# **Truth**

## A New Definition with Life

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#### PROBLEM IN DEFINING TRUTH

One of the main issues one immediately confronts when dealing with the word "truth" is the lack of attention to first defining the word. In this regard, this situation is very different than the ease in which truth's opposite, deception or falsehood, is defined. A deception of falsehood is defined as an act or statement that misleads. This raises two key issues: one, that falsehood and thus its opposite truth is of concern only to sentient beings; and secondly, that "misleading" is an action that results in an action from a deceptive or false action, whether in words or deeds.

If we view the main divisions of theory of truth as epistemic – dealing with the intellect, or pragmatic -dealing with results, I will contend that sentient beings, those creatures that care about being misled or not, are more than just an intellect, and thus any understanding of truth must take the wholly lived life of sentient beings as the basis to establish truth.

Common among discussions of truth is a connection of truth to knowledge, that is, there is a relationship between truth and epistemology. I will put forward that truth is a characteristic of knowledge, and that this characteristic is of a superlative type. Best knowledge, most important knowledge, not to be outstripped knowledge: these are descriptions which attach to the word truth as commonly imagined as well as to the nature of a superlative.

#### TRUTH AS GUIDE FOR ACTION

If falsity is a misleading, then truth is a leading to a desired objective. The most desired objective for any sentient creature would be that objective best facilitated by truth, and best destroyed by falsehood. I will put forward that a common most desired objective for all sentient beings is a fourfold path:

to avoid premature death, to avoid insanity, to avoid being placed into slavery, to avoid going to prison.

Each of these may be defined in the broadest of terms.

Thus, truth is that knowledge which, when possessed and acted on appropriately and in good faith, would lead to average life span, sanity, and freedom from disadvantageous constraint. Neither is truth any mere correspondence or coherence or social consensus, as these do not consider a wholly lived life, a life lived across time, a life lived with the constant threat of risk, a life which is the centerpoint of knowledge as both creator and user. We will here state what truth is and later describe in more detail:

## Truth is a demonstrated sustainably lived life.

### **OBVIOUS LIMITATION**

Certainly, for any sentient creature, decisions need to be made and will be made in the course of living and these decisions will be in a language, will reflect cognitive structures and will be assessable intellectually in thought experiments before any action is taken. But the measure of truth is not how these ideas in the mind accord with each other, but how any actions taken provide value for the living sentient creature. The proof is in the pudding as we say; however, the full adage is the proof is in the eating of the pudding.

One limitation in how decisions play out in the world rely on the widely accepted difference between intersubjectively verifiable facts and subjective likes/wants. We hereby contend that truth is not individualizable. In that, what is true for one person is also true for all others; but while one person likes the

taste of oranges and for them the statement "Oranges taste good" would likely precede walking across a room to grab an orange to eat it; another person may make the statement "Oranges taste bad" likely resulting in not walking across a room to grab an orange to eat it. But the truth is that people tend to walk across rooms to grab foods they deem taste good and people tend not to walk across rooms to grab foods they deem taste bad.

The question becomes for Stoics or masochists what truth would be. In this situation, the truth would be that they would be skinny by walking across a room to grab foods they dislike in as equal amount as walking across rooms to grab foods they like. As they are skinny, they are likely more malnourished than others, and thus more likely to die prematurely; thus, fewer and fewer non-malnourished have to listen to their misleading statements about the value of "taking what one gets" in the case of Stoics, or doing things that cause pain, in the case of masochists.

We must recognize that even for a person who would declare outwardly or just to themselves that "Oranges taste good" may decline from walking across a room to grab an orange to eat. This decision not to indulge oneself on this occasion may be tempered by the awareness that the surrounding event is a black tie event and the risk of squirting orange juice on one's white shirt outweighs the benefit of enjoying eating the orange. Thus the statement "Oranges taste good" may remain in force, but the need to present oneself as clean in the eyes of others at the event so as to protect one's long term earning capacity gains the upper hand. Thus in explaining why one did not eat an orange at the black tie event, truth emerges that: I had to present myself as worthy of the high paying job so as to not get fired and to have enough money for potential medical care to avoid premature death. But, for everyone else, we might just witness self-control leading to long term success.

### **NON-OBVIOUS LIMITATION**

The famous "Snow is white" is actually untrue, as given orange dust particles in sand deserts rising to make precipitation, we occasionally may see pink snow. Thus the statement, "Snow is non-white" is true. In a discussion with a not-so-bright person who tends towards violence (or a classical logician), imagine that you seek to tell this person that 'No, snow is not-white; it is sometimes white, but not always white' resulting in this person becoming highly agitated and angry. While this statement can be intersubjectively verified, the distress in making this statement has, unfortunately, resulted in the other person losing control and killing you. Thus, this other person will not have to hear again this "truth", and the pictures (see below) will remain in books rarely opened, and spoken about only in whispers between confidants, as word will likely spread about the danger of spreading the pink snow truth publically and openly (especially at logic conventions).

The truth then becomes that indeed "Snow is white" is false, "Snow is non-white; it is sometimes white" is true, and "Speaking 'Snow is non-white; it is sometimes white" can dramatically shorten one's life. Thus, this whole 'dangerous' truth is reserved for old people; that old people demonstrate truth by living it, by knowing when to walk away and when to run, to quote the song.



Pink Snow

#### CLASSIC CASE

As regards metaphysics, we hear much talk of this world as simulation, this world as unreal, as a mere projection of our mind, or collectively, minds. I am not certain about the meaning of "real" in these cases, but truth is that highest knowledge, that state-of-affairs that cannot be outstripped. The measure, again, is that given a situation and by acting appropriately – and yes, 'appropriate' needs clarification – and in good faith one avoids premature death, insanity, imprisonment, and slavery one is acting out truth, an exemplar of truth, evidence of truth, pathway of truth, or pathway to truth.

## Imagine this situation:

Two people are on train tracks and look over and see a train heading towards them. One person says that the train is real and he is stepping off the tracks; the other person says that the world is unreal thus this train is unreal and he is not stepping off the tracks. What will happen?

Well, two things will likely happen: 1) the person who stepped off the tracks will have some difficult explaining to do with a coroner, and 2) there will be silence on any continuation of that now rather foolish discussion about the reality or unreality of the world. Truth would be that the world is real, as the person who claimed that the world was not real is currently unable to contest this judgment. Truth would be the old person

regaling the story of the simulation theorist's funeral and how there were very few simulation theorists at that funeral, fewer indeed than at the previous funeral of the previous simulation theorist who died.

Eventually, there will be less and less talk of trains being unreal and more and more talk of stepping off train tracks when trains are viewed coming down the tracks.

#### PERFORMATIVE ACTIONS VERSUS TRUTH

Gottlob Frege struggled with asserting connections between the abstract science of logic and the world: he was not alone in this struggle. Truth, however, is not abstract; truth is a superlative of knowledge such that possession of that superlative and with good faith, appropriate actions based leads to the ability to continue a conversation, at a minimum.

Take his famous equality that the sentence "I smell the scent of violets" has identical content with the sentence "it is true that I smell the scent of violets". This equality is just not the case. One can imagine for a multitude of reasons why one would make the utterance "I smell the scent of violets" when actually one does not smell violets.

Imagine the extreme situation of a gangster holding a gun against one's head and asking you to say "I smell the scent of violets". As there are no violets in the room and one is not experiencing synthesia, one is tempted to utter "I do not smell the scent of violets", at which point, one may never smell the scent of violets again. Truth would be making the statement "I smell the scent of violets" while simultaneously to oneself also making the statement "it is not true that I smell the scent of violets" and living to tell the tale.

The world is not a collection of statements. The world is a place to live. Statements made may lead one to truth or mislead one away from truth and into premature death, insanity, slavery, or imprisonment.

One can immediately suggest that Frege meant only when one speaks free of duress. Okay. But then, we conditionalize truth to select situations. Once we begin the process of conditionalizing situations in which words in statements can be carriers of truth, we fall upon a slippery slope. It would quickly become excluding statements constructed under non-obvious duress, then statements constructed under subliminal duress as well, or even just collective pressure whether the pressure is obvious, hidden or structural as merely affected by the unalterable categories of thought.

Consider also after one makes the statement "I smell the scent of violets", the gangster then asks "Is it true that you smell the scent of violets"; obviously if one were able to retain one's composure, one would likely continue the charade and say "it is true that I smell the scent of violets". So here Frege appears correct again in that the sentence "I smell the scent of violets" has identical content with the sentence "it is true that I smell the scent of violets". I hope we can see by now that truth does not adhere in sentences floating on a page but rather truth is knowledge integrated with experience.

The Performative Action of merely outwardly declaring either of these statements is not misleading to oneself at all, but is rather an event of truth unfolding itself within the world. The knowledge that one actually did not smell the scent of violets will never be known if one is killed. The truth of not smelling the violets and yet saying one smells the violets can only be demonstrated by that person surviving, sustaining, and speaking; speaking ultimately the truth of when it is appropriate to make statements that do not accord with one's sense impressions. In this case, one could only make those statements if one is alive; otherwise, there is a different truth: not any truth from the dead body, but rather the truth that dead men tell no truths. Or less witty, we might put that truth as gangsters will be humored or others will die.

## INVESTMENT IN REALITY | INVESTMENT FOR REALITY

Deceptions, lies, falsities, falsehoods are those events that impel the mind to make a decision on whether to lead oneself into life or death; but the same may be said of truth as events that impel the mind to make a decision on whether to lead oneself into life or death. Letting oneself be mislead into prison, insanity, slavery or premature death is living in untruth. Events are only events if there is a sentient participant, and those events really only have importance if there is one or more sentient participant.

While glib, to the question of if a tree falls in a forest and no one hears it, does it make a sound, I am tempted to posit that the best answer is who cares. Who cares about answering this question? Who cares whether or not there is a sound? There is no investment by any sentient creature in this now mythological tree falling in the forest. However, there is a specialist study of waveform dynamics and quite obviously such practitioners take an interest and could both merely record the sound waves on paper or an auditable recording in which case, yes, a tree falling in a forest does make a sound, but not necessarily a sound that occurs in that forest.

Thus in asking whether this unimportant matter is true or not true, the answer would be in so many cases that it is hard to tell whether anyone even cares. But the moment that some intersubjectively verifiable fact becomes

contested in the world and a performative act is then the likely outcome of whether or not this intersubjectively

verifiable fact is truth – leading sentient beings to demonstrated sustainable living – then sentient participants

have an investment in determining the best course of action.

At this point, we may ask for volunteers to follow both courses, after taking all precautions against rash

dangerous action and after subjecting the elements of the intersubjectively verifiable facts to rigorous

investigation. We may conclude that if both decisions - to act, say, in favor or to act against, both lead to

sanity, freedom and self-preservation, then there is no truth of the matter. The resulting performative action as

outcome of this contested intersubjectively verifiable fact opens the truth that perhaps any action this

knowledge leads to reveals no drawbacks.

But this is what we expect in the world. Oranges taste good (or not) but intersubjectively verifiably eating

oranges provides nutrients that sustain life. However, one may choose to eat oranges or not and live perfectly

happy, long, safe, free lives. The reality is that oranges may or may not be consumed: your investment in

reality is the reality that is either for eating orange (pro) or against eating orange (con). The truth is that in life,

one will meet people who while knowing that oranges indeed provide nutrients and indeed know that others

think oranges are tasty, will nevertheless decline to eat oranges. This truth of two paths is something about

which really who cares.

WHO CARES?

Look around:

Truth is a demonstrated sustainably lived life.

New Definition of Truth

# A. Epistemic Theories of Truth

- 1) Verificationist Theory
  - a) Positivism

Logical positivism

b) A-priorism

Concept-containment

- 2) Perspectivist (Relativist) Theory
  - a) Individual Perspectivalism
  - b) Discourse Perspectivalism
  - c) Collectivist Perspectivalism
    - i) Consensus
    - ii) Power
    - iii) Marxist
  - d) Transcendental Perspectivalism Theory
    - i) Coherentism
    - ii) Theological Perspectivalism
  - e) Pragmatic Theory
- 3) Coherence Theory
- 4) Correspondence Theory
- 5) Consensus Theory
- 6) Constructivist Theory
- 7) Deflationary Theory
  - a) Redundancy Theory
- 8) Semantic Theory

## B. Pragmatic Theories of Truth

- 9) American Pragmatism
  - a) Pierce
  - b) James
  - c) Dewey

# 1) VERIFICATIONIST THEORY

Central to logical positivism, verificationism is based on verifying propositions and maintains that statements must be empirically verifiable to be meaningful. Otherwise, they are vacuous or mere tautologies. The result of such verification is truth; truth is reducible to the verification process.

POSITIVIST THEORY

In positivism, a proposition is meaningful, and thus capable of being true or false, if and only if it is verifiable by sensory experiences.

A-PRIORI THEORY

A-priorism holds a proposition true if and only if a priori reasoning can verify it, most useful in the abstract sciences of mathematics and logic.

# 2) Perspectivist Theory

According to perspectivalism, a proposition is only true relative to a particular perspective. A proposition is thus true relative to a select perspective if and only if it is accepted, endorsed, or legitimated by that perspective.

INDIVIDUAL PERSPECTIVIST

Perspectives are here taken as the points of view of particular individuals; thus, a proposition is true for if and only if it is accepted or believed by that person: true for me.

**DISCOURSE PERSPECTIVIST** 

As a perspective is just a system of discourse, it is a matter of convention which one arbitrarily chooses. A proposition is true relative to that particular discourse if and only if it is somehow produced, and thus validated or legitimated, by the methods internal to that particular discourse.

COLLECTIVIST PERSPECTIVIST

Here, perspectives are understood as communities of people and if a given community is in agreement, having a consensus about an issue, then any proposition in accord with this agreement would become

true; if power is the objective, then a proposition is true if it confers power to the community, or is generated by community power: truth is power; if there is an ideology, then a proposition is true if it is the *product of ideological struggle* or for some social constructivists agenda as in feminist epistemologists.

#### TRANSCENDENTAL PERSPECTIVIST

A truth-conferring perspective is something transcendental, and outside immediate human reach. The idea is that there is a transcendental or ideal epistemic perspective and truth is, roughly, what is accepted or recognized-as-true from that ideal perspective. Idealism posits a set of perfectly coherent and consistent propositions, and humans may attempt to approach this truth; religious thinking would decree a God's eye view and that is truth, and humans would have only distant access to it.

# 3) COHERENCE THEORY

The coherence theory of truth regards truth as coherence within some specified set of sentences, propositions or beliefs. Truth is a property of whole systems of propositions. Truth is then ascribable to individual propositions only afterwards and according to the extent of their coherence within the whole.

# 4) CORRESPONDENCE THEORY

Truth or falsity applies to statements and is determined only by how it relates to the world, and to the extent that it accurately describes (corresponds to) the world.

# 5) Consensus Theory

Truth is merely the process of accepting statements to be true simply because people generally agree upon them.

## 6) Constructivist Theory

Truth is socially constructed, and thereby socially relative. What is to be regarded as true is thus relative to a particular social formation, and in a different social formation, this truth may well be falsehood.

# 7) DEFLATIONARY THEORY

The deflationary theory of truth is one of a family of theories that all have in common the claim that assertions of the truth of a statement do not attribute a property called "truth" to such a statement.

a) Redundancy Theory asserts that a statement is true is completely equivalent to asserting the statement itself. For example, asserting the sentence "'Snow is white' is true" is equivalent to asserting the sentence "Snow is white". Redundancy theorists infer from this premise that truth is a redundant concept, in other words, that "truth" is a mere word that is conventional to use in certain contexts of discourse but not a word that points to anything in reality.

# 8) SEMANTIC THEORY OF TRUTH

The semantic theory of truth is a theory of truth in the philosophy of language which holds that truth is a property of sentences. Tarski developed this approach based upon his undefinability theorem.

# 9) PRAGMATIC THEORY OF TRUTH

The main thrust of the theory is that truth is a quality of knowledge, the value of which is confirmed by its effectiveness when applying concepts to actual practice and which will, when given extended scientific investigation, stand the test of time.