

A NOTE ON LINSKY'S *REFERRING*

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The "paradox of analysis"—a proposed analysis (of a phrase, word, concept, etc.) is either trivial (analytic, tautologous, uninformative, etc.) or it is incorrect—has its reverse side, what we might call the "fallacy of analysis." The fallacy occurs when we assume that an analysis must have as its data the word, phrase or concept removed from actual use. That is, it is an assumption that the data of such analysis is the word (phrase, etc.) along with its synonymous or logically equivalent words (phrases, etc.). This assumption is, in fact, the acceptance of the first horn of the dilemma above. It is the acceptance of the "paradox of analysis" as true.

An example of this is in Leonard Linsky's *Referring* (New York, Humanities Press, 1967). Russell argued that definite descriptions are "incomplete symbols," that they have no meaning in isolation. For Russell to have meaning was to name. Thus definite descriptions are not names. I wish to look at Linsky's discussion of one of Russell's arguments for this claim. Russell had other arguments for the claim, and Linsky discusses these as well. But I shall concentrate on one. Russell argues that in

(1) Scott is the author of *Waverly*

'the author of *Waverly*' cannot be a name. If it were, (1) would have the same meaning as

(2) Scott is Scott

and it does not.

Linsky states that this argument is unsound. His argument is as follows:

Another way to bring out the circularity of Russell's argument is this. At a certain point in that argument he rejects an assumption that has the consequence that (1) means the same as 'Scott is Scott'. But how can Russell know that the proposition expressed by (1) is not this trivial one unless he is assuming that in (1) 'the author of *Waverly*' is not functioning as a proper name in his sense? And if he is assuming this, what is the point of proving it? (p. 54).

Where the "fallacy of analysis" comes in is here. Russell knows that (1) and (2) have different meanings, not because he is assuming "the author of *Waverly*" is a definite description, but because he is aware that we *say* something different in the case of (1) and (2); that (1) has an informative use, whereas (2) has little or no use at all. Russell's analysis is on the data of this use, not just on the words 'Scott', 'the author of *Waverly*', and their synonyms. Linsky is assuming that one cannot know that (1) is informative without a theory of names and definite descriptions at hand. And that is a false assumption. We all know when we are being informed of something, without the use of such a theory. In assuming that the data of analysis are words with attached synonyms, we are committing the "fallacy of analysis," and *all* analysis comes to a halt.

If one wishes to argue, as Linsky seems to do, that Russell himself takes the data of analysis to be this abstract kind of entity (a word abstracted from use, or a meaning without reference to users of words), and that thus Russell commits the fallacy, we have only to refer to Russell's reply to Strawson:

I was concerned to find a more accurate and analyzed thought to replace the somewhat confused thoughts most people at most times have in their heads. (In Copin and Gould, *Contemporary Readings in Logical Theory* (New York, 1967), p. 131).

The *data* of analysis, and what a proposed reconstruction is of, or what elimination of ambiguity and vagueness is from, is *our* language. This fact is what vitiates Linsky's charge of circularity. It is what prevents us from charging Russell with committing what I have called the "fallacy of analysis."

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