

Chapter 6, Truth

The objective component of knowledge: true regardless of conflicting opinions

1. Necessary and contingent truths:

a) Logical distinctions:

– depend upon the meaning of the words that make them up

(i) **Necessary truths** – hold for all cases at all times
– impossible to deny without self-contradiction

(ii) **Contingent truths** – if true, could have been false
– can be denied or asserted without self-contradiction

b) Epistemological distinctions:

– denote the way we come to know the truth – through intuition or experience

(i) **A priori**

(ii) **A posteriori**

c) Semantic distinctions:

– denote the two ways in which the truth of a proposition is determined
– by reference to the world or to the meaning of the constituent words

(i) **Analytic** – truth determined either by the logical structure or by virtue of the meaning of the words

(ii) **Synthetic** – one of two mutually exclusive states = true
– to deny or affirm ≠ self-contradictory

2. Kant and synthetic a priori truths:

– explains something about the world, but is known to be true independently of it

a) Ultimate reality:

Plato – unchanging world of reality
– ‘Forms’ or ‘Universals’
– ultimate and necessary truths

b) The Enlightenment:

– certainty in reason and experience
– propositions = either contingent and uncertain,
or necessary and analytic

(i) Empiricists – Hume:

I. Perceptions = impressions or ideas

II. Objects of human reason =

1. relations of ideas

2. matters of fact

III. Ultimate reality/substance = unintelligible:

– all we have = shifting sands of appearances

– rapid sequence of impressions

(ii) Kant – knowledge begins with experience, but doesn't arise from it

I. We understand the world thro conceptions ≠ perceptions – not thro impressions but thro our intellect

II. What is known is affected by the act of knowing

III. The *a priori* element is derived not from the world but from us

Chapter 6, Truth continued

- IV. The Noumenal world (world-in-itself) v. the Phenomenal world
- V. Forms of Understanding – principles and concepts:
 - 1. Quantity
 - 2. Quality
 - 3. Categories
- VI. Forms of Intuition – a priori characteristics:
 - 1. Temporal features
 - 2. Geometric features
- VII. Beyond this = illusion and contradiction:
 - antinomies and paradoxes that can be proven and disproven

3. Theories of Truth:

- a) **Correspondence:**
 - agreement between what we believe and an independent reality
 - But what sort of correspondence?
 - (i) **Words and sentences** = a different type of thing from the evidence of our senses
 - (ii) **Ruled by meanings and conventions** – assumptions and judgements built into language
- b) **Coherence:**
 - collapses truth into belief – a statement = true if it is coherent with others
 - (i) While it points to the truth, it **doesn't establish it**
 - (ii) **= a necessary, but not a sufficient condition**
 - for this it must exclude the possibility of the proposition being false
- c) **Pragmatic theory:**
 - true if it is useful – if it allows us to accomplish what we want to accomplish
 - (i) But some theories = false even tho they're useful
 - (ii) In 20th Cent. false ideas accepted because they're ideologically valuable
- d) **Semantic theory:**
 - (i) **Problem with correspondence = self-referential:**
 - what we present as the 'truth' already contains assumptions of its adequacy as the truth
 - therefore, the risk = tautology and paradox
 - (ii) **Tarski's 'Semantic Theory of Truth':**
 - I. Metalanguage – talks about 2 separate things: statements and facts
 - therefore ≠ self-referential = semantic
 - II. v. Syntactical language = an object language
 - it only speaks about the statement
 - III. Metalanguage – identifies statement and facts;
Syntactical language – uses them