

TRUTH

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(1964)

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES
IN PHILOSOPHY SERIES

PRENTICE-HALL, INC. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey

INTRODUCTION

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Truth is the concern of all honest men: they try to espouse only *true* assertions, claims, theories, and so on. This is truth in extension. Philosophers worry also about truth in intension—i.e., about the concept of truth or the meaning of the term 'truth.' The great philosophers of history, however, although they had something to say about this concept, said surprisingly little: they were far more interested in truths than in 'truth.' It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that the subject was discussed earnestly and with great thoroughness. The stimulus for this sudden late outburst was, I think, the apparently outrageous things which the Absolute Idealists of the middle and late nineteenth century said about truth. Interest in the subject has not seriously flagged since then, and was vigorously freshened by the Austin-Strawson debate of 1950.

The works presented here deal with several important philosophical issues connected with the notion of truth. But many other relevant topics have regrettably had to be ignored. Most notably perhaps, there is no

discussion of the coherence, pragmatic, and semantic conceptions of truth. (Substantial bibliographies for all of them are given at the end of the book, however.)

The pieces fall into two groups. The subject of the first, consisting of the first five selections, is the Austin-Strawson debate, which is itself included. The second group comprises the last three selections. Michael Dummett's article is concerned largely with issues raised by Peter Strawson in the two selections which precede it—although Dummett also has interesting things to say about Ramsey's "redundancy theory" and about the connection between meaning and truth.

In the remainder of this introduction, I shall try to describe some—by no means all—of the pitfalls that earlier philosophers have fallen into or at least, given their views, *ought* to have fallen into, in thinking about truth. My hope is that this background will afford both a better understanding of why the writers represented here go about their business in the way they do, and a heightened appreciation of the magnitude of their achievements.

People think and assert many things, some of which are true and others false. (Many are neither true nor false; but that important fact can be ignored for the present.) If a person thinks or asserts something true, what is there about what he thinks or says that makes it true? What, in short, is truth? These questions can seem unspeakably deep; they can also seem unspeakably trivial. That is one good sign that they are philosophical. Another is that they are puzzling. On the surface, they are not puzzling, but the deeper one goes, the more puzzling they become.

The question "What is truth?" presents the aspect of a blank and very high wall: one is reduced to staring at it helplessly. Abstract substantives often produce this effect in philosophy. What we must evidently do is spurn the noble but abstract noun in favor of the more humble adjective: 'truth,' after all, is just 'true' plus '-th.' Let us ask, then: What is it for something a person says or thinks to be true? Some moves now at least seem possible. This freedom affords only brief comfort, however; for the natural moves we are tempted to make turn out either to be just wrong or to run into great obstacles.

For example: since 'true' is an adjective, one might naturally be tempted to suppose that it designates a property. In "What she wore was magenta," 'magenta' designates a property of what she wore; in "What he stepped on was sticky," 'sticky' designates a property of what he stepped on; so why shouldn't 'true' in "What he said (or thought) was true" designate a property of what he said (or thought)? G. E. Moore (1873-1958) succumbed to this temptation: he admitted that he once held the view—on grounds, presumably, like those which led him to the

corresponding view about goodness—that truth is a "simple unanalyzable property."¹ Bertrand Russell at one point asserted a similar doctrine,² although as the grammatical illusion worked on him, he saw two simple properties, truth and falsehood, where Moore had seen but one: falsehood for Moore was the mere absence of truth, and so, like all evil, nothing positive, but mere negation or deficiency.

But if falsehood is a deficiency, one thing that seems obvious is that the theory of truth as a simple quality is itself sadly deficient. It has no shred of plausibility for the important case of contingent truths (such as "John is in town," "It is raining"); because it implies that in order to discover that they are true, one has only to examine them to determine that they possess the requisite simple property, and that is absurd. And even in the case of necessary truths (such as " $2 + 2 = 4$ "), where the view does at least have a measure of initial plausibility, it still leads to paradoxical results. For example, the question "What makes it true that $2 + 2 = 4$?" must surely make plain sense and have some kind of informative answer; yet according to the view under discussion it is a very strange question indeed and has no such answer. On the simple property view, the only possible kind of reply would be "It just *is*, that's all. What do you mean?" Similarly, assuming that yellowness is a simple property, the question "What makes this cloth yellow?" is a strange question to which the most appropriate answer is the uninformative one "It just *is*, that's all. What do you mean?" The question about yellowness, in fact, is actually far less strange than the corresponding one about truth would be, for it might mean "What substance is present in this cloth, or what chemical process is it subjected to, to make it yellow?," whereas on the simple property view of truth, there seems to be no such plausible way to construe the corresponding question about truth.³ But surely questions of the form "What makes it true that *S* is *P*?" where "*S* is *P*" is a necessary truth, make perfectly good sense and have informative answers.

The basic dissatisfaction we feel with the simple property view can be put like this: it seems perfectly clear that what makes the thought that $2 + 2 = 4$ true cannot, as the view requires, be something inherent in the thought itself, as if the nature of the numbers 2 and 4 had nothing

¹ G. E. Moore, "Beliefs and Propositions," *Some Main Problems of Philosophy* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1953), p. 261.

² Bertrand Russell, "Meinong's Theory of Complexes and Assumptions," Part III, *Mind*, XIII (1904), 423ff.

³ It might possibly be held that truth is a simple property attaching only to what Moore called *organic wholes* [See his *Principia Ethica* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1903), pp. 27ff.], in which case the question could be plausibly construed; but I do not see how the doctrine of organic wholes *could* be applied here in the area of truth.

whatever to do with it; on the contrary, we are strongly inclined to suppose that what makes it true must be something about the numbers 2 and 4 and their relationship to one another. We think that what makes the thought true is the fact that $2 + 2$ *does* equal 4—however the expression ‘the fact that . . .’ is to be understood.

It appears, then, that we must shut our eyes to the misleading grammatical form of such sentences as “What he said is true” and “Your belief is true,” which makes it look as though ‘true’ were the name of a property which may belong to what people say or think, and try to construe the predicate ‘is true’ in some more satisfactory way. The move which comes to mind at once, of course, is to construe it as designating a relation between what people assert or think, on the one hand, and something else—a fact, situation, state of affairs, event, or whatever—on the other; and the relation which seems to be called for is that of agreeing with, fitting, answering to—or, to use the traditional expression, corresponding to. A true thought, according to this account, is one that corresponds to a fact, situation, state of affairs, or whatever.

There can be no denying the attractiveness of this view: it seems to be just right. It struck the great philosophers who first considered the problem of truth—viz., Plato and Aristotle—as so obviously the correct one that the question of possible alternatives to it never occurred to them.⁴ And certainly if there were such a thing as the common-sense view of truth, it would be the correspondence theory. Common-sense views of this sort may all, in the end, be correct, once they are properly understood; and to call them “common-sense views” is to claim that at the outset they appear to be straightforwardly and undeniably correct. But between the outset and the end (when they are at last “properly understood”)—that is to say, when they are in the hands of the philosophers—they inevitably run into tough sailing. Such, at any rate, is the fate of the correspondence theory of truth: philosophical arguments can make its initial plausibility seem to vanish into thin air.

The correspondence theory says: truth is a relation—that of correspondence—between what is said or thought and a fact or state of affairs in the world. Difficulties and perplexities arise concerning the nature of this relation and the nature of both its terms. Consider the first term of the relation, that to which the predicate ‘true’ is applied—namely, what is said or thought. I have been using the vague and ambiguous locution ‘what is said or thought’ mainly because it is vague and ambiguous enough to get by if it is not too carefully examined. But what exactly is meant by ‘what is said or thought’? Suppose someone said truly “It is

⁴ See Plato, *Sophist* 263B, and Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book IV, Chap. 7, 1011b 25-8.

raining,” so that what he said was true. He spoke or uttered the English sentence ‘It is raining,’ but *that* is not what we want to call true. If instead of “It is raining” he had said “Il pleut” or “Es regnet,” then in the sense of ‘said’ in which what he said was true, he would still have said the same thing, for these are just three ways of saying the same thing; but he would have uttered a different sentence. Therefore what he said, in the relevant sense—i.e., in the sense according to which what he said is *true*—is not the English sentence ‘It is raining.’ If one person says “It is raining,” another “Il pleut,” and a third “Es regnet,” a correct answer to the question “What did he say?” would in each case be “He said that it is raining”—for each would have said *the same thing*. And it is this element which all three utterances have in common—this same thing that is said in all three cases—that is the *real* bearer of truth, not the different sentences which the speakers happen to utter.

But what is this common element? It is, evidently, the common idea behind each of the separate utterances, the common thought which each of the different sentences is used to express. Not, mind you, the thoughts *qua* individual acts of thinking that occur at certain definite times and in certain particular minds, for those are different individual events and what we want is some *one* thing which is common to them all. What we want is the identical *content* of these different acts of thinking, that of *which* they are all acts of thinking. This content of any number of possible individual thoughts has been called a *proposition*: and it has been held that propositions are the real bearers of truth (and falsity).

It seems sometimes to have been assumed as obvious that propositions must be objective *entities*, on the ground that if two or more sentences all express the same thing, then of course there must be a thing which they all express. The same conviction was also reached as follows. When a person thinks or believes something, it is always a proposition that he thinks or believes. Hence, a proposition is an entity; for whenever a person thinks or believes something, there must *be* a thing that he thinks or believes.⁵

Propositions were thus often conceived to be timeless nonlinguistic entities capable of being apprehended, and of being believed or disbelieved, by any number of different minds. This conception of propositions encounters numerous difficulties, of which I shall discuss two kinds.

(a) We may begin by noting that there is a strong temptation to strip a proposition of any assertive force. Consider the following utterances: (i) The door is shut, (ii) Shut the door!, (iii) Is the door shut?, (iv) Oh, if the door were only shut!, (v) If the door is shut, then the picnic is off, (vi) The door is not shut, (vii) Either the door is shut

⁵ See Plato, *Theaetetus* 189A, and L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell & Mott, Ltd., 1953), Part I, Sec. 518.

or I've lost my mind. It is obvious that there is something in common to all these utterances, namely the idea, as we might put it, of the door's being shut. If we have no special prejudices in favor of categorical assertions and thus give no logical priority to utterances like (i), as against any of the other possible kinds, then we might naturally view the mere idea of the door's being shut as a kind of intelligible content or matter which minds can coolly contemplate and which utterances can embody with various different forms imposed upon it. Thus in (i), it is asserted that the content (the door's being shut) describes an actual state of affairs—the content is *asserted*; in (ii) the order is given that the content describe, in the near future, an actual state of affairs—the content is ordered; and so on. This intelligible content looks like our old friend the proposition, only stripped now of its assertive force.⁶

This way of regarding propositions seems right on at least one count: it makes asserting, ordering, questioning, and so on, actions which *people* perform by saying something, rather than actions which are mysteriously performed, without any agent to perform them, in a wordless abstract entity that exists independently of human or other agents. Notice, however, that this new nonassertorial entity is *not*, although it may appear to be, the same thing as the proposition we began with. Propositions were introduced as the common ideas or thoughts which several different sentences may express. Such an idea or thought, however, contained an assertive element: in our example, it was the thought that it is raining—not the mere nonassertorial thought of its raining, but the assertorial thought that it *is* raining.

This new nonassertorial way of regarding propositions engenders difficulties. One could argue as follows, for example: (i) A mere intelligible content, such as "the door's being shut," cannot be true or false, since it makes no claim; it *asserts* (or *denies*) nothing. If someone were to assert (or deny) the content, by saying "The door is (or is not) shut," then his remark would indeed be true or false, but the content itself is neither. *Comment*: This plausible line of argument deprives the proposition of the very role for which it was invented—namely, that of being the sole bearer of truth (and falsity).⁷

To avoid this trouble, one might argue instead in the following way: (ii) Of course remarks, assertions, statements, and so on, can be true, but so can propositions. Propositions, on the present nonassertorial view, are the intelligible contents of remarks and hence, it may be said, are

⁶ See C. I. Lewis, *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation* (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court Publishing Co., 1946), p. 49.

⁷ Hereafter I shall avoid the needless and annoying repetition of such expressions as 'and falsity,' 'or falsehood,' 'and false,' and so on; they should, however, be understood, wherever appropriate.

used to make true remarks; but both the propositions and the remarks are true. Consider this analogy: a die can be used to form star-shaped cookies, but both the cookie and the die are star-shaped.⁸ Why, then, should not a proposition and the remarks, statements, etc. it is used to make both be capable of truth? A true proposition will not be a true *assertion*, of course (just as the die is not a star-shaped cookie); it will be more like a true picture or representation of reality. *Comment*: For the present nonassertorial view of propositions, this line of reasoning is more satisfactory than the first, but it does introduce a kind of schizophrenia into the theory of truth, for it makes two radically different kinds of things the bearers of truth. Moreover, the sense in which remarks, assertions, and so on, are true seems to be somewhat different from that in which nonassertorial propositions are, if the latter are at all like pictures or representations. This dualistic result may not be fatal to the view under consideration, but it does make it untidy, at least.

(b) Whether propositions retain their assertive force or not, however, the very notion of a proposition as a timeless, wordless entity is fraught with well-known difficulties. How are we to conceive of this sort of entity? What, for example, are its constituents? The answer that immediately suggests itself, and indeed seems to be the only possible one, is that a proposition is composed of the meanings of the individual words or phrases making up the various different sentences which may be used to express it. The reasoning which lends support to this answer is the following: (i) Propositions were introduced in the first place as being what two or more sentences *with the same meaning* (e.g., 'It is raining,' 'Il pleut,' and 'Es regnet') have in common. Evidently, then, (ii) a proposition is the common meaning of all the sentences that can be used to express it. And so, (iii) a proposition must be composed of the meanings of the individual words or phrases which make up those sentences.

Let us accept this argument for the moment. Let us even swallow the camel of admitting the existence of Platonic meanings corresponding to each word. Still, there are some troublesome gnats to be strained at. First, if a proposition is to be formed, it is not enough that there simply be the Platonic meanings of the relevant individual words: the meanings must also be combined with one another. But what are the rules of combination, how is the combination supposed to be brought about, and what sort of complex entity is the result? Consider the corresponding problem at the level of words. In order to have a sentence, a group of individual words must be combined. But here we have a reasonably clear idea of how this is done: a person does it by writing (or speaking) the words one after another in accordance with the rules of syntax for the language,

⁸ This analogy was suggested to me by Richard Rorty.

and the resulting complex entity is of a familiar sort. But it is not at all clear that we understand what is supposed to go on at the higher level of Platonic meanings. For example, are there rules of meaning-combination as there are rules of word-combination—rules of conceptual syntax? If so, what are they? When one tries to discover what they are, he sees either nothing or mere pale reflections of ordinary syntactical rules—and that ought to make us suspicious. And suppose there were such things as rules of conceptual syntax: what would it be to *combine* the individual Platonic meanings in accordance with the rules? Not writing them down next to each other or speaking them one after another; for one cannot write down or speak a meaning (in this sense of 'a meaning'). Are they then just eternally combined with each other in all the possible ways—thus constituting immutable conceptual facts in Plato's heaven—and does the mind, when it entertains a proposition, simply pick out for consideration one of these everlasting possible combinations? But then this account does not differ, except verbally, from saying that the individual Platonic meanings are *not* combined in themselves at all, and that the mind combines them by thinking them together in some as yet unexplained way, when it entertains propositions.

The foregoing difficulties need not, however, exercise us unduly, for the argument (i)-(iii) (of the last paragraph but one) which gave rise to them is not acceptable. Plausible as it may have seemed, it cannot be accepted, for both (i) and (ii) are false. (i) is false: propositions were introduced as the common content of what is said or asserted when, in a number of utterances, the same thing is said or asserted. In the particular example I gave earlier, three sentences having the same meaning happened to be used: but this was not essential, for the same thing is often said or asserted by using sentences with different meanings. Sam Jones' brother says "My brother is sick"; the same Sam Jones' mother says, at the same time, "My son is sick"; and his son, at the same time, says "My father is sick." It is plausible to suppose that all three people asserted the same thing—i.e., expressed the same proposition—and yet no one could reasonably maintain that the three sentences they used all have the same meaning. And (ii) is false: if a proposition is the bearer of truth (and falsity), then it cannot be the meaning of a class of sentences, for, as Austin points out (see below, p. 20) "We never say 'The meaning (or sense) of this sentence (or of these words) is true.'" Again, although we can say of a proposition that it was asserted or denied, it makes no sense to say this of the meaning of a sentence.⁹

⁹ I owe this point to R. Cartwright. See his "Propositions," in *Analytical Philosophy*, R. J. Butler, ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell & Mott, Ltd., 1962), p. 101. In this article, the points here under discussion, and related ones, are treated perceptively and thoroughly.

I conclude that the argument does not establish (iii). And, since the initial plausibility of (iii) derives entirely from (ii), which is false, I conclude also that (iii) is false. But if the meanings of words are not the constituents of propositions, what are? What *are* the constituents of what-a-person-asserts, the *content* of what he says? It seems difficult, or impossible, to answer. But this must surely be a great embarrassment to those who hold that propositions are real entities: if we cannot even begin to say what their constituents are, we hardly have a clear idea of what *they* are.

Here I shall cut short the unhappy tale of those woes which beset the correspondence theory of truth from the side of the alleged truth-bearers—viz., propositions: I want to get on to some other problematic features of the theory. But first it ought to be made clear that the troubles I have been discussing cannot in fairness be said to be troubles which *the* correspondence theory of truth encounters, as if the version of the theory presented so far in these pages were the only one there is. It is not. For one thing, many defenders of the theory have not conceived propositions to be entities such as I have described: propositions have also been held to be mental entities of one sort or another, to be linguistic entities of various sorts (e.g., declarative sentences or classes of such sentences), to be identical with the facts they describe—and they have been conceived in other ways as well. For another, many defenders of the theory have not even held that *propositions* are the bearers of truth at all: other leading candidates for this role have been beliefs, judgments, sentences, assertions, and statements. Needless to say, it will not be possible to explore here all these alternatives to the particular view I have been discussing. Some of them are not open, of course, to the objections I have raised, although they have troubles of their own. All I have tried to do is point out some typical *kinds* of problems which correspondence theories of truth, as traditionally conceived, encounter.

Puzzles about propositions are not confined to the correspondence theory alone: they can plague any theory of truth whatever. Now I turn to problems which are peculiar to the correspondence theory. I shall begin with the crucial notion of correspondence itself. It seems to me that there are two different kinds of correspondence which might be relevant to a theory of truth. The first amounts to little more than mere correlation of the members of two or more groups of things, in accordance with some rule(s) or principle(s). Consider, for example, what is meant when mathematicians speak of a one-to-one correspondence. The series of integers can be put into one-to-one correspondence with the series of even integers, as follows:

Series A (integers)	1	2	3	4	5	6	...	n
	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓		
Series B (even integers)	2	4	6	8	10	12	...	2n

We may say that the 1 of Series A corresponds to the 2 of Series B, that the 12 of Series B corresponds to the 6 of Series A, and so on. What is involved here is the following: given any member x_i of one group, A, and the rule $y = 2x$, there is a unique member y_i of the other group, B, which satisfies this rule; and all it means to say that x_i corresponds to y_i (e.g., that the 1 of A corresponds to the 2 of B) is that x_i of group A and y_i of group B are correlated or paired off with one another in accordance with the stated rule. But without any indicated grouping or without some rule being either explicitly mentioned or tacitly understood, it hardly makes sense to speak of correspondence: what, for example, could be meant by claiming, out of the blue, that 1 corresponds to 2, or that 12 corresponds to 6? Again, if we were talking about forms of government, we might say that the British Parliament corresponds to our (American) Congress: and this would mean that the two can be paired off with one another in accordance with the principle that they serve (at least roughly) the same functions in their respective forms of government. This common kind of correspondence I shall call *correspondence-as-correlation*.

There is also another kind of correspondence. If two bits of paper each have a torn edge, so that when they are placed together the fit is perfect, then we can say that the two edges, or the two pieces of paper, exactly correspond. Again, if two witnesses are queried separately by the police about a shooting incident and they both tell exactly the same story, then their two accounts correspond perfectly—or correspond down to the last detail. The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* defines this sense of 'correspond' as follows: "To answer to something else in the way of fitness; to agree *with*; be conformable *to*; be congruous or in harmony *with*." This kind of correspondence I shall call *correspondence-as-congruity*.

There seem to be two different senses of 'correspond' involved in 'correspondence-as-correlation' and 'correspondence-as-congruity.' This is indicated by the fact that all cases of correspondence-as-congruity can be qualified as perfect or exact, whereas this is not true of correspondence-as-correlation: for example, the 1 of Series A cannot sensibly be said to correspond perfectly (or imperfectly) with the 2 of Series B. To be sure, sometimes correspondence-as-correlation can be exact, but then the phrase 'corresponds exactly' means something different from what it means in connection with correspondence-as-congruity: thus the British Parliament *could* be said (no doubt inaccurately) to correspond exactly—but not,

notice, *perfectly*—to the American Congress. But this would not mean that two legislative bodies "agree with" or are "conformable to" one another; it would mean that they perform exactly the same function in their respective forms of government.

Granted, then, that correspondence-as-correlation (where correspondence is a "weak" relation, a mere pairing of members of two or more groups in accordance with some principle) is to be distinguished from correspondence-as-congruity (where correspondence is a "richer" relation of harmony or agreement between the two or more things), the question that now presents itself is whether the correspondence theory construes truth as a relation of correspondence-as-correlation or as one of correspondence-as-congruity. There can be little doubt that the main impetus of traditional correspondence theories has been towards the latter interpretation: defenders of the theory tended to think of a proposition and the fact it states as two separate complexes which exactly fit each other. In the proposition "The cat is on the mat," 'the cat' designates the cat, 'on' designates the relation of being on, and 'the mat' designates the mat: the proposition asserts that the first (the cat) and third (the mat) in that order, are related by the second (the relation of being on). The fact that the cat is on the mat consists of the cat and the mat, related so that the former is on the latter. The agreement is perfect. Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), who in his early *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*¹⁰ worked out this conception of the correspondence theory more thoroughly than had ever been done before, came to the conclusion that at least elementary propositions, those to which all others are reducible by analysis, are perfect (logical) pictures of the states of affairs they describe. The congruity that exists between a proposition and the reality it describes is thus considered to be of the same intimate kind as that which exists between a perfect representation of something and that of which it is the representation.

The difficulties which the correspondence theory, conceived in this way, encounters are enormous. I shall mention three of them, but discuss only the first in any detail. It is obvious that if the view is even to get off the ground, the real parts of a proposition must be at least roughly distinguishable, for it is just in virtue of a connection between (a) the parts of the proposition and (b) the parts of the fact it describes, that the proposition as a whole is congruent with—i.e., corresponds to—the fact as a whole. The first difficulty facing this correspondence (-as-congruity) theory is that the problem of determining, even roughly, how many con-

¹⁰ Translated by D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (New York: The Humanities Press, 1961). This work was completed in 1918, and the first English translation appeared in 1922.

stituents a proposition has is horribly difficult, if not totally insoluble. As we have already seen (pp. 7-9), there is a tremendous problem about determining what *sort of thing* the constituents of a proposition are: the initially most plausible view—namely, that they are the meanings of words—turned out to be false, and no other plausible view presented itself. That troublesome question, however, can be by-passed in order to discuss this new one—namely, the question of determining *how many* constituents a proposition has: for it is not always essential, in order to determine how many *x*'s there are, to know exactly what sort of thing *x*'s are. In the present case of propositions, in particular, it might seem obvious that even though the constituents of a proposition cannot be identified with the meanings of the words or phrases which make up a sentence that can be used to express it, nevertheless there must be one constituent of a proposition (whatever its *nature* may be) corresponding to each main grammatical part of such a sentence. Perhaps it seems obvious, for example, that there are exactly three constituents of the proposition expressed by the sentence 'The cat is on the mat'—namely, those corresponding to the words 'the cat,' 'the mat,' and '_____ is on _____.' But difficulties immediately present themselves. There is a foreign language—I have just invented it—in which the proposition we express by saying "The cat is on the mat" is expressed by the one-word sentence 'Catamat.' Are we to say that when a speaker of this new language says "Catamat" he is expressing a proposition with only one constituent? But then how could that be the same proposition as the one we express by saying "The cat is on the mat," since ours has three constituents? Perhaps we are tempted to say that his proposition really has the same three constituents that ours does, since when he says "Catamat," what he means is that the cat (1) is on (2) the mat (3). This is true. But *he* can say, with as much justice, both (a) that when he says "Catamat," what he means is *catamat*, and (b) that when *we* say "The cat is on the mat," what we mean is *catamat*. So we are right back where we started. (See Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Part I, Secs. 19 and 20.)

What to do? (a) Are we to insist that the two sentences 'The cat is on the mat' and 'Catamat' both express the same proposition although conceding that the former has three constituents while the latter has only one? Identity of propositions would then have to be a matter not of the identity of their constituents, but rather of the identity of the facts or states of affairs they describe. But then since the correspondence (-as-congruity) of two things *x* and *y* involves some pairings of the respective parts of *x* and *y*, if one of these two propositions corresponds to the state of affairs, it is difficult to see how the other possibly could. This is diffi-

cult to see, at any rate, if one assumes, with most defenders of the correspondence theory, that states of affairs are real complex entities with a certain fixed number of constituents. One could try to reject that assumption: one could say that the proposition "The cat is on the mat" describes the state of affairs S_1 of the cat's being on the mat, which consists of three elements, while the proposition "Catamat" describes the state of affairs S_2 of cat'samat, which consists of only one element. But then the state of affairs S_1 could not without circularity be identified with S_2 , as it must be if the suggestion under consideration is to stand. The reason for this is as follows: a state of affairs can only be picked out, in the end, by means of language. We can pick out S_1 only as that state of affairs which is described by the proposition expressed by the sentence 'The cat is on the mat'; and we can pick out S_2 only as that state of affairs which is described by the proposition expressed by the sentence 'Catamat.' Now we cannot without circularity go on to claim that S_1 and S_2 are the *same* state of affairs; because this claim could only be backed up by the contention that the propositions "The cat is on the mat" and "Catamat" are identical. But *ex hypothesi* these two propositions are themselves identical solely in virtue of their describing the same state of affairs.

(b) Shall we say, then, that the two sentences 'The cat is on the mat' and 'Catamat' express one and the same proposition, the number of whose constituents has no necessary connection with the number of expressions in either of the two sentences? But then *how* are we to determine this number? (c) Shall we abandon the search for the number of constituents of a proposition and contend that the question of how many constituents a proposition has is a wholly arbitrary one having no right answer? But then we would seem to be abandoning at the same time all hope of construing truth in terms of correspondence-as-congruity, since this kind of correspondence between two things seems to require the pairing of their respective parts.

The second kind of trouble with the correspondence-as-congruity theory arises from the fact that the most plausible candidate for the relation binding the respective parts of a proposition and the state of affairs it describes seems to be that of *designating*, *standing for*, or *denoting*. A denotative theory of meaning¹¹ is at least a natural adjunct to the correspondence theory of truth conceived in the present way, if it is not actually an essential part of it: the two were certainly intimately connected in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. But the unsatisfactoriness of any purely denotative theory of meaning is well-known, thanks largely to

¹¹ I.e., one that construes the meaning of a term to be whatever it designates or denotes.

the later work, paradoxically enough, of Wittgenstein himself. The third set of difficulties facing the correspondence (-as-congruity) theory are those concerning the nature and hence the constituents of facts; since this topic is discussed in the pages that follow, however—notably by Strawson in "Truth"—I shall say nothing about it.¹²

It would appear that the only hope for the correspondence theory is not to view correspondence as a "rich" relation of congruity, but rather as a "weak" relation of mere correlation or pairing of individual propositions and facts. This version of the correspondence theory completely avoids the first two of the three kinds of difficulties encountered by the other version: there is no need for it to distinguish the parts of a proposition, and there is no necessity for it to embrace a denotative theory of meaning. It is, however, committed to an objective view of facts, or of some substitute for facts, and so is open to at least some of the criticisms on this score that the earlier version is. I shall say no more about this version of the correspondence theory: it is, in all essential respects, just the view which is so ably defended by Austin in the present volume. (Austin explicitly denies, however, that propositions are the only, and even that they very often *are*, bearers of truth.)

The most important recent development in theories of truth, prior to the Austin-Strawson debate of 1950, was undoubtedly the introduction, by F. P. Ramsey (1903-1930), of the view that the predicates 'true' and 'false' do not designate either properties of propositions or relations between propositions and something else. They do not, in fact, designate anything, contrary to what all previous theories had assumed.¹³

The stage is now set for the Austin-Strawson debate with which the greater part of the pages that follow are concerned. Austin defends, as I said, a version of the correspondence theory of truth, while Strawson presents a view which grows out of Ramsey's germinal idea. Which

¹² Interested readers may consult the following works: J. L. Austin, "Unfair to Facts"; P. Herbst, "The Nature of Facts"; B. Russell, "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism"; F. P. Ramsey, "Facts and Propositions"; G. E. Moore, "Facts and Propositions"; J. R. Lucas, "On Not Worshipping Facts." For full references, see the bibliography at the end of this book.

¹³ Ramsey's basic idea is actually first found in a writing of Gottlob Frege (1848-1925) dating from 1892: "One can, indeed, say: 'The thought, that 5 is a prime number, is true.' But closer examination shows that nothing more has been said than in the simple sentence '5 is a prime number.'" [G. Frege, "On Sense and Reference," *Translations from the Writings of Gottlob Frege*, P. Geach and M. Black, eds. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell & Mott, Ltd., 1952), p. 64.] Frege, however, did not hold that 'true' designates nothing: on the contrary, he thought it designates an object which he called "The True." [See R. Sternfeld, "A Restriction in Frege's Use of the Term 'True,'" *Philosophical Studies*, Vol. VI (1955).]

philosopher has more of the truth on his side? That is a question which each reader will have to decide for himself.¹⁴

¹⁴ My colleagues Joel Feinberg and Richard Rorty read this Introduction and made many helpful suggestions: I am happy to record my debt of gratitude to them. I take this opportunity also to thank the following: Mrs. J. Austin for her kind permission to reprint J. L. Austin's article "Truth," Mrs. L. Ramsey for her kind permission to reprint the selection from F. P. Ramsey's "Facts and Propositions," Messrs. Dummett and Strawson for permission to reprint their essays and/or the selections from their books, the publishers of the books and the editors of the philosophical journals in which the works reprinted here have previously appeared, and Messrs. Strawson and Warnock, who wrote their articles, "A Problem about Truth," specially for this volume.