

In recent years there has been a revival of interest in the Austrian philosopher, Alexius Meinong (1853-1920). With this interest have come doubts as to the adequacy of Russell's interpretation and criticism of Meinong. Some writers appear to regard Russell's rejection of Meinong's theory of objects in "On Denoting" as if it were intended as a full consideration of his philosophy.<sup>1</sup> J. N. Findlay, the author of an important book on Meinong, cites Russell's extensive reviews in Mind as the source of the English-speaking world's acquaintance with, and misunderstanding of, Meinong. He says: "Unfortunately Russell was far too concerned to advance from Meinong to his own notions and conclusions to bother to get Meinong quite straight, and the accounts he put into circulation of Meinongian contents as consisting of sense-data and images, and of Meinong's non-existent objects as 'subsistent', are simplifying travesties of Meinong's complex notions."<sup>2</sup>

The impression that Russell's treatment of Meinong was hasty and ill-considered should be appraised against the background of all the unpublished materials now available in the Russell Archives concerning the interactions of the two philosophers. In this context it seems important to draw attention to the records of Russell's reading of Meinong, to the correspondence between them, as well as to the accessible published comments and criticisms. Only against this background can an adequate evaluation of Russell's interpretation of Meinong be undertaken.

A brief chronology of the interactions between the two philosophers will provide part of such a background. In 1899 Russell published in Mind a review of Meinong's 1896 Über die Bedeutung des Weberschen Gesetzes.<sup>3</sup> The review is favourable, but Russell expresses two criticisms: he feels the treatment of psychical states as extensive to be too close to that of Bradley, and he comments that Meinong would have profited from the ideas of non-Euclidean geometry. In the same year Meinong wrote to Professor J. S. Mackenzie concerning this review. In this letter, now in the Russell Archives, he attributes the review to Mackenzie's intervention and thanks him for this, indicating that Russell is a reviewer of good judgment who gave an accurate account of his work. Meinong mentions that he has tried to take account of Russell's criticisms in his new work, "Über Gegenstände höherer Ordnung und deren Verhältnis zur inneren Wahrnehmung", published in the Zeitschrift für Psychologie und Physiologie der Sinnesorgane (21: 1899). He hopes that Russell will read it and will expand his remarks concerning new geometries. Next year Meinong published another article, "Abstrahieren und Vergleichen", in the same journal (24:1900). In 1902 Meinong's important book, Über Annahmen (Leipzig: Barth; 2nd ed. 1910), was published. The preceding two articles and the book were studied closely by Russell and were the basis of his three-part article in Mind of 1904, "Meinong's Theory of Complexes and Assumptions".<sup>4</sup>

It is of particular interest that the notes from Russell's reading of this material are preserved in the Russell Archives. On the article "Über Gegenstände höherer Ordnung" there are four pages of detailed notes in Russell's small script. These four pages of notes cover 90 pages of the article in question, the page numbers of which are noted in the left-hand margin, identifying the comment or note. Some of the notes state Meinong's position; some record Russell's suggestion for an English equivalent to a Meinongian term. On the second article, "Abstrahieren und Vergleichen", there are two full pages of notes for the 45 pages of the original article. Russell does not discuss this article in the Mind series but refers to it favourably in a footnote (p. 204, n.1). The text of Über Annahmen comprises 298 pages, but the notes of Rus-

sell's which survive cover only the first 183 pages of the book. The notes comprise nine full pages. Again the notes contain detailed records of Meinong's argument, suggested translations, and points raised in criticism of Meinong; each entry is identified by the page number of the book Russell used.

The Mind articles themselves not only report Meinong's ideas, but also serve as an occasion for Russell to contrast and compare the position of Meinong with that of the idealists, of Moore, of Frege, and of his own realism. This analysis serves as a kind of map of the new realism, and it illuminates the position which Russell held at that time.<sup>5</sup> The articles prompted Meinong to write directly to Russell. In his first letter he goes beyond a polite expression of appreciation; he says he had the feeling that Russell understood him better than his German readers when he read his earlier review, and that now he has come to the conclusion that he and Russell are of the same opinion in many matters. He is grateful for the reference to Russell's Principles of Mathematics and to the work of Frege, both of which were previously not known to the Graz group. He is arranging for the contributors to the cooperative volume Untersuchungen zur Gegenstandstheorie und Psychologie (Leipzig: Barth, 1904) to send Russell their respective articles and he encloses his own, the first of the series.

Russell replied to Meinong in an interesting letter<sup>6</sup> in which he makes an equivalence between what Meinong calls a theory of objects and what Russell calls logic. Russell says that until now he has always believed that every object must exist in some sense and that he finds it very difficult to accept non-existent objects. He attempts to resolve the problem of "the round square" and "the golden mountain" by a distinction between Sinn and Bedeutung: the former is an object, and exists, while the latter is not an object and does not exist. Russell also welcomes the identification of mathematics as a theory of objects and says that is the main thesis of his Principles of Mathematics. He goes on to say that metaphysics must be a priori since experience cannot demonstrate the existence of things. In terms of Russell's development it is interesting that his first criticism of Meinong was that he was insufficiently Platonic.

In 1905 a decisive change took place in Russell's views which removed him from the views he had himself expressed in 1904, and, at the same time, made Meinong's position with respect to objects which do not exist less attractive than it had been before. This change is visible in the review Russell wrote of the Untersuchungen,<sup>7</sup> and even more evident in the famous essay "On Denoting" of the same year.<sup>8</sup> The review is essentially descriptive of the views put forth by the various authors of the cooperative volume; Russell's own views are referred to briefly in an aside. This long review is based on a careful reading of the volume, as the notes which survive attest. There are 14 pages of Ms. referring page by page to the articles of Meinong, Mally, Ameseder, and Frankl. A notation on the part devoted to Mally refers to an idea put forth by Mally in a letter to Russell, but no correspondence between Russell and the authors of the Untersuchungen (other than Meinong) has been found.

In contrast to this review, "On Denoting" is an attempt to set forth Russell's own hypothesis about the meaning of such puzzling expressions as "the golden mountain" and "the round square". Here Russell is concerned to argue against alternative theories of the meaning of these expressions. Hence, this is a polemical rather than a scholarly presentation of the problem, although it certainly reflects Russell's assessment, right or wrong, of the net outcome of the Meinong position.

In 1906 Meinong published Über die Erfahrungsgrundlagen unseres Wissen (Berlin: Springer, 1906), and this was promptly reviewed by

Russell in Mind (n.s.15: July 1906, 412-15). For the most part the review is a statement of Meinong's conclusions concerning problems of perception and judgments of perception, although Russell enters certain caveats in parentheses. The study deals with a subject which does not touch the chief issue between the two philosophers. No reading notes survive from Russell's study of this book and it was not the occasion of any correspondence, apparently. However, later in the same year, Meinong published Über der Stellung der Gegendstheorie im System der Wissenschaften (Leipzig: Voigtlander, 1907). He sent a copy of the first part of this to Russell with the remark that it contained a response to Russell's stimulating polemical remarks, but that he still felt that they agreed on more important questions than their minor divergencies might suggest. In his reply to this letter Russell reasserts his objections to Meinong's treatment of "the round square" and other such expressions, but agrees that their differences are less important than their agreements. After receiving the second article of the two which composed the whole study, Russell again wrote to Meinong. In this long and final letter he finds some difficulties with Meinong's concept of necessity. In distinguishing the a priori from the empirical he attributes knowledge of the existential to the latter, knowledge of the non-existential to the former. He also takes issue with Meinong's treatment of geometry, holding that the space of geometry, whether Euclidean or non-Euclidean, is hypothetical. Any decision as to what geometrical system describes the actual world can be made only on the basis of experience. These criticisms of Meinong are expressed in the review in Mind (n.s.16: July 1907, 436-9) which Russell wrote of this work; the review, however, is mainly expository rather than critical. In a brief concluding section of the review Russell deals with Meinong's response to Russell's earlier criticism, but it seems clear that the matter cannot be settled, and that it has advanced only to the point of a clarification of the points on which they are divided.

The desire to keep their communication alive, which Meinong expressed, did not lead to any further correspondence, apparently, nor were any of Meinong's later works reviewed by Russell. But, although Russell's interests shifted, and he came to look on Meinong as a historical figure whose contributions to the study of objects were rendered unnecessary by his own theory of descriptions, Russell was influenced by his study of Meinong. He frequently refers to Meinong in refuting the idealist conception of truth, for instance, or in making the distinction between content and object.<sup>9</sup> In his long unpublished Ms. on theory of knowledge (tentatively dated 1913) Russell makes frequent references to Meinong's theory of perception, judgment, and truth. In 1921, in The Analysis of Mind (London: Allen & Unwin), Russell devotes much of the first lecture to differentiating his new neutral monism from the act, content, object distinction which he earlier shared with Meinong.

Whether, in the long run, Russell's analysis of Meinong's theories is judged to be accurate or inaccurate, his criticisms to be just or unjust, it is clear that Russell made an extensive study of Meinong, and attempted to present his views with scholarly care in translating and citing references. It is also clear that Meinong valued Russell's reviews of his own work, and was far from considering them "travesties". It seems that if any contemporary scholar is to dispute Russell's exposition and criticism, it must be made on the basis of a careful reading of the record, and point by point investigation of the quotations from and references to Meinong's works given by Russell.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ronald Suter, "Russell's 'Refutation' of Meinong in 'On Denoting'", Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, 27: June 1967, 512-16.

<sup>2</sup>Meinong's Theory of Objects and Values, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), pp. xi-xii.

<sup>3</sup>Über die Bedeutung des Weberschen Gesetzes, Beiträge zur Psychologie des Vergleichens und Messens (Hamburg & Leipzig: Voss, 1896, pp. 164; supp. vol. to Zeitschrift für Psychologie und Physiologie der Sinnesorgane), in Mind, n. s. 8: April 1899, 251-6. Russell did not note that this book was issued as a supplementary volume to the Zeitschrift, as was Über Annahmen.

<sup>4</sup>n. s.13: April-July-Oct. 1904, 204-19; 336-54; 509-24.

<sup>5</sup>See Roderick M. Chisholm, ed., Realism and the Background of Phenomenology (New York: Free Press, 1960), ed.'s introduction. Essay 4 is a translation of "The Theory of Objects" by Meinong.

<sup>6</sup>Philosophenbriefe aus der wissenschaftlichen Korrespondenz von Alexius Meinong mit Franz Brentano [et al.] (Graz: Akademische Druck-u. Verlagsanstalt, 1965), pp. 150-1. This book contains all three of Russell's surviving letters to Meinong. They are dated 15 Dec. 1904, 5 Nov. 1906, and 5 Feb. 1907. Photocopies of the originals may be consulted in the Russell Archives.

<sup>7</sup>Untersuchungen zur Gegenstandstheorie und Psychologie, mit Unterstützung der k. k. Ministeriums für Kultus und Unterricht in Wien herausgegeben von A. Meinong (Leipzig: Barth, 1904), in Mind, n. s.14: Oct. 1905, 530-8.

<sup>8</sup>Mind, n. s.14: Oct. 1905, 479-93. Reprinted in R. C. Marsh, ed., Logic and Knowledge (London: Allen & Unwin, 1956).

<sup>9</sup>See "The Monistic Theory of Truth" in Philosophical Essays (London: Longmans, Green, 1910, p.158; rev. ed., Allen & Unwin, 1966, p. 138). See also "On the Nature of Acquaintance" in Logic and Knowledge, pp. 169ff.

<sup>10</sup>When Russell's library is transferred to McMaster, additional evidence may be available in the marginalia in his copies of Meinong's works.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Announcement has recently been made of the publication of Meinong's complete works. See Meinong, Alexius: Gesamtausgabe (Complete Works), edited by Prof. Dr. R. Haller of Graz and Dr. R. Kindinger. Graz, 1968. Revised and supplemented (with hitherto unpublished literary remains) reprint of Meinong's publications. 7 vols., approximately 4,300 pages.