

Karel Lambert

Free Logic. Selected Essays

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003

xii + 191 pp. ISBN 0521818168

REVIEW

JEAN PAUL VAN BENDEGEM

Let me start with an important warning: the subtitle “Selected Essays” is rather misleading. It suggests that previously published papers have been ‘merely’ brought together, *i.e.*, reprinted in a single volume for the benefit of the reader. Such is definitely not the case. Although much of the material has in effect been published before, stretching over a forty-year period, it has gone through a thorough revision—one of the papers, *e.g.*, is the result of the integration of several published papers—and in addition, new material has been added, based on unpublished (joint) work. Perhaps “New Essays” would have been an overemphasis in the other direction, but to my mind it is indeed more ‘new’ than merely ‘selected’.

Nine essays constitute this volume, each one of them dealing with free logic, either within free logic itself or related to applications, some historical, some philosophical, some logical-technical. In short, the author covers most of the free logic landscape by selecting a small number of mountain peaks offering, nevertheless, a full view.

The first essay “Russell’s Version of the Theory of Definite Descriptions” aims to show that Russell had in effect two theories of definite descriptions, the first one expressed in the well-known classic “On Denoting” (1905), the second one presented in the even greater classic *Principia Mathematica* (1910). Lambert shows that Russell had different objectives in mind when he analyzed definite descriptions—1905 dealt with a logical analysis of ordinary language, whereas 1910 was aimed at the reduction of mathematics to logic—thus leading to different conceptions.

“Existential Import, ‘E!’ and ‘The’” is a truly foundational paper of free logic. A careful analysis of the shortcomings of several proposals to deal with *the fallacy of existential import*, *i.e.*, to deduce