones. Break a *plant* and you have *destroyed* the organic unity, and equally so with a nation. *Add* matter to matter and you have a bigger piece of matter. But you can't add organism to organism promiscuously and expect to have one larger organism, whether it be plant, animal or *nation*. Life is unique and undefinable, and the growth of a nation is as great a mystery as that of a plant. This growth may be artificially helped or hindered, but in *neither* case can the living organism be artificially *created* out of its constituent parts.

I fear much of this has been tiresome or has seemed hopelessly abstract to many of you. But its *bearing* is practical and obvious. (Just as higher math is abstract but the *bearing* practical and obvious when you determine structural details of an iron bridge.) Though one cannot find any empirical definition of a nation, one can recognise many of the distinctive factors and features of its life and growth. There are such things as national instincts, national prejudices, national ideals, national taste. There are national styles and national habits in the petty as well as in the serious activities of life. Imponderabilia, abstractions if you will, but very real in their effects. How often has the student of history to refer an event to just such factors in order to understand the historical sequence at all! And after all, too, most of the real priceless treasures that give life its value consist of such imponderabilia. And it is abstractions such as honour, fidelity and fame which have been able to fire men to the noblest heroisms and the greatest sacrifices. There are national *tendencies*, none the less definite in being usually hidden from those living in the midst of them. And, of supreme importance as the atmosphere of national life—the medium of its continuity—we have national *tradition*. Now these are all elements of the life of the nation as an organism, and not simply common characteristics or properties of a collection of individuals. Such factors as tendencies and tradition *affect* the individuals but are *borne only* by the super-individual being. No individuals incorporate these things, only the nation as a whole does that. [Here one may use an] analogy between the health of [the] body and the condition of an individual cell or organ, etc. These are all things which cannot be arbitrarily created or established. "Go to, let us make for ourselves suitable ideals and traditions" is an undertaking foredoomed to failure. Avowedly, nationalistic propaganda in schools, etc., leads only to ignorance, self-satisfaction, unfairness and, fortunately or unfortunately, almost the only national characteristics capable of creation or development by propaganda are

national prejudices and national conceit! Of both these all nations seem to have an abundant supply.

Now in the light of all that which I have been contending (with no chance for proper demonstration), Canada is not yet a fully-developed nation, fond as her press, politicians and a certain type of imperialising publicist from the old country is of calling her one. But as far as one can see, she is growing towards one; she has the aspirations and instincts which will, in the natural course of events, in longer or shorter time, develop the vital principles, organs and forces of a national life. Now, of course, I cannot foretell the path of Canada's growth to a nation, a growth which, as I have shown, must be intensive as well as, or rather than, extensive (cultural consolidation, etc.), but I want to indicate to you some of the symptoms of that growth, and then finally its bearing on the *imperial* problem.

First of all, there are difficulties in the way of the formation of a unitary national tradition: Loyalist beginnings, the French problem, then promiscuous and unsystematic immigration and intermigration—in general, the difficulty of finding any deeper instincts and feeling in which these people are at one. Also, a wide scattering [of population] demanding a long time for consolidation of all that which shows itself in national style, taste, culture. This leaves only material matters and externals in which consciousness of nationality can find a content, though *there* we have a common delight and pride in the material greatness of our country, a common joy in the type of life which it allows (summer, wildlife, etc.). But even these features vary enormously between the different parts of the country. On sober consideration, this common possession would seem really rather an utterly undefined hope and confidence in a future than anything else! Of course the *average* Canadian may not be *aware* of any lack. Satisfied with his opportunities for material comfort and prosperity, buoyed up by the excitement, enterprise and speculative success possible in a new land, he may not realise that these are an inadequate basis for the somewhat bombastic use of its word "national" by his country's press. Educated Europeans are apt, with some justification, to reproach us, along with the U.S.A., for the material preoccupation of our life. This is, of course, one of our problems. A mere community of economic interest may suffice to hold a group of people together, but will never provide the material out of which a national culture can grow. To be very definite: if what holds one's nation together is the common material prosperity of its citizens, then the collapse of that prosperity, national hardship and disaster, would be the death blow to national life. In a real nation, it is often the very reverse. The greatest example in recent times was the birth of the German national consciousness in

the troubles of the Napoleonic times. The reproach of materialism is not unfounded. I see one of the weightiest problems for the future of Canada, as for that of the U.S.A., just in this point: to what extent the people remain engrossed in material interests as they become prosperous enough to afford some of the cultural luxuries. But let me say that it is really marvelous that it isn't even more so. The original settlements of America and Canada were made largely on an ideal basis. Once the first struggle for existence and establishment of means of living was overcome, this part of America showed itself able, willing and eager to realise other than material phases of life and to find her own expression for them. (For example, the literary bloom in [the] first half of the last century.) But look what has happened since! We have been overwhelmed by an immigration with very few exceptions determined by economic causes and considerations.

Hardly a nation in Europe would want to own its representations in the new world. Too often no impulse towards culture, no appreciation for education except as a lever for material advancement. (There are exceptions, such as the Scandinavians, etc.) Canada, of course, received largely intelligent agricultural immigration from the U.S.A. and assimilable immigration from the old country, but consider the effect it *must* have on Canada and the problem it must be for her to have a percentage of culture and education in immigrants lower than in the old-country population itself. Those who are highly educated are often educated so that they can never really make the most of it. They never feel at home in the environment they are bound to find. We *don't* benefit by all European cultures through immigration, unlike in earlier days where emigration was often for principles or conscience's sake. Elements that emigrate nowadays, as a rule, are not bearers of their nation's culture.

The lure of material success in the new West has been constantly before our own youth. There have been difficulties in the way of education on which I have already touched. America has been suffering from spiritual indigestion, non-assimilation and the results ought not to cause surprise. I see one of the greatest problems, one of greatest obstacles to hopeful development of national life, in this fact: that the expanding sentiment, the growing realisation of its own life and tendencies, the nascent culture and tradition of the country will for many decades to come have to cope with a constant influx of settlers in the first place with little or no ability or will to appreciate and further these sides of national life. And where ability and will are present, the new settler of education and culture is often so rooted in the tradition of an older land that he can never appreciate the different

life struggling to realise and manifest itself in Canada, and so to help the birth of the new life.

I do not believe that there is any longer any possibility of the absorption or re-absorption of Canada into one whole of British nationality. I know that another type of belief is often very popular at imperialistic dinners in London and elsewhere. But I don't believe there is any use in shutting eyes to facts, to definite tendencies which continue to manifest themselves in spite of all *assurances* of something else. No! If imperialists are sincere, they mustn't attempt to deny or forcibly to check the tendencies actually present, but to *understand* them, to think them out to their logical conclusion, and then to consider the possibility of a lasting imperial bond on the basis thus established. It may be consoling for the ostrich to stick its head in the sand,; but it is hardly *wise*. The impossibility of hindering devolution of constituent nations doesn't prevent these nations from remaining constituent (in some other kind of whole), as I shall briefly suggest.

So I say (approaching [the] matter as objectively as possible) that I do not believe [in the absorption of Canada into British nationality]. There is too much which separates us already, even in such ways of doing little and unimportant things as are at all distinctive, there are already too many differences. (I was struck with the greater unity of Australian and English life.) One mustn't forget that the great body of Canadian people has long had no family connection with [the] old country at all! What we have of a national tradition is confined to the new world—not continuous with modern English tradition. There is much in the history of connections in older days which resulted in Canadians facing their problems alone and not as consciously part of a nation unitary with Great Britain! In short, the Canadian is surely and irrevocably a different man from the Englishman. One can't make him an Englishman because one can't give him the historical environment and the tradition. The continuity has too long been broken. The Englishman and the Canadian have been too long leading a different kind of life.

It is almost certain that, in spite of alien immigration, our national development will be (broadly) Anglo-Saxon. French will probably remain unassimilable and a picturesque fragment of nationality within a nation, less of a danger and problem in proportion as preponderance of others increases. Probably the type which will develop will be much more akin to the U.S. than to the old country type. The notorious unpopularity of some frequent types of Englishmen in Canada is a symptom [of this phenomenon], whereas the American can generally fit in well. The Englishman is at once recognised in Canada, and not only by his pronunciation, whereas in most situations the American

passes unmarked. There is a similarity of problems, needs and possibilities, [as can be seen in] American magazines, etc. If Canada fails to become a nation, the only hope is in absorption into the U.S.A. Absorption into England is impossible. The enormous preponderance of trade with the U.S.A. has little to do with it. The sense of affinity isn't based on business transactions in national, any more than in personal, life. Hopeless from this point of view is any idea that the imperial tariff wall would materially change the course of national devolution within empire—whatever its advisability from other points of view might be. Indeed, if one tries to make the bond of Empire an economic rather than a cultural or political one, one is treading the road most sure to lead to dissolution of the Empire altogether. The time is sure to come when the economic bond will fail one or another member where [they are] so widely scattered. Then, if [there is] no great reason back of this ... Durham's insight into this principle, and his far-sighted, whole-souled acceptance of its consequences, mark his Report as the work of a constructive Statesman. Hope for absorption into England [is therefore] impossible. A country with no definite national life and character is in a bad way in very concrete respects, such as chaos in too many forms of social, intellectual life.

There are probable Imperial effects of this war [1914–18], but mere common military history doesn't suffice to hold nations together any more than economic interdependence. There are two definite forms of "nationalism" in Canada. The Englishman is perhaps too ready to applaud or denounce the attitude in *individual* questions without realising that whole of which this one manifestation is a part is other than *his* whole. I have said possibly that Canada might develop her own genuinely independent national life (just as much so as that of U.S.A.) and still the political bond not be broken (as it might conceivably still include the U.S.A.). The question is what has Britain to offer us. "Protection" we may leave out of the question. Mutual economic advantage is not enough [due to the] U.S.A. Mere external pride of belonging to [the] greatest world empire won't stand the possible and probable strain of internal friction. [There is an] undoubted need of new instruments and institutions of political unity, but if these are to be sound and stable, a pledge of the future, they must not be mere mechanism but must correspond to some genuine inner unity of sentiment and interest among the parts. My sober judgment [is] that as far as Canada is concerned, this bond can only be two-fold: 1) A bond of mutual understanding and respect in realisation that whatever the development the constituent nations of the Empire, [they] are at least so far allied by nature that they can afford to remain together even at [the] cost of certain interests (such as Canada's role in the

foreign policy of Empire), and 2) a bond in the common possession of sources of spiritual life in the broadest sense and their common accessibility.

If these bonds are to be strengthened, much in communication between the old and the new land must change. Recent care to send out only Governors-General who will not rub us up the wrong way; fêting of colonial dignitaries, especially imperialistically talking ones—in fact, a sort of general gracious and indulgent pat on the back. But how much real effort to understand us is there? How much willingness to give Canada of your best? To put the same question to Canada is not fair. She is not sure enough of herself yet to be the one to move in such matters, and as yet she has little but the material returns of her resources and labour to give. Those apostles of culture that England *has* sent us have often been lamentable failures. The one didactic idea of making as many of us as possible into Englishmen [indicates that they are] not content merely to be to Canada the media for acquaintance with and appreciation of English culture while recognising all the time that *they* could never determine how much of this could be assimilated by Canada; and in their turn to try and grasp the deeper significance of what is typically or distinctively Canadian (all that of which I have spoken as the nascent and growing Canadian nationality) and interpreting this to the people of the old country. We mutually lack just that: Apostles of Culture willing and able to be simply interpreters.

That Canadians have resented the assumption of superiority on the part of many English is perhaps a sign of crudeness and youth, but by no means an unhealthy sign. The first felt difference is that of mere acquired externals—manners and forms. The English must answer by laying weight upon things that really count. The obligation of tact really rests upon the older party. (This is a general rule in pedagogy which is not universally enough recognised.) Some practical suggestions: Exchange of professors willing to try and get in touch with student life. Delegates of one kind or another willing not merely to express their wonder over our vast transportation system, our fine government buildings, and the extent of our country. Facilities for a better chance for Canadians visiting England really to see English life (remember the above point about the lack of family connections). But nothing can *now* prevent the divergence of types; such divergence is already present. What conceivably and practically can be prevented is growing mistrust and lack of mutual understanding and respect. The other factor is a common language as the vehicle of spiritual life in [the] broadest sense and the bond of both with the U.S.A. In Germany, one often meets the idea that the English World Empire would fall to pieces if the English fleet were destroyed. In such matters, of course,

definite prophecy is impossible, but one may certainly say that those who judge so misunderstand entirely the real basis of imperial power. England might in that case lose its tropical colonies, Egypt, even India, and a great proportion of its influence among the non-British nations, but its rule over Australia, South Africa, and Canada would by such an event alone be scarcely affected. The binding force of a common culture does not sink with the guns of a defeated navy.

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Inscription made by W.P. Bell during his incarceration at the Göttingen University Auditorium.  
Photograph taken by Gert Hahne in 1999.