THE PROBLEM OF TRUTH

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ABSTRACT

The main point of this thesis is to show the relation between the concept of truth and the concept of intention.

In Chapter 1 I give an account of what various writers have conceived the problem of truth to be, and have maintained that there are several different concepts of truth and that a complete philosophical discussion of the problem should explain and display the connections between the various concepts of truth and all other concepts to which they are related. Of these, the main problem that I have selected is that of the relation between the general concept of truth and the concept of intention, and asserted that this can best be understood by a consideration of the ways in which these concepts function in the course of linguistic activities.

In the second chapter I have discussed what it is that is true-or-false, and have claimed that this is best identified as a sentence, which I have defined as a set of sounds or marks uttered by a human being in the course of a linguistic activity. True-or-false sentences are a sub-class of sentences, and are those sentences uttered in stating, asserting, denying, etc.

Chapter III is a working out of the concept of "linguistic intention", which is defined as an intention which can only be achieved by the utterance of a sentence. The existence at some time of a linguistic intention is a necessary condition of linguistic meaningfulness, and in chapter IV I have argued that it is not a sufficient condition.

Finally, I have claimed that the truth of a sentence uttered in stating, etc., can only be explained by considering the complex activities of which it forms a part, e.g. doing science. The truth of a sentence, when it is true, is constituted by the success of a linguistic intention, but linguistic intentions are not self-justifying, and their nature and what is involved in their success can only be understood in the wider context of scientific and other human purposes in talking.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

I refer from time to time throughout this thesis
to the "traditional" theories of truth.   I use this
term simply as a convenient way of referring to the
Correspondence Theory, the Coherence Theory, and the
Pragmatist Theory.   By the Correspondence Theory I
mean the view that truth consists in the relation of
propositions or judgments or beliefs to the facts, or
to reality, and that this relation is that of copying,
agreeing with, or corresponding.   By the Coherence
Theory I mean the view that truth consists in the
coherence of propositions or judgments within a system,
where the relation of coherence is partly logical
consistency, but also has further characteristics
(which it would be impossible to explain without going
into the doctrine of internal relations and a great deal
of idealist metaphysics).   By the Pragmatist Theory I
mean the view that truth consists in utility, or
workability, or acceptability in the light of human
interests.   The exponents of these views that I have in
mind are chiefly Russell; Bradley and Joachim; William
James and F.C.S. Schiller, respectively.   It is not
suggested that these writers are the most representative
of the exponents of the theories mentioned, nor that

there may not have been extensive disagreement between
the proponents of each of them as to the best way of
expressing the view, or as to its more important
implications.

In the text, "P.A.S." stands for "Proceedings of
the Aristotelian Society" and "PASSV" for "Proceedings
of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volume".
All books mentioned in the text and footnotes, together
with other relevant works, are contained in a bibliography
at the end.

I

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Not the least difficult problem concerning truth is that of discovering what the problem is.   According to exponents of the traditional theories [1], there were two fairly clearly defined problems.   Many of the books on logic and epistemology published during the end of the last century and the beginning of the present one contained separate chapters on judgment and truth.   There was a philosophical problem of judgment, frequently posed in the form of the question "What is the nature of judgment?"   and a different, though connected and often correspondingly expressed, problem of truth, Russell inclining to the use of the expressions "analysis of" or "definition of the meaning of" in place of "nature of".   It might I think be said that the two problems which these writers were attempting to answer were (i) What is the nature or description of the defining characteristics of that which is true-or-false (e.g. a judgment, or a belief, or a proposition)? and (ii) What is it for that which is true-or-false to be true?

1.   See Introductory Note.

Now this approach to the problem(s) was dealt a death-blow by Ramsey, and what he said has set the key for nearly all subsequent discussions of truth. The crucial point of Ramsey's attack is made in the following paragraph:-

> "But before we proceed further with the analysis of judgment, it is necessary to say something about truth and falsehood, in order to show that there is really no separate problem of truth, but merely a linguistic muddle. Truth and falsity are ascribable primarily to propositions. The proposition to which they are ascribed may be either explicitly given or described. Suppose first that it is explicitly given; then 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. They are phrases which we sometimes use for emphasis, or for stylistic reasons, or to indicate the position occupied by the statement in our argument........It is, perhaps, also immediately obvious that if we have analysed judgment we have solved the problem of truth."[1]

Thus for Ramsey there was only <u>one</u> important philosophical problem concerning truth: the problem of judgment, by which he meant the analysis of the relationship between the mental factors involved in judging or believing or asserting, and the "objective" factor, i.e. the proposition. And since the proposition is <u>defined</u> as something which is true-or-false, and any given proposition is <u>either</u> true <u>or</u> false, the answer to the problem of judgment will be an analysis of the two different relationships involved in true judgment and false judgment. A similar point, in claiming that there is really

1. Foundations of Mathematics; "Facts and Propositions", pp. 142-3.

only one important problem concerning truth, and not two as the propounders of the traditional theories supposed, is made by Mr. P.F. Strawson:-

> "What supremely confuses the issue" (i.e. the issue at stake in philosophical discussions about truth) "is the failure to distinguish between the task of elucidating the nature of a certain type of communication (the empirically informative) from the problem of the actual functioning of the word 'true' within the framework of that type of communication."[1]

So far the problem - whatever and however diverse it may be - is still being conceived of as that of explaining the "nature" of something; a more precise method of approaching it is suggested by Strawson in the same article:-

> "....it is, indeed, very strange that people have so often proceeded by saying 'Well, we're pretty clear what a statement is, aren't we? Now let us settle the further question, viz. what it is for a statement to be true.' This is like 'Well, we're clear about what a command is; now what is it for a command to be obeyed?' As if one could divorce statements and commands from the point of making or giving them!"[2]

I shall agree with Strawson that the answer to the problem of truth requires an account of the point of making statements, or, as it may also be put, of the function of statements in human discourse; but this is not the only problem concerning truth, nor even the only important or

1.   PASSV, Vol. XXIV, 1950, "Truth", p. 156.

2.   Ibid., p. 141.

interesting problem.   There are, I think, very many

philosophical problems concerning truth;   as Tarski says:-

> "We should reconcile ourselves with the fact
> that we are confronted, not with one
> concept, but with several different concepts
> which are denoted by one word;   we should
> try to make these concepts as clear as
> possible.........and then we may proceed to
> a quiet and systematic study of all concepts
> involved, which will exhibit their main
> properties and mutual relations."[1]

Tarski is not entirely explicit as to the principles on

which the vague, ambiguous concept of truth as it occurs in

most everyday talk should be broken down into more precise

and clearly defined concepts;   he mentions the pragmatic

conception, the coherence theory, and himself explores what

he calls the semantic conception.   But since all these

conceptions are the fruit of elaborate theories of truth

based on widely differing views as to the nature of the

problem and the nature of meaning, the assertion that the

ambiguous concept of truth must be broken down into these

concepts before philosophical investigation can start seems

to be question-begging.   Nevertheless there can be little

doubt that the word "true" is generally used in several

different meanings, or with several shades of meaning.   It

is used to refer to objects, people, events, beliefs,

statements, descriptions and theories;   it is obvious that

1.   Readings in Philosophical Analysis, ed. Feigl & Sellars,
      1949, "The Semantic Conception of Truth", pp. 65-66.

"true" does not have the same meaning when applied to a
statement like "Everything that is red is coloured" as
when it is applied to a friend; that the kind of truth
possessed by a likeness is not the kind possessed by the
statement of the law of gravity.

It would indeed be impossible to distinguish between
different concepts of truth without making some
presuppositions, at least in regard to meaning, but we
can try to keep these at a minimum and make some attempt
to justify them. To begin with, we can perhaps take it
for granted that "true" is used in a different sense to
describe statements, judgments, beliefs, reports,
descriptions from the sense in which it is used to
describe objects or people. (This is an assertion with
which perhaps even Mr. A.R. White[1] would not disagree,
since his claim is that "true" is applicable commonly
to all these various types of things in an evaluative
sense, which he sharply discriminates from describing.)
And there is a sense in which "true" could be claimed to
be a different concept according to whether it applied
to a statement, a belief or a description. The function
of a true belief in the psychological history of an
individual person is different from the function of a
true statement in a policeman's report. It might be

1. Mind, Vol. LXVI, July, 1957, "Truth as Appraisal",

objected here that the kind of function which a
philosophical discussion of a concept should be concerned
to elucidate is logical, and not psychological or legal.
To suppose that it is possible to study the logical
function of a concept in independence of the other types
of function it or the things or events it refers to has,
is I think to oversimplify the problem, and one of my main
purposes in this thesis is to show that the extremely
difficult notion of the logical function of a concept can
only be explained or exhibited by discovering its <u>point</u>,
i.e. by showing its significance within a larger context.
And since the context of a belief, which could be called
a personal context, is different from the context of a
description say in a newspaper, it is likely that the truth
of a belief is a different sort of thing from the truth of
a description.

On the other hand, judgments, assertion, beliefs,
statements, descriptions all involve the utterance (or
thought) of meaningful words and sentences, and it might be
claimed - has, indeed, frequently been claimed - that <u>what</u>
is true (or false) is not the belief or statement or
judgment considered as an episode in the history of an
individual but the <u>object</u> of such individual acts of
belief, statement, judgment. The importance of this line
of approach is considered established by the fact that

the question whether what someone states or believes or judges is true can in most cases be answered without any reference to the occasion of its utterance; whether it is true that grass is green does not depend on whether it is stated or believed or judged. If I state that grass is green what I state is true, and it follows from this that if I or anyone else believes that grass is green, we shall be holding a true belief. For these reasons I do not think it would be helpful to enumerate the concepts of truth as those involved differently in speaking of a true belief, a true judgment, a true description, etc., but nevertheless it will be important to remember that the fact that a belief and a judgment and a description function in different ways in human activities is relevant to any discussion of the point of saying things that are true.

There is of course a short answer to the question "What is the function of the concept of truth as it is applied to judgments, statements, descriptions, etc.?" and that is "What is judged or stated or described (as being the case) is true if it can be verified, i.e. passes the appropriate tests for truth". And such tests exist and can be and have been classified as to types: there is the "look and see" type, there are inductive procedures, and there are logical or deductive procedures, to mention a few. There are mathematical procedures also, but I do not wish to go into the question of whether these should be

included with other types of logical or deductive
procedures. Thus it might be said that there are as
many concepts of truth as there are different types of
methods of verification; this is of course a view which
has been held by many philosophers[1]. If what we state
or judge or believe is verifiable by means of the "look
and see" methods, or these methods supplemented by
the application of inductive procedures, then what we
state or judge or believe is empirically or synthetically
or contingently true; if, on the other hand, it is
verifiable by logical means, e.g. by deducing what follows
from the fact that certain words have certain meanings,
then it is logically or analytically true. Here then we
have two different concepts of truth: contingent truth and
analytic truth, and if someone asks for a philosophical
analysis of these concepts we can say: contingent truth
consists in verification by means of sense experience and
inductive procedures, and analytic truth consists in self-
evidence, or logical necessity (the fact that there is
philosophical disagreement as to the nature of analytic
truth is irrelevant to the present point).

Now the traditional theories of truth have been
criticised for not admitting that answers like these are

1.   See, e.g., A.J.Ayer, "Truth"; Revue Internationale de
      Philosophie, 1953, p.195.

the most or best that can be provided to their questions as
to the nature of truth. They have been accused of looking
for the answers to questions which cannot, owing to the nature
of the case, properly be asked. Among many writers who have
criticised them along these lines may be noted White, in the
article already mentioned:

> "The correspondence theory fitted empirical
> statements, the coherence theory fitted
> mathematical and logical statements, and the
> pragmatist theory fitted scientific hypotheses.
> They were correct so long as they confined
> themselves to their respective types of statement
> and so long as only the descriptive function of
> truth was in question...........It is when a
> theory seeks to universalise its criteria and
> apply to more than its own kind of statement
> that it errs."[1]

and Strawson:

> ".......the puzzle about truth has commonly got
> entangled with the puzzle about certainty.....
> So that the question 'What is the nature of
> truth?' heads naturally to the question 'What
> are the tests for truth?', and this, in its
> turn, to the question 'What are the conditions
> of certainty?'.......the historical or judicial
> search for truth is the search for the evidence
> which will set doubt at rest. The
> philosophical endeavour to characterise truth
> in general has tended to become the endeavour
> to characterise that which in general sets
> doubt at rest; really and finally at rest."[2]

Now insofar as the traditional theories were an attempt
to find a general criterion of validity, or some entirely

1.   p. 323 and p. 325.

2.   Analysis, June 1949, "Truth", pp. 96-7.

general or universally valid method of verification,
there can be no doubt that they were mistaken; in any
case such a criterion would have to be expressed so
generally, if not vaguely, that it would be of no value
in deciding whether any given statement (or belief, or
judgment, etc.) were true or false.   I do not however
think that most representatives of the traditional
theories would have agreed that this is what they were
trying to do, or that their actual theories did provide
general criteria, and consequently White's criticism here
is to some extent misplaced.   Russell was explicit on the
matter:

> "The question we have to discuss is therefore:
> What is the difference between a true belief
> and a false belief? By this I mean, What
> is the difference which actually constitutes
> the truth or falsehood of a belief? I am
> not asking for what is called a criterion
> of truth, i.e. for some quality, other than
> truth, which belongs to whatever is true
> and to nothing else.   This distinction
> between the nature of truth and a criterion
> of truth is important, and has not always
> been sufficiently emphasised by philosophers.
> A criterion is a sort of trade-mark, i.e.
> some comparatively obvious characteristic
> which is a guarantee of genuineness.... Now
> I do not believe that truth has, universally,
> any such trademark: I do not believe that
> there is any one label by which we can
> always know that a judgment is true rather
> than false......I wish to discuss what truth
> and falsehood actually are, not what
> extraneous marks they have by which we can
> recognise them."[1]

1.   Philosophical Essays, 1910, "On the Nature of Truth",
     pp. 172-3.

Similarly Joachim, in defence of the coherence theory, and entirely in disagreement with Russell as to what the meaning of truth _is_, said:

> "A <u>criterion</u> of truth, i.e. something other than the truth itself, by which we are to recognise the truth, is not what we require. We want to know what the truth in its nature is, not by what characteristics in its opposing falsehood we may infer its presence."[1]

But neither Russell by claiming that he is not looking for an infallible label, nor Joachim by suggesting that criteria are tests only applicable to falsehoods, explains satisfactorily what this alleged difference between "meaning" and "criterion" is.   And however much they protest to the contrary, their language in referring to the "meaning" of truth, e.g. the "nature" of truth, or what "constitutes" truth, does suggest that they are in fact looking for a super-quality, a defining characteristic.

As regards Strawson's criticisms of the demands embodied in the traditional theories, the "puzzle about certainty" can arise in two ways: on being told that truth consisted of several different concepts classified according to methods of verification, someone might ask:

(a)   How can we be sure that we have applied the tests correctly, or that we have interpreted the results of the tests correctly? or

(b)   How can we be sure these are the right tests?

1.   The Nature of Truth, 1906, p. 67, note.

The answer to (a) is obviously "We can't be sure; but this doesn't matter theoretically, for we can be sure that if we have applied the tests correctly, and interpreted their results correctly, then the judgment or statement or belief in question is true (or false, as the case may be)". And the answer to (b) is "We can be sure because the various concepts of truth are defined in terms of the tests".

Now although I think that the answer to (b) given above is correct as far as it goes, I do not think that to define truth in this way, by subdividing into different concepts of truth according to the different types of methods of verification, is to tell the whole of the philosophical story about the concept of truth.   To explain fully the function of contingent truth, or of analytic truth, or indeed of moral or poetic or religious or any other possible kind of truth, it is certainly necessary to give an account of the ways in which it is established, and on the basis of which it is distinguishable from other concepts of truth; but it is also necessary to consider the "point" of the tests, e.g. the reasons why we have these particular tests and not different ones and, indeed, the reasons why we have tests at all.   This point is suggested by some remarks of Mr. M. Dummett on the justification of different forms of arguments:

> "Classification of arguments into (deductively or inductively) valid and invalid ones is not

a game played merely for its own sake,
although it could be taught without reference
to any purpose or interest, say as a school
exercise.   Hence there really is a problem
of showing that the criteria we employ for
recognising valid arguments do in fact serve
the purpose we intend them to serve: the
problem is not to be dismissed - as it has
long been fashionable to do - by saying that
we use the criteria we use."[1]

I shall claim that the adjective "true" is sometimes used

descriptively; that when it is so used it can be defined

in terms of methods of methods of verification; but that

to give a philosophical account of its use in this way

requires more than a description of the apppropriate

methods of verification - it requires also, to use

Dummett's phrase, "showing that the criteria we employ

do in fact serve the purpose we intend them to serve".

And I shall further claim that the purpose we intend the

various criteria of truth to serve is a complex of purposes

which cannot be considered as the desire to discover or to

tell the truth.

The passages from Russell and Joachim quoted above do

suggest however that the larger demand of the traditional

theories, the request for the "meaning" of truth, is in some

way asking for an account of the general or inclusive

concept of truth, which would apply to all types of truth,

no matter by what criteria established.   Inso far as this

1.   Paper on "Truth" delivered to the Aristotelian
     Society, 1959, p. 143.

is based on a desire to discover an absolutely infallible
criterion - and I think it does, historically, reflect
in a slightly different context the attempt to justify
induction by reducing it to deduction - it may fairly be
discounted, but nevertheless I think it may be possible to
say something about truth in general, i.e. neglecting the
differentiation into different types of truth according to
methods of verification. Moreover I shall maintain that
it is this general concept which is of most interest and
importance in discussing the function of the separate
concepts of truth, or, rather, that in order to explain the
nature or function of contingent and analytic truth and
their methods of verification it is necessary to assess
their place in a framework which depends on there being a
general concept. It is at least not self-evident that the
concepts of contingent and analytic (and perhaps other kinds
of) truth are unrelated, and that it might not be possible
to say something of philosophical interest about a concept
of truth which would include both, or apply indifferently
to both. For both contingent and analytic are terms which
are applied to what is stated, believed, judged, conceded,
confirmed, admitted, denied, doubted, asserted, considered,
entertained; and it is possible to teach or persuade or
convince someone of both analytic truth and contingent truth.
Further, the fact that it has been possible to dispute
whether an accepted truth (e.g. "Every event has a cause")

is contingent or analytic suggests that there may be a
concept of truth which is in some sense independent of
contingent or analytic truth, or at any rate is not to be
defined in terms of a particular type of method of
verification. "It is a part of the concept of truth",
according to Dummett, "that we aim at making true statements".
Our aims in making statements may be various - even,
perhaps, conflicting - but obviously these aims do not vary
directly according to whether the statements we make are
contingent or analytic. The problem of truth id to
explain the function of judgments, statements, beliefs,
etc. in human discourse; every particular individual
judgment or statement or belief (or what is judged or stated
or believed) is always either contingently true (or false)
or analytically true (or false), or possibly some other
type of truth or falsehood; but in describing the function
of these judgments, statements, beliefs, etc. it is
important to consider the purposes which underlie them,
and the way in which these purposes may be classified cuts
across the classification of judgments, statements, beliefs,
etc. according to the types of methods of verifying what is
judged, stated, believed, etc.,

Now the objections to considering the notion of a
general concept of truth are linked withthe question of
whether truth is a property. That truth is not a property
is of course suggested in Ramsey's assertion, already

quoted, that "'It is true that Caesar was murdered' means
no more than that Caesar was murdered" and most writers
since Ramsey (with the notable exception of the
semanticists, who think that it is a special kind of
property) have agreed that it is not. But it is not
easy to see the precise significance or importance of the
alleged fact that truth is not a property. After all,
almost any sentence can be put in subject-predicate form,
and consequently anything that is said about truth will
undoubtedly be formulatable in terms which allow truth, or
statements or judgments or beliefs etc., to be characterised
by means of it. By talking about "what constitutes truth"
or "what truth in its nature is" it is not possible therefore
to avoid representing truth as a property. To say "truth
consists in correspondence with the facts" or "the essential
nature of a true belief lies in its practical usefulness"
thus does represent an attempt to show that truth is a
property, or at least makes the assumption that truth is a
property. For both of these definitions can be reframed:
"A true statement (or proposition) is one that corresponds
with the facts", and "A true belief is one which can
successfully be made the basis for action" or, perhaps,
"A true belief is one which, if made the basis for action,
will result in successful action". And in each of these
cases we have suggested a test, or a partial test, for truth.
If any given belief corresponds to the facts, then it is

true;   or, if any belief can be shown to constitute a
basis for successful action, then it is true.   Thus
whatever kind of property truth is claimed to be, whether
simple or relational or functional, it will always be
possible to state this type of definition of truth in terms
of a test or set of tests for truth.

Further, if truth is a property, then the adjective
"true" has descriptive meaning: to say "p is true" (where
p is a belief, or judgment, or statement, etc.) will at
least sometimes be to describe p, to assert or state
something about p.   And if Ramsey is right, then to say
"p is true" is not to make any further or other assertion
than that made by p.   Strawson, in the articles already
referred to, has attempted to show that the expression
"is true" is never used assertively, but generally, if not
always, what he calls "performatorily".   That is, to say
"p is true" is not to make an assertion or a statement about
p, but to confirm p or admit p or concede p, a different
type of linguistic activity.   In other words, "p is true"
functions in the same way as "I confirm p", "I admit p"
or "I concede p", and each of the latter three expressions
are not descriptions of what I am doing in confirming or
admitting or conceding p, but indications of confirming or
admitting or conceding p;   as it might be put, expressions
of the acts of confirming, admitting, conceding themselves.
To say "p is true" is to confirm p, (in cases where "is true"

is confirmatory) as to say "I confirm p" is to confirm p,
and not to describe one's action in confirming p.
However, even if it were the case (which I do not think it
is) that in saying "p is true" we are never describing p
but pursuing a different linguistic performance such as
conceding p or confirming p or admitting p, it would I
think be odd to claim that it would be logically improper
to use "true" descriptively. As, also, it would be odd
to claim that while, admittedly, "Iconfirm p" is usually
more accurately described by saying that in uttering it
I am indicating that I confirm p, or actually confirming p,
a type of linguistic performance which is not assertive or
statemental, it is or would be logically impooper to use
the expression "I confirm p" to describe my performance in
confirming p. That I am confirming p, or pursuing any
"performatory" linguistic activity is, when it occurs, a
fact, and as such in principle describable. And as a
matter of fact we do, when the occasion arises, describe
such performatory activities by means of the same
expressions that we use in performing them. Moreover if
"it is true that p" functions in the same way as "I confirm
p" (or "I admit p", etc.), and "I confirm p" can be used
to describe my performance in confirming p, then the truth
of "it is true that p" will depend on the conditions of
truth of "I confirm p", viz. whether I am in fact pursuing
this particular linguistic activity. ~~This difficulty can~~

There is, however, no need to deny that truth is
sometimes a property, or that the word "true" sometimes
functions descriptively. In saying this I mean that
whether it is logically improper to think of truth as a
property or not depends on which concept of truth is
being referred to. It is only when the general concept
of truth is being thought of that the attempt to
characterise truth in some way becomes the unjustifiable
search for a general criterion of validity. When "true"
means "contingently true" or "analytically true" there
is no reason for insisting that it cannot be descriptive,
or is not a property. If someone is asked to write
"true" or "false" against each in a list of twenty
statements, then he may be said to be describing the
statements in question; "statement 1 is true" could be
taken as meaning "statement 1 is in accordance with the
.... tests for truth, or has passed the....... tests
for truth", and "statement 2 is false" could be taken as
meaning "statement 2 has not passed the........tests for
truth", where the blanks are to be filled in accordance
with whether the statement in question is contingently
true or analytically true, or perhaps has passed some
other type of tests for truth.

The problem of truth, as I see it, is that of
discussing in order to explain and display the relations
between the various concepts of truth, contingent,

analytic, etc. and the "general" concept of truth, and other concepts. This is obviously a very large number of problems, more or less inter-related, for the concept of truth is so fundamental in human discourse that it is related to very many other concepts. Its - or their - relationship to some concepts will be more interesting than its relation to others, although whether the relation of one concept to another is interesting and has far-reaching logical consequences may not always be clear until some investigation has been made into the nature of the relation. Among the concepts to which truth is most interestingly related might I think reasonably be supposed to be existence, meaning, intention (since true statements generally occur in the course of purposeful activities), implication, validity, and so on. In this thesis I shall be chiefly concerned to show the relation of the general concept of truth to the concept of intention. I do not think this is necessarily the most important problem concerning truth, but I think it is an important problem because it involves a discussion of the relation between meaning and truth, and that the concept of meaning is perhaps the most important and fundamental concept for philosophers to deal with, since what is said about almost any philosophical problem seems to me to depend on certain assumptions, which are sometimes explicit but more often entirely suppressed, on the nature

of meaning.

To show the relation between truth, whether the general concept or one of the particular concepts, and some other concept, is to discuss the ways in which these concepts function in the human activities comprising language. Now this can be interpreted in two ways. One might, I think, be interested in the ways in which the word "true" functions in language, or in the ways in which the things that are true (statement, or judgment, or belief, or proposition, or sentence, etc.) function in human linguistic activities. The difference between these two types of investigation might be made clearer by observing that the first type of investigation could only be carried on in a language which actually contained the word "true" or a synonym or translation for it; whereas the second type of investigation could be carried on in a language which did not contain any word for true. It is with the second type of problem that I shall be concerned, the question of the ways in which statements, judgments, beliefs, etc. function in human activities and human discourse, when these statements, judgments, beliefs etc. are true. For it could be said that statements, judgments, beliefs, etc. are true (and are false) whether we have any word to refer to this fact about them or not.

There are also further problems, which might also

be included as problems about truth, concerning the nature of the various tests for truth, and, as has already been suggested, of discussing the "point" of the tests and the ways in which they fit in with the "point" of making true statements, or true judgments, etc. in general.

To sum up: the main problem which I shall be dealing with is the problem of the way in which the things which are true function in human linguistic activities; thus the first question to be answered is "What are the 'things' which are true (or false)?" - i.e. how are they to be identified. I shall generally, and unless explicitly stated otherwise, be referring to what I have called the "general" concept of truth; most of the statements I make apply, I think, indifferently to contingent truth and analytic truth.

II

WHAT IS IT THAT IS TRUE-OR-FALSE?

"True" is an adjective which is applied to many
different nouns: we speak of true judgments, true beliefs,
true statements, true sentences, true reports, true
descriptions, to mention only a few.   It has however been
generally agreed by most writers on truth that what is true
(or false) is not the <u>act</u> of stating, believing or judging,
i.e. a psychological event in the history of an individual
human being, but the <u>object</u> of such individual acts of
statement, judgment, belief.   Whether a statement, a
judgment or a belief is true does not (with a few exceptions)
depend either on the identity of the person who judges or
states or believes it, or on the time at which or the manner
in which it is stated, judged or believed.   So far there has
been fairly general agreement, but there has been a great
deal of dispute over the way in which the object of these
various acts is correctly to be characterised or identified,
and over the question of which is the most accurately
descriptive or least misleading word to use in order to refer
to it.   The idealists favoured the term "judgment";   the

pragmatists "belief".   Russell, who himself used the term
"judgment" in earlier writings, criticised the idealists and
pragmatists for the use of these terms on the grounds that
they frequently made important philosophical mistakes through
failing to notice or acknowledge their ambiguity, by means of
which they can be used to refer both to the act of judgment
or belief and also to the object.   The nature of these
alleged philosophical errors is not relevant to my purpose
in the present discussion, which is to claim that what is
true-or-false is a sentence, and to justify this claim.

Russell used the term "proposition", a technical term
generally defined to mean "that which is true or false", in
order to avoid mistakes due to ambiguity;   the word was also
used by Ramsey and by many other writers.   The introduction
of a technical term however has given rise to speculations as
to the logical or ontological status of propositions, and it
might be criticised on the grounds that it is misleading,
because of its suggestion that there is some entity,
independent of any actual acts of judging and believing, to
which it refers.   In other words, by introducing it, it is
possible to overstress the distinction between the act and
the object of judgment or belief.   More important, it raises
problems about meaning: it has usually been defined in such
a way that it is expressible in words but is not identical
with the words in which it may be expressed (since the same
proposition can, it is generally claimed, be expressed in

more than one set of words), and this invites the questions
of whether the proposition has meaning, and if it has, of
how its meaning is related to the meaning of the words in
which it is expressed.   Strawson, as we have been, has
used the term "statement"; in a technical sense, indeed,
to refer to what it is that is stated, as distinct both from
the episodic act of stating and from the sentence used in
stating it, but in preference to "proposition" I think as
a less aggressively technical term.   Against this background,
I shall next outline what I think to be the correct answer
to the question "What is it that is true-or-false?" and
attempt to justify it by considering various objections
which might be made to it.

What is true-or-false is not the act of stating, or
judging, or believing, etc., considered as a psychological
event, but what is stated, judged or believed.   But what
I state when I state that some bears are black is not
                    it happens
something which/can be expressed or formulated in meaningful
words, but is itself logically independent of the words in
which I happen or choose to express it; what I state is the
meaningful sentence "Some bears are black".   There are
other sentences which have the same meaning as "Some bears
are black", e.g. the translation of this sentence into any
other language into which it can be unambiguously and
exactly translated, and perhaps some other English sentences
which contain synonyms for some or all of the words in it.

If I state one of these other sentences, I am making the same statement as when I state "Some bears are black"; I am uttering (in order to state) a sentence with the same meaning as the sentence "Some bears are black". I maintained in the previous chapter that the concept of truth is logically connected with the concept of meaning; the reasons for assuming this are

(a)   frequently if a word in a sentence which is uttered e.g. in stating is replaced by a word with different meaning, the truth-value of the sentence is changed, and

(b)   once meaning is fixed, truth is fixed.   By this I mean that if a sentence uttered in e.g. stating is meaningful (i.e. true-or-false) it is _either_ true _or_ false; the person stating or hearing it may not know whether it is true or not, but it has in fact got a truth-value.   All meaningful sentences uttered in e.g. stating _are_ either true or false;   what remains, in many cases, is for us to find out, discover or know whether they are in fact true or false.   This is not to say either that if we understand the meaning of a sentence uttered in stating we know whether it is true or false, or that it is possible to deduce or in any way infer the truth or falsity of a sentence uttered in stating from its meaning;   the latter may be true of sentences whose truth is analytic, but not of sentences whose truth (or falsity) is contingent.

For these reasons it seems to me to be essential to

regard the vehicle of meaning as identical with the
vehicle of truth. "Sentence" I define as a linguistically
meaningful set of noises or marks which is uttered or
written (or thought) by a human being in the course of a
variety of linguistic activities, including stating,
asserting, warning, promising, threatening, commanding,
and many others. Thus not all sentences are true-or-false;
true-or-false sentences form a subclass of sentences.
Meaning (linguistic meaningfulness) is not I think definable
in terms of truth; it is possible to imagine a language
which consisted only of say commands and threats, i.e.
sentences uttered in commanding and threatening, and these
would be linguistically meaningful utterances. I am here
using "meaningful" in its most general sense. There are
of course many different kinds of meaning. Even sets of
noises or marks uttered or written by human beings may have
different types of meaning: aesthetic significance, e.g.,
is very different from descriptive meaning. There is
literal meaning, emotive meaning, evaluative meaning,
rhetorical meaning, poetic meaning - there is a wide variety
of starting-points from which different classifications of
types of meaning may be made. Although, as I have claimed,
there is a general sense of linguistic meaningfulness in
which it is not possible to define meaningfulness in terms
of truth and falsity, since other types of sentences besides
statements, judgments, warnings, etc. are linguistically

meaningful, there is another sense of meaning in which
the meaningfulness of statements and assertions and
warnings, or sentencesuttered in stating, asserting,
warning, etc. is different from the meaningfulness of
sentences uttered in saying commanding or threatening.
This is the sense in which the meaningfulness of a
sentence is dependent, to a large extent, upon its point,
the fact, e.g. that it is being stated and not uttered in
threat.   There are even occasions when the same set of
noises or marks may be uttered in the pursuit of different
linguistic activities; the actual sounds or marks used
might be the same, say, in a statement or a threat, but
insofar as the point of uttering them in the one case is
different from the point of uttering them in the other case,
they have different meaning.   There is a further
distinction in types of meaning which could be made
according to whether the set of noises or marks in question
were stated or asserted or uttered in warning or prediction,
etc.   In this sense of meaning, "There is a tiger in the
next room" has a different meaning according to whether
I utter it in making a statement, giving a warning,
excusing myself for not going into the next room.   This
sense of meaning, I shall claim, is important for the
investigation of the concept of truth.

However, the present point is that linguistic
meaningfulness, which will be discussed more fully in the

next chapter, is an attribute or characteristic or
certain noises and marks uttered and written by human
beings, and that it is a subclass of linguistically
meaningful noises and marks which are true-or-false.
What is true or false is a physical occurrence or object,
but it is a physical occurrence or object which has
linguistic meaning. Sentences can of course be considered
simply as physical occurrences or objects, and they can be
described as such, e.g. as long or noisy or unpleasant or
euphonious. Physical attributes do not generally affect
the linguistic meaningfulness of a sentence, although it
is logically possible that the same noise might have a
different meaning according to whether it was uttered
loudly or softly, or that the same set of marks might have
a different meaning according to whether it was made in
pencil or in ink. As a matter of fact, this state of
affairs is not common in language as we know it, but it
could become so.

What is true-or-false, then, is a linguistically
meaningful utterance or set of marks, or sentence, uttered
by a human being in a context and on a specific occasion.
Not all sentences are true-or-false. True-or-false
sentences include sentences uttered in stating (statements)
sentences uttered in asserting (assertions), sentences
uttered in denying, some sentences uttered in warning, some
sentences uttered in supposing or considering possibilities,

and others.   They may also include sentences uttered in
threatening, promising and predicting, but I do not intend
to go into the question of whether statements about the
future, or sentences uttered with future reference, which
are in principle unverifiable at the time of their
utterance, are correctly describable as true-or-false.
Sentences which do not fall under the true-or-false
category include sentences uttered in commanding, asking
questions, and some sentences uttered in warning (e.g.
"Look out!").

The notion that what is true-or-false may be
identified as a sentence has been attacked by Strawson[1]
chiefly on the grounds that if it is accepted it is
impossible to give a satisfactory account of inconsistency.
I quote the relevant passage at length, as I may be able
to make my position clearer by considering it in detail:

> "I have spoken of statements as inconsistent
> with each other; and there is a temptation
> to think thatin this context we mean by a
> statement the same thing as a sentence of a
> certain kind; or, perhaps, the meaning of
> such a sentence.   But suppose I write on
> the blackboard the following two pairs of
> sentences: (i) 'I am under six foot tall'
> and 'I am over six foot tall'; (ii) 'The
> conductor is a bachelor' and 'The conductor
> is married'.   In writing the sentences on
> the blackboard, I have, of course, not
> contradicted myself; for I may have written
> them there with a purely illustrative
> intention, in giving an English lesson.
> Someone might say: Nevertheless, the
> sentences in each pair are inconsistent,

1.   Introduction to Logical Theory, pp. 3-4.

"with each other.   But what would this
mean?   Would it mean that if they were
ever uttered with the intention of making
a statement, an inconsistency would result?
But suppose the first two sentences were
uttered by different people, or by the
same person at an interval ofyears; that
the second two sentences were uttered in
different omnibuses, or in the same
omnibus, but on different days.   Then
there would be no inconsistency.....What
these examples show is that we cannot
identify that which is true or false
(the statement) with the sentences used
in making it; for the same sentence may
be used to make quite different statements,
some of them true and some of them false.
And this does not arise from any ambiguity
in the sentence. The sentence may have a
single meaning which is precisely what, as
in these cases, allows it to be used to
make quite different statements.   So it
will not do to identify the statement
either with the sentence or with the meaning
of the sentence.   A particular statement
is identified, not only by reference to the
words used, but also by reference to the
circumstances in which they are used, and,
sometimes, to the identity of the person
using them."

I do not wish to identify the statement (the sentence

uttered in stating) either with the sentence considered

simply as a physical occurrence, a "mere" set of noises

or marks, nor with the meaning of the sentence, considered

as something independent in some way of any given occurrence

of a sentence.   But I do wish to identify the statement

(the sentence uttered in stating) with the sentence used

in making it considered as a linguistically meaningful

set of noises or marks uttered in stating; this is a

tautology, in fact a repetition of the "Red is red" type,

but my point is that "the sentence used in making" the
statement is only the sentence that it is (i.e. the
linguistically meaningful set of noises or marks that it
is) if it _is_ the sentence used in making the statement in
question.   In other words, the _meaning_, just as much as
the truth (or falsity) of any given statement or sentence
uttered in stating, is dependent on what the statement is.
The same _sentence_ cannot be used to make different
statements, because a sentence is a linguistically
meaningful set of noises or marks, and what the statement
is depends on what the set of noises or marks means, or
is being used to mean.   The same set of noises or marks,
considered purely physically, can of course be used to
make different statements.   The same set of noises or
marks, considered purely physically, can be uttered on
one occasion in stating and on another in threatening;
it may even be possible for them to function in both ways
at once (e.g. in the case of "I confirm p", as already
meantioned, it may be possible in uttering these noises
both to confirm something and to describe onds performance
at the same time).   X and Y, i.e. two sets of sounds or
marks made by human beings, are the same sentence if they
are uttered or written with the same meaning, e.g. uttered
in making the same statement or the same promise.   The
sentence "I am under six foot tall" written on the black-
board with illustrative intention is not the same sentence

as that uttered by the teacher in asserting that he is
six foot tall.   The former occurrence of the sentence is
meaningful, but is not true-or-false; the latter is also
meaningful, but has a different type of meaning from the
former, and is true or false.

Now it might be objected that to claim that a set of
noises or marks which occurs in identical physical form
in the course of stating, asserting, denying, promising
and warning has a different meaning in each of these
contexts is to multiply types of meaning excessively and
unnecessarily.   I think it is true that it multiplies
them excessively, but that unless we do acknowledge the
distinction in meaning between a set of sounds uttered e.g.
in asserting and a similar set of sounds uttered e.g. in
warning, we cannot do justice to the workings of language
or give an adequate account either of what it is that is
true-or-false, or of what it is that is true, i.e. statements
and beliefs and judgments, etc.   I do not wish to deny that
if someone asks me "What does X mean?", where X stands for
a set of marks customarily written in commanding, or
promising, or stating, or some other kind of linguistic
activity, or in several sorts of linguistic activity, I do
not have to ask "Is X being uttered in commanding or
promising or stating?" before I can answer.   Let us
consider an example.   The question "What does the
sentence 'There is a tiger in the next room' mean?" is

a meaningful sentence.   It could be answered by uttering
a sentence (set of noises which are meaningful because they
are being uttered in answering a question) in which some of
the words in the sentence quoted in the question were
replaced by synonymous words.   If someone asks me "What
does the sentence "There is a tiger in the next room" mean?"
I recognise the sentence quoted as being a set of noises
frequently uttered in stating, asserting, warning, etc.
and my answer, if it is a correct one, will also be a
sentence which is frequently uttered in stating, asserting
and warning.   Of course, in this case, as in most cases,
although the sentence quoted and the sentence given in
answer are sentences which are uttered in pursuit of
several different linguistic activities, and therefore with
several different types of meaning, their physical aspects
are similar and they are recognisable by their physical
aspects as being sentences which frequently occur with these
different types of meaning.   So the question "Is X a
meaningful sentence?" can mean two things:

(a)   Is X, a set of noises or marks occurring on a given
occasion, being used to state or assert or warn (and the
answer will be "yes" if X is being used in <u>one</u> of these
linguistic activities) or

(b)   Is X a set of noises or marks which is frequently
used by people in stating or asserting or warning?

   Further, the actual occurrence of the marks "There is

a tiger in the next room" in the question "What does the sentence 'There is a tiger in the next room' mean?" has a different meaning from this (physically similar) sentence or set of marks as it occurs in contexts of stating, or asserting, or warning.   In the question it is quoted, i.e. it occurs in quoting, and quoting is a different linguistic activity from asserting or warning; consequently a set of noises or marks uttered in quoting has a different type of meaning from the same set of noises or marks uttered in asserting or warning.

For some purposes, e.g. doing logic, and compiling dictionaries, it is possible and convenient to ignore these differences in types of meaning.   But in order to explain adequately the concept of truth, these distinctions of meaning are of the utmost importance.

Thus the sentence "I am under six foot tall" (assuming that it is a meaningful set of marks) written on the blackboard is not true-or-false unless it was written in stating, asserting, denying, or in the course of some other linguistic activity which involves the utterance of a true-or-false sentence.   Further, it cannot categorically be claimed to be a sentence (i.e. linguistically meaningful). If I go into a room and see the marks "I am under six foot tall" on the blackboard, it does not follow logically that what I see is a meaningful sentence.   If this pattern of marks on the blackboard was caused by paint falling from

the newly-painted ceiling, or by a monkey playing with a piece of chalk, then they do not constitute a meaningful sentence.   Of course, in the case of such a complex set of marks as "I am under six foot tall" (and most sets of noises and marks uttered in the pursuit of linguistic activities are physically complex) it is so unlikely that this would be the explanation of the occurrence of these marks on the blackboard that anyone entering the room would be reasonably entitled to assume that they were the result of a human action (allowing for the possibility that a monkey might have the facility of copying a human action of this kind) and further, knowing something about the general patterns of human behaviour, that they were written in pursuit of a linguistic activity.   It is however true that even if they were caused by paint falling from the ceiling, it would be possible for somone who later came into the room to point to them as an example of a meaningful sentence.   This I think is a special case, and can be accounted for by saying that anyone who pointed to a set of marks which had been caused in such a way and said "This is an English sentence" (or "This is an example of an English sentence") could be understood as saying "This set of marks is physically similar (or identical) with sets of marks frequently used by English people in making certain statements, uttering certain apologies, illustrating points of grammar, and so on".

I shall claim in the next chapter that it would be possible for a human being to write this or any other set of marks customarily written or uttered meaningfully, i.e. in the course of linguistic activities, without meaningfulness.

However, assuming that the set of marks on the blackboard has been written by a human being, and is meaningful, i.e. has been written in the course of a linguistic activity, it is not possible to say whether this actual occurrence of the sentence is true-or-false, for it may have been written e.g. as an example of a grammatically correct sentence. But my point is not only that it cannot be said to be true (or false) until it is known what statement it is being used to make; but that it cannot be said to be true (or false) until it is known what it means. Strawson, at the end of the passage quoted, ties the identification of a statement (something true-or-false) to "the circumstances in which" the words comprising it are used, and (sometimes) to the identity of the person making it; I wish also to tie the meaning of the sentence to these considerations. Suppose we know that the set of marks on the blackboard, "I am under six foot tall" was written by some human being, but we don't know which one. Then I do not think that we can be said to know the meaning of this sentence, although we are certainly entitled to assert that it is a meaningful sentence, if we know that this unknown human being wrote it in assertion or statement.

Thus I am claiming that it is possible to know that a
given set of marks or sounds is meaningful without knowing
what it in fact means;   and this not in the sense that
we know that it is meaningful because someone whose word
may be relied on has assured us that it is meaningful,
although we would never have recognised it as meaningful
for ourselves;   but in the sense that we ourselves recognise
it, in this occurrence, as being a set of sounds or marks
frequently uttered meaningfully, and in accordance with the
rules of the English language, but we do not know what it
means on this actual occasion - because, e.g., we do not
know to whom the pronoun "I" refers.   "I am under six foot
tall" uttered by a person A has a different meaning from
"I am under six foot tall" uttered by person B.   This is
a peculiarity of pronouns.   The pronoun "I" functions in a
similar way to the variable in a propositional function;
what the sentence "I am six foot tall" (assuming that it _is_
meaningful) means depends on the identity of the person
uttering it;   whether it is true depends also on the identity
of the person uttering it, but in a different way - whether
it is true depends on the height of the person uttering it;
whether it is meaningful, or what it means, does not.
This is because one of the considerations the meaningfulness
of a set of marks depends on is what the referring words in
it are actually being used to refer to.   I do not wish to

suggest that a propositional function containing a variable
to which an actual value has not been allotted, or a
sentence like "I am under six foot tall" uttered
(meaningfully) in the course of a linguistic activity such
as giving an example of a set of marks frequently uttered
by people pursuing linguistic activities does not have meaning,
although in this case no value has been assigned to the
variable, or the pronoun "I" does not have any definite
reference; here again, I should say that in this context
the sentence has a different type of meaning from the
physically similar sentence uttered in asserting or stating.
Also that the type of meaning possessed by the former
expressions is logically dependent on the type possessed by
the latter.   Only sentences which could occur in actual
contexts, i.e. at specified times and places and utterable
by human beings in pursuit of linguistic activities can be
quoted or given in illustration of grammatical or logical
points.   The sentence "'I am under six foot tall' is
an example of a set of noises frequently uttered in making
statements, assertions, etc." is true only because there
have been, or could be, actual occasions of people stating
"I am under six foot tall"; and it is only meaningful in
the former context because it is meaningful in the latter
context.   If "I am under six foot tall" is true-or-false,
then it is uttered meaningfully, by an individual person,
and the pronoun "I" has a specific object of reference.

I have mentioned the case where someone might ask
"What does the sentence 'There is a tiger in the next room'
mean?" and suggested that it can be answered without finding
out whether it is being uttered in warning or asserting etc.
because a correct answer does not depend on the recognition
of differences of meaning in each of these different
linguistic activities, since the correct answers would be
physically similar, whether the sentence is thought of as
one uttered in warning, or asserting, etc.   But consider
the case where someone actually runs up to me and says "There
is a tiger in the next room".   If I say to him "What do you
mean?" my question is ambiguous.   I may ask him this
question because I do not understand all the words in the
sentence, or recognise the grammatical construction of the
sentence;   or I may be asking him the reason why he said it,
e.g. whether he was warning me or giving me a piece of
interesting information.   I do not think it is correct to
say that the question "What do you mean?" would be more
appropriate in trying to get information in the one case
rather than the other.   If I say "What do you mean?" in
order to find out whether I have been given a warning or a
piece of information, I may correctly be said to be enquiring
after the intentions of the speaker, but this is just as much
an enquiry about the meaning of the sentence as is the
request for a synonymous word or sentence.   What I want to
know is what the speaker intended to say (or possibly what

he expects me to do about it) and this can <u>only</u> be
answered adequately by the utterance of another sentence.
The importance of intentions in the account of the type
of meaning relevant to the discussion of truth will be
discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

It should now be clear that I do not think it
necessary to distinguish between sentences and statements
in the way in which Strawson does in the passage quoted
in order to give a satisfactory account of inconsistency.
The sentences "I am under six foot tall" and "I am over
six foot tall" written on the blackboard are not
necessarily inconsistent; they are not necessarily
sentences.   If they have been written by a human being,
with the intention of making a statement or an assertion
or giving a warning, then they are meaningful; if they
have been written by one human being in making an assertion
or a statement, within a relatively short period of time,
then they are inconsistent, for one of them must be true
and the other false (unless the writer is 6 feet tall;
this complication is irrelevant to the present point).
Nevertheless if I read in a textbook of logic "The
sentences (or statements) "I am under six foot tall" and
"I am over six foot tall" are inconsistent with each other"
I can understand what I read and agree to it; though I
may think it would have been better put "The sets of marks
"I am under six foot tall" and "I am over six foot tall"

are sets of marks which are frequently uttered in
making statements, or making assertions, etc., and if
they are both so uttered by one man within a relatively
short period of time, then they are inconsistent".
Of course, if it were put in this way, then although
its exact meaning would be more precise, the discussion
of its logic would become impossibly cumbrous. I am
not suggesting that all textbooks of logic, or arguments
involving such expressions, should all be reworded in
this way; but simply that it is important to bear in
mind while reading e.g. a textbook of logic that the
true-or-false sentences it is quoting and referring to
are sentences which always occur in concrete circumstances
and contexts in the course of numerous types of linguistic
activities, and that the use or quotation of these sentences
in the context of a logic textbook is parasitic on these
other occurrences.

In the course of this chapter the references to
linguistic meaningfulness and the function of sentences
in actual discourse have been incidental and cursory;
in the next chapter I shall discuss some of the problems
which arise out of this in more detail.

III

WHAT IS THE FUNCTION OF WORDS & SENTENCES?

Words and sentences are sounds or marks, or sets of
sounds or marks, uttered or written by human beings in the
pursuit of linguistic activities. All human actions or
courses of action could be classified as linguistic or
non-linguistic, with a large number of types of courses
of action which are mixed. Closing the door is a non-
linguistic action, asking a question is linguistic;
swimming the Channel is a non-linguistic course of action,
writing a letter is almost entirely linguistic. Even
linguistic activities like asserting and promising have,
necessarily, a non-linguistic basis; it would be
impossible to perform any linguistic activity without
at the same time breathing, or moving one's lips or hands.
But these physical motions do not in themselves make any
difference to what particular type of linguistic activity
is being performed; from the fact that someone is making
marks on paper with a pen it cannot be deduced that he is
pursuing any specific linguistic activity. It cannot,
indeed, be deduced from this fact alone that he is pursuing
any linguistic activity at all, since he may well be

doodling or drawing.   Examples of "mixed" activities are playing chess and acting in a play.   Thus many primarily linguistic activities, e.g. teaching someone a language and giving a lecture, involve non-linguistic components (opening the dictionary and wiping the board).   Moreover not all sounds and marks uttered and written by human beings, even in the course of purposeful activities which may be primarily linguistic, are linguistically meaningful. Involuntary cries of pain or sighs, portraits and musical scores, are non-linguistic.   The first two may or may not occur in the course of purposeful (linguistic or non-linguistic) activities;   the drawing or painting of a portrait and the composing of a musical score would be purposeful activities, and the actual portrait and musical score could be said to possess significance;   but they are not linguistic, although they might, especially the latter, be connected with linguistic activities (learning how to write down a musical score or express one's musical ideas by writing a score might involve linguistic activities).

Further, there are many types of activity which are borderline, and it would be extremely difficult to classify as either linguistic or non-linguistic without a good deal of discussion, and possibly a more or less arbitrary decision;   expletives and ritualistic language fall under this category.   There are also, of course, as has already been mentioned, many different types of linguistic meaning.

Now there are many activities that human beings
pursue by means of language, i.e. by uttering or writing
linguistically meaningful sets of sounds or marks.   Some
of them, e.g. warning, or threatening, may possibly be
pursuable by both linguistic and non-linguistic means.
Linguistic activities could be classified in many ways.
At the highest level of generality they could be specified
as thinking, talking and writing, although I do not wish to
suggest that all thinking is in language; I should maintain
that all conceptual thinking necessarily involves language,
but there may be other kinds of mental activity, e.g.
imagery, which resemble conceptual thinking in enough
respects to merit the title "thinking".   However whether
or not this is so is a question I do not propose to go into,
and is irrelevant to the present point; all that is
claimed is that some thinking is in words and sentences.
At a lower level of generality the activities listed above
could be thought of as part of a mixed activity, e.g.
playing a game or bidding at an auction.   Or, again, as
a series of almost exclusively linguistic activities, like
writing a novel, explaining to someone how to fill in a
form, or making a political speech.   At a lower level
again linguistic activities might be thought of as those
which are manifested in the utterance or writing of a single
sentence, grammatically defined.   At this level they could
be specified as including stating, asserting, denying,

promising, predicting, commanding, asking a question,
answering a question, telling a lie, considering a
possibility, and many, many more.   They would also
include warning, threatening and other similar types of
activity insofar as or when these are pursued linguistically.
Answering a question may involve uttering more than one
(grammatically defined) sentence, and there might be a
case for describing the uttering of a sentence in answer
to a question as stating or asserting.   "Considering a
possibility" may also apply to other forms of human
activity besides that which consists in uttering a
sentence starting "Perhaps......" or "Let us suppose
that.....".   But the general lines of the type of
classification suggested should I think be clear from the
examples given.

It would be extremely difficult, if not (practically)
impossible, to give an exhaustive list of such activities
at any level except perhaps the highest, partly because
they are so numerous and partly because there would be a
considerable amount of overlapping.   The overlapping
increases as we descend the scale.   As already suggested,
answering a question may involve writing a book, and on
the other hand a political speech might consist of one
single sentence.   There are means of referring to
linguistic activities at the third level indifferently

or non-committally;   such terms as "saying" and "telling"
are used to cover several of the activities already listed.
Sometimes it is possible to discover from the context that
"he said" is being used to mean "he promised" or "he
stated" or "he threatened";   sometimes what a speaker means
by "he said", i.e. which linguistic activity he is referring
to, is not important to the understanding of what he is
talking about.   The words and sentences we utter in the
course of linguistic activities can be vague or precise;
whether this matters will depend on our particular purposes.

The reason why I have classified linguistic
activities in this way is that I want to suggest that it is
by considering those at the third level above, i.e. those
that are generally pursued by uttering one single sentence
(grammatically defined) that it is most convenient to
discuss the problem of truth with which I am concerned,
and the notion of linguistic meaning that is relevant to
the problem.   Since that which is true-or-false has been
identified as a linguistically meaningful utterance, or
sentence, uttered in stating, asserting, denying, etc.
in order to discuss the function of such sentences it is
necessary to investigate the function of the linguistic
activities of stating, asserting, denying, etc. in relation
to the larger linguistic and mixed activities of which they
form a part.

"Sentence" I have already defined as a set of sounds

or marks uttered or written by human beings in pursuing
the activities of stating, asserting, commanding, asking
questions, promising, and so on.   There is also a
grammatical criterion to which sentences must conform.
A question, e.g., is a set of words combined in
accordance with certain grammatical rules, and having
a question mark at the end; but this is not a complete
definition of a sentence which is a question.   On the
basis of it alone it would be impossible to know that
e.g. "How do you do?" is generally not a question.   In
order to be a question, a set of words combined in
accordance with certain grammatical rules and having a
question mark at the end must be uttered in pursuance of
the human activity of asking a question.   Otherwise, that
is if the type of activity involved were completely laid
down by the rules of grammar and the meaning of the words
comprising the sentence, it would be impossible to speak
rhetorically.

I have said that a sentence is a set of sounds or
marks, and that it is made up of words.   By "word" I mean
a part of a sentence, which is itself linguistically
meaningful, since the sentence of which it forms part is
linguistically meaningful, and which is not generally used
for the same purpose as a sentence.   Of course, it is
possible to make oneself understood as stating something
by uttering a single word, but the notion of a word is

the notion of something which is not normally sufficient
for pursuing the activities of stating, warning, denying,
etc., unless used in conjunction with, or in relation
with, certain other words.   Words can function as
sentences, i.e. they can be used to state, assert and
deny in certain situations where we have reason to expect
that our hearers will recognise them as elliptical for
certain sentences;   sentences can function as words, e.g.
can be used to refer to objects.   The relation of words
to sentences is a matter of a difference of function.
We use sentences in order to state, assert, promise,
threaten, etc.;   one of the important reasons why we use
words, as words, is to refer;   another is to connect
together other words in order to form a sentence to utter
in stating, asserting, etc.   Referring, like asserting,
is a linguistic activity;   I wish to say not that words
refer, but that people refer by using words.   To refer
to something is to indicate it, identify it, distinguish
it by uttering a linguistically meaningful sound or set
of sounds.   Referring thus presupposes that there are
things to refer to, but not that the things we refer to
have any particular ontological status.   The latter will
depend on further considerations.   All that is required,
in order that we should be able to refer, is that there
should be identifiable and distinguishable things.   It
might, indeed, be claimed that the activity of referring

does not even presuppose that there are things to be
referred to, but only that we can identify and distinguish.
However, it would then be necessary to say that there are
things to be identified and distinguished, so these things
are at least indirectly presupposed by the activity of
referring.   Some words are nearly always used to refer,
e.g. "table", "dream", "cat".   Other words, e.g. "by",
"please", are rarely used to refer, though any sound can
be used to refer at least to itself, while retaining its
meaning, or at least some kind of linguistic meaning.[1]
There are many types of words, e.g. abstract nouns like
"courage", "beauty", whose relation to things, considered
as objects existent in the world, is extremely complex and
the subject of much philosophical discussion, which is not
relevant to the present point.   Referring is a relatively
incomplete activity; we normally refer to something in
order to state or assert something about it, to warn
somone of it, to threaten someone with it, and so on.
I say "relatively" incomplete, because I do not wish to rule
out the possibility that when I utter "chair" in response
to your command (perhaps in a game) "Refer to something",
my utterance is a linguistically meaningful sound, a word.
Further, we frequently coin new words simply by uttering
a sound in order to refer to something, or stating that

1.   See pp. 95-8.

the intention to introduce a new word was our purpose in

uttering a certain sound.   However, even in these cases

the purpose in uttering the sound was not just to make a

noise in the presence of an object.   For this reason,

referring is not the same activity as pointing, or a

linguistic version ofpointing.   Pointing, indeed, can

count as referring, as shaking one's head can count as

denying, but only when there is some convention linking

the activity of pointing, which is non-linguistic, with

the activity of referring, which is linguistic.   Pointing

could not function in the same way as referring unless

there already were an activity of referring.

Referring, then, is indicating something in order to

say something about it (we might say: it is a linguistic

activity which is generally pursued in furtherance of a

larger, or other linguistic activity), and if we are

referring when we utter a certain sounds, then that sound

is meaningful, is a word.   It is a purposeful activity,

and its characteristic purpose is to single out something

in order to pursue some other linguistic activity.   The

place of proper names in this scheme raises interesting

problems, but they are not relevant to the present issue.

I shall claim that all purely linguistic activities, e.g.

referring, stating, asserting, denying, are incomplete,

and that it is a failure to recognise this that has led to

various misconceptions about truth.

Words and sentences then are uttered in the pursuit of linguistic activities. What makes an activity linguistic? When, e.g., are the activities of warning and threatening linguistic and not non-linguistic? It will not do to say "When they involve uttering sounds" since not all sounds, as we have seen, are linguistically meaningful. Nor can we say "When they involve uttering sounds generally recognised as meaningful or similar to those listed in the dictionary", for words and sentences are physical things and can operate in human activities purely in their physical capacity.

Let us consider what is involved in the activity of warning, in an attempt to become clearer as to what are the discriminating features of a specifically linguistic activity.

In general, to warn someone of something is to express concern for his welfare and to try to prevent him from coming to harm. It is possible that this describes animal as well as human activity. There are likenesses between a man's shouting "Stop!" and a dog's activity in barking and jumping up and down excitedly when its puppy goes too near the edge which might make us want to say that the dog was warning or attempting to warn the puppy. Concern for someone's welfare can be shown by behavioural

signs, by humans or by animals. These signs may be
conventional, like raising a hand, or the intention with
which they are used may be unmistakable by their actual
form, like signalling to a driver that there is an
obstacle round the corner with one hand, and waving him
back with the other. The signs can be operating
causally; a shout, loud or urgent. They can also be
linguistically meaningful: "There is a tiger in the next
room". However, the fact that I have uttered the sounds
"There is a tiger in the next room", or any other sounds
which are customarily uttered in the context of a linguistic
activity, does not entail that these sounds are
linguistically meaningful whenever they are uttered. They
too could have been operating causally, since the speaker,
or the hearer, or both, might not know of the existence of
the English language, or before the English language came
into existence, and yet the utterance might occur in the
hope of preventing an accident, and might be effective in
so doing. The same set of sounds might be uttered out of
concern for someone's welfare, from a desire to prevent an
accident, from a desire to warn someone of danger, or from
a desire to warn someone that there is a tiger in the next
room - to give only a few possible reasons for their
utterance. More than one of such reasons might be
operative on one occasion. In any of these cases they
could be understood or misunderstood, correctly

interpreted or misinterpreted, acted on or ignored, by
whoever hears them - or they may not be heard at all.
But in order for an utterance or a sign to qualify as a
warning there must at least be the intention or hope of
being heard or seen, understood or correctly interpreted,
on the part of the person warning.   It is not necessary
that there should be concern for someone's welfare - the
policeman who warns me that parking is not allowed on
this side of the road does not, in general, care whether
I take notice of his warning or not;   he might even hope
secretly that I will not heed it, so that he will get a
conviction.   Thus a person's motive in warning might be
to prevent someone else from coming to harm, to do one's
moral duty, to do one's professional duty, or to pursue
one's own interests.   But for an activity properly to be
called a warning there must be, I think, on the part of
the warner at least the expectation that the person warned
will find what he is being warned of unpleasant or
undesirable, or something he wouldn't take action to avoid
unless he was warned.   It is also necessary that the
warner should at least believe or think it likely that
the person warned is able to change his course of action
because of what has been said, or of the sign that has
been made in warning.   These conditions could be claimed
to have been fulfilled in the case of the dog, since they
can be demonstrated by behavioural signs, and since they

are necessary conditions of an activity's qualifying as
a warning, they are also necessary conditions for a
warning to qualify as linguistic.

Whether an activity qualifies as a warning does not
depend on the consequences of the activity, since if,
again taking the case of the dog, the activity is directed
at two puppies simultaneously and one reacts appropriately
and the other does not, the same activity can have
different consequences, according to whom it is directed.
The actual consequences are similarly irrelevant to whether
a warning is linguistic or not, since the same
meaningful sentence uttered in warning, i.e. one occurrence
of it on one occasion, can be understood or misunderstood,
acted on or ignored.

Whether or not an activity is correctly to be described
as linguistic does not depend, then, on the consequences of
the activity, the reactions of the person towards whom the
activity is directed. Moreover many linguistic activities,
e.g. thinking out a moral problem or wondering what will
happen tomorrow, are not directed towards anyone, but are
private. (This is not to say that there are any
linguistic activities which are necessarily private;
indeed I doubt whether it would be possible to have a
criterion of linguistic meaningfulness which could (logically)
be applied by only one person. I don't need an audience

in order to think out a moral problem or wonder what will happen tomorrow, but if I _were_ overheard in my musings, there would be some reaction on the part of the hearer, if only that of understanding or misunderstanding or failing to understand altogether.

Nor does whether or not an activity is linguistic depend on the nature of the actual performance in its physical, i.e. visual or aural aspect. The hand raised in warning could be raised in exercising the arm. The sounds uttered in shouting "Stop" merely to make the child draw back (before the child understands the meaning of the word) may be uttered in pleading. And in the case of warning as a linguistic activity, again, the sentence uttered in warning someone that there is a tiger in the next room may also be uttered in excusing oneself for not going into the next room.

Does whether an activity is a warning depend on the speaker's intention? In the case of warning as a non-linguistic activity, this would appear to be a useful criterion. If I see you raise your hand, and am in doubt as to what you are about, I may ask you what you are doing. If you say "I raised my hand in order to warn you not to go into the **n**ext room", then I may (on the assumption that you are telling the truth) safely conclude that your activity was one of warning. Is the intention to warn you not to go into the next room a _guarantee_ that

you were warning? It might be objected that the means of
carrying out the intention on a given occasion were
illchosen, and if they were sufficiently illchosen the
activity could not be called warning. However, since I
am primarily concerned with linguistic activities, I will
consider this possible objection as it arises in that
context.

The intention of the speaker would appear to be a
useful criterion also for deciding whether a given
utterance was a linguistically meaningful warning or not.
I may be doubtful as to whether you were performing a
linguistic, as opposed to a non-linguistic, activity in
uttering the sounds "There is a tiger in the next room".
An animal might be taught to react to them, and if they
were then used to warn the animal - e.g. to prevent it from
coming to harm - the animal's reaction would be related
to them as an effect to a cause; they would be operating
causally in the stimulus-response sense and not with
linguistic meaning. The animal would react to them
"automatically"; the human being who hears a linguistic
warning can generally choose whether to act on it or not.
If I am in doubt as to whether your activity in uttering
these sounds is linguistic or non-linguistic, a good way
for me to find out, again, is to ask you why you uttered
them. I might also be in doubt, when hearing you uttering
these sounds, as to whether you were warning me or simply

reporting to me a fact you thought I would find interesting, or perhaps excusing yourself for not going into the next room. In the first case, my doubt is as to whether your activity is linguistic or non-linguistic; in the second, as to what kind of linguistic activity you are performing. It should be noted that I am not suggesting that doubts as to whether activities are linguistic or non-linguistic are part of the worries of the ordinary man. The doubts are created by the definitions I have given of these terms, and the question at issue is how, on the definitions of linguistic and non-linguistic that have been given, it is possible to give an account of the crucial discriminating features of linguistic and non-linguistic activities.

We are at the moment concerned with the first type of case, the question whether an activity of warning is linguistic or non-linguistic. I want to suggest that if, in answer to my question as to why you uttered the sounds "There is a tiger in the next room" you say "Because I wanted to prevent you from going into the next room", or "Because I wanted you to draw back from the door", or "Because I wanted to warn you of danger", your activity may have been non-linguistic, and your utterance thus not a meaningful sentence; but if you say "Because I wanted to warn you that there was a tiger in the next room", or "Because I wanted to inform you that there was a tiger in

the next room, in the hope of preventing you from
entering it", then it was a case of warning as a linguistic
activity, and your utterance, by consequence, was a
linguistically meaningful sentence.   If you want to warn
me that there is a tiger in the next room, you can only
do this by uttering linguistically meaningful sounds, i.e.
a sentence.   You might of course do it by showing me a
photograph of the tiger sitting in the next room, and then
point to the next room and shake your head, but this
activity would only count as a warning, i.e. it would only
function as a warning if there were certain mutually
understood conventions linking the photograph with the
state of affairs in the next room, and linking my gestures
with the utterance of sentences in warning on other
occasions.   The kind of intention that is particular to
a set of sounds uttered with linguistic meaningfulness in
warning, then, is the intention to warn that........, where
what follows "that" is something which can only be
expressed or formulated in linguistically meaningful
sounds, words and sentences.   This kind of intention I
shall call a linguistic intention, and there is an
appropriate linguistic intention for every kind of
linguistic activity.   There are other activities, besides
warning, which can be performed either linguistically or
non-linguistically, e.g. threatening.   Threatening is a
linguistic activity, and the sounds uttered in

threatening are linguistically meaningful (i.e. words and sentences) when they are uttered in pursuance of the linguistic intention to threaten that........, and so on.

The intention or desire to warn you that X might be considered as the intention to communicate something to you.   The concept of communication is however of no help in explaining the nature of linguistic intentions. Communication itself can be a linguistic or a non-linguistic activity.   Communication consists sometimes in bringing about a state of affairs where A knows what B knows, A believes what B believes, A feels what B feels. This can sometimes be achieved by other means than language; it can sometimes be achieved by behavioural signs.   Communication is of course frequently a linguistic activity, but since in order to explain linguistic intentions in terms of communication it would be necessary to make clear the differences between linguistic and non-linguistic communication, and this itself can only be done in terms of linguistic and non-linguistic intentions (the differences between linguistic and non-linguistic acts of communicationx being similar in type to the differences between warning as a linguistic activity and warning as a non-linguistic activity, etc.) such an explanation would be circular.

Further, not all linguistic activities are

communicative, as has already been noted.

There are many activities which would appear to be entirely, or almost entirely, linguistic. It would be difficult to find a non-linguistic counterpart to the linguistic activities of stating, asserting, denying, promising, asking questions, predicting. I may be able to assert something by nodding, or deny something by shaking my head, but these are not genuine counterparts, which are non-linguistic, to the linguistic activities of asserting, stating, etc. As in the case of warning by showing a photograph, accompanied by certain gestures, they only count as asserting and denying if and when there are certain conventions linking them to the linguistic activities of asserting and denying. The appropriate linguistic intentions in these cases would be the intentions to state that, assert that, ask whether, predict that, and so on. Some of these may be borderline cases, e.g. someone might want to claim that commanding could be a non-linguistic activity, which could be performed with the intention of displaying authority or perhaps some other non-linguistic intention; in the latter case it might be achieved by making signs which unmistakably indicate that I want the door shut. The intention to describe can be linguistic or non-linguistic, or mixed; I might be able to fulfil my intention of describing something to you by showing you a photograph,

or drawing a picture, and whether an explicit convention
linking this with the linguistic activity of describing
is necessary in order for my intention to be understood,
or my activity to be understood, is I think a more
questionable issue than that involved in the case of
denying by shaking my head.   Some of these activities
shade off into others; it might be difficult to say
whether a given activity was an example of warning or of
threatening, even after the speaker had been asked his
intention.   It may be difficult, in a given situation,
to say what one's intentions are, thus making it difficult
to judge whether the activity in question is linguistic or
non-linguistic.

A linguistic intention is one that can be carried
out successfully, or achieved, only by uttering
linguistically meaningful sentences.   A non-linguistic
intention is one that can be achieved successfully by the
performance of activities which do not necessarily involve
the utterance of linguistically meaningful sentences:
they can of course involve the utterance of sounds, even
sounds resembling those normally uttered meaningfully in
sentences, but not all sounds, as we have seen, are
linguistically meaningful.   Further, a non-linguistic
intention can be carried out successfully by the
utterance of linguistically meaningful sentences.   If
I have the non-linguistic intention of warning you of

danger in the next room, it may be possible for me to
achieve this intention by behavioural means, but I shall
also have succeeded in this intention if I say to you
"There is a tiger in the next room", i.e. utter the sounds
"There is a tiger in the next room" and you understand them
as giving you certain information; that is, you recognise
them as sounds which are frequently uttered by people who
have the linguistic intention of warning someone that there
is a tiger in the next room.   This proviso is necessary
because otherwise, if no sounds uttered in the absence of
an avowed linguistic intention could be said to be
linguistically meaningful, it would be necessary to say
that the actual presence, on any given occasion, of a
linguistic intention would be essential if the utterance
were to be linguistically meaningful.   In claiming that
intentions may be exhaustively classified as linguistic
or non-linguistic, however, I do not wish to be understood
to be using the term "intention" in any but the most usual
senses.   An intention, I take it, is something which can
be achieved by pursuing a certain course of action, or
uttering words and sentences.   Whether people's actions,
either linguistic or non-linguistic, are intentional or
not, and what particular intention they are in fact the
means of pursuing, are questions that can often be
answered by observing the pattern of the actions in
question, together with the knowledge we have of how people

generally behave.   But in general there is no better
way of finding out what someone's intention is than by
asking him.   If it is impossible to formulate one's
intention - in linguistically meaningful sentences - then
it is extremely doubtful whether one can be supposed to
have one.   To formulate one's intention is itself a
linguistic activity;   the existence of words and sentences
is a necessary condition of the existence of linguistic
intentions, and a necessary condition of the formulation
of any intention, whether linguistic or non-linguistic.
Intentions, both linguistic and non-linguistic, can be
displayed in linguistic activities, but non-linguistic
intentions can also be displayed in non-linguistic
activities.   Words and sentences are needed in order to
formulate any intention, but they are a condition of the
existence of a linguistic intention.   The question whether
it is possible to have an unformulated linguistic intention
is one the answer to which I think does not hinge on
whether we could find any means of detecting such
unformulated linguistic intentions, but on the
interpretation of what it is for a sentence or a set of
sounds to be linguistically meaningful.   In language,
as in other activities, most prevalent intentions find
expression in fairly stereotyped ways, and the methods,
of courses of action, by which we can attempt to carry
out our intentions successfully, are generally known and

recognised.   Whether my action in putting on the kettle
is intentional or unintentional does not depend on whether
I have explicitly formulated my intention to boil the
water.   That is, it does not follow from the fact that
I have not explicitly formulated my intention to boil
the water that my action in putting on the kettle was
unintentional.   Similarly, the fact that I may not have
said to myself "I must warn X that there is a tiger in the
next room" before saying to X "There is a tiger in the
next room" does not entail that the sounds I utter to X
are not linguistically meaningful.   If somone utters
sounds which are usually uttered with linguistic meaning,
in a context which indicates that they are also being used
on this occasion with linguistic meaning, then we are
entitled to assume that they are being used on this
occasion with linguistic meaning, unless the speaker
actually disavows a linguistic intention.   A very large
part of our use of language is habitual, i.e. we talk
very often without thinking much about what we are saying,
or what we are intending to say, but taking it for granted
that we shall be understood as using sounds and marks in
the ways in which they are generally used, or as though we
were in fact using them with certain linguistic intentions.

The fact that our use of language is largely
habitual and follows certain recognised patterns is one
of the reasons why it might be supposed that to talk

meaningfully is to use sounds and marks in accordance
with certain rules, and that to make statements, utter
warnings, etc., is to use sentences in accordance with
certain rules.   It is of course true that most of the
linguistically meaningful sentences that we utter are in
accordance with certain rules;   rules which lay down what
sounds you must utter and how you must combine them if you
want to be understood.   These rules are necessary to
linguistic meaningfulness in the sense that unless the
regularities which they specify existed it would be
extremely difficult for anyone ever to make himself
understood.   If, in order to say something meaningful,
e.g. to warn someone that...... or state that......, it
were necessary to as it were start from scratch and think
up an entirely new way of expressing one's intention, very
few people would ever say anything and still less would
succeed in communicating what they wanted to say to someone
else.   But although the regularities of expression, the
similarities of methods of carrying out linguistic
intentions, are important factors in the understanding of
what other people say, and in the possibility (practical)
of formulating or expressing linguistic intentions at all
for most people, these regularities which are recorded in
the rules for the use of language are not constitutive
elements in the meaningfulness of sentences, i.e. they are

not necessary conditions of the meaningfulness of words or sentences. If they were, if the meaningfulness of a word or a sentence depended logically on whether it was in accordance with certain rules (whatever types of rules they may be, e.g. syntactic or grammatical rules, or semantic rules about what is and what is not meaningful), then unanswerable questions would arise about how it is possible for language ever to change, for certain words not simply to become archaic but to change their meaning, and for individual speakers or writers to introduce new usages.

Moreover, words and sentences are not __tools__ in the way in which this approach to the explanation of linguistic meaningfulness suggests. It is inaccurate to think of a sentence as a tool or instrument, and misleading philosophically, since it leads to mistaken theories about the nature of meaning. It is for this reason, i.e. that to speak of words and sentences as things which are __used__ in making statements, giving warnings, etc., that I have used the word "uttered" rather than "used", as far as possible, in discussing the ways in which sounds and marks have linguistic meaningfulness. (It is more appropriate to use the word "used" in reference to words than to sentences. We may be in doubt as to which is the best word to __use__ in a sentence, say in stating something, where there are alternative words (i.e. which of the sounds

customarily uttered in pursuing this particular linguistic
activity is e.g. most likely to be effective in making
myself understood, or in ensuring that it has the effect
I want it to have).   It is rather more odd to say that
we sometimes wonder whether to use one sentence rather
than another in warning somebody of some danger.   "Use"
is perhaps a better term than "utter" when it is a
question of choice between various alternative ways of
pursuing a particular linguistic intention.)

It is inaccurate to think of a word or sentence as
a tool or instrument because there are important differences
between the ways in which words and sentences function and
the ways in which things we ordinarily call tools or
instruments function.   We use a bicycle pump to put air
into a bicycle tyre, but the existence of bicycle pumps
has no logical connection with the existence of bicycle
tyres;   there might be some quite different tool or
instrument with which to put air into bicycle tyres;   or
there might be no tool at all, so that it would be
necessary to buy a new tyre every time a tyre punctured.
Meaningful sentences are not tools in this sense;   making
an assertion is not doing something with the aid of a
meaningful sentence (something which might be done by other
means, or in the absence of any means);   making an assertion
is uttering a meaningful sentence, and uttering it with a

certain (linguistic) intention: the intention to assert whatever is being asserted. That is, it is a part of the definition of an assertion that it involves the utterance of a linguistically meaningful sentence; it is not a part of the definition of a bicycle tyre that it needs a bicycle pump in order to keep it in repair.

Dictionaries are records of the ways in which words are used - gathered from observation of instances of their actual utterance in the pursuit of linguistic activities) and semantic rules are records of the ways in which sentences (sounds which are linguistically meaningful) are uttered in the course of making assertions, giving warnings, promising, describing, etc. But there could be no rules unless certain sounds and marks, and sets of sounds and marks, already had linguistic meaningfulness, were already uttered in the pursuit of linguistic activities. Moreover, the rules themselves have to be understood; to formulate a rule, to record a usage, is itself a linguistic activity, which must itself be in accordance with the rules of syntax and semantics. Thus the existence of a rule presupposes certain rules, and the whole notion of explaining linguistic meaningfulness in terms of rules becomes circular.

Nevertheless, someone might say, it is extremely far-fetched to suggest that linguistic meaningfulness is connected with the existence of certain types of intentions rather than with rules, for the very way in which we talk

about languages - the English language, the French
language, etc., and the fact that we learn languages in
order to be able to talk meaningfully and pursue linguistic
activities - indicates or is suggestive of the fact that to
utter meaningful words and sentences is to apply certain
rules.   This is, I think, a stronger way of putting the
point already made, that unless languages were formalised
to some extent and regularities of utterance were
recorded and taught, it would be practically almost
impossible for most of us to have any conversation.   But
my point is a logical one, and it is that although rules
are important, if not essential (in the practical sense)
for talking and for understanding other people's talk,
they are not necessary conditions of meaningfulness.   My
further point, which is more relevant to the present problem
about truth, is that the fact that any given utterance is
in accordance with syntactical or semantical rules is not
a sufficient condition of its meaningfulness.   It is
possible to utter sounds which are normally uttered in the
pursuit of linguistic activities, and which will be found on
consulting the grammar books and books explaining nice
distinctions of meaning to be entirely well-formed, and
which are, on a given occasion of their utterance,
linguistically meaningless.   Consider the following two
cases:

1.   Suppose one Ancient Briton said to another Ancient
Briton (before the English language came into existence;
I do not say "before the English language was ever spoken,
since this suggests that it might have existed before it was
spoken): "Grass is green".   We need not go into the
conditions under which this phenomenon might come about;
it is logically possible that this might have happened.
The situation is one where, for some reason or other, an
Ancient Briton uttered the sounds "Grass is green".   Was
what he said meaningful?   Someone might say "What he said
was in fact an English sentence, but he did not know it;
it was therefore meaningful, but he did not know it".
If we accept this, then it is surely impossible for us ever
to say, with certainty, that any sounds anyone ever utters
are meaningless, since for all we know there may in future
be some language - or there may indeed be some language
existing now of which we have never heard - in which sounds
like these are meaningful sentences.   Shall we then say
"Of course, 'grass is green' may mean something different
in another language from what it means in English, or it
may be meaningless when measured against the rules of
some other language, but nevertheless 'grass is green' is
a meaningful English sentence, and although it was not a
meaningful sentence when uttered by the Ancient Briton,
who did not and could not have known the rules of English

it is a meaningful sentence whenever it is uttered by
someone who knows English.   Further, there is a sense in
which it could be said to be meaningful in English when
uttered at the present day by someone who doesn't know
English, whereas it would not be correct to say that it
was meaningful in English when the Ancient Briton uttered
it;   for at the time when the Ancient Briton uttered it
there was <u>no-one</u> who could have said - either meaningfully
or truthfully - "That is an English sentence", whereas
although the Frenchman who happens to utter the sounds
"grass is green" may not know that this is an English
sentence, there are many people who, on hearing him
utter these sounds, would recognise it as an English
sentence".   That is, whether "grass is green" is a
meaningful sentence does not depend on someone's linguistic
intentions, but on whether it is a part of an actual
language, a language being the totality of all the sounds
and marks uttered and written by a certain group of people
when they talk meaningfully.

Now I do not wish to deny that "'Grass is green' is
a meaningful English sentence" is true insofar as it means
"The sounds 'grass is green' are customarily uttered by
English people when they wish to pursue the linguistic
activity of e.g. stating that grass is green, and by people
of other countries when they utter the sounds customarily
uttered by English people in pursing this activity, when

they wish to pursue this activity. What cannot be
maintained, I think, is that it follows from this that the
sounds "grass is green" are linguistically meaningful on
every occasion of their utterance, even when uttered by
Englishmen. For consider
2. Suppose the sounds "grass is green" are customarily
uttered by English people when they wish to state that
grass is green, and are also uttered by French people when
they wish to make some different statement. Further,
suppose that someone who utters these sounds, on a
particular occasion, knows both languages. It would be
logically impossible on such an occasion to discover what
the utterance in question meant without asking the person
who uttered it what he intended to say. And if it is
possible for an Englishman to utter the sounds "grass is
green" without meaning what these sounds are generally
uttered to mean, then it is possible for an Englishman to
utter these sounds without any linguistic meaning at all,
for there is no rule which says that every sound we utter
is in some language or other.

But although it is logically possible for an Englishman
to utter sounds which are customarily uttered by Englishmen
in the pursuance of some linguistic activity without
linguistic meaningfulness, it is at the same time true that
it is as a matter of fact impossible to utter sounds
customarily uttered by Englishmen in the course of

linguistic activities _to_ Englishmen without being
misunderstood.   By this I mean that there would be little
point in trying to prevent someone coming to harm by
making a noise to alarm him, if he were an Englishman,
by uttering the sounds "Everything's quite alright" in
tones calculated to alarm.   If I utter sounds customarily
uttered in the pursuit of a certain linguistic activity,
i.e. which are customarily meaningful, then I must expect
the usual linguistic intentions to be attributed to me
whenever I utter these sounds, at least in the presence of
people who know what intentions they are generally uttered
in pursuit of.   But if I shout "Stop!" to a dog,
intending merely to make it draw back, then all that could
be meant by saying that this is a meaningful sentence is
that it is customarily uttered in pursuance of the
linguistic intention of warning people that they should
stop.   There are no grounds for asserting that it is
meaningful on the actuall occasion of its utterance to the
dog.

A further reason why it is possible for English
people to utter sounds like "Grass is green" without
linguistic meaning is that unless this were possible,
it would be impossible for human beings ever to _give_
meaning to words, to _cause_ a sound or set of sounds to be
linguistically meaningful.   "Cause" is being used here

in the sense "decide to give".   For if it is impossible
to withhold meaning from a set of sounds, it must be
impossible to bestow it.   In fact, talking meaningfully
is I think a much more creative activity than many
theories of meaning would lead us to believe.   I do not
however wish to pursue this line of argument since my
intention is not to give an account of how words and
sentences come to have meaning, but to show that it is
impossible to give a satisfactory account of what it is
for a word or a sentence to have linguistic meaning
without showing the relation between linguistic meaning
and certain types of intentions.   But it is logically
impossible that a set of sounds should acquire linguistic
meaning by being in accordance with a set of rules, for
if this were possible, it would be possible to decide
what the man who uttered "grass is green",when this is a
meaningful sentence in English and a different meaningful
sentence in French, meant without asking him.   And if
a set of sounds which were once - before the existence of
any language which incorporated them - meaningless become
meaningful, then any account of what their meaningfulness
consists in which makes their meaningfulness depend on
something which logically could not have resulted in their
acquiring meaning (at least on its own) must be false.

In this chapter I have discussed various kinds of
human activities, which were classified as linguistic
or non-linguistic. A linguistic activity is one which
involves the utterances of linguistically meaningful words
and sentences, a non-linguistic activity is one which does
not. Whether sounds uttered in the pursuit of
linguistic and non-linguistic activities are linguistically
meaningful depends on the nature of the agent's intention,
which is also either linguistic or non-linguistic. A
linguistic intention is one that can only be successfully
achieved by the uttering of linguistically meaningful
words and sentences; a non-linguistic intention can
be achieved either by uttering sounds which are customarily
uttered in the pursuance of linguistic activities, provided
that the agent does not disavow a linguistic intention;
or by other non-linguistic means. Thus linguistic
meaningfulness is essentially linked with linguistic
intentions, but not in the sense that whenever sounds
have linguistic meaning, there must be an actual linguistic
intention; but that at some time previously these sounds
must have been uttered with a linguistic intention, which
is not being disavowed on this particular occasion.
But if a person denies (truthfully) that he has a
linguistic intention in uttering certain sounds, then
these sounds do not have linguistic meaning, at least on
this occasion.

A linguistic intention is an intention to state
that....., warn that....., threaten that....., etc; thus
the existence of words and sentences is a necessary
condition of the existence of a linguistic intention.
I do not think this raises difficulties of the "Which came
first, the hen or theegg?" type.   Linguistic intentions,
like non-linguistic intentions (intentions to run across
the road, dress oneself, etc.) presumably come into
existence with the means of satisfying them; they are
processes which develop side by side.

Linguistic intentions can be particular or general.
In warning you that there is a tiger in the next room,
I may utter the sounds "There is a tiger in the next room";
I could also utter these sounds meaningfully in warning
you that there is a dangerous animal in the house, or
that there is danger in the next room.   To say that a
linguistic intention is one that can only be achieved
successfully by uttering words and sentences is to say
that the achievement of a linguistic intention, at least
in communicative activities, depends on the understanding
of the words and sentences uttered on the part of the
hearer or addressee.

Although sounds which have once acquired linguistic
meaningfulness - i.e. are frequently uttered in pursuit
of a particular linguistic intention - pass into current
use, continue to be uttered in the pursuance of similar

linguistic intentions, it does not follow that on all

subsequent occasions when these sounds are uttered they

are being uttered with the same linguistic meaning, or

with any linguistic meaning at all.   If the first

consequence is allowed, then it is impossible to explain

how it comes about that words change their meaning.   If

the second consequence is allowed, then it is impossible

to disavow a linguistic intention;   or it is impossible

that the disavowal of a linguistic intention should be

taken as evidence that no such intention exists.   Both

of these consequences are unacceptable.   Of course,

once a word or a sentence has passed into current usage,

i.e. is usually uttered in pursuance of a particular

linguistic intention or set of linguistic intentions,

then if we utter these sounds to people who are aware

of these usages, we must expect the appropriate

linguistic intentions to be imputed to us.   This is why

I think we may say that utterances may be assumed, often,

to be linguistically meaningful, even in cases where a

linguistic intention is not explicitly avowed.   But the

linguistic meaningfulness of any set of sounds depends,

if not on the actual existence of a linguistic intention

at the time of their utterance, at least on the

existence of a linguistic intention at some previous time.

I am thus claiming that the existence of a linguistic

intention either in connection with an actual utterance,

or in connection with a physically similar previous occurrence of that utterance, is a necessary condition of the linguistic meaningfulness of that utterance.

In this chapter I have dealt with the way in which linguistic intentions are necessary conditions of linguistic meaningfulness; in the following chapter I shall discuss whether the existence of a linguistic intention is a <u>sufficient</u> condition of linguistic meaningfulness, and consider various further objections which might arise at this stage.

IV

LINGUISTIC INTENTIONS AND
LINGUISTIC MEANINGFULNESS

If I utter the sounds "Catherine can't come" with
the intention of asserting that Catherine can't come,
or of informing you that Catherine can't come, or of
explaining to you that Catherine can't come, etc., then
there can be no doubt whatever that the sounds I utter
constitute a linguistically meaningful sentence. If I
utter the sounds "Catherine can't come" without having
previously formulated any linguistic intention - as is
usually the case - but if asked why I uttered them would
reply "Because I wanted to let you know that Catherine
can't come" etc. it is similarly possible to assume that
my utterance is linguistically meaningful, and such an
assumption would, in this case, be justified, since the
sounds I have uttered are easily recognisable as sounds
usually uttered in pursuance of this linguistic intention.
Linguistic intentions, like non-linguistic intentions,
are however not always formulated in words, and not always
enquired after. Does the existence of an honest linguistic
intention guarantee the linguistic meaningfulness of the
sounds uttered in its pursuit? Consider the following

cases:-

1.   The sounds I utter in pursuance of a linguistic
intention might be illchosen, and if they are sufficiently
illchosen, can the utterance be said to be linguistically
meaningful? "Illchosen" sounds might occur in two ways:-

(a)   I might, in asking you whether you like a
certain food, use a word you do not understand (utter
a sound customarily uttered to refer to the food in
question, but which you do not know is customarily
uttered in this way).   Since, as has been claimed,
it is not necessary in order that an utterance should
be linguistically meaningful, that it should be
actually understood by another person, or the person
to whom it is addressed, this would not detract from
the meaningfulness of my word or question.   Someone
else might understand me, might recognise the sound
as one customarily uttered in referring to the food
in question.

(b)   I might, in asking you a question, utter sounds
which nobody could be expected to understand, since
they are sounds which are not customarily uttered in
asking this question, or in referring to the things
the question is about; or utter sounds which are
customarily uttered in performing a different linguistic
activity.   In these cases I may be uttering sounds

which I would understand if someone uttered
them to me in pursuance of the linguistic activity
of asking this particular question (i.e. I would
recognise them as sounds normally uttered or
sometimes uttered in asking this particular
question) but which I am aware you are unlikely
to recognise as such.   If this occurs, it could
be doubted whether my (linguistic) intention was
serious.   On the other hand, they may be sounds
which I think are normally uttered in pursuance
of this particular linguistic intention, but in
fact are not.   I might say to you "Do you like
frow?" under the impression that the sound "frow"
is customarily uttered by people who wish to
refer to what is usually referred to by the
sound "cheese".   Are we to say that in this case
I have a linguistic intention, but that the
sounds I utter in its honest pursuit are not
linguistically meaningful?   This would appear
to be the correct answer, though it is not
entirely clear whether my avowed linguistic
intention in this case is admissible.   This is
more difficult than the case where my intention
may be confused, and my utterance confused, i.e.
when I utter sounds that are something like
sounds usually uttered in pursuance of a

generally recognised linguistic intention, or
made up of sounds recognisable as words - i.e.
usually uttered in referring to certain things,
etc. - but in an unusual sequence.   We are
sometimes not clear what it is that we want to
say, whether we are aware of it or not.

2.   The sounds uttered by a dying man might be entirely
incoherent, but he might be consciously aware of the
desire for a glass of water, and in uttering them intend
to be asking for a glass of water.   The sounds uttered
- and marks written - in pursuance of linguistic activities
can vary a good deal in physical characteristics, but still
be recognisable as similar to sounds and marks usually
uttered and written in pursuance of these activities.
In the extreme case, however, it is necessary to admit that
it is possible to have a consciously formulated linguistic
intention and to be able to utter sounds in pursuit of it,
but sounds which are not linguistically meaningful.   Of
course, the man uttering them may be aware that the sounds
he is uttering are not the sounds he wishes to utter.
This is the straightforward case.   But if he is under
the impression that he is uttering the sounds he wishes
to utter (not the sounds that are usually uttered) then
it seems necessary to deny linguistical meaningfulness to
them if they are sufficiently incoherent.

3.   In performing a linguistic activity I may make a slip

of the tongue.   In this case the sounds I utter are not the sounds I intend to utter, and on being asked what I mean, I can put things right.

The difficulty which arises out of 1(b) and 2 is not that they prove that the existence of a linguistic intention does not guarantee the linguistic meaningfulness of the sounds uttered in its pursuit, but that they suggest that it is possible to have a linguistic intention which is not formulatable in words, at least on the part of the person who has it.   In case 2, this is only true if we mean "formulatable in spoken words";   there seems to be no reason why we should not say that there are some occasions when we are physically prevented from saying the things we want to say, but nevertheless we can formulate them in unspoken words.   In the case of the man who thinks that "frow" is generally uttered to mean what "cheese" is generally uttered to mean, it is I think a matter for decision whether an intention which can only be formulated - by the person who has it - by means of a sound which has a definite reference but is not the sound which usually has this reference, can properly be called a linguistic intention or not.   In both these cases, of course, the difficulty arises primarily because of the failure on the part of the people hearing the sounds uttered to understand what is being said - and this, it is felt, through no fault

of their own. It seems reasonable to deny meaningfulness
to the utterances of the dying man and the man who asks
"Do you like frow?" on the grounds that nobody could be
expected to understand these utterances since they are
not the utterances usually made in performing the
linguistic activities that the speakers are in these
cases trying to perform; and that this indicates that
meaningfulness, at least in some cases, is more a matter
of understandability than of linguistic intentions. And
further that "understandability" depends on whether
utterances are similar to those usually uttered with
certain meaning, and thus in accordance with rules.

I think however that this is a practical difficulty,
of the type previously mentioned in the discussion of
meaning as being possessed by sounds and marks combined
in accordance with rules, and does not show that
meaningfulness is sometimes independent of linguistic
intentions. That there is a gap between linguistic
intention and linguistic performance, very often, is
undeniable. Very occasionally, someone, e.g. Shakespeare,
introduces a new usage, utters sounds which have never
been uttered before with linguistic intention, with a
certain linguistic intention, and is understood. The
fact is that sometimes it is possible to get away with
it, and sometimes it is not; the relevant factors include
command of language and facility of expression. When a

scientist introduces a new term or a new way of talking
about things, the change is generally more gradual, and
its relation to the customary uses is generally made
explicit.   The difference between "getting away with"
and "not getting away with" introducing a new usage is
the difference between succeeding in getting yourself
understood and not succeeding.   But it is possible to
utter sounds which have never been uttered before in
pursuit of a certain linguistic intention, or in pursuit
of a new linguistic intention, and to be understood;
that this is possible proves that linguistical meaningful-
ness is not entirely explicable in terms of rules.
That a given utterance is in fact in accordance with the
rules of English can be a sufficient condition of its
meaningfulness in the sense that it can often be
understood by a hearer or a reader (especially) simply
by being interpreted in accordance with the rules;   that
a given utterance is uttered in pursuit of an honest
linguistic intention is not a sufficient condition of its
meaningfulness.   Nevertheless, the claim that the
existence of a linguistic intention, either on the actual
occasion of or at some previous occasion of any given
utterance is a necessary condition of the linguistic
meaningfulness of an utterance is I think not affected
by the cases discussed so far in this chapter.

It might be objected at this stage that linguistic meaningfulness is not only possessed by <u>human</u> utterances. Sounds can be uttered by animals, and sometimes when these sounds uttered by animals resemble sounds uttered by human beings in pursuit of linguistic activities, it would be arbitrary to deny them linguistic meaningfulness. Suppose my parrot escapes, and is found some distance away by strangers.   It utters the sounds "I live at 47 High Street", as a result of which the people who found it return it to me.   Can it be claimed that the parrot's utterance was not linguistically meaningful - for if it was not, how did the people who found it know where to return it?

The answer to this seems to be that anyone who found a parrot, and on hearing it utter the sounds "I live at 47 High Street" returned it successfully to its owner, would be doing so not because he recognised the parrot's utterance as a linguistically meaningful sentence in its own right - i.e. as uttered by the parrot in pursuance of the linguistic intention of stating that it lived at 47 High Street - but because he recognised the sounds as sounds which are frequently uttered by human beings when they are pursuing that particular linguistic intention, and knows that (a) it is possible to teach parrots to utter such complexities of sound, and (b) it is likely that the

owner of this particular parrot taught the parrot to utter
these particular sounds because the parrot might escape.
If it turns out that the parrot does not belong to the
people who live at 47 High Street, it does not follow that
the parrot has made a false statement.   Nor does it follow
that the man who returned it did not understand the
meaning of the sentence uttered by the parrot;   it would
be more accurate to say that he misinterpreted the parrot's
utterance, i.e. treated it as functioning as a sign of
something which it in fact did not function as a sign of.
The sense in which he could be said to have "understood"
what the parrot said is that he recognised the sounds the
parrot uttered as sounds customarily uttered, etc., and
while I do not wish to say that it would be logically
improper to allow some limited sense of linguistic
meaningfulness to the parrot's utterance, the main point
is that this example does not show that linguistic
meaningfulness is ever independent of human intentions.
But since the parrot <u>could not</u> have a linguistic intention,
or understand the sounds he uttered, i.e. its owner uttered
in teaching it, it would be very odd to say that its
utterance was linguistically meaningful.   I am not
suggesting that the parrot's inability to formulate
linguistic intentions and utter meaningful words is a
logical impossibility;   the parrot is, I think, in this
respect in the same case as the Ancient Briton.

It might further be contended that linguistic
meaningfulness is sometimes possessed by human utterances
which are entirely unintentional; Gladys hears her
husband say, in sleep, "I love Dorothy".   She immediately
takes steps to prevent him from seeing Dorothy again.
Was her husband's utterance linguistically meaningless?
It was certainly unintentional.

Several possible explanations could be offered as to
how Gladys' husband came to utter these sounds in sleep,
assuming that he does love Dorothy.   They might be
interpreted by Gladys as a sign (in the non-linguistic
sense that smoke is a sign of fire) that her husband, when
awake, pursues certain linguistic (and amorous) activities,
namely, thinking and stating (on carefully chosen occasions)
that he loves Dorothy.   Or she might simply recognise
them as sounds which are frequently uttered by people who
do have linguistic intentions in uttering them, and
reasonably conclude that, although uttered unintentionally
on this occasion, these sounds do indicate that her husband
is in love with Dorothy.   But if she turns out to be wrong
in her supposition, she cannot blame her husband for
misleading her, as she could if he had uttered the sounds
when awake with the appropriate linguistic intention.
There is of course a sense in which her husband may "mean
what he said" even if he is not aware that he is uttering
the sounds.   This is I think that if he were awake,

and were asked an appropriate question, he would answer
(if he is honest) "I love Dorothy".   Here again, it may
be more appropriate to allow a sense of linguistic
meaningfulness analogous to the linguistic meaningfulness
possessed by sounds that are actually uttered with
linguistic intention, rather than to say that Gladys'
husband's utterance was linguistically meaningful in
the strict sense, but the important point is that the
example does not show that linguistic meaningfulness is
ever logically independent of linguistic intentions, for
if "I love Dorothy" were never uttered by people actually
pursuing linguistic intentions, Gladys would not have been
able to attach any significance to the utterance at all.

The question might also arise as to whether, if
linguistic meaningfulness is dependent on linguistic
intentions, either at the time of utterance or at some
previous time, sounds or marks which occur "out of context"
as, e.g. in a foreign phrase book, or a textbook on logic,
can be said to possess linguistic meaningfulness, since
even if they are recognisable as sounds and marks which
have been uttered on previous occasions in the pursuit of
linguistic intentions, we cannot suppose that the usual
linguistic intention which results in the uttering of these
sounds is to be imputed to the writer of the foreign phrase
book or the logic textbook.   The sounds "I am hungry"

are customarily uttered in pursuance of the linguistic
activity of stating or asserting that I am hungry ("I"
referring to the speaker, whoever he may be). If I open
a foreign phrase book and read:

   I am hungry   J'ai faim

are the marks "I am hungry" and "J'ai faim" linguistically
meaningless, since the writer of the book is not to be
supposed to be asserting or stating that he is hungry -
moreover he would probably deny that he wrote these marks
in pursuance of the linguistic activity of stating or
asserting that he was hungry? And if the marks do not
have linguistic meaningfulness, how can the one set be said
to be a translation of the other?

  In this case, we may say that the marks "I am hungry"
and "J'ai faim" are linguistically meaningful, since they
are being uttered or written in pursuance of a linguistic
intention, but the linguistic intention prompting the
writer to produce the marks "I am hungry" and "J'ai faim"
is not the intention to state or assert that he is hungry.
They are linguistically meaningful because they form part
of the larger linguistic activity of writing a foreign
phrase book, or providing translations of English sentences
into French sentences (i.e. sets of sounds customarily
uttered by English people in pursuance of the linguistic
intentions of stating that....., asserting that......, etc.,
into sentences or sets of sounds customarily uttered by

French people in pursuance of the same linguistic intentions), together with the linguistic intention or intentions appropriate to these activities. These would be e.g. the intention to write a foreign phrase book, the intention to provide translations (in the sense already described) of English sentences into French sentences, the intention to illustrate the ways in which some English sentences have the same meaning as some French sentences, etc.

The linguistically meaningful marks "I am hungry" function in this context of the foreign phrase book as a word, rather than as a sentence; they could be said to be occurring in reference to the set of marks commonly written by people who want to assert that they are hungry. And as any sound, if uttered in pursuance of the linguistic intention to refer (allowing for the qualifications made at the beginning of this chapter) is linguistically meaningful, so this particular set of sounds or marks normally uttered by people who want to assert that they are hungry, is also linguistically meaningful.

Similarly, if I say "Socrates is mortal" in illustration of the syllogism, or explanation of the rules of the syllogism, the set of marks "Socrates is mortal" which, it might be claimed, _must_ be linguistically meaningful if they are to provide an example of part of a syllogism, is functioning not as a sentence uttered in

pursuance of the linguistic activity of stating that
or asserting that Socrates is mortal, but as part of
a more complex sentence or linguistically meaningful
utterance, uttered in the course of the linguistic
activity of talking about logic, or explaining the
rules of the syllogism.   Only marks which are
generally uttered or written in stating or asserting
(or some other linguistic activity which involves the
utterance of true-or-false sentences) are appropriate
for me to write at this particular stage of this
particular activity of talking about the rules of the
syllogism, but these marks function differently in this
context from the way in which they function when they
are uttered by someone who is actually arguing (another
linguistic activity) in syllogistic form.   In this
context of the logic textbook they are being uttered in
pursuance of the linguistic intention to refer to the
set of marks which are usually written or uttered by
people arguing in syllogistic form.

V

HOW DO TRUE SENTENCES FUNCTION
IN HUMAN DISCOURSE?

True-or-false sentences, it has been claimed, are
linguistically meaningful utterances which occur in the
pursuit of certain types of human activities, such
activities being characterised by their being pursued
in the attempt to fulfil or achieve certain types of
intentions, which have been called linguistic intentions.
What, then, is the relation between any particular
intention which results in the utterance of a sentence,
and the truth of the sentence so uttered (when it is true)?

The particular classes of linguistic intentions which
give rise to the occurrence of true-or-false sentences
have been claimed to include the intentions to state that....,
to assert that...., to warn that...., to deny that...., to
concede that...., to allow that...., to admit that....,
to confirm that...., to report that...., and so on.
These intentions cannot be grouped together as different
varieties of the intention to communicate that...., as has
already been noted, because the intention to communicate
is not always linguistic, and also because all linguistic

activities are not communicative. It would, however, be possible to group the sentences which occur in the pursuit of these various linguistic activities under the heading "those that give information". This is not very helpful, since sentences uttered in pursuit of other types of linguistic activities may also give information. My command "Shut the door", in most circumstances, gives the hearer the information that I want the door shut just as definitely as if I had, instead, said "I want the door shut". Further, many of the activities listed which involve the utterance of true-or-false sentences are not uttered with the primary intention of giving information. This would apply especially to conceding, admitting, allowing that; frequently also to warning and threatening, and sometimes even to stating and asserting, e.g. on occasions when I state or assert something because this is what is expected of me, and not because I am anxious to give someone some information.

We cannot then say that true sentences are those that succeed in giving information. Only things that can try to do things can succeed, and thus this would have to be interpreted: sentences are true when uttered with the intention of giving information, and this intention is successful. But this is not acceptable; as we have seen, a person's intention in uttering a sentence which is

in fact true may not be to give information; it may, indeed, be to misinform, since he may mistakenly believe that the sentence he is uttering (in stating, asserting, etc.) is false.   Nor can we say that true sentences are those from which we can as a matter of fact obtain information, in the sense of learning something that is in fact true, for if this were the case sentences uttered in such activities as asking questions, commanding, etc. would frequently be true (or false).   I may not only gain information that you want the door shut from your command "Shut the door", but I may also gain information about your character, your mood, and so on.

Let us consider the activities of stating, asserting, denying, etc., taken individually.   Is it possible to say that true sentences are those uttered in pursuing these activities successfully, that truth is constituted by the success of the linguistic activities of stating, asserting, denying, warning, etc.?   Now the words "state" and "assert" are not precise in their meaning.   They are frequently used by logicians in a technical sense (often unacknowledged) in which they are related to "statements" and "assertions", the latter being themselves technical terms in these contexts for "that which is true-or-false". In speaking of "stating" and "asserting" I have so far intended these terms to be taken as referring to actual types of human activities, activities which involve the

utterance of sentences. Let us consider in more detail what activities these could be. "To state"can be taken as elliptical for "to state the truth of something" and "to assert" elliptical for "to assert the truth of something". "To state the truth of something" could be "to state something to be true" or "to state that something is true"; "to assert the truth of something" could be "to assert something to be true" or "to assert that something is true". If we consider the first of the possibilities described in the last sentence, then if "to state something to be true" is "to state something that is true" and "to assert something to be true" is "to assert something that is true", then, evidently, the success of the activity guarantees the truth of the sentence uttered. And since a successful activity, at least for our purposes, is an activity in which the intention of the agent is successfully achieved, in these cases truth will be constituted by the success of the appropriate linguistic intentions. To succeed in one's intention to state something that is true and to succeed in one's intention to assert something that is true is to utter a sentence which is true.

But this doesn't get us very far. For if stating and asserting something that is true (or something true) marks the success of the linguistic intentions of stating and

asserting something that is true, the concept of truth
has been introduced into the formulation of the linguistic
intention, and therefore a reference to the success of
linguistic intentions does not provide any interesting
information about the truth of the sentence uttered.

Consider next the other senses of stating and
asserting, viz. "stating that something is true" and
"asserting that something is true". It might be said
"Clearly the success of these intentions does not
constitute the truth of the sentence uttered in their
pursuit. It is possible to state that something is
true, e.g. that "the moon is blue" is true although the
moon is not blue, and it is possible to assert that
"pigs can fly" is true although pigs cannot fly. Thus
I can succeed in stating and asserting, although what
I state or assert may be false".

We may accept, as Ramsey has pointed out,[1] that to
assert that something is true is to do no more than to
assert something, and similarly to state that something
is true is to do no more than to state something
(otherwise, again, it becomes necessary to introduce the
concept of truth into the formulation of the appropriate
linguistic intentions: the intentions to state that
something is true and to assert that something is true).

1.

But what is the function of stating and asserting in the
complex of human activities and interests?   These are
not complete activities in the way in which warning and
threatening are sometimes complete activities, and running
and eating a meal are complete activities; they do not
"stand on their own" as these latter activities do.   In
saying that they are incomplete, I mean that it is not
possible to give a full account of them without describing
their point; a complete activity is one which it is possible
to understand fully, or to give a full account of, without
describing the reasons why it was performed.   I shall
claim that all linguistic activities which can only be
pursued by uttering true-or-false sentences are incomplete
in this sense.   If I utter the sounds "The house is on fire"
you may ask me "Why did you say that?" and if I reply
"Because I wanted to state something", or "I wanted to
assert something", you would be justifiably puzzled;
there is no point in stating something for the sake of
stating, or in asserting something for the sake of asserting.

"But if", you might say, "when I asked you why you
uttered the sounds "The house is on fire" you had replied
"Because I wanted to warn you (that the house is on fire)"
then I should not have been puzzled; this activity of
warning is complete in itself, and self-justifying; and in
this case it is a linguistic activity".   This raises

important points.   There are at least three different
types of activity which might be called warning.   I may
warn you by behavioural signs, e.g. raising a hand.   I
may warn you by shouting "Stop!" or by saying "There is
danger in the next room".   The first of these, if it is
properly to be called warning (i.e. can in principle be
understood as a warning, e.g. by animals, without
requiring to be supplemented by various conventions
linking it to the linguistic activity of warning) is a
non-linguistic activity;   the second and third are both
(generally) linguistic.   It is in the third case that
the difficulty arises: what is uttered, it might be said,
is a true-or-false sentence, and nevertheless as a warning
it is a complete, self-justifying activity.   I have up
to now classified warning as a linguistic activity at the
same level as stating and asserting, but if we investigate
further the nature of the intention involved in the
activity of warning someone that there is danger in the
next room, it becomes clear that the intention in this
case could be said to be only _partly_ linguistic.   My
intention in the first type of warning, the behavioural
case, is of the form "to prevent you from coming to harm"
etc.   This is a non-linguistic intention.   However,
since "warning" covers all three types of activity listed
above, and in particular covers both linguistic and non-

linguistic activities, to say that an activity of
warning is linguistic when it is performed in pursuance
of the intention of warning that...., or that a set of
sounds uttered in warning is linguistically meaningful
when uttered in pursuance of the intention of warning
that...., is not to give an adequate account of the [1]
nature of the linguistic activity of warning, since
it has not been made clear whether "warn" is being used
in the linguistic or the non-linguistic sense in the
description of the intentions necessary to warning as a
linguistic activity.   In fact, I think, it would be more
accurate to say that the sentence uttered or the set of
sounds uttered in pursuance of the intention of warning
someone that there is danger in the next room is
linguistically meaningful if it is uttered in the pursuance
of the intention of stating or asserting that there is
danger in the next room, in the hope or expectation that
it will prevent him from coming to harm, or put him on
his guard, or, as in the case of the policeman's warning,
in the desire to do what is expected of one or to do one's
duty.

Now the intention to state that.... or assert that....
in the hope or expectation that it (the understanding of
the sentence stated or asserted, by the hearer) will prevent
the hearer from coming to harm, etc. could be described

1.   See p. 64.

either as a mixed intention, i.e. an intention which is
partly linguistic and partly non-linguistic, or as two
intentions, one linguistic (the intention to state that....,
or to assert that....) and the other non-linguistic (the
intention to preserve or try to preserve someone from harm,
etc.). In either case, it is only insofar as the
intention involved is linguistic that the activity is
incomplete in the sense I have adumbrated. And indeed,
whether the sentence uttered in warning "There is danger in
the next room" is true or false obviously depends on the
same considerations as whether any sentence uttered in
stating or asserting is true or false. To warn someone,
in the linguistic sense, is to give them some information
to act on; put this way, also, it is clear that the
intention involved is partly linguistic and partly non-
linguistic.

If all linguistic activities which involve uttering
true-or-false sentences are incomplete, then it is necessary
to discuss the function of these activities in a larger
context in order to discover the reasons why we perform
them. Let us consider stating and asserting again.
One's reason for stating something might be to comply with
the policeman's request for a statement. This sort of
case does not however provide much help in understanding
the reasons people generally have for stating. The
policeman's request might be complied with unwillingly,

and in this type of case it could perhaps be said
that "state" means much the same as "describe".   Let
us consider the kinds of contexts in which we utter
true-or-false sentences without regard for the moment
to the question of what particular activity we may be
pursuing, at least at this level.   Whether a sentence
uttered in pursuing the linguistic activities of stating,
asserting, denying, predicting, wondering whether,
considering the possibility that, etc., is true or false
doeshot depend on which of these linguistic activities
it is being uttered in pursuit of.   Whether any such
sentence is true or false depends, as we have said, on
whether it passes certain tests, but since in order to
give an adequate account of the concept of truth it is
necessary to discuss the "point" of the tests, the
relation of the tests to the purposes we have in uttering
true-or-false sentences, a discussion of the larger
contexts of human discourse in which true-and-false
sentences occur may throw light on the general problem.

Some of the larger activities in the course of which
we utter true-or-false sentences (i.e. state, assert,
predict, consider, etc.) are describing our experiences,
doing science, doing mathematics, doing logic, and
influencing people's behaviour.   Now these are not all
exclusively linguistic performances.   We can describe
our experiences by drawing pictures or showing

photographs, and influence people's behaviour by
physical force or possibly by psychological techniques.
Doing science includes performing experiments, and doing
mathematics includes performing pieces of calculation.
True-or-false sentences are sounds uttered in the
performance of these activities insofar as they are
linguistic activities, but it would be impossible neatly
to classify every item of activity performed during the
course of say doing research into the effects of a certain
drug, and label what the scientist was doing on each
occasion as linguistic or non-linguistic.

Let us first consider some of our purposes[1] in
describing:-

A.   (a)   To say what something is like
       (b)   To tell someone else what it is like
       (c)   To convey a general impression
       (d)   To convey how we felt
       (e)   To make someone else want to see it
       (f)   To make someone jealous
       (g)   To answer a question as to what it's like.

These intentions may be classified as follows:-

       (a)   Linguistic
       (b)   Linguistic
       (c)   Non-linguistic
       (d)   Non-linguistic
       (e)   Non-linguistic
       (f)   Non-linguistic
       (g)   Linguistic.

1.   "Purpose" is here being used interchangeably with
     "intention".

(a) and (b) are linguistic intentions, and can only be achieved by uttering true sentences.   It is possible that in (b) one might, in order to let someone know what something was like, have to utter a false sentence, since one might have a reputation for being a liar, and the hearer might therefore disbelieve what was in fact stated.   This is unimportant, since it is only because the standard way of letting someone know what something is like is to assert something about it which is true that the speaker in the possible exception to (b) can put things right, and ensure the success of his intention, by uttering a false sentence.   This case is thus derivative on the fact that if one wants to tell someone what something is like, or let someone know what something is like, one must utter a true sentence.

(c) - (f) are all non-linguistic, and could, logically, be achieved by uttering either true sentences or false sentences.   It might be claimed that (g) could be achieved by uttering a false sentence.   I do not however think that the alleged fact that it is possible to answer a question by giving a false answer, i.e. by uttering a false sentence, is evidence that linguistic intentions can sometimes be achieved by uttering false sentences.   For the person who asks the question does not want simply to hear someone state something;   he

wants to know the (correct) answer to the question.
Of course, if someone asks me "What did you do with the
pencil?" and I say "I put it in the drawer", under the
mistaken impression that this is what I did, whereas in
fact, although I have forgotten it, I put the pencil in
my pocket, there is a sense in which by saying "I put the
pencil in the drawer" I am answering the question,
although I have uttered a false sentence.   But I could
not here be said to have succeeded in my intention, for
my intention was to answer the question correctly.
Suppose, however, that my intention was to misinform
the questioner, then in order to succeed in my intention
I must, it might be claimed, utter a false sentence.
But if my intention is to misinform the questioner, then
my intention is not to answer the question, but I use the
question as an occasion for pursuing my intention to
misinform him.   Asking a question is not uttering sounds
in a certain tone of voice, or writing marks with a
certain grammatical form and a question mark at the end.
Asking a question is an activity; we ask questions because
we want to know the answers, the correct answers.[1]   Of
course, if I ask you where you put the pencil, and you
incorrectly answer "I put it in the drawer", your
statement that you put it in the drawer, which you may
believe to be true, and I may believe to be true, may

1.   The eccentric asking of question, e.g. rhetorically,
      is not relevant to the present point.

satisfy me in a practical sense; I may accept
(wrongly) that it is the right answer, the correct
answer (note that we do not say the "true" answer)
and I may act on it.   But insofar as my intention in
asking the question was linguistic, it was logically
connected with the desire or intention to know the
correct answer, and thus my linguistic intention in
asking a question can only be completely achieved by
receiving the correct answer.   Asking questions and
answering questions are logically related linguistic
activities; the intention to ask a question is not
simply the intention to utter a sentence of a certain
grammatical form, or signify one's curiosity, but to
discover the answer to it; it is the intention to
acquire some information.

Nevertheless, it might be urged further, my
intention in telling you something, even if not in
answer to a question, might be to misinform you, to
deceive you, to tell a lie.   In these cases my intention
would be successful only if I uttered a false sentence.
Now the intention to deceive is not always a linguistic
intention; it may be sometimes, in which cases in would
probably be necessary to speak of the appropriate linguistic
intention as the intention to deceive someone into
believing that......, or to deceive someone into

thinking that.... It is possible that I might utter a true
sentence in pursuance of my intention to misinform someone,
under the impression (mistaken) that what I was saying was
false.   If this happened, then I would not have succeeded
in my intention, although I may have thought that I had
succeeded.   The intention to tell a lie is I think an
entirely linguistic intention, and as such is a further
example of a linguistic activity which needs to have its
point explained in order to give a satisfactory account of it.
Normally we tell lies in order to deceive people.   However,
my point at the moment is not to discuss the implications of
the statement that no linguistic activities are self-justify-
ing, but that although there are some circumstances in which
it might appear necessary to utter a meaningful sentence in
order to deceive someone, or to misinform him, e.g. if one's
intention was to deceive someone into believing that Germany
is in Asia, or to misinform him as to the geographical
location of Germany, it does not follow that some linguistic
intentions can only be achieved by uttering false sentences.
The linguistic activities, insofar as they are linguistic
activities, of deceiving and misinforming are not on all fours
with those of being honest with people and informing.   If we
are to succeed in misinforming, our activity must essentially
consist of pretending to pursue the activity of informing;
it is only because it is generally known and accepted that
the primary purpose of informing is to utter true sentences
that it is possible to succeed in misinforming, and this
activity thus is logically derivative.

Next consider some of our intentions and purposes
in doing science:-

B.   (a)   To find cures (in medical science)
        (b)   To find causes
        (c)   To construct scientific hypotheses
        (d)   To predict (to give information about the
                           future)
        (e)   To cure people of diseases
        (f)   To build bridges
        (g)   To make money
        (h)   To achieve fame
        (j)   To formulate sentences to act on.

The notion of what constitutes "doing science" implied
in this brief classification may be extremely sketchy,
and the intentions and purposes mentioned a very limited
selection from the mass of human interests reflected in
the pursuit and application of scientific knowledge, but
I do not think it could be denied that these are some of
the purposes involved, and since my aim is not to arrive
at a generalisation by induction from a few instances,
but to illustrate a point which I take to apply to all
the intentions and purposes embodied in "doing science",
a consideration of these few examples may be sufficient
to make the point clear.

Which of the intentions listed above are linguistic,
and which non-linguistic?

        (a)   Linguistic
        (b)   Linguistic
        (c)   Linguistic
        (d)   Linguistic
        (e)   Non-linguistic
        (f)   Non-linguistic
        (g)   Non-linguistic
        (h)   Non-linguistic
        (j)   Partly linguistic, partly non-linguistic.

Now of these intentions, (a) is linguistic because
it is possible to find cures, i.e. discover what the cures
for certain diseases are, without applying them, or ever
curing anyone.   Further, this intention - the intention
to find a cure - is _general_, i.e. the cures would apply
to all cases of the disease in question, thus ruling out
"finding a cure" in a practical sense of trying out
various remedies for a particular discomfort until one
hit upon one that worked; this would not be a linguistic
- or a scientific - activity.   Here, in the case of
the intention to find a cure for all occurrences of a
disease, the success of the linguistic intention can only
be achieved by uttering true sentences.   The same applies
to (b), (c) and (d); all these are linguistic intentions
which can only be successfully achieved by the writing or
utterance of true sentences; if the scientist's statement
of the cause of X is false, then he has not found the cause
of X.   In the case of the construction of scientific
hypotheses, and of prediction (here being taken to mean
"giving information about the future") it is indeed
disputable whether sentences uttered in pursuance of these
activities are correctly to be called true-or-false
(primarily, I think, because of the fact that statements
or assertions about the future are in principle
unverifiable); however, for present purposes these

questions are not important.   The point is that if they
are _not_ true-or-false sentences then they may be omitted
and are not relevant to the present discussion;   if they
are true-or-false sentences then they are only true if
they do explain observed facts, and do give information
about the future.   Thus in all of the cases (a) - (d)
the intentions are linguistic, and can only be achieved
by the utterance of true sentences (whether these
sentences are stated or asserted or denied).   The non-
linguistic intentions (g) and (h) could be achieved by
uttering either true sentences or false sentences (it would
be possible to achieve them by formulating false theories
or telling people what they want to believe, but is not
true).   However, these two, (g) and (h) could perhaps
be considered as ulterior intentions;   it would probably
be necessary at least to give the appearance of having
some of the non-linguistic intentions, or at least of
intentions (e), (f) and (j) in order to succeed in them.

(e) and (f) - the intentions to cure people of
diseases and to build bridges I have called non-linguistic
since both are intentions to _do_ something, the actual
doing of which does not necessarily involve uttering
sentences.   These non-linguistic intentions, however,
are obviously connected with other, linguistic activities;
in the case of curing someone, with (a), finding cures;

in the case of building bridges, with the (linguistic) activities of (b), finding causes; of (c), constructring scientific hypotheses; of discovering relevant mathematical formulae and in short of pursuing all the linguistic activities involved in doing theoretical physics or engineering.   This leads to a consideration of intention (j), that of formulating sentences (or theories) to act on.   It is this type of intention which provides the link betweenthe linguistic intentions (a) - (d) and the non-linguistic intentions (e) and (f). Insofar as (j) is a linguistic intention, it can only be achieved by uttering a true sentence.

The point which these examples of types of intentions and purposes in describing and doing science are intended to illustrate is that truth consists in the success of linguistic intentions in these activities.   This is consequently a different point from that made by the traditional pragmatist theory of truth.   The pragmatists, James, Schiller, etc., were concerned to establish that truth consisted in the success of non-linguistic, practical intentions.   The basic principle of pragmatism, as put forward by William James, is that the whole meaning of any idea or concept whatever is correctly expressed in an account of its practical consequences; indeed that the meaning of a concept is identical with an account of its

practical consequences.   The pragmatist maxim may be
summed up: if you want to know what any concept means,
then consider what practical consequences are involved
in its acceptance and rejection.   James says:

> "Grant an idea or belief to be true,
> what concrete difference will its being
> true make in anyone's life?   What
> experiences (may) be different from
> those which would obtain if the beliefs
> were false?   What, in short, is the   1
> truth's cash-value in experiential terms?"

There is here, I think, a certain confusion in the use of
the terms "concept", "idea" and "belief", but I have quoted
the passage in order to illustrate the pragmatists'
belief that truth is connected with human purposes, which
are assumed to be entirely practical purposes.   This would
appear to be a one-sided account of the nature of human
activities and the purposes and intentions they embody.
It will however be useful to consider the traditional
pragmatist notion of truth in a little more detail, in
order to make clear the implications of the statement that
truth consists in the success of linguistic intentions,
and to show the exact respects in which this differs from
the traditional pragmatist position.

The pragmatic theory of truth was of course intended
to provide a criticism of and an alternative to both the
coherence and correspondence theories of truth, which it
condemned together as "intellectualist".   By
"intellectualism" James and Schiller meant, I think, undue

1.   The Meaning of Truth, p.v.

abstraction. The correspondence theory, for example, they criticised for treating truth as a relation between purely "objective" entities, propositions and facts. Propositions were objective in the sense of being logically independent of any mind, or what I have called linguistic activity, and facts objective in the sense of being chunks of reality, of the external world, which exist and are what they are quite independently of any human intentions or even of language. This, the pragmatists said, misrepresents the situation: truth is a property of certain of our beliefs, which have their subjective and objective aspects, being, according to James, "more allied to the emotions than to any supposed faculty of pure reason". Now the difficulties attendant on speaking of facts, considered as chunks of reality, have been exposed sufficiently completely by many writers [1] for it not to be necessary to go into them at this point. If is over the question of what truth is most properly to be ascribed to that the pragmatists are most interesting at this point. While I do not wish to go into what James may have meant by asserting that truth, or true beliefs, are more allied to the emotions than to pure reason, I should agree with him that "true" is applicable to beliefs rather than to

1. See, e.g., P.F.Strawson, "Truth", part of a symposium, PASSV 1950, Vol. XXIV.

propositions, and for similar reasons: what he calls the "subjective" aspect of belief may I think be interpreted as the notion of belief as an actual human process (not activity, since I have defined activity as something which is normally purposeful, or displays certain intentions). Believing, like knowing and understanding, are not purposeful or intentional activities, and it is for this reason that they have not been included in the list of linguistic activities which involve uttering true-or-false sentences.

The "situation" in which we find ourselves, and which the pragmatists accuse the correspondence and coherence theories of truth of misrepresenting, is described by the pragmatists as follows. The most important and interesting feature of all human activity, they claim, whether it be practical, ethical, cognitive or of any other kind, is its purposiveness. The business of philosophy, for the pragmatist, is to analyse the relations between various kinds of human activity and their purposes or aims. Pragmatism is defined by Schiller as

> "the thorough recognition that the purposive character of mental life generally must influence and pervade also our most remotely cognitive activities.....an assertion of the sway of human valuations over every region of our experience".[1]

1. Humanism, p. 8.

The analysis of truth and belief is concerned with these more "remotely cognitive" activities. Whenever the truth of a belief is in question, according to Schiller, we find ourselves in the following situation: we have behind us a body or system of accepted (true) beliefs, and we have to fit the belief in question into this system. If we can do so, the belief is true, if we cannot, then it is false. The peculiarly pragmatic twist is given in the assertion that by "fitting" the belief in question into the system we <u>make</u> it true, by finding that we cannot do so, we make it false. Thus the pragmatist gives a special meaning to the term "verification". Every true belief has arisen because of some human need. It has been formulated by human beings to meet not an objective demand of reality (to correspond to the facts) or the world as it in fact is - "the world as it in fact is" obviously cannot, and does not need, to make any such demands - but to meet a need of human nature. It is a "practical postulate claiming truth". In verifying a belief we do not <u>discover</u> it to be true, but <u>make</u> it true. James says:

> "The truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth <u>happens</u> to an idea. It <u>becomes</u> true, is <u>made</u> true by events".[1]

The making of truth in this way is identical with the

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1.   The Meaning of Truth, p. xii.

verification of a belief. If we discover that certain
fresh beliefs serve our purposes better, the old beliefs
that we took to be true become false, and the new beliefs
that we adopt become true because they are found to work.

In "Studies in Humanism" Schiller gives an elaborate
analysis of the act of knowing and the "making" of truth.
He distinguishes seven stages in each "act of knowing":
(1) we always use a mind which has some prior experience
and possesses some knowledge, and so (2) has acquired some
"basis in reality" which it is willing to accept as "fact",
because (3) it needs a "platform" from which to operate
further on a situation which confronts it, in order (4)
to realise some purpose or to satisfy some interest,
which defines for it an end and constitutes for it a good.
(5) It consequently experiments with the situation by
some voluntary inference, which may begin with a "mere
predication", and proceed by reasoned inference, but
always, when completed, issues in an "act".   (6) It is
guided by the results (consequences) of this experiment,
which go to verify or to disprove its provisional basis.
Hence (7) if the results are satisfactory, the reasoning
employed is good, the operations performed valid, the
results are right, while the conceptions used and the
predications made are _true_.[1]

1.   p. 152.

Schiller goes further than this, however, and asserts that the making truth is necessarily and ipso facto also a making of reality. "Successful predication extends the system of knowledge and enlarges the borders of fact. Truth and reality grow for us together, in a single process." He modifies this statement, however, by admitting an ambiguity in the use of the word "fact". In a wider sense, he says, everything (i.e. every object, qua experienced, whether imagined or dreamed of or the subject of an illusion) is a fact; it is independent of us, and is "found" and not made by us. Fact in this sense is taken to mean object, or a collection of objects, and he claims that as immediately experienced these objects forms a meaningless chaos. On the other hand, we _make_ our immediate experience into facts - in the second sense, in which facts are the objects of true beliefs - by selection, valuation and segregation. James makes a similar assertion and distinction when he says of reality "in one sense you create it, and in another sense you _find_ it".[1]

The _criterion_ of truth, for the pragmatists, is utility, or usefulness to believe. A belief is true if it is "workable", if its practically consequences, or the practical consequences of acting on it, are acceptable;

1. Humanism and Truth, p. 94.

acceptable, that is, in the light of human interests, and not in the sense of "worth accepting, because true". This latter sense does not exist for the pragmatists; for them, "acceptable" means (and means only) "can be fitted in with human interests" - or, of course, with accepted beliefs and theories, but these also are only true if they are or have been proved to be acceptable in the first sense, i.e. have been accepted and fit in with those beliefs whose acceptability has already been established.   This criterion of utility of workability was applied by the pragmatists not only to empirically or contingently true beliefs, but also to the laws of logic and mathematics and the principle of contradiction itself.   Schiller admitted that the acceptance of certain truths of logic would seem to involve no practical consequences, but in the working out of the theory both he and James extended the scope of "consequences" to include practical, theoretical, mental and intellectual, although I do not think they dealt fully enough with or succeeded in explaining the interrelations between these various types of consequences of holding beliefs which would be necessary to show that they were all important for human interests.

Now I think the pragmatists were right in asserting the central importance of what they called "purposiveness"

in the philosophical discussion of the meaning of various concepts, but that their chief mistakes were (a) that "utility" or "acceptability in the light of human interests" cannot be made into a <u>criterion</u> of truth, and (b) that they did not carry their point far enough.   The type of criticism of pragmatism offered by e.g. Russell and Moore does not, I think, apply. In "Philosophical Essays" (1910), Russell does indeed maintain that utility is not a satisfactory criterion of truth, but not, I think, for the correct reasons. He asserts, e.g., that it is "surely far easier to discover by direct investigation that the Contrat Social is a myth than to decide whether belief in it has done harm or good on the whole"[1].   What the pragmatists would presumably reply to this is that "direct investigation" is itself finding out the practical consequences of holding a belief, and Russell's criticism therefore only applies if a certain assumption, viz. that "direct investigation" and "discovering the consequences of holding a belief" are different processes, is made which the pragmatists do not make.   Most of Russell's arguments in this chapter are aimed at proving that "A is true" does not mean the same as "A is useful to believe". None of these arguments are, however, valid, for they all

1.   William James' Conception of Truth; pp. 127-149.

consist of trying to prove this conclusion by stating
alleged facts about how people talk and scientists
construct theories and hypotheses.   He says, e.g.,

> "According to the pragmatists, to say
> 'it is true that other people exist'
> means 'it is useful to believe that
> other people exist'.   But if so, then
> these two phrases are merely different
> words for the same proposition;
> therefore when I believe the one I believe
> the other.   If this were so, there
> could be no transition from the one to
> the other as plainly there is.   This
> shows that the word 'true' represents
> for us a different idea from that
> represented by the phrase 'useful to
> believe', and that, therefore, the
> pragmatic definition of truth ignores,
> without destroying, the meaning commonly
> given to the word 'true', which meaning,
> in my opinion, is of fundamental importance
> and can only be ignored at the cost of
> hopeless inadequancy." [1]

All that Russell is doing here is to deny what the

pragmatists assert - that "true" means "useful to believe",

and questions concerning what goes on in people's minds

when they use these expressions are surely irrelevant.

In order to show that these expressions do not have the

same meaning, it would be necessary to show that if it

is supposed that they do have the same meaning, certain

logical absurdities follow, and this is not Russell's

course.   The same may be said about Moore's argument

1.   pp. 136 - 7.

in his essay "William James' Pragmatism" (Philosophical
Studies, 1922).   Moore here attempts to show that "A is
true" does not mean the same as "A is useful to believe"
by asserting that it is possible to ask whether A, a
belief (statement, proposition, etc.) which it is useful
to believe is true or false, and that since this is a
meaningful question, "true" cannot mean "useful to believe".
Here again, the argument only applies if certain assumptions
are made which the pragmatists deny;   the pragmatists could
deny that the question whether something which is useful
to believe is true or false is a meaningful question;
in fact it follows from their premises (that "A is true"
does mean the same as "A is useful to believe") that this is
not a meaningful question.   But since their premises were
not put forward on the grounds that these are the ways in
which people talk about truth and belief and utility, but on
(at least purportedly) logical grounds, they cannot be
defeated by an appeal to the ways in which people actually
talk, what words are (normally) used to mean, or what the
people who generally use them think they mean.

It should I think be observed that it might be held
that the question whether this type of argument carries
depends for its answer on the view that is taken of the
nature of philosophical method.   Moore certainly held,
I think, that any philosophical view that was in
contradiction to a statement of fact (observed or

established) must be mistaken, and it would only be necessary to refer to the matter of fact to show that it was mistaken. And if this is so, then of course it cannot be denied that "true" does not mean the same as "useful to believe". But the pragmatists obviously did not think that the fact that "true" and "useful to believe" are sometimes used by people who think that they do not mean the same thing, and that it is possible to ask "Is A, which it is useful to believe, true or false?" (at least when not talking about the philosophical problem of truth) disproved their theory. Thus in order to refute the pragmatist theory of truth it would be necessary to prove that their method of dealing with the problem was incorrect, and it is not sufficient simply to apply, as Russell and Moore do in the passages referred to, methods of arguments which would not be accepted by the authors of the theory they are put forward to demolish.

The more appropriate criticism to apply to the statement that utility is a criterion of truth - and the pragmatists thought that it was both a criterion and the meaning of truth - is that the pragmatists do not explain, and indeed it would seem impossible to explain,exactly what tests this criterion would consist of, and how they could be applied. It is obviously not the particular interests of the person who happens to hold a certain belief that determine whether the belief in question is

true or false, and the pragmatists never supposed this.
When they did talk about the actual relationship between
true beliefs and human interests, they took refuge in
such assertions as that the true belief is the belief that
is useful in the long run.   They even went so far, on
occasions, as to say that truth is an ideal, and that we
may find that the beliefs we now hold, even the ones that
are most firmly accepted, turn out to be inadequate
foundations for action when future human needs and
interests become apparent.   The perfect truth, according
to Schiller, would "satisfy every purpose and unify all
endeavours"[1].   But the main criticism of the notion of
the possibility of a workable criterion of truth which
would assess the truth or falsity of any belief in terms
of its ability to be used as an aid to the furtherance of
human interests in the long run, is not that this criterion
is unworkable because it is so complex but (a) that there
is no reason for supposing that there _are_ many common
human interests, or, even supposing that there are, that
they may not change radically as time goes by;   and (b)
that the pragmatists do not succeed in establishing that
there is such a direct link between human interests and
human beliefs as they suppose.   The further point, that
they conceived of human interests in purely _practical_ terms,

1.   See, e.g. Schiller: Studies in Humanism, "The Ambiguity
        of Truth".

I shall refer to again later.

That they did not carry their idea of the importance of "purposiveness" in discussing philosophical problems far enough is a consideration which throws light on another aspect of the difficulty of using "utility" as a criterion of truth.   In trying to meet the objections of Russell, Moore and many other writers that the pragmatic theory of truth was "subjective", they conceded more, I think, than was necessary.   Despite the passages affirming that "truth and reality grow in a single process" and the way in which we "make" truth already quoted, and numerous other arguments directed against the notion of "fact" used by the correspondence theory, most pragmatist writers do admit the existence of facts in some sense or other, as existing independently of human purposes, in trying to prove that pragmatism preserves the "objectivity" of truth.   Now the charge that the pragmatist conception of truth is subjective might be brought in many different ways.   If the truth of a belief is determined by whether it is useful to believe - even "in the long run", i.e. whether it is acceptable to human interests - even as a whole - then it would seem to be undeniable that whether any given belief is true depends on what human interests as a matter of fact are.   Even if we do not suppose that human interests sometimes change, on a large scale, it is obviously possible that human interests might be other than

they are, and it would therefore follow that any given belief we now hold as true might be false, in the same world, but given a different set of human interests. Thus, it appears, "grass is green" might be false. And that "grass is green" might be false, either because human interests were different, or for any other reason than that grass in fact changed its colour, seems to be entirely unplausible.

Now from the fact that human interests might be other than they are it does not necessarily follow, even on pragmatist assumptions that "grass is green" might be false. If our interests were different, not only would the truth-value of the sentences we uttered in pursuit of the linguistic activities of stating, asserting, and the complex activities of doing science, describing, etc., be different, but their meaning also would be different. Since our linguistic intentions in stating, asserting, etc., which are modified by and reflect our non-linguistic intentions as in the more complex activities of e.g. doing science, are of the utmost importance in determining the meaningfulness of the sentences uttered in pursuit of these activities, it is evident that meaningfulness is just as dependent upon human interests (which I take to be the sum total of human intentions and purposes and motives and likes and dislikes and (possibly) moral and artistic preferences, etc.) as truth is; though this dependence is

not, I think, as direct as the pragmatists supposed.

Schiller, indeed, did apply the principles of pragmatism

to the theory of meaning, and in the book "Logic for Use"

he outlined a theory of meaning in which he did state that

the meaning of words, also, is dependent on and entirely

determined by human interests.   I have said that the

pragmatist theory of truth does not go far enough because

I think for the reasons just stated that it is not necessary

for the pragmatist to admit that there are certain basic

facts of experience - what James called "the hard core of

experience" - in trying to avoid the difficulties

suggested by critics who say that the pragmatist theory of

truth is subjective.   Nevertheless I do not think it is

possible to avoid assuming the existence of facts at the

level of meaning, or that linguistic meaningfulness can

be accounted for solely in terms of human interests.

It was part of the argument put forward in attempting to

show the kind of methods used by people who have said that

pragmatism is subjective that according to the pragmatist

view of truth, "any given belief we now hold as true might

be false", in the same world, but given a different set of

human interests".   The phrase "in the same world" is of the

utmost importance here; it does seem necessary to suppose

that there are some objects of experience, if not objects

existing in the external world (though I do not think it

is possible to account for the common understanding of

language and its power in communication without assuming
that there is common experience of external objects and
not just objects of individual experience) and this
involves at least acceptance of the statement that there
are facts that objects, certain objects, exist.   Further,
that the truth of these existential sentences is not
dependent on human interests, but entirely dependent on
the question of whether these several objects do in fact
exist.

Another way in which this point might be made is to
say that while, if our interests were sufficiently
different, our whole conceptual system or language might
be different, it cannot be denied that language is about
something - that in pursuing linguistic activities one of
the centrally important elements of these activities is
referring.   Nearly all describing is saying something
about something, and while it may be true that we might
have very different interests in describing, that we might
even classify the things we describe differently, and
distinguish them from each other on different principles
from those we now use, and identify them by different
methods, or with different further purposes in mind,
nevertheless there must be something or some things for
us to refer to, identify, classify, distinguish,
for us to be able to talk meaningfully at all.   It is
not possible that all conceptual or linguistic activities

should be <u>evaluative</u> of experience, or of the world,
for anything it is possible to evaluate or appraise (ie.
express an opinion of in the light of human interests)
it is also in principle possible to describe.   In other
words, the terms "descriptive" and "evaluative" are
defined in terms of each other.   It is not possible to
evaluate something that does not exist (is not
identifiable) and anything that is identifiable is at
least in principle describable.

But although the truth of existential sentences
may be independent of linguistic intentions, I do not
think it would be correct to say that their meaningfulness
also is independent of such intentions.   What
existential sentences mean, in the sense of what kind of
ontological status they have, is obviously determined
largely by our purposes in various activities, e.g. science,
poetry, description, etc.

In discussing pragmatism at some length my main
purpose has been to show that although I have claimed
that truth is connected with intentions, I do not think
that the connection between the truth of any given
true sentence (sentence uttered in the successful pursuit
of a linguistic activity) and any human intention or
purpose, except a linguistic intention, is direct enough
for this necessary connection to provide us with a
<u>criterion</u> of truth.   And further, that although the

connection between the truth of a sentence and the linguistic intention with which it was uttered _is_ direct, the statement of this connection cannot provide us with a criterion of truth, because linguistic intentions are _incomplete_, and can only be justified in a wider context of non-linguistic intentions.   The pragmatists, I think, saw that there was a connection between the truth of sentences (or as they called them, beliefs) and human intentions and purposes, but they assumed that only _practical_ purposes were respectable.   In a sense, they were right: they clearly saw (although they did not put it in these words) that only practical purposes are self-justifying.   In order to explain the connection between truth and purpose, it is I think necessary to distinguish between various types of intention in the ways I have suggested.   In classifying intentions and linguistic and non-linguistic I do not think I have introduced an entirely new concept or two new concepts, or even that I have been using the terms "linguistic intention" and "non-linguistic" intention" as technical terms, but these terms are merely suggested as convenient words for referring to different types of intention the existence of which, of the possibility of classifying in such a way, is already suggested or implied by many of our normal uses of the term "intention".

Thus I have asserted in this chapter that truth

consists in the success of linguistic intentions and have illustrated this point by discussing the various types of intentions involved in describing and in doing science.   Since truth, however, consists in the success of a type of intentions which are not self-justifying, i.e. can only be explained by reference to other non-linguistic intentions, it is not possible to formulate a criterion of truth on this basis.   In any case, such a criterion of truth is neither possible nor necessary; as in the first place it has been conclusively shown (as mentioned in Chapter I) that there can be no general criterion of truth, and in the second we have, in the criteria or tests for contingent truth, analytic truth, etc. all that we require.   Further, since the business of a philosophical discussion of a concept like truth is not to give a "better-than-the-dictionary" definition, but to explain and display the relations between truth, or truths, and certain other concepts, that the statement of some of these relations does not give rise to a criterion of truth is neither surprising nor regrettable.

In conclusion, I will deal with a possible objection which might be made to my classification of different types of linguistic intentions involved in doing science and describing, as this may I think throw a little more

light on the connections between linguistic and non-
linguistic intentions.   Someone might say "Surely all
these alleged different linguistic intentions which
can only be achieved successfully by the utterance of
true sentences really all amount to _one_ single
linguistic intention, the intention to tell the truth?
And it is obvious that if my intention is to tell the
truth, I can only succeed if I do tell the truth.
Thus the explanation of truth in terms of linguistic
intentions is circular, for the definition of "linguistic
intention" is in terms of truth".

        This argument is not, I think, valid, because the
alleged linguistic intention to tell the truth is not,
except possibly in a moral and a logically derivative
sense, not a genuine intention at all.   By this I do not
mean that it is an _incomplete_ intention, which needs
further justification, but that the notion of the
desire to tell the truth or the intention to tell the
truth as a separate, identifiable intention cannot be
given any substance.   I may of course tell the truth,
or utter a sentence I know or believe to be true
intentionally, but this is not to say that my linguistic
intention in uttering it was to tell the truth.   In
telling the truth - uttering a true sentence - I may
have a variety of intentions or motives.   I may be
intending to warn someone, to impress someone with my

superior knowledge, or to do my duty, amongst many other
intentions.   But if I feel that I have a moral obligation
to tell the truth, I must be able to back it up with
reasons - there are always reasons why one should perform
one's moral obligation, even if they are only of the
"Because my conscience tells me" or "Because it is self-
evident" types.   If someone asks me, "Why are you
morally obliged to tell X the truth about Y?" I cannot
answer "Because whatever the true sentence about Y that
I ought to state or assert to him is, is true"; this is
no reason at all.   The reason offered may be that I think
X is entitled to know the truth about Y, or that I do not
think that I am entitled to withhold the truth about Y
from X; but this is not to say that X ought to be told
the truth "for its own sake".

Nor is it possible to give a satisfactory account of
the pursuit of truth "for its own sake" in non-moral
terms.   If it is said that a scientist, or a historian,
is interested, in the study of science or history, in
the pursuit of truth for its own sake, or that he
studies these subjects out of a "disinterested desire for
truth", what could be meant?   A scientist, say a medical
scientist, whose interest in performing experiments
and using scientific procedures was said to be the pursuit
of truth for its own sake would be the scientist who was
interested in the purely theoretical side of medical

science, in formulating theories about the causes and
cures of various diseases, but had no interest in applying
them.   The historian whose interest in finding out about
the ancient Greeks was the disinterested desire for truth
would be the historian who was interested in finding out
what the ancient Greeks were really like and what they
really did, as opposed to the historian whose interest was
in writing a historical novel or finding evidence in
support of a theory he might hold about the nature of
historical development of the inhabitants of Greece.
But to specify the "disinterested" motives of the scientist
and the historian in this way is largely a matter of
saying that he does not have certain other or ulterior
motives in doing science or history.   The medical
scientist who wants to know what the cure for X is, and
the historian who wants to know what the ancient Greeks
really did, may want to satisfy their curiosity about
these matters, or they may pursue these studies because
they take some sort of pleasure in them, as a theoretical
mathematician may take pleasure in working out complex
mathematical problems.   But there are no criteria by
which we could judge that a man pursuing one of the
activities mentioned above, who had disclaimed all the
motives and intentions listed above, and any others,
had the intention of pursuing the truth "for its own sake".

If a man said "Yes, I wish to find out if X is true",
or "My intention in doing what I am doing is to find
out if X is true", and followed this by saying "but I
have no ulterior motive for this, nor am I at all
curious about whether X is true, nor do I take any
pleasure in doing it", this would be a very odd statement.
Consequently, although the "desire to tell the
truth for its own sake" or the "disinterested search
for truth" sounds as though it would be a self-
justifying linguistic intention, I do not think it is
possible to give any content to the intention which it
purports to describe; the actual linguistic intentions
which we pursue in describing and doing science are
incomplete, and can only be justified by reference to a
further, non-linguistic intention, but they are concrete
and various.

In attempting to show that truth consists in the
success of certain types of linguistic intentions I have
in this chapter considered certain of such intentions
against the wider background of the activities of doing
science and describing our experiences. Now it might
be supposed that this shows (if I have been successful)
the relation of contingent truth to linguistic
intentions, but since no reference has been made, or no

examples taken from, the wider contexts of doing logic
and influencing human behaviour, other types of complex
human activities which I referred to as relevant at the
beginning of this chapter [1], there would appear to be no
evidence that I have been dealing with the general
concept of truth, and not simply contingent truth.
This would I think be based on a mistaken idea of the
nature of the enquiry. It is not in respect of their
contingency that sentences uttered in the pursuit of
these linguistic activities are true, if the linguistic
intentions of which their utterance marks the pursuit of
are successful, but in respect of their truth. The
examples which have been given were chosen merely for
their convenience and facility in illustration. But
sentences which are true are not contingently true or
analytically true because of the type of human activity
they occur in, but because of the types of criteria or
tests which are applicable for their verification.
The pursuit of scientific activities, whether physics,
biology, medical science, or any other kind, involves
the utterance of analytically true sentences as well
as contingently true sentences. In particular,
mathematics is an important part of most sciences.

Thus although my examples have been taken from the
activities of describing and doing science my conclusions

1. See p. 108.

apply to what I have called the general concept of truth, i.e. to all types of truth indifferently, irrespective of their particular types of methods of verification.

There are indeed other problems concerning truth and verification which are extremely relevant to, though beyond the scrope of, this thesis. There is, most importantly, the question of just how many types of truth there are: whether analytic sentences are true-or-false, as I have assumed throughout, whether mathematical sentences are true-or-false, whether sentences expressing moral judgments are true-or-false. The answers to these questions depend largely I think on the extent to which the arguments commonly put forward in support of e.g. moral judgments can be systematised and shown to possess some sort of logic sufficiently like or analogous to the methods used in establishing the conclusions of arguments whose conclusions are generally accepted as true-or-false, viz. methods of establishing contingent truth and analytic truth. Also connected are the problems of the relations of sentences uttered in stating, asserting, etc., to sentences uttered in promising, warning (when this is a linguistic activity, but does not involve uttering a true-or-false sentence, but a sentence like "Stop!"),

commanding, etc.; I have been primarily concerned with
the relation of the linguistic activities of stating,
asserting, denying, etc. with non-linguistic activities.
There is also the problem of discussing in more detail
than I have done the different types of meaning of a
sentence according to whether that sentence is uttered in
stating, or warning, or excusing, etc., as I have suggested
on p. 33. In the case of all of these problems, and
numerous others, however, I do not think that their solution
or elucidation is necessary for the discussion of the main
points with which I have been concerned.

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