AN INTRODUCTION TO *THE PROBLEMS*

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David Mills Daniel and Megan Daniel. *Briefly: Russell's* The Problems of Philosophy. London: SCM P., 2007. Pp. viii, 131. ISBN 978-0-334-04118-4. £7.99.

The following book is a part of the SCM *Briefly* series, which already includes such titles as Anselm's *Prosologion* and Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*. The series objective is to "enable students and general readers to acquire knowledge and understanding of key texts in philosophy, philosophy of religion, theology and ethics" (p. vii). Each volume is a "short guide" to a particular philosopher's ideas through a close reading of a primary text by that philosopher.

This review looks at the volume on Bertrand Russell's *The Problems of Philosophy*, which is divided by the authors into a few parts, including a section on the "Context", a "Detailed Summary of Bertrand Russell's *The Problem of Philosophy*", an overview and a helpful glossary of terms. The "Context" provides a very brief statement about who Russell was, and spends most of its pages summarizing the arguments of Russell's *Problems*. The last few pages of this section provide some helpful "Issues to Consider," which are a list of pertinent questions one may ask of Russell's *Problems*, and ends with some further reading. It ought to be noted that the "Context" is not about the history of Russell's text, nor is it an attempt to relate the latter to Russell's other works. This is unfortunate, considering Russell's well-known philosophical development and the rich history surrounding *Problems*. The volume under review is indeed a problem-oriented study of *Problems* which uncritically rehearses the same embedding of problems that Russell urges, especially in relation to the British empiricist tradition of the early modern period.

The main section of the book is the "Detailed Summary" and is itself divided in the same way in which Russell's *Problems* is divided; that is, into fifteen subsections, with exactly the same headings and order. Using a reissued second edi-

tion of Russell's *Problems* by Oxford University Press (2001),[1] Daniel and Daniel provide a very close, page-by-page exposition of each chapter of Russell's *Problems*. The reading is in fact so close that not only is there nearly the same number of pages dedicated to each chapter as in the original, but just about every sentence teems with scare quotes. This goes for not only technical terms such as "universal", "sense-data", "relations", etc., which remain snared by scare quotes throughout the entire section, but also all sorts of other terms such as "light", "motion", "just", "forgotten", etc. The rationale for this is given in the introduction and is supposed to "enable the reader to follow each development in the philosopher's argument" (p. vii). Unlike the terms that are in bold type, which are given some explanation in the glossary, the reviewer finds the sheer number of scare quotes distracting and pedagogically confusing, because there is no distinction made between terms central to Russell's argument and those used only in the construction of a sentence. But even the glossary entries are oddly compiled. While most correspond to the bold-type terms in the Summary, some are terms not found anywhere but in the introduction or the "Context" section. So **Sartre**, **Wittgenstein**, **McMaster University**, and **Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation** are nowhere to be found in Russell's original, or in the summary provided by the authors—they are simply terms used in passing in the introduction or "Context" and without being introduced in bold type. Other notions or names used by Russell that ought to require a glossary entry, such as "Cantor" and "Occam's razor", are not in the glossary.

While 54 pages are spent on the "Detailed Summary", the "Overview" is allotted 39 pages and may be considered a summary of the summary. Apart from the original text of Russell's *Problems*, which is supposed to be accompanied by the volume under consideration, all in all the student is confronted with three quite repetitive summaries of Russell's text. Additional information, aside from what is given in Russell's original text, is limited to the few pages on Russell's life, further reading, "Issues to Consider" and the glossary at the end of the volume. Considering the nature of Russell's *Problems* as an excellent elementary text in itself, good enough to be used in a first-year Introduction to Philosophy course, the volume under review might be useful to drill home by repetition some important arguments, and may provide a diligent student with an excellent mnemonic. However, bearing in mind the near-verbatim nature of much of the volume's content, it may not be suitably used beyond an introductory-level course, where the original text and class discussion may be enough.

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[1] It has the same pagination as OUP's 1967 edition in the UK. —Ed.