

***Prosentential Theory of Truth* in DOROTHY GROVER (1936–2017)**

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Dorothy Grover's lasting contribution to philosophy is the *prosentential theory of truth*. Grover's views on prosententialism are set out in her landmark book *A Prosentential Theory of Truth* (1992), which followed on from her article "A Prosentential Theory of Truth" (1975, with Joseph Camp and Nuel Belnap) and other works (1979, 1981).

According to prosententialism, the English truth predicate "is true" is importantly different from *property-ascribing* predicates like "is blue" or "is evenly divisible by 4." We use the sentence "Blueberries are blue," for instance, to ascribe the property of being blue to blueberries. By contrast, prosententialism holds that we don't use "is true" to ascribe any sort of property to anything.

The leading idea of prosententialism is that in both ordinary and specialised discourse, "is true" only appears as a part of *prosentences*. Prosentences belong to the category of *proforms*, with pronouns and pro-verbs also being familiar members of this category. Pronouns such as "he" and "she," for instance, function grammatically as nouns. That is, pronouns are substitutable for nouns because they inherit their content from nouns. In "Jack and Jill lived in Oxford. He was a restaurateur, and she an attorney," the reference of "he" depends on that of "Jack," and likewise for "she" and "Jill."

Analogously, the content of prosentences depends on the content of other sentences. Suppose Jill says, "The tax the state charged is too high." "*That's true*," the tax assessor replies, "but you ought to pay it now and dispute it later." According to prosententialism, "That's true" is a prosentence that is anaphorically dependent on the preceding sentence. This means that in using "That's true," the tax assessor says the exact same thing that Jill does: that the tax the state charged is too high. Thus, the assessor doesn't ascribe a property—the property of being true—to the statement that Jill makes.

Prosententialism is one of the main *deflationary* theories of truth. Deflationists aim to bypass traditional debates about the metaphysics of truth using a variety of strategies. The distinctive strategy of prosententialism is to classify sentences like "That's true" as prosentences. This has the deflationary consequence that, contrary to first appearances, the English truth predicate doesn't enable us to talk about a property whose nature needs to be uncovered.

Primary Sources

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Keywords:

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