

## A RUSCELLO ON RUSSELL

I. GRATTAN-GUINNESS  
Faculty of Science, Engineering and Mathematics  
Middlesex Polytechnic  
Enfield, Middlesex EN3 4SF, England

Michele di Francesco. *Introduzione a Russell*. (I Filosofi, Vol. 53.) Rome and Bari: Laterza, 1990. Pp. viii, 200. 16,000 Lire.

—. *Il Realismo analitico: logica, ontologia e significato nel primo Russell*. (Saggi, Vol. 28.) Milan: Guerini, 1991. Pp. 269. 30,000 Lire.

Italy has long enjoyed a tradition of work in the history of philosophy. Russell featured well recently in R. Simili, ed., *L'Epistemologia di Cambridge 1850-1950* (1987), and here he is the leading figure in two books by an Italian scholar, who has just been appointed to the University of Palermo.

The first book is a small-format volume in a series of introductory texts on philosophers; so Russell's social, educational and political writings are not treated, although a short biographical summary is furnished. While the centre of attention falls upon epistemological concerns, other aspects of Russell's philosophy are noted. A chronological line is followed, beginning with the idealist phase and proceeding to logicism and the early philosophy of language. Then comes logical atomism and the later doctrines through works such as *The Analysis of Mind* and *The Analysis of Matter to Human Knowledge* (rather briefly handled). A very good survey and selection of Russell writings (including *Papers*) is given, followed by a fine classified bibliography of secondary literature; but unfortunately no indexes then follow.

The second book, which belongs to a series of "essays" on scholarly subjects, is aimed at a more academic audience. As its title indicates, it is primarily concerned with the philosophical aspects of Russell's thought from his neo-Hegelian phase before 1910. After a quite lengthy thematic introduction, the chapters concentrate, in turn, upon Bradley and Frege; the Moore-Russell reform; the ontology of propositions in *The Principles*; "significato", denotation and paradoxes there; the background to "On Denoting"; Meinong (with a welcome appendix on K. Twardowski, a figure normally known only to students of Polish thought); the theory of descriptions in "On Denoting"; and finally a general survey of the problem of meaning in analytic philosophy.

As in the other book, no indexes are furnished, but the bibliography of secondary literature is very rich, and is well cited in the text (which is admirably parsimonious in the use of footnotes). However, there are some gaps in the primary literature outside Russell. In particular, it is a surprise that this Italian scholar says very little about Giuseppe Peano and his followers, and cites none of their works; for a major component of Russell's background is thereby not properly illuminated, and several important examples of the place of mathematical issues in Russell's developing philosophical programme are left unregistered (for example, why definite descriptions are preferred to indefinite ones in the first place).

Among other quality books of this genre, one thinks most readily of J. Vuillemin, *La première philosophie de Russell* (1968), N. Griffin, *Russell's Idealist Apprenticeship* (1991), and F. A. Rodríguez-Consuegra, *The Mathematical Philosophy of Bertrand Russell* (1991). All three recent authors have the advantage over their distinguished French predecessor of the availability of the Russell Archives, and all have made effective use of the manuscripts. (However, nobody seems yet to have fully exploited the potential of Russell's correspondence.) The other two new volumes gain a certain edge over this one for their somewhat more extensive use of manuscripts, and the greater attention paid to mathematico-logical issues; but nevertheless, the Italian public are basically well served by their compatriot with this book and its introductory predecessor.