

Russell's Philosophical Programme

The hard-core

Roger Jones, 2020:06:18, k03

The Breadth of Russell's Philosophy

Topics covered in “The basic writings of Bertrand Russell”

- Language, Logic, Mathematics, Science
- Epistemology, Metaphysics
- Psychology, Ethics, Philosophy of Education
- Politics, Economics, International Affairs
- History of Philosophy, Philosophy of History, Culture, Religion

The Ionian Cradle of Western Philosophy

Supplanting religion with reason

- 600 BC **presocratic philosophers** — Mathematics, philosophy, cosmology...
- **Axiomatic geometry** as a deductive discipline - highly successful
- **Philosophy** more broadly - aspires to deductive rigour but fails to achieve consensus or consistency.
- Culminating in **Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Euclid**
- **Euclid** compiles the elements of mathematics, a demonstration of deductive virility.
- **Aristotle** begins the formal science of logic, and his conception of *demonstrative science*, a deductive enterprise analogous to axiomatic mathematics.
- **BUT** Aristotle's formal logic, the syllogistic, is *too incomplete for practical deduction*, deduction remains an art.

Since Aristotle...

- **Nomologico-deductive Science** - Bacon,
- **Leibniz's Philosophy & Logic** - *the calculus ratiocinator*
- **Hume's Empiricism**; Mathematics as *Relations between Ideas*
- **Kant's conception of Mathematics as *synthetic a priori***
- **Beginnings of Mathematical Logic**, e.g. Boolean algebra
- **Frege: Logicism** (mathematics = logic + definitions)
- The rejection of Hegelian Idealism (& British variants) by Moore and Russell
- **Philosophy as Analysis**

Main Components of Core Programme

- The Principles of Mathematics - **The Theory of Types** - **abstract reductionism** - descriptions - **logicism**
- The formal derivation of mathematics - ***Principia Mathematica***
- The Philosophy of **Logical Atomism**
- **Scientific Method** in Philosophy
- **Neutral Monism** - common substrate to mind and matter
- The Analysis of **Mind**
- The Analysis of **Matter**

Philosophy as Logic (Russell)

All this supposed knowledge in the traditional systems must be swept away, and a new beginning must be made. . . .

The one and only condition, I believe, which is necessary in order to secure for philosophy in the near future an achievement surpassing all that has hitherto been accomplished by philosophers, is the creation of a school of men with scientific training and philosophical interests, unhampered by the traditions of the past, and not misled by the literary methods of those who copy the ancients in all except their merits.

The study of logic becomes the central study in philosophy: it gives the method of research in philosophy, just as mathematics gives the method in physics....

Our Knowledge of the External World, as a Field For Scientific Method in Philosophy

Postscript

- **Philosophy as Analysis** - Russell together with Moore had initiated a period of ascendancy of the conception of philosophy as *analytic* (involving a wide variety of distinct methods of analysis)
- **Logical Analysis** - Russell's program was taken up by Rudolf Carnap and the Logical Positivists, and was briefly popularised by A.J.Ayer in his "Language Truth and Logic" (1936).
- **Ordinary Language** - These logical conceptions of analysis were counterposed against analytic methods (of which the prototypes were from Moore and Wittgenstein) concerned more with the analysis of *ordinary language*.
- **Decline** - As the second half of the twentieth century drew on, the conception of philosophy as analysis gradually fell out of favour, being considered too narrow.