

# Horwich's Truth, Chapter 6: Propositions and Utterances

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- Propositions may not be defined in terms of truth (circularity).

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- 34: Truth for utterances etc.

## 30: For the Existence of propositions

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But "syntax is not an infallible guide to semantic structure".

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We might have the following data:

- A collection of sentences, some of which are true.
- Entailment relations between the sentences.
- The (best) analysis of these relations would attribute to some sentences logical forms that entail the existence of entities of a certain type ( $K$ s).

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1. is the best option. These arguments are often weak (based on question-begging overgeneralization).
2. involves rejecting existing knowledge.
3. involves rejecting an apparently adequate analysis of logical form.

The case of propositions conforms to this pattern.

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- The believed proposition in  
**Raphael believes of Hesperus that it is Phosphorus.**  
consists of Hesperus (Phosphorus) and the senses of 'is' and 'Phosphorus'.

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Note: there may be no determinate fact of the matter as to which patterns are basic, and whether two utterances are intertranslatable (and hence express the same proposition). But this means only that these facts are semantically inaccessible, not that they do not obtain.

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- (C) There are words,  $x$ ,  $y$ , and  $z$ , such that the use of  $x$  resembles that of  $y$ , which resembles that of  $z$ , which in turn does not resemble that of  $x$ .

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(B) and (C) entail the intransitivity of translation. With (A), this entails the possibility of utterances  $u$ ,  $v$  and  $w$  s.t.  $u$  and  $v$  express the same proposition;  $v$  and  $w$  express the same proposition; but  $u$  and  $w$  do not.

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These sameness facts always obtain, but may be indeterminate and hence inaccessible to us (and, again, similarly with basic patterns of usage and intertranslatability).

"Either two words *are* properly intertranslatable, or they are not—even though it may be impossible to say which is so."



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which we would translate as:

**(2) Snow is white.**

we ought generally be able to infer:

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But if translation were intransitive, there "would be no guarantee" that the following translation of (2):

**(2') La neige est blanche.**

is the translation of (1) into French, and hence "no guarantee" that (3) and (4) describe the same propositional attitude.

## 34: Truth of Utterances etc.

Consider the following proposal:

(D?) Any utterance of the sentence-type 'p', is true iff  $p$ .

This does not work due to the context-sensitivity of utterances—it is not the case that all utterances of 'I am hungry now are true' are true iff I am hungry now.

Accounting for context-sensitivity:

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Accounting for context-sensitivity:

For any expression-type 'e' with multiple possible meanings (propositional constituents), we take '\*e\*' to pick out an expression-type consisting of the syntactic form of 'e', along with one of its possible meanings.

- '\*bank\*' can refer to the expression-type with form 'bank' and the meaning of bank-as-river-bank, or to the type with form 'bank' and the meaning of bank-as-financial-institution.

We can then have:

$$(D) (u \in^* p^*) \rightarrow (u \text{ is true iff } p)$$

and say that instances of this are accepted when the ' $p$ ' in the consequent is interpreted so that it is a member of the  $*p^*$  in the antecedent, i.e. when the two tokens of ' $p$ ' are given the same interpretation.

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To account for utterances in other languages and utterances whose context precludes us expressing their meanings using the same words (John yesterday: 'I am hungry'), we use the translations and context adjustments from before: ' $p$ ' is the correct *interpretation* of  $u$  ( $Int(u) \in^* p$ ) iff the result of translating and/or context-adjusting  $u$  is ' $p$ '. Then:

$$(23) (Int(u) = v) \rightarrow (u \text{ is true iff } v \text{ is true})$$

Combined with (D):

$$(DT) (Int(u) \in^* p^*) \rightarrow (u \text{ is true iff } p)$$



Given

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(25)  $u$  expresses the proposition that  $p \rightarrow$   
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(DT) and the equivalence schema for propositions

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A modification of this provides us with a minimal theory of truth for beliefs and the like; this is equivalent to propositional schema in a similar fashion.

## Some questions

- Could the "general philosophical considerations" against propositions be strengthened?
- How could it be that meaning is constituted by use and yet, in some cases, is utterly inaccessible to us?
- What about the more radical indeterminacy of translation of Quine? Does this undermine Horwich's arguments in a way that the kind of indeterminacy he considers does not?