

RUSSELL VS. MEINONG, 100 YEARS LATER

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Nicholas Griffin and Dale Jacquette, eds. *Russell vs. Meinong: the Legacy of "On Denoting"*. London and New York: Routledge, 2009. Pp. xiii, 384. ISBN: 978-0-415-96364-0 (hb); 978-0-203-88802-5 (e-bk). £70.00; US\$103.00.

The background for the conference in 2005 at McMaster University from which these papers come is a 50-year period in anglophone philosophy during which Russell was portrayed as having put to rest the urge, exemplified by Meinong, to have an intentional object for every thought. Beginning roughly in the 1970s, analytic philosophers began publishing work more sympathetic to both the specifics of Meinong and his general concerns. Some landmark publications in this vein are Terence Parsons, *Nonexistent Objects* (1980), and Richard Routley, *Exploring Meinong's Jungle and Beyond* (1980). The development of more sophisticated accounts of Meinong, along with developments in Russell studies, has resulted in a more nuanced presentation of Meinong's thought in recent literature, including this volume.

There is one article in this collection which is explicitly devoted to comparing the views of the historical Russell and Meinong. This is "Psychological Content and Indeterminacy with Respect to Being" by J. C. Marek. The title indicates the two topics examined. Meinong was in the tradition of Brentano in seeing a mental state of presentation (*Vorstellung*) as combining a mental act and a mental content. A presentation may or may not also have a presented object. Russell, famously, thought of the state corresponding to Meinong's presentations as a relation called "direct acquaintance" that comes to exist, or ceases to exist, between a mind and objects. There is no place here for non-existent objects. There is very little to say about Russell's theory of direct acquaintance and most of that is familiar to English-speaking readers, so Marek rightly devotes himself to expounding Meinong's views on presentational content. The problem here is whether such content exists. Meinong averred he could introspect such content, and Russell averred that he could not. Beyond such fruitless personal testimony, Meinong offered arguments for the explanatory value of presentational content.

One is as an explanation of how we could have presentations (thoughts of) non-existent objects, e.g. the \$1,000 in my pocket. Of course, Russell treats this with his theory of descriptions. Another such argument for mental content by Meinong is that it is needed to account for the difference in mental state when presented with different objects. Russell says that when the mind is in relation to the distinct objects the distinctness of the objects guarantees two distinct relations of acquaintance. This leaves unclear what the mental difference is between seeing a red patch and seeing a blue patch.

The separate discussion of the Meinong/Mally “indifference” of the “pure object” or object itself as to whether it exists or not is a topic that is canvassed more in the anglophone literature. In Meinong’s 1904 formulation “the present king of France” doesn’t now exist, but if the French have a revolution then a “present” king of France might exist in 2011. In either case there is an object of thought/reference, and it has (indifferently) the character (*Sosein*) of being king of France. Marek’s exposition in this area focuses on the various technical devices Meinong introduced in 1915 to mitigate the problems caused by allowing for the being of “impossible” objects such as the round square.

In “Meditations on Meinong’s Golden Mountain”, Dale Jacquette offers the traditional dramatic classroom story about Russell and *OD*. On this account, prior to 1905 Russell is a committed Meinongian who then converts to Frege’s “extensionalism” because he discovers Meinong’s theory gives contradictions. Jacquette argues that (1) Russell misunderstood Meinong and (2) a version of Meinong’s theory can make distinctions that avoid the contradictions which bothered Russell.

I don’t see any evidence here that Russell misunderstood Meinong’s views. In my opinion, Meinong appears in *OD* (along with Frege) as a polemical foil to buttress Russell’s presentation of his own rather unintuitive theory of descriptions. In that role, one would not expect a careful and sympathetic treatment. The change in Russell’s presentation of Meinong from the considered treatment he gave him in lengthy reviews prior to 1905 can be explained by the change in rhetorical position and not because of disillusionment with regard to a previous belief.

In the later sections of this paper Jacquette presents a neo-Meinongian treatment of both existent and non-existent objects. This uses devices such as a distinction between nuclear and extra-nuclear properties and between sentence and predicate negations. These are ideas that Meinong himself introduced in his writings subsequent to the appearance of *OD*, partially it seems in response to Russell’s criticism.

In this neo-Meinongian framework, Jacquette presents an example of how his treatment does a better job of handling “The golden mountain is mythological” than does Russell’s theory of descriptions. The problem is easy to see with the stock example of Sherlock Holmes. A quick and dirty theory of descriptions

treatment of “Sherlock Holmes lived in London”¹ gives:

$$\exists x (x \text{ is uniquely Sherlock Holmes and } x \text{ lived in London}).$$

This theory of descriptions sentence is false since there exists/existed no one who fits the Sherlock Holmes description. What’s more, the negation of this sentence is true. But this is the exact opposite of the truth-values a reader of the stories might give these sentences. The problem is indicative of the reasons why authors concerned with a semantics for fictional discourse seek an alternative to Russell’s theory of descriptions.

The title of Peter Lopston’s article, “Contra Meinong”, suggests that he disagrees with Meinong. This is true, but he also suggests that the theory of descriptions response to Meinongianism isn’t adequate, at least for those who take discourse about fictional objects seriously. After discussing the positions of both authors, he presents his own quite distinct treatment of fictional discourse.

In his semantic theory speakers are commonly comfortable with a range of alternative ways of expressing a given “thought”. Thus a speaker who says “George is a bad choice for the job” might feel that the more specific statement “George has a history of unreliability” more accurately expresses his “thought”. Lopston would say the latter statement “trumps” the former for the speaker. In the case of sentences such as “Holmes was a detective”, a speaker using such a sentence, it is hypothesized, would find that a sentence like “The Conan Doyle stories represent Holmes as a detective” trumps the Meinong sentence. Assuming the implied ontology of the latter can be handled with existent mental states, cultural objects, etc. Lopston takes it that a central motivation for Meinongianism is undercut.

The article by Gabriele Contessa, “Who is Afraid of Imaginary Objects?”, examines and rejects a variety of approaches to fictional discourse, including Russell’s theory of descriptions. Contessa takes “Sherlock Holmes” to reference an abstract object that is a character created by Conan Doyle in a series of stories. But this character doesn’t have properties like living in Victorian London, since abstract objects don’t live anywhere. But in fictional discourse the reference abstract objects play the role of “standing for” an array of possible objects. The objects the abstract object *Sherlock Holmes* stands for all have the property of living in Victorian London in their possible worlds, so the sentence “Sherlock Holmes lived in Victorian London” is true. None of the possible Sherlocks are married, per the stories, so the sentence “Sherlock Holmes was married” is false. Since it is undetermined by the stories, the sentence “Sherlock Holmes has been to Bruges” is neither true nor false, since some of the possible Sherlocks have

¹ Taking “Sherlock Holmes” to be a disguised definite description for a bundle of properties.

been to the Belgian city and some have not. Contessa canvasses how his approach avoids problems of other accounts of fictional discourse, such as those of van Inwagen and Salmon, but acknowledges that what he gives is an initial sketch that needs filling out.

The contribution by Nicholas Griffin is “Rethinking Item Theory”. He follows the late Richard Routley (later Sylvan) in using “item” for the broadest category of entities, encompassing both existents and non-existents. Griffin catalogues the sorts of objections that have been made over the years to such free positing of items under the three headings of consistency problems, status problems, and relational problems. The first two are exemplified by Russell’s round square and existent golden mountain that doesn’t exist. The third category is due to John Woods and includes the item corresponding to the condition “the husband of Joan of Arc”. This item was married to Joan of Arc, but she wasn’t married to him. Griffin goes through various suggestions that have been made by Meinong, Mally, Routley, Parsons, Zalta, and Woods to avoid these problems, and he finds them all inadequate.

In the second half of the paper he offers his own theory. It is based on indexing statements to a context of supposition. Saying “Sherlock Holmes lived in London” carries with it the context of the Conan Doyle stories and is true in that context, even though it is false in the context of the actual world. Griffin is explicit that what he offers isn’t a full-fledged semantic theory, but he is able to offer plausible and not totally *ad hoc* examples of how it might be developed. Thus, existents can be “imported” into suppositional contexts, so the husband of Joan of Arc is married to her *in that context*, but non-existents can’t be “imported” into the actual world, so in the actual world Joan of Arc wasn’t married to anyone. Griffin’s “theory” is a promising approach to neo-Meinongianism based on a thorough understanding of the problems inherent in that view.

Somewhat surprisingly, two articles in the collection focus on both Russell’s and Frege’s treatments of definite descriptions. The article by F. J. Pelletier and B. Linsky, “Russell vs. Frege on Definite Descriptions as Singular Terms”, is, as they note, a shorter version of material that appeared more largely in *On Denoting: 1905–2005*.² In both papers the authors identify three theories that have been described as “Frege’s theory of descriptions”. One is the “Frege–Strawson theory” in which some proper names have *Sinn* but no *Bedeutung*. Another is the “Frege–Carnap theory” in which descriptions which otherwise lack a *Bedeutung* have an arbitrarily chosen object for their *Bedeutung*. The final Frege theory is that of the *Grundgesetze* in which the definite description operator is only applied to expressions for courses-of-values. If only a single object is in the course-

² “What Is Frege’s Theory of Descriptions?”, in Bernard Linsky and G. Imaguire, eds., *On Denoting: 1905–2005* (Munich: Philosophia Verlag, 2005), pp. 195–250. See my review in *Russell* n.s. 26 (2006): 167–78.

of-values, then that object is the *Bedeutung*. If the course of values contains no or multiple objects then it is the course-of-values itself that is the *Bedeutung*. This gives a situation where “the daughter of Barack Obama” has a *Bedeutung*, and it is a course-of-values containing Malia and Sasha. It is with reference to this theory that Russell offers his only explicit criticism of Frege in *OD*.

The authors take a number of puzzles and problems with non-denoting definite descriptions in *OD* to be criticisms of Frege’s views. They do bear on the three treatments outlined by the authors, but I find nothing in the *OD* text or material presented by the authors to indicate that Russell aimed these problems specifically at Frege’s views. So, I can’t agree with the authors’ contentions that “Russell’s discussion is unfair to Frege’s various accounts” and that “Russell tries to paint Frege’s theory with the same brush he uses on Meinong’s theory” (p. 56). Despite these historical reservations, the clarification of the different Frege treatments and an interesting comparison of how they affect a collection of fifteen *prima facie* logically true formulas is definitely material that is needed in Frege studies.

The article by Kevin C. Klement offers the rather different take of “A Cantorian Argument against Frege’s and Early Russell’s Theories of Descriptions”. This paper contains an interesting paradoxical argument, but I was uncertain how it was supposed to put either Frege or Russell in conflict with Cantor’s Theorem as the author believes. Cantor’s theorem says that the set of subsets of any set a (the powerset of a) is strictly larger than a . Extensionalists consider the subsets of a set as representing the properties of entities in that set. Intensionalists complain that this doesn’t capture the intensional notion of property. But for them the problem is that there are more intensional properties than extensional subsets. So, on either treatment Cantor’s theorem makes the set of properties larger than the set of entities.

We can represent, as the author does, the sense/meaning of a definite description \ulcorner the ϕ \urcorner by $[\text{the } \phi]$. According to Klement,

If, like Frege and early Russell, we believe that a descriptive phrase of the form \ulcorner the ϕ \urcorner has a *sense* or *meaning* which is a distinct entity from its denotation, and believe that such a sense exists for every property ϕ , we come to the brink of violating Cantor’s theorem. (P. 65)

This is because,

we risk positing as many senses as properties applicable to them, in violation of Cantorian principles. (P. 66)

The author seems to take it as obvious that for every sense $[\text{the } \phi]$ there is a property ϕ and *vice versa*. This is plausible in one direction, but it is not plausible to say that for every property ϕ there is a sense $[\text{the } \phi]$. For Frege a sense is a sense of an expression in a language. The number of $[\text{the } \phi]$ senses will

match the number of \lceil the $\phi \rceil$ definite descriptions in a language. The set of properties which applies to the definite descriptions, descriptive senses, and entities designated by them will be strictly larger than that set, by Cantor's theorem. But this just means that there are properties which are inexpressible and which therefore have no corresponding descriptive sense. A not very surprising result.

The situation with the early Russell is more obscure. One way of understanding Russell's "propositions" is as states-of-affairs, that is, certain complexes of non-linguistic entities. Since Russell's definite denoting concepts, which have matching meanings, are components of these non-linguistic propositions, there could be a problem for Russell. In this case, for each property ϕ , there would be a definite denoting concept /the ϕ / in which it was a component and this would have a meaning [the ϕ]. If the meanings are entities to which properties can apply, then we seem to have properties equal in number to a subset of the set of entities to which they apply.

One confusing feature of this article is that Klement never goes into even the sort of detail I have presented about how Frege or Russell could come into conflict with Cantor's theorem. 95% of the article is devoted to a seemingly unrelated argument that develops a paradox similar to Grelling's "heterological" paradox. This involves a property *heteropredicable* that applies to a descriptive sense [the ϕ] if the property ϕ does *not* apply to the sense. Klement argues in detail that the property *heteropredicable* must both apply and not apply to the sense [the heteropredicable thing]. This is interesting, but I must admit that I still don't see what it has to do with Cantor's theorem.

Three of the papers in this volume are historical studies concerned with the *OD* article itself. Gideon Makin examines the central question of Russell's motivation for *OD* in "On Denoting: Appearance and Reality". He rejects as "appearance" the traditional interpretation that the significance of the new theory was that it enabled Russell to avoid a Meinongian intentional object to match every description. Makin relies mainly on recent scholarship to show that this thesis is untenable in a "crude" form associated with Quine. He also considers the more "sophisticated" theory posited by Peter Hylton in *Russell, Idealism, and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy* that *OD* was motivated by a change in ontological theory in 1905 of a more subtle sort. Makin finds this view interesting but unsupported by historical evidence.

His own analysis of Russell's ontological views takes a crucial change to occur in "The Existential Import of Propositions", written and published earlier in 1905 than *OD*. Contrary to common belief, Makin does not find Russell to have been committed to an exuberant Meinongian ontology in *The Principles of Mathematics*. He examines passages in which Russell seems to advocate the being of such things as chimeras and Homeric gods. In particular, he examines Russell's statement "'*A* is not' is always false. For if *A* were nothing, it could not be

said not to be” (p. 449). This has been taken to commit Russell to a “being” for any singular term that can be substituted for “*A*”, including such things as “the present King of France”. Makin argues that Russell intends to substitute only proper names for “*A*” and these require a referent to count as “names”. That avoids problems with descriptions, but leaves a problem with seemingly meaningful non-referential names such as “Apollo”. It is in “The Existential Import of Propositions” that Russell adopts the device of treating such fictional names as disguised descriptions. As pointed out by Nick Griffin and others, the theory of denoting concepts in *PoM* can already accommodate meaningful but non-denoting definite descriptions such as “the ancient Greek sun god”.

Makin’s discussion is a must-read for anyone interested in the actual content of *OD*. But as he indicates himself, his analysis leaves a puzzle as to why Russell did adopt the theory of descriptions in *OD*, if it was not to avoid an exuberant ontology as traditionally claimed. Makin points to the convoluted “Gray’s Elegy Argument” as the likely place for an answer, but admits that finding it in that thicket is problematic.

The article by Alasdair Urquhart surveys the material he edited in *Collected Papers* 4 which chronicles the progress of Russell’s thinking on denoting concepts between 1903 and 1905. Urquhart presents the prehistory of the *OD* theory as centred around the clarification of logical concepts that Russell thought were involved in his Contradiction. This was part of a project of ontological reduction. It is not the sort of reduction for reduction’s sake championed by Quine. As Urquhart presents it, and I agree, Russell’s motivation was pragmatic. By reducing the universe of basic logical objects, Russell hoped to more easily focus on the source of the contradictions that bedevilled his theory. This simplification led eventually to the substitutional theory which didn’t even have the propositional functions of *OD*, only propositions and substitution of entities into propositions. As Urquhart and others have documented, this theory eventually succumbed to its own contradictions. This forced Russell back into his least preferred alternative, some theory of types.

The limited space that Urquhart has for presenting the complex logical universe of Russell between 1903 and 1905 means that what he says will be only suggestive to those who haven’t read the papers themselves. Nevertheless, the paper alerts people to the issues in Russell’s own thinking that motivated *OD*, as opposed to any concerns about Meinong’s impossible objects.

Omar Nasim has an historically interesting paper, “Explaining G. F. Stout’s Reaction to Russell’s ‘On Denoting’”. As reported by Russell, Stout in his role as editor of *Mind* found the theory of *OD* “so preposterous that he begged me to reconsider it and not to demand its publication as it stood” (*MPD*, p. 83). My own assumption had always been that Stout’s problems were with the confused nature of *OD*, but as Nasim shows Stout did have doctrinal disagreements with Russell’s views.

Nasim quotes from a 1915 paper by Stout, “Russell’s Theory of Judgement”, in which he explicitly criticizes *OD* as trying to show how knowledge by description can be replaced by knowledge by acquaintance, but failing in leaving variables as descriptive/referential elements. This echoes a similar criticism about the lingering denoting status of variables made by Moore in a letter of 1905. This seems to me to be a criticism that could easily have prompted Stout to suggest a withdrawal of the article as containing an obvious flaw.

Nasim, however, thinks it is not this that was the reason for Stout’s negative view of *OD* in 1905, but “a more fundamental reason”. He finds this in Stout’s agreement with the Austrian school of Brentano, Twardowski and Meinong that there cannot be an objectless representation/thought, as allowed by the *OD* theory. Stout makes this objection in a 1903 letter to Russell stating that his then theory allowed for denoting *concepts* with no referred object.³

Nasim gives no particular reason for his preference for the latter over the lingering variable problem mentioned earlier as the source of Stout’s 1905 objection, aside from its more “fundamental” nature. Whichever the reader’s preference, Nasim does a service in articulating two possible objections Stout could have had to *OD*.

The article by Nathan Salmon, “Points, Complexes, Complex Points and a Yacht” analyses two separate passages in *OD*. One is the passage that is often called the “Gray’s Elegy Argument”.⁴ Salmon’s analysis takes the GEA to consist essentially of a two-stage argument (although he describes his analysis as having eight stages). The argument is against the claim that a definite description has a “semantic content” which determines its referant. The first stage tries to express a proposition that is about the *content* and not the referant of the definite description, using the original definite description (as in “the meaning of *D*”). This first stage is supposed to show that any such attempt results in a proposition about the *referant* and not the content.

The second stage of the argument takes the only alternative for expressing a proposition about the *content* to be a sentence that has a distinct definite description which refers to that content. The most critical part of this stage is explaining why this indirect approach is a problem. According to Salmon, Russell believes this “renders our cognitive grip on definite descriptions inexplicable” (p. 343). Explaining how this all shows up in the GEA text is a tortured business. Salmon’s analysis is clearly a detailed and important contribution to the literature on the GEA, but it is hopeless to give a careful assessment of it in a small space.

³ For the letter see A. Urquhart, “G. F. Stout and the Theory of Descriptions”, *Russell* n.s. 14 (1994): 163–71.

⁴ This is a shortened version of the analysis he presented in “On Designating”, *Mind* 114 (Oct. 2005): 1069–1133. See my review in *Russell* n.s. 27 (2007): 259–70.

In the *OD* centenary issue of *Mind*, Saul Kripke argues, among other things, that applying Russell's ideas of quantifier scope ambiguity to his example of the yacht owner who doesn't think his yacht is bigger than it is doesn't give the right results to make the joke work.⁵ The centre of Kripke's complaint is Russell's use of "The size I thought your yacht was" in one of the disambiguated sentences. Kripke points out that this definite description can't have a referent, since the speaker probably had no definite size (e.g. 42 feet) in mind for the problematic yacht. Salmon argues that Russell misapplied his own theory of scope and that, if correctly applied, the problem pointed out by Kripke is avoided. Salmon needs to apply some "analysis" to the original sentence to get the disambiguation to work correctly, which, if really needed, would completely ruin the joke.

The article by Graham Stevens, "Antirealism and the Theory of Descriptions", is concerned with Dummett's views on the theory of descriptions. Dummett characterizes antirealism as not only involving a rejection of the law of excluded middle, but in addition, any treatment that rejects the *prima facie* ontic commitments of the surface structure for the language. By this Dummettian standard Russell's theory of descriptions represents "a retreat from realism". Stevens is clear that "Russell himself did not, at least originally, intend to use the theory of descriptions to retreat from realism regarding anything more than classes" (p. 27).

Stevens presents a thumbnail, but accurate, history of the development of Russell's thought through 1914 in which he shows how he used the theory of descriptions to eliminate denoting concepts, functions, and classes, while retaining his realist view of propositions as complexes of objects, properties, and relations. The multiple-relation theory of judgment eventually used the strategy of the theory of descriptions to eliminate even propositions as entities, but it retained a realism of objects and universals. All of this "elimination" of categories of entities might represent a "retreat" from a naive realism, but Stevens sees it as motivated by a fundamental realism about objects and universals. In Stevens's telling, Russell is using his theory of descriptions to formulate a non-paradoxical version of realism.

A shorter final section of the paper considers Russell's attitude towards the law of excluded middle. Here he sketches how Russell used the law of excluded middle as marking the limit beyond which he was unwilling to extend his empiricism. Stevens praises Dummett for highlighting excluded middle as essential to realism, but finds that "To mistake the theory of descriptions as a rejection of realism is to invite both a misinterpretation of Russell's philosophy and a misinterpretation of the realism debate in general" (p. 37).

David Bostock's article, "Russell on 'the' in the Plural", provides a somewhat

⁵ "Russell's Notion of Scope", *Mind* 114 (Oct. 2005): 1005–37.

detailed history of the development of Russell's thinking on classes from *The Principles of Mathematics* up through *Principia Mathematica*. Bostock tells a story in which Russell moves towards a theory of classes that is basically the simple theory of types. This has some awkwardness, since Russell doesn't really adopt a simple theory of types. Bostock acknowledges this, but relies on the work of Landini arguing that much of *PM* could have been handled within a simple theory of types. As a conceptual account this is enlightening; as an historical account it is somewhat unhappy, since clearly Russell (and Whitehead) didn't see it that way.

The most interesting part of the paper is the last section where the vexed question of the nature of propositional functions in *PM* is discussed. There are some technical problems in this section, as when the *PM* notation $R\hat{x}\hat{y}$ is treated as equivalent to the Church notation $\lambda xy: Rxy$ (p. 129). The latter is a version of the *PM* notation $\hat{x}\hat{y}Rxy$ that is a singular term for the binary relation R .⁶ The notation $R\hat{x}\hat{y}$ is a variable for relations. So it is misleading to suggest, as Bostock does, that *PM* doesn't contain relation variables. Despite this, the last part of the paper contains many worthwhile observations on one of the most unsettled aspects of *PM* interpretation.

The article by Gregory Landini, "Russell's Definite Descriptions *de re*", concerns four distinct topics on definite descriptions in *PM*. I must admit that it is not clear to me how the title unifies the four topics. In the first topic, Landini considers the question of what is the "real" formal language of *PM*. He argues, convincingly but not conclusively, that definite descriptions are not individual terms of that language but definitional abbreviations for correctly written-out formulas.

The second topic concerns the interrelation of two aspects of *PM* that are motivated by avoiding the paradoxes. These are the no-classes theory and the theory of types. Russell seems to attribute to the no-classes theory based on the theory of descriptions the technique he used for the solution/avoidance of his class paradox. But Landini's account is mainly concerned with how the type theory of *PM* avoids the need to postulate classes. In this he is concerned to counter a treatment by Linsky and others in which what is typed is not predicates and propositions, but intensional attributes.

One of the most interesting discussions of the paper is concerned with various ideas about the ontic significance of Russell's theory of descriptions. Landini sides with those who hold that ontic questions and questions of reference/meaning were not Russell's principal motivation in developing the theory of descriptions. He, similarly, takes them not to be the main concern of Meinong. He identifies Meinong's own concerns with developing a theory of intention-

⁶ Indeed, the story runs that Church did his original work using the *PM* notation, but the printer couldn't handle the hats and put in lambdas. The rest is history.

ality. Landini does yeoman's work in this section to mark the divergence of focus of Meinong and Russell in these areas. In retrospect, one sees that it is only a small overlap of interests that has joined their names in intellectual history. There are a couple of times, however, where in his efforts to make this correct general point Landini gets a little carried away. For instance, he references Russell's famous assertion to Frege that Mont Blanc itself is a component of the proposition expressed by "Mont Blanc is more than 4,000 metres high." He takes from this the conclusion that "Russellian propositions are intensional entities, not *intentional* entities." But this overlooks Russell's consistent justification of his treatment of propositions as complexes of entities on epistemic grounds, as when he tells Frege, "If we do not admit this, then we know nothing at all about Mont Blanc."⁷ Despite this tendency to over-strong formulations, Landini's observations here are a valuable antidote to the post-1945 tendency to treat Russell as all about reference/meaning.

The final topic covered in the paper is the role of Russell's theory of descriptions in problems created by propositional attitudes. To indicate the issue, I will turn the George IV of Russell's *OD* example into an uninformed modern car buyer. It might be true of George that

$$[\exists x Wx] \text{ George believes } [Bx],$$

where $Wx = "x \text{ is the worst car on the dealer's lot}"$ and $Bx = "x \text{ is the best car on the dealer's lot}"$. But it is almost certainly false that,

$$\text{George believes } [\exists x Wx][Bx].$$

Distinguishing the two possible scopes of the description operator might be used to explain away the seeming paradox of the sentence "George believes the worst car on the lot is the best."

Landini describes the first belief sentence as *de re* where the object relevant for the truth of the sentence might not be cognitively accessed by George using the definite description in the sentence. In the second, *de dicto*, form of belief sentence the mode of cognitive access to the relevant object is built into the structure of the believed sentence. As Landini notes, accepting the *de re* and *de dicto* forms presupposes that there are two distinct types of beliefs, beliefs about an object and belief in a sentence/proposition. The distinction of definite description scopes uses one Russellian device from *OD* to solve problems about propositional attitude statements. But it doesn't use the more fundamental Russellian idea of radically altering the structure of the expressed proposition from

⁷ G. Frege, *Philosophical and Mathematical Correspondence*, ed. G. Gabriel *et al.*, trans. H. Kaal (Chicago: U. of Chicago P., 1980), p. 169.

the apparent structure of the original statement. Instead it relies on a pragmatically determined distinction in the believer's cognitive state. The distinction between objectual belief and propositional belief also doesn't comport well with the early Russell, who took belief to be only propositional. Landini proposes that a more Russellian approach to problems treated with a *de re/de dicto* belief distinction would involve a refined syntax which incorporates the necessary distinctions into the expressed proposition.

Following Landini's program (p. 290), my own example of "George believes the worst car is the best car" would be taken to express the proposition,

$$\exists x (Wy \leftrightarrow_y y = x) \cdot \wedge \cdot \exists \phi (\phi y \leftrightarrow_y Wy \cdot \wedge \cdot G \text{ believes } [\neg x\phi x][Bx]).$$

The last clause says there is some description under which George conceptualizes the worst car on the lot. It might be "the worst car on the lot", but it could equally be something like "the dark blue Toyota".

As Landini notes, this approach is unRussellian in introducing quantification over concepts which will, in fact, need to form a Fregean conceptual hierarchy. This differs from a Russellian type theory in which *objects* have types which delimit their modes of combination. Whatever the virtues or defects of the Landini approach as Russellian or unRussellian, it does provide an interesting way to handle the representation of propositional attitudes.

The article "Quantifying in and Anti-Essentialism" by Michael Nelson discusses an important later use of Russell's theory of definite description in connection with Quine's arguments against the coherence of quantified modal logic (QML). Nelson actually presents two arguments. One propounded by "pseudo-Quine" and the other by real Quine. Pseudo-Quine argues to a contradiction based on substitution *salva veritate* of singular terms with identical reference. Arthur Smullyan and others argued using the theory of definite descriptions that the contradiction didn't follow. Nelson's version of this Russellian response shows that the pseudo-Quine argument doesn't work if the two names (in this case "Hesperus" and "Lucifer" for the morning and evening stars) are treated consistently as either proper names or as disguised definite descriptions. Nelson prefaces the material on the pseudo-Quine argument with a discussion of Russell's principle of acquaintance and its effect on his theory of material objects. The relevance of this to the pseudo-Quine argument never became clear to me.

The second, much longer, portion of the article is concerned with what Nelson takes to be the argument of "real Quine". This is an argument that seeks to show that QML creates a commitment to statements which are necessarily true because of "Aristotelian essentialism" and not simply logical truth, analyticity or some such thing. Nelson makes clear that he is giving his own version of what he takes to be Quine's best argument against QML. The basis of Quine's various arguments against QML has been subject to virtually endless interpretation, so

others might differ. Nelson argues that the earlier Russellian response is inadequate for responding to this argument about essentialism. The final part of the paper presents a tour through the last 50 years of debates on QML. But since Russell's theories don't make an appearance, I won't consider the details for this journal.

Most readers will consult such a collection for one or two articles on a topic of interest. But reading through the whole gives a survey of the diversity of ways the material of *OD* has penetrated analytic philosophy, sometimes in direct descent, sometimes in reaction, sometimes more in the manner of artistic influence than in the literal content of *OD* itself. Whatever the reason, one begins to suspect that *OD* deserves the many retrospective treatments its centenary has provoked.
