CHAPTER - 7

INCOMPLETENESS OF PREDICATE - EXPRESSIONS - STRAWSON (II)
Strawson often tries to explain the subject-predicate distinction in the light of some basic antithesis between 'completeness' and 'incompleteness'. According to him, in a proposition two sorts of expressions are combined to yield a complete thought. Of such expressions, one kind of expressions involves a completeness which the other lacks. In this Chapter we shall discuss how Strawson has explicated this basic antithesis between two sorts of expressions.

In his earlier book 'Individuals' 56 Strawson distinguishes between two sorts of expressions which are combined to formulate a singular proposition of a fundamental kind. In the assertions 'Socrates is wise', 'Raleigh smokes', 'Socrates' and 'Raleigh' are subject-expressions and 'smokes' and 'is wise' are predicate-expressions. For him, anything which can be introduced into an assertion by an expression is a term. According to Strawson both subject-expressions and predicate expressions serve to introduce terms though they introduce them in different ways. Subject-expressions adopt the substantival or noun-like mode of introduction, whereas predicate-expressions adopt the verbal or verb-like mode of introduction. Strawson holds that a subject-expression is a singular, grammatically substantival expression, while a

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56. p. 140.
predicate-expression contains at least one finite form of a verb in the indicative mood. Both kinds of expressions are capable of formulating an assertive sentence when combined with some suitable expressions of the other kind.

Strawson tries to find out the rationale behind this overt grammatical distinction. There is a class of expressions which merely serves to introduce terms into remarks, but not in any particular style. For Strawson, in English, expressions like 'Socrates' belong to that class. 'Socrates is wise', 'Socrates be wise', 'Let Socrates be slain' — these are very different kinds of remarks and in all of them the expression 'Socrates' is common.

But it is different with 'is wise'. This expression introduces being wise, just as 'Socrates' introduces Socrates. But the former introduces its term in a quite distinctive and important style, i.e. the assertive or propositional style. Thus, according to Strawson, the indicative form of a verb introduces its term in such a way that what it is introduced into is a proposition. On the other hand, the use of the substantives has no such significance. We may use them if we want merely to make a list of terms. In the remark 'Socrates is wise', both 'Socrates' and 'is wise' introduce terms, namely Socrates and being wise. But, Strawson holds, the phrase 'is wise' not only introduces being wise, it also carries the assertive or propositional tie.
Frege maintains that an object can never be a concept and vice versa. If a concept is to be an object, it is to be introduced by means of a substantival expression. But, for Frege, a concept is essentially something that can be represented only by a non-substantival expression which introduces its term in the propositional style. Frege distinguishes between objects and concepts by saying that objects are complete, but concepts are incomplete or unsaturated, and as the predicate-expressions, which represent concepts, are unsaturated they are capable of serving as a link. Russell also upholds the view that in a proposition there is one constituent which is itself incomplete or connective and holds all of the constituents of the proposition together. Ramsey criticises this view, as we have seen earlier, by saying that there is no reason why we should regard one part of a proposition more incomplete than another, since both of them equally fail to be the whole. Strawson's answers to this objection is that the expression 'is wise' seems to be more incomplete than the expression 'Socrates' which is in a sense nearer to completion. The name 'Socrates' may be completed into any kind of remark, not necessarily in a proposition. But the expression 'is wise' demands a completion into a proposition or a propositional clause.

According to Strawson, in the fundamental subject-predicate sentences, the terms are basically distinguished into two classes. One includes the expression like '.... loves ....'

57. 'On concept and object' Philosophical writings of Gotlob Frege, ed. Geach and Black, p. 54.
and '.... is wise' etc., which are essentially sentence-frame and to be completed into sentences by filling up the gaps, and the other contains the expressions 'Caesar', 'Brutus' etc., which are used to fill up the gaps. It may be argued that the latter sorts of expressions may also be regarded as sentence-frames, e.g. 'Caesar...' or '..... Brutus'. Because they equally fail to be complete sentences by themselves and require completion in a sentence. But, Strawson says, the former sort of expressions demands completion in accordance with a fixed pattern, i.e. its gap must be filled with determinate number of terms of the other sort. But the terms of the latter sort can appear in any pattern of sentence and with an indefinite number of gaps.

According to Strawson human thought involves a duality between spatio-temporal particulars and general concepts. And the duality of subject and predicate mirrors this duality in our elements of thought. Particulars and universals are assertively tied to each other to yield a proposition. According to Strawson, in a subject-predicate proposition of the basic kind a particular-introducing expression is propositionally combined with a universal-introducing expression. The expression which introduces the particular term in question is the subject-expression, and that which introduces the universal term in question is the predicate-expression.

Strawson thinks that the grammatical criterion, discussed earlier, serves as a mark of the presence or absence of a more fundamental kind of completeness. He inclines to
explicate this notion of 'completeness' and 'incompleteness' through a contrast between the conditions of introducing particular terms and universal terms respectively into propositions. Any expression which serves to introduce a term indicates what term is being introduced by the expression in question. When we say 'Socrates is wise', the first expression indicates what particular is being referred to and the second expression indicates what characteristic is being ascribed to that particular.

Strawson speaks of some conditions which is to be satisfied to make a successful identifying reference to a particular. One condition is that there should be a particular which the speaker is referring to. Another is that there should be a particular which the hearer takes the speaker to be referring to and a third condition is that the speaker's particulars should be identical with the hearer's. The first condition suggests that there should be a particular which corresponds to the description used by the speaker. If the speaker uses a name it requires merely a minor modification of the condition. Because, one using a name must be prepared to substitute a description for the name. But this condition is not enough. The speaker refers to just one particular. There may be a number of particulars answering to the description the speaker uses. So it is required that there should be at most one particular which he has in mind. The speaker can not, for himself, distinguish the particular which he has in mind by the fact that it is the one he has in mind. There must

58. Ibid, p-180
be some description uniquely applying to the particular he
has in mind and which does not contain the phrase 'the one I
have in mind'. Thus, according to Strawson, to make an
identifying reference to a particular, the speaker must know
some true empirical proposition to the effect that there is
at most one particular corresponding to a certain description.
A similar condition must be satisfied in the case of hearer's
identification. And the third condition requires that the
speaker's and the hearer's description should apply uniquely
to one and the same particular.

Strawson says that there are no such parallel condi-
tions for a successful introduction of the universal term into
a proposition. Suppose, the universal is being introduced by
an adjectival form of expression, 'ø'. Then we have to
look for some empirical proposition which must be true for the
introduction of the universal term in question. A sufficient
condition of its introducibility will be that the speaker should
know the truth of the general empirical proposition 'Something
or other is ø'. But this can not be a necessary condition
since another equally sufficient condition will be the truth
of the empirical proposition 'nothing is ø'. It may be said
that we may obtain a necessary condition by formulating the
disjunction of these two sufficient conditions, viz. 'either
something is ø or nothing is ø'. But this is no more an
empirical proposition, but a tautology.
It may be argued that we can find an empirical proposition for the successful introduction of the universal term by means of '∅'. We may say that the proposition 'Something is ∅' is a significant empirical proposition and is clearly understood both by the speaker and the hearer. Yet the condition is not parallel to that of particular-introduction. The required fact, is not in the required sense, a fact about the world. Rather it is a fact about language. Again it may be objected that the empirical proposition of the form 'Something is ∅' can not be significant unless at least a preponderant proportion of them are true. So it may be said that the introduction of a particular term universally presupposes, while the introduction of a universal term in general presupposes the truth of some empirical proposition.

In answer to this objection Strawson emphasizes the difference between the kind of presupposed empirical proposition. The kind of proposition whose truth is universally required for particular introduction states quite a definite fact about the world, whereas the kind of proposition the truth of which may in general be required for universal-introduction states quite an indefinite sort of fact. He further maintains that it is not only necessary that a definite empirical proposition should be true for the introduction of a particular term. It is also necessary that the proposition of that kind should be known to be true. But the situation is different with universal-introduction. It may be the case that the words used for identifying the universal term may acquire
their meaning only if most of the universals so introduced are in fact instantiated. But once these words have acquired their meaning, it remains no longer necessary for them to identify the universal terms that the users should know empirical propositions to the effect that the universal terms in question are in fact instantiated. All that is necessary is that the users must know what the expressions mean.

Thus, according to Strawson, it is a universally necessary condition for particular-introduction that an empirical proposition of a certain definite kind should be known to be true, whereas there is no such parallel condition for introduction of a universal term. Strawson points out that if the universal term is introduced by some expressions which contain the description of the universal term, then for the successful introduction of the universal term, it may be necessary that some empirical proposition is true. Thus the universal term 'wisdom' may be introduced, not by the adjective 'wise' or the substantive 'wisdom', but by a description such as 'the quality most frequently attributed to Socrates in philosophical examples'. For this mode of introduction to be successful it must be the case that there is a just one quality which is actually attributed to Socrates in philosophical examples.

Thus Strawson distinguishes between two sorts of expressions - (1) expressions such that one can not know what they introduce without knowing some certain empirical fact about what they introduce; (2) expressions such that one can know what
they introduce without knowing any distinguishing empirical fact about what they introduce. Both kinds of expressions are incomplete in a sense as both of them are parts of a statement of fact. Nevertheless, Strawson holds, the expressions of first kind involve a sort of completeness, a self-sufficiency which the expressions of second kind lack. The expressions of first kind, though they do not explicitly state facts, perform their role only because they represent facts and presuppose propositions which they do not explicitly affirm. Those expressions carry a weight of fact in introducing terms. But the expressions of the second kind carry no such weight of fact. They can merely help to carry a fact only by being conjoined with some other expression into an explicit assertion.

According to the grammatical criterion, as it has been aforesaid, a predicate-expression introduces its term in the coupling, propositional style, in the incomplete style, which must be completed into an assertion. We find that it corresponds to the incompleteness of the second kind of expressions and also to the failure of this kind of expression to present a fact by itself. So it is clear that in the explicit assertion constituted by conjoining both sorts of expressions, it must be the former one which carries the propositional symbolism. Thus Strawson proposes a new criterion for the subject-predicate distinction. On this criterion a subject-expression presents a fact by itself and to that extent is complete. But a predicate-expression presents no fact in isolation and so is incomplete. A predicate-expression can be completed only by explicit coupling
with the expressions of the other sort. It also explains
the contrast between the complete and incomplete part of the
sentence and Frege's metaphor of the saturated and the
unsaturated constituents.

According to the traditional theory, the expressions
introducing complex terms which have been called by Strawson
'Universals-cum-particulars', e.g. 'is married to John' may
be classified as the predicate-expression. It may be said that
those expressions, by virtue of containing a part which intro-
duces a particular, possess the completeness which prevents
them from appearing as predicate-expressions. But, according
to Strawson, such expressions do not, as a whole, possess
completeness by their own right, though each contains a part
which does. The expression 'is married to John' does not
present any fact as a whole, though one of its parts 'John'
carries its own presupposition of fact. This complex expres-
sion presupposes the tautology that either some one is married
to John or no one is married to John. So, on Strawson's view,
such complex expressions are incomplete by themselves and thus
qualify as predicates.

Next Strawson proceeds to explain the relations between
term-introducing expressions which are complete and the facts
which confer upon them their completeness. Suppose, we say
pointing to a person 'That person there can direct you'. The
expression 'That person there' introduces a particular. Here
the relation between the fact upon which the term-introduction
is based and the actual word is clear enough. The term-distinguishing fact is that there is just one person there, where we are pointing. If there is none whom we are taken to be pointing at, the term-introducing expression lacks of a reference and so the statement fails to have a truth-value.

The situation is slightly complicated if our term-introducing expression is a proper name. It is not required for term-introduction by a proper name that there must be just one particular object or person which bears the name; nor that the presupposed fact is the fact that there is just one object or person which both bears the name and is now being referred to. For, we have seen previously that the presupposed fact must be some true empirical proposition known to the speaker which he may offer to indicate which particular he has in mind. Now if we find a fact which distinguishes the particular he has in mind, there is no proof that the fact in question is actually presupposed by the statement containing the term introducing expression. It may be the case that there is just one child whom I saw playing yesterday and it may be the same child whom I now refer to as 'John'. But this existential fact may not be presupposed, in the sense illustrated, by the statement I now make about John.

Nevertheless, according to Strawson, if the identifying reference is made by the name 'Socrates', to satisfy the conditions for successful term-introduction both the speaker and the hearer must know some distinguishing fact or facts, though not necessarily the same ones, about Socrates which may be cited to
indicate whom the speaker now speaks of and the hearer understands by the expression 'Socrates'. Let us suppose that there is a group of speakers who use the name 'Socrates' with the same reference. We may ask each of them to write down what he regards to be the most distinguishing facts about Socrates and then construct from these lists of facts a composite description combining the most frequently mentioned facts. Strawson thinks that it will be too demanding to say that for the successful term-introduction within a group by the proper name there should exist just one person of whom all the propositions in the composite description are true. Rather it would require that there should exist just one person of whom a reasonable number of these propositions are true. For instance, there can be a situation that there is just one person of whom half of the propositions are jointly true. Then whether any particular proposition about Socrates is true or false can not be determined unless some other indications are offered of which Socrates is being referred to.

So Strawson speaks of a presupposition set of propositions which is formed by the propositions constituting the composite description of Socrates. The limits of such a set or what constitutes a reasonable proportion of its member will not in general be precisely fixed for any putatively term-introducing name. Strawson also holds that we can not offer a simple general explanation of the relation between the complete term-introducing expressions and the term-distinguishing facts which are to be known necessarily for a successful term introduction.
It has been said that for the success of any putatively term-introducing expression in introducing a particular term both the speaker and the hearer must know some term-distinguishing fact. The resulting statement of fact may very often contain themselves the expressions introducing particular term. But, Strawson says, this will not lead to an infinite regress. Because we can always arrive, in the end, at some existential proposition which will not contain the particular-introducing expression but demonstratives, though the proposition as a whole presents a particular term, e.g. 'There is just one so and so there'. On Strawson's view, a successful particular introduction requires knowledge of some term-distinguishing fact. And the resulting statement of facts must contain either the expressions themselves or at least involve quantification over particulars. It may be argued that the sentences involving quantification over particulars can have no place in language unless definitely identifying expressions for particulars also have place in language. Then we can not assert any statement of conditions without supposing that the language contains term-introducing expressions for particulars. So this account seems to suffer from circularity. Strawson answers that this account can not be accused of involving circularity, since the given account is an account of the identifying introduction of a particular into a certain piece of discourse, not an account of introduction of particulars into discourse in general.
Strawson further tries to explain the phrase 'introduction of particulars' in a different sense. In the second sense, it means the introduction of the custom of introducing them in the first sense. In the first sense, it is the individual particulars which are introduced into, viz. an individual man, say, Socrates is introduced into a proposition. While at least kinds of particulars or particulars in general are introduced in the second sense, viz. man in general is introduced into discourse. Strawson makes this difference in sense by the use of subscripts. Individual particulars are introduced\textsubscript{1}, into propositions. Kinds of particulars are introduced\textsubscript{2} into discourse.

According to Strawson, a doctrine concerning the conditions of introducing\textsubscript{1} particulars must be supplemented with a doctrine concerning the conditions of introducing\textsubscript{2} particulars. He says that the introduction\textsubscript{2} of particulars of a certain class presupposes the existence of facts of a certain class. And the ultimately presupposed facts must be such that the statement of them involve neither introducing nor quantifying over any particulars. According to him, the successful introduction of a certain particular rests on the truth of some presupposed\textsubscript{1} propositions and hence it is a condition of the presupposing statement's having a truth-value. The introduction\textsubscript{2} of a certain kind of particulars is conditioned by the existence of facts of a presupposed\textsubscript{2} kind and it is a condition of there being any proposition at all where particulars of that kind are introduced\textsubscript{1} into.
Strawson urges that there are many types of particulars of which we can evidently construe such a theory of presuppositions. He refers to those particulars which are introduced in a relatively advanced stage of thought, such as the particular entities of scientific theory or particular social institutions. There are classes of facts in the statement of which only more primitive kind of particulars occur, yet which provide a basis for the introduction of those more sophisticated entities. For instance, propositions about men are presupposed by the propositions about nations. But the difficulty really arises when we attempt to arrive at the classes of facts which provide a basis for the introduction of those particulars upon which the introduction of all other depends.

According to Strawson the universals contained in the presupposed propositions can be neither the sortal nor the characterising universals at all. Strawson speaks of a kind of universals and statements containing such universals which we would arrive at ultimately. Strawson calls them feature universals or feature-concepts and feature-placing statements. For example, "Snow is falling", "There is coal here", "There is gold here" etc. The universal terms which are introduced into these propositions are not characterizing universals; snow, coal, gold etc. are general kinds of stuff, not characteristics of particulars. They are not sortal universals also, for none of them involves a principle for distinguishing, enumerating and re-identifying particulars of a kind. These sentences
contain neither any particular introducing expressions, nor any expression whose use presupposes the use of expressions introducing particulars. When these sentences are used, circumstances of their use together with the tense of the verb and the demonstrative adverbs yield a statement of the incidence of the universal feature. And this much is required for a singular empirical statement, i.e. the introduction of a general concept and the indication of its incidence.

According to Strawson, these feature-placing sentences, though do not introduce particulars, supply a basis for their introduction. They state the facts which are presupposed by the introduction of certain kinds of particulars. The statements of facts as 'there is water here', 'It is snowing' etc. are preconditions for the existence of any such proposition into which particulars are introduced by means of such expressions, 'This pool of water', 'This fall of snow' etc. Thus Strawson espouses the view that we can find the ultimate propositional level in the feature-placing propositions. He does not claim that there exist feature-placing propositions corresponding to every specific kind of basic particulars. It is enough to choose as paradigm some very broad categories of basic particulars and to make plausible the idea of feature-placing propositions corresponding to them.

From the above discussion, it is clear that according to Strawson the thought of a particular is a complete thought, while the thought of a universal need not be so. So the
particular possesses logical complexity which the universal lacks. Every introduction of a particular into a proposition depends upon a definite fact about the world other than which is stated in the proposition which it is introduced into. On the other hand, the introduction of a universal into a proposition does not depend on any such definite empirical fact. Here the idea of definitely identified particular presupposes a proposition which does not contain any part introducing it, yet supplies a basis for the particular-introduction. The proposition as a whole individuates the particular either as uniquely related to some other definitely identified particular, an or as unique instance of some complex of universal and demonstrative elements. But such propositions themselves contain at least the quantification over particulars and may involve introduction of particulars also.

Therefore, Strawson searches for some method which at least in some point can supplement the first method of resolving the complexity of the particular. According to this method the propositions about the kind of particulars should be resolved in the propositions containing, not sortal universals of which the particulars of that kind are instances, but a universal in someway corresponding to such a sortal universal. So we have to find out facts underlying the particulars which do not contain any sortal universal instantiated by the particulars. This task, Strawson thinks, is comparatively easier in the case of dependent particulars. For there must be a fact about a relatively independent particular which underlies any idea of a
dependent particular. But if we are to arrive at the desired
goal of the method, we should ultimately find facts which
provide a basis for some particulars, but contain neither
particulars nor sortal universals. And we can find such a
range of facts indeed. According to Strawson, statements of
them consist of the demonstrative placing of universal
features, which are distinct from sortal universals. Ultimately these feature-placing statements underlie our
thought of basic particulars.

Thus the thought of a particular rests on or unfolds
itself into a fact. In this sense the idea of a definite-
particular is complete. It is also incomplete in a sense.
Because when we think of the particular in isolation, we think
of it as the constituent of some further fact. From this point
of view, the ultimate or atomic fact is the one stated by
those propositions which consist of a general feature along
with the demonstrative indication of its incidence. These
ultimate facts do not involve particulars as constituents, but
supply the basis for the conceptual step to particulars.
Strawson holds that the statements of them are not of the
subject-predicate form, yet stand as the ultimate basis for
subject-predicate proposition. With reference to this basic
antithesis between two sorts of expressions as regards their
possession of completeness, Strawson seeks for the rationale
of subject-predicate distinction and its traditional associa-
tion with universal-particular distinction.