

IS TRUTH EFFABLE?

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Preliminary version of "Is Truth effable?"
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1. Professor Hintikka's work has so much breadth and scope that it is tempting to think of him as a contemporary Leibniz, if he had not warned us against the nostalgia for systematic philosophy:

“One upon a time a serious philosopher was expected to produce a system of his own. Twentieth century philosophers are likely to find this expectation not only old-fashioned but more than a little ridiculous. Professional standards of clarity and argumentation are in our time and age such that it is hard enough to produce first class work in one limited area of philosophy. Hence the idea of marshalling deep philosophical thought on command about each and every philosophical topic seems to be about as relevant to us as the principles of Napoleonic warfare are to global strategy (Hintikka 1987: 9)

Nevertheless, Hintikka's work is very systematic, both in his constant defense and illustration of the model-theoretic tradition in logic, in its application to so many fields as modal logic, epistemic logic, logical semantics, and in his analysis of the “ultimate presuppositions” (a term he borrows from Collingwood) which lie behind the traditions of thought that he examines. One such great presupposition, which he has brought into light better than anyone else, is the universalist assumption in logic and the thesis of the ineffability of semantics. Hintikka argues that his own game-theoretical approach in logic and in semantics allow us to claim that semantics is not ineffable, and to reject the universality assumption. In an illuminating series of essays

¹, he has analysed how the thesis of the ineffability of semantics affects our understanding of the concept of truth, which becomes itself ineffable. Now the question we may ask is this: what conception of truth emerges from Hintikka's rejection of the ineffability thesis? I want to try to characterise the *philosophical* concept of truth which underlies Hintikka's analyses, and in particular to confront it with the "deflationary" and "minimalist" conceptions of truth which have recently occupied the front scene. I shall try to show that, in spite of his criticism of Wittgenstein's conceptions of truth and semantics, Hintikka is still very close to Wittgenstein's conception of meaning as use, and that Hintikka's view can still be characterised as a form of minimalism about truth and meaning.

2. Let us try first to characterise the ineffability thesis about truth and semantics, starting, as Hintikka most often does, from Wittgenstein's views. In a famous passage of the *Philosophical Remarks*, Wittgenstein says :

In a certain sense, the use of language is something that cannot be taught, *i.e.* I cannot use language to teach it in the way in which language could be used to teach someone to play the piano. And that of course is just another way of saying that I cannot use language to get outside language" (Wittgenstein, 1975, p.54)

There are at least two lines of thought, closely associated to each other, in such passages. The first is the thesis of the *ineffability of semantics* proper, that semantic relations cannot be established from without, but only from within a language, and actually from within our language, the language that we speak. The ineffability of semantics goes hand in hand with the thesis of the universality of language, that language is the universal medium of communication and thought. Actually, as Hintikka notes, the former assumption is stronger, and entails the second:

¹ Especially those in *Lingua Universalis vs Calculus ratiocinator: an ultimate presupposition of Twentieth Century Philosophy, Selected papers, vol 2.*, Dordrecht, Kluwer 1997, but in many other places as well. Hintikka has shown that the idea of language as a universal medium plays a structuring role in much of contemporary philosophy, and in this sense it is comparable to the role played, in the context of philosophical thought about modality, to the principle of plenitude. I tried once to examine the status of this principle in Engel 1988.

“If semantics is ineffable, it makes no sense to try to speak in our language of a situation in which the expressions of one’s language would have meanings different from what they in fact have. In other words, if semantics is ineffable, it makes no sense to try to say or to assume, by using my actual home language, that there are languages other than it or that I am changing the semantics of my language. “A language that I do not understand is no language”, as Wittgenstein puts it. Hence the ineffability of semantics entails the universality of language.” (Hintikka 1989, p.23)

The second line of thought present in Wittgenstein’s passage is that “the use of language cannot be taught”, and that for this reason one cannot use language to teach the meanings of the expressions of language. Wittgenstein is not here saying that language cannot be taught, for this would be obviously false, but only that “in a certain sense” it cannot be taught. Why? What he seems to say is that any rule for the use of a word must be expressed in language, and that we cannot use language itself to explain the rules: in some sense the way the signs are used is primary. This means that signs can only convey meaning if at some point there is a natural uptake on how they are used, which cannot be taught. Although it is in a sense just another way of formulating the ineffability thesis, what Wittgenstein says can be formulated thus: there is no way to explain what it is to know the meaning of a word, and to understand a language, which would be independent from our knowing already how words are used. Hence there is no language independent account of what it is to know meaning. In particular (and this is a familiar theme emerging from Wittgenstein’s “rule-following” considerations), there is no account of meaning which could invoke our grasping concepts or propositions, conceived either as psychological entities (“ideas”, “representations”) or as abstract Platonic entities independent from language. In other words, there is no priority of a structure of thought - or of a structure of ontological entities independent from language - over language. Hintikka has commented widely upon this idea in Wittgenstein’s writings². Following John Skorupski (1997) who himself adapts a phrase from Dummett, let us call this the *thesis of the priority of language* (or *the priority thesis*, for short): it says that any account of thought and concepts is intrinsically dependent upon an account of language rules and

² see in particular Hintikka & Hintikka 1986, ch.1

language-understanding. Although, as I have just said, the priority thesis seems to entail the ineffability thesis (there is no way of formulating the semantics of our language outside our language), they are not equivalent and the latter does not necessarily entail the former. It is open to a theorist to defend the view that semantics in ineffable although thoughts and concepts are independent from language. For Frege, for instance, thoughts are language-independent entities, although he subscribes to the ineffability thesis and to the universality assumption.³

3. Now, what are the consequences of the thesis of the ineffability of semantics and of the thesis of the priority of language for the nature of the concept of truth? As Hintikka shows, the first thesis implies the ineffability of truth, as the main semantic relation. This line of thought is clearly present in Wittgenstein, when he argues, against a correspondence theory of truth, that such a theory is impossible, because “it is impossible to describe the fact which corresponds to a sentence without repeating the sentence”.⁴ Because the relationship between sentences and facts, propositions and reality, cannot be spelled out, truth admits of no other “definition” than this one:

“For what does a proposition’s “being true” means? “p” is true = p (That is the answer)”⁵

As Hintikka points out commenting this passage, the basis of this Wittgensteinian view is “the impossibility of expressing in language the conditions of agreement between a meaningful proposition – a thought – and reality”⁶ And in this sense it does not amount to a *definition*, or to a *theory* of truth. It is simply the denial that any sort of such definition or theory could be given.

In so far as one could ascribe a “theory” (and not simply an elucidation) of truth to Wittgenstein in such passages, it would fall within the category so so-called

³ On this point, see e.g. Hintikka 1981

⁴ *Vermischte Bemerkungen*, tr.engl; *Culture and Value* Blackwell, Oxford, 1980 p. 10, quoted and translated by Hintikka 1989 p.24

⁵ *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1978, 3rd ed. Appendix I, sec 5. quoted by Hintikka, *op cit.* p.23.

⁶ “Is truth ineffable?” *op cit.*, p.23 (the quote is from MS 108,p.265).

“minimalist” or “deflationist” theories of truth. Actually, Wittgenstein is often considered as a representative of the “redundancy” theory of truth, alongside Ramsey and Ayer.

The redundancy conception of truth should not be confused with the *disquotational* conception. According to the former, truth is a (non genuine) property of *propositions*, the meaning of which we already know, whereas according to the latter, truth is a (non genuine) property of *sentences*. The role of “true” is to express T-sentences of the form “ ‘*p*’ is true iff *p*” or infinite disjunctions and conjunctions of sentences of the form: x is true iff ($x = \text{‘}s_1\text{’} \ \& \ s_1$) or ($x = \text{‘}s_2\text{’} \ \& \ s_2$) or....⁷ What these views have in common, as Paul Horwich (1990) as pointed out, is the claim that truth is not a genuine property, but only a quasi property : truth has no essence, substance, or explanatory role, and so cannot be explained in terms of such properties or relations as correspondence, coherence, utility, etc.

Against such minimalist views of truth, Hintikka argues that they belie the ineffability assumption about semantics. Tarski’s hierarchy of metalanguages is itself but a version of the view that truth cannot be defined and that the ultimate semantical relations cannot be spelled out. This is because both disquotational and other “minimalist” conceptions of truth suffer from the same difficulty as Tarski’s definitions: they cannot be formulated in the language to which they are supposed to apply.⁸ They operate at a purely syntactical level. Indeed, for the minimalist the truth predicate only obeys the discipline of syntax : it allows us to quote and to disquote sentences, and to embed them within propositional attitude and other contexts.⁹ Against this, Hintikka argues that truth can be defined, both for a formal and for a natural language, by dropping Tarski’s hierarchy, through an Independence-Friendly (IF) logic and a game-theoretical semantics, by developing a theory of truth “in some

⁷ For various versions of the disquotational conception, see David 1994.

⁸ “Defining truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth”, Selected papers, 2,”, op.cit. p.76

⁹ This very feature has been called “syntacticalism” by some minimalist theorist. See in particular Crispin Wright 1992

suitable metalanguage which does not have to be thought as being sharply separated from the object language itself¹⁰. By contrast,

“...Disquotational treatments of truth are ...subject to the standard criticism which has been levelled at Tarski’s treatment of truth. They do not tell anything about the way sentences are in fact shown to be true or false. Indeed, when nothing is said of the language games through which truth and falsity are constituted, it is natural to resort to disquotational ideas.” (Hintikka 1991, p.76)

Not only disquotational account of truth do little to illuminate truth, but also they do little to illuminate meaning. Where famously a number of philosophers, following Davidson, have hoped to built an empirical theory of meaning on the basis of theories of truth satisfying (to a certain extent) Tarski’s Convention T, Hintikka has objected that such accounts fail for a number of simple quantificational sentences (such as “Any corporal can become a general”) and that the principle of semantic compositionality upon which they rest fails as well.¹¹

4. My concern here is not to examine the specific nature of Hintikka’s proposals in logic and in model-theoretic semantics. The question that I intend to raise is this: what kind of analysis of the *ordinary* concept of truth emerges out of Hintikka’s analyses, and what kind of philosophical conception of truth does it support? Given his criticism of minimalist theories of truth, one should expect that Hintikka should propose some kind of substantive theory of truth, where by “substantive” I mean any conception of truth which would reject the minimalist view and the ineffability thesis, and which would claim that truth is a genuine property of some sort which could be defined and spelled out fully. But which one? One suggestion which come naturally to mind could be that Hintikka defends a variety of verificationist theory of truth. As he says in the passage above when he contrasts the game-theoretical approach with the disquotational approach to truth, the former does, in a way in which the latter does not, tell us how sentences are *shown* to be true or false. In a nutshell, the game theoretical analysis of the truth conditions of sentence says that a sentence S is true in

¹⁰ Hintikka, “Defining Truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth”, 1997, *op cit*, p. 87.

¹¹ see in particular Hintikka 19XX

a given model M if and only if there exists a winning strategy for the initial verifier in the game $G(S)$ when played on M . Now this definition, because of the role played in it by the notion of verification, has often been compared with an anti-realist conception of meaning in terms of assertability conditions, such as Dummett's. But although he admits that his views are very much "in the spirit of the constructivist way of thinking", Hintikka has stressed that his own conception of truth is not constructivistic or anti-realist.¹² Dummett's famous analogy between the notion of truth and the notion of winning a game is not the good one if truth is supposed to be *identified* in some way with the strategy of verification. This is not so: "The interesting analogy is between the notion of truth and the *existence* [my italics] of a winning strategy."¹³ In other terms, the winning strategy is already there, it is not constructed or created in any sense by the steps in which it consists. So it is not part of the game-theoretical conception that truth conditions should be understood in some sense as investigation-dependent or as *known*. In spite of the analogy between the notion of game and the notion of verification, truth, Hintikka insists, is not known truth; so his concept of truth is not to be identified with the constructivist's or to the intuitionist's one. Actually Hintikka's substantive conception of truth seems to be closer to the *realist* conception of truth, which presupposes that there are verification transcendent truth conditions for sentences. This point emerges in particular in Hintikka's analysis of such first order sentences with dependent quantifiers as

$$(1) (\forall x) (\exists y) F [x, y]$$

These are true not only when it is possible to find a "witness" individual y depending on x such that $F [x, y]$. But one can *find* such an individual only if *there is* a certain function f such that

$$(2) (\forall x) F [x, f(x)]$$

¹² see , *The Principles of Mathematics Revisited*, p. 210; "Defining truth...", op cit, p.65

¹³ Hintikka 1996, p. 27.

where f is a Skolem function, namely a choice function of individuals.¹⁴ So the truth condition of (1) is the existence of such a Skolem function. In other terms, appropriate witness individuals exist for a quantificational sentence S only if there is an “array” of Skolem functions. The quantifier “there exists” should be understood here objectually. As Hintikka suggests in a recent essay, one could even use the notion of a truth-maker, which has been invoked in the context of recent realistic conceptions of truth¹⁵. When it comes to the establishment of the truth-conditions of our sentences, Hintikka’s account is genuinely semantical, in the sense in which David Lewis said famously that “semantics without truth conditions is no semantics”. But when it comes to seeking truth, Hintikka’s account is constructivistic: it involves the activities of finding truths. But the first cannot be reduced to the second, and it is only when one confuses semantical games with interrogative games that one is led to the idea that truth is in some way dependent upon our human activities.¹⁶

Now, is Hintikka a straightforward realist about truth in the sense of a correspondence theory? There are several reasons to doubt this. In the first place, Hintikka has little sympathy, to say the least, for an ontology of facts and states of affairs, and even less for an ontology of real possible worlds à la Lewis, which are the entities usually invoked by genuine correspondence theories of truth. In the second place, he has often reiterated Wittgenstein’s criticism against such theories. Commenting upon the difference between his game-theoretical approach and pragmatist conceptions of truth he says :

“The possibility of a game-theoretical concept of truth which accords with our natural concept of truth, together with the distinction between semantical (truth-conditioning) and interrogative (truth-seeking) games also has profound philosophical repercussions. For one thing, it shows what is true and what is false in pragmatist conceptions of truth. What is true is that to speak of truth is not to speak of an independently existing correspondence relations between language and the world. There are no such relations. Or, as Wittgenstein puts it, the correspondence between

¹⁴ see Hintikka 2001.

¹⁵ Hintikka 2002, manuscript. I thank professor Hintikka for having allowed me to read this manuscript. As Hintikka notes, however, this cannot really be considered as equivalent to, say, David Armstrong’s notion of truth-making (see e.g. Armstrong , 1997), for according to Armstrong sentences are made true by a host of different kinds of “truthmakers”: objects, properties, relations, states of affairs and facts .

¹⁶ see e.g. *The Principles of Mathematics Revisited*, p. 42-44

language and the world can be established only by the use of our language – that is by semantical games. Truth is literally constituted by certain human rule-governed activities. What is false in pragmatist ideas about truth is the claim that the relevant activities are the activities by which we typically find out what is true – that is to say verify, falsify, confirm, disconfirm and so forth, our propositions. This claim is based on overlooking the all-important distinction between truth establishing games (that is semantical games) and truth seeking games (that is interrogative, or perhaps other epistemic games)...Our actual truth seeking practices, whether or not they are relative to historical era, epistemic or scientific community, social class or gender, are not constitutive of our concept of truth – that is of *the* concept of truth.”¹⁷

Here Hintikka ‘s reasons for rejecting the correspondence theory seem very close to the reasons which led Wittgenstein to say that it is “impossible to describe the fact which corresponds...to a sentence, without simply repeating the sentence.”¹⁸

But not only does Hintikka reject the correspondence conception in such a passage, but he also seems to commit himself to what I have called the priority thesis. The priority thesis, remember, is not a thesis about truth, but a thesis about meaning. It says that there is no account of meaning independently from an antecedent grasp of the meanings that we give to the sentences and expression of *our* language. This is partly what is involved in Wittgenstein’s emphasis that meaning is, in a certain sense, nothing but *use*. The only way in which we can spell out the meaning of our sentences is by displaying how they are used in certain rule governed practices. Now, given that among meaning-relations the relation between a sentence and its truth-conditions is central, what would be the consequence of this for the truth-relation (or the truth-property)? To say that a certain sentence is true is just to be able to use it within a certain language game, the language game of assertion. But to know what truth “is” is just to understand how the rule or rules for assertion function. And this kind of knowledge seem only to be available *from within* our assertoric practices. In this respect, Hintikka game-semantical ideas seem to be very close to Wittgenstein’s version of the ineffability and priority theses. When he comments upon his game-theoretical account of truth conditions for first order sentences – in terms of Skolem functions as above with (1) and (2) – Hintikka seems ready to draw the same

¹⁷ Hintikka 1996, p.44-45

¹⁸Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1980, p. 10 Quoted by Hintikka in “Is truth ineffable?”, *Selecte papers*, 2, p.24.

conclusions about the use-character of the concept of truth as those that he draws about the use-character of the concept of meaning:

“It may nevertheless be questioned whether the concept of truth in general is really illuminated by the game-theoretical conditions. The job that they do is to specify what quantificational sentences *mean* by specifying their *truth conditions*. the notion of truth is here a mere auxiliary one, it seems. In other words, the first-order semantical games seem to be language games for quantifiers, and not for the concept of truth. This is apparently in keeping with the nature of these games as games of seeking and finding. The conceptual connection between quantifiers and the activities of seeking and finding is easy to appreciate, but there does not seem to be any equally natural link between semantical games and the notion of truth in general. this can be thought of a being illustrated also by the impossibility of defining truth for quantificational sentences in those first-order languages which receive their meaning from my semantical games. One can suspect here, as Wittgenstein would have done, that the concept of truth can only receive a use – and ergo a meaning – in the context of certain other language games.” (Hintikka 1996, p.31-32)

The very fact, however, that we cannot spell out the meaning of the concept of truth from without its use and from without our language games does not imply that the concept of truth is ineffable or inexpressible. Actually when he comments upon his truth-definitions for IF languages, which can be given *from within* these languages and not from without in a distinct metalanguage, Hintikka emphasises that this feature dispels the “myth that the notion of truth for a sufficiently strong language is inexpressible in that language itself” and hence the ineffability thesis about truth. But what is interesting is that Hintikka recruits this point in favour of the priority thesis. He raises precisely the Wittgensteinian point about semantical games:

“How can these very same games also serve to give an altogether different kind of concept its meaning, namely the concept of truth – at least the notion of truth as applied to first order languages. How can one and the same language game serve to lend a meaning to two different kinds of concepts, one of which (the concept of truth) seems to be a metalogical one? This two hats problem can also be called Wittgenstein’s problem (cf. here Hintikka 1986, ch.1). For Wittgenstein insisted that you cannot speak meaningfully and nontrivially of the truth of the sentences of a language in that language itself. Or since for Wittgenstein there is ultimately one language (“the only language that I understand”), we cannot speak of truth nontrivially, period. What looks like a metalogical discourse pertaining to the truth and falsity of a fragment of language is for Wittgenstein a different “calculus”, a

different language based on a different language game. How then can the meaning of first-order languages be constituted by the same language games? Doesn't speaking of truth take us ipso facto to a metatheoretical level?" (Hintikka 1996, p.127-128)

And his answer to these questions is that giving the meaning for various expressions (here quantifiers) is not the same as giving *definitory* rules; it is giving *strategic* rules for the sentences which contain these expressions, and what it is to understand the meanings of these expressions is just what it is to understand the concept of truth for the language which contain them. Thus the step from an understanding of the expressions to an understanding of the truth of the sentences which contain them is not a step "to a metalogical level": "understanding the strategies available to the players of a semantical game...[is] just what is needed to understand the concept of truth" (*ibidem*, p.128). In other terms, the definability of truth – which refutes the ineffability thesis – does not imply that our understanding of the *concept of truth* is not implicit to our mastery of our language, hence it is compatible with the priority thesis.

If this is correct, Hintikka's rejection of the ineffability thesis about truth and meaning is still compatible with a form of minimalism. Contrary to the universalist tradition in logic and semantics, Hintikka takes truth to be definable. Contrary to the deflationist and disquotational conceptions of truth, he does not take the meaning of the truth-predicate to be exhausted by Tarski's T-schema. But he holds in order to understand the concept of truth, we do not have to use resources which would exceed our own grasp of the rules of our language. As I have suggested, although Hintikka rejects the ineffability thesis, he still subscribes to a form of the priority thesis. Now the priority thesis does not, by itself entail any minimalism about truth, but it does entail a minimalism about meaning, in the following sense: in grasping a language rule, I grasp its applications, but I do not grasp any further rules determining what its applications to particular cases consists in. Similarly when I understand a strategic rule for a semantical game, I do not need *further* rules to grasp their applications. Minimalism about meaning does not, by itself justify minimalism about truth. But there is a straightforward incompatibility between a (non minimalist)

conception of meaning in terms of truth-conditions and the minimalist theory of truth, which has been spelled out by Dummett a long time ago:

“In order that someone should gain from the explanation that P is true in such and such circumstances an understanding of the sense of P, he must already know what it means to say that P is true. If he enquires into this he is told that the only explanation is that to say that P is true is the same as to assert P, it will follow that in order to understand what is meant by saying that P is true, he must already know the sense of asserting that P, which was precisely what was supposed to be explained to him.”¹⁹

Dummett actually uses the same point against a truth conditional conception of meaning when he claims that such a conception can only lead to a minimalist (or “modest”) conception of meaning. On a truth-conditional conception of meaning – in particular when it takes the form of the Tarski-like requirement that truth conditions be given by such T-sentences as :

(3) “Theetetus flies” is true (in English) if and only if Theetetus flies

what it is to know what “Theetetus flies” means consists in knowing that (1) (on the basis of its structure) expresses a truth. But of course one can know that this metalinguistic sentence expresses a truth without knowing what the object-language sentence “Theetetus flies” means, or the proposition that it expresses. In order to know the meaning of “Theetetus flies” through (1), I must already know what meaning of this sentence (on the right-hand side). This why Dummett says that the attempt to specify what a speaker understands through (T) sentences like (1) can only yield a *modest* theory of meaning, one which “is not intended to convey the concepts expressible in the object-language, but to convey an understanding of that language to one who already possesses those concepts”. On the contrary, a “rich” or “full-blooded” theory should “in the course of specifying what is required for a speaker to

¹⁹ Dummett, “Truth” (1959) in Dummett 1978, p.7.

grasp the meaning of a given word...explain what it is to possess the concept it expresses".²⁰

Of course Hintikka is not a "modest" theorist of meaning in the sense in which Dummett considers that Davidson is one; neither is he a minimalist theorist of truth. But he is no more a full-blooded theorist in Dummett's sense (nor, as we have seen, would he subscribe to a constructivist conception of truth). Nevertheless, if I am right, he shares Wittgenstein's view that grasping the meaning of an expression is not grasping a language-independent concept that this expression expresses. There is no more to grasp of meaning than grasp of the strategic rules which are immanent to our implicit understanding of our own language. In this respect, in accepting a version of the priority thesis, Hintikka has not completely withdrawn the thesis of the universality of language.

5. I am not sure that he has completely withdrawn a (certain form of) minimalist conception of truth either. In order to see this, let us first contrast a genuine minimalist conception of truth, such as Horwich's deflationism, with a more substantive conception. According to Horwich (1990), the meaning of the truth predicate, and the nature of truth itself, are completely exhausted by (a form of the) the disquotational schema

The proposition that p is true iff p

The problem with this view is that there is more to truth than that. Truth does not simply register the fact that we make certain assertions, the contents of which are either quotable with the predicate "is true" or disquotable when one drops this predicate. Truth registers a distinctive norm, which has a definite content (Wright 1992, Engel 2001, 2002). The norm in question is that our assertions, when true, are not simply subject to disquotation and to the discipline of syntax, but also to certain standards of objective correctness. The fact that a speaker who makes an assertion is

²⁰ Dummett "What is a theory of meaning (I) 1974, in S. Guttenplan, ed. *Mind and Language*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. (1993, *op cit* p. viii and p. 22. Sq.)

supposed to be justified in making it, and liable to answer queries about it, is an important fact which shows that truth has a more substantive content than what the deflationist conception allows. The recognition of this fact does not imply that truth is a substantive concept in the sense of the realist or anti-realist conceptions of truth, such as correspondence, verificationist, or coherence conceptions. But it implies that our use of the truth predicate carries an implication that our statements can be objective, answerable, and that speakers can potentially converge on them. In other terms, the concept of truth is substantial in the sense that in use it, we commit ourselves to a minimal form of realism. But this realism need not be of a metaphysical kind, as in a correspondence theory of truth couched in terms of facts or states of affairs. We only need to recognise that when someone asserts a certain sentence to be true, he carries the implication that its content is *knowable*. The norm of assertion is not so much truth than *knowledge*: in making an assertion I make a claim to knowledge, and I do not simply express my belief that the assertion is true. Given that knowledge implies truth, it is open to us to say that truth is the norm of assertion, through its aiming at knowledge.²¹ I cannot here to develop these ideas (see Williamson 2000, Engel 2002). But if they are correct, there is room for a form of minimalism about truth – which would grant that there is not much more to truth than the disquotational feature – which would nevertheless be substantive in the sense that it registers the norm of knowledge.

At first sight, and on the one hand, it seems to me that Professor Hintikka should agree with the view that I have just sketched. The idea that truth is not just disquotation and that it registers a distinctive norm is but a version of Dummett's famous remark that truth is what our assertions aim at, just like winning is what our playing a game aim at. Hintikka (1996, p.27) agrees with this analogy in so far as it is understood as the analogy between truth and the existence of a winning strategy. And we have seen that this reading is compatible with a form of realism, although not of the metaphysical kind. On the other hand, I suspect that he would disagree, and would say that my reading into the concept of truth a commitment to a knowledge

²¹ These issues have been discussed in Hintikka's classic *Knowledge and Belief* (1962). But as far as I know, he does not defend the view that assertion implies a claim to knowledge.

claim belies a confusion – already alluded to above- between *semantical* games, which give the truth conditions of the relevant sentences of the language, and *interrogative* games, which give the conditions of our reaching knowledge through inquiry.²² The former are prior to the latter, and more fundamental. They characterise truth in general, and not the way we come to know truth. Hintikka denounces the confusion between semantic and interrogative games in the context of a criticism of the verificationist conception of truth, which in some sense equates truth of knowledge of truth. This is not, however, the point that I put forward when I say that truth registers a norm of knowledge. It is not meant to say that truth is in some sense epistemic, since the conception of truth which is here presupposed is realistic. But the distinction that Hintikka makes between semantic games, dealing with truth, and interrogative games, dealing with knowledge, shows that he is closer to a minimalist conception of truth than the conception that I have advanced. Another sign of this would be his recent claim (2002a) that in epistemology we need neither the notion of knowledge nor the notion of belief, but only the notion of information. In so far as Hintikka wants to dissociate the notion of truth from the notion of knowledge, and epistemology from this very notion, it seems to me that he is prepared to adopt a relatively thin concept of truth.

Let us, finally turn to the credentials of what I have called the priority thesis. The priority thesis seems compelling only if the alternatives to an account of language understanding from within our language games are a Platonist conception of concepts or a psychologistic account of them. These were actually the two kinds of view that Wittgenstein meant to attack in the rule following considerations. But these are not the only options. If we could give a better account of what it is to possess a concept than a Platonist or a psychologistic one, the priority thesis will seem less attractive. Such an account would have to be substantive, in the sense that it would not explain our grasp of a meaning or of a concept in terms capacities which would presuppose a priori grasp of these meanings. On a minimalist theory of meaning, we do not in any sense explain the meaning of “Theetetus flies” through a sentence like (1), because we must already know what the right-hand side means. Similarly when a minimalist

²² For this distinction and the confusion in question, see for instance Hintikka 1996, p.36-37

conception of meaning is formulated in terms of language rules. In order for a conception of meaning to be substantive, one has to frame in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions which do not presuppose the meaning of the target sentences, along the lines of something like (for instance, for the rule for assertion) :

(A) S is correctly used to make an assertion in language L if and only if

...

Now a game-theoretical semantics is just what can provide us with what we need on the right hand side. But if what precedes is correct, even though game-theoretical semantics uses such notions as that of a verifier or of a winning strategy, these are notions which a speaker is supposed to already understand, and hence which are redescriptions of what a user of language already knows. A better account seems to be directly in terms of what a speaker knows:

(A) One correctly uses a S to make an assertion if and only if one is justified in believing the proposition expressed by that use, that it is true.

And here again the account yields an analysis only if the relevant notion of “justified belief”, or indeed of *knowledge* spelled out. On such an account, meaning is understood in terms of *epistemic capacities* or in terms of *epistemic* norms. To grasp the meaning of an expression is to grasp a certain concept individuated in terms of its *cognitive* role.²³ Here too I cannot develop this proposal, but I suspect here again that Professor Hintikka would say that it is to confuse semantical games and interrogative games, truth conditions and knowledge conditions. But this too would show the extent of his commitment to the priority thesis.

Hintikka’s discussions on truth are shaped by his concern to give an overall account of the languages of logic and mathematics on the one hand, and of the semantic structure of natural languages on the other. I have not discussed his particular proposal for a truth definition, but only his remarks on our “normal” concept of

²³ For such views, see in particular Peacocke 1992, Skorupski 1997.

truth. Let us grant that truth is indeed definable, along the lines that he has proposed. The ineffability thesis would then be disproved. But I have suggested that Hintikka is still committed to the view that “one cannot use language to get outside language”, with respect both to truth and meaning.

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