

# Investigation on the Nature of Truth in Correspondence Theory: Russel vs. Austin

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## 1

Russel, in his paper<sup>1</sup>, mentions three main points regarding the nature of truth:

1. He claims that every theory of truth must consider its *opposite*, namely falsehood.
2. Truth, as same as falsehood, is a *property of belief*.
3. The value of a belief depends on something *wholly* outside of the belief itself.

This paper contains two main parts. In the first part, I will examine these points individually and also by comparing them to Austin's views. My claim here is that although beliefs are necessary for something to be true or false, the property of truth is not always owned by beliefs. There are some cases in which in addition to the belief being true the property of truth is in something else. So, Russel's theory of truth needs to be reformulated if we consider some difficulties I will try to illustrate. After these arguments, I try to remake Russel's theory<sup>2</sup> by introducing the *force* as a third dimension to Russel's theory of the relation between mind and the world. A third dimension which clarifies the direction of the mentioned relationship in Russel and also it clarifies where the property of truth is; however, the notion force is vague at the moment, but I think it would solve some difficulties.

Being on the same boat, Austin agrees with the first claim, in his paper<sup>3</sup>. However, he brings some objections regarding other points. His main objection is

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<sup>1</sup> Truth and falsehood, Nature of truth, pp.17

<sup>2</sup> My main focus in this paper is the difficulties which both Russel's and Austin's Views have. So, introducing a new formulation should be a subject for further papers; However, I would mention some of my corrections which I think could help fixing the problems mentioning in this paper.

<sup>3</sup> Truth, Nature of truth, pp.25

that Truth is not a property of beliefs but statements. I want to compare these two views by firstly investigating whether the truth is a property and secondly if it is, is it a property of beliefs or statements. After claiming truth is a property, the main idea in the first part is that belief is more suitable for having truth for its property. However, I do not agree with Russel in stating that belief is the *only thing* that can have the property of truth due to the fact that there are two separate cases, one in which truth is entirely in something outside of the belief, another one the cases in which beliefs are neither true nor false. In opposition to the latter cases, we can comprehend that statements always have the property of being true or false. Therefore, As I will argue, sometimes beliefs would inhere the property of being true by the direction of the force which relates beliefs and world together, And then by inhering it, they would give the property of being true to the statements too. On the other hand, when they do not have any forces, they are neither true nor false.

Supporting my claims mentioned before, I will examine Russel's third claim and show its difficulties regarding the situations in which beliefs are not always dependent on something outside themselves. Therefore, being sympathetic to Russel's ideas, I will introduce another solution for the nature of the relation of belief and the world. Because, there are some beliefs/judgments, namely *declarative, self-referential and tautologies*, where the property of truth is in their nature and independent of something outside of them. Therefore, I would go back to the introduced definition of the force by claiming that the property of truth is something which is in it in the first place. After showing the direction of the relation between mind and the world, the force would give the property of being true or false to the base point of the vector of the mentioned relation.

Next, In the second part of this paper, I want to show that the distinctions between correspondence theory of truth and its opponent, coherence theory of truth<sup>4</sup>, is not as bright as of how both Austin and Russel claim. Two of them are in favor of correspondence theory, but I will claim that this view has its problems which would not make it such a robust theory against its opponent. Next, I

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<sup>4</sup> Both philosophers, when trying to defend the correspondence theory, introduce this theory as an opponent of it, although I disagree with them. They think there is only these two contrary theories, so by choosing one and rejecting the other we would have a theory of truth. Instead, I will illustrate that there is a range between them which is still vague and by considering this area we could have a better option for the theory of truth.

question the fact that these are two opposite views and ask whether we can merge them. Then, I will examine the introduced theory of force to see whether it could be used in favor of correspondence theory while seeing the points of coherence theory at the same time or not.

## 2

Russell's argument on truth being a property of belief<sup>5</sup> is like this :

- a. In a world of mere matter, there would be no beliefs.
  - b. If there were no beliefs, there would be no falsehoods.
  - c. By considering 1, if there would be no falsehood, there would be no truth either.
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- d. If there were no beliefs, there was no truth.

If we accept this argument as a sound one, which it is, we go straight to the conclusion that belief is necessary for Truth; however, I think there is a confusion in Russell between something being necessary for something else and something being a necessary property of something else. By a necessary property of something, I mean the object is entirely for that individual and cannot be a property of something else. Since Russell is just talking about beliefs in his paper, in which whenever they find a complex unity in the world they are true we can conclude that there are no other things which can have the property of being true.

In other words, Russell uses this argument both for showing the necessity of belief for truth and also concluding that belief is the only thing which has the property of truth without any further arguments for proving such a claim. The presupposition that there is only one thing which truth or falsehood is a property of is not so bright, and I will show that there could be other things that can have this property when the force gives it to them.

Before investigating whether there are other things besides belief for having the property of being true, first I would argue whether truth is a property. As

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<sup>5</sup> Nature of truth, pp.18

Austin mentions in his paper, we can see truth as essence, quality (like being red) or a relation. The first two, are something in the thing claimed to be true or false and not something entirely outside of the thing in itself. However, when we say a belief is true, we cannot *always* make any judgments just by looking at the belief in an isolated situation, instead, in *some* cases, we go to its content, and other times we relate it to the world or other beliefs for finding its value. Therefore, the truth is not an essence or a quality which we always can find by looking only at the content of a belief. It is not something we can find only in an isolated object, and it is not an individual object. Mostly, when we mention truth, we using it as a predicate like this: X is true which means X has the value of being true, and having something which is outside of it means X took it and it was not at first in X. So, in some cases, for finding the truth value of a belief/judgment, we should relate its content to something and if the relation exists then the belief is true.

Although I agree that truth cannot be quality or an essence due to existing situations in which we should relate the content to the world, I claim the property of being true is not exclusive to belief. There exists a force which chooses the way the property should go. Sometimes this force is wholly in the belief, sometimes entirely outside of it, the other times it is in between and both belief and the world share it.<sup>6</sup>

Now we can illustrate the differences between the statement in Austin and the belief in Russell. Austin points out that being true is not a property of belief but the property of statements. Even though Austin makes this distinction by rejecting belief, whenever Russell is talking about beliefs, he does not make a distinction between beliefs and statements. Also, Russell, in some cases, mentions both beliefs and judgments<sup>7</sup> in an equal place for owning this property. Austin does not exactly reject beliefs by an argument; instead, he only points out that “beliefs are not common outside philosophy or theology.”<sup>8</sup> it is not clear why

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<sup>6</sup> We can ask a further question that is being true a quality or an essence of the force? The short answer of it is no due to the fact that force will give it to the belief or the world and when something is shared is not an essence or quality. However, this is still not a complete answer and we can see there are some qualities which can be find in the owner of them like the color in a painting and its pencil. Therefore, whether force can really be a good solution or a complex ad hoc component that we should not use is a topic which we can investigate on in further article, but as I mentioned before, unfortunately, there is no room for searching the answers to this question in here.

<sup>7</sup> The nature of truth, pp.21

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, pp.26

we should abandon a philosophical term, which is very useful in a subject, just because it is not common outside of it.

However, I agree with the view that statements could be a better solution for owning the property of being true, in some aspects, since they are always either true or false when stated. This reason could be the one motivated Austin to choose them instead of beliefs.

Despite Russell claiming that beliefs always have the property of being true, I think there are some cases in which beliefs are not true nor false. We can always create some beliefs just for using them as psychological instruments for motivational purposes although nobody may do know the truth value of them. For example, someone who has cancer might believe they would be cured, just because of the motivation of hope. However, not only do they not know whether it is true or false, but neither do their doctors.

Some may reject this view by stating that these situations are for future possibilities, which no one would know. Furthermore, statements have these difficulties too. On the other hand, if we investigate more, we may find related evidence for supporting the truth value of them or at least anticipating them although there are some cases in which there is no possibility of finding some evidence, and it is better for us to suspend the truth value.<sup>9</sup>

Instead of keep arguing on what Austin had in mind by making the distinction between beliefs and statements, It is better for us to ponder whether there is a distinction and if it is which one is more relatable to the truth? In my opinion, Austin's statement is too restricted to be used. Since, if we choose it, we would lose some advantages of Russell's theory and his "belief."

In Russell's theory, the truth is a relation between the subject of the belief, namely the mind which obtain the belief, and the object of the belief, which Russell clarifies it as a complex unity of relations between objects in cases in which belief is true. In other words, there are some objects in the world which are used in the content of belief, and the belief is claiming that there is a relation

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<sup>9</sup> I am aware that this kind of suspension is just a practical one and at last we can find the truth value of each belief if we consider the improvement of science. But, in that case, beliefs and statements are same as each other.

between these objects and the real world. If that relation exists as a complex unity, the belief is true otherwise it is false.

By considering Russell's theory, firstly, it is hard to see what is the differences between statements and beliefs regarding their objects and the relation mentioned above. When they are created, both have some objects in which they are claiming there is a relation. Secondly, Austin's definition of statements<sup>10</sup> is again not a distinct notion from the beliefs, and what is said in it can be said about beliefs too. Therefore, we reach a point in which we can use both statement and belief as equals regarding truth, as Russell did in his paper; however, we should consider that beliefs have priority to statements respecting their creation. Moreover, the content of a statement is always about a belief. Also, without beliefs, we do not have any statements. The priority and the necessity of belief are not the only reasons which make beliefs a good candidate; there is also a difficult situation when it comes to the supporters of the view which claims true statements are identical to the facts.<sup>11</sup> Although Austin tries to show that there is a distinction between them, I think the problem arises due to taking the statements as the main subject which is related to the truth. On the contrary, if we consider belief, there would be no such a confusion between true beliefs and the facts because beliefs always have a subject which claims of existing relationships among beliefs' objects. Moreover, it is clear that facts have the causal role for creation of beliefs. We cannot find these mentioned distinctions, between the subject of the belief and the object of it in a statement.

By considering the reasons mentioned above, we can conclude that statements are too restricted to be used as the only candidate for having the property of truth. Furthermore, we can see a statement as an objective belief without any subjects of the relations claiming the components of the statements are a complex unity.<sup>12</sup>

Another struggle Austin has in his paper is to defend his view that statements about something being true are different from statements alone since some

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, pp.28

<sup>11</sup>As Russell defines, facts are the complex unity mentioned earlier.

<sup>12</sup> By emphasizing on belief, **I am not rejecting the view that statements have the property of being true** or false. Alternatively, the emphasis is for broadening the realm in which truth is contained.

philosophers<sup>13</sup> claim that statement ST<sup>14</sup> is superfluous and it is like stating S<sup>15</sup>. In my opinion, if we choose belief and compare true belief to the belief itself, it is clear that we would not have the problem of being superfluous for true belief. For supporting this claim, I bring the example of motivational beliefs once more. Although these types of beliefs are practical, they are different from a true belief which has the same content.

For the last argument in favor of belief, I should mention here that while Austin claims that statements are for communication, not only belief has the same job but also it is necessary for the non-communicational situations, for example, self-reflection and... ; however, we do not use statements in these situations.

According to the above arguments, there are five points in favor of belief for being the right component having truth for its property against its opponent, namely statement :

- 1- Beliefs are prior to the statements regarding the time of being created.
- 2- Beliefs/statements are necessary for truth.
- 3- The distinction between true belief and facts are more explicit than true statements and facts.
- 4- True belief is not superfluous; however, the distinction between ST and S is not clear.
- 5- When it comes to the non-communicational cases, the priority of usage is for belief.

Now that we pointed out the advantages of belief for being the right component owning the property of truth, in favor of Russell, we can examine two further questions: 1-does belief always depend on something outside itself for being true or false? Despite the fact that Russell claims “minds do not create truth or falsehood,” I disagree with him by pointing that we have some cases in which truth is created by believing/stating. 2- Are truth and falsehood always contained by beliefs as their property or we can find them in other things?.

I bring two different examples in order to answer these two questions. One in which belief (minds) create the truth and the truth is not dependent outside of it

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<sup>13</sup> Austin mentions Strawson being one of the adherents of such a view.

<sup>14</sup> Statement S is True

<sup>15</sup> Statement S

which would answer the first question. The other, which would answer the second question, is for the situations in which the truth is not the property of belief even though belief is still one of its necessary constituents. For the first cases I introduce **A**. Declarative speech acts ( Searle names them declarations), tautologies and self-referential beliefs and for the second one I suggest **B**. there are some objects, namely artificial objects, which truth is something inhering in their nature rather than depending on the relation of the objects of the belief.

I will give some examples for both A and B. In A for example when we believe that something is money the belief is true just by believing it. Alternatively, when we say X is X, there is no need for further investigations outside the belief's/judgment's content. In B, imagine a car, that car is truly a car just because it is one whether we believe it or not. For clarifying these, I must introduce the notion force, which it would complete Russell's difficulties I am mentioning here.

In the B cases, we have beliefs about cars or the objects of the car. However, the car being true would happen when the relation between mind and world has the opposite direction<sup>16</sup>. It means that in Russell cases there is a belief and its objects, then they refer to the world for checking the status of its value. On the other hand, in B, we have a world which has a force of direction towards the belief. Although the belief of being a car has a fixed content, an individual being correct or true of it has the direction of the world to mind. I call this thing which chooses the direction of the relation, *force*.

The relation which Russell is talking of is a two-dimensional relation. Force is a third dimension being added to the vector of Russell's relation which would brighten how we can decide something is true or false. When the force is in an object, the direction of the relation is from world to word, and when the force is wholly inside the belief, in cases like in A, there is no need for making a relation between objects of the belief outside of it the force of the belief would make the belief true. In other situations, when beliefs and world both share the force, the direction of Russell's relation is like what he claims.

As I mentioned before, the notion force is still not so clear at this moment. The proper place for investigating it is not in this paper which its purpose is to compare Austin and Russell 's theories and pointing their difficulties regarding the

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<sup>16</sup> This notion is like Searle's idea of the direction of fit. (world to word or word to world)



meaning of truth; however, I introduced the force for further studies which I think would be a benefit for Russell's theory of beliefs/statements being true.

### 3

In this part, I will compare both Russell's and Austin's views of the correspondence theory of truth with their opponent, coherence theory. Both philosophers reject the coherence theory, then by using this rejection, they introduce correspondence theory; however, there are still some advantages in coherence theory which cannot be rejected entirely.

Russell rejects this theory for two reasons. First, he states that if we accept it, there would be more than one cohere system, hence more than one truth. For example, there could be an excellent fictional writer who can create a world of fiction in which there are no inconsistencies. In this rejection, Russell presupposes the idea that there should be only one truth although by accepting his theory, we cannot find any truth in this presupposition. Russell does not give us any further reasons for accepting that there should be just one truth or why it is not correct for us to have more than one truth.

Are the supporters of coherence theory and correspondence theory debating on how many truths should we have on one subject? This debate is also not clear in the philosophy of science, for example If we consider scientific theories, even though there is always an inclination to have only one theory for describing everything, there are some situations in which we have more than one theory working correctly, and it is not clear if one of them is wrong.

His second objection is that although a cohere system is not related to the world, its fundamental laws of logic are from the world. So, they are not entirely independent of Russell's idea of the relation. This argument has the presupposition which former objection had. If we do not suppose that there should be just one truth, we can also have different laws of logic which are wholly created by the users of that cohere system. If we consider the belief that "there must be only one truth" in Russell's theory, we cannot always find a relation between the objects of this belief in the real world. Philosophers like scientists

prefer one over many; they would like to find the best explanation or the one truth rather than having different truths; however, by considering the correspondence theory of truth, we cannot find any related fact to this belief.

One advantage of the coherence theory in this regard is that it does not have any presuppositions of the meaning of truth in it. On the contrary, it has some disadvantages too; namely, we can make a system that if we compare it to the reality would be *false* ( like some fictional cases), by Russell's definition of falsehood, even though it would be true by the definition of adherents of coherence theory. What should we do? Are they two contrary theories or can we combine them to make a hybrid theory in which we can benefit from their advantages while excluding their disadvantages?

Above arguments were for brightening the advantages of the coherence theory regarding not having any presuppositions about the meaning of the truth even though, by stating them, I was not utterly sympathetic to Russell's ideas since if we accept his presupposition, we can make a cohere system with those objective laws of logic. In other words, Russell gives priority to the correspondence theory because if we accept the coherence theory alone, in which we have an independent system which we do not know whether it is real, we will face some unfortunate consequences in which there are no promises our system is *real*. Russell arguments are for the reason that we can have a cohere system of beliefs only if we make some connections between it and outside of it.

For solving these difficulties, I will use the notion force again. In my opinion, we should not search the truth without considering where the force of a belief or a cohere system is guiding us for the direction of the relation of that belief. Sometimes, the force would take us inside the system, other times it would direct us outside of it for finding whether the whole system is correct and according to the facts which Russell claims they exist in the material world. If we include force in our theory of correspondence, we could even realize there exist some cohere theories utterly independent of the world in which the force is made, for some benefits which that system has. If the system's force is a fictional force, there is no problem for us recognizing them as true. Then again, if there is a cohere system which is not claiming to be fictional, we should examine its force to see what direction it is choosing and what the consequences it is pointing.

I am not stating that my theory is a complete hybrid theory of correspondence theory and coherence theory. Instead, I am making some amendments in Russell's theory for improving it so we can also have the advantages of the coherence theory.

#### 4

According to the reasons mentioned above, Austin's try for rejecting belief in favor of statements makes the domain of truth too restricted. It is better for us to choose Russell's theory of truth over Austin. Although we choose belief as the necessary component of truth, there should be some amendments in Russell's theory: 1- truth does not always depend on something wholly outside of it. 2- truth is not always contained by belief, and we can find it in other things. These two claims can be recognized if we try to add the notion force in Russell's idea of the relation between world and mind (the objects of the belief and the subject of it.).

Then, if we look more general and broader to the whole correspondence theory against its opponent, coherence theory of truth, we can see the latter has some advantages over the former. So, if we use the force in coherence theory, these two mentioned theories would be no longer two contradictory views, and we can merge them although the main notion of force is the relation it makes to something. Therefore, we would have a better correspondence theory which has the advantages of not presupposing the number of truths.

After these conclusions, the next step should be the examination of the force. Even though by adding this component we had solved mentioned drawbacks, it is not clear at this moment if it is a good solution. There exists the possibility that after investigating on the force we conclude that it makes the theory more complicated than Russell's, and maybe some other solutions would solve the difficulty without adding any new components.

## References

1. Russell, Truth and falsehood, in Michael P. Lynch - The Nature of Truth-The MIT Press (2001). pp. 17-24
2. Austin, Truth, in Michael P. Lynch - The Nature of Truth-The MIT Press (2001). pp. 25-40