

PHIL 218 -- Contemporary analytical philosophy

Russell: metaphysics and the theory of meaning

Spring 2013

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Lecture

Time: Weds 2:00pm--4:50pm
 Location: Philosophy Seminar Room (7th fl, HSS 7077) [[map](#)]

Required textbooks

{available at UCSD Bookstore (in the Price Center)}

Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*
 Russell, *Our Knowledge of the External World*
 Russell, *Philosophy of Logical Atomism*

{others tbd}

Recommended textbooks

Peter Hylton, *Russell, Idealism, and the Origins of Analytic Philosophy* (Oxford)
 Nicholas Griffin, *Cambridge Companion to Bertrand Russell* (Cambridge)
 {others tbd}

Course description

In this course we will focus on the extraordinarily influential positions in metaphysics and the theory of meaning that Bertrand Russell developed in the first few decades of the 20th century (roughly from his 1903 /Principles of Mathematics/ to his 1921 /The Analysis of Mind/). Russell's work from this period forged the basic framework for the subsequent analytic tradition and also provided what are now seen as the most exemplary attempts as such philosophical analyses.

Our goal will be to come to a clear understanding of the nature and prospects of Russell's key proposals during the period, both concerning particular questions in philosophy and more broadly concerning philosophy as a discipline.

Topics to be covered will include:

- * logic and the objectivity of meaning
- * sense-data and the subjectivity of meaning
- * knowledge by acquaintance and by description
- * the theory of descriptions and the relation between meaning, reference, existence, and non-existence
- * the theory of 'logical atomism' about the elements of meaning (and the relation between logical and sensible objects)
- * the theory of 'neutral monism' about the elements of reality (and the relation between physics and psychology)
- * the role of logical atomism and neutral monism in the construction of a unified scientific account of the world
- * logical analysis and logical construction as methods in philosophy

Course requirements

{tentative}

- * attendance
- * participation in discussion
- * 2 short response papers (~2-3pp), due during weeks 2-9
- * 1 seminar paper proposal (~1-2pp), due the end of week 9
- * 1 seminar paper (~15-20pp), due the end of finals week

Schedule of topics

{tentative}

- * wk1: the context of Russell's development: Bradley vs. Moore
- * wk2: idealism and the objectivity of meaning: 1903 /Principles of Mathematics/
- * wk3: meaning, reference, existence: 1905 'On Denoting', against Meinong and Frege
- * wk4: critical engagement with 'On Denoting' (Quine, Strawson)
- * wk5: acquaintance and the subjectivity of meaning: 1912 /Problems of Philosophy/, 'Knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description'
- * wk6: acquaintance and phenomenalism in the theory of meaning post-Russell (Ayer, McDowell)
- * wk7: sense-data, logic, and the meaning of 'reality', pt 1: 1914 /Our Knowledge of the External World/ (EW)

* wk8: sense-data, logic, and the meaning of 'reality', pt 2: EW cont;
1918 /Philosophy of Logical Atomism/ (PLA)

* wk9: neutral monism as a unified theory of psychology and physics,
pt 1: PLA cont (William James)

* wk10: neutral monism as a unified theory of psychology and
physics, pt 2: 1921 /The Analysis of Mind/

Satisfaction of grad program distribution requirements

This course can satisfy the mind/language requirement or the metaphysics/epistemology requirement. If you'd like to satisfy a different requirement, please contact me directly.

Reference links

{coming soon}

Course URL

<http://philosophy.ucsd.edu/faculty/ctolley/courses/s13/phil218/index.html>

last updated: February 17th, 2013