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Thomas MORMANN, *Bertrand Russell*, Munich: Beck (Beck'sche Reihe, "Denker", no. 560), 2007, 180 S. ISBN: 978-3-406-45990-0

The book is an introduction to Bertrand Russell's theoretical philosophy. In the Preface, the author correctly notes, with regret, that today, the interest in Russell's philosophy in the germanophone countries is rather limited. There are introductions to the philosophy of Quine, Putnam, Davidson and Lewis, and of course, to the early analytic philosophers who wrote in German, Frege, Wittgenstein and Carnap, but not to the, arguably, founding father of analytic philosophy, Bertrand Russell. This is rather surprising, mainly for two reasons: (i) in the Weimar Republic, German philosophers took the lead in creatively exploring Russell's ideas. It suffices to name Carnap's *Aufbau*, a book considerably influenced by Russell. (ii) For more than thirty years now, analytic philosophy has been the leading philosophy in the German speaking countries.

Mormann's *Bertrand Russell* is a good example of this situation in Russell studies. The author is a German philosopher who has been teaching for years at the University of Donostia-San Sebastian, Spain. In 2000 his introduction to the philosophy of Rudolf Carnap that was well received and well reviewed was brought out by the same publishing house as the present book. Mormann has also published interesting papers in the philosophy of geometry that I, personally, highly appreciate. Unfortunately, his book on Russell is open to many criticisms, some of them quite serious.

The objective of the book is to suggest a "possibly wider synopsis of Russell's philosophical development" that is not limited to his canonical writings "from 1905–1920" (10). Mormann succeeds in this endeavor. His introduction discusses a wide range of themes of Russell's technical philosophy: his logic, philosophy of mathematics, philosophy of language, the idea and practice of logical analysis, his neutral monism and his naturalistic epistemology of *Human Knowledge* (1948). It also discusses Russell's books—academic and popular—on ethics, political philosophy and philosophy of religion. At the same time, the author warns his readers that he presents only the ideas from selected works of Russell. I will be more specific, pointing to the fact that four important books of Russell are not even mentioned in this introduction: *Philosophical Essays* (1910), *Theory of Knowledge* (1913), *Inquiry into the Meaning and Truth* (1940), and *History of Western Philosophy* (1945).

The book starts with a discussion of Russell's idealistic apprenticeship. Mormann correctly underlines that Russell's realism of 1898 was to a great extent a reaction against British Idealism. Traces of the positions of the idealists can be easily discovered in Russell's philosophy, sometimes in converted form. Thus, (i) while the British Idealists refused to accept the external relations, Russell defended them; (ii) Russell also replaced the absolute idealism of the former by absolute realism; etc. I have some problems with Mormann's treatment of Russell's idealist apprenticeship, however. First of all, he failed to mention the real source of Russell's interest in the British Idealism: it was not Bradley but Russell's Cambridge teachers James Ward and G. F. Stout. Secondly, it was Russell's elderly friend and tutor J. E. McTaggart, who persuaded him that he was a Hegelian: indeed, Russell firmly believed that before 1898 he was Hegelian. In fact, he was much more influenced by Kant than by Hegel, which is especially clearly seen in his *Essays on the Foundations of Geometry* (1897). As regards Bradley, the Oxonian, he did not think of himself as a Hegelian: in fact, "Hegelian" was a predicate given to Bradley and his friends by their opponents in Britain, an act directed to a public always skeptical to alien influences. The "neo-Hegelians" themselves repudiated this title decisively.[1] Thirdly, it is scarcely correct to say that the criticism of Moore-Russell was directed against the psychologism of the British Idealists. Bradley, in particular, was one of the first to join the *fin de siècle* fight against psychologism started by Lotze and later also waged by Frege, Russell,

Husserl and many others. Finally, it is misleading to speak about "Russell's strict anti-idealistic position" (p. 51). The point is, and Mormann actually mentions it elsewhere, that Russell's realism of 1900 was itself idealistic—it was a radical form of Platonism.

Mormann also overestimates the role Peano played in elaborating Russell's conception of logicism when he speaks about Russell's hope of logically substantiating mathematics "with the help of Peano's logic" (62). First of all, Russell had developed large parts of what later was published as *The Principles of Mathematics* (1903) before he met Peano in August 1900 (for example, in "Draft of 1899–1900"). His logic of relations, in particular, was elaborated already in 1899; it was not adopted from Peano, as Mormann claims (p. 56). What Russell really learned from Peano was the technique of quantification, the idea of material implication, as well as his new symbolism. These ideas certainly helped Russell to radically develop his project for reducing mathematics to logic. They did not give birth to Russell's project for reducing mathematics to logic, though.

I agree with the author when he claims that Russell's logic of 1903 was not a discipline that investigates the laws of thought; rather, it was something of an ontological-logical theory, or "ontologic". "Russellian propositions" of 1903, in particular, were not linguistic but ontological entities. Perhaps the most well-known point of Russell's ontologic was that everything that can be mentioned at all is a term; terms are logical subjects that are independent one from another and also from the rest of the world. Unfortunately, from this claim Mormann draws the false conclusion that in *The Principles* Russell adopted the position that "a word has a sense just when it stands for something, i.e. when it is a name for an object" (65). In this sense, Mormann asserts that Russell's 1903 philosophy of language followed the "Augustinian model" of the relation between language and world (159). Correspondingly, Russell allegedly assumed that the world consists of singular objects, not of facts or other holistic entities, unanalysible complexes, for example.

Nothing can be further from the truth. In fact, as early as in 1903 Russell developed a philosophy of language according to which many propositions—in particular, those that have the words "a", "some", "every", "any" and "the" as their constituents—function holistically: the words in them do not follow the conception "one word, one meaning" (cf. *Principles*, §§ 5ff). This was Russell's famous Theory of Denoting (*Kennzeichnungstheorie*) which already adopted the Context Principle. Its most important metaphysical implication was that there are two kinds of wholes: aggregates and units. An aggregate is extensionally defined, a unit intensionally. Russell accepted also that the unit is logically more fundamental than the aggregate.

Mormann further argues that, similarly to the atomism in physics and chemistry, the central task of the logical atomism was to discover the logical atoms. Unfortunately, he says little about them. On the one hand, the author is right when he insists that the notion of logical atom by Russell is rather a regulative concept that only directs the investigation, so that we must not fix what the logical atoms exactly are. On the other hand, he cites (on pp. 96 and 110) a section in "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism", from which it is clear that logical atoms are facts. This, however, is only one conception of logical atomism Russell adopted. In other places, he claimed that logical atoms are individuals which are to be discovered in epistemology. In fact, this point is cited by Mormann, but elsewhere again (on p. 104): when he lays down (with reference to Russell's "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description") the epistemological principle of logical atomism. In this sense, logical atoms, such as particulars and universals, are elements of perception.

On pp. 110–13, Mormann discusses Russell's conception of propositional attitudes. Specifically, he analyzes what he calls "propositions of belief" which, despite the appearance to the contrary, do not have propositions as constituents. This will become clear if we examine propositions of belief which are false, for example, "p believes that 'Charles I died in his bed' ": Russell's "robust sense of reality" forbade him to accept that "Charles I died in his bed" is a proposition. His conclusion was that "*no* judgement consists in a relation

to a single object", such as a fact.[2] Instead, he accepted that the logical form of "propositions of belief" consists in a relation of the judging subject "p" and the different elements of the apparent proposition about Charles I. This was Russell's famous "multiple relation theory of judgment". It was introduced by Russell in the just cited paper "On the Nature of Truth and Falsehood" (1910) and was also employed in *Principia Mathematica* (1910/13). Unfortunately, Mormann fails to recognize it as a theory of judgment and calls it simply, and mistakenly, "theory of multiple relations". This point goes together with the fact that Mormann did not discuss Russell's theory of truth in the context of which his multiple relation theory of judgment was developed.

The author further underlines that Russell's method of analysis was connected with the method of logical synthesis, or construction. But I fail to understand why he calls Russell's method that of "logical deconstruction". This label does not convey the fact "that in Russell's analyses both *destructive* (analytic) and *constructive* (synthetic) elements play a role" (117)—in fact, it suggests dominance of the "destructive" moments over the synthetic ones. This suggestion is all the more misleading since, as Mormann himself notes, "logical constructions are rather a general leitmotif of Russell's philosophy" (ibid.).

An important role in Russell's logical constructivism was played by Whitehead's method of "extensional abstractions" (123ff.). It helped Russell to analyze the points of geometry as the systems of their surroundings (*Umgebungssysteme*). Unfortunately, Mormann says nothing about Russell's "deconstruction" of the moments of time that actually runs parallel to his analysis of points of space.

The author claims further that in the 1940s Russell's philosophy took a radical turn. In particular, his concept of knowledge, as developed in his *Human Knowledge*, ceased to be connected with the deductive structure of logic and mathematics. Instead, probabilistic and inductive aspects played a prominent role (141). More specifically, Russell gave up the dichotomy of "knowledge versus opinion" and replaced it with a continuum of forms of knowledge. I cannot welcome this interpretation by Mormann either. In fact, probability and induction already played a central role in *The Problems of Philosophy* (1912). After Wittgenstein changed Russell's interest to new philosophical themes in 1912, Russell simply shelved the discussion of these problems for later times; and in 1948 he returned to them.

According to Mormann, Russell's alleged later turn against logic was even more dramatic. In support of this claim the author (twice) cites a passage from *Human Knowledge*, p. 5, in which Russell says that "logic is no part of philosophy". In fact, here Russell merely expressed his disappointment with logic, after Wittgenstein convinced him that its truths are nothing but tautologies. Mormann's claim also contradicts his later note that "in truth, *Human Knowledge* is just as indebted to the logico-analytic approach as his earlier works were" (138). Even more unconvincing is Mormann's statement that, in this book, Russell tended to abandon the doctrine of pluralism and atomism and to embrace a form of "radical holism à la Bradley" (139). This claim cannot be convincingly supported with any piece of evidence.

Another claim of the author with which I cannot agree is that the radical naturalism of *Human Knowledge* was a new trend in Russell's philosophy. In fact, Russell had already pleaded for closer cooperation of philosophy with mathematics and science in the late 1890s. For decades, however, he made philosophical use mainly of mathematics and logic, but not of the sciences. This was followed by a period (that started 1912) of engagement with philosophy of language in which Russell was influenced by Wittgenstein. Even in this period, however, Russell was philosophically interested in science. Suffice it to mention the final sentence of *Our Knowledge* (1914) in which he drew up the program for creating "a school of men with scientific training and philosophical interests". These words impressed many German philosophers, scientists, and mathematicians of the time. Furthermore, as Mormann himself has it (in another place!), Russell's closer attention to natural sciences did not start in *Human Knowledge,* but in the *Analysis of Mind* (1921), in which he paid particular attention to psychology.

Even more frustrating is the last chapter of the book, "Russell in the Philosophy of the

Twentieth Century", in which Mormann casts doubt on the role Russell played in the birth of analytic philosophy:

> Russell is continued to be considered, together with Moore, Frege and Wittgenstein, as one of the founding fathers of analytic philosophy. In turned out, however, that in some respects [at least] he is not as close to the analytic philosophy of today than was accepted earlier. (153)

I have three main remarks on this judgment. First of all, this is also true of Frege, Moore and Wittgenstein. We know today that Frege was considerably influenced by German philosophers like Kant, Trendelenburg and Lotze, that Moore wrote two dissertations on Kant's ethics, and that Wittgenstein was enthusiastic about Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard. Practically all early analytic philosophers developed out of "continental" traditions of nineteenth century philosophy. Secondly, I do not believe that the analytic philosophy of today is "more analytic" than the analytic philosophies of Moore and Russell were. On the contrary, many authors convincingly claim (Peter Hacker, e.g.), and I join them here, that this tradition in philosophy degenerated around 1970. Finally, contrary to Mormann, I do not believe that Russell would rebuff the schism between the two opposing "blocks" of philosophy, that have come to be called continental and analytic philosophy (154). In fact, Russell was the person who did most for the introduction of this opposition, first, by being excessively critical of the philosophers who were currently thought of as the "British Neo-Hegelians", and later, in 1912, through his celebrated discussions with Henry Bergson. What the investigations of Hylton and Griffin have shown was not that Russell was in a way sympathetic to these authors, but rather that Russell's work shows signs of crypto influences by these authors, influences of which Russell was unaware.

The book ends with a discussion of Russell's reception in German-speaking philosophy. Mormann claims that the most significant work produced in the spirit of Russell was done by the members of the Vienna Circle (160). I cannot agree with this judgment either, for two reasons. First of all, the initial variant of Carnap's *Aufbau*, the document that most convincingly supports this thesis, was written before Carnap moved to Vienna in 1926: so it cannot be considered as a product of the Vienna Circle. Secondly, Russell's works were made popular in the German speaking countries mainly by members of the Berlin Group, not by the Vienna Circle. One of its founding fathers, Kurt Grelling, translated four of Russell's books into German. He also wrote extensively on Russell and, apparently, systematically informed his friend Hans Reichenbach about Russell's philosophy. In my judgment, Grelling's papers on Russell's philosophy from the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s are the best stuff written in German on this philosopher. Unfortunately, Mormann's book has not changed this situation.[3]

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1. Cf. R. G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography*, 2nd ed., Harmondsworth: Penguin (1944), 16.
2. B. Russell, "On the Nature of Truth and Falsehood", in: *idem*, *Collected Papers*, vol. 6, London: Routledge, 1992, 115–24; here 120.
3. The work on this review was generously supported by the Fritz-Thyssen-Stiftung.