Book Review

The Cambridge Companion to Bertrand Russell, edited by Nicholas Griffin

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agency. Moreover, this book exhibits some distinctive features that may be called 'philosophy of action, Wisconsin style' (Dretske's *Explaining Behavior: Reasons in a World of Causes* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988) is its forerunner): a thoroughly naturalistic orientation, smooth combinations of both teleological and causal explanations, and skillful applications of biological and computational models, which, on the whole, make it a remarkable contribution to contemporary philosophical literature of action theory.

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The Cambridge Companion to Bertrand Russell, edited by Nicholas Griffin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, xvii + 550 pp., $28.00, £19.99.

The purpose of each volume in the Cambridge Companion series is to introduce the philosophical novice to great thinkers in the annals of philosophy. Some editions of the series have succeeded in this endeavor while others have failed — and sometimes miserably. The *Cambridge Companion to Bertrand Russell* has a few shortcomings, but inaccessibility is not one of them. Anthologies placing a premium on accessibility have tended to sacrifice depth for breadth. Nicholas Griffin has managed to edit an anthology where contributors address all of the main components of Bertrand Russell's work in a clear and concise way without surrendering rigor.

Nine of the fifteen essays address Russell's logical, metaphysical, or epistemological views. It is arguable that Russell's greatest contribution to philosophy was his views in philosophy of language and philosophy of logic. Among Russell's greatest accomplishments were the theory of types and theory of denoting. A good question to consider is how and why these theories arose in the first place. Some essays in the volume try to answer this very question. They attempt to evaluate Russell's intellectual evolution from mathematics to philosophy.

I. Grattan-Guinness argues that Russell's motivation for doing logic was largely the result of his mathematical aims. Russell's primary

concern as a mathematics student was the foundation of mathematics. Questions in the foundations of mathematics are primarily philosophical in nature. Grattan-Guiness traces Russell's works in the foundation of mathematics and logic to show how it developed into a full-fledged logicism. Grattan-Guinness does a remarkable job not only explaining Russell's devotion to his logicist project but also informing us of the reception that Russell's logicism received in the early part of the twentieth century.

For Grattan-Guinness, Russell's particular views in logic fit into his overall mathematical aims. In 'Bertrand Russell's Logicism,' Godwyn and Irvine seem to reverse the direction of fit. They argue that Russell's 'regressive method' with its emphasis on the distinction between logical and epistemological order shows how closely Russell's mathematical epistemology was integrated within his general theory of knowledge. Russell's brand of logicism prescribes no clear or absolute demarcation between mathematical knowledge and scientific knowledge. According to Godwyn and Irvine, the lack of demarcation indicates that Russell developed a sophisticated and philosophically fruitful version of logicism.

In 'Russell's Philosophical Background,' Griffin explains Russell's development from a mathematician to a logician. Griffin wants to show how and why Russell abandoned mathematics. A peculiar phenomenon of early analytic philosophy is the fact that almost all philosophers were once mathematicians. Griffin explains that the rapid evolution of Russell, the mathematician, to Russell, the philosopher, was largely the result of his reading F.H. Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*.

Several contributors recognize Russell played a significant role in the development of logic. This recognition is particularly acute in the matter of Russell's attempt to solve the paradox that bears his name.

Gregory Landini contends that Russell's substitutional theory is 'the conceptual linchpin connecting Russell's 1903 *Principle of Mathematics* with the mature system of the 1910 *Principia Mathematica*' (p. 283). Landini concludes that the substitutional theory's importance is that it was Russell's first step toward the solution of his paradox that had troubled him for so long.

In 'The Theory of Types,' Urquhart outlines the development of Russell's theory of types. The theory of types was supposed to solve all paradoxes. Urquhart notices that Russell's work in logic begins and ends with a theory of types. His chapter begins with Russell's early theory of types in Appendix B of *Principles of Mathematics* (1903)

where Russell argued that the logical universe was to be stratified into a regimented hierarchy of types. The lowest type was comprised of individuals. The next highest class was comprised of classes of individuals. The next highest class was comprised of classes of classes of individuals and so on. The type hierarchy prevented Russell's paradox from arising.

Several criticisms of Russell's original theory drove him to ramify the theory of types. In the ramified theory of types, Russell used properties instead of classes to show that there were properties of individuals (lowest type), properties of properties of individuals (next lowest type), and so on. Russell prefixed an axiom of infinity and an axiom of reducibility to solve the problems critics of his theory had raised.

Despite the theory's shortcomings, the theory of types has been taken seriously by many philosophers, including Godel, Chwistek, Ramsey, Copi, and Myhill. We may think of the theory of types as a dusty relic shelved in the philosophical warehouse, but a recent resurgence of interest in the theory of types has occurred in the foundation of programming languages. Thus, Russell's type theory, even if it fails to serve its original purpose, may have wider implications. This shows that the theory still has plenty of staying power.

The Theory of Types is a fundamental part of Russell's views in logic. Another of Russell's views that arose out of his views in logical analysis was logical atomism. Logical atomism is a metaphysical view. In particular, logical atomism is the idea that the analysis of propositions acts as a guide to an analysis of facts which correspond to them. The analysis leads to the discovery of logical categories in the world and the logical atoms that comprise it. In 'The Metaphysics of Logical Atomism,' Bernard Linsky tries to show that the scope of Russell's logical atomism was the result of his metaphysical and logical views between the two editions of *Principia Mathematica*. Linsky traces the development of these views into what we know as logical atomism.

A.C. Grayling addresses Russell's epistemological views. Grayling sets out a specific characterization of empiricism. Empiricism is 'the family of theories which in one way or another may locate the source or, at very least, the test of contingent knowledge in experience — specifically, in sensory experience' (p. 449). Empiricism requires experiential grounds for concepts to have contents or applicability. Grayling argues that Russell was an empiricist and remained for most of his career. Russell was an empiricist in a qualified sense of this broadly characterized position.

I want to raise two criticisms of this volume. First, serious consideration of the Russell/Wittgenstein relationship is omitted. Second, there is a surprising lack of articles addressing Russell's views in ethics and social and political philosophy.

The first problem is that there is no article included in the volume about Russell and Wittgenstein. Richard Cartwright has authored an article on Russell's connection to Moore, and Michael Beaney has written an article detailing Frege's influence on Russell. Wittgenstein could be considered Russell's protégé. It is no doubt that the two of them had a rocky relationship but that should not prohibit the view that they influenced one another's philosophical positions. On the one hand, Russell dropped his *Theory of Knowledge* project because of a comment by Wittgenstein. On the other hand, Wittgenstein completed a thesis under Russell's supervision. Additionally, Russell and Wittgenstein seem to exercise an early understanding of truth-tables in 1912 (John Shosky, 'Russell's Use of Truth Tables,' *Russell: The Journal of the Bertrand Russell Archives* 17:1, 1997, pp. 11–26.). So, there are a few reasons to include an article that explores the tumultuous bond between Russell and Wittgenstein.

The second problem is that there is only one article in the volume addressing Russell's moral philosophy. Charles Pigden, the author of 'Bertrand Russell: Moral Philosopher or Unphilosophical Moralist?', does a splendid job trying to make up for a huge deficiency of this volume. He argues that Russell was a powerful figure in ethical theory. Much of Pigden's essay concerns Russell's anticipation of many of the problems in twentieth century metaethics. For instance, Pigden illustrates Russell's flirtation with emotivism and with error theory. Russell seems to think that ethical intuitions are preferences we feel. If this is the case, then, according to Pigden, this makes sense of Russell's arguments in 'The Place of Science in a Liberal Education' (1913) and 'On Scientific Method in Philosophy' (1914). In both of these pieces, Russell argues the ethical notions should be removed from scientific philosophy because philosophy is an inquiry aimed at truth. Judgments about good and evil lack a truth-value. Russell is unclear whether he wants to argue for emotivism. So, according to Pigden, we should take his arguments to be favoring emotivism as much as error theory.

The *Cambridge Companion to Bertrand Russell* is a remarkable contribution to the series that is both accessible to the novice reader and rigorous enough to delight more advanced students of philosophy. The

question the volume leaves for us to debate is whether Russell's legacy will only include his contributions in the area of metaphysics, logic, and epistemology.

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Why There is Something Rather Than Nothing, by Bede Rundle. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004, 216 pp., £35.

Why is there anything at all? One familiar answer, offered by various theists, is that there is a particular being (God) who *must* exist. Although Rundle rejects the theist approach he thinks we can explain why there is something. Our explanation can appeal to an implication of the theist's principle, namely, there cannot be *nothing* — something *or other* must be. This no-nothing principle does not imply that any particular thing has a necessary existence. It is compatible with admitting, of each particular thing, that it might not have been (so long as something else was). However, we have an answer to our question: the reason why there is anything is that there has to be something or other.

Rundle offers several considerations in support of his principle. He says it has the status of a conceptual truth in that we cannot really conceive of there being nothing:

> Our attempts at conceiving of total non-existence are irredeemably partial. We are always left with something, if only a setting from which we envisage everything having departed. (p. 110)

Furthermore, Rundle argues, when we deny the existence of something, we presuppose a domain of things and a space they occupy. 'There are no more apples' means roughly that nothing in my house (or some other place whose salience is evident in the context) is an apple, or that no where in my house is an apple. In denying that something exists, we are characterizing things and places whose existence we presuppose. Hence to say nothing exists is not really