The Article "On Denoting"

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100 Years of Denoting   Utrecht, June 23, 2005

The Original Idea is not Unique

- On Denoting 100 Years (June 24, 2005, Utrecht)

- Russell versus Meinong, 100 years after on Denoting; 14 – 18 May, 2005; The Bertrand Russell Research Centre; McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario Canada; invited speakers: David Bostock, Rudolf Haller, Bernard Linsky & F.J. Pelletier, Gideon Makin, Johann Marek, Edgar Morscher, Nathan Salmon, Peter Simons, Alasdair Urquhart, Paul Weingartner

- Description, Meaning, Denotation; On Denoting: 100 Years Later; September 29 – 30, 2005; Philosophy Institute of Eötvös University

The Theory (definition $* 14 \cdot 01$)

- $[(\iota x)(\phi x)] \boldsymbol{.} \psi(\iota x)(\phi x) \boldsymbol{.} = \boldsymbol{:} (\exists b) \boldsymbol{:} \phi x \boldsymbol{.} \equiv_x \boldsymbol{.} x = b \boldsymbol{:} \psi b$

  employing more up to date notation (including more familiar devices to indicate scope), this definition can be rephrased as:

- $(\iota x \phi x)(\psi x) = \exists x (\forall y (\phi y \leftrightarrow y = x) \wedge \psi x)$

Thematic Questions

- What Was, and Is, the Impact of "On Denoting" on

  – Epistemology
  – Philosophy of Language
  – Logic
  – Linguistics?

	Epistemology	Phil. of Language	Logic	Linguistics
1905				
2005				
2105				

Q1. Does This Theory Make Sense?

- "A phrase may be denoting, and yet not denote anything;"
- cf., e.g., "I may be eating, and yet not eat anything."

- After Montague? After Kamp?

Did Russell have One Specific Target?

- Meinong? Frege? God? Paradox?
- …?

Q2. tToD unchallenged for 45 years?

- "(...) Russell's Theory of Descriptions (...) is still widely accepted among logicians as giving a correct account of the use of such expressions in ordinary language." (Strawson, P. F.: 1950, On Referring, Mind 59, 320–344, p. 321)

- "The main purpose of the article is to refute my theory of descriptions. As I find that some philosophers whom I respect consider that it has achieved its purpose successfully, I have come to the conclusion that a polemical reply is called for. (Russell, B.: 1957, Mr. Strawson on Referring, Mind 66, 385–389, p. 385)

Q3. Language and / or Logic?

- "Neither Aristotelian nor Russellian rules give the exact logic of any expression of ordinary language; for ordinary language has no exact logic." (Strawson, p. 344)

- "This brings me to a fundamental divergence between myself and many philosophers with whom Mr. Strawson appears to be in general agreement. They are persuaded that common speech is good enough not only for daily life, but also for philosophy. I, on the contrary, am persuaded that common speech is full of vagueness and inaccuracy, and that any attempt to be precise and accurate requires modification of common speech both as regards vocabulary and as regards syntax. Everybody admits that in physics and chemistry and medicine each require a language which is not that of everyday life. I fail to see why philosophy, alone, should be forbidden to make a similar approach towards precision and accuracy." (Russell, p. 387)

Q4. Pragmatic Ambiguities?

- there appear to be monsters

  (1) You might have been George Bush.

- what about inverse monsters?

  (2) Dthat['the king of France'] is bald. (Kaplan)

- topic marking in Korean, Japanese, Hungarian

- what are pragmatic ambiguities? (Donnellan, Kripke)