

24.400

Proseminar in philosophy I

Fall 2003

"On Denoting"

0. (i) Case 1: At the lion exhibit, I assertively utter 'The cage contains cats'. In fact, the zoo contains many other cages containing tigers, cheetahs, and so forth.
Case 2: I assertively utter 'The cat is scratching the table'. In fact, the creature I am pointing to, although it is scratching the table, is not a cat at all, but a robot controlled from Mars.
How would Russell paraphrase what I said in each case? There are (at least) two problems here. What are they?
(ii) According to Russell, 'The cat is not indoors' (for example) is ambiguous between a reading on which 'the cat' takes 'primary occurrence', and one on which it takes 'secondary occurrence'. Using logical notation as appropriate, explain.
(iii) Treating 'catsup' much the same as 'cat', give the Russellian paraphrase of 'The catsup has spilt'. Why is this paraphrase incorrect? Is there a quick fix?
1. Critically compare and contrast Russell's and Frege's accounts of sentences such as 'The man who discovered the elliptic form of the planetary orbits died in misery'. What does Frege mean by 'presupposition'? Are Russell's criticisms of Frege correct?
2. According to Russell, his theory solves "three puzzles". Does it?

"The Philosophy of Logical Atomism"

0. Explain what Russell means by 'fact', 'proposition', 'name', 'particular' and 'symbol'. Why does Russell think that facts cannot be named?
1. Why does Russell think that the only names "in the logical sense" are 'this' and 'that'? Is he right?
2. What does Russell mean by 'logical fiction'? What does Russell take to be logical fictions? Assess his reasons.

The Problems of Philosophy

0. Set out in valid form Russell's argument that "The real table, if there is one, is not *immediately* known to us at all" (ch. 1). Is it sound?
1. Explain and evaluate Russell's treatment of belief in ch. 12. How did he criticise this view in "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism"?
2. According to Russell, "[a]ll our knowledge, both knowledge of things and knowledge of truths, rests upon acquaintance as its foundation" (ch. 5). What does this mean? Is it true? Are we in fact acquainted with anything?