

REMARKS ON CLASSICAL ANALYSIS*

SINCE the time of Socrates philosophers have sought a priori definitions of philosophically important concepts. However, the prospect of such definitions is threatened by a serious "internal" difficulty, viz., the paradox of analysis. If a correct definition should do no more than give back the very concept being defined, then such a definition could, it seems, never be informative. Yet, clearly, definitions can be informative. Hence, the paradox. In addition to this "internal" difficulty, the prospect of successful philosophical analyses is also threatened by serious "external" difficulties. For example, Wittgenstein assembled a variety of linguistic data supporting the view that general terms in natural language have no determinate logically necessary and sufficient conditions and, hence, that the concepts expressed by these terms have none either. Moreover, Quine has argued that the very distinction between definitional and nondefinitional truths is a mere dogma, a metaphysical article of faith. Finally, even if the currently popular "causal" theory of reference and meaning should get us around Quine's difficulty by providing us with a well-defined distinction between definitional and nondefinitional truths, many definitions would on this theory turn out to be, not a priori truths, but truths of empirical science. And if this theory is taken to its extreme so that all definitions take on this empirical character, as Putnam sometimes seems to envisage, then classical analysis would be eclipsed. For every question of definition would then become a matter for the sciences. Classical analysis thus faces two quite different kinds of difficulties, internal and external. Of the two, the external are usually thought to be more serious. I think, however, that these can be answered, at least provisionally. The first aim of my remarks is to indicate why, from our present perspective, this is a plausible assessment. I will argue that the Wittgensteinian difficulty can be overcome by developing a suitably rich theory for the pragmatics of conversation and that the difficulties of Quine and the extreme causal theorist can be met by certain transcendental arguments which show that classical analysis should be possible for at least some epistemologically and metaphysically central concepts. If I am right, then there is no choice but to confront the paradox of analysis on its own terms, as Ernest Sosa has done in his paper.

* Abstract of a paper to be presented in an APA symposium on Classical Analysis, December 30, 1983, commenting on a paper by Ernest Sosa; see this JOURNAL, this issue, 695-710.

Unlike most resolutions of the paradox of analysis, which very often are based on some "formal" insight, Sosa's is based upon an idea of how to give an actual *explanation* of what makes it possible for someone to be ignorant of a definition. This is a significant virtue. The idea begins with an analogy based on the role perspective plays in perceptual knowledge: what lies behind someone's ignorance of a definition is that he is considering the definition from a certain "perspective," or under a certain "aspect," relative to which it does not appear to be a trivial logical truth. I venture to say that nearly everyone who has worked on the paradox of analysis would agree that something like this is going on. In working out this idea more formally, Sosa suggests that the standard propositional attitudes (believing, etc.), which previously were thought to be binary relations, must now be treated as ternary relations among persons, propositions, and aspects of those propositions. This treatment carries with it a cost, namely, some additional complication in the logic for the propositional attitudes. In view of this, it is natural to want to know whether this feature of the resolution is really essential and to want to get a fuller idea of the conditions for, say, believing a proposition under an aspect. Is it possible that the ternary relation of believing something under an aspect might not itself be analyzed in terms of the familiar binary relation plus auxiliary notions? Could believing p under aspect F be analyzed as believing q , where q is related to F and p in some suitably specified way? If not, why not?

In the closing, more speculative part of his paper, Sosa's proposed resolution is combined with a theory of simple and complex properties in order to give an explanation of a pervasive and puzzling kind of "supervenience." The explanation of this kind of supervenience is an intriguing prospect. However, it should be noted that the proposed resolution of the paradox of analysis is not *committed* to the suggested explanation. This is as it should be. For there are a number of difficult new questions raised by this kind of supervenience. (For example, can we explain why, necessarily, scarlet things are red without sacrificing our intuition that there is something objectively correct about cutting color boundaries more or less where we do, e.g., at red, blue, green, and so on?) Therefore, the proposed resolution of the paradox of analysis is in a much safer position if it is not committed to any particular explanation of this kind of supervenience.

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