

## An inquiry into meaning and truth (William James lectures for 1940, delivered at Harvard University)

Bertrand Russell

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Bertrand Russell is concerned with the foundations of knowledge which he approaches first through language. 'Meaning', as applied to words, is shown to be different for words of different kinds: object-words, proper names, logical words and dictionary words. For a sentence we have to consider the way that it expresses something of the nature of an assertion, a denial, an imperative, a desire, or a question. We can understand what it expresses if we know the meaning of its several words and the rules of syntax. From this Russell passes to a discussion of a belief and a sentence in which it is expressed. 'Knowledge' and 'truth' involve the relationship of truth to experience and Russell considers whether we can know that there are unknowable truths. The book concludes with an investigation of the structure of language and the structure of the world, with the suggestion that the former permits some inference as to the latter.



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