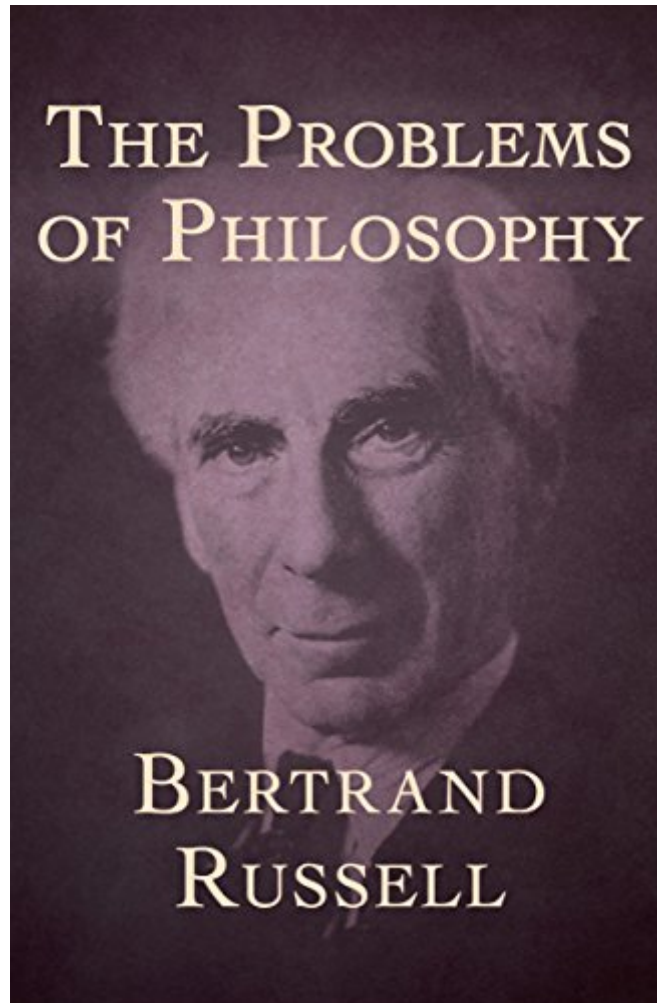




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# The Problems Of Philosophy



## Synopsis

Bertrand Russell's classic primer on Western philosophy and the greatest thinkers of the past three millennia. With zest and rigor, Bertrand Russell applies twentieth-century thinking to age-old philosophy, from the works of Plato and Aristotle to those of René Descartes and John Locke. In *The Problems of Philosophy*, he reviews the Western canon's most influential ideas and thought experiments, offering a comprehensive and enlightening text for curious and seasoned philosophy readers alike. Infused with Russell's own observations and critiques, this study offers reviews of topics such as idealism, knowledge, and the natures of truth, reality, and existence. Including the author's prominent thinking on knowledge by acquaintance versus knowledge by description, *The Problems of Philosophy* is a critical look at the major philosophical accomplishments spanning from classical Greece to the twentieth century. This ebook has been professionally proofread to ensure accuracy and readability on all devices.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is brain food, a vicious attack to common sense because philosophy bring us discomfort through methodical doubt (thanks Descartes). If you cannot give a definite answer for a question, then the study is within the helms of philosophy. Here, Russell goes about asking simple but very hard questions concluding that this book is a brief and very incomplete review of problems. Well, if this is food, now we can start using our brains.

The blue cover version of this book is a large print copy, not stated in the product description. The book itself is nearly the size of a magazine, pages aren't numbered, and the print is probably around 20pt size font. I was hoping this could be something I could take with me to work or when I'm out and about, but it's too big to fit in a standard purse. Pics show size and font size against 11pt size font.

This short book is a journey through some of philosophy's more famous problems. Naturally a synopsis this short (it is roughly 100 pages) cannot do full justice to much of philosophy, or even to the problems it actually addresses, but it is an entertaining read that nevertheless will find itself illuminating to those unfamiliar with the subject. Uniquely, instead of following the historical chronology of the problems he chooses, Russell travels a path that seems to flow naturally from one subject to the next, as if each problem logically entailed the other. Consequently, Russell jumps decades (and even centuries), forward and backward as his narrative dictates. The experience is like a modern thriller movie whose out-of-sequence path nonetheless has a logic that makes sense. If you aren't already familiar with the subject you might not notice Russell's technique. Russell opens his inquiry by asking what justifies knowledge. Using Descartes' technique of systematic doubt, he explores the problem by examining illusions and fallacious conclusions that can arise when considering knowledge via sensory data to be perfectly reliable. Moving on to the existence of matter, Russell flexes some of his physics muscle with a cursory examination of the current state of thinking (writing as of 1912). The distinction between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description leads to a discussion of induction and the distinction between empirical and a priori knowledge. This leads him to Kant and a long engagement with idealism follows. I won't spoil anymore. Of course Russell is himself a towering figure of 20th century analytic philosophy, and if you allow yourself a little cynicism, by the end it is clear his narrative merely engaged the line of philosophical puzzles that led to his own work. This is not meant as a character slight: this book's lightness bears little resemblance to his serious work and is aimed at a different audience. Rather, it is telling that the narrative he chooses is historically in line with his own work, so his omissions are

less surprising when seen in this light. Given that Russell's original work centers on epistemology and logic, it makes sense the book starts at the Enlightenment, concentrating on epistemological questions, and never touches upon anything prior except for his brief foray into the problem of universals. For a book that calls itself the "The Problems of Philosophy," the omissions of major philosophical problems might raise your eyebrows if not for this fact. Russell is not an impartial narrator; he makes his opinions clear on a number of occasions, particularly with issues that have historical significance. I don't consider this a weakness; there is no shortage of general philosophy volumes that treat all ideas in a sympathetic light. It is also salutary to reflect Russell is not a philosophy historian in the normal sense (his huge History notwithstanding); he is an original contributor. Thus I would not expect a thinker of his stature to not proffer his views, as would be expected from any academic professor. My gripe with this book is the tediousness with which Russell begins the discussion. The early pages are somewhat monotonous and not entirely engaging. The rest of the work is quite engaging, so the book as a whole is let down by its beginning. This is unfortunate because many readers might not find themselves committed enough to finish it. Given the target audience (folks who may have no prior exposure to philosophy), missing out on the best parts because of its beginning would be unfortunate.

In problems of Philosophy, Russell discusses and explains some of the problems in philosophy. He mainly writes about the branch of philosophy called epistemology. Epistemology concerns knowledge, how we acquire it and to which extent we can use it. Russell writes about basic things in our life, like a table, and discusses whether it exists or not. The book is split up in fifteen chapters. At the beginning of each chapter, he summarizes his aims for the chapter. This can for an example be a term or the views of another philosopher. At the end of the chapter, he gives a conclusion to his arguments. Russell is also a mathematician. This, in my opinion gives the book a (relative) simplicity and that really helps the reader to understand the difficult problems that Russell proposes. The book is also getting older and therefore, the vocabulary can be difficult, but Russell does a good job by not using any unfamiliar words. Therefore, one does not need to have read any philosophy beforehand. This makes Problems of Philosophy an excellent introduction to philosophy. My favorite quote: "I think, therefore I am" I really like this quote, because it says, a lot if one chooses to investigate further. Descartes wanted to know what he could not doubt. The only thing he could not doubt was his own thoughts, because he figured that if he did not exist then he could not think the thoughts that he did. Therefore, he knew he existed. Quotes like this can change the way I think. I really enjoyed the book

and I recommend it to everyone that is interested in philosophy. This is the first book about philosophy I have read and it served as an excellent introduction to philosophy that makes me want to read more about the subject. Even though the book is 128 pages long, I read it very slowly so that I could understand it. It took me three times longer to read than I would have read any other book.

Seems systematic, needs a bit of focus to be understood even though its not so hard as a text. Good tangential critique of other philosophies. Pragmatic enough to cut corners and not be so concerned with the problem of fully defining every concept even if the definitions are decent enough. What I'm trying to say is good philosophical book without being so hermetical that can't be understood.

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