**The normative dimension and narratological of Truth**

**I. Historical perspectives**

The dichotomy of fact-value/is-ought, which states that there is a fundamental epistemological distinction described between statements of fact, which based upon a “reality’, and statements of value, which encompass ethics and aesthetics, is explicitly formulated by Hume (Hume 1739). According to the correspondence theory of truth, truth is a relationship between our language or beliefs and the world: a truth bearer is true, if and only if it corresponds to the fact. Truth is the adequation of things and intellect (“adaequatio intellectus et rei”). Therefore, assuming the fact-value distinction, truth could not have a normative dimension.

However, in many philosophers, truth itself has a normative dimension. In the tradition of normativity of truth since Plato [1], universality and constancy are the important criteria of being “true”. In Plato, the world of sense, is in flux, is illusory and it is the world of ideas that is the object of “knowledge” (Silverman 2014); For Heidegger, the split of things into subject/object, as is found in the western tradition, must be overcome. And Heidegger is against the correspondence theory of truth, and holding that the search for truth as technology is a kind of Entbergung (unconcealment), but the Entbergung itself is also a kind of Verbergung (concealment), and truth is the “offen” of beings to being, is freedom, which takes place in the Lichtung (clearing, or lighting), for example, the truth of a work of art (Heidegger 1993). Truth is not only about 'is', but also about 'ought'. Truth has always been unseparated from goodness and beauty. All these remind us of Keats’ famous stanza:

“Beauty is truth, truth beauty,”—that is all

Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.”

At this point we can understand why Hegel and plenty of thinkers speak of “contradiction” everywhere: when fact and value, truth and will, are not separated, the world is full of “contradictions”. The world should be that way, yet it is not that way.

Let us recall the classic fallacy “appeal to purity”, or “true Scotsman”, a fallacy that one attempts to exclude the counterexample to protect their universal generalization from a falsifying counterexample by a slightly modified generalization constructed ad-hoc to exclude the counterexamples definitionally, which takes the form of “true, pure, genuine, authentic, real”, etc., a rendition of which is:

A: “All Scotsmen are loyal and brave.”

B: “But McDougal over there is a Scotsman, and he was arrested by his commanding officer for running from the enemy.”

A: “Well, if that’s right, it just shows that McDougal wasn’t a TRUE Scotsman.”

What we talk about when we talk about truth? When one speaks of “true Scotsman”, what she means is that it “should’ be the case that all Scotsmen are loyal and brave. And what should be true should come true.

Let me drive your attention back to Spinoza. It is well known that Spinoza is a property dualism of mind-body problem. There is a basic problem of this: on one hand, minds and bodies are identical; on the other hand, minds possess thought but not extension and bodies process extension but not thought. It seems violate the principle of indiscernibility of identicals: if x and y are identical, then they possess the same properties. Further, Spinoza seems to not accept the principle of the transitivity of identity, for Spinoza claims that the attributes are different from one another, yet also identical to the one substance.

Why does Spinoza reject principles that many have considered to be self-evident? In Garrett (2017), Don Garrett proposes that it is because for Spinoza, what is important is ways of being, “rather than merely different beings. …Truth is not merely a matter of correspondence between ideas and things, but also requires that ideas represent things completely, as adequate ideas do. It follows that true ideas must understand things through their peculiar way of being” (Garrett 2017).

**II. The narratology**

What I want to talk about is the narrative of truth: we are not only talking about facts, but also about relations between facts.

The “objectivity” is a big issue. As in the case in historical research, many scholars have emphasized that the talk about “truth’ is selective and evaluative, both of which are value-dependent. the subject matter is value-charged; the selection of topics in the construction of a theory/system is value-guided (Dray 1964: 23-4).

For too long a time we have talked about truth as if there were an objective, out-of-perspective fact out there waiting to be talked about. Just as not to choose is also a choice (for example, when you are being chased and it is a choice that you stay still; you cannot suddenly jump out of time and space and withdraw from the matter; it is just that we are not normally so urgent and we can spend long periods of time thinking as if time stood still), the so-called “objective, third-party” narrative are also a form of narrative.

I would like to draw your attention to another issue—narrative styles. According to Hayden White, in Hegel, history is ironic; in Jules Michelet, history is a romantic drama; in Tocqueville history is tragic; Burckhardt's history is satire, Marx's history Metonymical, and Nietzsche's history metaphorical (White 1973). Umberto Eco says, “I have noticed that life must be more like Ulysses than The Three Musketeers, but we usually think of life in forms of The Three Musketeers rather than Ulysses.” (Eco 1994: 117-118) No matter how romantic and off-history the story of The Three Musketeers may be, its narrative is linear and clear, whereas, as Eco says, our lives and consciousness are disorganized and chaotic, we are often governed by our subconscious, just like the narrative of Ulysses. Our thoughts, are just like what Woolf says in “Modern Fiction”,

Look within and life, it seems, is very far from being “like this'. Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions - trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall， as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old; the moment of importance came nowhere but there; so that, if a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the Bond Street tailors would have it. Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display，with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? We are not pleading merely for courage and sincerity; we are suggesting that the proper stuff of fiction is a little other than custom would have us believe it (Woolf 1921: 160-161).

For example, the Nazi’s narrative of the Reichstag fire, even if everything said in it was true, we would think it is not so “true”; in life, a person or a media may hide information, or add useless information, or make mistaken comparisons, etc., even if they do not lie; and it is in this sense that we say a novel even if a work of fiction, it is more “truthful’ than a lie made of “truth”s. Hugo's description of the secret conversation between Marat, Danton and Robespierre in “The Ninety-three” (book second—The Public House Of The Rue Du Paon, part second—In Paris), although by no means real, and despite the dramatic exaggeration, fits the characters of the three men very well. And, more importantly, it is heuristic, as does Dickens's “A Tale of Two Cities”, in which he depicts the old regime, the absolute monarchy, the corruption and degradation of the aristocracy, and the mob politics of the French Revolution, among others. These fictional realities, which give us overarching and highly representative impression of the events, help us get rid of the diffuse mist of minutiae and history, are of a kind of heuristic reality. Just as Picasso said, “art is a lie that tells the truth”.

Therefore, we find that some falsehoods seem to be more “truthful” than others. For example, the proposition that the number of planets in the solar system is 9 is false, but closer to the truth than the number of planets in the solar system is 9 million. Suppose you are interested in the truth about how humans came to be. At the beginning of the inquiry, all you have are tautologies such as “humans either evolved from apes or they did not evolve from apes”, which are almost useless in helping you find the truth about how humans came to be. Now, suppose that the theory of evolution is correct. Then learning that “humans either evolved from apes” will get you closer to the goal. Then some truths are closer to the truth of human beings than others. The proposition that atoms are elementary particles was accepted, but the discovery that atoms are actually composite objects supersedes it. However, the hypothesis that atoms are elementary particles seems to be closer to the truth than vitalism (assuming that the modern physics is true). Thus, some false ones may be closer to the truth about physics than other false ones. And the hypothesis, although it is wrong, also seems to be better in achieving our goal than tautology. If this is the case, certain falsehoods may be closer to the truth than certain truths (Oddie 2016).

At last, we have to notice that our narratives are always incomplete—how limited we are compared to the almost infinite facts—, always relative to some “whole’, always towards some goal. When we take about “truth”, what we talk about when we talk about truth? It's a system or a theory (in logic, a theory is a set of sentences) rather than a proposition with two truth values that are either true or false. It involves a comparison of different systems. For example, when we are talking about the cheating of Alice, if you say much about the fact that what a good person she is, but do not mention her cheating, you are deliberately hiding the truth; and even if you admit that Alice did cheat this time, then you say it was because she had no choice, there was a reason, and she used to be a good person, this is at least an excuse, if not changing the subject. Consider the most simplified case, in which only elementary arithmetic involved: Suppose we are talking about an issue concerning 5 facts A, B, C, D and E, assume that their weights are equal in our talking, they each have a weight of 1/5. Then, when a person says (“” is the logical operation conjunction), the degree of how close she is to the “whole’ (and in some other cases, the goal) is 2/5; and if E is the focus of our speech, which is weighted by 1, then, if a person says E, even if she says nothing else, she has fully achieved the goal of our speech. We have not considered falsehoods that are close to the truth (in which case the weight of the falsehood would not be 0 or a negative number, but a positive number), and off-topic truths (in which case the weight would no longer be a positive number, but a negative number). In these cases, we are omitting the factor of in which ways we say the facts and the problem that whether there are objective facts independent of us out there waiting for us to talk about. A more detailed discussion can be found in Oddie (2016).

I suggest that the reason why our narratives are “fundamentally” flawed—fail to achieve our goal, is that our talking and writing are linear and sequential-like a straight line, with the later text being dependent on the preceding text. But the world is colorful, it is complex. In other words, it is nonlinear. Language is not a mirror of our world. It is not a perfect representation of our world. The lines spread straight to our eyes. For example, when we say “He loves you” and “I want you” one after the other, the two sentences seem to be related, even though they may be independent upon each other and unrelated; Consider another way to express, when I want to express a disjunction (i.e., it can be either this or that), I might express it like this: Her face is as beautiful as the snow/flowers. Now, because of this arrangement, when one sees the word “snow”, one sees the other word “flowers”. The associations that come with them fall into our minds, and we receive impressions. It is impossible to ever reach the pure, crystal-clear meaning that was originally intended. In the classic Italian novel “The Testament Couple”, there is much lengthy historical information of on two bravoes, which, in Eco’s word, “knowing full well that the reader would skip them” (Eco 1994: 57). To understand why the author inserts those pages, we need to first introduce a pair of concepts. In narratology, we have story time, which “is part of the content of the story. If the text says ‘a thousand years pass,’ the story time is a thousand years. But at the level of linguistic expression, which is at the level of fictional discourse, the time to write (and read) the utterance is very short” (Eco 1994: 54). And we have reading time also. A novel, it has to be completed with the reader's interpretation, his or her imagination and feeling. Now, we understand why the author has to write those. It is “a textual strategy that interacts with the response of readers and forces a reading time on them” (Eco 1994: 57).

I write down a word, “blue”, but I want it to be pronounced as “brown” because I always pay more attention to the pronunciation than to the actual meaning. I would have to add a pair of parentheses after it, add a note, “read as “brown’”, and then that makes an interruption that would take the reader's mind out of the scene. These difficulties are grounded by the grammatical structure.

Thus, we may also understand why words and images can never fully represent each other, why poets have to pay attention to structural beauty and formal beauty, as if a poem is a building. The pre-subject-object distinction state of nature in art is an attempt to transcend this linearity.

We may see another perspective in logic. In logic, there are similar problems. Differences in the dependency patterns between operators can make important distinctions, such as for example the one between the formula , which expresses the continuity of a function , , which is the definition of the uniform continuity of a function (here “”is the symbol for “for all ......” in logic, and for “there exists …”). Everyone who has a basic training in logic and mathematics knows that  and  are not the same, just like everyone has someone he or she loves is completely different form that there is someone who everyone loves. This is because in these formulas, the laters depend on the earliers. If it is , is in the scope of . The value of y depends on the value of the x we have chosen in advance. The formula  is equivalent to , where f is a function symbol. The value of the function y = f(x) depends on the value of x. This is a technique called skolemization. Logicians think of ways to be able to get rid of this dependence. For example, they have come up with the idea of arranging the quantifiers in the formula in the following form:

to express that and do not depend on each other; to represent that does not depend on , and so on, with appropriate semantics such as game-theoretic semantics and team semantics augmented (Galliani 2021).

Although the approach is not perfect, at least it is a try. It will be interesting to apply this to the narratology of truth. However, it will have to be left for later works.

**Notes**

1. This should be distinguished from the normativity of truth that one is incorrect to assert that p if one does not have adequate grounds for believing that the proposition p is true in the theory of truth.

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