CHAPTER – 7

Russell's Theory of Descriptions : Concluding Assessments

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Section – I

Overview

In this concluding chapter we deal with some contemporary treatment of Russell and Frege's views of proper names. There is a trend nowadays to obliterate the distinction between Russell and Frege's theory of proper names and to treat them both as sense theories. But actually Russell had two theories, one for ordinary proper names, and another for logically proper names. According to Russell the former has sense but the latter does not. Yet again, what Russell really wants to say is this — ordinary proper names are not genuine proper names at all, they are abbreviated descriptions. What is most confusing is that he denies ordinary proper names the status of genuine names on the ground that they do not have sense. To be honest with Russell we see that he rejects the Fregean theory of sense and so I do not think it to be justified to put him together with Frege. Of course Russell does say that the ordinary proper name has descriptive content, and what he means by this is that, it can be expanded into a description. Frege's theory is now taken to be similar to

Strawson and Searle's theories of the sense of a proper name. In this Chapter, I wish to discuss the works of some recent researchers on reference and names. I have stated here Quine, Kripke and Donnellan's views regarding this matter. I have also tried to justify some of Russell and Strawson's views and see where either of them was mistaken. Lastly, I wish to say this that, giving full credit to Russell's theory, I still feel inclined towards using ordinary language as Strawson had suggested.

Section – II

The problem of indiscernibility of identicals : Quine's view

The law of indiscernibility of identicals or the principle of substitutivity which was devised by Leibnitz runs thus: 'Given a true statement of identity, one of its two terms may be substituted for the other in any true statement and the result will be true'.[1] Linsky has a different opinion about the matter; he says that the principle of substitutivity and the indiscernibility of identicals are two distinct principles. A failure to see this distinction led to certain confusions between proper names and descriptive phrases specially when applying the principle of substitutivity to the theory of descriptions. The principle of the indiscernibility of identicals states that if $x = y$, then any property of x is a property of y, and conversely. On the other hand, the principle of the substitutivity of identicals

says that if *a* and *b* are names (or other designations) for the same thing then *a* can replace *b* in any true proposition in which it occurs (and conversely *b* can replace *a*) *salva veritate*.[2]

In Russell's formulation of the principle of substitutivity, a confusion arises: 'If *a* is identical with *b*, whatever is true of the one is true of the other and either may be substituted for the other in any proposition without altering the truth or falsehood of that proposition.' This means that if *a* is identical with *b*, whatever is true of the one is true of the other, which in turn means that every property of *a* is a property of *b* and conversely and moreover either may be substituted for the other in any proposition, *salva veritate*. But the use-mention confusion in this formation was to be altered because what we substitute in a proposition is not *a* for *b* (or conversely) but names (or other designations) for *a* and *b*. So, after correction, we obtain the following principle :

'If *a* is identical with *b*, whatever is true of the one is true of the other and names (or other designations) for *a* and *b* may be substituted for each other in any proposition *salva veritate*'.

Linsky states that this principle is also false, which can be evidenced as follows :

Scott is the author of *Waverley*... (1)
George IV wished to know whether Scott was the author of *Waverley* ...(2)
Therefore, George IV wished to know whether Scott was Scott...(3)

Due to a wrong assumption it seems that we must accept this false principle. The false assumption is that any open sentence expresses a property. If this assumption was a true one then the verified principle of substitutivity would have been entailed by the principle of indiscernibility of identicals. But that this assumption is dubious is quite clear.

It therefore remains a problem as to what is wrong with (1), (2) and (3). Some open sentences do express properties and some do not. There has not so far been any line of demarcation in this regard. So we cannot know which sentences express properties and which do not. So, the problem has not yet been solved satisfactorily.[3]

Quine, Frege and Russell are however determined to defend Leibnitz's law — the principle of substitutivity. As we have just seen, the 'law' seems to be false, for it is possible that Smith knows that Venus is the morning star and yet does not know that Venus is the evening star, though, 'The morning star is the evening star' is a true statement of identity.

Or, to take another example,

(1)   Cicero is Tully,
         and
(2)   'Cicero' is spelt with six letters.

From (1) and (2) it does not follow that

(3)   Tully is spelt with six letters.[4]

Linsky goes on to show that not only is it possible to produce examples that are opposed to Leibnitz's Law, but it is also the case that no two terms equally follow it.

If t and t' be two different terms and if

(4)   Jones explicitly denied that $t = t'$ be a true statement, surely it does not follow that

(5)   Jones explicitly denied $t = t$

So, if we have to defend Leibnitz's Law then we also have to accept the peculiar consequence that only trivial statements of the form $t = t$ are true statements of identity and therefore a true statement of identity can never be informative.

Quine seeks to solve the problem in the following manner. He says that there are 'referentially opaque' positions in sentences. For these positions the principle of substituitivity is not a valid mode of inference. These positions are such that expressions occupying them do not succeed in referring to any thing, whereas the same expressions do refer to something in referentially open positions. To make the point we will use an example :

In the statement, ' Smith knows that Venus is the morning star' the position of the subject and predicate expressions are opaque. Again in the statement, "'Cicero' is spelt with six letters", the portion between the quotation marks is referentially opaque. According to Quine, the cases of failure of substituitivity do not implicate exceptions to Leibnitz's Law, but only to referential opacity actually. It might be objected that Quine has not been successful in showing that Leibnitz's law has no exceptions. He has only been able to give characterization of the exceptions. Quine has to accept that they involve substitution into referentially opaque positions and if Quine insists on defending Leibnitz's law, he must reformulate it in the following way :

> Given a true statement of identity, one of its two terms
> may be substituted for the other at any referentially open
> position in a true statement, salva veritate.

This new version does not have exceptions even in the case of verbs of propositional attitude. But, what is the status of substituting positions within clauses governed by these verbs — are they referentially open or opaque? What is the criterion of the referential opacity of a position? These questions remain to be answered. While we are contemplating on this topic, which has a vast range and includes issues like naming, denoting, descriptions, existence etc., let us also consider the views of some prominent philosophers who have made significant contributions in this field in contemporary philosophy. Among them

are John Searle, Saul Kripke, Keith Donnellan, Hilary Putnam, Donald Davidson, G. Evans, S. Neale to name only a few. However, in the present context I have only discussed theories of Kripke and Donnellan, though each one has something Important to say on the problem.

Section – III

Donnellan's Distinction

Among the recent philosophers Keith Donnellan, while criticizing both Russell and Strawson's account of definite descriptions brings forth an interesting objection to Russell's theory. In his article "Reference and Definite Descriptions" (1966), in *Philosophical Review*, he differentiates between two uses of definite descriptions. This brought out another aspect of the description theory and came to be know as the famous Donnellan's distinction :

> I will call the two uses of definite descriptions I have in mind the attributive use and the referential use. A speaker who uses a definite description attributively in an assertion states something about whoever or whatever is the so–and–so. A speaker who uses a definite description referentially in an assertion, on the other hand, uses the description to enable his audience to pick out whom or what he is talking about and states something about that person or thing. In the first case the definite description might be said to occur essentially; for the speaker wishes to assert something about whatever or who-ever fits that description; but in the referential use the definite description is merely one tool for doing a certain job — calling attention to a person or thing — and in general any other device for doing the same job, another description or a name would do as well. In the attributive use, the attribute of being the so–and–so is all-important while it is not so in the referential use.[5]

Donnellan had noted that even if Russell is right about some uses of descriptions, he has missed out the "referential" use of descriptions. Russell writes as if all descriptions were used attributively. The most obvious type of referential use is when a description is written in capital letters and is used as a title e.g. "The Holy Roman Empire." The description here does not match its attributes, i.e., its referent is neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire.

Russell might have pointed out that this is not a description at all, but as the capital letters show, it is used here as a title. We will use examples to make the point clear. "The Swan" is the name of a piece of instrumental music by Saint-Sa'éns, and sentences containing this title are about music, not about a certain kind of water bird.

However, Donnellan has further shown that there are still cases in which we use description solely to focus on a particular individual regardless of that person or thing's attributes. We may use one of Russell own examples to show how:

Example 1 : Smith has been murdered and after looking at his mutilated body we say, Smith's murderer is insane.

Here we mean that the person, (let his name be Jones), who has murdered Smith so brutally, must be out of his mind, and this is an attributive use. But supposing we have no direct knowledge about Smith's murder and somehow we are attending the trial where we see the person who is being charged with Smith's murder; watching his unnatural behaviour we say, "Smith's murderer is insane". Here the use is referential because we are only referring to the person we are looking at regardless of what attributes he has.

Donnellan accuses not only Russell, but also Strawson. As opposed to what Donnellan has said about Russell (that he had overlooked the referential use of descriptions), while examining Strawson's theory Donnellan notices that Strawson did not see the attributive use; that he assumes all descriptive phrases to be referential and did not see that a definite description may be used non-referentially.

So, according to Donnellan, both Russell and Strawson were mistaken in thinking that definite descriptions always function in one way. He gives several characterizations of both the uses. About the new referential use, he says:

> [W]e expect and intend our audience to realize whom we have
> in mind —and, most importantly, to know that it is this per son
> about whom we are going to say something.[6]

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He characterizes the attributive use by saying: " the θ is y", "if nothing is θ then nothing has been said to be y". The difference with the referential use is that, "the fact that nothing is the θ does not have this consequence."[7]

But Donnellan's theory when closely examined reveals a few difficulties. William Lycan opines that sometimes the real referent differs from the semantic referent. Going back to the example (Ex - 1) we have cited, we suppose that in spite of all evidences, in actuality Jones is innocent; that Smith committed suicide; that there is no murderer. So, there is no semantic referent here.

Donnellan defends himself saying that whether or not the real referent is the semantic referent, does not matter; his theory holds true. He says that regardless of whether he is the murderer or not, the statement will be true if Jones is insane. To make this clear Donnellan further gives the example of a party guest observing a distinguished looking person sipping from a glass; the guest asks, "Who is the man drinking a martini?" Actually the glass holds only water, not martini; (the guest mistakenly assumes water to be martini) but Donnellan maintains that in fact the guest wants to know about that particular man and not any other person in the party, drinking martini. Thus the choice of the definite description, i.e., the particular description which is chosen, rather than any other, is not essential for the reference to be consummated.

It is important for our present purpose to have total clarity on the implication of Donnellan's distinction. One of the things it does imply is that the attributive use too is referential in the basic sense, although 'anything which might be identified as reference here, it is reference in a very weak sense ... .'[8] It is also necessary to be clear about whether the difference throws any light on the question of the possibility of non-singular reference. One important conclusion that seems obvious is that an attributive use of a definite description cannot result in a strictly singular reference. The reference, although it is made by a term, which is apparently singular is, in an important way, general. When the speaker says that Smith's murderer is insane, as far as the speaker's utterance goes any individual might have committed it, and so any individual could have been the referent of the definite description. This is the generality involved in the reference, which could be made by a definite description used attributively.[9]

Another important point to notice is that Donnellan by his distinctions between two uses of definite descriptions tries to bring about a synthesis of Russell and Strawson. They were both right and both wrong. The new theory incorporates what is correct in both.

In 1979, Saul Kripke[10] distinguished between what a linguistic expression itself means or refers to and what a speaker means or refers to in using the expression. Let us take for example :

Example 2 :   Albert's an elegant fellow.

If we take this sentence literally it means that Albert is an elegant fellow. But a speaker might use it sarcastically to mean that Albert is actually a revolting slob. In contrast with semantic reference, in the speaker reference, the referent of a description on an occasion of its use is the object to which the speaker intends to draw attention.

Kripke thinks that Donnellan has failed to notice that a sentence containing a definite description can be true even if nothing (or something) is the descriptions' semantic referent. But I think that Donnellan's distinction cannot be fully rejected. It has certain value of its own. Donnellan's theory raises the question of specifying the circumstances under which one succeeds in referring, by using a description, to the person or thing one intends to refer to. He has also shown that this does not always go by semantic referent. So Kripke's objection does not do full justice to Donnellan's distinction.

Again, even if we agree with Kripke it remains to be seen whether, for the referential case, the actual referent is always the speaker-referent. This question presupposes a third notion, that of "actual" referent, which is distinct from the other two.

This means that the actual referent is the object about which the speaker actually succeeded in making a statement. Of course, if the theory of descriptions is correct, either the actual referent is always the semantic referent or, since according to Russell definite descriptions do not really refer at all, there is no actual referent.[11]

Another recent researcher on this topic A.F. Mackay[12] argued that in some cases actual referent might be the semantic referent rather than the speaker referent, even if one misspeaks. For instance, let us suppose that there is a rock and a book on a table. I want the book but mistakenly I utter, "Bring me the rock on the table." Using "the rock" referentially and speaker referring to the book, I have still asked you to bring me the rock. If you bring me the book instead it does not mean you are complying. What Mackay wants to point out is that a speaker's intention may be arbitrarily crazy.

The question arises here that whether this notion of an "actual referent" can rightfully be accepted. I think that though our concepts of semantic referent and speaker referent are clear, perhaps the idea of an "actual referent" is just the confusion of the two.

Section –IV

Saul Kripke's theory of Proper Names

Kripke's argument for the thesis that proper names do not have any sense is based mainly on a distinction between what he calls *rigid* and *non-rigid* or *accidental* designators. A rigid designator is one which designates the same object in all possible worlds; i.e., if it designates a certain object in the *actual world* then it designates the *same* object in all other possible worlds in which the object exists at all (it should be taken into consideration that there may be some possible world in which the object may not exist). A non-rigid designator, on the other hand is one, which does not designate the same object in all possible worlds; there may be some other world in which the designator designates something different from what it designates in the actual world. For example 'the square root of 4' is a rigid designator for it refers to the same object namely, number 2 in all possible worlds. Whereas 'the President of the USA in 1970' is a non-rigid designator for it may designate different individuals in possible worlds other than actual. To clarify the point, 'the President of the USA in 1970' — designates Richard Nixon in the actual world. But, there is nothing inevitable about it. It is only due to the actual outcome of the relevant Presidential election; the result of the election might have been different and in case, a

different man had been elected, 'the President of the USA in 1970', would have designated that other man.

Kripke's argument against the theory that proper names have sense as well as reference is formulated on the basis of this distinction between rigid and non-rigid designators. Eminent philosopher Pranab Kumar Sen analyses Kripke's argument in his book *Logic, Induction and Ontology* in the following way :

If a proper name has a sense, then the reference of the proper name is determined by its sense. The meaning of this is that every proper name means certain properties or conditions, which the object designated by it must fulfil or, we may say that we can call an object by a certain proper name if and only if that object satisfies certain conditions demanded by that proper name. If this theory be accepted then a proper name cannot be called a rigid designator because a certain object may satisfy the conditions of the proper name it is associated with in the actual world, but the same object may not satisfy the conditions in all other possible worlds. It is probable that some other object satisfies the condition in some other world. So we have to conclude that if the reference of a proper name is determined by its sense, it has to be a non-rigid designator behaving just like 'the President of the USA in 1970'. But the fact is

that a proper name *is* a rigid designator; therefore, a proper name does not have a sense.

But, how can it be shown that a proper name is a rigid designator? Kripke's argument to prove the point goes like this. He says that we are able to make counterfactual statements with the help of proper names and unless proper names were rigid designators we would not have successfully done so. For example, the man who was actually the President of the USA in 1970, by virtue of having won the relevant election might not have been so. Because it was a mere contingent fact that he won the election. To assert the case we can just use the *name* of the person and say 'Nixon' might not have been the president of the USA in 1970. This type of assertions could not be meaningfully stated unless proper names designated the same thing or individual in both actual and possible world.

Now, does Kripke's argument result in the rejection of the sense theory of proper names? Is the argument acceptable? An argument, we know is considered to be valid if its premises are all true and the conclusion is not false. So, first of all let us see if the premises of the said argument are all true.

The first premise of the argument is: if the proper name has a sense then there is associated with every proper name a certain condition such that the proper name designates an object if and only if the object satisfies the condition. Sen thinks that this premise is true. To show this, Sen says, it is necessary for us to clearly distinguish two significantly different ways in which one may maintain that a proper name is associated with a condition. We can either maintain that a proper name is associated with a condition such that the condition only fixes the reference of the name. Or we may also maintain that a proper name is associated with a condition not only in that the condition fixes the reference of the name, but also in that the fulfilment of the condition by the object is strictly entailed by its being designated by the name, so that the fulfilment of the condition is logically necessary and sufficient for the object's being designated by the name.

The following example would help in understanding the distinction clearly :

> One may maintain that the condition involved in the description
> 'the length of the standard metre bar in Paris' is associated with
> the designator 'One metre', but only by way of determining its
> reference, and that is why it is logically possible that the length
> designated by 'one metre' would cease to satisfy the condition in
> the logically possible event of the metre bar changing in its length,
> and would still continue to be designated by the same designator.[13]

Now it becomes clear from the above example that followers of the sense theory must maintain that some condition or the other is associated with every proper name not in the first but in the second manner. To say precisely, there must be a logical connection between a proper name and the condition that fixes its meaning or sense. The relation should be something more than just fixing the reference.

We will turn now to the second premise of Kripke's argument. It says that if the reference of a name is determined by its sense, if, that is, a name designates an object if and only if it satisfies a certain condition, then it cannot be a rigid designator. This premise is actually a little doubtful. As Kripke himself has pointed out, some of the designators, which are of this kind are rigid designators, e.g., the square root of 4 is 2 in all possible worlds. It may be argued at this point that though the sense of 'the square root of 4' determines its reference; it is still a rigid designator. This is because of the fact that the sense consists of a property which is *essential* to the number it designates, but first of all 'the square root of 4' is not really a proper name, and secondly, 'the square root of 4' does not designate any normal thing like persons, things and places and moreover it is not confirmed whether they can be said to have any essential properties. Kripke himself has sought to establish that particular persons and things, typical bearers of proper names, do have essential properties. This

should be clear from the following two examples used by Kripke ---- the property of being born to the parents to whom he is in fact born is an essential property of Nixon, and the property of being made of the block of wood of which it is actually made is an essential property of a wooden table.

In defence of Kripke, it might be said that what is important is not whether the thing designated by proper names have essential properties, but the importance lies in the fact that whether these essences play any role in the designation of objects by proper names. A little speculation over the matter shows that they do not. In the first place, looking back to Locke, we see that he had maintained that these essential properties of things are in general unknown and unknowable and so they cannot be used by proper names. Secondly, even if they are knowable, it is not necessarily the case that these essences contribute towards the determination of reference of proper names. The accidental characteristics may well suffice in doing the job, (i.e., we should be able to understand which is the name of which object.) To use the example again, the description, 'the President of the USA in 1970', which is used for the purpose of fixing the reference of the proper name Nixon is not necessarily satisfied by what the name designates.

The above argument in defence of Kripke, however, cannot save Kripke's second premise, namely, if the reference of a name is determined by its sense then it cannot be a rigid designator because if it is not the essential property which determines the reference of the name for its users then it is not the essential property which constitutes its sense.

Now let us consider the third premise of Kripke's argument, namely, a proper name is a rigid designator. Though this premise is unable to save Kripke's argument (due to the weakness of the second premise) it has an importance of its own. Kripke's major contribution to the theory of names is that he emphasizes on proper names' being rigid designators and also goes on to show its various implications.

The root of Kripke's third premise may, however, be traced back to Mill. Mill had said that a proper name is a name of the thing itself. This means that the proper name designates the object and the designation is done irrespective of the properties it may or may not have; also whether or not it satisfies a description or condition. If it is so then proper names are surely rigid designators. If we do not accept this we shall never be able to say significantly that this or that object satisfies or fails to satisfy, such and such conditions.

Kripke's argument draws our attention to this fact that proper names are indeed such designators.

Russell introduced another line of thinking regarding the nature of proper names. Russell claimed that a proper name refers to its referent directly, and not through any characteristics. David Kaplan developed this idea later in minute detail in the context of demonstratives. According to Sen, saying that a designator stands for the object directly and saying that it stands for the object itself are two ideas, which are logically equivalent to each other. A designator stands for the object itself if and only if it refers to it directly.

In view of the foregoing discussion, we can therefore reach the conclusion that both sense and no-sense theories of proper names originate from the same basic characteristic of proper names, that is a proper name stands for the object itself, or equivalently that it refers to the object directly. The two contradictory theses do not follow from each other.

Thus the following statement about Kripke's argument may be implicated :

What we have built up, as Kripke's argument against sense theory of proper names does not succeed in its purpose. However, there are certain novel ideas in his argument, which are very basic to the notion of proper names. Though

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the roots of these ideas, as we have seen, can be found in Mill and Russell's work. But Kripke's most significant achievement is in showing us the far-reaching consequences of the theory that a proper name is a rigid designator.

Section – V

Concluding Remarks

This dissertation, as the title, "Russell's Theory of Descriptions" — A Statement and Evaluation, suggests, is a critical assessment of Russell's outstanding thesis. In this paper I have also discussed the views of certain other philosophers before and after Russell, philosophers who have speculated on the problems regarding names and descriptions. As is now understood, the problems of reference did not emerge only after Russell first stated them in his paper 'On Denoting' almost 100 years ago. The success of Russell's theory, in my opinion is that, it has defied time. Russell was the first one to present the problems systematically and analyse them. With him started a new era in Philosophy and a new field, which is now called Analytic Philosophy. Though his predecessors had also tried to solve the puzzles of reference, Russell's manner of approaching the problem and his solution in the form of The Theory of Descriptions surpassed them all. It was not subjected to any form of serious criticism for nearly fifty years after it was first put forth.

Russell had devised the theory of descriptions because he was not satisfied with the attempted solutions of Meinong and Frege to the problems of reference. He thought that his own theory had adequately solved the problems. But accepting Russell's views will not be doing proper justice to these two great philosophers who were largely misinterpreted and misunderstood. The role of Meinong in modern British philosophy has been largely that of 'a philosophical Aunty Sally who is honoured in being struck down'. The recognition is gradually dawning that Meinong made significant and substantial contribution to philosophy. Philosophers now have started taking interest in Meinong's theory, which is, no doubt, very difficult to grasp. In contrast, Frege's work has been highly acclaimed and acknowledged. He is now considered to be the Great Grandfather of Analytic Philosophy. However, from these facts it does not follow that their theories were wholly correct; I only want to submit that Russell had rejected them for wrong reasons. Particularly, regarding Frege, Russell's arguments show that the connection between sense and reference is obscure but he seems not to resolve that obscurity.

I also do not entertain the idea that Russell's theory was inadequate. When we refer to Russell's doctrine as 'The Theory of Descriptions', it is a gross understatement in itself for it involves Russell's logical thinking, some of his epistemological views and also his semantical and ontological theories. This

doctrine helps us to understand the importance of philosophical analysis for the exposure and clarification of philosophical problems.

In spite of all these Russell fails in his primary objective. On close inspection it is clear that he is unable to provide a satisfactory solution to one of the problems he dealt with. I have in mind problems concerning 'propositional attitudes' and 'non-extensional contents'. To solve them, Russell had to amend his original theory between 1905 and 1910. Further, as opposed to what Russell had claimed, his theory has not been found indispensable for solving the puzzles. It is also arguable as to how far the theory is in itself acceptable; because, the theory involves certain assumptions, which are highly controversial and of course there are alternative solutions to the same puzzles.

First, Russell calls expressions of the form "the so-and-so" and "a so-and-so" ___ "descriptions", i.e., they have descriptive function. So, if these expressions are used for the purpose of describing, surely they can be used as predicates. Yet, Russell says that these expressions are neither names nor predicates. Secondly, Russell sometimes mixes up the two kinds of descriptions, which is very confusing. It is true that a definite description is neither a name nor a predicate and in some cases the indefinite description also behaves in this way. But it is definitely wrong to assume that "a man" in "Socrates is a man" does

does not have a predicative function. There is a schematic difference between the two uses of the same phrase "a man" in "Socrates is a man" and "I met a man".

Thirdly, Russell has been inconsistent in his assumptions. On the one hand he says that descriptions are neither names nor predicates; on the other hand he does assume that a description, even a definite description, has some predicative function and that is why in his analysis a proposition containing a definite description involves saying that certain things are possessed of certain properties in terms of which the meaning of this description was to be explained.

Fourthly, Russell confuses descriptive content (meaning) with descriptive function. He says that no proposition containing a definite description can be categorical or subject-predicate in form. Russell argues that an expression like "the author of *Waverley*" has a descriptive content or meaning and as such it cannot be used to *refer* to anything, for referring cannot be done by descriptions. But actually if 'the author of *Waverley*' has a referring function, it cannot have a descriptive function also; however, it may well have a descriptive content.

Lastly, Russell always thought that a statement must be either true or false. But, following Strawson we can say that it may well be neither true nor false. Russell was working with a bogus trichotomy—true, false and meaningless. Strawson scores a point over Russell here by distinguishing between true or false and meaningful or meaningless. According to Strawson, as we have earlier discussed in detail, a sentence could be meaningful or meaningless whereas what may be true or false is only a statement.

Hence, to sum up :

(i)   Strawson points out that Russell views sentences and their logical properties too abstractly and ignores their standard conversational uses by real people in real life situations.

(ii) Russell misses the fact that sentences containing non-denoting descriptions are not regarded as false but they are truth-valueless due to presuppositional failure. He also ignores context–bound descriptions.

(iii) Donnellan distinguished between referential and attributive uses of descriptions, which were ignored by Russell and Strawson respectively.

(iv) Russell's theory cannot explain all the anaphoric uses of descriptions.

Strawson's theory can be regarded as another paradigm in this field because it tried to change the paradigm (Russell's theory) itself. The change was so great it can be called a revolution inside philosophical circle but my conclusion is that it

largely fails as an attack on Russell's theory. Strawson criticizes Russell on mainly two points.

(a)   Russell unreasonably asserts a relation of entailment to hold between statements like "The present King of France is wise" — (S) and statements like "One and only one person is at present King of France" — (S').

(b)   Russell similarly asserts that part of what one is saying when one makes a statement of the first kind is a statement of the second kind.

According to Strawson both the mistakes on Russell's part are due to his failure to see the relation of presupposition (not entailment) that holds between S and S'.

In my opinion Strawson is unclear in his criticism of Russell. Objecting to his first criticism it can be argued that there is not only no contradiction involved in maintaining that statements like S both presuppose and entail statements like S' but also that on this account the relation of entailment is contained within the relation of presupposition. Further, Strawson's arguments do not show that S does not entail S' on the standard account of entailment, which does not even make sense for truth valueless objects. That Strawson supports the existence of truth valueless objects is established by the definition of presupposition given by him in his book *Introduction to Logical Theory* : S is said to presuppose S' if and only if, a necessary condition for S having a truth value is that S' be true.

Since the statement presupposed (S') is false, it follows from this definition that S is neither true nor false.[14]

This is the substantial point of difference between Strawson and Russell: Is a statement like 'the King of France is wise' either true or false (as Russell contends) or is it neither true nor false (as Strawson contends)? I think Strawson is right at least in this issue and if that is so then we need a new account of logical connectives and relations such as entailment. Strawson also attempts to provide such an account. But even then what is important is that it does not follow from any of this that there is a mistake in Russell's analysis of the proposition – 'The present King of France is wise."

Russell had held that philosophy should consist in criticizing and clarifying abstract notions. He was a champion of formalism. I reiterate that first of all it would be a stupendous task to construct a formal language for philosophy and also that the degree of measurement and precision found in physics or mathematics is neither possible nor necessary in philosophy. It is true that individual points or arguments are often seen more clearly when spelt out formally. But whole positions of philosophic works would tend to become less and not more manageable if expressed in formal language. So, to go on using common speech carefully and refining it as we go along will be better.

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Notes & References on Chapter – 7 :

1. W. V. O. Quine, *From a Logical Point of View*, Harvard, 1951, p. 139.

2. L. Linsky, *Referring*, London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967, p. 79.

3. Cf. *Referring, op-cit*, pp. 79 - 80.

4. *Ibid*, p. 100.

5. *Philosophical Review*, LXXV, 1966, p. 285.

6. *Ibid*, pp. 285 – 6.

7. *Ibid*, p. 287.

8. *Ibid*, p. 304.

9. P.K. Sen, *Reference and Truth*, ICPR, New Delhi in association with Allied publishers, 1991, p. 39 and p. 44.

10. S. Kripke, "Speaker Reference and Semantic Reference" in *Contemporary Perspectives in the Philosophy of Language*, P. French, T. Uehling and H. Wettstein (eds.), Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979. Cf., W.G. Lycan, *Philosophy of Language : A Contemporary Introduction*, London : Routledge, 2000, p.27.

11. *Philosophy of Language : A Contemporary Introduction, op.cit.*, p. 30.

12. A.F. Mackay, "Mr. Donnellan and Humpty Dumpty on Referring", *Philosophical Review*, 77, 1968, pp. 197 – 202.

13. P. K. Sen, *Logic, Induction and Ontology*, The McMillan Company of India Limited, 1980, p. 234.

14. P.F. Strawson, *Introduction to Logical Theory*, London : Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1966. Cf. *Referring, op.cit.*, pp. 98-99.

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