

# Some Philosophical Issues About Truth

Ranjan Mukhopadhyay

Department of Philosophy and Religion  
Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan

2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Winter School on Logic  
Jan 14 – Jan 26, 2008

Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur

- encounter with truth

➤ truth seeking character of an utterance

success and failure

truth and falsity

? Degrees in failure/ success

? Intermediate states

# •which things are true/ false ?

➤ bearers of truth

utterances/ statements

[time-place-utterer-hearer]

propositions

[meaning -- abstract entity]

sentences [linguistic entity ruled by

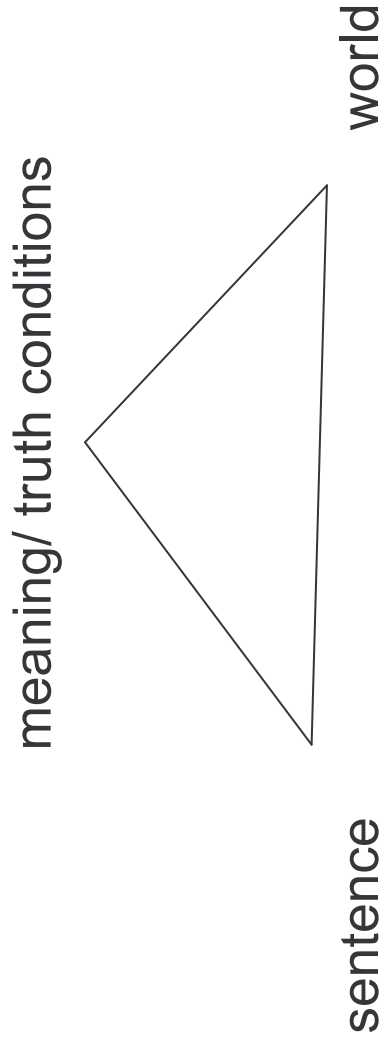
grammar]

concrete -- type-token

- truth and meaning

- the intimate relation : cluster concepts
  - a sentence is true because of the meaning of it and of the states of affairs in the world.
  - the meaning of a sentence can be understood in terms of the conditions (states of affairs) under which it is true

- the triangular relationship  
“true” as a value



a sentence is true of the world iff the conditions for its truth obtained in the world.

# •Views by-passed ?

- coherence theory of truth
- pragmatist theory of truth

1. a sentence is true iff the sentence is consistent with the other sentences believed in.
2. a sentence is true iff acts (intentional) done out of belief in it are successful.

- definition vis-a-vis criterion

$\Delta$  is a definition of  $C$  iff  $\Delta$  specifies the conditions for something to be  $C$

$\kappa$  is a criterion of  $C$  iff  $\kappa$  specifies ways to check whether something is  $C$

coherence/pragmatic success are criteria of truth only – not definitions

- correspondence theory as definition of truth : what is correspondence

➤ to say of what is that it is and to say of what is not that it is not is to say something true

Aristotle/ Tarski

Sentence	is true iff what	Sentence	says
----------	------------------	----------	------

obtains



# •metalinguage and object language : semantics

object language : the language which is the  
object of study

metalinguage : the language in which  
we study the object  
language.

**semantics** is the study of the relationship between the expressions of a language on the one hand and the meanings/denotations/extra linguistic entities associated with it . [“is true” , “names” , “denotes” , “entails” ...are semantic predicates occurring in the metalinguage with applicability on object language expressions]

# •material correctness of a truth definition: schema T, convention T

(T)  $s$  is true iff  $p$

where “ $s$ ” is replaced by a structural descriptive name of a sentence and “ $p$ ” is replaced by the translation in the metalanguage of the sentence named in the place of “ $s$ ” .

convention : a definition of truth with respect to a language is materially correct iff the definition yields T-sentences (sentences of the schema T ) with respect to each sentence of the language.

# •truth not definable for natural languages -- the liar paradox

\*The sentence indexed by a star is not true.

“The sentence indexed by a star is not true” is true iff the sentence indexed by a star is not true

.....1, (by (T))  
The sentence indexed by a star = “the sentence indexed by a star is not true”  
.....2

∴ The sentence indexed by a star is true iff the sentence indexed by a star is not true.

.....from 1 and 2

a contradiction. proposed definition of truth unsatisfactory.

# •formal languages and not natural languages

- truth for FL not expressible in FL although expressible in metalanguage for FL.

the forms of expression of the (formal) language determine which expression are sentences of the language and which are not.

“is true” is not accommodated in the language itself. “is true” is defined in the metalanguage for the language.

- grammar of formal languages
- variables, sentential functions/sentence frames
  - sentences are sentential functions with no free variables
  - sentences becoming special cases of sentential functions
  - different from the grammar of natural languages

# •definition of truth for formal languages

➤ satisfaction of sentential functions by infinite sequences of objects

s is true (in L) iff s is satisfied by **all** infinite sequences of objects

“Fa” is true (in L) iff “Fa” is satisfied by all infinite sequence of objects

iff  $\delta "a" \in \delta "F"$

truth becoming special case of satisfaction

•truth in terms of denotation/reference

evaporation of facts

assignment of sets to predicates fixing  
how the world is

denotation/reference forming the  
definients

# •troubles with the definition

truth relative to particular languages –  
no general definition of truth

structural descriptive names – no  
other ways of naming sentences of  
object language

attempts to define truth generally  
without giving rise to the liar paradox