

The Truth Norm for Assertion: Definitional or Individuative?

Abstract:

This paper is about the norm of truth for assertion, which I henceforth call “The Truth Rule”, and is formulated as follows: “One ought to assert only what is true”. I argue that The Truth Rule as thus formulated is a norm for assertion in a specific sense. I defend the view that assertion is, *by its nature*, governed by the rule according to which one ought to assert only what is true. The paper proceeds in two parts: a historically expository part in which I situate the problem and a conceptual one in which I defend the thesis. I start the first part with Dummett, who argued for the importance of the norm of truth for assertion through an analogy with games. I then explain how this analogy is formulated in the literature in terms of what is known as “constitutive rules”, and I discuss two distinct, but conflated, ways of characterizing constitutive rules from the works of Williamson and Searle. In the second part, I introduce a distinction between two types of constitutive rules, which I call “definitional” vs. “individuative” constitutive rules. I argue then for the truth rule as being of the individuative type, and I give a possible explanation of the distinction within the institutional framework. I finish by looking at one possible account of the nature of the individuative type of constitutive rules.

Keywords: Assertion, Truth, Constitutive Rules.