

Workshop *Truth at Work*
Paris, June 22, 2011

‘Truth Predicates’ and Natural Language

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1. Apparent truth predicates in English

- (1) a. That the sun is shining is true.
b. That the sun is shining is the case.
c. That the sun is shining is a fact.
d. That the sun is shining is the truth.

Philosophers’ intuitions:

Deflationism and identity theorists about truth: equivalence between (1a) and (1b)

Correspondence theorists: equivalence between (1b) and (1c) (predication as attribution of the achievement of an aim: correspondence with a fact (Austin))

Philosophers’ intuitions about (1d)?

Claim:

The sentences in (1) are all fundamentally different in construction type and semantic content

Sentences of the same types:

- (2) a. That the sun is shining is correct / right.
b. That the sun was shining happened yesterday.
c. That the sun is shining is a true belief.
d. The fact is that the sun is shining.
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2. *Is true* as a predicate of representational objects

Clausal subjects, extraposition, and prosentential quantifiers and pronouns:

- (3) a. That the sun is shining is true.
 b. It is true that the sun is shining.
 c. That / Everything / Nothing is true.

referential NPs as subjects: *is true* as a predicate of representational objects:

- (4) a. The proposition that the sun is shining is true.
 b. The sentence that the sun is shining is true.
 c. John's belief / claim that the sun is shining is true.

Other predicates of the same sort: *correct, right*

German: *stimmen*

- (5) a. Dass S stimmt.
 b. Es stimmt, dass S.
 (6) Die Proposition / Der Satz / Hans' Behauptung stimmt.

is the case: does not allow for referential NPs:

- (7) a. That the sun is shining is the case.
 b. It is the case that the sun is shining.
 c. That / Everything / Nothing is the case
 (8) a. * The proposition / The sentence is the case.
 b. * John's belief / John's claim is the case.

Modifiers relating to the understanding of representational object:

- (9) a. It is in a way / in a certain sense true that John is the best teacher.

Not with *is the case*:

- b. ?? It is in a way / in a certain sense the case that John is the best teacher.

Difference in the corresponding nominalizations:

Reference to tropes (manifestations of the truth property):

- (10) the truth of the sentence / proposition / belief that the sun is shining

- (11) a. The proposition that S might have been false.
 b. The truth of the proposition might have been false.

Standard cases of trope-referring terms with adjective nominalizations:

- (12) a. the wisdom of Socrates
 b. the whiteness of Socrates

Quantification over truth tropes:

- (13) a. There is some truth in his claim that S.
 b. The claim that S has some truth in it.
 (14) a. There is some wisdom in John's remark.
 b. John's remark has some wisdom in it.

Conclusion:

True expresses a property of representational objects, however, the property is ultimately to be understood.

The truth of x: stands for the manifestation of that property in x (a truth trope)

Nominal case-constructions:

the case that the sun might be shining.

- (15) a. We discussed the case that John might not return.
 b. The case that John will not return could occur / present itself.
 c. Der Fall, dass Hans nicht zurueckkommt, koennte eintreten.
 'The case that John might not return could enter'.

- (16) a. In case it rains, we won't go.
 b. In a case in which it rains, we won't go.

(17) Im Fall, dass es regnet, werden wir nicht gehen.

'In the case that it rains we won't go.'

(18) In case it rains, we won't go. In that case / In such a case, we will stay home.

Other predicates like *is the case*:

occur

(19) It has never occurred that John did not return.

What are cases?

Cases are not facts:

Cases can be merely possible.

Cases do not 'obtain', unlike facts, but rather 'occur', 'present themselves', or 'enter'.

Cases are not 'possibilities':

Possibilities as 'mere' possibilities 'exist', cases do not 'exist'.

Cases are not events:

Events 'happen', 'take place', 'last', can be 'sudden' or 'visible'.

Cases do not 'happen', 'take place', 'last' and cannot be 'sudden' or 'visible'.

Cases as merely possible facts, facts based on possible situations that could become part of the actual world

3. *Is the case* and the Austinian view of truth

The intuition of the identity theory:

If *it is the case that S* is true, then *that S* stands for a worldly fact.

The same for *that S is true*.

Wittgenstein: - 'The world is everything that is the case'

- 'The world is the totality of facts.'

Differences between *is true* and *is the case*:

Syntactic difference:

The case does not enter small-clause construction -- criterion for predicatehood:

(20) a. I consider it true that John is a genius.

b. ?? I consider it the case that John is a genius.

Semantic differences:

[1] tense:

(21) a. It will often be the case that Mary forgets something.

b. ?? It will often be true that Mary forgets something.

(22) a. It was once the case that no one knew of Michael Jackson. Today it is no longer the case.

b. ?? It was once true that no one knew of Michael Jackson. Today it is no longer true.

[2] location restrictions:

(23) a. In many European countries it is still the case that women can wear a burka.

b. ? In many European countries it is still true that women can wear a burka.

(24) a. In our firm it is never the case that someone gets fired without explanation.

b. ??? In our firm it is never true that someone gets fired without explanation.

[3] adverbs of quantification:

(25) a. It is sometimes the case that someone is absent.

b. ?? It is sometimes true that someone is absent.

(26) a. It was twice the case that someone was absent.

b. ??? It was twice true that someone was absent.

[4] ‘propositional completion’:

That S in *That S is true* is understood as complete regarding context-dependent elements, such as quantifier restrictions, tense interpretation, location etc., proposition expressed may involve ‘unarticulated constituents’;

that S in *Sometimes it is the case that S* is not propositionally complete.

Difference between *it is the case that S* and *it occurs that S*:

Restrictions on *it occurs* to eventive *that*-clauses

(27) a. ?? In European countries it occurs that woman can still wear the burka.

b. Sometimes it occurs that Mary forgets something.

Against an identity theoretic account of *the is the case* construction:

That-clause can be true relative to different situations:

(28) It was once the case that S. Today *that* is the case again.

Accounting for the possibility of locational and temporal restrictions in the *is the case*-construction:

The *is the case* construction involves reference to an actual situation relative to which the *that*-clause is claimed to hold.

In Austin’s terms:

The situation referred to is claimed to be of the type specified by the *that*- clause

The situation referred to acts as the *truth maker* of the *that*-clause.

Accounting for adverbs of quantification with *is the case*:

The adverb of quantification quantifies over situations relative to which that the *that*-clause is claimed to hold.

The truth-making idea:

If a sentence / proposition is true, it is in virtue of something in the world that makes it true.

If e is a truthmaker of S/p , then e 's existence implies the truth of S/p .

Truth makers of simple sentences

(29) a. John is happy

b. John walks.

Truthmaker: the actual situation s in which John is happy / walks

-- and nothing not sufficiently involved in that is the case in s (exact truthmaker)

(30) a. Someone is happy.

b. Someone walks.

(31) a. John or Mary is happy.

b. John or Mary walks.

Standard conditions on truth-making of complex sentences:

(32) a. $s \models p \vee q$ iff $s \models p$ or $s \models q$

b. $s \models \exists x p$ if for some $d \in D$, $s \models p(x/d)$

c. $s \models p \ \& \ q$ iff for some s', s'' : $s = s' \vee s''$ and $s' \models p$ and $s'' \models q$

Exact truth maker needed (situation of which the sentence provides an exact description):

counting with adverbs of quantification:

(33) It was exactly twice the case that John made a mistake.

Austin's notion of truth:

With a sentence a speaker refers to an actual situation, and asserts the sentence relative to that situation.

Austin's motivation:

The situation referred to is responsible for contextual restrictions, on quantification domains, temporal and spatial interpretation etc.

Facts (situations) as worldly things making sentences true.

The present view:

The truth-making relation meant to hold between a situation and a sentence uttered is not necessarily responsible for contextual restrictions (different situations may be needed for different parts of the sentence, also problems with attributively used definite descriptions (Soames)).

But the truth-making relation is involved in the constructional meaning of *the is the case*.

Roughly:

(34) a. For a location modifier PP,

PP *is the case that* S is true iff for the maximal situation s such that $PP(s), s \models S$.

b. Adverbs of quantification:

PP *it is QP the case that* S is true iff for Q-many s such that $PP(s), s \models S$.

A compositional analysis of *is the case*?

The case as a referential NP referring itself to the truth-making situation?

This cannot be:

The case in *it is the case that S* is not a referential NP anymore, but a quasi-referential residue in an idiomatic construction.

Evidence:

No other determiners than *the* possible:

(35) * That S is that case.

No modifiers possible:

(36) a. * It is the unfortunate case that it is raining.

b. * That it is raining is the case that I did not expect.

The case cannot act as antecedent for nominal *the case* construction:

(37) That no one came was recently the case. ?? We did not like that case / the case.

4. *It is a fact that S*

Like *is true*-sentences, *is a fact*-sentences resist location modifiers, adverbs of quantification, and past and future tense:

- (38) a. ?? In many European countries it is still a fact that women can wear a burka.
 b. ??? In our firm it is never a fact that someone gets fired without explanation.
 c. ?? It is sometimes a fact that someone is absent.
 d. ??? It was twice a fact that someone was absent.
 e. ??? It will often be a fact that Mary forgets something.
 f. ?? It was once a fact that no one knew of Michael Jackson.

Also *that S* in *that S is a fact* must be propositionally complete.

Differences between *is true* and *is a fact*:

Like *is the case*, *is a fact* allows only for *that*-clauses and pronouns or quantifiers in the place of *that*-clauses:

- (39) a. That S is a fact.
 b. It is a fact that S.
 (40) a. * John's belief is a fact.
 b. * That sentence is a fact
 (41) It is raining. That is a fact.

But *is a fact* does not allow free relative clauses with attitude verbs, unlike *is the case* and *is true* (Austin):

- (42) a. What John said / believes is true.
 b. ?? What John said / believes is a fact.
 c. What John said / believes is the case.

Unlike *the case* in *is the case*, *a fact* in *is a fact* is an ordinary indefinite NP, allowing for modifiers etc:

- (43) a. That S is an interesting fact
 b. That S is a fact that I had never noticed.
 c. That S is a fact. That fact is hardly known.

A suggestive semantics of *is a fact*:

Equivalence:

- (44) a. That S is a fact.
 b. The fact that S obtains.

A related construction:

- (45) a. the color red
 b. Red is a color.
- (46) a. the truth value true
 b. True is a truth value.

Other cases:

- (47) a. The possibility that S exists.
 b. That S is a possibility.
- (48) a. the common belief that S
 b. That S is a common belief.

color, truth value, fact, possibility, belief as ‘reifying’ sortals: mapping a non-referential expression onto an object that is a color, a truth value, a fact, a possibility, a belief
 nonreferential term may follow the sortal or else occur in subject position

Strawsonian view of facts:

facts as abstractions from true propositions / sentences

Further evidence:

The fact that S allows S to be disjunctive, negative, quantificational.

4. *Is the truth*

Linguistic properties (confirmed for German only):

Inversion possible:

- (49) a. That John will not return is the truth.
 b. The truth is that John will not return.

No extraposition:

- (50) * It is the truth that John will not return.

Obligatory definite determiner:

- (51) a. That John will not return is a truth.

b. * A truth is that he will not return.

Only very restricted modifier possibilities:

(52) ?? That John will not return is the unexpected / embarrassing truth.

No prosentential quantifiers:

(53) a. Nothing is true.

b. ?? Nothing is the truth.

(54) a. Everything he said is true.

b. ? Everything he said is the truth. (?)

A different construction with free relative clauses:

(55) a. What John said / claimed is the truth.

b. John said / claimed he truth.

(56) a. ?? What John believes is the truth.

b. ?? John believes the truth. (?)

Comparison with *is true*

(57) * True is that John will not return.

Comparison with *is the case*:

No inversion:

(58) * The case is that he will not return.

Quantifiers possible with *is the case*

Comparison with *-fact--*:

(59) a. The fact is that he will not return

b. ?? That he will not return is the fact.

Conclusion:

The truth is not a predicate (pace Hinzen 2003), *is the truth* is not a syntactic predicate taking clausal subjects, *the truth* is not an ordinary referential NP, *is the truth* is not a lexicalized syntactic predicate like *is the case* (but rather the truth makes a particular semantic contribution).

An analysis of the *is the truth* construction:

Specificational sentences (Higgins 1973, MIT dissertation):

- (60) a. What John did was kiss Mary.
 b. Kiss Mary is what John did.

- (61) a. The best player is John.
 b. John is the best player.

Common analysis of specificational sentences:

Subject is a concealed question, postcopula expression elided answer

Question: What did John do? – answer: John kissed Mary.

With *that*-clauses:

- (62) a. What John said is that it is raining.
 b. That it is raining is what John said.

- (63) a. John's claim is that it is raining.
 b. It is raining is John's claim.

- (64) a. The idea / plan is that we will leave early.
 b. That we will leave early is the idea / plan.

Higgins:

- (65) a. The proof that S is that S'.
 b. * the proof that S that S'

- (66) * the truth that S

Analysis of *the truth is that S*:

Question: What in this context is true ? Answer: That S.

the truth:

a peculiar definite NP in other contexts than specificational sentences:

- (67) a. John said / claimed the truth.
 b. John revealed / knows / found out the truth.

- (68) a. * John said the falsehood.
 b. *John said the correctness.

- (69) a. The topic of the conference is truth (falsehood / correctness).
 b. ? The topic of the conference is the truth.

The truth:

- not property-denoting like *truth*

as a definite mass NP:

- does *not* stand for a contextually relevant quantity of truth tropes
- stands for the contextually relevant things that in the actual circumstances are true – if there are such things (compare: *the beauty*)