A Brief History of Truth

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0. Brief Introduction

Broadly speaking, there are three traditions in recent philosophical writing about truth. First, there is a highly technical literature of interest principally to formal logicians. Secondly, there is the literature of the so-called "Continental" tradition, of consuming interest to those for whom obscurity is a reliable mark of profundity. Thirdly, there is a recognizably inter-related set of writings which give rise to, and develop, the mainstream work on the topic in English (though these writings are not themselves always in English). It is more than enough work for an article such as this to concentrate, as we have decided to do, upon the third — and most accessible — of these traditions, which in any case overlaps the others.

Pascal Engel begins his recent book *Truth* by remarking, 'Truth is a central philosophical notion, perhaps *the* central one. Many other important philosophical notions depend upon it or are closely tied to it ... .' He goes on to give so many examples that someone who proposes to write about truth might despair at the outset, faced not only with the seeming obligation to say something about everything but also with the suspicion that truth poses a problem of first philosophy: that, as Michael Dummett once famously suggested about logic, if we do not get it right, we shall get nothing else right. But its very ubiquity might make one suspicious of its importance, on the grounds that it may just be appearing as a proxy for a range of other, or local, topics. And indeed, one of the main issues in recent discussion has been just how much of what has commonly been assumed to be central to the investigation of truth turns out to be really a matter of indifference.

So, for example, among the questions we shall be canvassing are the following. Are the disputes over the nature of truth, and the realism/anti-realism debate, mutually relevant or not? Is the theory of meaning relevant to the nature of truth? Do ontological claims about truthmakers support some accounts of truth over others? Does the plausible suggestion that truth is a norm of assertion require us to order rival theories in terms of their respective capacities for giving an account of it? Does a theory of truth require a theory of justification?

One way in which to handle such questions is directly, taxonomizing the various positions and attempting to map the relations between them. We have chosen, instead, to approach the subject matter historically, fulfilling our editorial brief by tracing the course of the debates as they developed from the turn of the twentieth century to the turn of the twenty-first. This choice is the result of several commitments that we share. One is a preference for looking at the theories of real philosophers rather than the abstractions (and sometimes straw men) of the textbooks, even though this has meant that we have had to make what may seem invidious and idiosyncratic decisions about who is to be a focus of attention, and who ignored or marginalized. Another is the belief that a theory, together with its strengths and weaknesses, is best understood through a developmental account, for the views of philosophers emerge in response to the various competing demands made in actual debate. Yet another is the conviction that bad (or, perhaps worse, time-wasting) philosophy results from amnesia. The history of analytic philosophy can, as we shall see, look like a tale of exhausting re-invention of a range of rectangular wheels. Part of the story we have to tell is one of how often the taking of sides about truth involves a return to a position already mapped decades previously.

1. Early Views

1.0 Introductory comments

The various claims about truth which were being advocated around the start of the twentieth century were largely by-products of their proponents' commitments in metaphysics, the philosophy of logic, and the philosophy of language (though at the time this last branch of philosophy was not the self-conscious sub-discipline it subsequently became). In particular, theories of truth were inextricably entangled with what were then still often called theories of judgement. Among these views we find some which still look familiar, but others which only philosophers with an interest in the history of the period would recognize — although, as so often in philosophy, it is just these half-forgotten and more recondite theories which have, at the time of writing, most recently reappeared in modern dress.

1.1 Primitivism: Moore, Russell

The close of the nineteenth century witnessed an intellectual rupture which was to have momentous consequences for the way in which philosophy subsequently developed. It began with G. E. Moore, who in working on Kant had come to the view that a basic presupposition of any form of idealism (variants of which had dominated Britain's major universities for some decades), that the objects of human knowledge are in some way mind-dependent, had to be rejected. Moore reacted with the zeal of the convert, abandoning idealism for an extreme realism, rejecting the ontological monism which frequently accompanied absolute idealism in favour of an extreme atomism, and, more significantly, persuading Bertrand Russell to follow him.

Moore's resultant ontology is difficult even to comprehend, let alone accept. It begins to emerge in his theories of propositions and truth:

> A proposition is a synthesis of concepts; and just as concepts are themselves immutably what they are, so they stand in infinite relations to one another equally immutable. A proposition is constituted by any number of concepts, together with a specific relation between them, and according to the nature of this relation the proposition may be either true or false. What kind of relation makes a proposition true, what false, cannot be further defined, but must be immediately recognised.

(Moore 1899: 5)

All this may seem consistent with a correspondence theory of truth, but it quickly becomes clear that Moore does not think of the relation as 'making' the proposition true (or false) by arranging the proposition's concepts to reflect (or not) a corresponding arrangement of existents. One of his reasons, soon to become familiar in the framing of theories of truth, is the difficulty on the correspondence account of making sense of arithmetical truths. But his main reason is far more idiosyncratic. Clearly inspired by the residual influence of idealism, Moore contends that meanings cannot be abstracted from the actual things in the world that are meant. (Moore's conception of meaning involves rejection of distinctions such as that between sense and referent.) Consistent with this opposition to abstraction, and because he holds that meanings are concepts, he goes on to proclaim that 'the world is formed of

concepts'. In consequence, he rejects the correspondence theory, maintaining that a judgement's 'truth or falsehood cannot depend on its relation to anything else whatever, reality, for instance, or the world in space and time',[1] and that, while the correspondence theory tries to define truth in terms of existence, any definition should go in the other direction. Since, on this view, the world cannot be distinguished from the totality of propositions, Moore risks losing the distinction between truth and falsehood. At first it seems that he protects himself from this consequence by stipulating that truth is one kind of relation amongst concepts and falsehood another. This view would face the serious objection that it requires both truth and falsehood to be, each of them, a potentially infinite number of kinds of relations because of the potentially infinite complexity of propositions. But Moore quickly moves to a different protective strategy: he adds truth and falsehood to the stock of basic properties. (The move occurs seemingly unawares; this may be the first, inchoate, appearance of Moore's later idea of supervenient properties.) The idea is a version of what is now generally called 'primitivism': truth is a fundamental, indefinable, irreducible property of propositions. One of Moore's arguments for his claim that truth is primitive develops a theme which was also destined for familiarity: that any proposition which purports to define truth must, if the definition is to be correct, itself be true, so that any such definition is bound to be viciously circular.

Moore's view, which he soon abandoned, appears little more than an historical curiosity. Its importance, in hindsight, resides partly in its prefiguring of later concerns, but mainly in its impact on Russell, whose own version of this theory is highly significant because of its generation of an extended series of influential reactions to its internal difficulties. Russell's version begins with a sketchy account of judgement which may be called the 'binary theory': judgement is a single primitive binary relation between two entities, a judging mind and a proposition. But whereas Moore had taken the eternal constituents of propositions and put them into the world, Russell started with objects at least many of which are commonplace and constructed propositions from them. A proposition does not consist of words; 'it contains the entities indicated by words'.[2] These Russell called 'terms', and they include, e.g., men, chimaeras, and relations.[3] [From now on, we shall call this *the doctrine of real propositional constituents*.] The reason Russell believes that constituents of propositions are the things the propositions are *about* appears to be a view which emerges explicitly only later in his writings: that the sole alternative is to regard them as ideas, which are 'constituents of the mind of the person judging' and 'a veil between us and outside things'.[4] 'Every term', he says, '… is a logical subject … possessed of all the properties commonly assigned to substances'.[5] This idea that everything is at bottom an object, and of the same sort, is, Russell thinks, unavoidable: the attempt to deny it leads to self-contradiction.[6] His explanation of the contradiction is unclear, but it looks to be a version of Frege's notorious problem concerning

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[1] Moore 1899: 8, 18 respectively.

[2] Russell 1903: §51.

[3] ibid. §47.

[4] Russell 1911: 155.

[5] Russell 1903: §47.

[6] ibid. §49.

the concept *horse*,[7] namely that if one regards the proposition as composed of both saturated and unsaturated elements (in Frege's vocabulary, of objects and concepts), then it is impossible to talk about the unsaturated ones, for as soon as one puts the unsaturated, predicative, element into subject position it becomes something else, something saturated. This not only makes it impossible to talk about concepts, but certainly looks inconsistent. Had Russell used Fregean terminology, he would have held the constituents of propositions to be, all of them, saturated.

Why did Russell think that propositions, as well as being composed of entities, are themselves entities? Because he held that they were unities,[8] and he subscribed to the principle *ens et unum convertuntur*;[9] in addition, it soon became clear that his early attempts to prove the so-called 'axiom of infinity' require the assumption that propositions are entities[10] — without such a proof, he would have been forced to admit that the theorems of mathematics cannot be derived solely from principles which are true by logic alone. (That this assumption generates paradox is another story.) What makes a proposition a unity? His answer is that its constituents are related by the proposition's verb: 'the true logical verb in a proposition may be always regarded as asserting a relation'.[11] Moreover, the verb, Russell says, 'when used as a verb, embodies the unity of the proposition'.[12]

What, then, is the unity of the proposition? It is what distinguishes a proposition from a list of its constituents, so that unlike a mere list it 'holds together' and says something. But this seemingly undeniable unity, when combined with Russell's principle that 'Every constituent of every proposition must, on pain of self-contradiction, be capable of being made a logical subject',[13] generates a problem. On pain of contradiction, the verb must itself be a term, something capable of appearing as a logical subject, i.e. saturated. But it must be a very unusual kind of term, for while itself being one of the related items it must simultaneously be unsaturated too, the source of the proposition's unity, relating all its constituents. That is, the verb is unlike other terms in that it has, he says, a 'twofold nature … , as actual verb and verbal noun, [which] may be expressed … as the difference between a relation in itself and a

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[7] Frege 1892: 45.

[8] Russell 1903: §54.

[9] ibid. §47.

[10] Russell 1904b.

[11] Russell 1903: §53. He gets around the apparent exceptions posed by intransitive verbs like 'breathes' by claiming that in such cases the verb expresses a complex notion which 'usually asserts a definite relation to an indefinite relatum' (ibid. §48).

[12] ibid. §54. Russell talks indifferently of 'verbs' whether he means words or the 'entities indicated by words', i.e. terms. (This explains the frequency of subsequent accusations of use/mention confusions.) The indifference results from his inclination to the view that English grammar gives us — by and large — a transparent window through which to view reality. Although his inclination was temporary, this fantasy about grammar is surprisingly persistent, though generally as one or other unexamined presupposition rather than, as here, a doctrine explicitly embraced. It recurs with numbing frequency in the debate over truth, generally in the form that, because ' ... is true' is a grammatical predicate we should, *prima facie*, expect truth to be a property. (A recent example is Horwich 1998a: 37.) Some effort is made at exposing the fantasy in Oliver 1999 and Candlish 2001.

[13] Russell 1903: §52.

relation actually relating'.[14] Yet as soon as we make the verb a logical subject, we are forced to identify it as 'a relation in itself' rather than as 'a relation actually relating', destroying the unity of the original proposition in which it was the source of that unity. He illustrates the point like this:

> Consider, for example, the proposition "*A* differs from *B*." The constituents of this proposition, if we analyze it, appear to be only *A*, difference, *B*. Yet these constituents, thus placed side by side, do not reconstitute the proposition. The difference which occurs in the proposition actually relates *A* and *B*, whereas the difference after analysis is a notion which has no connection with *A* and *B* … . A proposition, in fact, is essentially a unity, and when analysis has destroyed the unity, no enumeration of constituents will restore the proposition. The verb, when used as a verb, embodies the unity of the proposition, and is thus distinguishable from the verb considered as a term, though I do not know how to give a clear account of the precise nature of the distinction.
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> (Russell 1903: §54)

Russell's problem, then, is that while he cannot deny propositional unity, he can find no account of the proposition which can do justice to it. Perhaps anxious to get on with mathematical matters, he left the matter unresolved. Opinions differ over how serious that problem is.[15] But a related difficulty is certainly serious: whether true or false, a proposition is a unity, hence on Russell's view an entity. In fact it is a complex entity whose constituents are the things it is about, which makes it hard to see how it can differ from what in his later vocabulary would be called a fact. The difficulty, in thin disguise, is just the perennial conundrum: how is false judgement possible? The source of the difficulty is the combination of Russell's attachment both to the unity of the proposition and to the doctrine of real propositional constituents. This makes it hard for him to give a sensible account of truth, and the correspondence theory is noticeably absent from *The Principles of Mathematics*. Rather, he turns to primitivism, saying merely that truth is an unanalysable property: true propositions just have it, false ones just lack it.[16] The world, then, contains both objective falsehoods and objective truths: 'objective', here, meaning that they are entities in no sense mind-dependent.

Some interpret these early forms of primitivism as a version of what has subsequently come to be called the identity theory of truth, according to which truth consists in an identity between truth-bearer and truthmaker.[17] This vacillation in recent commentary between the identity theory and primitivism is prefigured in Meinong, at least as described by Findlay.[18] Meinong's 'objectives', such as the being-white-of-snow and the being-an-integer-between-3-and-4, divide into two sorts, the factual (*tatsächlich*) and the unfactual (*untatsächlich*). There are no entities between our minds and these objectives, hence no propositions between

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[14] ibid. §54.

[15] Palmer (1988: *passim*) thinks it extremely serious. Sainsbury (1979: 20-25) suggests that, although it is a real difficulty for Russell, it just shows that he had a muddled conception of the construction of propositions.

[16] Russell 1903: §52.

[17] For example, Baldwin 1991, Cartwright 1987, Dodd 1995 §3, Hornsby 1999, David 2001 p. 684. The now-common but then unknown vocabulary of truth-bearer and truthmaker has to be understood as involving truth-aptness rather than actual truth; a truth-bearer may be false.

[18] Findlay 1933: ch. X sec. IX.

our minds and the facts. Truth and falsehood are derivative properties of objectives, when these are considered as the objects of what we should now call propositional attitudes. Findlay says of this, 'Meinong's theory of truth is therefore a theory of *identity* or *coincidence*. The *same* objective which is factual … reveals itself in a certain judgement or assumption … ; the fact itself is true in so far as it is the object of a judgement'.[19] What is it, though, for an objective to be factual? Factuality is, Meinong says, 'a fundamental property which admits of no definition'.[20] It could hardly be clearer how easy it is to move, without noticing, from the identity theory into primitivism.

But an identity theory of *truth* is unavailable to Moore and Russell, for they give an identity account of *all* propositions (truth-bearers), true and false, between which no distinction can be drawn merely by appeal to identity with some combination of propositional constituents (truthmakers); hence the need for a further property to accomplish the task. Russell himself appears to recognize the difference between primitivism and an identity theory in a slightly later presentation of his views in which primitivism has mutated from its earlier version, in which false propositions merely lack the property of truth, into one in which true propositions have one property and false another (though he gives no attempt to account for the opposition of truth and falsity).[21] In both versions, it is clear that the idea that truth is a primitive property is imposed by the failure of identity between representation and represented to provide a distinction between truth and falsehood.

1.2 Identity and coherence: Blanshard, Bradley, Joachim

The philosopher against whom both Moore and Russell took themselves to be principally reacting, and who exemplified in their minds the views they were rejecting as pernicious, was F. H. Bradley. Bradley is presented in the great majority of philosophy textbooks as a coherence theorist, and this is certainly how Russell understood him. He is also often implicitly presented as a metaphysician and no logician.[22] But he wrote a major work on the philosophy of logic, and his views are mostly ignored now because he, like Mill, attacked the idea that logic could be both formal and adequate to represent reasoning. In this major work (which incidentally convinced Russell that the logical form of universal propositions is hypothetical) he indicates that logic requires a correspondence theory.[23]

Despite this, he himself did not endorse correspondence, since in characteristic fashion he regarded logic as an inadequate key to metaphysics. His own account of truth is reached by a reaction against the correspondence theory (which he calls the 'copy' theory). There is a set of problems clustering around the notion of judgement which Bradley sums up succinctly just following his seeming endorsement of that theory:
      How then are ideas related to realities? They seemed the same, but they clearly are not

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[19] ibid. 88: italics in the original.

[20] Quoted by Findlay, ibid. 76.

[21] Russell 1904a: 473f.

[22] He is, for example, lampooned by Ayer in his assault on metaphysics (1936: 36), and ignored by the Kneales in their magisterial history of logic (Kneale 1962).

[23] Bradley 1883: 41f.

so, and their difference threatens to become a discrepancy. A fact is individual, an idea is universal; a fact is substantial, an idea is adjectival; a fact is self-existent, an idea is symbolical. Is it not then manifest that ideas are *not* joined in the way in which facts are? Nay the essence of an idea, the more it is considered, is seen more and more to diverge from reality. And we are confronted by the conclusion that, so far as anything is true, it is *not* fact, and, so far as it is fact, it can never be true.

(Bradley 1883: 43f)

The word 'fact' here indicates a truthmaker, and 'idea' a truth-bearer. The suggestion is that, because of the inherent limitations of symbolism, it is impossible ever to have a true judgement in the sense that it accurately reflects the reality with which it deals. The correspondence theory, applied to symbolic thought and taken quite literally, commits us to the view that no judgement is ever actually true.

This train of thought is behind the most important of a string of problems which Bradley marshals in his consideration of the correspondence theory.[24] First, judgements about the past and the future cannot be the result of copying.[25] Second, the very facts whose copying is supposed to give us truth are themselves 'the imaginary creatures of false theory', whose seemingly independent existence is merely the result of projecting on to the world the divisions imposed by thought, whereas if thought is to be capable of truth those divisions must exist independently of thought itself.[26] Third, '[d]isjunctive, negative and hypothetical judgements cannot be taken as all false, and yet cannot fairly be made to conform to our one type of truth', and neither can '[u]niversal and abstract truths'.[27]

Bradley then moves on to the pragmatic theory of truth, and suggests a fourth objection: that at bottom, both theories commit the error of defending the supposition of a 'truth which is external to knowledge' and a 'knowledge which is external to reality'.[28] The argument that this is an error seems to turn on the claim that the supposition involves a vicious circularity: for '*p*' to be true, it must be true also that '*p*' is a copy of *p*, or that believing '*p*' is advantageous (and so *ad infinitum)*; and for '*p*' to be known to be true, it must also be known that '*p*' is a copy of *p* or that believing it is advantageous (and so *ad infinitum*).

The third of these objections was serious, and required the invention of the theory of truth-functions for a plausible answer to be provided. The first, though, might be easily dismissed as arising from a misunderstanding. But Bradley's discussion of the correspondence theory is infected by a strain of anti-realism, which would be expected from one who is committed to idealism. (This helps to explain why he calls it the copy theory, since he appears to assume that it is a theory of the genesis as well as of the nature of truth.) In his view, truth cannot be verification-transcendent, and, on the correspondence theory, must be obtained by a process of copying reality. But the correspondence theory is usually associated with metaphysical realism. This objection thus rests on a far wider disagreement.

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[24] Bradley 1907.

[25] ibid. 107.

[26] ibid. 108.

[27] ibid. 109.

[28] ibid. 111.

We have already seen Moore making the claim on which the fourth objection rests. Philosophers divide over whether to take it seriously, either in general (for it threatens every attempt to give an account of what truth consists in) or in application to the correspondence theory.[29] But if we take the notions of correspondence and fact at face value, so that the fact is an independently existing counterpart of the proposition and there must be a further fact for each true proposition about correspondence to correspond to in order to be true, then the regress will be vicious. When one thinks of the elaborate apparatus employed in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* to avoid such a regress, in particular the distinction between showing and saying, one could reasonably wonder whether the correspondence theory's regress can be dismissed without following that book in making the theory unstatable.

The second objection is the most foreign to a modern reader, who may be surprised to learn that these grounds of Bradley's dissatisfaction with the correspondence theory were shared by that hero of modern logicians, Frege:

> A correspondence, moreover, can only be perfect if the corresponding things coincide and so are just not different things … . It would only be possible to compare an idea with a thing if the thing were an idea too. And then, if the first did correspond perfectly with the second, they would coincide. But this is not at all what people intend when they define truth as the correspondence of an idea with something real. For in this case it is essential precisely that the reality shall be distinct from the idea. But then there can be no complete correspondence, no complete truth. So nothing at all would be true; for what is only half true is untrue. Truth does not admit of more and less.
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> (Frege 1918: 3)

Frege follows this initial argument against the correspondence theory with the consideration of an obvious response, that all that is required is 'correspondence in a certain respect' (loc. cit.). To this, where Bradley would have rejected such talk of 'respects' with his second objection, Frege provides Bradley's fourth objection, of vicious circularity, which he supposes gives us, when generalized, and buttressed by the assumption that truth is not a matter of degree, good reason not only to reject the correspondence theory but to maintain that truth is '*sui generis* and indefinable', a 'property of a thought',[30] thus apparently abandoning his earlier and more well known view that the True is an object named by sentences. Frege, then, like Moore, thinks that all attempts to define truth in these kinds of ways involve a vicious circle, and reverts to primitivism. But Bradley tried instead to bring thought and reality together, to do justice to the idea that when we think truly, *what we are thinking is what is the case,* and follows his rejection of correspondence by expounding his own largely unrecognized view of truth:

> The division of reality from knowledge and of knowledge from truth must in any form be abandoned. And the only way of exit from the maze is to accept the remaining

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[29] Examples of both sides of the divide are provided by Ralph Walker. In his 1989 (p. 99) he asserts without argument that the correspondence theory's regress is non-vicious. In his 2001 (pp. 150-1), he attempts to *show* that the regress is non-vicious for the correspondence theory while vicious for the coherence theory. The argument appears to turn on a confusion of the correspondence platitude (which all theorists of truth can agree to affirm) and the correspondence *theory*, which requires some serious account of the nature of the correspondence.

[30] Frege 1918: 4, 6.

alternative. Our one hope lies in taking courage to embrace the result that reality is not outside truth. The identity of truth knowledge and reality, whatever difficulty that may bring, must be taken as necessary and fundamental.

(Bradley 1907: 112-138)

This view has come to be called the identity theory of truth. But what does this slogan 'the identity of truth and reality' amount to?[31] It looks as if Bradley means that truth consists in the identity of some *x* with a reality that thereby makes *x* true; and the identity theory's most general form is that we have truth iff the truth-bearer is identical with the appropriate truthmaker.

We can see that Bradley's identity theory of truth arose out of his second objection to the correspondence theory: that its view of facts is based on the illusion that a proposition can be true by corresponding to part of a situation even though it rips that part from its background and separates it up into further parts which are not separate in reality. Because he rejected this fragmented world in favour of a monistic ontology, not of a Parmenidean sort but one in which reality is itself a coherent whole of differentiated but not separate parts, his identity theory of truth allows him to employ a coherence theory of justification, and entails that coherence is a test of truth. In fact, in his view, it is *the* test.[32] The result is that much of his discussion of truth is conducted in coherentist terms (e.g. 'system'). It is easy to be misled; and when Russell launched his famous attack on the coherence theory,[33] while he focused ostensibly on Harold Joachim's version of it, it is clear that his real target was Bradley, whom he took to be an archetypal coherence theorist. (Russell's seminal role in the subsequent discussion explains the already-remarked mistakes of the textbooks.) Russell's focus on Joachim may not have been entirely misdirected, however, since Joachim's theory is obviously inspired by Bradley's, and he too features, along with Brand Blanshard, as a textbook coherence theorist — indeed, the theories of Joachim and Blanshard are so similar that we may usually treat them as one. And yet, like Bradley's, their theory has an important feature that is either overlooked or underemphasized in the textbook characterizations of coherence theories of truth. For although, in contrast to Bradley, they insist that the nature (and not just the test) of truth lies in coherence, they resemble him in claiming that the genuinely coherent system of belief will be identical with reality.

However, while Bradley's appeal to coherence follows from his identity theory, the direction of entailment seems to flow the other way for Joachim and Blanshard. They worked their way into a theory of truth through a theory of judgement that began with the idea that the nature of judgement needs to be understood teleologically – to understand judgement we need to understand the goal we have in making a judgement. They concluded that there are two such goals. One is, as Bradley insisted, that in judging we aim to judge that things are the way they are. The other, 'immanent', goal we have in making a judgement is to put an end to our inquiry. Of course, neither Blanshard nor Joachim thought that just any judgement would

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[31] The presence of the word 'knowledge' in Bradley's version of the slogan is to be explained through the already-noted verificationist element in his idealism. We ignore it here as an unnecessary hostage to fortune.
[32] Bradley 1909: 202.
[33] Russell 1907.

suffice for this. Only a properly justified judgement can satisfy our curiosity.[34] So we need to understand what it is for a belief to be justified in order to understand the nature of judgement.

For the early coherence theorists, a justified judgement is one that coheres with the rest of our beliefs. But what, exactly, is it for two things to 'cohere'? Do beliefs cohere as long as they are consistent? For both Joachim and Blanshard, a coherent set of beliefs must not only be consistent, but also form a systematic, unified, explanatory system.[35] Blanshard goes even further and claims that in the perfectly coherent system, that which lies at the end of all inquiry, each judgement will be necessitated by the others. The central feature in this account of justification, though, is its holism. For clearly no belief considered on its own could be coherent in this sense. Instead, it is a whole system of beliefs that is coherent and whether any particular belief is justified is a matter of whether the system of belief will be coherent, remain a *system*, after the inclusion of the belief. Thus for Joachim and Blanshard, as for Quine, the primary bearer of epistemic merit is a whole system of beliefs.

Moreover, this system of beliefs is a *teleological* whole because it has a unity that lies, in part, in the fact that its construction has the common goal of putting an end to the inquiry. As Joachim characterizes it, a teleological whole is '… a whole of parts such that each part contributes determinately to constitute the whole, and that the structural plan of the whole determines precisely the nature of the differences which are its parts … .'[36] Given that the parts of the system are the beliefs that make it up, this conception of the system implies that the nature of a belief depends upon the whole of which it is a part. In fact, both Blanshard and Joachim insist that judgements do not have any determinate significance in isolation.[37]

But what do these claims about justification and judgement have to do with truth? Blanshard argued that the conception of our belief system as a teleological whole united under the goal of ending inquiry was incompatible with a correspondence theory of truth. He maintained that to suppose truth is correspondence is to suppose that the goal of establishing the systematic coherence of our beliefs is different from that of apprehending the nature of reality. However, if this is the case, what reason do we have for supposing that by pursuing the goal of coherence we are creating a system of thought that corresponds to some external reality? And if there is no reason to think that we are getting at the truth by constructing such a system, why should we stick with this method of inquiry? As Blanshard thinks that this method of inquiry is part of the nature of thought itself he concludes that the correspondence theory's failure to justify this procedure (by failing to tie it to truth) will leave us forever out of touch

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[34] Blanshard 1939 vol. 1: 489; Joachim 1906: ch. 3.

[35] Blanshard 1939 vol. 2: 264; Joachim 1906: 73-8.

[36] Joachim 1906: 9f.

[37] Blanshard 1939 vol. 2: 266; Joachim 1906: 73, 93. Although their overall position combines epistemological holism with meaning holism, there is no argument provided (as far as we are aware) from one form of holism to the other. They seem to draw their motivation for both positions from their conception of the goal of thought as the identification of thought with reality and the idea that this identification can occur only if the reality has been made intelligible.

with reality.[38] Furthermore, for the correspondence theorist to identify the two goals of judging, it would have to be possible to justify a belief by comparing it to some independent, unconceptualized fact. But Joachim and Blanshard's coherence theory of justification was based on the claim that we have no access to unconceptualized facts that on their own could justify some belief. So there is no way for us to justify our thoughts by comparing them with such facts.[39]

Indeed, Joachim and Blanshard agreed with Bradley's second objection to the correspondence theory, claiming that both reality and our conception of it are teleological wholes whose unity would be destroyed, and their nature falsified, by what he had called the 'vicious abstraction' that such a theory entails.[40] As applied to truth, the idea is that we do not speak the truth if we say less than the situation we are talking about would justify, just as we do not speak the truth if we say more, or something entirely different. Their hostility to any such abstraction ensures that, when their views are consistently carried through, at most one proposition can be true — that which encapsulates reality in its entirety.

The identity theory in this version has the advantage that it can meet a condition of any theory of truth, that it must make room for falsehood, the condition which diverted other potential identity theorists in the direction of primitivism; for they can account for falsehood as a falling short of this vast proposition and hence as an abstraction of part of reality from the whole. The result is that they all adopted the idea that there are degrees of truth: that proposition is the least true which is the most distant from the whole of reality.[41] Adopting this doctrine at least allows some sort of place for false propositions and the possibility of distinguishing worse from better.[42] However, the consequence of this is that all ordinary propositions will turn out to be more or less infected by falsehood because they fail to reach this ideal of inclusiveness. It is also unclear how such a theory can distinguish between the degrees to which different beliefs are false and so explain how we can be led towards the truth. For his part, Joachim seems to claim that the ground of falsity and error in particular judgements lies precisely in a failure to see that all such judgements are only partial truths.[43] As Russell was quick to point out, this suggestion entails that if someone asserts that some birds have wings, while confidently believing that the assertion is true, the assertion must be false.[44]

Russell also famously objected to the coherence theory on the grounds that it would be easy to create coherent systems of propositions that contain falsehoods.[45] For example, the claim

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[38] Blanshard 1939 vol. 2: 267ff.

[39] Joachim carefully spells this out in Joachim 1906: ch. 2. The question remains, of course, as to whether the two goals of judging really do need to be identified as Joachim and Blanshard insist.

[40] Joachim 1906: 36ff; Blanshard 1939 vol. 2: 266-7.

[41] Bradley 1909; Blanshard 1939 vol. 2, ch. 27; Joachim 1906: 85-121.

[42] Although philosophers have tended to share Russell's scorn for this idea (see, e.g., the Fregean argument quoted near the start of this section), variants of it keep turning up. See §4 below.

[43] Joachim 1906: 162.

[44] Russell 1907: 135.

[45] Because Russell used the example of a coherent system that contained the claim that the (in fact

that no birds have wings undoubtedly belongs to some coherent system of propositions, though presumably one that is constituted by a vastly different range of propositions from those most of us accept. As we have seen, although this objection would have been partly directed at Bradley it has no force against his identity theory of truth. Yet its force against Joachim and Blanshard's theory is also questionable. For a start, all these philosophers insisted that the relevant set of propositions was that of those actually believed.[46] And they insisted further that not just any set of non-contradictory beliefs counts as coherent. In particular, these coherent systems were called 'self-fulfilling' in part because the standards that a belief must reach to become part of the system were themselves part of the system. These standards could (and do) evolve over time.[47] So judgements that cohere must not only be justified (rather than merely adopted on a whim) but the standards of justification themselves get stronger and our inquiries more focused and effective as our inquiry progresses and we learn more about the domain in question. Thus it is at least not as easy as Russell suggested to create a coherent set of beliefs that contain what we would consider falsehoods. Perhaps it is possible to do so if we start our hypothetical set with different standards for entry into the set than those we actually have. For Joachim and Blanshard, however, it is not possible to swap our standards of justification: they are part of the nature of thought.

Regardless of whether any or all of Bradley, Joachim and Blanshard can provide an account of falsehood and avoid the Bishop Stubbs objection, the metaphysical price of their theories is obviously high. The price has several components. For one, whether one agrees with Joachim and Blanshard's peculiar teleological account of judgement or not, it is clear that the idealist metaphysics built into it is what ensures that their claims about the identity of truth-bearer and truthmaker are at least not non-starters. Yet this metaphysical position on its own is too costly for most philosophers.

Further, Bradley worried that the theory's sole all-describing proposition will still be infected by falsehood. For the nature of symbolism demands that it display reality's connected aspects by means of separate fragments, and it will itself both have to be, as an existent, part of reality and yet, as reality's description, separate from it. The only resolution of these difficulties which he could see was to go further in the same direction, concluding that the total proposition, to attain complete truth, would have to cease to be a proposition and *become* the reality it is meant to be *about*. This seems to be what Blanshard had in mind when we claimed that truth is 'thought on its way home'.[48] While Joachim and Blanshard agreed to such talk of identity, though, it was not meant to *replace* the claim that the nature of truth is coherence. They insisted that theirs is a coherence theory. It is just that the ideally coherent system of judgements will be identical with reality.

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eminently respectable) Bishop Stubbs was hanged for murder, this objection has become known as the Bishop Stubbs objection. Russell 1907: 135-9.

[46] Lengthy investigations of whether this move protects the coherence theory from the Bishop Stubbs objecton can be found in Walker 1989 and Wright 1995.

[47] Blanshard 1939 vol. 1: 490; Joachim 1906: 76f.

[48] Blanshard 1939 vol. 2: 264.

But Bradley drew more extravagant consequences from their shared hostility to abstraction. While this hostility initially motivates the identity theory, when it is allowed to remain unbridled, its implications begin to threaten even the theory itself. For although Bradley, Joachim and Blanshard all described their view of truth in terms of 'identity', and so justify talk of an identity theory of truth, this title is ultimately misleading in application to Bradley, since his theory ends up as eliminativist: on his anti-Hegelian view, reality transcends the rational, and turns out not to have a fact-like structure expressible in any propositional form at all,[49] so that when full truth is attained, the point of inexpressibility is reached. Hence Bradley, despite using the word 'identity' to describe his view, says as well that 'in the proper sense of thought, thought and fact are not the same' and talked of the attainment of complete truth in terms of thought's 'happy suicide'.[50] In effect, as the proposition approaches complete truth, it disappears altogether in favour of reality:

> But if truth and fact are to be one, then in some such way thought must reach its consummation. But in that consummation thought has certainly been so transformed, that to go on calling it thought seems indefensible.

(Bradley1893: 152)

Bradley's metaphysical theory of truth, when its consequences are fully explored, thus turns out to be self-destructive. His metaphysics is such that he did not regard this as an objection. But it is likely to seem so to those — surely the overwhelming majority — unwilling to share his entire metaphysical vision, with the result that the theory appears to be merely an historical curiosity. However, we shall see that the fundamental ideal of the identity theory — securing truth by closing the gap between mind and world — has been recently revived and is once more influencing discussion.

1.3 Correspondence: Russell, Wittgenstein

Russell's attack on Joachim signalled a move away from the binary theory of judgement and its required primitivist account of truth. As early as 1904, he was articulating worries about primitivism in his long consideration of Meinong:

> It may be said — and this is, I believe, the correct view — that there is no problem at all in truth and falsehood; that some propositions are true and some false, just as some roses are red and some white; … . But this theory *seems* to leave our preference for truth a mere unaccountable prejudice, and in no way to answer to the feeling of truth and falsehood … .
>
> The fundamental objection may be simply expressed by saying that true propositions express *fact*, while false ones do not. This at once raises the problem: What is a fact? And the difficulty of this problem lies in this, that a fact appears to be merely a true proposition, so that what seemed a significant assertion becomes a tautology.

(Russell 1904a: 473)

After this succinct discussion of issues still surrounding the notion of truth, Russell reassures himself that primitivism is all right — 'What is truth, and what falsehood, we must merely apprehend, for both seem incapable of analysis' — and it turns out that 'our preference for truth' (which we have since learned to re-label as the claim that truth is a 'norm of assertion')

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[49] Bradley 1883: 590f.
[50] Bradley 1893: 150, 152.

is not 'a mere unaccountable prejudice' but is justified by 'an ultimate ethical proposition'. Still, it is clear that he is uneasy. By 1907 Russell's discomfort with the primitivism imposed on him by the binary theory was great enough for him to end his critique of Joachim by contemplating replacement of the latter with the multiple relation theory of judgement; and in 1910 he committed himself to the change.[51]

The new theory is developed against the background of his criticism of Meinong's primitivist account of truth and falsehood as properties of objectives. Falsehood, he now thinks, is the work of the mind and not an independent property: it is impossible to believe in the existence of real mind-independent objectives where a judgement is false, and this provides sufficient reason for not believing in them even where the judgement is true; furthermore, primitivism renders the true/false distinction a 'mystery'. In consequence, he opts for a new theory in which judgement is not binary but 'a multiple relation of the mind to the various other terms with which the judgement is concerned'.[52] It is clear that most of his dissatisfaction is not in fact with primitivism *per se*. It is rather with the idea that the world contains mind-independent falsehoods; and this is a consequence of the combination of the unity of the proposition with the doctrine of real propositional constituents, not of primitivism. Be that as it may, however, propositions, as the truth-bearing unified entities which figured in the binary theory, have disappeared altogether (although the vocabulary lingers); they have been displaced by propositional acts. A full account of the theory, together with its version of the correspondence theory of truth, is given in the last couple of pages of the paper. Using some of Russell's own words, it may be summarized thus: When we judge that, say, *A* loves *B*, we have 'before the mind' the person *A*, the person *B*, and the relation of loving, in such a way that the relation is not present 'abstractly' but as proceeding from *A* to *B*. The judgement is true when there is a corresponding complex object, *A*'s loving *B*, and false when there is not. Russell thus endorses a correspondence theory of truth, in which the complex object (which Russell was soon to call a 'fact') to which a true judgement corresponds is something the theory presents as quite independent of that judgement itself.

This presentation of the multiple relation theory embroiled Russell in a confusion of the problem of direction (how do we ensure that non-symmetrical relations like 'loves' go in the right direction?) with the problem of unity (how do we ensure that we have a proposition, and not a mere collocation of its individual constituents?), a confusion which was partly responsible for a rapid succession of different versions of the multiple relation theory, whose differences may be ignored here,[53] for in all its versions the theory is still dogged with the problem which had forced Russell to adopt primitivism as the suitable theory of truth for the binary relation theory of judgement.

The multiple relation theory was meant to circumvent the binary theory's problematic requirement of the mind-independent existence of all propositions constructed from real constituents. But once primitivism's apparatus for making the true/false distinction is no

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[51] Russell 1910b.

[52] ibid. 122.

[53] They are discussed in detail in Candlish 1996, from which the current discussion has been condensed and modified.

longer available, false judgement is rendered impossible, even on the multiple relation theory. That theory is made necessary by Russell's lingering attachment to the doctrine of real propositional constituents and the idea that a truthmaker is a set of objects unified by a relation which is itself one of those objects. But these views, combined with Russell's recognition of the need to distinguish between a judgement that *A* loves *B* and the mind's merely being simultaneously acquainted with *A* and love and *B*, are bound to lead to a collapse in the ability to employ the true/false distinction. To see this, suppose that it is true that *aRb*, i.e. that this unified 'complex object' exists. Now suppose that someone S judges that *aRb*. This judgement consists in the unification of S, *a*, *R* and *b* by the judging relation (call it '*J*'). But on this account, all such judgements will be false owing to a failure of correspondence, since in the fact *a* and *b* are related by *R*, whereas in the judgement — according to an essential component of the multiple relation theory — *a* and *b* are not related by *R* (but by *J*). A natural response to this objection is to say that the multiple relation theory should be modified so that *a* and *b* are related by *R* inside the judgement, thus enabling correspondence to hold. But this modification has the consequence that no judgement can be false, since any judgement will unify its components and create the fact which makes it true. That is, either the judging does not include a suitable correspondent for the judged, in which case nothing can be true; or it does, in which case nothing can be false.

A possible defence of Russell's combination of views at this point would be to say that all that this objection reveals is a serious unclarity in the notion of correspondence, and that Russell should have gone on to show how a non-unified collection of objects can correspond in the required sense to a complex object whose components are those objects. Even if this line is taken, however, the multiple relation theory still relies upon a mysterious power of the mind to assemble and arrange real objects (and modern versions of the theory which employ sequences to do the same job are no more than stipulations which merely disguise the mystery). Furthermore, it does nothing to address the difficulty concerning unity which had partly prompted the replacement of the binary by the multiple relation theory, that is, Russell's treatment of relations as substance-like objects and his consequent requirement that a relation play the inconsistent role of both the unifier and the unified: in the new theory this role has merely been transferred from the judged relation *R* to the judging relation *J*.

In 1918, Russell himself effectively conceded the first of these criticisms and admitted the problem of falsehood had not been solved; in 1924 he conceded the second.[54] In fact, within the metaphysics of logical atomism, it is vital for the possibility of false judgement, and indeed of a correspondence theory of truth, that there be some distinction between the real objects about which some judgement is made and the constituents of the judgement. It is thus hardly surprising that, soon after this concession, Russell abandoned both the doctrine of real propositional constituents and the multiple relation theory of judgement in favour of a mentalistic view of the nature of propositional constituents while retaining successive variants of the correspondence theory of truth.[55]

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[54] Russell 1918: 198f; Russell 1924: 170-3. The latter concession is disingenuously presented as not a change but a clarification.

[55] Russell 1919; Russell 1959: ch. xv.

A feature of both the multiple relation and the correspondence theories is that Russell originally explained them only for non-quantified propositions; he abandoned the former before attempting its extension to include quantification, but it is clear that any such extension could not be straightforward, and poses a problem for the associated extension of the latter, since the nature of correspondence as originally explained would not apply where quantifiers are involved.[56] At first this seemed to Russell an advantage, since it opened the possibility of explaining one of the distinctions required by type theory (and at one stage he tried unsuccessfully to use it to solve the Liar Paradox). But it also posed a problem he never solved: his logic contained unrestricted generalizations about propositions,[57] and these require an infinite realm of propositions which exist independently of their contingent formulation by finite minds. A natural solution to the difficulty would be to say that the quantification extends over possibilities; but Russell himself made this solution unavailable by his repeated insistence that possibility is not fundamental but must be accounted for in terms of actuality.[58]

In 1913 Wittgenstein had severely criticized the latest version of Russell's theory of judgement. While there is still argument about the nature of the criticism, there is no argument about the fact that Wittgenstein's views in the *Tractatus* were often formed in reaction to Russell's. He follows Russell in adopting a correspondence theory: but his accounts of propositions and truth are distinguished by their embodying ingenious treatments of the problems with which Russell had been struggling unsuccessfully.

First, Wittgenstein rejected the doctrine of real propositional constituents; instead, propositional constituents are Names, not Objects. (The expressions are capitalized in this pargaraph to draw attention to the fact that these are no ordinary names or objects, but the end-points of analysis required by a theory.) This immediately relieved him of the worry that the demand that the proposition be a unity would make every proposition true, the worry which had driven Russell, first, into primitivism, and then, following his rejection of primitivism, into the multiple relation theory of judgement. Wittgenstein could allow propositions to be unified without risking the creation of their truthmaking facts, whose constituents are Objects, not Names.

Secondly, Wittgenstein had a coherent account of propositional unity itself (and, incidentally, of the corresponding unity of the truthmaking fact). To take Russell's example, suppose that it is true that *A* differs from *B*. Russell had understood this proposition as consisting of three things, *A* and difference and *B*; as we saw, he was unable to explain how these saturated objects could form either a proposition, or, after the abandonment of the binary theory, a fact. (Bradley had seen the difficulty, arguing that if one thinks, as Russell does, of relations as a sort of object, the demand for propositional unity sets off a vicious infinite regress as one endeavours vainly to find a relation which will not itself need further relating to its relata.) Part of Wittgenstein's strategy is obvious enough: it was to reject Russell's treatment of

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[56] He eventually accommodated the latter by the postulation of 'general facts', in addition to singular facts, to be the truthmakers for quantified propositions; it is still far from obvious how this postulation is consistent with the doctrine of real propositional constituents. See Russell 1918: 206f.

[57] Compare the point about the axiom of infinity in §1.1.

[58] The matters touched on in this paragraph are well explained in Hylton 1990: 355f.

relations as saturated objects. But he followed Russell in rejecting Frege's idea that relations are unsaturated constituents of propositions. This left the problem — a solution to which is vital for a defence of a correspondence theory of truth — of accounting for the truth of relational statements.[59] He unravelled this tangle by maintaining that both facts and propositions are unified by relations which do not figure in them as constituents.

The crucial remarks in the *Tractatus* for understanding Wittgenstein's views on these matters are these:

> The propositional sign consists in the fact that its elements, the words, are combined in it in a definite way.
> The propositional sign is a fact.

(Wittgenstein 1921: 3.14; Ogden's translation)

> Not "The complex sign 'aRb' says that a stands to b in the relation R", but rather, that "a" stands to "b" in a certain relation says that aRb.

(ibid. 3.1432; SC's translation.)

In the *Tractatus*, then, propositions contain no names of relations, and in particular the relation which unifies them does not appear as a propositional constituent but is exhibited by the relation of the names to each other. Correspondingly, in the truthmaking fact, relations are not a further kind of object demanding to be related to the other constituents of the fact. The symbolizing of a relational fact is accomplished by the construction of another relational fact which is isomorphic in its structure. Propositions, on this account, are a kind of picture.

Along with this solution of the problem of unity we get a definite account of the nature of the correspondence involved in truth: a proposition is true just if the arrangement of its constituent names is isomorphic to an actual arrangement of objects, with a 1:1 relation of names to objects; it is false when the arrangement is merely possible but not actual. The pictorial relation is not itself stated, but shown; in Wittgenstein's view it cannot be stated, since it involves logical form, which is presupposed in any proposition at all. In this way, Wittgenstein was able both to maintain a correspondence theory and to evade the Bradley/Frege argument that the theory involves a vicious infinite regress: the evasion is accomplished by making the theory unstatable.

Of course, propositions expressed in natural language look nothing like pictures. Wittgenstein dealt with this understandable reaction in three stages. First, the notion of *picture* is generalized to embrace propositions.[60] Second, the claim that the proposition is a picture is restricted to the *fully analysed* proposition; when a proposition's deep form is revealed, it will be shown to consist of nothing but names of objects. The analysis is accomplished by repeated application of Russell's Theory of Definite Descriptions to everyday names until the real ones are reached. Third, the pictorial account is restricted to atomic propositions; molecular propositions are truth-functions of atomic propositions. This meets one of

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[59] As we saw, for Russell these were *all* statements, but in fact Wittgenstein's solution, while compatible with this Russellian view, does not require it, since, if it works at all, it applies just as well to monadic propositions treated as fundamentally so.

[60] This is accomplished in §§2.1 - 2.19; it is well described in Pears 1977.

Bradley's objections to the correspondence theory: the theory can be restricted to a base class of atomic propositions from which all others can be generated.

The pictorial account also provided Wittgenstein with a way of dealing with another problem which had been puzzling Russell, namely, why belief contexts are not truth-functional despite their appearing to contain propositions. Russell had concluded that, not being truth-functions of the propositions believed, belief statements reveal a new kind of atomic fact.[61] Wittgenstein, rejecting both the binary and the multiple relation view of judgements concluded that they are neither atomic nor molecular;[62] rather, they are not propositions at all, but disguised deployments of the pictorial relation — the real form of 'A believes that *p*', is '"*p*" says that *p*',[63] which on the *Tractatus* account is not a proposition at all but just an attempt to say what can only be shown.

In this way Wittgenstein deals all at once with a great range of problems surrounding the notion of truth. But the metaphysical price paid is very high, and it was not long before even he decided that he was not prepared to pay it.

1.4 Pragmatism: Dewey, James, Peirce

At the same time that Russell and Bradley were arguing with each other about truth, both were arguing with William James. Like other pragmatists, James rejected the idea that there are fixed, ideal structures of thought such as we saw (in §1.2) figuring in the theories of Blanshard and Joachim. Moreover, the pragmatists denied that thought and reality are such that they could be, even if only ideally, identical (as Bradley as well as Blanshard and Joachim seemed to maintain). On the other hand, like these theorists, the pragmatists attacked as false abstractions the correspondence theory's twin notions of truth and facts as external to justification. Yet despite their combative stance, they shared the common approach of devising a theory of truth on the basis of a theory of judgement.

The American pragmatists were largely united under a maxim expressed by Peirce:

> Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object.

> (Peirce 1878: 258)

This maxim served as a way to 'make our ideas clear' and to brush aside metaphysical games of make-believe and philosophical arguments whose resolution could have no practical significance to our lives. Applied to judgements, it obviously implies that they are to be individuated according to their practical causes and effects. Yet although the pragmatist theory of judgement originates with Peirce's maxim, there is a significant difference between his pragmatic theory of truth and the sort of conception of truth found in the works of

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[61] Russell 1918: 199.

[62] The rejections of the binary and multiple relation theories are at Wittgenstein 1921: §5.541-2 and §5.5422 respectively.

[63] ibid. §5.542.

William James and John Dewey.[64]

Peirce applied the pragmatic maxim directly to our concept of truth and argued that the only experiential and pragmatic concepts we have to guide us here are the notions of doubt and belief:

> But if by truth and falsity you mean something not definable in terms of doubt and belief in any way, then you are talking of entities of whose existence you can know nothing, and which Ockham's razor would clean shave off. Your problems would be greatly simplified, if, instead of saying that you want to know the "Truth", you were to say that you want to attain a state of belief unassailable by doubt.
>
> (Peirce 1905: 279)

Thus, truth is the property of those beliefs that are unassailable by doubt and that therefore register the fact that we have formed a settled opinion. The true beliefs are those that are held at the end of our inquiry. Like Joachim and Blanshard, Peirce emphasizes that the immanent goal of inquiry is the suspension of doubt and identifies the beliefs reached at the end of an ideal inquiry with the set of *true* beliefs.

However, it would be a mistake to see Peirce's theory of truth as a pragmatically construed coherence/identity theory. Peirce did not think that our final set of beliefs would be identical with reality. Instead, he held the optimistic belief that only a properly scientific inquiry would successfully create a stable end to doubt and inquiry and at the same time reveal the nature of reality. Admittedly, Peirce gave 'reality' a revised definition. 'The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real. That is the way I would explain reality.'[65] It is important to see that although Peirce shares the coherence theorist's intuition that reality is just what is 'represented' by the set of beliefs at the end of inquiry, his motivations are entirely different. For Peirce, the pragmatic maxim about meaning dictates that 'reality' be construed so that the real is, ideally, attainable within the realm of experience. There is no room for a reality that is in principle epistemically unreachable and plays no role in guiding our inquiry. By redefining 'reality' in this way, Peirce has reinterpreted the idea of true beliefs corresponding to reality. Because reality is what the ultimate set of beliefs will say exists, we have been given a guarantee that the true beliefs are those that correspond to reality.

Nevertheless, it was these close ties to the coherence theory that led James and Dewey to develop the pragmatist line further and so abandon Peirce's theory of truth. Both denied that there would be some ultimate or final point of view that would contain all and only the truths:

> But owing to the fact that all experience is a process, no point of view can ever be the last one. Every one is insufficient and off its balance, and responsible to later points of view than itself.
>
> (James 1904: 55)

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[64] James and Dewey themselves had slightly different theories of truth; in particular, Dewey seems more willing to straightforwardly equate truth with verification (see Dewey 1948: 159f). However, given the restrictions of space, we have focused on the claims to which they both would have agreed.

[65] Peirce 1878: 268.

In effect, this point from James amounts to a criticism of Peirce's conception of inquiry from within pragmatism itself. How are we to understand the notion of an ideal end to inquiry in pragmatic terms? How are we to tell that we have reached the end rather than merely fooled ourselves into thinking that we have because the game has started to get boring and difficult?[66]

James and Dewey both considered the essential feature of their pragmatism to be their conception of judgements as tools of our own making that are designed to help us cope with our surroundings.[67] On this view, we should not expect some endpoint to inquiry. What counts as useful is, of course, interest-relative and we have no reason to suspect that we have some fixed set of interests that will determine some final, ultimately useful system of beliefs. So, as our interests endlessly change, new needs and questions will arise and the process of inquiry will continue on.

This view of the goal of judging leads quite naturally to a theory of truth. If the goal of judging is to help us cope, then the true judgements are those that succeed in this goal. James famously defined truth on just these lines.

> 'The true', to put it very briefly, is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as 'the right' is only the expedient in the way of our behaving. Expedient in almost any fashion; and expedient in the long run and on the whole of course … .
>
> (James 1907b: 222)

Yet, such a theory of truth faces some obvious criticisms and, again, Russell was one of the first to raise them. Russell complained that James's theory entailed that we could not work out whether a belief is true until we worked out whether it would be useful to believe it.[68] But James claimed that their theory was not one of justification, not meant to provide us with a *criterion* for deciding which of our beliefs are true.[69] Even so, Dewey maintained that some belief may be true now, even if we do not now know whether it will turn out to be useful or not. It still has the ability to work now and this will come to light as it is tested and relied on.[70] To the extent the pragmatist theory does provide criteria for determining whether a belief is true or not, the criteria would be the same as any of us would endorse; namely weighing evidence, checking for consistency, inspecting the world and so on.

James gives us another definition of truth to help us see this. What, James asks, is the 'cash-value in experiential terms' of the notion of a true judgement? 'The moment pragmatism asks this question, it sees the answer: *True ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate and verify. False ideas are those that we can not.*'[71] The problem with this pragmatist response is that their position now seems to be pulled in a number of different directions. On the one hand, the true beliefs are those that are expedient. On the other hand,

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[66] Rorty 1986: 339.

[67] For an example of the claim that the pragmatists' theory of judgement is prior to their theory of truth see Dewey 1910: 165.

[68] Russell 1908: 135f.

[69] James 1908: 106f.

[70] Dewey 1910: 163.

[71] James 1907b: 212f.

the true beliefs are those that are or will be verified. Moreover, the pragmatist faces yet another obvious criticism, again voiced by Russell. Russell also complained that most of us do not want to know whether it is useful to believe that God exists, but whether God really exists.[72] In other words, the common understanding of truth, claims Russell, is one in which the belief that God exists is true if and only if God exists. How is the pragmatist going to account for this while maintaining both that the true is the useful *and* that the true is the verified or verifiable?

To answer this question one must realize that the pragmatists had a much broader sense of utility in mind than might be at first suggested by their definition of truth as expediency. For a belief to pay or be useful, it must cohere with our other beliefs and the beliefs of others, it must enable us to cope with the objects the belief is about and it must not lead to perceptual expectations which have been disappointed. In other words, coping is precisely a matter of unifying and explaining our experiences and other beliefs. Moreover, the content of a belief is to be understood pragmatically and so the meaning of a belief just is the perceptual expectations it creates, the actions it disposes us to perform and the inferential relations it has to other beliefs. Construing belief content in this way means that verification, assimilation, corroboration and the rest are signs that the belief fits into the network of belief, perception and action and helps grease the mechanisms that make our daily living possible.[73] Thus, beliefs which meet all of these constraints are satisfying to us and so, in a sense, give us what we want.[74]

Nevertheless, postulating truth as verification and utility seems to leave truth floating blissfully free from reality. If truth is as the pragmatist says it is, why should we think true beliefs let us in on how the world really is? For a start, James and Dewey agree that 'getting reality right' is an essential part of being true.

> If the reality assumed were cancelled from the pragmatist's universe of discourse, he would straightaway give the name of falsehoods to the beliefs remaining, in spite of all their satisfactoriness. For him, as for his critic, there can be no truth if there is nothing to be true about.
>
> (James 1908: 106)
>
> I am of course, postulating here a standing reality independent of the idea that knows it. I am also postulating that satisfactions grow *pari passu* with our approximation to such reality.
>
> (James 1907a: 88)

Reality is independent of experience in that it does not require a belief in it in order to exist. In fact the pragmatist insists that the existence of certain situations, such as that the tree in front of me is a eucalypt, is really the only explanation of why it is useful to hold the belief

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[72] Russell 1908: 143.

[73] See, for example, Dewey 1948: 157.

[74] The notion of utility implied here was often emphasized by the pragmatists and puts paid to a common objection that goes back to G. E. Moore (1907), who criticized the obviously dubious claim that all and only the true beliefs are useful in getting us what we want. (There are many cases where it is more useful, in a *narrow* sense, to have a false belief than a true one.)

that the tree in front of me is a eucalypt.[75] So, in a sense truth is a correspondence relation between beliefs and reality. As Dewey argues, the pragmatist merely explains in more concrete detail than is usual what the nature of this correspondence is. (The Procrustean taxonomies of the textbooks convert the overlapping views of real philosophers into artificially sharp contrasts.) This correspondence relation is constituted by the relations of verification and coping that hold between the belief and reality.[76] It is the whole process of being verified and validated and generally of 'agreeing' with reality.

Yet, both Dewey and James insist that reality cannot go beyond experience. The real is that which is or can possibly be experienced. This is why the first of the two quotes in the previous paragraph has the proviso 'from the pragmatist's universe of discourse'. Pragmatists do not believe in facts that stand beyond all experience and that make our beliefs true. They do, however, believe in independent facts within experience such that when this reality 'comes, truth comes, and when it goes, truth goes with it'.[77] With reality conceived like this, it makes no sense to wonder, when we have done all we can to verify, assimilate and corroborate some belief, whether this belief may still be false. As Peirce would say, to speculate so would be to engage in a typical philosopher's make-believe. While it is easy to sympathize with this hostility to speculation, one can see that it risks, despite the pragmatists' express desires, committing them to idealism. However, perhaps the objection to pragmatism which lingers longest is the sense that, for all their protestations to the contrary, the pragmatists at bottom identify truth with what is convenient. While there is clearly a nugget of insight in the pragmatist account, what is omitted is a clear view of what it is which makes truth a useful property of beliefs without being mere usefulness itself, and which also gives a point to the concept, a point gestured at by later philosophers' talk of truth's being a normative end of assertion. This clear view begins to emerge with the work of Frank Ramsey.

1.5 Redundancy: Ramsey

As we have remarked, almost all the philosophers we have examined have approached the theory of truth through the theory of judgement. F. P. Ramsey, however, seems to have been the first to suggest that a certain type of theory of judgement actually exhausts what can be said about truth.

In his analysis of judgement, Ramsey agreed with Russell that a judgement must involve the mind's being multiply related to a number of objects. However, he also agreed with Wittgenstein that 'A judges that p' is really of the form '"p" says p'. This suggested to Ramsey that the whole problem of judgement really reduces to the question 'What is it for a proposition token to have a certain sense?'[78] He seems to have meant by this question something like 'What is it for an act of thought to be a belief of a certain form?' For example, he was crucially interested in determining what made it the case that some acts of thought were beliefs of the form ~aRb as opposed to aRb or $\exists x Fx$. Moreover, he realized that neither

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[75] James 1909: 8.

[76] Dewey 1910: 158f.

[77] James 1908: 106.

[78] Ramsey 1923: 275.

Russell nor Wittgenstein had given an answer to this question.[79] Like the pragmatists, Ramsey concluded that it is the behavioural causes and effects of holding a certain belief that constitute the fact that it is a belief of a certain form. Yet his view was not identical to theirs, for he seems to have been the first to suggest a version of what has since been labelled 'success semantics': the view that a belief has the content that p iff p's obtaining would result in the success of the actions we perform on the basis of that belief (together with some desire).[80] That is, truth is the property of (full) beliefs such that if all the beliefs which combine with any desire to cause an action have it, then that action will succeed in achieving the object of that desire. *This* is the kernel of truth in pragmatism. And, importantly, Ramsey thought that only this theory of content could explain why it is that we want true beliefs – namely, because true beliefs, more often than false ones, lead to the satisfaction of our desires.[81] The pragmatists, on the other hand, removed the need to explain why it is that true beliefs are more likely to get us what we want, by combining their theory of content with an identification of truth with utility. Ramsey, however, took a strikingly different approach to the theory of truth.

Ramsey argued that once we have an analysis of judgement there is no further problem of truth to be solved. Normally, he claimed, the bearers of truth and falsity are taken to be propositions. If we focus on propositions, assuming for the moment that we have solved the question as to why certain sentences express certain propositions and why certain mental acts are beliefs that p, then we have two contexts of truth predication to consider. In the first case we know exactly what proposition is being called true. About this case, Ramsey says, 'It is evident that "It is true that Caesar was murdered" means no more than that Caesar was murdered, and "It is false that Caesar was murdered" means that Caesar was not murdered.'[82] Accordingly, he believed that in this context both 'true' and 'false' were redundant predicates. We express the same content when we assert that a proposition is true as we do when we just assert the proposition itself (and *mutatis mutandis* for attributions of falsity).

In the second sort of context, 'true' is not eliminable in the same way. Consider a case where we say 'Everything Newton says is true'. In this case we mean something like 'For all p, if Newton says p, then p is true' (where the variable 'p' ranges over propositions). If we were to straightforwardly eliminate 'is true' from this sentence, the result would be ungrammatical. In the sentence 'For all p, if Newton says p, then p' the final occurrence of the variable 'p' is occupying a name-position. Thus the sentence makes no more sense than the sentence 'If Newton said that snow is white, then Bob'. Nevertheless, Ramsey thought that even in this

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[79] Russell's failure is noted on p. 142 of Ramsey 1927; Wittgenstein's theory is examined in Ramsey 1923: 274-9. Ramsey seems to have largely ignored the question of what it is for an elementary statement to express a certain atomic proposition, seemingly resting content with the *Tractatus*' claim that these statements consist of names that are correlated with objects.

[80] Ramsey 1927: 143f. For a recent version of success semantics, see Whyte 1990. For criticism and response, see Teichmann 1992, Whyte 1992, Brandom 1994, Whyte 1997, Dokic and Engel 2002, Daly 2003, and Mellor 2003: 217-20.

[81] ibid. 148.

[82] ibid. 142. Frege had made the same point about sentences some years earlier: "It is also worth noticing that the sentence 'I smell the scent of violets' has just the same content as the sentence 'It is true that I smell the scent of violets'." (Frege 1918: 6.)

case we can assert something with the same content as 'Everything Newton says is true' without using a truth-predicate. For example, if we restrict ourselves to propositions of the form *aRb*, 'then "He is always right" could be expressed by "For all *a*, *R*, *b*, if he asserts *aRb*, then *aRb*", to which "is true" would be an obviously superfluous addition.'[83] Newton thought that the sentence he proposed overcame the problems faced by the approach that merely deleted 'is true' because his candidate sentence allows us to use the verb within the sentence itself, so that the consequent of the conditional is a sentence that is used rather than mentioned. Thus, he concluded, we need to discover (through the analysis of judgement) all the different forms propositions take, so that for each form we can construct a universal statement like that offered for *aRb*. Having done this we could conjoin all these universal statements, thus capturing the content of 'Everything Newton says is true'.

But if we understand quantification in the usual objectual way then Ramsey's paraphrase does not work. For, on this understanding, when we quantify using the variables *a*, *R* and *b* we are quantifying into name-position.[84] So even if the first occurrence of '*aRb*' in the sentence Ramsey proposes is in name-position (so that if we replaced the variable with a name it would be a name for a propositional form[85]), the second occurrence must be read the same way and so, again, the sentence is ungrammatical. Alternatively, if we treat each of *a*, *R* and *b* as occupying name-positions, then replacements for 'aRb' would be collections of names and not propositions.

While this problem may seem to undermine Ramsey's redundancy account of truth, it does so only if we cannot find a way to read the quantifiers that makes sense of his proposed paraphrase. Further, his suggestion that 'the proposition that p is true' and 'p' are in some strong sense equivalent seems to be on to an important fact about truth. It could only be a matter of time before this idea was taken up.

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[83] ibid. 143.

[84] We follow Ramsey in treating these as variables.

[85] We shall ignore some notorious problems concerning form. For Russell's difficulties, see Pears 1977, Hylton 1990: 344f, and Candlish 1996: 118-24. For more general treatments, see Smiley 1983 and Oliver 1999.