Reviews

THE DENOTING CENTURY, 1905–2005

MICHAEL SCANLAN
Philosophy / Oregon State U.
Corvallis, OR 97331, USA
MSCANLAN@OREGONSTATE.EDU

Guido Imaguire and Bernard Linsky, eds. *On Denoting: 1905–2005*. Munich: Philosophia Verlag, 2005. Pp. 451. €98.00. ISBN 3-88405-091-5.

This anniversary collection of papers connected with Russell's 1905 publication of "On Denoting" reflects both the almost mythic status that paper has achieved in analytic philosophy and the quite variegated nature of the significance that philosophers have seen in it. The papers in this collection break down roughly into two sorts. There are those which take a historical approach and attempt to explicate various aspects of the content of the *OD* article. The other sort might be labelled "application" papers in which Russell's analysis in *OD* is seen as a tool or a model for subsequent philosophical work, in the spirit of Ramsey's much quoted "paradigm of philosophy" remark.

The volume opens with a reprint of the *OD* text with pagination indicated for the original *Mind* printing, for the text in *Collected Papers* 4 and for the widely referenced *Logic and Knowledge* Russell collection edited by R. C. Marsh. The *Mind* and *Papers* texts use the American convention of single quotation marks within double quotation marks. The Marsh edition (and the text given here) uses the inverse British convention. Readers need to be aware that paper authors here, and elsewhere, vary in which text they cite. The end of the volume has a comprehensive 21-page bibliography of the secondary literature. In between there are thirteen papers.

I will be rather brief with the "application" papers, since I believe that *Russell* readers will tend to favour the more historically oriented papers. Some of the application papers wander quite far afield from Russell's treatment of definite descriptions. For instance the paper by Thomas Mormann on "Description, Construction and Representation from Russell and Carnap to Stone" takes off from Russell's assertion that his theory of descriptions was an early version of his subsequent interest in substituting "constructions" for "inferred entities" such as space-time points. The paper is almost exclusively a (worthwhile and mathematically astute) analysis of Russell's efforts along these lines in *Our*

Knowledge of the External World and *The Analysis of Matter*. The author argues that Russell's constructions did not actually achieve the effects he wanted, but that (curiously) they can be properly developed within the later framework of topological spaces developed by Marshall Stone in 1937.

The paper by Guido Imaguire, "Theory of Descriptions and Inferential Semantics", explicitly eschews an "exegetical" approach and allies itself with a "systematical approach, in which one analyses possible new features and extensions of the proposed theory" (p. 397). The extension considered here is to "inferential semantics", especially that of Robert Brandom. The spirit of this approach is to take the semantics of a language to be determined by the set of allowed inferences within that language. Imaguire takes as an essential lesson of Russell's theory of descriptions that definite descriptions and proper names cannot be treated as singular terms of a language in the same manner. He goes on to argue for a criterion for distinguishing proper names from definite descriptions based on inferences allowed between sentences containing them, and he takes this distinction to argue for a modification of Brandom's treatment of singular terms in his inferential semantics.

Elena Tatievskaya's paper on "Russell's Theory of Descriptions and Wittgenstein on Internal Properties of Propositions" is another paper that is mainly about something other than Russell and his theory of descriptions. It is a very detailed study of Wittgenstein's attempt to make good on his claim that the logical symbols of propositional logic notation, such as $\vee$ and $\sim$, do not correspond to "logical" components of propositions (*Tractatus* 5.4). In particular, this means that p and $\sim\sim p$ represent the same proposition. Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* attempts to replace this notation of propositional logic with a notation of "operations". For this operation notation, "… the results of truth-operations on truth-functions are always identical whenever they are one and the same truth-function of elementary propositions" (5.41). What this seems to say, to put the matter in rather non-Wittgensteinian terms, is that if we think of each truth-table as amounting to a distinct proposition ("truth-function"), then this operation notation would yield a unique symbol for each such table, with no duplication as occurs, for example, with the normal symbolization of $\sim p \vee \sim q$ and $\sim(p \cdot q)$. Tatievskaya explores this issue in much more historical detail and in somewhat different terms than I put the matter here. The connection with *OD* seems to be that this is a case where there is a concern that the notation gives a misleading impression of the "logical form" of the proposition actually expressed.

A trio of papers is more closely related to the distinctive theory of *OD*, but are only marginally "exegetical" in that they tend to look at the theory of descriptions as a contribution (or not) to present-day discussions of the semantics of formal logical languages. The paper by Josef Wolfgang Degen, "'On

Denoting' and Some Infelicitous Consequences", is in effect an argument that the way function expressions (which are definite descriptions) are handled in a present-day textbook treatment of first-order logic is the right (or at least superior) way to handle them. Interestingly, this paper does focus the discussion on the right area historically, since Russell's interest in definite denoting expressions seems to have been motivated by his need to fashion a notation for mathematical functions out of that for propositional functions. The content of the paper amounts to a recasting of *Principia Mathematica* in a modern version of a simple theory of types. The approach shows how to handle in a non-eliminative manner definite descriptions and other "incomplete" symbols of *PM*. Their role as function expressions is indicated by introducing explicit stipulations that they are total and have unique values. Of course, all of this is done in a modern Tarskian manner in which logic presupposes mathematics. That would clearly have been unacceptable for the logicist project of *PM* in which mathematics was to depend on logic.

At various points in his paper Degen makes some interesting observations about *OD*. He observes that "A big mistake in *OD* was to mix up the correct treatment of [definite descriptions] with the problem of substitution in intensional … contexts" (p. 387). As Degen observes, the sort of problem pointed out in the *OD* example of George IV and Walter Scott occurs independently of definite descriptions, as in "Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent isn't Superman" (not Degen's example). Degen views this as a fault in *OD* because he takes the three puzzles of *OD* to be important sources of Russell's theory. This is not uncommon in the literature—for instance it is the approach taken by Oswaldo Chateaubriand in this volume. Others take them to be expository devices, intended for the readership of *Mind*, and not representative of the actual problems that pressed Russell to develop his theory of descriptions. Degen's observation is telling, however, for those who think the puzzles are significant.

Degen also observes (as Peter Simons does, too, in his paper) that instead of the title *On Denoting*, "a more descriptive title for *OD* would be: *How to eliminate denoting phrases*. A still shorter, and even more descriptive title is: *On Nondenoting*" (p. 388). This leads Degen to observe that Russell in *OD* (or *PM*) had no semantics (nor syntax). Degen does not conclude from this accurate observation that Russell was concerned with something different from a modern Tarskian logical system. Rather he shows how Russell should have handled matters in that framework.

The observation that the Russellian theory of definite descriptions is in a context with no semantic theory makes it somewhat ironic that much of the literature on *OD* takes it to be a contribution to semantic theory. The article by Oswaldo Chateaubriand, "Deconstructing 'On Denoting'", is firmly within this interpretative tradition. As such it is a very competent and readable treatment of

some of the problems that *OD* poses when read as a contribution to the semantics of first-order languages, thought of as a way of representing the underlying "logical form" of natural-language sentences. The gist of the treatment seems to be that Russell's elimination of definite descriptive singular terms should be thought of as favouring instead "descriptive predicates", which have as part of their content that they hold uniquely. An example would be "*x* is the prime minister". But Chateaubriand argues that the natural-language expression of descriptive predicates is ambiguous and finds Russell sometimes treating the "is" as expressing identity when it should be predication.

Somewhat separately, Chateaubriand also considers Russell's criticisms of Frege's theory of sense and reference in *OD*. He takes the centrepiece of this to be the Gray's Elegy Argument section of *OD*, the material inserted by Russell between his presentation of the three puzzles and his solutions for the puzzles. There is a tradition of interpreting the GEA as focused on Frege's theory, since it is explicitly against *a* theory of meaning and denotation. But a good bit of recent scholarship finds the target of the Grey's Elegy Argument to be Russell's own theory of meaning and denotation, as he developed it in the period from *The Principles of Mathematics* (1903) up until *OD*. Especially important in this regard is Russell's manuscript "On Fundamentals" of 1905, which contains on the first page a note reading, "Pp. 18ff. contain the reasons for the new theory of denoting." The relevant pages contain versions of the material that appears in the Gray's Elegy Argument and make no mention of Frege.[1]

The article by Herbert Hochberg, "Descriptions, Paradox and Russellian Types", is also in the tradition of taking *OD* to be mainly a contribution to semantics. The semantical issue on which Hochberg focuses is the idea of taking facts to be the semantic references of sentences. This has the standard problem that it seems to leave false sentences with no semantic reference. Hochberg introduces a formulation that amounts to saying for a given sentence *s* that *s* is true iff the fact [*s*] exists, where [*s*] is a construct based on the structure of the sentence *s*. Taking the "the fact [*s*]" to be a Russellian "incomplete symbol" that can be eliminated in context with no ontological harm, we can talk of facts while avoiding embarrassment about false sentences. In the final portion of the paper Hochberg applies this analysis to what is known in the literature as the "great fact" argument which (allegedly) shows that admitting facts as sentence referents leads to the conclusion that there is but a single fact that all true sentences refer to. Wiser heads than mine will have to figure out how successful Hochberg is at undercutting the arguments of such people as Donald Davidson

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[1] About this manuscript material *cf.* Francisco Rodríguez-Consuegra, "The Origins of Russell's Theory of Descriptions according to the Unpublished Manuscripts", *Russell*, n.s. 9 (1989): 99–132, and the headnotes to the papers in *Papers* 4.

and Stephen Neale.

For completeness, I should mention that the Hochberg paper begins with a separate, detailed discussion on the theory of types as Russell's response to his paradoxes, Wittgenstein's criticisms, etc. It is unclear if this is supposed to have any connection with *OD* or is simply a separate matter, as it appears to be.

I now come to the seven papers which are rather specifically focused on the actual paper "On Denoting", or at least on critical pieces of the interpretative puzzle that surrounds this paper. In the 1950s there was a standard view, famously articulated by Quine, of what *OD* was about and why it was significant. Students were taught that Russell had shown how to have a definite description operator in a first-order logical language, without apparent ontological commitment to a present-day King of France and Pegasus. Although students are still often taught this version of Russell's theory of descriptions,[2] specialist Russell scholars have long been dissatisfied with the textbook account. One aspect of the received account, which made it a better story, touched on the question of why this should be an issue at all. According to that account Russell recognized a threat from the philosophy of Alexius Meinong which involved ontological commitment to any describable object, for instance, a round square. By eliminating descriptions as independent language components, *OD* freed us from the danger of such commitments. One place in which the received story began to unravel was when scholars looked closely at Meinong's writings and examined both Russell's own comments on Meinong and the efficacy of his theory of descriptions as a response to those views.

Janet Farrell Smith in her paper gives a nuanced modification of the received story about the relation of *OD* to the views of Meinong. She notes Russell's close study of Meinong in the years prior to *OD* and his own later endorsement of the ontological economy account of the importance of *OD*. For instance, she quotes (p. 142) from his 1943 "My Mental Development", "[T]he desire to avoid Meinong's unduly populous realm of being led me to the theory of descriptions."[3] But, as many scholars now do, Smith rejects the accuracy of Russell's retrospective comments. She instead identifies as the main motivation for his elimination of descriptions, and with them Meinongian objects, a concern in the Russell of 1905 with a desire to affirm the universality of logical laws, for all entities, spurred on by his obsession with his paradoxes. Smith is not very precise in this piece about what exactly are the Meinongian objects in question. She describes Meinong's theory of objects as dealing with "possible, impossible,

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[2] For instance, Scott Soames, *Philosophical Analysis in the Twentieth Century*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 2003).

[3] In P. A. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell* (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern U., 1944), p. 13; *Papers* 11: 13.

real and non-real, actual and non-actual entities". It would be helpful if the reader were told what Meinong's distinctions are among all of these things. This is important in that Russell was no stranger to ontological distinctions. In the *Principles* he distinguishes between entities which have being or subsist but don't exist, as opposed to entities which not only have being but also exist. All possible objects of thought have being, but existent entities also have a space-time location. It is unclear that Russell ever abandoned some such distinction, although in later writing it seems to show up as a distinction between universals and sensible particulars. Thus when Smith describes Russell's motivation in *OD* by saying, "It is as if Russell reasoned we need to focus on the realm of the 'real', the 'existent' in the sense of the *actual*, in order to generate an adequate *logical* theory for language, ontology, and knowledge" (p. 143), it is unclear where "real", "existent" and "actual" are supposed to fall in relation to Russell's own ontology or the previously noted distinctions of Meinong.

In contrast, in section 3 of her paper, Smith does give a detailed account of Meinong's ontology and notes that the logically problematic entities, such as round squares, are in a compartmentalized portion of Meinong's ontology that is "outside of being", where the law of non-contradiction does not apply. So, as a number of authors have noted, Meinong's theory is not self-contradictory, it just contains contradictory objects. As Smith ends up putting it, the dispute between Russell and Meinong comes down to one of logical taste. "So Russell's and Meinong's disagreement, ultimately, involved a disagreement over the scope of the law of contradiction. Meinong was willing to suspend it for objects on the outer edges of human assumption and imagination. But Russell was not, and created the theory of descriptions …" (p. 155).

The paper by Maria Reicher, "Russell, Meinong, and the Problem of Existent Nonexistents", is more focused than the Smith paper, which considers all of Russell's objections to Meinong in *OD*. Reicher considers only the passage where Russell says, "It is contended, for example, that the existent present King of France exists, and also does not exist…." The contradictoriness here turns on the use of "existent" in the definite description. There would be no problem with "The merely subsistent present King of France exists", since that is false on Russell and Meinong's shared ontology. In her carefully organized presentation Reicher first shows that Russell's objection really was a problem for Meinong's own theory, and not simply a disagreement about "existence". Meinong replied to Russell's objection in a letter of 1907 with a distinction to the effect that the use of "existent" in the description is different from the role it plays in the assertion that something "exists". On this construal, "The existent present King of France exists" is not necessarily true. Russell was dismissive of such a move, but some "neo-Meinongians" have sought to elucidate it. Reicher carefully and clearly assesses the approaches of Terence Parsons and Dale Jacquette. These

writers distinguish "nuclear" and "extra-nuclear" properties of an object. With this, the descriptive existence is for nuclear properties, while the asserted existence is for extra-nuclear properties. Reicher discusses the proposals in the literature to give these distinctions some real content and how the proposals can be related to Meinong's own theory. She ends up concluding that the proposals never get past Russell's reply that Meinong's two sorts of existence are a distinction without a difference.

Reicher proposes a rather severe reworking of Meinong's own theory of objects where the two ontic categories become universals and the particulars which instantiate them. The universals correspond to Meinong's "incomplete objects", which are the objects associated with descriptions. For instance, it is undetermined whether there are any golden deer that live on "the golden mountain" and so it is an incomplete object. But if the golden mountain were instantiated at a particular place, this detail would have to be taken care of one way or the other. Some of these incomplete universals are impossible objects in that they can't be instantiated in a particular. Using these distinctions, Reicher is able to give an account of the nuclear/extra-nuclear distinction and thus a sort of defence of Meinong. But in the process some key Meinongian doctrines must be abandoned, so the extent to which Meinong is defended is unclear. Nevertheless, for those who enjoy ontology (there are such people), this is both an understandable and fascinating presentation.

The other figure mentioned by name in *OD* is Frege. He receives one article in this collection, "What Is Frege's Theory of Descriptions?", by Francis Jeffry Pelletier and Bernard Linsky. As the title indicates, this is focused on Frege's own theory of definite descriptions. It draws comparisons with Russell's only in passing. Its main focus is elucidating four different treatments of definite descriptions that the authors find in Frege and that are variously identified in the literature as "Frege's theory" *simpliciter*. That there should be such variety is not surprising, given that Frege did not think of himself as a philosopher of language, but as a researcher in logical and mathematical foundations. Even "Über Sinn und Bedeutung", a sacred text of analytic philosophy of language, must be seen in the context of his overall work as an *ad hoc* effort to clarify some problems that arose in his attempt to formalize logic. The *ad hoc* nature of his treatment of descriptions over the course of his career seems to account for the variety of theories that the authors find in different works of Frege. For instance, they identify one theory, the "Frege–Hilbert" theory, as requiring that any name or definite description provably have a unique reference for sentences containing the name or description to be grammatical. In contrast in the "Frege–*Grundgesetze*" theory, Frege constructs his language so that every definite description will have a reference. Grammatical well-formedness guarantees a unique reference. The authors give a careful account of what statements of

Frege seem to justify the four different theories and then go on to discuss the differing impact of the four theories, along with Russell's, on the semantics of a language. They do this by cataloguing the effect of the different treatments on sixteen sentences and arguments containing definite descriptions which are plausible candidates for logical truth or validity. The results turn out to be quite variegated and instructive.

At the end of the paper the authors finally apply their work to consideration of *OD*. They consider the effect of various Russellian arguments against both Frege's and Meinong's positions when we consider the different theories to be the target of the attack. In general, they find Russell's arguments ineffective, because they take him not to have properly understood the relevant theories. The authors find that Russell "joins other commentators in not remarking on the different theories of descriptions Frege presented in different texts. Indeed he states two of them without remarking on their obvious differences" (p. 241). I was not always convinced that the authors had themselves identified the right target of Russell's various *OD* arguments, but the systematicity and carefully presented nature of their work in this paper means that future discussions of the "theories" attacked by Russell in *OD* must be much more nuanced than they have been heretofore.

Another paper which is historical but which locates *OD* in a wider context (in this case Russell's own work) is "Russell on Judgment, Truth and Denoting: 1900–1910" by Francisco Rodríguez-Consuegra. The paper focuses on the important topic of Russell's struggles with the nature of propositions during this period. It attempts to elucidate the transition in Russell's thinking from G. E. Moore's treatment of propositions as objects of judgment which are complexes of concepts to the "multiple-relation" theory of judgment. In the latter, there is no unified object of belief; rather the believer is in a special sort of relation to each of the multiple components in the traditional proposition. Based on his examination of yet unpublished manuscripts in the Bertrand Russell Archives, the author contends that the date for Russell's adoption of the multiple-relation theory should be pushed back to around 1906 from the generally accepted date of 1910. The description of these manuscripts indicates that they do contain adumbrations of the multiple-relation theory, but at least from the material discussed here, it is unclear to me that Russell is doing any more than considering the multiple-relation theory as a possible alternative, without necessarily accepting it. That would be consistent with his published work of this period, e.g. the last section of "On the Nature of Truth".[4] This article is unfortunately written in a manner that will only be understandable to specialists already well

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[4] *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, n.s. 7 (1906–07): 28–49.

versed in Russell's logical and philosophical writings of this period. So, while it does display a great deal of knowledge of Russell and his concerns on an important topic in this period, it will probably be informative only to similarly knowledgeable readers.

I will end with the three initial articles of this collection. These focus specifically on interpretative problems of *OD* itself. As noted above, at the end of one hundred years the consensus interpretation has come unravelled, but no new consensus has arisen in its place. The crucial problem is in finding an acceptable treatment of the section known as the "Gray's Elegy Argument". That argument seems intended as a *reductio ad absurdum* of *some* theory of meaning and denotation. But what that theory is and how the argument works are unclear.

James Levine in "Aboutness and the Argument of 'On Denoting'" argues that a neglected basis for understanding Russell's argumentation for his new theory is in what he calls the "initial negative argument" (INA) in *OD* and not only in the GEA. The INA turns out to be the paragraphs where he discusses Meinong and Frege's treatments of definite descriptions and argues that they are inadequate. Instead of the mainly polemical function that most readers find in these paragraphs, Levine takes the passages to contain an argument, based on Russell's theory of what a proposition is "about", that a denoting phrase does not denote the subject of a proposition. The way he does this is to present a rational reconstruction of the argument in which Russell is presented as "accepting" such principles as "A sentence that fails to be about any entity fails to be either true or false." This method has the advantage of giving rather precise restatements of "Russell's" positions, which he himself did not state very precisely. The author displays great subtlety in enunciating principles that Russell might adhere to. Nevertheless, the subtlety of the presentation seems to get in the way of clarity. I often had difficulty keeping track of the state of the argument. To some extent this was because various features of the reconstruction seem to me not to jibe with Russell's positions in the INA and elsewhere. For instance, the above principle would seem to commit Russell to the view that "The King of France is bald" is neither true nor false. Yet in *OD* he says "… it is plainly false." I feel sure this sort of thing causes me a problem because I am missing something in Levine's treatment, but it is difficult to figure out what it is.

Levine offers a good number of novel suggestions about Russell's motivation and argument in *OD*. These include an argument that the initial motivation for his new theory of denoting came from his attempt to avoid his class paradox by the "zig-zag theory". In this theory, certain class-abstraction expressions actually succeed in denoting a class, whereas others fail. The problem was to sort out which was which. According to Levine, Russell took the class-abstraction expressions to be a sort of definite description, and from this arose his interest in non-denoting definite descriptions.

Another way in which Levine differs from a significant number of writers is that he believes Russell's commitment to the principle that a meaningful sentence containing a denoting phrase must be "about" some entity, holds for Russell's pre-*OD* theory of "denoting concepts". In this theory denoting concepts are components of propositions. A number of writers (including Peter Hylton, cited by Levine) have argued that on this theory a sentence containing a non-denoting definite description phrase, such as "The present King of France doesn't exist", can express a meaningful conceptual proposition, which is true because the proposition's denoting concept, *the present King of France*, in fact has no denotation. Levine will have none of this and argues that the same sorts of problems he finds with sentences that need to be "about" something to be meaningful apply also to the propositions with non-denoting concepts (*cf.* pp. 56–61).

Those who subscribe to the view that Russell's pre-*OD* theory of denoting concepts as the meanings of definite description phrases can avoid the sorts of puzzles Russell cites in *OD*, generally also hold that his abandonment of the notion of denoting concepts as meanings expressed by denoting phrases led to his *OD* treatment of definite descriptions. They also generally hold that the thinking which led to this abandonment is cryptically enshrined in the "Gray's Elegy Argument" passages of *OD*. In some sense, Levine's treatment of the GEA is along these lines. He phrases it in terms of the denoting concepts' status as "aboutness shifters" instead of as having a meaning that determines a denotation, and he gives a rational reconstruction of the GEA as an argument that such aboutness shifters are incoherent as propositional components. Some of the points made are similar to other treatments in the literature, but there are also important divergences. Connoisseurs of the GEA will find, as Levine acknowledges, that "… on the interpretation presented here, there remain places where Russell's language is unclear and misleading" (p. 71). Levine's approach will probably not be taken as *the* correct account of the GEA, assuming that phrase is an actually denoting description, but it is a serious contribution.

The papers by Alasdair Urquhart, "Russell on Meaning and Denotation", and Peter Simons, "Gray's *Elegy* without Tears: Russell Simplified", are shorter and more tightly focused on the Gray's Elegy Argument. Urquhart takes the target of the GEA to be Frege's theory of *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*. What is more he aligns himself with a very small group of writers (he cites A. Church and R. J. Butler) who "dismiss Russell's attempted argument as completely worthless" (p. 115). In support of this view, the article includes the texts of two previously unpublished 1960 letters between Russell and Ronald Jager in which Russell is dismissive of the GEA and indicates that he never repeated the argument in later publications because it was "confused": "I came later to think that all the stuff about denoting complexes is unnecessary and in no way essential to my

argument" (p. 119).[5]

Urquhart's paper has the great virtue of carefully examining the actual Russellian text and not, as often happens, seeking merely to "produce an argument that has at least a few points of contact with what Russell says" (p. 101). He finds the source of Russell's faulty argumentation in clumsy notation, in particular, "idiosyncratic use of quotation marks" and an inconsistent use of 'C' as a schematic letter in presenting his central argumentation.[6] Urquhart gives three different ways that Russell might be taken to be using 'C' and carefully shows how a consistent use of any of them undermines Russell's argumentation. His detailed analysis of these passages is valuable for anyone attempting to read them, at least in showing what won't work.

But Urquhart's commitment to the view that the GEA is targeting a Frege-style theory of sense and reference for words and sentences leads him into a position where he can only characterize Russell's statements in the second half of the GEA as "odd". He finds himself even more puzzled when Russell proposes to consider a situation involving only meaning and denotation. According to Urquhart, "This new suggestion of Russell is hard to understand. On any view of meaning and denotation, we still have to talk about syntactic entities …" (p. 111). This is quite true on a Fregean theory, but Urquhart does not take these oddities of Russell's text to indicate that he perhaps has something in mind that is different from Frege's theory.

Finally, Peter Simons has the noble goal of guiding us through the GEA "without tears". He takes the GEA to be aimed at a common core of Russell and Frege's theories of meaning. He labels this the three-level or 3L theory, because it posits expressions, meanings and denotations. He notes that for Russell this only applied to descriptions, while it held more widely for Frege. Simons also notes the concerns of Urquhart about use/mention confusions and the confusing schematic letter 'C', but believes these are fixable with some minor textual patching or interpretation. The "without tears" aspect of his approach is to go through what he takes to be Russell's argument with a simple example of his own and then attempt to illustrate how that pattern can be applied to the actual Russellian examples, such as, 'the first line of Gray's Elegy'. His own example involves the descriptive expression, 'the black spot', and an actual black spot printed on the page. In a short space Simons gives an account of the origin of the GEA in the manuscripts from 1903 to 1905, carefully indicating the varying notions of meaning and denotation used there. He introduces a terminological distinction in which a phrase *expresses* a concept, which *denotes* an object which

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[5] Jager had sent Russell a copy of his "Russell's Denoting Complex", *Analysis*, 20 (1959): 53–62.

[6] From here to the end I use single quotation marks to form names of letters, words, etc.

the phrase in turn *designates*.[7]

Simons presents tabularly a putative relation between the expression 'the black spot', the abstract meaning "the black spot" and the token black spot on the reader's page, using the indicated conventions for quotation marks. The expressions and the black spot all find a home on the page, but the meaning designated by '"the black spot"' can't appear on the physical page. Simons argues that the problem Russell finds is that we have no way of indicating what the putative meaning is except by reference to particular linguistic expressions. But the relation of denoting that Russell posited between denoting concepts and objects was to be a *logical* relation, not a relation which is "linguistic through the phrase", that is, determined by empirical facts of English, Polish, etc. As Simons indicates, this reconstruction of the argument does not identify a logical contradiction in the 3L theory, but something that "should give the friends of meaning pause for thought" (p. 130). Although Simons does not put it quite so, his overall view is that discovering this sort of obscurity in a theory of meaning and denotation that was only becoming more and more baroque made Russell ready for any simplifying alternative, such as the *OD* theory.

Although I personally agree that the elements that Simons' simplified argument brings out are important in the GEA, when it comes time to transfer the pattern over to Russell's own argument involving 'the first line of Gray's Elegy', the results are less happy. As diagrammed by Simons this involves relations of meaning and designation for *sentences*, something that was not part of Russell's own theory of meaning. (Sentences express propositions, but those don't in turn denote anything.) In this and other ways I would do the diagram differently, but as indicated I think his general approach is illuminating for important aspects of the GEA.

Reading a collection of articles like this makes one long for a breeding programme between scholarly articles. Just as with horses or cows, one animal has certain desirable features but other undesirable ones. Crossing with an animal which has an inverse feature distribution produces hope that some offspring will have the perfect feature mix. For instance, I would love to cross the articles of Urquhart and Simons to see if I could get a result that has the textual literalness of the one with the argumentive clarification of the other. But in reality these articles will play a role in the usual unsystematic process of scholarly cross-fertilization. The collection as a whole provides a good representative sample of serious professional treatment of *OD* after one hundred years, both in its own content and its surprising influences.

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[7] This terminology matches that in the manuscript "On Meaning and Denotation" (1903; *Papers* 4: 314–58), although Russell does not adhere to it uniformly in the pre-*OD* period.