

Logic as an Object of Quasi-Religious Belief: the Case of Bertrand Russell

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The title of my paper may sound a bit oxymoronic, for “logic” means “proof” while “belief” means “without proof”. Nevertheless, the nature and value of logic itself have been matters of controversy and belief rather than of verified knowledge. Bertrand Russell’s logicist project in the first decade of the 20th century was inextricably intertwined with his concurrent project to marry religious emotion with agnosticism. According to the latter project, “the emotion with which we contemplate the world may be religious, even if we have no definite theological beliefs”, and “the absence of a creed is no reason for not thinking in a religious way” (from a letter to G.L. Dickinson, July 20, 1904) (Russell 1967, 287-288). In a biographical aspect, Russell’s unsatisfied thirst for absolute certainty was redirected from religion to mathematics (with logic as its heart) during the period in question. It was logic that became, for Russell, the true object of religious belief and religious emotion. In such a context, I prefer the term “quasi-religious” to “religious”. Russell endeavoured to build a new logic that could fully satisfy his quasi-religious expectations. It was noticed by Hermann Weyl, who called the logical system of *Principia Mathematica* “a sort of logician’s paradise” and compared it to “the doctrines of the early Fathers of the Church or of the scholastic philosophers of the Middle Ages” (Weyl 1946, 6). Russell’s logicism and logical platonism in the 1900s and evolution of his criticism of religion are usually treated separately. By putting these two strands of his thought together again, one obtains a better understanding of both.

Bibliography

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Foreword

The 2nd World Congress on Logic and Religion (Warsaw, June 18–22, 2017) is an international scientific event gathering philosophers, mathematicians, orientalists, specialists in religious studies and theologians eager to analyse different aspects of relations between logic and religion.

It is a continuation of the 1st World Congress on Logic and Religion, organised jointly by the Federal University of Campina Grande, the Federal University of Paraíba and the University of Brazil in João Pessoa, and held on April 1–5, 2015. That event was prepared and conducted by Jean-Yves Beziau and Ricardo Sousa Silvestre and devoted to a wide range of problems concerning the relations between logic and religion. At the conclusion of the congress, many participants expressed the wish to continue discussions on these topics in the future and also warmly welcomed the idea to organise such an event in Poland, which can be called a country of logic and religion thanks to both the tradition of Lvov-Warsaw School of logic and a considerable level of religiosity.

The authorities of the Institute of Philosophy and of the Faculty of Philosophy and Sociology of the University of Warsaw accepted this idea, made a decision to organise the second congress and set up the chairs of the academic and organising committees. In the preparations of this event the organisers of the first congress and many other significant scientists took part.

The organisers of the second congress proposed a number of important topics to be discussed, which included such fields as:

- impact of religious beliefs on logical structures,
- logic at the service of apologetics,
- rationalisation of religious beliefs,
- justification in religious legal traditions (including Talmudic Logic),
- logics vis-a-vis illogicalities in religion,
- non-classical logics and religion,
- models of argumentation in religious discourse.

The congress announcement prompted a positive response from a large number of scholars. As a result, the organisers received more than 180 paper submissions and finally selected about 140. Furthermore, many significant scientists agreed to give plenary speeches during the congress, namely:

- Johannes Bronkhorst (Lausanne),
- Jessica Frazier (Oxford),
- Dov Gabbay (London),
- Michał Heller (Kraków),
- Saul Kripke and Romina Padro (New York),
- Laurent Lafforgue (Paris)
- Ricardo Strobino (Boston),
- Giuseppe Veltri (Hamburg),
- Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina (Toronto),
- Jan Woleński (Kraków, Rzeszów).

Such a great interest within the academic community has resulted in a rich and thought-provoking programme extending over five days. The event will conclude with a debate, led by plenary speakers, that will address most important issues identified during the congress.

This book contains all final versions of the abstracts that have been submitted by the speakers in the PDF format; these are ordered by the authors' surnames.

The programme of the Congress is liable to change. The complete, regularly updated programme and other details are available at:

<http://logicandreligion.uw.edu.pl>

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