Russell 1900–1914

Wednesday, 3-6 pm. WAG 312.
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A course examining Russell’s philosophy during the years 1900 to 1914. We will focus on Russell’s metaphysics, epistemology and views on meaning. But some attention will also be paid to his views on logic, logicism and the paradoxes.

Grading Policy: Enrolled students will be required to write one seminar paper of roughly 20-25 pages, due at the end of term. No student presentations will be required. (This is a correction to the draft requirements already posted on line. In the end I decided not to do presentations simply because there’s an awful lot I want to get through.)

The following required books are available in the Coop.

Russell, B. The Principles of Mathematics
Russell, B. Logic and Knowledge
Russell, B. The Problems of Philosophy
Russell, B. Mysticism and Logic
Neale, S. Descriptions

Key: Proops’ website = the “papers” part of my departmental webpages.

Note: the reading for week 2 is heavier than for other weeks. Plan accordingly!

Syllabus:


Russell, B. The Principles of Mathematics, Preface and chapters, 4, 5, 6 and 9. (Available as a free google e-book, but I’ve also ordered a copy from the Coop.).

2. Aug 31. Russell’s “Theory of descriptions”—What it is, how it solves Russell’s three puzzles, and how relieves him of a commitment to denoting concepts. The philosophical consequences of Russell’s solution to the George IV puzzle.

--Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy, ch.16 “Descriptions.”

Sainsbury, M. *Russell*, ch. 4, sections 1–3 (i.e., pages 95–116).

Neale, S. *Descriptions*, ch. 2. (Don’t spend too long on this chapter: Neale isn’t really doing Russell scholarship, but rather presenting a theory of descriptions as generalized quantifiers.).


3. Sept 7th. *The debate over Russell’s early ontology*

Russell, B. *The Principles of Mathematics*, sections 46, 53 and 427;
--“On Denoting” (pp. 46–8 & 53–4)

Makin, G. *The Metaphysicians of Meaning*, ch. 3.


Russell, B. “On Denoting” in Marsh pp. 41–2 and from final para on p. 55 to end.
--“Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description,” ch. 10 in *Mysticism and Logic.*
--*The Problems of Philosophy*, chapters 5, 9, 10 and 14.
--“The Philosophy of Logical Atomism,” excerpt from section II, pp. 189–206 in Marsh.


Proops, I., “Russellian Acquaintance” (draft)

5. Sept 21st. *Russellian acquaintance, part II*

--*Problems of Philosophy*, chapters 3 & 4.

Huemer, M. Stanford Encyclopedia, article “Sense-Data” (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/sense-data/).


Potter, M. Wittgenstein’s Notes on Logic, pp. 26–43.


Optional:

7. Oct 5th. Russell's argument against denoting concepts (aka. the Gray’s Elegy argument)

--“On Fundamentals,” Papers, vol. 4, pp. 359–413. (Read around ad lib, focusing on the non-formal remarks.)

Optional.
Makin, G. The Metaphysicians of Meaning, Appendix C.

8. Oct 12th. Russell’s early (c.a. 1902) conception of logic and the philosophical significance of his logicism


9. Oct 19th. The paradoxes (Liar and Cantorian paradoxes)


Potter, M. Reasons Nearest Kin, ch. 5.
Optional:

10. Oct 26th. The paradoxes, the substitutional theory and ramified type theory

Klement, Kevin, C. “Russell, His Paradoxes and Cantor’s Theorem,” *Philosophy Compass* 5/1 (2010), 29–41, part II.


11. Nov 2nd. The multiple relation theory of judgment and Wittgenstein’s objections to it


This is a relatively light reading week; so begin the reading for next time, which is much heavier.

12. Nov 9th. Strawson and Donnellan’s objections to the theory of descriptions


Kneale, S. *Descriptions*, ch. 3.

13. Nov 16th. Fara and Ludlow and Segal’s objections to the theory of descriptions


14. Nov 23rd, Wed before Thanksgiving. (Special discussion section.) Class will be held, but no new material will be introduced

15. Nov 30. Spare meeting (I expect to be running behind)