
UNIT 3 BEING AS TRUE

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3.0 OBJECTIVES

Philosophers hold that anything that exists is a being and, that which exists is true. Our attempt in this section is:

- to understand the notion and implication of truth, especially in relation to being, i.e., in the metaphysical context.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

‘What is truth?’ - it is the classical question we see in the Holy Bible, a question posited to Jesus by Pontius Pilate during his trial before the crucifixion. *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* is the autobiography of M.K. Gandhi, the father of our nation, who held that ‘Truth is God’. Everywhere people posit questions like, ‘what is truth?’ or ‘is it true?’ and so on. It seems that all have some idea of truth. But if in a Socratic style we seek further the depth of their understanding of truth, the response may not be very promising and so we may feel frustrated. Hence is the necessity of a precise elucidation of the notion of truth and its implications in relation to the question of being.

3.2 HISTORICAL SKETCH

Two separate ways served the development of the ‘notion of truth’ in the Western thinking. One is that of the Bible. In the Old Testament the term ‘emeth’ (a Hebrew word) is used for truth; it means, to be firm, reliable and faithful. In relation to God truth refers to His fidelity, sincerity and constancy; he is a sure refuge. As regards the humans, truth (or true way of living) is walking in the law of God. As a whole, the main Old Testament thrust as regards truth is the correspondence of assertion and reality. On the other hand, in the New Testament, where the teachings of Jesus are recorded, we see the Greek word “aletheia” for truth; it refers to the reliability and fidelity of God. The main emphasis here is that, truth is that which is revealed, communicated

and transmitted through Christ. It is the disclosure of the one, who always exists. In our time, the philosopher Heidegger develops the doctrine of truth akin to this: truth is the disclosure of being in and through the questioner of being, Dasein (which means, there-being; it refers to the human).

The second path can be traced from the Greek antiquity. It goes to the credit of *Parmenides*, a pre-Socratic philosopher, that the first treatise on truth is ascribed. From his “didactic poem” we learn that truth is something revealed to him by the goddess (according to Heidegger, this goddess is ‘truth’). The road of truth is that of ‘that which is’ (that is to say, of existence or being). It is one without beginning, without end; it is solid, indivisible, changeless; it is finite and complete; it lacks or needs nothing, etc. Ordinary humans or mortals may simply adhere to what is appearing or seeming and thus cherish different opinions. On the other hand, Parmenides was given here a superior knowledge of truth, which the ordinary people do not possess (it is superior in the sense that he knew the truth and contradicted the false views; he could trace the defects of the mortals and explain the reasons of their errors).

Greek antiquity surged ahead with the problem of truth and reality. The *Sophists*, the wise men of ancient Greece, undertook the responsibility of educating the youth through persuasion. In fact it was at the cost of neglecting truth that they promoted achievements and successes. Against this background *Socrates* appeared on the arena and inculcated the necessity of true and profound knowledge to be gathered with all humility. Socrates’ dialectical approach revealed the fact that the hearers’ claims of knowledge are not very profound and truth is to be sought further in each department of knowledge.

For *Plato* ideas are real; they are more real than that which is presented to our senses, that which can be seen, heard, etc. Ideas are thus more real than the things we habitually consider as the one and only reality. This is beautifully presented in the famous *Allegory of the Cave*. Those prisoners would think that reality is nothing else than the shadows of the artificial objects. Slowly one will rise from the shadows projected on the wall to the objects themselves whose shadows were on the wall, and then to the light of the fire which projected those shadows and finally to the sun which is far brighter or more luminous than the fire (See *Republic* 514a – 516 c). Thus in Plato truth was thought of as a coming out of concealment. For him the real is the form or idea; as one gets this idea, he gets the truth. His famous disciple *Aristotle* placed truth in judgement because it is in judgement concepts are referred to reality. In short, these classical paths paved the foundation for the discussion of truth in Western thinking. Accordingly truth consists in a kind of self-manifestation of reality in and through judgements. This takes us to the systematic exposition of truth, especially in the context of our understanding of being as true.

3.3 TRUTH AND BEING

Philologists see that the English word ‘true’ takes its origin from the German word ‘*treu*’, which is related to the Indo-germanic word for tree. Hence the English word refers to something firm and solid. Now, in Greek language, it has a different connotation. The Greek word for true is ‘*alethes*’ (which means, what is not hidden and thus unconcealed and disclosed in the discourse). Accordingly, true is that which is real, as it is revealed in the disclosure. In Greek thought, real and true are identified. Hence Aristotle wrote in his famous book on *Metaphysics*, “Truth is to say what is, is; what is not, is not”. For the Greeks truth and reality are identical, for the real (its Greek word is ‘*on*’) could also mean true and the true (its Greek word ‘*alethes*’)

could mean real. More than a transcendental property, they therefore held that being and truth are identical.

Now, truth is a relation of knowing and being. It is usually associated with knowledge, which is expressed in judgements. Thus we say, knowledge or judgement is true. For example, the ideas like snow, white, cold, warm, etc., are neither true nor false. But if somebody says, 'snow is white', this judgement will be true, because it agrees with the fact. On the other hand, if there is no agreement, we would say, it is a false statement. However, we can still observe that people use the word 'truth' in some other contexts too. They speak of 'true gems' or 'true friendship' instead of 'false gems' or 'false friendship'. Here we see truth / falsity as ascribed to things or events. The meaning here is that people cherish certain ideas or standards as regards things and events; if the given things / events agree with those standards, they say that they are true. Here it seems that truth is residing as a quality of things themselves.

How is being true? How is it a transcendental property? What are the implications of this doctrine? In the earlier section, we have studied that being is undivided; it is one; it is set apart from all, especially from that which destroys its unity (i.e., its negation or non-being). Thus any reality has unity; it is a being; it is identical with itself. Thus the property of unity is derived from the consideration of being-in-itself. However, we have to consider being in relation to others, for we see being not in isolation; we meet with many beings. The property of truth is found in the context of relation of being to knowing or to the intellect that knows (here intellect is taken in its most general sense). What kind of a relation is that?

It is a relation between mind / intellect and being. For example, we cannot think of a mind / intellect that does not have any relation to reality; if there is such an intellect that would not have knowledge of any reality. As we speak of an intellect, we speak of it as knowing something (being); this knowledge must be true also, for a false knowledge is no knowledge at all. Again, we can find this relation in another way. Suppose there is an order of things and no mind / intellect to know this order. In this context also we cannot speak of the truth of reality. The property of truth is thus traced against this background. Accordingly we can say, truth is the conformity of intellect to being or of being to intellect. Based on the relations of being and intellect we see different kinds of truth.

3.4 KINDS OF TRUTH IN RELATION TO BEING

There can be a relation of intellect to being or a relation of being to intellect. On the basis of this, philosophers speak of three types of truth.

- 1) *Logical truth.* It refers to the truth of our knowing, i.e., our knowing is as the being is. Here the relation is of the intellect to being. It is the conformity of our intellect to being or it is the agreement of our intellect to the object known. There are various things in the world. In the process of knowing these objects, our intellect forms their ideas; then, those ideas are brought in judgements (e.g., roses are beautiful or S is P). Now, if our judgement (of the intellect) corresponds to or agrees with the reality, then we have logical truth, i.e., we have true knowledge. These judgements are expressed in affirmative or negative statements. Thus logical truth is concerned with the truth of our knowing (there are different theories of truth like correspondence theory, coherence theory, pragmatic theory, semantic theory, performative theory, etc. as discussed in epistemology or theory of knowledge).

- 2) *Ontological Truth*. There can be another kind of relation between intellect and being (reality). It is the conformity of being to the intellect. If the being conforms to the intellect or to the ideas in intellect, then we have *ontological or transcendental truth*. This truth is in being. Let us take an example. An artist draws a picture on the canvas. He does it in accordance with the idea he has in his mind. If the drawn picture agrees with the idea in artist’s mind then there is ontological truth. It is the truth of the reality. In other words, reality or being is conformable to the intellect; it is the agreement of being to intellect. It is conformity of being to the conditions of its being. Thus any being as conformable to the intellect is ontologically true.

It is in fact the intrinsic intelligibility of being. Here being comes out of hiddenness and gets revealed. Heidegger would write, “Entities [beings] get snatched out of their hiddenness”. Since being has this quality of getting disclosed (an understanding we derive from the Greek word for truth – aletheia), we can say, being is intelligible. Accordingly, the statement ‘being is true’ refers to the ontological truth, i.e., to the intelligibility of being. The very possibility of logical truth, which is the truth of our knowing, depends on this truth. Thus ontological truth serves as the prerequisite for logical truth.

- 3) *Moral truth* is the agreement of speech with thought. For example, we make a judgement in our mind with regard to some facts and then we express those thoughts in words. If our speech agrees with our thought, then we have moral truth. Any discrepancy will lead to moral falsity or lie. Now, some writers view moral truth as a kind of ontological truth. It is because, in the latter, to the intellect’s knowledge the being is conformable; in the same way in thought also mind’s knowledge is there and to this knowledge our verbal statement or speech must conform. Since in metaphysics the discussion of being as true refers to the ontological truth, let us focus more on this theme now.

Check Your Progress I

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

- 1) How did the discussion of truth develop in the West?
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- 2) Explain the different kinds of truth.
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3.5 IMPLICATIONS OF ONTOLOGICAL TRUTH

Being is true; it means that being is intelligible. Here being is conformable to the intellect. Now the question here arises is, to which intellect must being conform? It is self-evident that there are a lot of things to which no human intellect is related. Again, things in the world are true even before human intellects began to perceive their truth. Neither do our intellect make things to be what they are, nor it make them be; on the other hand, our intellect only discovers them. Hence here comes the need of an intellect, other than human.

In the philosophy of Plato, Augustine and Aquinas, we see that God created the world through His divine ideas. His intellect cherishes the original ideas of the things in the universe. It is to this Intellect, that has the type-ideas of everything that exists, must the beings in the world conform. Thus the Divine intellect serves as the ultimate foundation of all truth. The Divine mind has the idea of the things in the world; He gives beings their existence through creation (but the produce of an artist is not considered as a creation). As the being is conforming to the divine knowledge, there is ontological truth.

There are philosophers who see a further division in ontological truth. *Exemplary ontological truth* is that in which the intellect possesses an idea of the being; this idea is taken as the standard of the being. A being must agree with this type-idea. Insofar as being agrees with this standard or pattern that the intellect possesses, then it is ontologically true. For example, Michael Angelo tries to produce a statue. He has the idea of the statue; he produces it after the type-idea or exemplar of that statue in his mind. If the produced statue is in conformity with the type-idea, then there is exemplary ontological truth. *Identical ontological truth* refers to the original identity of being and knowing. It is an identity of being and truth. Knowledge is the self-presence of being. Both knowing subject and known object are being and intelligible.

Since being is intelligible or true, it is conformable to intellect and so we come to know it; but it is not our knowledge of being that renders being intelligible. Accordingly, everything that exists is intelligible. Hence we can say, there is nothing outside intelligibility. This is a very promising truth for humankind. Since everything is understandable or intelligible, all researches are possible. If that was not the case, neither science nor discovery was possible in the universe. Hence we can say that intelligibility of being (i.e., being as true) as a transcendental property – property which is applicable to everything that exists - is the ground of human progress in wisdom and knowledge. Since no generation of mankind possesses this wisdom exhaustively, it is the duty of the humans of all time to seek truth, which is accessible to all, for being is always intelligible or true.

In the history of Western philosophy, however, there were attempts to deny the intelligibility of being. For Descartes (1596 – 1650), things haven't any truth in themselves; they are not measured by our ideas but are measured by the arbitrary decree of God's will. Because God willed so, things are as they are. For example, two and two make four is so because God wills so. All the truth of our knowledge depends on the veracity of God Himself. In Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804), it is our intellect that 'makes' things intelligible by applying the a priori thought-forms to them; thus things (phenomena) are not intelligible in themselves. Even some thinkers belonging to pragmatic school (e.g., William James 1842 – 1910) hold that beings are not intelligible. Things are made true by us; we give 'meanings' to things; ideas are true

only when they are useful or when we are able to make use of them for the realization of certain purposes. All truths are like the ‘artistic truth’, a kind of our making. For Sartre (1905 – 1980) and Camus (1913 – 1960), reality is absurd or not intelligible. However, this Western mind-set is a self-defeating ‘syndrome’; it simply undermines human knowledge itself. In fact, intelligibility of being or being is true shows the potency in things to be known by some intellect.

‘Being is intelligible’ implies more. By knowing the beings in the world (i.e., through our logical truth) we indirectly come to know the divine mind or divine ideas; this, in turn, is bringing our knowledge in conformity with the divine knowledge (or with divine ‘logical truth’). Again, the truth in its profound nature as conformity must be viewed as a manifestation (dis-closure, as the Greek word ‘*aletheia*’ implies); it is a coming to light of being in its depth, or reality in its deep interiority gets revealed or dis-concealed.

Since truth of being is a transcendental property, we can convert it and say, truth is being. How is it possible? When we say being is true, it means that it is intelligible. Now, in order to be intelligible, there must be something which has existence. Something that which exists is being and as an existing being it is conformable to the intellect. Therefore we can conclude that anything that is intelligible or conformable has existence; it is a being. With regard to something that has no existence, we cannot speak of intelligibility, for it is simply not; it is not anything. Thus, truth as a property (here it is a transcendental property) is indeed something, not nothing. Now, as something it is being and so truth is being.

The transcendental property of truth is the ground of the fundamental principle of sufficient reason. It means that any being has in itself the sufficient reason for its intelligibility, i.e., it can explain itself. It itself is the sufficient explanation of its being. Hence Leibniz (1646 – 1716) wrote, “Nothing exists without a sufficient reason why it exists, and why it exists in this way rather than in some other.” Accordingly, everything which is, possesses a sufficient reason for its being, i.e., it is grounded in being and so it is capable of explaining itself to the intellect (however, we have to note that Leibnizian articulation of this principle may lead to a universal determinism, which does not take into account the possibility of liberty!).

Do evidences have any relevance in the appropriation of truth? We often hear people asking, ‘is it true?’, ‘what is the evidence?’ etc. These questions suggest that evidences have significant role in the appropriation of truth. That something is true must be established through evidences, i.e., so that our judgement will be objective. Evidence is objective, when reality is present or made available to the perceiver. Here the intellect apprehends the reality in its self-revelation, self-manifestation (a-letheia); it is indeed a disclosure to the intellect. Thus the knowing intellect can make true judgements. Hence evidence serves as the criterion of truth; it is the ground of intelligibility.

3.6 PROBLEM OF FALSITY

A discussion of truth inevitably takes us to the consideration of falsity also. Falsity is not a simple negation of truth, but a distortion of truth. If truth is conformity between intellect and being, falsity will be its opposite. Since there are three types of truth, we can speak of three kinds of falsity too. Logical falsity is error; it is the non-agreement of intellect to the reality. This is expressed in mistakes, changing views, confused opinions, doubts, etc. Here the judgements are not correct. Moral falsity is the

disagreement or nonconformity in speech and thought. It is falsehood or lie. Now, what about ontological falsity?

Since every being as long as it is, is intelligible and so it is true. As regards the relation of being to the Divine intellect, there cannot be ontological falsity. Thus as intelligible, being is always true and so there is no ontological falsity as such in an absolute sense. However in relation to the human intellect there can be relative ontological falsity. For example, an artist in his attempt of producing an artefact may not be able to bring out the perfection expected of it because of various reasons. Here the thing is in nonconformity with his intellect or with the type-idea in artist’s mind. It can be counted as a relative ontological falsity.

A false appearance (that may take place in the level of self-manifestation of being and so it is concerned with ontological truth) is the deformity of the externality of a being from its internal structures (i.e., from its truth). Accordingly, falsity (as in the case of false speech) can refer either to the lack of manifestation of a being in its profound nature or to the intervention in the process of manifestation of some elements that have impeded it (and thus it got falsified). Hence a simple non-manifestation does not constitute a non-truth, but it may open to us the new vistas of the liberty of truth, liberty of being.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) How do you convert being and truth?

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2) How does the theme of ‘intelligibility of being’ help humankind?

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3.7 LET US SUM UP

Being is true; it is a transcendental property. As transcendental it is applicable to every being both finite and infinite. It is traced in the context of being in relation to the mind or intellect. There can be a relation of intellect to being and through such a relation one gets the knowledge of beings; it is known as the truth of our knowledge or logical truth. Another type of relation is that of being to the intellect. Here the being

has to conform to the mind’s (intellect’s) ideas or knowledge. Such conformity of being to the mind is the ground of determining ontological truth. Therefore ontological truth refers to the quality of being to conform or agree with the intellect; it is the intelligibility of being. Here being discloses or manifests itself.

Since being is intelligible that we come to know being. Hence ontological truth is the basis of the truth of our knowing or of logical truth. That beings are knowable or being is conformable to intellect in general (it need not be our intellect) is the basis of all researches, scientific discoveries and human progress. Thus this metaphysical position is an ever valid principle for the hopeful engagement into the mysteries of being.

3.8 KEY WORDS

- Aletheia** : it is the Greek word for truth. Literally it means non-concealment. Truth is the ‘coming to light’ of being or manifestation of being to the knower or to the intellect. In the philosophy of Heidegger, truth is presented as uncovering of being.
- Ontological Truth** : it is found in the relation of being to the intellect. A picture drawn by an artist has ontological truth as it is in conformity with his ideas. Here the object relates itself to the mind of the artist for its being. Analogously, that which is (being) is in the mind of God, the creator and He has created them after these divine ideas; the created beings are in relation to His intellect and thus they are ontologically true. Thus a being is ontologically true as it is conformable to the intellect. Accordingly, ontological truth refers to the very intelligibility of being; on this ground all logical truths (i.e., the truth of our knowing) depend.

3.9 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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3.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

- 1) Two paths can be traced in the development of the notion of truth in Western thinking. One is derived from the biblical background, where the Hebrew word ‘emeth’ is used for truth. It refers to god’s firm and steadfast faithfulness. In the

New Testament truth refers to the self-revelation (its Greek word is 'aletheia') of God through Christ. In general the Bible attaches the meaning of agreement between assertion and reality to truth. Other path is of Greek antiquity. Parmenides saw the road of truth as that of existence and it is the path to be treaded by the mortals, who are often in error. Refuting the Sophist's style of mere persuasion for success, Socrates inculcated the profound means of attaining truth in various realm of knowledge. For Plato, true was the idea and it is this world of ideas or forms that must be sought by the humans. In Aristotle, truth is expressed in the judgment. These two ways of considering truth paved for the discussion of truth in the Western history.

- 2) We have seen three types of truth. 1. *Logical truth*. It is the truth of our knowing or our knowing is as the being is. Here we see a relation is of our intellect to the being known. Thus it is the conformity of our intellect to being or it is the agreement of our intellect to the object known. Here our intellect forms the ideas of the objects; then, those ideas are brought in judgements. Now, if our judgement corresponds to or agrees with the reality, then we have logical truth. Such judgements are expressed in affirmative or negative statements. 2. *Ontological Truth*. This derived from the relation of being to intellect. It is the conformity of being to the intellect. If the being conforms to the intellect or to the ideas in intellect, then we have *ontological or transcendental truth*. Here we see the truth of the reality. Any being as conformable to intellect refers to its intelligibility; it is the intrinsic intelligibility of being. Here being comes out of hiddenness and gets revealed to the intellect (it is the meaning of the Greek word aletheia). This ontological truth is a condition for logical truth; thus the former enjoys certain priority over the latter. 3. In *moral truth* we see an agreement of speech and thought. As we make a judgement we make it first in our mind and then we express those thoughts in words. If our speech conforms to our thought, then there is moral truth.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

- 1) Being is true. Its conversion is 'the true is being'. The former means that being is intelligible. It is intelligible only as a being, i.e., as something having existence. As something having existence it is conformable to the intellect. Again, as property (here as transcendental property) truth is indeed something (not nothing) and so truth is being.
- 2) Denying intelligibility is undermining human knowledge. If so, intelligibility of being is principle behind our searches, researches, inquiries, scientific discoveries, etc. That something can be dis-covered (a-letheia) is the hope all the scientists cherishes in the background of their painstaking efforts. Since the universe as a whole is a being and since no generation of mankind has exhaustively perceived it as a whole, this metaphysical position of the 'intelligibility of being' is a source of perennial hope for humanity. Moreover, discovering the truths of nature or being (i.e., our logical truths) is a way to trace the 'divine ideas' perpetuated in and through being and beings. Thus we can way the divine mind is pursued in and through the intelligibility of beings.