

TOWARDS A LOGIC OF SIGNIFICANCE

PART I: THE SENTENTIAL BASIS

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I tried to show in a previous article¹ that some formal account can be taken of Ryle's theory of categories if we allow that predicates generate three classes of individuals: the class for which they are true, the class for which they are false and the class for which they are absurd (non-significant²). In order to deal with these matters formally, however, I there assumed that predicative and relational sentences of the form ' ϕx ', ' xRy ', *etc.* take on three values: 1 (true), 0 (false) and n (non-significant); but this assumption gives rise to difficulties at the level of interpretation. In particular, it might be thought that absurdity or non-significance is not a third value comparable with the two truth-values, truth and falsity, since there are important semantic differences between them; and even granted that it is, problems arise concerning which particular three-valued logic should be adopted.

I now want to look at these and related difficulties in more detail, though most of what I say in Part I will be confined to the problems as they arise in sentential logic, apart from some brief necessary excursions into predicate logic, and I shall be more concerned with the pre-formal intuitive basis for a significance theory than with detailed formal developments. I hope to discuss the similar but special problems of predicate logic in Part II.

1. *Three values* Consider, first, the question of whether 'non-significance' is a value comparable with the two truth-values.

It might be said that we cannot take an arbitrary grammatical sentence and consider it to be either true, false or non-significant for this amounts to saying that it might be used to make a true statement, a false statement or an absurd statement, and 'absurd statement' is a contradiction in terms. We might perhaps say that it can be used to make a true statement, a false

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