

# THEORIES OF TRUTH

HZT4UI - Mr. Wittmann - Unit 4 - Lecture I



## *La condition humaine*

-René Magritte.

“Even though we distinguish between truth and falsity hundreds of times a day, we may have difficulty expressing that distinction. What is truth?”

# WHAT IS TRUTH?

- All philosophical theories of truth agree on these axioms...
  1. Truth is an accurate account of the world
  2. There is a difference between true and false beliefs
  3. Truth requires sufficient reasons
- Most agree that true belief, without justification, is not sufficient for knowledge.
- Some agree that truth requires absolute certainty.

# WHY IS IT TRUE?

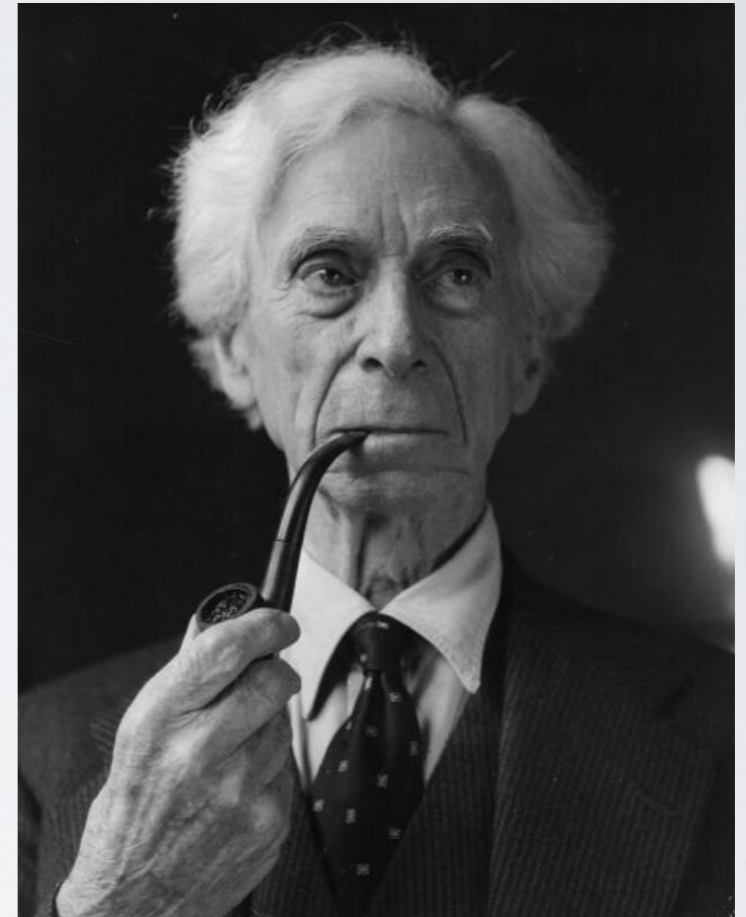
- We need evidence or sufficient reasons, to establish what we believe to be true.
- Beliefs can be true without evidence but they are not considered knowledge without it.
- A believer usually needs to justify their belief in order to believe it to be true.

# **3 THEORIES OF TRUTH**

1. Correspondence Theory
2. Coherence Theory
3. Pragmatic Theory

# CORRESPONDENCE THEORY

- A belief or statement is true when it corresponds to a fact in objective reality.
- Thus truth is a relation to reality.
- The structural correspondence between what is true and what makes it true.



Bertrand Russell  
1872-1970

# **CORRESPONDENCE THEORY**

**(CONTINUED)**

- The correspondence between a belief, a judgment, a statement, an event, a fact, etc., with reality.
- Truth is a relational property involving real agreement of beliefs and independent reality
- Often associated with metaphysical realism.

# COHERENCE THEORY



Brand Blanshard  
(1892–1987)

- A belief or statement is true when it coheres with some specified set of accepted beliefs.
- A statement is true if it conforms to a system of mutually coherent statements.
- The coherence or consistency is defined independently of objective reality.

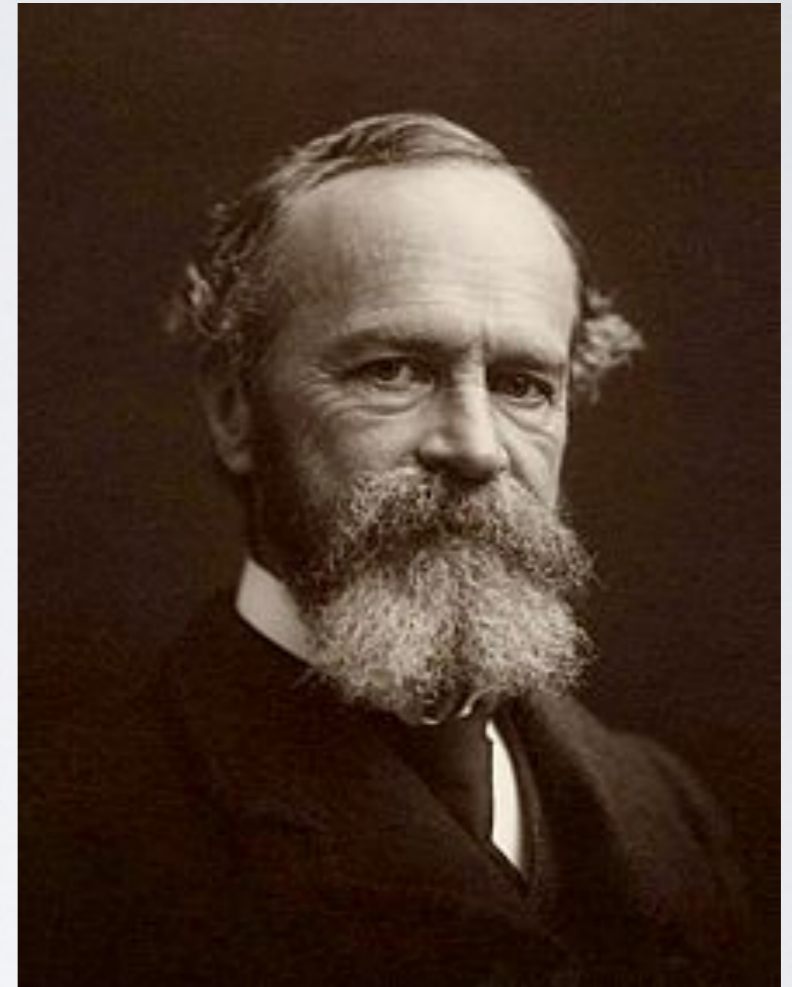
# COHERENCE THEORY

(CONTINUED)

- Favoured by Idealism, which rejects the sharp distinction between reality and your perception to it.
- Truth is the coherence of beliefs with each other.
- Reality is the largest possible number of consistent beliefs.
- Only the system as a whole is fully true, the individual component statements are only partly true or true to some degree.

# PRAGMATIC THEORY

- Truth is indeed agreement with reality, but what counts as 'agreeing with reality' is what works in the sense of satisfying needs and wants.
- In advanced sciences, the nature of accepted concepts and methods bar any correspondence with reality.



William James  
(1842–1910)

# PRAGMATIC THEORY

(CONTINUED)

- The truth of beliefs is dependent upon their usefulness and practicality.
- If a belief, a model or theory works well in achieving a desired result, then it is true.
- Beliefs are false if they do not accomplish our objectives.

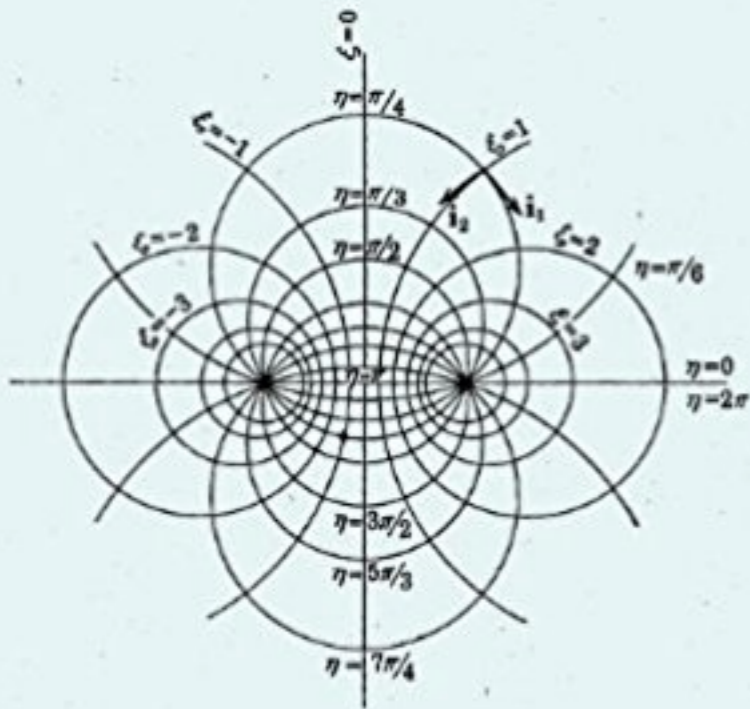
# FOR EXAMPLE...

- **Systems of belief from human history...**
  1. **Sympathetic Magic (c.30,000BCE to c. 2000BCE)**
  2. **Religion (c.2000BCE to c.1900CE)**
  3. **Science (c.1900 to present)**
- **Why are these true or not true?**

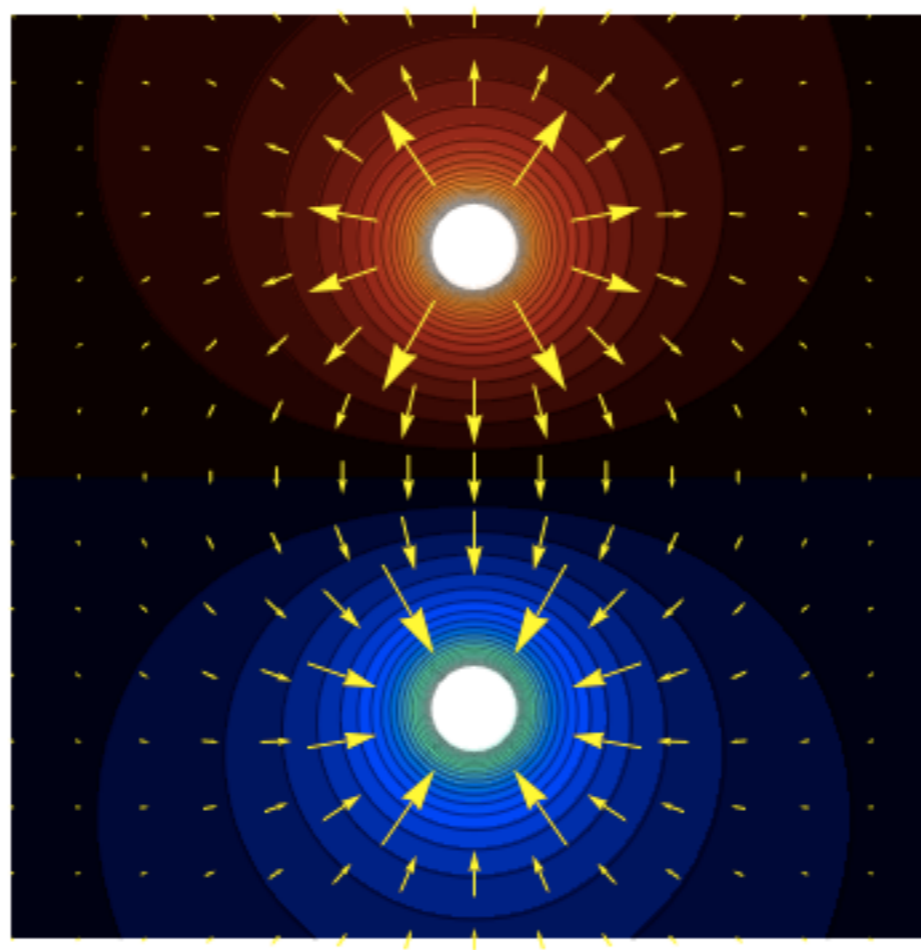


# FOR EXAMPLE...

## ELECTROMAGNETIC THEORY



JULIUS ADAMS STRATTON



**THE END**