

# TRUTH, DISCOURSE, AND REALITY

BY

GEORGE P. ADAMS

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Within the context of the present discussion, the adjective "true" qualifies only such entities as beliefs, judgments, and propositions. Accordingly, it would appear that two major questions confront us. First, what is the nature of any entity which may be qualified by the adjective "true," and secondly, under what circumstances does it acquire this predicate. It is as if we wanted to know the meaning of such a class of things as "books belonging to me." "Belonging to me" is a predicate of some books. We should have to know the nature of books at large, irrespective of their belonging to me or not, and then we should have to ascertain the nature of the new quality which some books acquire when they become mine. Most of the books in the world are not books belonging to me, and likewise most of the assertions and propositions which exist seem not to be true. I shall hope to show, before I finish, that this is not a very satisfactory or adequate sort of analogy and that it rests upon assumptions which are questionable. But for the present, I want to accept the framework which such an analogy suggests and see what we can make of it.

I begin then with the observation that truth is a quality which may attach only to entities of a certain kind, and which does not belong to them intrinsically and by their own right, so that it is not the case that to be an entity of the sort in question is also to possess the quality of being true. The full-fledged existence of these entities contains or implies no guaranty of their being true. They are to be thought of as capable

of existing, of living their own life and fulfilling their own careers irrespective of whether they acquire the additional quality of being true or not. Their existence as entities or events of a certain kind is one thing; their happening to be true (or false) is incidental and adventitious to their existence. The entities here in question are beliefs, judgments, assertions, or propositions. We are, for the present, to think of these as existing in some domain which can be marked off from all other regions, and designated as the region in which these entities, as existing, have their habitat, just as the flora and fauna of Australia have their existence within the spatial confines of that continent, or as the passengers of an ocean liner, as long as they are passengers, dwell in and on the ship. *Where* do beliefs and assertions exist and carry on? The usual answer is, I suppose, within men's minds.

But this answer is not satisfactory or illuminating, not yet at least. For what do we know about the mind as a realm or a potential container or beliefs and propositions, ready to entertain or make judgments and assertions, but having an existence and nature different from that which belongs to the entities which exist within it—a kind of Noah's Ark before the animals went in? We have framed our question clumsily if it leads to such an answer. The only clues we can have as to the nature and existence of minds are to be gathered from beliefs and judgments themselves, and other entities which do not here concern us. We have no knowledge of minds apart from or prior to these entities themselves. Yet judgments and assertions certainly exist, and they exist somewhere. We need a term to designate the realm wherein they dwell. I think the best term to use for this purpose is "discourse." I shall, in any case, use this term to denote the realm, matrix, or medium in which judgments and propositions exist. Beliefs too belong here, so soon as they become articulate, so soon, that is, as there is something believed which is expressed in words or symbols of some sort. Prior to such articulation of experience, say as mere feeling, belief does not concern us. Discourse then, as something which

we know and use, is the scene and setting of judgments and assertions, whether true or false. If a judgment, having its home in the realm of discourse, acquires the quality true, then truth too belongs to discourse, and exists there. There too will falsity exist, in so far as a proposition which acquires the predicate "false" is made and exists in the world of discourse. "Discourse" need be so far only a collective or distributive term, designating the totality of expressed beliefs and judgments, some of which are false and some of which may be true. Yet even so, there seems to be something substantive and existential about discourse, even if it be no self-contained matrix, even if it be nothing but the totality of assertions which are at any time made. Assertions and propositions are made of something, and we can use the term broadly as a name either for the material out of which they are formed or for the formed and shaped product.

The central issues concerning propositions and judgments are born from the necessity of making certain distinctions and also from the equally imperious need of discovering and defining the bonds and relations which link together the discriminated aspects. It is usually easier, both in practical affairs and in philosophy, to pull things apart than to put them together again. I want to exhibit three distinguishable aspects in any situation where beliefs, judgments and propositions are involved. In the first place, they exist as events which happen, which occur at some region of space and time. Assertions are existing here and now. I am making and uttering them. You are hearing them. There are specific events in my body-mind and in your body-minds, and in the intervening medium. What the specific nature of these events may be, what are the respective shares and boundaries of physics, physiology, and psychology in their description and explanation, need not here concern us. Something surely happens when a belief is held and expressed, when a proposition or judgment is made. These exist as events somewhere and somewhen, just as surely as do thunderstorms and earthquakes. And like other events occurring in nature, they

have causes and effects, they are caught up in a moving network of other events which precede, surround, and follow them. Every judgment, then, exists as an event or a series of events, and *qua* event, it is no different from the occurrences and happenings which are studied in physics, geology, or meteorology.

But there is certainly a second aspect, ingredient, or domain wherever any event such as judgment or belief occurs. Whenever a belief occurs as an event there is something which is believed. When an assertion is made and exists, there is something asserted. Let us call this aspect or entity the content or the immanent object of the judgment. Every assertion which is more than a series of sounds, has such a content or immanent object. Both the term "content" and the term "object" are ambiguous and possibly misleading. In saying that an assertion has a content, I do not mean to denote any character or quality of the assertion as an event. The content of an assertion is not a character belonging to the assertion as an event—its length, for instance, in the sense in which a sound of a definite intensity, timbre, and duration is a content of a thunderclap. To describe what the thunderstorm is, *qua* event, is *ipso facto* to describe that ingredient of the thunderstorm which is the sound. To describe an assertion as an event is likewise to describe the qualities of the sounds of which the assertion is composed. None of the contents or characters or the assertion as an event, as a series of occurring sounds, is the thing asserted, the assertum. Thunderstorms and rainbows do not say or assert anything. They just happen. But the assertions that Napoleon escaped from Elba, and that the moon is made of green cheese both happen—their happening is really qualified in ways which the biologist, physicist, and psychologist may discover—and they also say something. Suppose a Chinaman makes a statement in Chinese. I could explore and describe his assertion as an event, discover all of its existing qualities, its antecedents, and consequences and be in complete ignorance of what it is that he is saying. The only difference between doing this and describing a thunderstorm is that I may suppose the Chinaman's noises to

assert something, whereas I make no such supposition in listening to a thunderclap. That content of the assertion, which is the assertum, is not any quality or character of the assertion as an existing event.

The designation of that which is asserted as the *object* of the assertion may be equally ambiguous. We are seemingly compelled to distinguish between such objects as are believed in, asserted, described, and judged, and another level or dimension of objects which exist in their own right, objects which are transcendent to the judgment rather than the objects asserted by the judgment. The central crux of the problem of truth lies just here and will soon occupy the whole of our attention. For the present, I ask you to observe merely that every assertion has a more immediate object which is simply the fact or object asserted. I call it the immanent object of the judgment.

The immanent object of a belief, judgment, or assertion is always more or other than a simple atomic entity. Some relation or relational complex is present in anything which is asserted or judged. I never believe, assert, or judge a single quality, whether essence or existence. I believe something about that quality or I believe that it exists in some context. If I assert that Napoleon escaped from Elba, I am not asserting Napoleon nor Elba, nor escaping. If I assert that Napoleon was or existed, not Napoleon alone is the immanent object of my assertion but some domain of existence within which I place Napoleon.

The objective which is asserted or believed must certainly be distinguished from any event which is the believing or asserting it. Indeed, the objective appears to be, with respect to those events, transcendent. My judgment today that Napoleon escaped from Elba, as a mental or bodily event is as distinct from the judgment made fifty years ago by a French schoolboy, as my eating my breakfast this morning is distinct from his eating his breakfast on a certain day half a century ago. Yet these judgment-events, existentially so discrete and dissimilar have the same or an essentially similar content or objective. And the totally dissimilar events which might constitute the gesticula-

tions of a deaf mute could still have the same objective. Innumerable different and discrete events, of the sort that we designate as asserting, believing, judging, etc., scattered about in different places and times can have one and the same immanent object or objective. They can all express the same proposition. It is not at all that they all have a common nature or quality, as many different roses may have the character "pink." The identity of content of different assertions (where content = immanent object) has nothing to do with the identity of a single character belonging to different things or events.

It is not only beliefs and assertions which have an immanent object. Desire and aversion, sentiments and attitudes, liking and disliking, feeling, sensing and perceiving, all of the traditional modes of conscious experience have immanent objects. Desire implies and includes something which is desired, and so for all the rest. But it is only modes of conscious experience which have such immanent objects. Lamps and chairs, thunderstorms and earthquakes are events which occur, specified and qualified each in its own way, having causes and effects, standing in all sorts of relational contexts except that one relation in which the event which is a judgment stands to the content which is judged. This seems to me as indubitable and basic as anything can well be, and to define the one single difference between a mental event and all other events.

Yet in spite of this difference between the assertion as an event and the assertum, in spite of the fact that the assertum is neither any character of the judgment-event nor the occurrence of that event, it is none the less immanent. This is so because you need only to inspect and to understand the judgment or assertion in order to know exactly what it is that is judged or asserted. The assertion itself tells you. This is why I have spoken of the *object* of the judgment as a content and as immanent. In order to know what is believed or asserted in any instance you need never, it would seem, go beyond the boundaries of that form of human experience which we have called discourse. All that discourse says, what is asserted in

any judgment, seems cabined and confined within the realm of articulate discourse. If I ask what it is that you assert when you say that twice three is six, that the Alps were submerged in the mesozoic period, do I journey outside the realm of discourse, into the empyrean of timeless essences, or back in time to a remote geological epoch before there was any judgment and any discourse? How impossible and absurd! I stay close at home; I know all that you assert when I understand the content of your judgment here and now. I scrutinize and comprehend it without once leaving the realm of discourse.

But, that object of a judgment which can be discovered and inspected without going beyond the judgment itself, the content or immanent object, surely is not *the* object, the “*real*” object, that about which we want to know and judge, belonging to that world which science, history, and philosophy seek to reveal to us. How absurd to tell me that *the* object which I am describing and telling about in any judgment will be found by looking within discourse at the judgment or description itself. When I exclaim, “who is it that I see here?” a bystander who hears my exclamation does not look at me or into my eyes, save perhaps only to know the direction from which some one is coming, but at the approaching person. What exists and lives within discourse (including *all* its contents or immanent objects) seems to be related to a domain of transcendent things and events, as account books, with their notations and figured sums are related to actual piles of real money existing not in account books, but in pocket-books and banks. When my accounts are audited, the auditor examines the notations in my account book and *then* looks outside of my books to see what money I actually have on hand. Certain theories of knowledge seem to me to be analogous to an injunction to an auditor of my accounts to tell me whether they are correct but forbidding him ever to inquire what money I really have or owe.

The auditor of my accounts has no difficulty in turning away from my books, looking at the money in my pocket-book, and seeing whether or no they correspond. This is the way in

which, at the end, he verifies the truth or correctness of my accounts. He compares the figured sum and the real sum, the immanent and the transcendent money. Similarly, the truth of a judgment ought to depend upon an analogous correspondence between that which is believed, judged, and asserted in discourse, and the real transcendent object which exists outside the realm of discourse.

We have before us the familiar framework of a correspondence theory of truth. We have reached it by way of distinguishing between the immanent object of any assertion which can be known by an inspection and understanding of the assertion itself, without leaving the realm of discourse at all, and the "real," transcendent object about which the assertion with all its immanent content is made. I know the entire immanent object of the judgment, Napoleon escaped from Elba, when I understand the proposition. But no inspection or understanding of it will tell me anything about its truth. To know whether the judgment is true or not, I must turn away from that which is asserted *in* the judgment, to the real Napoleon and his real adventure of escape from the real Elba, which are not contents or constituents of the judgment at all. Unless these existed in their own right and in just the way in which they are depicted in the judgment long before my judgment with all its content and its immanent object came into being, my judgment is not true.

The situation on our hands then is this. We make judgments and assertions. These occur as events in our body-minds. Their existence as events is limited to highly organized animal bodies. But these events, unlike all other events, sustain a unique relation to something which is objective to them, i.e., the proposition, the assertum. Nevertheless, this objective content of the assertion is immanent because, in order to discover it, you need only to inspect and to understand the assertion itself. So far, you attend to nothing which transcends the boundaries of discourse. This content or immanent object is not any character or quality of the judgment as an occurring event, nor is it related to that



event as cause or effect. But, no such inspection or understanding of what is asserted will yield any hint of the truth or falsity of the judgment. The truth of a judgment or belief appears to depend wholly upon the existence of a real object which falls outside the domain of discourse. A judgment is true in case there really exists a transcendent object which corresponds with the immanent object asserted in and by the judgment. But no scrutiny however exhaustive of the judgment and of what it asserts, its content, can possibly decide whether or not such a transcendent object exists. To suppose that it could, would be equivalent to saying that you could by ascertaining what it means to be a book, tell which books have in addition the property of being my books. But just as the property of being a book of mine is accidental and adventitious to the nature of being a book, so the property of being true is external and adventitious to all of the internal characteristics of judgment.

The correspondence theory of truth is thus the result of erecting the domain of discourse, with its occurring events and their immanent objects, into a self-contained realm, an island or prison within whose confines we live and move. All science and all knowledge dwell here in the realm of discourse. Yet the figure of a prison is not very apt. This realm of discourse, self-contained as it is (on the theory of correspondence) is in one sense, spacious enough, perhaps infinitely so. It is "self-contained" only because all existing, real, and transcendent objects lie outside of it. They must do so in order to provide any possibility for a judgment to be true. The truth of a judgment never depends upon nor is it ascertainable by discovering anything whatever which is found within the judgment. What judgments are true depends entirely upon what is real, not upon what is judged and asserted, what is literally grasped and held within the scope of discourse. When I say that this self-enclosed realm of discourse though in one sense a prison is, in another sense, spacious and infinite, I am thinking of all that inexhaustible realm, which is accessible to us through discourse alone. I am thinking of those essences which Mr. Santayana

once regarded as "concretions in discourse." Whether we think of essences as constituted by discourse, or as simply discovered by discourse, is for our present purposes irrelevant. In either case, they are germane to discourse, they comprise its habitat; they provide the subsistential, dreamy stuff which is woven into the structures of mathematics and logic, dialectic and discourse, fancy and imagination—all of that infinitely profuse realm which, on the correspondence theory, is held aloof from existence, and from reality where *this* means that which really exists. Discourse moves at will throughout this realm. But the truth of what discourse discovers here—in the really pregnant sense of truth—does not depend upon anything found either in discourse or in essences, but upon the existence in reality of *real* facts, events, and structures. On these premises, the confines of discourse and essence, remote as they may be, are none the less there, and beyond them, irrelevant to anything found within those confines, is existence.

The philosophical motives which lead to this conception of the realm of discourse as thus self-enclosed, separated from reality by all that distinguishes the immanent object of discourse and the transcendent object, such motives are both numerous and potent. Men have made and are still making and remaking science, but men have not made nature. The hypotheses and theories, the concepts and formulae of science have issued from human observation, experiment, and thought. They are just as much the product of men's mind, of human nature, as fairy tales and myths, and they rank as inventions no less than aeroplanes. These achievements and products of constructive human activity continue to exist and live in what we have been calling the realm of discourse. But we lose sight of essential characteristics of that invention which we name science and knowledge when we compare it with physical inventions and tools. An aeroplane, once made, enters into the context of physical nature; it flies through the air, and becomes a part of the spatio-temporal world of physical objects and events. It is not so with scientific judgments, statements, and formulae.

In building up a scientific hypothesis, the object of the scientist is *not* to take something from nature, refashion it, combine it with other things, and then to replace the artificial product back into nature. That is what he does when he invents an aeroplane. But the scientist is bent upon knowing what nature is without remaking or altering it one single bit. I cannot but think that the pragmatic emphasis upon experiment, upon the fashioning of instruments and all of the elaborate practical laboratory activity of modern science, as being the very life of knowledge, leads to a distorted perspective. Experiment is purely instrumental. It is but the external means—as necessary as you please—for knowing, a knowing which is itself never practice. Hence, in making science, nature must be untouched and unaltered. How can this be unless the knowledge which men achieve exists somewhere apart from nature which is increate? I think that most of the really fundamental grounds for the correspondence theory of truth can be developed from this thesis that men make science but have not made nature. Since something is certainly and literally made when scientific knowledge is achieved, and since that something is not nature itself, are we not compelled to say that the knowledge which is the product of human observation and thought is a duplicate of nature, existing in a medium of its own different from that of nature and reality? Nature is the model which we find and do not make; knowledge is the scheme or map, corresponding to that model, which we construct in the medium of discourse.

But, if we can thus be thought to build up in the medium of discourse, structures which correspond with the models which we find in nature and outside of discourse, we can also disregard any such model and contrive structures in discourse to which nothing real corresponds. We invent playfully, piecing together the counters of discourse, weaving whatever patterns our fancy may dictate. Discourse is plastic clay which a sculptor *may* fashion into a form true to some model which he has before him, whose given shape constrains his creation. So the scientist

hopes to work in the medium of discourse with the facts of nature as his models, building up the structures of science to conform to that which he finds and does not make. But the soft, yielding clay may also evoke a sheer creative impulse. All given models may be disregarded. Fantastic figures are fashioned, a thousand shapes emerge like grotesque gargoyles to which nothing real corresponds. So it is with discourse. It too seems to be a plastic medium which can be worked without the constraining influence of any external model, yielding structures grotesque and fanciful, beautiful and ugly, significant and absurd. Here is the home of error, of suppositions, of fancy, and imagination. Here too dwell logic and mathematics, complex intricately woven concretions in discourse, whose fabrication is guided by no external model at all but solely by rules and principles which the creative thinker himself selects or determines.

I think it is impossible to exaggerate the influence and the importance of the presuppositions which constitute the foundation of such a philosophical perspective and framework. Modern Empiricism from the time of Locke has moved within such a framework. The mind (or an internal self-contained realm of discourse) is a region in which once something gets in, it expands, proliferates, develops or is shaped in such a way that what it eventually becomes bears no resemblance to what it was initially. Once in the mind, or in discourse, ideas become subject only to the jurisdiction of the internal medium in which henceforth they are to fulfil their careers. Their life within the mind may be one of gradual impoverishment, starvation, and decay. Images and thought are then said to be decaying sense, bare abstract skeletons which alone remain when the warmth and intimacy of original impressions and perceptions are left behind. Or on the other hand, the ideas which expand and combine in discourse and in mind generate new structures and new meanings which far outstrip the poverty of initial impressions. But they do so only by relinquishing any claim to truth—i.e., to correspondence with those primitive elements which alone

disclose objective facts. The more of art and artifice which enters into their making, the more widely do they depart from the original simple elements which are given at the outset and which accordingly are more genuinely objective. It is as if I applied a lighted match to a piece of paper. There is a moment when the correspondence between the flame of the match and that of the paper is at a maximum. I do not say identity. I might say continuity. The spread of flame in the match is continuous with the spread of flame in the paper. But the match is made of wood and the news sheet is made of paper. The stuff of the paper provides a medium or matrix in which events, initiated by the flame of the match, something objective, will occur of a kind and on a scale to which nothing corresponds in the world beyond the boundaries of the paper. What correspondence (or continuity) may have existed at the outset is lost and left far behind as soon as the initial flame spreads and proliferates in the separable and detached medium of the paper.

The analogy is crude and no one would wish to press it too far. But it does picture a philosophical framework whose hold upon our traditional way of thinking, it would be very hard to exaggerate. The little flame which initially is both in the match and the paper is like the simple ideas of Locke or the impressions of Hume, or like primary qualities shared alike by our minds and by things, or like Mr. Russell's percepts. The flame as it later exists in the paper alone is like complex ideas, or secondary qualities, or the products of mere custom and imagination, ideal constructions of thought and discourse, which in their complexity and artificiality correspond to nothing objective.

The correspondence theory of truth, with respect to judgment, bears a close resemblance to the representative theory of perception. Thus, according to this theory, we are directly aware in perception, only of mental states. Likewise, the immanent object or content of the judgment is, on the correspondence theory, all that the judgment itself in any way holds or contains. Conversely, for the representative theory of perception, we have no direct, sensory awareness of what is physically and inde-

pendently real. Likewise, on the correspondence theory, the real object judged about is existentially transcendent to the assertion, or content, disclosed by an inspection and understanding of the judgment as it lies within the realms of discourse.

Again, on the premises of the representative theory of perception, the perceived characters of "physical" objects cannot really be physical, independent, and real, because they depend on a context, and vary from one perceptual situation to another. But there can be only *one* set of characters—position, size, etc.—which intrinsically and absolutely belong to a physical object. Therefore, the perceived qualities which are relational cannot be physical and real. They are mental. There is, consequently, a much greater range of perception than of physical objects. A dish of water really is some one definite temperature. Sometimes it is felt as hot, sometimes as cold. Hence, the discrepancy between the felt temperatures and the real temperature, and since they cannot both exist at the same time and place in the physical order, felt temperatures are mental.

Likewise with judgment. Charles I either did or did not die in his bed. But I can assert either the one or the other. Or I can even say that he was drowned at sea, or any one of countless things, only one of which would be true—i.e., that one whose immanent object, the assertion, corresponds with the real historic fact. The range of possible judgments (all but one of which are false) is analogous with the range of perceived qualities, only one of which bears any exact correspondence to the objective fact. The world of past history cannot contain a real Charles who was both beheaded, and who was drowned at sea. Yet some habitat must be provided for the Charles who is judged to have been drowned at sea. But you cannot so plausibly convert him into a mental state as you can (on the representative theory of perception) perceived, sensory qualities which conflict with the one real quality belonging to the real object. The Charles who is judged to have been drowned certainly is not a mental Charles; the immanent object of a judgment, even an erroneous judgment, is after all an *object*

and not any slab of the stream of consciousness of the mind which makes the judgment. Yet the Charles qualified as drowned certainly never existed in the historical past; he is not the real Charles who dismissed the short Parliament. Where then does he exist? Where else but in a subsistent realm of essences, a kind of philosophical attic in which all sorts of discarded furniture can be stuffed away for which there is no place in the downstairs world of really existing facts and events. In other words, the existence and the possibility of false propositions compels us to posit a realm of subsistent objectives (in Meinong's sense) or essences, and to locate in that realm the immediate objects of such judgments, just as fluctuating and relational perceived qualities have to be taken out of the independent, physical order and lodged in minds, because they so often conflict with the one intrinsic quality which can alone be real. On the one hand, subjective mental states, and on the other hand, essences which subsist but do not exist, provide a refuge for the discards and misfits of the actual.

But, once embarked on such an enterprise, where shall we stop, either in transferring perceived qualities into minds, or entities discoursed and judged about into the realm of non-existing essences? Mr. Marhenke pointed out the difficulty with respect to perceived qualities. Not only some, but *all* perceived qualities are relational; they vary with the state and position of the percipient organism, they depend upon the intervening medium and upon the choice of standards of measurement wherewith to ascertain the alleged real qualities of things. Likewise, with judgment and its objects. If the assertum of a false proposition is but an objective inhabiting the domain of essences, so too is the assertum of a true proposition. As long as we are judging, we never trespass beyond the boundaries of objects suitable to discourse, beyond the realm of essence. Judgment itself never can reveal the truth or falsity of a belief because the only entities which judgment knows are essences severed from existence.

If now any judgment happens to be true, if there happens to exist a real situation corresponding to the content of the judgment, that is an added and extrinsic fact, irrelevant to the existence and the meaning of the judgment itself.

Such, then, are some of the analogies between the theory of representative perception and the correspondence theory of truth. This is not the place nor is there any need for me to examine the theory of representative perception and expose the grounds upon which it meets disaster. Mr. Marhenke has already done that, and I accept the validity both of his criticism of that theory and of the general direction in which the positive theory of perception which he sets forth, is moving. I assent, that is, to the following three theses:

1. In *all* perception, we are in direct cognitive contact with independent, physical existence.

2. All perceived characters are relational; their nature is dependent upon the total context in which they exist.

3. It follows that there are no physical existences with simple, intrinsic qualities indissolubly attached to them in such wise that any perceived characters incompatible with these intrinsic qualities have to be placed in a mental and non-physical medium.

If now we reject the theory of representative perception and accept some such theses as these with respect to the nature of perception, are we not all the more compelled to adhere to a correspondence theory of truth with respect to judgment? How otherwise shall we account for error and falsity? We have purged perception of error; we assert that, throughout, perception discloses directly and without the intermediary of mental duplicates, the existence of physical reality. Driven out of perception, where else but in judgment, interpretation, and inference, shall error be found? And if discourse is the only possible seat of error, will it not be because in discourse and judgment, we are directly concerned only with an immanent content, existentially divorced from real objects, sometimes perhaps corresponding to them but frequently not? When I assert



that Nero was the last Roman emperor, my statement is simply and totally false. What it asserts is absolutely excluded from the historical past. In making this assertion I am not in any contact with reality at all. If perchance any of my judgments are true, I am in quite indirect cognitive contact with the real, i.e., through the intermediary of the terms and essences which alone are directly accessible. I find it difficult and even impossible to accept the substance and implications of such a theory as this, and I hope to show, in the remainder of my paper, some of the grounds for my dissent, and to offer a brief indication of the only possible direction in which, as I think, we can advance.

In the first place—and paradoxical as it may well appear—I deny that when I now utter the words “Nero was the last Roman emperor” I am making a *bona fide* judgment. This is, if you choose, a proposition, an artificial combination of words or terms. It is not a judgment because when I make it, I neither believe it, nor do I make any claim that it is true. Essential for a *bona fide* judgment is the claim to be true, to reach and to portray or embody some fact, event, or situation which is real. The proposition does indeed assert something; it has its own content and immanent object. This content is an artificial product of language, useful perhaps for purposes of make-believe or for formal logic. It would be a judgment only if the content of the assertion claimed to coincide (or if you prefer, to represent) a transcendent object. The crucial difficulty in interpreting the nature of erroneous judgments does not arise in the case of propositions which are known to be false, which are not believed in, and which consequently, I should say, are not genuine judgments. The problem is critical only where you have a *bona fide* judgment, one, that is, which claims to be true. Unless some sort of claim or venture is actually made and made in good faith, there is no possibility either of success or of defeat.

When I say that belief in its truth, and the claim to be true is an essential aspect of judgment, I do not mean merely to say,

with Mr. Russell, for instance, that a certain kind of feeling is present whenever a judgment is made and its truth is believed. Belief is dependent on something more than mere feeling. It is dependent on the presence of evidence of some kind and degree. A judgment is both the articulation and also the interpretation of some present or presented evidence. In complete absence of any evidence no judgment can occur. A verbal proposition of the sort "Nero was the last Roman emperor," or "the moon is made of green cheese" is no real judgment precisely because, for us, there is no evidence to support these statements.

Hence we are entitled from now on to consider only such instances of discourse as are (1) based upon some evidence, (2) carry consequently some degree of conviction and belief, and (3) make a claim to be true. But we meet here at once with difficulties. In so far as every judgment rests upon evidence, and in so far as a judgment is faithful to that evidence, are not *all* judgments *in so far* true? Have we not assimilated judgment to perception? We needed something different from perception just because we accepted, in principle, the thesis that all perception is veridical, that independent existence is directly disclosed in perception.

Let us see what we have. Men once believed that the earth was a flat, stationary disc surrounded by water. We now believe it to be spherical, to rotate, and to move in an elliptical orbit around the sun. Both of these assertions are genuine judgments, the one, say, made by Thales, the other by ourselves. Thales' assertion was a judgment and not merely a verbal proposition not only because he believed it and claimed truth for it, but because his belief rested upon such evidence as was then accessible to him. Our conflicting belief summarizes the evidence accessible to us. The principle of contradiction bids us say that if our judgment is true, that of Thales was wrong. The same earth cannot be both a flat stationary disc, and a moving, rotating sphere. All the ingredients of a correspondence theory of truth are here at hand. Nevertheless, I think we both can and must deal with such conflicting judgments as these, in the same

way in which we have to deal with sensory and perceptual discrepancies. We could not do this if the earth which Thales asserted to be flat is the one identical and simple earth which we assert to be round. The earth of Thales was the earth compatible with the evidence accessible to him, and that *was* a flat earth. Our round earth is the earth which is compatible and continuous with the totality of evidence accessible to us. In *this* sense the earth described by Thales is not the earth described by us. I say, "in this sense." For observe, there is another sense in which they *are* the same. That is, both Thales and we believe *that* something designated as the earth does really exist. We differ as to the qualities and characters which we ascribe to the earth. And every one of the characters which Thales ascribed to the earth, in so far as it was supported by evidence, must be provided for and included within our description and interpretation of *what* the earth is. Thales' earth was just as really flat within the perspective of his evidence, as is ours round within the context of our available evidence.

I am not yet done with this sort of situation, and shall have to come back to it presently. But even if such judgments as this can be dealt with in some such way, there is, it appears, a type of judgment where difficulties of a more obdurate kind are met with. The disagreement between Thales' judgment that the earth is flat and our judgment that the earth is round is due to an incompatibility of characters which, in judgment, we ascribe to an object assumed, in both cases, to exist. I am urging that such divergence as to the *nature* of an existing thing, when asserted in a judgment, does not differ in principle from the presence in perception of mutually divergent qualities. In neither case do we need any dimension of being other than the one real and existing world, holding perspectives, with a relational structure, in order to account for the divergence. Not yet are we sent to a self-contained realm of discourse, existentially divorced from the real. But suppose the divergence between two judgments concerns not the *what*, but the *that*, not the nature of the predicate but the existence of the subject of the judgment.

Suppose I accuse some one of having stolen my automobile. Now, even if it be granted that the earth may truly be said to be both flat and spherical, dependent upon the available evidence, the context, and *what* earth one is talking about, surely here no such device will be of any help. Either the accused person did or he did not steal my automobile. If he did really steal it, it is sheer nonsense to say that there is any conceivable context or perspective in which he could truly be said not to have stolen it. Here the law of contradiction applies and applies inexorably. There can, it would seem, be nothing relational about such an assertion. It is either true or false, simply, intrinsically and absolutely.

So that, even if we grant that judgments as to the characters which belong to existence, in so far as they all are based upon some evidence, are all in so far true, we are debarred from saying that contradictory judgments as to existence itself can both be true. Even if a coherence theory works in the first type of judgment, it breaks down in the second. In judgments of the first sort (the earth is round) but a single quality is ascribed to an existing subject. The contexts and relations in which things stand are sufficiently complex and multiform to permit a variety of such simple predicates to be owned by an existing entity. But, a definite and more complex relation of characters is affirmed in judgments of the second sort, and then is ascribed to a specific instance of space-time. The area of existence—a single event—is more restricted while the characters ascribed to that event are more complex, so that there is no room in that limited area of existence for a different and contrary set of characters. The realm of characters overflows any possible concretion in existence. A definite instance of existence, such as an event, has either to accept or reject the characters affirmed by the judgment.

Mr. Pepper spoke of a revolution taking place in recent and contemporary philosophy. Every important philosophical epoch likes to think of its own work as achieving something momentous and revolutionary. Our own epoch may be significant. If

it is, and if Mr. Pepper is right, the contemporary overturning consists in a persistent refusal to accept as ontologically ultimate the distinction between characters and their occurrence, and the correlative distinction between judgment or discourse and perception. I do not believe that the distinction can be obliterated, and replaced (as Mr. Pepper appears to wish) by the continuity and conjunctions of events, of movements, of experience. But I should like briefly to indicate how it seems to me that the absolute separation of these two realms can be at least mitigated. I agree that there is a genuine difference between the situations represented by these two types of judgment. But let us analyze the difference more closely. It lies, I think, in the different regions of possible doubt and of certainty in the two cases. In the first instance, the two discrepant judgments about the earth agree that something, designated as the earth, exists. They differ as to its characters. That the earth exists is taken for granted by each judgment. There is room for doubt and fluctuation as to what the earth is, or is described as being, due to differences in the presented evidence. In the second case, on the other hand, the characters which the judgment affirms are determinate and fixed. We want here to know whether there existed or occurred an event, the stealing of my automobile, which is (for our purpose) adequately and completely characterized by the terms of the judgment. When I judge "this person stole my automobile," the judgment is true only if an event really occurred such as is described by the terms of the judgment. When I judge "the earth is round," the judgment is true if an object, taken as existing, has, in a specific context, certain characters. In the first case the *that* is certain, the *what* is problematic; in the second case the *what* is definite and absolute, the *that* is more dubious. The copula has a different sense and function in the two cases. In the former (the earth is round) it is the copula of description. In the latter, (my automobile was stolen) it is the copula of position, of occurrence, of the presence in existence of a specified event.

I have spoken as if these were two kinds of judgment—depending upon whether the existence (or occurrence) of the subject, or the character of the predicate occupied the focus of attention, presented the question which the judgment resolves. I think there is some such distinction as this within types of judgment. But for our present purposes, I point out that the distinction between perception and judgment is suggested here, rather than a distinction within the class of judgments alone. For, as we descend the series of cognitive levels from a highly complex theory, through simpler judgments and hypotheses, down to perception and sensory awareness, we have a shifting and gradual alteration in the relative preponderance, the relative certainty and doubt of the two aspects which, since Bradley, we have come to designate as the *that* and the *what*. At the lower levels of sensory awareness, *that* something is there, is, I feel confident, much more certain than *what* that something is. And at the higher cognitive levels, where we are, seemingly, at greatest remove from sensory awareness, in pure mathematics and logic, we know precisely *what* we are dealing with, but whether or no it is exemplified in existence, is either relatively indifferent to us, or quite problematic so far as that level of judgment is concerned. For perception the *that* is certain, the *what* is dubious; for judgment the *what* is unambiguous, the *that* is precarious. The nearer a judgment is to perception, the more uncertain or hidden is the *what*; the further from perception a judgment, the more unambiguous is the *what* and the more uncertain the *that*.

If we push to its last limit this refusal to ascribe any *what*, any character at all to the object of perception (or of immediate experience) we go the way of the mystic. We affirm that no character which judgment ascribes to the *that*, is really owned by it. Or, we shall perhaps affirm that the characters which description, concepts, and judgments specify and articulate are relevant only to our needs and practical purposes. Both mysticism and instrumentalism distort the true statement that the *what* furnished by perception is problematic into the false state-

ment that perception (or immediate experience) yields only *that*, with the result that judgment and theory, science and philosophy, are barred from disclosing the nature of things. The articulation and relation between characters is the dominant aspect of judgment, but this concern with essences, "concretions in discourse," by no means necessarily precludes existence from being disclosed to, and directly apprehended by judgment. The psychological continuity between perception and judgment can hardly be questioned. Both are members of a single series of cognitive energies and functions. Sensory awareness, perceptions, memory and imagery, ideas, hypotheses, scientific theories of all degree of elaboration and complexity, comprise a single continuum, so far as the life of the mind is concerned. Discrimination and analysis, comparison and ideal construction, recognition and interpretation, are present throughout in varying combinations and proportions. Is this psychological and cognitive continuum broken and disrupted on the side of existence, of *what* is known as belonging to nature and reality, so that while independent existence is directly present in perception, it is only indirectly and vicariously present (if at all) in imagination and memory, in judgment and theory, in the constructions of science and in discourse?

Take the apparently simpler case of imagery. When I have a visual image of an absent physical object, the campanile, what is really and directly before my mind's eye? A mental duplicate, impoverished and vague, comprised of a radically different kind of stuff from the real physical campanile made of steel and granite? Are there in this case two existentially separate campaniles, one physical and the other mental? If *this* is affirmed, then I think we are inexorably driven to say that when I stand at the foot of the campanile and *perceive* it there are likewise two existentially different campaniles, one mental and perceived, the other physical and not perceived, and all the old insuperable difficulties of a representative theory of perception are on our hands. All of the available psychological and physiological evidence points in the direction of a genuine continuity between

perception and imagination. Mr. Kemp Smith is wholly right in saying that "no established psychological results stand in the way of our assuming that images are identical in character with sense-perceptions."<sup>1</sup> Either then, the perceived campanile is wholly mental, or the imaged campanile is physical. The theory of representative perception is so demonstrably hopeless that we have to embark upon the second alternative, and go with it wherever it leads us. I suspect that its ultimate goal is not really a relational or cross-section or behaviorist theory of mind, but that is another story which must not be told now. But I am ready to say that what is called an image of the campanile is the one physical campanile *as imaged*. And I shall go farther still. Just as perception and imagery belong to one continuum, so do imagery and memory. Memory is as direct as is perception. That is, just as an image of an absent object is the object as imaged, so a memory of a past real event is that event itself *as remembered*. Memory is not, any more than perception and imagery, a trafficking with mental entities, existentially divorced from the real, occurring solely in a matrix which is isolated from that which has existence. But the next—and last—step which I have to take will appear most hazardous and paradoxical. But I am driven irresistibly, it may seem, down a steep incline where disaster inevitably awaits me. What I have said of perception, of imagery, of memory, I now affirm of discourse and description. I perceive the campanile, I image it, I remember it, I describe it. My description may assume the form of history, of esthetic theory and appraisal, or of the physical stresses and strains which the structure, as an engineering product, must and does sustain. But no matter in what interest my description is conceived, a description of the campanile is again the real existing campanile *as described*. Once more, here in the higher reaches of the cognitive series, far removed from momentary, sensuous perception, here in the domain of exact technical and engineering theory, or of esthetic judgment, or historical narrative, you have not two existentially and radically separated

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<sup>1</sup> *Prolegomena to an Idealist Theory of Knowledge*, 195.



realms; the campanile which is known in theory is even more the *real* campanile, than is the one perceived. The campanile as described is no more made of words and terms in discourse, than is the campanile which is imaged made of mental images, or the campanile which is perceived made of mental sensations. I neither image a campanile made of mind stuff, nor do I describe one which is compacted only of words and the letters of the alphabet.

The little word "of" is likely to be treacherous. To say that I have a perception of a knife is only to say that I have the knife as perceived. I never get the knife at all save as either perceived or imaged or remembered, or as used in cutting, or enjoyed as a thing of beauty or described in words, or as known by physicist and chemist. If I have the right to say that I perceive, touch, and see an independently existing object—and unless I can say this there simply is not any *problem* of perception or knowledge at all—then I have the equal right to say that I image, remember, and describe an equally real and existing object. For, observe. Each of these various ways in which we get a knife, a penny, or anything whatever yields a unique perspective. Just as, at the level of sense perception, there are innumerable *horizontal* perspectives in which a penny may exist and be perceived as existing, so the series of cognitive levels provides a series of *vertical* perspectives. There can be no essential difference in principle between the two different horizontal, perceptual perspectives in which the penny is now a circle and again an ellipse, and the two vertical perspectives in which the penny is now perceived and again described in terms of the formulae of the analytical chemist. As we ascend this vertical cognitive series from perception to scientific theory—or beyond—we enter into perspectives which are, intellectually, more satisfying because larger ranges of the things reality and nature are contained in them. Thought and discourse, science and theory, instead of removing us from the real which is so fragmentarily and inadequately disclosed in immediate experience, penetrate more closely to things themselves.

But what is *the real penny, the real knife, the real anything?* The adjective "real" is a small, simple term of discourse. Nothing is more insidiously easy and natural than to suppose that the things which are designated by simple and single terms are themselves simple and single. We tend all unconsciously to assume that because "life," and "mind," and "soul," "home," and "thing" are compact, discrete, one-syllable terms, that the entities for which these *are* terms in discourse must have the same simple and absolute characteristics. We fall foul here of the very notion of correspondence. Such terms as these are neither abstractions, nor essences, neither *flatus vocis* nor muscle twitches. They are, quite literally, the presence in discourse of complex relational structures. They are the focal points of perspectives which spread out and include vastly wider stretches of existence than those which figure in the perspectives of sensory awareness and perception. Yet, in spite of this difference, almost quantitative, the relation between such a term and the relational structure which is telescoped or which comes to a focus in that term, is not in principle different from the relation between a relatively simpler physical thing—a penny—and our perceptions of the penny. I suspect that one not inconsiderable motive which has led philosophers to the belief in discrete essences dwelling apart and floating, detached from that which has existence, is the notion that that for which a term stands must have the simplicity, the discreteness, the self-containedness, which characterizes the word as a term in discourse.

The question recurs, what is the real penny? Which perception of the penny delivers the real penny, and which description of the penny is *the* true description? When I try to be on my guard against the sort of fallacy which I have just indicated, and when I take such questions in all seriousness, I have to answer that I do not and never expect to know what the real penny is just because I can never hope to exhaust the infinite number of perspectives in which things exist, are experienced, are described, and are thought of. And I do not think that you can urge, in reply, that at least I know some things absolutely

and finally about the penny, i.e., I know it to be wholly false that a penny is an elephant. Unless there is some evidence for this proposition, it simply is not a judgment at all. If there is evidence for it, that evidence will have to be conserved and adequately included in the final judgment, ideal and unattainable, as to the real nature of the penny.

But we are here on the threshold of a new and fresh inquiry. My chief concern hitherto has been to urge that there are no insuperable obstacles to the belief that independently existing things and structures directly appear not only in perception, but at every level of cognition in the ascending series from momentary sensory awareness, through images, memory, ideas, to the sustained processes of scientific and philosophical thought.

It is this which marks my disagreement with the view propounded by Mr. Dennes (if I rightly understand him) that perception alone supplies a breach in the domain of judgment, a loophole through which the real characters of things break through and are directly perceived for what they are, so that the truth of judgment consists in its fidelity to perception. *What* breaks through in perception is problematic, in need of incessant completion and revision. And not alone in such sporadic and vulnerable spots are the defenses of the domain of discourse broken through. The wall wears thin and threatens to crumble along the entire front from sensory awareness to thought and judgment.

Yet, the impressive characteristic of perception is the constraint which comes from independently existing things. Such constraint *appears* to diminish as we go from perception to judgment, thought, and discourse. It seems to be replaced by an irresponsible freedom. Imagination and discourse seem to range at will, not tied down to anything which is given in sensory awareness. Of what sort is this freedom? Does it mean that the moment the constraint from the side of the given in sensation is relaxed, the instant that ideal construction comes upon the scene, there is no constraint of *any* sort at all? Such a supposition seems to me little short of monstrous. It would

render inexplicable every instance of inference, it would make invalid every departure from and ideal elaboration of a vanishing immediate which could never be uttered; it would banish from science and thought every vestige of the effort to interpret the fragmentary clews which not only physical nature but all experience yield us. For nature yields nothing but faint and scattered clews. Everything given is problematic, not because nature as experienced and discoursed about is a shroud which conceals an unknowable—a substance I know not what—but because of the manifold wealth of pattern and structure, of content and perspective which her fragmentary hints disclose to the discerning and disciplined mind.

In inference, interpretation, hypothesis, and theory, the mind is under the constraint of ideal elements and standards, no less than it is subject to the constraint of "facts" in perception. But no hard and fast line can be drawn at the point where constraint by facts ceases and constraint by ideal standards begins. Both types of constraint are operative throughout. There is inference and interpretation in perception, and there is something given in all hypothetical constructions of theory. What these constraining and ideal standards are cannot be ascertained by any easy and simple device. They are disclosed only in the actual structures of science and knowledge on the theoretical side, and likewise only in the fabric of concrete historical achievement, on the practical side.

In modern theories of truth which recognize any such constraining ideal standard, the ideal of coherence has received most attention and stress. And I am willing to say that the drift of my discussion is all in the direction of a coherence theory of truth. But I am under no illusion of having here adequately constructed such a theory or meeting the serious difficulties with which such a theory has to contend. They appear to me fewer and less serious than those which stand in the way of any sort of correspondence theory. But I hope I have removed what has often appeared as the one great obstacle to a coherence theory. Our thoughts, judgment, and discourse, may be as

coherent as you please; what right does this give one to assert that the reality which is known by thought is correspondingly coherent? But this obstacle stands only upon the premises of a correspondence theory, of the belief that discourse and reality are two existentially different worlds, that discourse is an autonomous realm, fabricated within a matrix which is cut off from things. Once we recognize the possibility that discourse is indeed things discoursed about just as images are things imaged and perceptions are things perceived, *this* obstacle is overcome. Truth is, in all literalness, reality itself in the form and perspective of judgment. The immanent object, the content, of a true judgment is the transcendent object itself in the one context in which it is most completely accessible to us. The discrepancy and conflict which is the source of error does not lie in the disagreement between the content of a judgment and a transcendent object, a disagreement which could never be known or judged. It has its source in the ever fruitful discrepancy between ideal standards, perennially operative within experience, and the fragmentary data vouchsafed us by a world of which we know, indeed, so very little. But the proper expansion of any such statement as this must be deferred to another occasion.