

Seminar on Truth (Philosophy, G9531, Spring 1998)

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General Outline

This seminar will survey the main philosophical theories of truth and the connections of truth and meaning, and truth and realism. Among the topics to be covered are: the correspondence theory, deflationism, Tarski's "semantic conception of truth", truth and meaning in Davidson and Dummett, the semantical paradoxes, the linguistic hierarchy, various solutions to the paradoxes.

Requirements and Organization

A solid background in logic and philosophy of language will be presupposed. The course will be run as a seminar, and students are encouraged to participate actively. The requirements for E-credit are a short class presentation (20-30 min) and a final paper (approximately 5,000 words). The class presentation will account for 30% of the grade; the final paper will account for the remaining 70%.

Readings

The required readings are collected in a packet that can be bought in the Office (Philosophy 708).

Tentative Schedule

- 1 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW • Jan 21
- 2 – 3 THE CORRESPONDENCE THEORY • Jan 28 – Feb 4
- Russell: ‘The Philosophy of Logical Atomism’ (1918), sections 1 and 2
 - Wittgenstein: *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921), excerpts
 - Austin: ‘Truth’ (1950)
 - Davidson: ‘True to the Facts’ (1969)
 - Barwise and Perry: ‘Semantic Innocence and Uncompromising Situations’ (1975)
- 4 – 5 COHERENCE AND DEFLATIONISM • Feb 11 – Feb 18
- Strawson: ‘Truth’ (1950)
 - Williams: ‘Do We (Epistemologists) Need a Theory of Truth?’ (1986)
 - Horwich: *Truth* (1990), excerpts
 - Ramsey: ‘Facts and Propositions’ (1927)
 - Grover, Camp, and Belnap: ‘A Prosentential Theory of Truth’ (1975)
 - Davidson: ‘A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge’ (1986)
 - Rorty: ‘Pragmatism, Davidson, and Truth’ (1986)
- 6 – 7 THE SEMANTIC CONCEPTION • Feb 25 – Mar 4
- Tarski: ‘The Semantic Conception of Truth and the Foundations of Semantics’ (1944)
 - Field: ‘Tarski’s Theory of Truth’ (1972)
 - McDowell: ‘Physicalism and Primitive Denotation: Field on Tarski’ (1978)
 - Soames: ‘What is a Theory of Truth?’ (1984)
- 8 – 10 TRUTH AND MEANING • Mar 11 – Apr 1 (includes Spring Break)
- Davidson: ‘Truth and Meaning’ (1967)
 - Davidson: ‘Radical Interpretation’ (1973)
 - Davidson: ‘The Folly of Trying to Define Truth’ (1996)
 - Dummett: ‘What Is a Theory of Meaning? I’ (1975)
 - Dummett: *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics* (1991), excerpts
 - Putnam: ‘On Truth’ (1983)
 - Putnam: ‘A Comparison Of Something with Something Else’ (1985)
 - Wright: ‘Theories of Meaning and Speakers’ Knowledge’ (1987)
 - Gaifman: ‘Is the “Bottom-Up” Approach from the Theory of Meaning to Metaphysics Possible?’ (1996)
- 11 – 13 THE LIAR PARADOX • Apr 8 – Apr 22
- Buridan: *Sophismata*, excerpts
 - Russell: ‘Mathematical Logic as Based on the Theory of Types’ (1908)
 - Kripke: ‘Outline of a Theory of Truth’ (1975)
 - Herzberger: ‘Notes on Naive Semantics’ (1982)
 - Gupta and Belnap: *The Revision Theory of Truth* (1993), excerpts
 - Gaifman: ‘Pointers to Truth’ (1992)
- 14 OPEN ISSUES AND CONCLUDING REMARKS • Apr 29