Define ‘hek’ as a predicate that truly applies to any dog that is blind in one eye, has had all its legs amputated and smells particularly badly in April. This is a perfectly acceptable definition, and, since Mrs. Snaith’s terrier Lucky satisfies the predicate, we can say that it has the property of hekness, or that Lucky is a hek dog.

Define ‘hel’ as a predicate that truly applies to names of predicates that apply to dogs. This too is an acceptable definition, and we can say, for example, that ‘is an animal’ is hel.

Define ‘heo’ as a predicate that truly applies to any dog if and only if it truly applies to that dog. Since this ‘definition’ does not fix a meaning for ‘heo’, does not allow us to determine whether Lucky (or any other dog) is heo, it fails as a definition; no property of heoness has been identified. Another way of putting the point is that we have no grounds for the application of ‘heo’, whereas the application of ‘hek’ is grounded in, or founded upon, examination of dogs, and the application of ‘hel’ is grounded in our examination of the predicates that apply to dogs.

Define ‘hep’ as a predicate that truly applies to any dog if and only if it does not truly apply to that dog. This attempted definition clearly fares no better than the previous one. We have not fixed a meaning for ‘hep’ and hence are in no position to raise the question of whether ‘Lucky is hep’ is true or false. In fact, ‘Lucky is hep’ makes no more sense than ‘Lucky is qep’.

Define ‘heq’ as a predicate that truly applies to the word ‘heq’ itself if and only if it truly applies to that word. Like the above attempted definition of ‘heo’, this is a failed attempt.

Define ‘hes’ as a predicate that truly applies to itself if and only if it does not truly apply to itself. Again, a failed attempt at a definition – it stands to the attempted definition of ‘heq’ as that of ‘hep’ stands to that of ‘heo’.

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Farewell to Grelling

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Analysis 63.1, January 2003, pp. 31–32. © Laurence Goldstein
Define ‘het’ as a predicate that truly applies to itself if and only if it does not truly apply to itself and which also truly applies to any predicate that does not truly apply to its own name. We know that the attempted definition of ‘hes’ is a failure, and so a fortiori is that of ‘het’. Similarly, there is no Qussell class which contains itself as a member if and only if it does not contain itself as a member, so a fortiori there is no Russell Class which contains itself as a member if and only if it does not contain itself as a member and which also contains all and only non-self-membered classes (such as the class of dogs). The second conjunct in both the definition of ‘het’ and of the Russell class cannot revive a definition doomed to failure. Likewise, the ‘definition’ of \( n \) as ‘\( n > 1 \) iff \( n < 1 \)’ fails, and the attempted definition of \( m \) as ‘\( m > 1 \) iff \( m < 1 \) and \( m \) is prime’ is hopeless too; its final clause buys it no respectability.

But ‘het’ is just an abbreviation for Grelling’s predicate ‘heterological’ and since, as we have seen, this predicate has been given no meaning, sentences such as ‘“long” is heterological’, ‘“heterological” is heterological’ are meaningless; and so can be neither true nor false. But Grelling’s Paradox works by deriving a contradiction from the assumption that ‘“heterological” is heterological’ is either true or false. Since, as we have seen, that assumption is untenable, we can bid a fond, if curt, farewell to Grelling.