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# UNIT 4 THEORIES OF TRUTH

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## 4.0 OBJECTIVES

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The main objective of this Unit is to introduce the theories of truth, the core concept in the theory of knowledge. The words ‘truth’ and ‘true’ are much used, misused and misunderstood word. Though the concept appears to be simple, when we go deep into it we will feel its mysterious nature. The questions, “What is truth?” and “How to know the truth?” are as ancient as man himself. In this unit we will try to make a survey of the theories of truth that the philosophers have put forward and to examine their merits and demerits. It is the duty of every human being to continue the quest to understand the importance of the concept of truth and to approach it with awe and respect.

Thus by the end of this Unit you should be able to:

- to have a glimpse of the complexity of the concept “truth”;
- to understand the importance of truth.
- to have a better understanding of the nature and criteria of truth;
- to get a general view of the different theories of truth; and
- to evaluate the theories you come across in contemporary reading.

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## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

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In court, witnesses swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. They are expected to know what truth means and in some sense they do. At the same time the concept ‘truth’ is abstract, ambiguous and mysterious. The meaning of the word “truth” that concerns philosophers is something akin to what a witness assumes in the court room to report what he/she believes to be true in

statements or propositions. This is the sense of the word that matters most in our everyday lives.

Voltaire says that we may define truth humanly speaking but we should always wait for a better definition because there is no final definition or one which is definitive for all times. It is a difficult task to define truth for the following reasons: first, truth is an extremely basic concept. It is difficult to engage in any theoretical inquiry without employing it. You cannot even argue over a theory of truth without using the concept, because to question a theory is to question its truth, and to endorse a theory is to endorse it as true. We cannot get behind the concept of truth as we can with other concepts. Secondly, truth is deeply connected to belief. When witnesses assert or endorse what they believe, it implies that they are reporting what they believe to be true. Thirdly, truth is also connected to knowledge: one doesn't know that a particular person committed the crime unless he actually committed it. Truth is the central concept of logic. Fourthly, it is also related to another mysterious concept, reality. To speak the truth is to speak of reality as it is. Truth is interconnected with many concepts and it is very important to understand this interconnection if we want to know what truth is.

Knowledge is the recognition of truth. To recognize falsity for truth is a false knowledge. A belief in the truth of a false statement is a mistaken belief. If knowledge excludes all falsity, then certainty becomes essential for knowledge. And if certainty is unattainable it follows that truth and knowledge are also unattainable. Philosophers have been driven to a conception of knowledge so rigorous that there is very little that we can claim to know. But to say that there is no truth is to neglect everything valuable, for what is the use of the good and the beautiful if there were no truths about them? We should admit that absolute certainty or truth is unattainable. Even scientists do not entitle their findings as final or definitive. However, we should continue our search and be ready to abandon the prevailing beliefs when they are proved to be false. We must learn to doubt and then to believe all over again; or, to believe without believing absolutely.

How much can we doubt? Skepticism may be defined as the claim that none of our beliefs is objectively justified as more probably true than its negation. According to the skeptics the search for truth is hopeless and hence every opinion is as good as the others. Skepticism expresses the concern that our beliefs may not accurately correspond to the world in itself. It poses a problem for every theory of truth. A certain degree of doubt is natural and motivates us to search for the truth. But in our daily life we are more believers than doubters. For instance, we believe that our doctor knows how to cure us, we believe that the pilot of our plane knows how to fly it.

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## 4.2 NATURE AND CRITERIA OF TRUTH

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Theories of truth attempt to give satisfactory answers to the following questions: "What is truth?" and "How to know the truth?" We want to know whether propositions or beliefs are true or false. To deal with propositional truth we can take either the definitional route and define "is true" as qualifying the proposition, or the criterial route and justify the application of "is true" to the proposition.

What is the nature of truth? This is similar to the question, what is the underlying nature of the property of being gold or the substantive facts about gold? Or, what

does the word “gold” mean in ordinary English? The result of the inquiry is that gold is an element with atomic number 79. My concept of gold picks out many important and substantive facts about gold, that it is a malleable yellow metal, for instance. When philosophers ask what truth is, they are interested sometimes in the concept, sometimes in the underlying nature of its property, and sometimes in both. Unlike the case of gold, we have no independent, empirical access to the property of truth except via that concept. Thus disputes over the property of truth are frequently fought on conceptual ground, over how we might best define the concept of truth. According to this latter method, we learn about the property of truth by learning about the concept. On the other hand, we might hold that as in the case of gold, learning about the concept can tell us much about the property without necessarily telling us everything about that property.

We may know something about the nature of truth and may be able to define truth, but it is not of much value if we are not able to prove that something is true. The nature and criteria of truth are obviously different. The definition of gold as a yellow metal having atomic number 79 does not help us to determine whether an ornament is really gold. The assayer’s test of solubility in *aqua regia* provides criteria to verify gold, but does not define it. Such a distinction is applicable to truth. To know the meaning of the word “true” is only half the matter; we should also be able to apply it. If we adopt the criterial route critics will say, “You are not really tackling the core issue of what is true, but only the marginal issue of what is taken as true.” On the contrary if we take the definitional route he/she will say, “Your definition is only formal; it does not help us determine whether a proposition is actually true or false.”

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### 4.3 PERSPECTIVES ON TRUTH

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Our perspectives on truth differ depending on whether we take a detached point of view or agent point of view or a combination of the two. The ontic perspective is a view from nowhere or a totally detached view of facts regardless of its being believed to be true. The descriptively epistemic perspective is an agent point of view of facts as actually believed to be true. The normatively epistemic perspective is a fusion of the agent and detached points of view that truth is what would be rationally accepted regardless of anyone’s actually doing so. Its epistemic component consists in its reference to thought, and its ontic component in its reference to what is rationally warranted. Those who take the ontic perspective claim that the truth-value of a belief does not vary over different epistemic situations. A belief does not alter its truth-value contextually. Hence we cannot simply identify truth with justification.

As there are three perspectives on truth we can divide the theories of truth into three groups: Realist, Anti-realist and Quasi-realist theories. All these theories are motivated by questions like: Is there such a thing as absolute truth? Is truth in some way or other subjective or relative? What sort of relationship do true propositions have to the world? Are all truths verifiable or justifiable? These questions concern the subjectivity and objectivity of truth.

The root intuition behind Realism is that truth hinges not on us but on the world. A proposition is true when things in the world are as that proposition says they are. It implies that truth has a nature and that its nature is objective: whether a proposition is true does not depend on what anyone believes. Realism is a doctrine

about truth which holds that for a belief or proposition to be true, a certain states of affairs must obtain independent of any mind. For example, the belief that snow is white is true only if snow is white in the extra-mental world. Classical realist theory of truth is the correspondence theory.

Anti-realists or non-realist theories about truth have in common the view that extra-mental reality or facts have nothing to do with truth or falsity. It is not a necessary or a sufficient condition for the truth of the belief that “snow is white,” that snow be actually white in the extra-mental world. So it is theoretically possible for it to be true even if it is not an extra-mental fact that snow is white. Classical non-realist theories of truth are coherence and pragmatic theories. Deflationists go a step farther and ask whether truth even has a nature to explain. They suspect that the so-called problem of truth was really a pseudo-problem. They believe that there is no single property shared by all the propositions we consider as true. Consequently our concept of truth should not be understood as expressing such a property but as fulfilling some other function. Deflationists believe that the problem of truth should not be explained but be explained away.

There is a growing consensus among philosophers that neither traditional realist theories nor the anti-realist theories are adequate. Some philosophers have tried to clear new paths to think about this old concept. Whereas a few philosophers name their theories of truth others claim that they provide only some elucidation of the concept of truth.

### Check Your Progress I

- Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.  
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) What do you understand by the nature and criteria of truth?

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2) Classify the different perspectives and theories of truth?

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## 4.4 CLASSICAL THEORIES OF TRUTH

### The Correspondence Theory of Truth

According to the correspondence theory of truth a proposition is true just when it agrees with reality. It demands a unique conformity between judgments and states of affairs. It is a systematic development of the commonsense account of truth expressed in dictionary definitions like “conformity with fact.” “Delhi is the

capital of India” is true because it corresponds to the fact. Aristotle writes: “To say that that which is, is not, or that which is not is, is false; and to say that that which is, is, and that which is not, is not, is true.” For St Thomas Aquinas, truth is the agreement or conformity of thing and intellect. Michael Devitt claims that “truth is neither to be identified with, nor to be eliminated in favour of any epistemic notion. Truth is one thing, evidence for it quite another.” According to him a sentence correctly represents reality if and only if its component parts bear an appropriate causal relation to certain objects in the world.

Correspondence as congruence says that every truth bearer is correlated to a state of affairs. If the state of affairs to which a given truth bearer is correlated actually obtains, the truth bearer is true; otherwise it is false. For Bertrand Russell it is beliefs that are true or false and facts make beliefs true. He agrees that beliefs depend on minds for their existence, but claims that they do not depend on minds for their truth. According to him “assertions correspond to states of affairs; they are true if the corresponding states of affairs obtains, and false if it does not.”

Correspondence as correlation claims that there is a structural isomorphism between the truth bearers and the facts to which they correspond when the truth bearer is true. Like the two halves of a torn piece of paper, the parts of the truth bearer fit with the parts of the fact. It is because of this isomorphism that the fact and the truth bearer can be said to correspond with each other. J.L. Austin takes correspondence to be a matter of correlation between whole statements and whole facts or states of affairs. For him this correspondence is not natural but the result of linguistic conventions.

### **The Coherence Theory of Truth**

Immanuel Kant challenged the validity of the classical correspondence theory. Consequently, the post-Kantian philosophical tradition was bound to seek its theory of truth elsewhere. A significant alternative to correspondence theory is the coherence theory, according to which the truthfulness of a proposition is implicit in its “coherence” with other propositions.

The coherence theory has its roots in the idea of a system. According to F.H. Bradley, “Truth is an ideal expression of the Universe, at once coherent and comprehensive. It must not conflict with itself, and there must be no suggestion which fails to fall inside it. Perfect truth, in short, must realize the idea of a systematic whole.” A statement is true if it coheres with a system of other statements, and false if it fails to cohere. But the coherence at issue is not coherence with reality or with facts. The coherence theory proposes the criteria to classify empirical propositions as true or false; it does not specify the constitutive essence of truth. Coherence is the test by which truth-candidates are validated as genuinely true or rejected as false. It resembles the solving of a jigsaw puzzle by rejecting superfluous pieces that cannot possibly be fitted into the orderly picture.

Idealists or anti-realists reject the traditional distinction between subject and object. For them, to think of a thing is to get that thing to a certain degree within the mind. A thought and its object do not differ in kind but in degree of realization. Thought should develop and become more and more coherent until it is literally identical to, or one with reality. Hence reality is the realization of a fully articulated and maximally coherent system of judgments. A particular judgment is true if it belongs to such a system.

For Blanshard “Coherence is the sole criterion of truth.” Having accepted the coherence theory of justification, Blanshard felt compelled to accept the coherence theory of truth. He believed that if reality is something completely external to human minds then no theory of justification would ever work. We would never have knowledge except by luck and therefore be forced to accept general scepticism. “If thought and things are conceived as related only externally then knowledge is luck.” The way to avoid this, he suggested, is to postulate that the thoughts in our minds are really not completely distinct from the things in the world we think about. For him, “To think of a thing is to get that thing itself in some degree within the mind.” With the assumption that the world is coherent, it seems to follow that our beliefs are probably true to the extent they cohere. Hence he endorses the claim that the coherence of beliefs is evidence of their truth.

### **The Pragmatic Theory**

Pragmatism envisages a conception of truth that recognizes a close link between truth and human experience. The pragmatic theory of truth bases itself on the intuition that one cannot profit from error either by rejecting a true proposition or by accepting a false proposition. Being right is the most advantageous policy, and so maximal utility is a safe indicator of truth. The prominent advocates of classical pragmatism are Charles Peirce, William James and John Dewey.

For Peirce, a true proposition is a final and compulsory belief, a belief unassailable by doubt. The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate is what we mean by the truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real. Even though the possible hypotheses are infinite, investigation in the long run will eliminate all of them except the true one. A judgment is true if and only if it is justified at the end of scientific inquiry. He renamed his theory as pragmatism when pragmatism was appropriated by Dewey, Schiller and James to label their view. He claims that “human opinion universally tends in the long run to the truth.” For him the opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate is what we mean by truth. Peirce’s theory of truth is plausible only because it is parasitic on truth as correspondence with reality.

James’ pragmatism could be characterized as a kind of instrumentalism. According to James an empirical judgment is true if it is verifiable. The truth of an idea is the process of its verification and validation. A true idea guides us in our dealings with reality, and hence, a true judgment is what is expedient to believe. Our knowledge of the world, according to James, results from the interaction between our minds and the world. But our minds do not, like mirrors, passively copy facts, but actively manipulate them according to our needs and ends. James insists that truth should be useful, having cash value in experiential terms. Something is useful because it is true and it is true because it is useful. An empirical judgment is true just when it is verifiable. The truth of a judgment consists in its continuous practical use in our lives. Instrumentalism holds that a belief can be useful if it leads to accurate predictions and hence true. I see your knitted brow, see you rub your temples, hear you utter “Oowoo”. The hypothesis that you have a headache would explain these three events. For James the facts of the matter are irrelevant. What counts is the usefulness of the belief. For James usefulness means useful over the long term and when all things are considered.

According to John Dewey an idea is a plan of action or a possible solution and

not a copy of the environment. Their validity and value are tested by their practical success. If they succeed in dealing with the problem they are true; if they fail they are false. The idea that guides us well or the hypothesis that works is true. For example, a human being lost in the woods can use his idea as a working hypothesis. If he finds his way home, then his idea is true because it agrees with reality. According to Dewey truth is a mutable concept; it works within the process of inquiry. Truth happens to an idea when it becomes a verified or warranted assertion. Thus he claims that all received truths should be critically tested by new experiences.

### Critical Evaluation of Classical Theories of Truth

The oldest criticism against correspondence theory is that it cannot withstand sceptical challenge. If truth is independent of our epistemic values, we have no reason to believe that our best theories are approximately true. Since we cannot step outside our beliefs, we cannot ever check to see if they correspond to the world or not. Therefore we can never know whether our beliefs are true. Another general problem concerns their scope. Traditional correspondence theories take correspondence to be the nature of truth for every proposition. But propositions vary. What would be the correspondence for abstract objects like numbers, fictional characters, justice etc? There are objections to coherence theory of truth. It allows any proposition to be true, since any proposition can be a member of some coherent set or other. There is no independent way, outside coherence, of determining which beliefs are true. The main charge against pragmatic theory of truth is that it leads to relativism. Relativism is incoherent and self-refuting. It is self-refuting to hold a point of view and then say that all points of view are equally right. If all points of view are equally good, then the point of view that relativism is false could be as good as relativism is true. Another problem is that there could be judgments that are true but that are never discovered to be so by any investigation.

#### Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) What do you understand by the Correspondence theory of truth?

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2) How do you distinguish between coherence and pragmatic theories of truth?

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## 4.5 OTHER THEORIES OF TRUTH

### Semantic Theory

Alfred Tarski claims that his semantic conception of truth is the essence of the correspondence theory of truth. He calls truth a semantic concept because it is defined in terms of other semantic concepts, especially the concept of 'satisfaction'. Tarski's strategy is to define all semantic concepts, save satisfaction, in terms of truth, truth in terms of satisfaction, and satisfaction in terms of physical and logico-mathematical concepts. According to him, an adequate definition of truth is one from which all equivalencies of the form "X is true if and only if p" follow, where X is the name of the sentence and p is the sentence. He limits his definition of truth to artificial or formal languages of logic and mathematics because the natural languages are semantically closed and hopelessly paradoxical. Such formal languages are semantically open and contain none of the ambiguity and vagueness of ordinary language. Secondly, it is crucial to Tarski's definition that it is not a general definition of true in any language L, but a definition of 'true-in-L1' 'true-in-L2' etc. We must always climb up to a meta-language to define truth for the language below.

Quine regards "true" as a philosophically neutral notion. It is a mere device for raising assertions from the object language to the meta-language without any epistemological or metaphysical commitment. Quine claims that his view is in accordance with the correspondence theory of truth. His truth predicate functions as an intermediary between the words and the world. What is true is the sentence, but its truth consists in the correspondence between the sentence and the world.

### Deflationary Theories

Deflationism is the name for a family of views which aim to deflate the lofty pretensions of traditional theories of truth. They believe that truth has no nature. It is not so important a concept. Deflationary theories call attention to the transparency of truth. When we say that "it is true that roses are red", we can look right through the truth that roses are red. We automatically infer that roses are red. There is no reason to try to explain why something is true by appealing to correspondence or coherence.

According to Frank Ramsey's Redundancy theory 'is true' is a superfluous addition; in reality we ascribe no property to the proposition. All ascriptions of truth are gratuitous or redundant. But the question arises as to why we would have the word 'true' in our language if it is redundant. According to P.F. Strawson's Performative theory ascriptions of truth to propositions are actually nonassertoric performative utterances like command. If I tell you to close the door, I am not making an assertion or stating a fact; I am telling you to do something. Strawson argues that we should regard utterances of the form "It is true that p" in a similar way. It calls our attention to an often neglected feature of our concept of truth: its normative and performative role in our language. According to Quine's Disquotation theory "ascription of truth just cancels the quotation marks. Truth is disquotation." According to Minimalism there is no more to understanding truth than understanding the equivalence of saying something is true and to asserting it. For instance, we know what it is for people to assert propositions and we normally know what kinds of considerations confirm or disconfirm the propositions.



## Neo-pragmatic Theory

Richard Rorty follows Dewey and tells us to leave behind our realist intuitions. According to Rorty anything we believe as true we also believe as justified, and anything we believe as justified we also believe as true. There is no practical difference between truth and justification. He identifies truth with rational acceptability to one's own cultural peers or *ethnos*. According to his "ethnocentrism" truth depends on the conventions of particular communities. He claims that justification as criteria of truth will always be relative to audiences. For him truth is a compliment paid to justified beliefs. Rorty dismisses the problem of truth as unreal because when we are able to justify something the problem about truth vanishes.

For Michael Foucault truth is by nature political. For him there are no objectively true statements in the usual sense; there are only statements that 'pass for true' in a particular community at a particular time. And what passes for true is determined by the hegemonic systems of power. He reduces truth to power. He advocates a view of truth that takes power relations to be more or less constitutive of truth depending on the statement and context in question.

Hilary Putnam derives inspiration from James and wants to reconcile pragmatist insights with realism. According to Putnam totality of objects is not fixed because objects themselves exist only relative to conceptual schemes. For him a proposition is true just when that proposition would be rationally acceptable in ideal epistemic conditions. Putnam's picture of truth is not a kind of verificationism though verification is an important aspect of it. For him truth is idealized verification under sufficiently good epistemic conditions. He is not reducing truth to epistemic notions. Instead, he just claims that truth and rational acceptability depend upon on each other. His concept of truth involves a defence of objectivity. Truth is not subjective; it goes beyond justification. There is no conclusive justification even for empirical sentences. Truth depends on the meaning of the assertions as well as on their reference. For him objects are theory-dependent, and hence two theories, in spite of their incompatible ontologies, can both be right. His picture of truth refutes both metaphysical realism as well as relativism. He seeks objectivity neither in correspondence nor in consensus. Instead, he proposes an alternative to both realist and idealist concepts of truth.

## Postmodern theories

According to Martin Heidegger's Phenomenological theory propositional truth presupposes a more primordial relation of accordance between humanity and beings in the world which he calls "openness" or "unconcealedness". Truth is "disclosure of being through which an openness essentially unfolds." To speak truly is to uncover beings as they are. According to Heidegger there is an absolute world structure that grounds the possibility of objective truth. Our thoughts are true when they conform to that structure. It is our way of being in the world that makes truth and falsity possible. Heidegger's view challenges the idea that truth is a static, binary relation between a subject's representation of an object and that object itself. Truth is neither correspondence nor coherence but the product of an activity that presents the world directly. Truth depends on humanity in some sense. "There is truth only when and as long as *Dasein* exists." Without human thinkers there would be no true thoughts. It is only against the background of human interests and needs that parts of the world become possible objects of knowledge.

A common thread running through Primitivism and Pluralism is the claim that the failure of substantive definitions of truth needn't lead to a thoroughgoing deflationism. Primitivism takes truth as a basic indefinable concept. For Moore truth "is a simple unanalyzable property which is possessed by some propositions and not by others." Donald Davidson and Ernest Sosa are advocates of this theory today. Traditional theories have failed because truth cannot be defined. The concept of truth is already so basic to our thought that without it we might not have any concepts at all. What we can say about truth is how that concept relates to other concepts, our attitudes and our behaviour. Pluralism takes truth to have different natures in different discourses. Putnam argues against the usual alternatives: deflationism and metaphysical realism. There is a plurality of ways for propositions to relate to reality. The word "true" has different uses, depending on whether we are talking about morality, mathematics, physics etc. Pluralist theories of truth have significant advantages. They account for the fact that every traditional theory of truth seems plausible in some domains but not in others.

### **Critical Evaluation**

Though the semantic theory of truth adequately defines the nature of truth, it is unable to provide any criteria to decide what is and what is not to be counted as true. A logician is not concerned with the intuitive notion of truth. On the contrary, a philosopher is concerned with discovering the intuitive notion of truth. Tarski tries to substitute the intuitive notion with a logical notion useful for scientific purposes. His theory fails to define the ordinary concept of truth and merely provide a general definition of "true". The deflationary theorists fail to substantiate that truth has no property. The Neo-Pragmatist Rorty's ethnocentrism has strong relativist overtones. We cannot agree with Foucault that truth changes with the change of systems. For example, racism and slavery were wrong and are wrong now. It also leads to a radical scepticism making any social criticism impossible. Postmodern theories of truth also are inadequate to provide a satisfactory picture of "truth".

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## **4.6 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY OF TRUTH**

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What is the importance of the study of truth for our lives? The theory of truth we choose to accept will affect our perspective, our attitude and also our way of life. Those who accept correspondence theory of truth are normally absolutists and traditionalists. Those who opt for coherence theory of truth are idealists who give more importance to their subjective ideas and convictions. Those who accept pragmatic theory of truth give importance to useful and practical aspects of life. All the other theories are only modifications or combinations of the classical theories.

It is important for us to examine our temperament. Do we give so much importance to objectivity so as to neglect subjectivity? Do our thoughts, words and actions have a human face? Are we fundamentalists who believe that only one theory or point of view can be true; or relativists who hold that anything goes or that all theories are equally true; or pluralists who consider that there may be a plurality of true or right versions of reality? Do we try to compartmentalize life and then create walls between peoples or accept unity in plurality? Are we ready to accept the role of the community in asserting that something is true or false? Truth is essentially dynamic. It emerges in the interaction between subject and object. The

criteria of practical success is not enough. We have to combine successful understanding and successful practice. Do we give equal importance to means and ends? The glimpse of truth will become brighter if we approach it with an open mind. Lack of interest and involvement conceals truth to a great extent. Never be satisfied with what we know. Truth reveals itself to those who continue the search and is ready to do the same until death.

### Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) What do you understand by deflationary theory of truth?

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2) Describe the post-modern theories of truth?

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## 4.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have introduced the problem of truth and examined the nature and criteria of truth. Truth is closely intertwined with many other concepts like world, reason, justification, thought, language etc. There have been a lot of attempts or theories to explain truth because it is such an important concept which we use in our everyday life knowingly or unknowingly. There are mainly three families of truth – Realist, Anti-realist and Quasi-realist. Realist theories of truth consider truth as objective. Anti-realist theories hold that truth is primarily subjective. The quasi-realists try to combine the realist and anti-realist theories. All the modern theories of truth are modifications of the classical theories of truth viz., correspondence, coherence and pragmatic theories.

## 4.8 KEY WORDS

<b>Idealism</b>	: The ontological view that ultimately every existing thing can be shown to be spiritual, mental or incorporeal.
<b>Realism</b>	: The philosophical doctrine that a real material world exists and is accessible by means of the senses.
<b>Relativism</b>	: The view that there are no absolute truths; all truths are relative to time, place, and culture.
<b>Verification</b>	: Any procedure carried out to determine whether a statement is true or false.

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## 4.9 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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## 4.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Answers to Check your Progress I

- 1) To determine the truth of a proposition we can either define "is true" as qualifying the proposition or justify the application of "is true" in the proposition. The first way illustrates the nature of truth and the second way its criteria. To know the meaning of the word "true" is only half the matter; we should also be able to apply it. For example, to know that gold is a malleable yellow metal with the atomic number 79 does not help us to know whether an ornament is gold or not. There should be some way of testing to prove that it is really gold. Similarly, it is not enough to know what truth is; we should also know how to justify the claim that something is true.
- 2) There are three perspectives on truth. The ontic perspective is a detached point of view of facts regardless of its being believed to be true. The descriptively epistemic perspective is an agent point of view of facts as actually believed to be true. The normatively epistemic perspective is a fusion

of the agent and detached points of view. We can divide the theories of truth into Realist, Anti-realist and Quasi-realist. According to realism a belief or proposition is true if a certain states of affairs obtain independent of any mind. According to non-realist theories extra-mental reality or facts have nothing to do with truth or falsity. For quasi-realists truth depends not only on values but also on facts; both subject and object play equal roles.

### Answers to Check your Progress II

- 1) According to the correspondence theory of truth a proposition is true when it agrees with reality. It demands a unique conformity between judgments and states of affairs. It is obvious that my statement, “Delhi is the capital of India” is true because it corresponds to the fact. There are two types of correspondence: correspondence as congruence and correspondence as correlation. Correspondence as congruence says that every truth bearer is correlated to a state of affairs. If the state of affairs to which a given truth bearer is correlated actually obtains, the truth bearer is true; otherwise it is false. Correspondence as correlation claims that there is a structural isomorphism between the truth bearers and the facts to which they correspond when the truth bearer is true. Like the two halves of a torn piece of paper, the parts of the truth bearer fit with the parts of the fact. However, this correspondence is not natural but conventional.
- 2) According to the coherence theory of truth a statement is true if it coheres with a system of other statements, and false if it does not. But this coherence is not agreement with reality or with facts. The coherence theory provides the criteria or test by which truth-candidates are proved as true or rejected as false. It resembles the solving of a jigsaw puzzle by rejecting superfluous pieces that cannot possibly be fitted into the orderly picture. The pragmatic theory of truth also provides the criteria to justify a belief or proposition as true or false. Unlike in coherence theory which gives importance to mutual agreement pragmatic theory lays stress on practical usefulness or success as the proof. Beliefs or propositions are like hypotheses to be tested by empirical investigation or verification to prove their truth or falsity. A belief can be useful if it leads to accurate predictions and hence true.

### Answers to Check your Progress III

- 1) Deflationary theories of truth aim to deflate the lofty pretensions of traditional theories of truth. According to them truth has no nature. The concept of truth is unimportant; it is transparent and evident. When we say “It is true that roses are red”, we can look right through the *truth* that roses are red. We can automatically infer that roses are red. Hence truth needs no special explanation or justification. For Frank Ramsey ‘is true’ is a superfluous addition; in reality we ascribe no property to the proposition. All ascriptions of truth are gratuitous or redundant.
- 2) According to Martin Heidegger propositional truth presupposes a more primordial relation of accordance or “openness” between man and other beings in the world. There is an absolute world structure that grounds the possibility of objective truth. Our thoughts are true when they conform to that structure. It is our way of being in the world that makes truth and falsity possible. Primitivism takes truth as a basic indefinable concept. The concept

of truth is so basic to our thought that without it we would have no concepts at all. We can only say how concept of truth relates to other concepts. Pluralism allows truth to have different natures in different discourses. There is a plurality of ways for propositions to relate to reality. The word “true” has different uses in different discourses about morality, mathematics, physics etc.