TRUTH, REALITY, AND LANGUAGE IN TOM STOPPARD'S JUMPERS

Maurice Gning

Department of English, Faculty of Arts & Humanities, Gaston Berger University of Saint-Louis, Senegal

ABSTRACT

This study emphasizes the problem of truth, reality, and language, highly philosophical notions, as they are expressed in *Jumpers* (1972) by the contemporary British playwright, Tom Stoppard (1937: 87 years old). Basing our analysis on some theories of analytical philosophy and the postmodern thought, we show how Stoppard stresses, in his aforementioned play, the problem of knowledge or truth in a context where old certainties have collapsed. After displaying the intrinsic link between truth, reality, and language from a historical and philosophical perspective, the study focuses on the relativity of human knowledge, particularly with regard to questions of an ethical and/or metaphysical nature. It also shows that reality is ultimately only the subjective interpretation or representation that individuals have of facts and things. This means that it only exists in subjective consciousness and is, from this point of view, always elusive.

Keywords: Truth, reality, language, verification, Tom Stoppard.

1. INTRODUCTION

The 20th century is certainly one of the richest and most varied in terms of literary production. It is a century in which writers, in their eagerness to express the uncertainties of the moment, seem to rival each other in inventiveness. In the field of theatre in particular, playwrights multiply the forms and possibilities to reflect the crisis of meaning affecting the contemporary world. One of the most innovative theatrical movements is what the literary critic Esslin has called 'the theatre of the absurd'. The English writer Tom Stoppard (1937: 87 years old) is often ranked, alongside Beckett and Pinter, as one of the leading exponents of this type of theatre in the British Isles. His most famous plays include *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1966), *The Real Inspector Hound* (1961), *Jumpers* (1972), *Travesties* (1974), *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* (1977), and *Arcadia* (1993).

Stoppard tackles a variety of themes such as the problems of art, metafiction, politics, human relationships and ethics. One constant in Stoppard's theatre, however, remains the ambiguity or uncertainty that forms the background to his many themes and which is an essential feature of postmodern writing. *Jumpers*, for example, a parody of the great questions posed by the analytical philosophy[1] of the time, is a perfect example of the staging of uncertainty. Drawing on a number of theories of analytic philosophy and the postmodern movement, we will show how Stoppard, in *Jumpers*, problematises the question of truth, language and knowledge of reality in a context of general uncertainty. The aim is precisely to show the extent to which reality eludes the power of words and, consequently, human knowledge. From a philosophical-

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[1] Analytical philosophy, which emerged at the beginning of the 20th century from the work of Gottlob Frege (1848-1925) and Bertrand Russel (1872-1970), attempted to find a solution to the crisis of language. To this end, they adopted an analytical method centred on a logical analysis of language.

historical perspective, we will first highlight the close link between truth, reality and language. We will then show the relativity of human knowledge, particularly as regards questions of morality and transcendence. Finally, we will show how Stoppard underlines the plural nature of reality, which varies according to the subjective interpretations of different people.

2. THE PROBLEMATIC OF TRUTH, REALITY AND LANGUAGE: A HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

The notion of truth is at the heart of philosophical thought. Besides, the main focus of Western philosophy since Socrates in Ancient Greece has been the ongoing quest for truth. But what exactly is truth? Although Socrates, whose thought has come down to us through the writings of his disciple Plato, does not formulate a theory of truth, he does reveal an appropriate method for accessing it. For him, truth is not a foregone conclusion. It is a perpetual quest that requires a critical and rational examination of received opinions that are most of the time relative, changing and therefore false. Plato, on the other hand, places truth in the intelligible world, the world of ideas of which observable reality is only an imperfect copy. This world of absolute, unchanging, universal, and eternal truth, this real world, which contrasts with the world of appearances in which we live, is, for Plato, accessible only through reason. Departing from the idealist vision of his contemporary Plato, Aristotle defines truth as the conformity between mental representation and the observable reality external to the mind. He writes: 'To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true' (1011b25). Aristotle thus implicitly created a theory of truth that would later be called, in the philosophy of language, the correspondence theory, that is the correspondence, conformity or adequacy between what is said and reality, between the idea and its object. This theory of correspondence is made famous by one of the great figures of scholasticism, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). His definition of truth as an adequacy between the idea and its object, which echoes the Aristotelian conception, is the one generally adopted by philosophers. There is only truth when what is said corresponds perfectly to what is, otherwise it is false.

It goes without saying that according to this theory of correspondence, truth applies strictly to ideas, statements or discourse, and not to things. This is why Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) writes in his famous book *Leviathan* (1651) that truth and falsity are attributes of language and not of things, and where there is no language, we cannot speak of truth or falsity. An object or thing cannot therefore properly be described as true or false. It simply exists. A balloon, for example, is, strictly speaking, neither true nor false. It is just a balloon. It is real. On the other hand, the judgement we make about this thing, this reality called a balloon, can be true or false. In other words, true or false qualifies our knowledge of things, not the things themselves.

However, since the Copernican revolution wrought by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) in the field of epistemology, we know that knowledge of a thing depends less on that thing than on the knowing subject. Now, according to Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), the subject cannot have exact a priori knowledge of the thing-in-itself (the noumenon). He is only capable of making a representation of this thing through the senses, a subjective representation that Kant calls phenomenon, which is also sensible intuition. Even if Kant, in the rest of his theory of knowledge, specifies the conditions under which the subject can access truth, i.e. knowledge of the thing, he has introduced a kind of relativism into the field of knowledge. He teaches that knowledge of a thing is not immediate, but follows a mental process that passes through sensible experience. Better still, he shows that the subject's claim to know everything, specifically realities that fall within the metaphysical domain, is not only illusory but makes no

sense whatsoever. Besides, his *Critique of Pure Reason* aims to delimit the field of knowledge beyond which human reason can grasp nothing.

Kant merely emphasizes the limits of reason or the subject in the vast field of knowledge. However, many 20th century thinkers, while admitting like Kant that knowledge of a thing is a function of the subject, cast definitive doubt on the subject's ability to access truth. However, they place the problem of knowledge at the level of language. For these philosophers, like Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) or the post-structuralists such as Michel Foucault (1926-1984) and Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), language is par excellence the means by which the subject conceives, interprets and expresses the reality over which it claims to have control (Gning 392). Nevertheless, they point out that language has no referential capacity. In other words, it is not capable of accurately articulating reality all the more so since Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) reveals that the linguistic sign is arbitrary, that there is no natural relationship between the signifier and the signified, between the word and the physical reality it is trying to designate. It simply means that the idea can never truly corresponds to the object. Jacques Derrida, [..] with his "deconstruction," contends that, language is a system of signs constantly shifting in meaning (Muhamba & Francis 35). The poststructuralists thus invalidate the correspondence theory of truth and inaugurate an era of uncertainty. The artificiality of language, its inability to fully express reality implies the relativity of all knowledge, and consequently the relativity of truth. This partly accounts for the "wealth of recent and not-so-recent work which is skeptical about truth in general" (Chipper 16).

In addition to the observation of the inability of language to express reality or truth, the 20th century saw a collapse of well-established certainties. The general crisis of this period arose, among other things, from the failure of the emancipatory promise of the rationalist discourse of modernity, as evidenced by the bloodshed of the two world wars. The general uncertainty engendered by the crisis is the continuation of a long tradition of questioning old certainties; a deconstruction that began, essentially, with the Copernican-Galilean thesis of heliocentrism, the Darwinian theory of evolution and the questioning of the autonomy of the subject by the three philosophers of suspicion, Marx, Nietzsche and Freud.

By submitting to critical reflection rationality, the paradigm of the project of modernity, which resulted in the catastrophes cited above, poststructuralist or postmodern thinkers have concluded that it is mere subjectivity. "For them, rationality had no firm foundations, and was itself merely one narrative among others. Hence, they presented the Enlightenment not as a common project of the advancement of knowledge, but as a vehicle of power" (Turnbell (6). Postmodernists like Jean-François Lyotard (1924-1998) proclaims the end of metanarratives, the great ideologies that have punctuated the march of history. At the same time, they herald the advent of the era of general relativism. "Postmodernism challenges the traditional view, arguing that truth is always shaped by cultural, historical, and linguistic factors and that no universal truth exists beyond our individual and social experiences" (Muhamba & Francis 34). It is against this backdrop of general uncertainty and the relativity of truth that Tom Stoppard's plays, often associated with the British theatre of the absurd, are set. Stoppard constantly uses the game of language to underline, with a touch of irony, the elusive nature of reality, the problems of ethics and language - in short, the philosophical uncertainties of the contemporary age.

3. TRUTH OF MORAL JUDGEMENT

The 20th century, as we have already pointed out, is the century where certainties crumble one after the other. It is the century of relativism which affects all areas of life. We are therefore far from the time when men, for example, agreed on what is good and what is bad. We are in

the era of cultural relativism where notions of good and evil vary depending on space, time, people and multifaceted beliefs or convictions. From then on, the debate on moral values leads to a real impasse. In addition to exposing the subjectivity of any point of view, such a debate also reveals the inability of language to adequately express our convictions.

Stoppard's *Jumpers* is an eloquent expression of the relativity of moral judgement and the deadlock any debate about ethical values leads to. The play projects onto the stage a professor of moral philosophy called George Moore. Considering that British moral philosophy has been negatively altered for years, the professor seeks to set the straight right. To this end, he prepares, in the form of lecture titled "Man – good, bad or indifferent", an attack on logical positivism[2] which, he thinks, is responsible for this situation. He concentrates all his efforts in demonstrating that, as opposed to what logical positivism teaches, absolute and universal values do exist in the realm of metaphysics.

Two main viewpoints are set in opposition here, dividing the characters into two opposing camps. The one defended by George Moore believes in the existence of universal truths and values. This theory finds its root in the thought of the real George Edward Moore (1873-1958), a main figure of the British analytical philosophy and author of a famous moral philosophy book entitled *Principia Ethica* (1903). The other viewpoint according to which all moral values are relative is held by the British logical positivist thinker, Sir Alfred Jules Freddie Ayer (1910-1989), mostly known for his book, *Language, Truth, and Logic* (1936). This viewpoint is epitomised in Stoppard's plays by characters like Archie Jumper (the Vice-Chancellor of the university), Dorothy also called Dotty (George Moore's wife) and mostly Duncan McFee, Professor of Logic and the very intellectual opponent of George Moore in the upcoming annual debate on the topic cited above.

Stoppard's George Moore first defines moral philosophy as "an attempt to determine what we mean when we say that something is good and that something else is bad (56). But, just as Kant did with the issue of reason, he specifies the field of applicability of moral judgement, which, he thinks, modern philosophy fails to do. For him, all realities cannot be judged morally. He explains:

Language is a finite instrument crudely applied to an infinity of ideas, and one consequence of the failure to take account of this is that modern philosophy has made itself ridiculous by analysing statements as: 'This is a good bacon sandwich', or, 'Bedser had a good wicket' (pp.56-57)

While implying, like poststructuralists, that there is no reality beyond language, Moore is convinced, as are most theorists of knowledge, that good and evil cannot, with objectivity, be applied to objects. Moore subscribes then to the view that people may have different or contradictory viewpoints about the quality of one object, each standpoint having its own validity. It is in this sense that he shares Professor McFee's idea that "good has also meant different things to different people at different times" (44). He glosses over these considerations which are purely relative and dwell on judgements relating to human behaviour. Moral appreciation, for Moore, has nothing to do with the expression of personal feeling. To sustain his viewpoint, he evokes the parable of the Good Samaritan in the Bible:

But when we say that the Good Samaritan acted well, we are surely expressing more than circular prejudice about behaviour. We mean he acted kindly – selfishlessly – well. And what

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[2] A twentieth-century intellectual movement created by a group of thinkers who met and Vienna and came to be referred to as the Vienna Circle. Logical positivist thinkers consider that anything that cannot be logically demonstrated and scientifically verified is not true. For the proponent of this theory of knowledge, metaphysical ideas are unverifiable and therefore meaningless, only scientific truth is valid since it can be verified thought direct observation or logical proof.

is our approval of kindness based on if not on the intuition that kindness is simply good in itself and cruelty is not (57).

The idea that Moore defends here is that of traditional intuitionists who postulate that basic moral propositions are self-evident (Lake 28). These intuitionists, including Rene Descartes (1596-1650), Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677), and Nicholas Malebranche (1638-1715), consider that obviousness, known by rational intuition, is the most reliable criterion of truth. Spinoza (352), for instance, writes: "He who has a true idea knows at the same time that he has a true idea and cannot doubt the truth of his knowledge [...] for no one who has a true idea is unaware that the true idea envelops the highest certainty. To have a true idea, in fact, means nothing except to know a thing perfectly"[3]. Spinoza's assumption indicates the existence of truths the obviousness of which does not allow one to have the slightest doubt about them. Such truths do not need to be verified or demonstrated because they are self-evident. Basing on this, Moore believes that it is quite possible to distinguish between good and bad, truth and untruth with no risk of making an error of judgement. The absolute nature of moral truth is also supported by George E. Moore whom the fictional Moore is oddly paraphrasing. In the following lines, Cahn (132-133) illustrates George E. Moore's idea of intuitive knowledge of morality.

According to Moore, goodness is an actual property possessed by things in the world. This if we affirm that some object is good and if, in fact, the object possesses the property of goodness, then our judgement is actually true. If we affirm that some object is good and the object does not possess the property of goodness, then our judgement is actually false. How is it known whether an object possesses the property of goodness? According to Moore, often referred to as an 'ethical intuitionist', moral truths can be known to be truth 'by intuition', which is to say that their goodness is self-evident.

There is clearly a difference in point of view between the real Moore and the fictional Moore who takes up the ideas of the first, of course in a parodic perspective that characterises postmodern writing. Indeed, in the light of the above quotation, we see that the philosopher Moore includes things and objects within the framework of what can be described as good or bad. It is quite the opposite, as we have just pointed out, that the fictional Moore maintains. It is as if, beyond logical positivism, the fictional Moore is committed to correcting what he considers to be errors in the philosophy of modern language generally, including in the thinking of his idol.

Even if he more or less succeeds in circumscribing the framework of moral judgment beyond which any moral point of view becomes a simple relative opinion, Moore comes up against two almost insurmountable obstacles. The first is epistemological in nature. It relates to the very idea of making intuition a criterion of truth. Indeed, there is no universal criterion of truth. Philosophers do not always agree on what the paradigm of truth should be. "Some philosophers claim that intuition has a heavy epistemic credence and can be often relied on, while others doubt that and call for a revision (or even rejection) of Intuition as a Source of intuition-driven methodologies of philosophy" (Cekiera 10-11). Leibniz, for example, advocates the recourse to mathematical procedures such as demonstration and calculation. Associated with this method of verification, logic constitutes, for Leibniz, the token of truthfulness of a given idea; it is more objective than obviousness which, he thinks, is generally based on personal convictions. Cekiera (2024) uses the term intuitionist Deniers to refer to those thinkers who reject intuition as truth-bearer. One of the early modern intuitionist Deniers is Nietzsche for

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[3] « Qui a une idée vraie sait en même temps qu'il a une idée vraie et ne peut douter de la vérité de sa connaissance […] car nul ayant une idée vraie n'ignore que l'idée vraie enveloppe la plus haute certitude. Avoir une idée vraie, en effet, ne signifie rien, sinon connaître une chose parfaitement ».

whom obviousness established by intuition is not reliable as a criterion of truth, for it can be misleading.

The position of postmodern relativists, which is close to that of the nihilists of whom Nietzsche is the main figure, is simply that there is no single reliable criterion for determining truth. By analogy, there is no unfailing criterion on the basis of which a peremptory judgement can be made with regard to the goodness or badness of an action or attitude. The holders of this theory negate the absolute nature of moral and aesthetic judgement. The notions of 'truth' and 'falsehood' cannot be applied to such realities which they believe to be the expression of personal feelings. A. J. Ayer, who defends this point of view, declares: "If I say to someone, 'you acted wrongly in stealing that money', I am not stating anything more than if I had simply said 'you stole that money'. In adding that this action is wrong I am not making any further statement about it. I am simply evincing my moral disapproval of it" (qted by Cahn, 133). It is this same idea that Dotty takes up. When, quoting Archie Jumper, she declares: "Things and actions, you understand, can have any number of real and verifiable properties. But good and bad, better and worse, these are not real properties of things, they are just expressions of our feelings about them" (pp.31-32).

It is important, however, to point out that these relativists do not condone actions such as killing a person, stealing or telling lies, which they think to be, socially speaking, disruptive elements in normal life. On the sole grounds that peaceful living together should be preserved they strongly recommend people to avoid the above-mentioned things and always tell the truth. Professor McFee maintains that "telling lies is not sinful but simply anti-social" (39).

The second major obstacle Moore comes across in his attempts to express what he considers to be basic absolute truth is linked to language itself. He desperately confesses: "I had hoped to set British moral philosophy back forty years, which is roughly when it went off the rails, but unfortunately my convictions are intact and my ideas coherent, I can't seem to find the words" (36). Moore realises that, as Butler sustains, "whatever we say, we are caught within a linguistic system that does not relate to external reality in the way we expect, because every term within each system also alludes to, or depends upon, the existence of other terms" (qted by Yedekçi 8). In consequence, his misfortune is that he cannot say enough about the question he raises. The further Moore goes in his demonstrations, the more he needs words and the more he is at loss of them. "A truth", declares Stoppard, "is always a compound of two half-truths, and you never reach it, because there is always something more to say" (Qted by Bareham Ed. 34). Such an observation might have been one of the conclusions of Stoppard's Moore's unsuccessful philosophical venture. The realisation of the inability of language to express reality also leads Moore to conclude that "it's so difficult to know what it is one knows" (62). Moore does not give up his conviction. It is just that he isn't in a position to give an effective account of it. His inability to justify what he knows intuitively can also be seen through the details, trivialities and inconsistencies which run through all his reasoning, before he himself confesses. For a philosopher who thinks he can submit language to a logical analysis in the hope of removing it from uncertainty and establishing tangible truths, such a failure can only be a major irony of fate. Just as it is difficult to justify the truth of one's moral judgments, it is more difficult when it comes to matters that fall within the realm of faith.

4. TRUTH OF BELIEF

In addition to his unsuccessful attempt to demonstrate the existence of absolute moral truths or the truth of what we think we know, Moore ventures into a much more complex philosophical path. He indeed attempts, as thinkers like Descartes and Thomas Aquinas did, to demonstrate the existence of God, but based on the logic of language. Kant, and later the thinkers of logical

positivism, delimited the field of knowledge beyond which the human mind cannot establish any objectivity. Metaphysical questions such as God, faith, the soul, the world simply do not make sense since they transcend human reason. Added to this is the inability of language to accurately match reality, as poststructuralists insistently emphasize, a reality that Moore unfortunately stumbles upon.

A great many artists who are known under the label of absurdist playwrights including Eugene Ionesco, Samuel Beckett, Jean Genet, and Harold Pinter, to name a few, are very contemptuous of language for its artificiality and incapacity to rise above the level of nonsense. In Pinter's *The Birthday Party*, Goldberg is unable to find the appropriate words to define the universe.

Because I believe that the world … (vacant)…

Because I believe that the world …(desperate)…

BECAUSE I BELIEVE THAT THE WORLD … (lost)… (88).

The stage directions denote the perplexity of Goldberg as he tries in vain to utter a clear and consistent sentence to describe the world. Moore finds himself in an identical situation in his endeavour to prove the existence of God. Bumping into the vagrancy and inadequacy of words, he gets booged down in a contradictory mass of arguments. It is as if awareness of the powerlessness of language is never greater than when it comes to speaking about things that transcend the human mind. Esslin (406) declares in this regard that "it is in this striving to communicate a basic and undissolved totality of perception, an intuition of being, that we can find a key to the devaluation and disintegration of language". Indeed, Moore's plight comes from the fact that he attempts to communicate ideas he has received in the form of intuition. Something inside him tells him that God exists. This thing is nothing else but faith. As opposed to scientific knowledge which can be acquired through reason, faith is in no way premised on reason. It is a belief in and adhesion to unverified truths. Any rational argument aiming to justify these unspeakable truths about the existence of God is consequently doomed to failure. This goes in line with A. J. Ayer's assertion that "all utterances about the nature of God are nonsensical" (Qted by Jenkins 88), to which Wittgenstein adds: "what I cannot speak about we must consign to silence" (ibid). It is on the basis of this remark that Blaise Pascal and other philosophers appeared to be very critical to Descartes' attempt to demonstrate rationally the existence of God. Pascal insisted that God can only be known by the heart or faith and not by reasoning.

By the end of his mental gymnastics which parallels the acrobatics executed by the jumpers, George Moore admits in despairing tone the impenetrability of the question of God: "I do not claim to know that God exists, I only claim that he does without my knowing it, and while I claim as much I do not claim to know as much; indeed, I cannot know and God knows I cannot" (62). The recognition of the indecipherable character of God and the inability of language to of prove his existence does less than shake Moore in his belief. He still holds convictions though he is unable to formulate proofs to sustain them.

The question arises as to know whether convictions which cannot stand up to rational analysis or verification can be considered to be true. Moore remains categorical in this respect: "There are many things I know which are not verifiable but nobody can tell me I don't know them" (69). The positivists are rather sceptical about this issue. For them, "truth must be capable of scientific verification and anything which fall outside this area of fact is not philosophical" (Jenkins 88). Most believers would agree with Moore. They come to hold ideas as being true out of sheer belief. In the absence of rational proof, one is free to accept or reject such truths. Stoppard expressively poses the problem of the difficulty of truth verification. The believer is in no position to prove that his convictions are fundamentally true, just as the sceptic cannot, on the basis on any argument, explodes these convictions. It is particularly for this reason that

23

Kant and the proponents of logical positivism regard these transcendent subjects as meaningless. They cannot be the subject of any scientific or logical analysis.

What emerges overall from Moore's philosophical exercise is that abstract realities resist logical analysis and the power of words. It is virtually impossible to verify the veracity of ideas that are received and accepted by simple intuition or faith. But what is even more ironic is that Moore, who is preoccupied with demonstrating the veracity of metaphysical questions, does not seem to be in a position to know what is going on around him, in his concrete world.

5. THE PLURAL AND UNSTABLE NATURE OF REALITY

Moore's philosophical demonstration reveals that abstract metaphysical reality escapes human understanding. Postmodernists go beyond this observation. Even if they do not systematically deny reality in general, they believe that it "is not stable or objective" (Yedekçi 14). It is relative, changing. Indeed, for them, reality, "is not a monolith, but the result of our own individual, subjective experiences with the world around us" (Aryan vii). In other words, reality is a multitude of interpretations, none of which can claim to be objective. Stoppard stresses the plural, subjective and elusive nature of reality by creating equivocal situations that give rise to endless conjectures.

The death of Professor McFee perfectly fits into this category of ambiguous circumstances. The Radical Liberal Party has just come to power. In the heart of their victory celebration at the Moore's, one of the jumpers who make up the university gymnastic team is shot dead as they assemble themselves into human pyramid to perform acrobatics. The perpetrator of this crime is not specified. Faced with this mystery around the circumstances of this death, characters are reduced to mere speculations. Even Stoppard has a vague opinion on the matter. In the following stage directions, he suspects Dotty to be behind the murder: "and from her position in the near dark outside the jumpers' light, it should be possible to believe that Dotty is responsible for what happens next which is: a gun shot. One jumper is blown out of the pyramid" (12).

As the play progresses, suspicions multiply. Dotty thinks Archie Jumper to be guilty, while Archie Jumper, inspector Bones, Crouch and George Moore are rather convinced that Dotty is the one who as committed the murder. Even though we acknowledge the validity of each of these suspicions, none of them is definite. Archie avows that "anybody could have fired the shot" (54).

Ironically, inspector Bones, who has come to shed light on the matter and restore order, does nothing but add fuel to the fire. In fact, accused of rape by Dotty and Archie, he goes away without clarifying the enigmatic death and leaves behind him another wave of suspicions. The truth about this death will remain for ever evasive. Archie's words are suggestive enough of that: "The truth to us philosophers, M Crouch, is always an interim judgement. We will never know for certain who did shoot McFee. Unlike mystery novels, life does not guarantee a denouement and if it came, how would we know whether to believe it?" (72).

Archie's insightful comment on this issue should serve as a response to the suspicions aroused by the doubtful relation with Dorothy. Taking himself for a psychiatrist, which is never verified, Archie makes regular visits at the Moores in order to attend to Dotty who suffers from neurosis. The 'treatment' take place in so ambiguous a condition that George Moore has grown to think that Archie is having an affair with his wife. Faithful to his thought process which consists in demonstrating an idea through the logic of language, Moore embarks on a maze of hypotheses to clarify the suspicious relation.

I do not deal in suspicion and wild surmise. I examine the data. I look for logical inferences. We have on the one hand, that is to say in bed, an attractive married woman whose relationship

with her husband stops short only of the issue of ration book; we have on the other hand daily visits by a celebrated ladies' man who rings the doorbell is admitted by Mrs Thing who shows him into the bedroom, whence he emerges on hour later looking more that a little complacent and crying […] Now let us see. What can we make of it all? Wife in bed, daily visits by gentleman caller, does anything suggest itself? (23-24)

Moore's reasoning remains unsolved. He ends his sentences with the same embarrassing question that has motivated his reflexion. He cannot find the proof that his wife has an adulterous relation with Archie. G. B. Crump makes a most significant comment in this regard. He states: "although the available evidence suggests the hypothesis that Dorothy is having an affair with Archie, the same evidence could conceivably support her explanations that Archie is her psychiatrist" (Qted by Bareham Ed. 138). This pertinent observation proves that it is difficult to say whether inspector Bones has raped Dotty, as Archie and Dotty claim. We remember that Archie has been trying to corrupt inspector Bones with the intention of shielding Dotty whom he believes to be Archies' murderer. In the face of an incorruptible inspector, it is quite possible that Archie act in connivence with Dotty and try to set a trap for Bones and blackmail him into silence. In this case, his accusations are groundless. It may also be true that inspector Bones has really raped Dotty, which much of a surprise for Archie. This gives him the opportunity to have an agreement with Bones, without which he is likely to report the inspector to his seniors. The following is a discussion during which Archie shows a kind of amazement and a determination to have the inspector forget about the whole question of the murder, while the latter is remarkable for his imprecise explanations concerning the rape he is accused of:

Archie: Tush… Tush, Inspector. I am shocked…deeply shocked.

Bones: No – no – I was just…

Archie: What will they say back at the station?

Bones: No – no – We were just…

Archie: What a tragic end to an incorruptible career.

Bones: No – please!

Archie: Do not despair. I'm sure we can come to some arrangement (61-62)

The truth about the relation between Dotty and Archie on the one hand and that between Dotty and Bones on the other is simply unverifiable.

6. CONCLUSION

Classically conceived as the correspondence between idea and reality, truth is intrinsically linked to language. Like reality, truth is conceived through and in language. However, the epistemological crisis heralded by Kant's Copernican revolution and confirmed by Nietzsche and later by post-structuralist thinkers shows that, from a philosophical point of view, truth is virtually inaccessible to man. This is because the language with which man attempts to grasp and express reality is unable to correspond exactly to that reality, given the arbitrary and artificial nature of the relationship between signifier and signified, between words and things. Added to this is the collapse of the ideals of modernity, aggravating the epistemological crisis crystallised by postmodern thought and ushering in an era of general relativity.

Analytical philosophy, born of the desire to find a solution to the crisis of language by adopting an analytical approach based on logic, does not seem to have produced the expected results. Tom Stoppard's *Jumpers*, through its protagonist George Moore, takes an ironic and amusing look at man's claim to account for what he knows or to grasp reality. Moore's attempt to prove the veracity of moral judgements and the existence of God, based on a logical analysis of language, ends in total nonsense, reflected in his many inconsistencies, contradictions, trivia,

digressions and admissions of failure. Reality, whether metaphysical or not, eludes man. According to the postmodernists, it is changeable, relative and plural, depending on one's interpretation or another. Stoppard captures this epistemological aspect through the ambiguous circumstances he creates, which are subject to multiple interpretations by the characters, none of which is certain. Beyond the conceptual complexity it implies, the analysis of truth, reality and language in Tom Stoppard's *Jumpers* reveals a profound crisis of meaning in a world where uncertainty has paradoxically become the only true reality or certainty.

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