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Truth: A Multiple-Fit Theory

Abstract

This theory tries to shed light on how we understand and use the notion of truth. It draws on some views of Putnam and Goodman, but it develops these views by claiming that truth is a matter of a statement fitting one or more of the following: the criterion of internal consistency; sensory data; data from memory; non-verbalized beliefs; other parts of discourse. The common cognitive structure, as delineated by Ray Jackendoff, that serves as a locus of convergence for meaning conveyed via language, background knowledge, perception, inference, etc. is identified as the medium of the fit that results in the “that’s true” effect. The theory also claims that truth is a family, encompassing different kinds of truths. It is pointed out that truth has a normative dimension, which is cashed out as the possibility of challenge to truth-claims, which in turn presupposes a regulative ideal of universal human rationality.

Key words

truth, multiple fit, normativity, cognitive structure

I will present my conception of truth by way of five key points. The tagline, so to speak, of this conception is the following: *Truth comes with MIND imprinted on it*. Obviously, then, this conception falls under what Künne (2003) calls *alethic anti-realism*: the view that truth is epistemically constrained, that it does not outrun rational acceptability. However, the theory to be presented here differs (at least partially) from any of the theories that Künne examines in his book,¹ and since this book is both very recent and such that P. F. Strawson says of it that “it would be difficult to find a more comprehensive treatment of its subject”,² the exposition of this theory should prove to be of some interest.

Contemporary theories of truth, fuelled by the awareness of the “clear and present danger” of the disastrous consequences of ending up in the Liar paradox, and inspired by the influential way out of this impasse that Tarski proposed (cf. his 2001), have tended to become very technical and at the same time devoid of real informativity. They present certain presumably valid models

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This also holds of this theory in the light of the accounts of theories of truth given in Haack (1978: ch. 7) and Walker (1997), which classify, in perfect analogy, theories of truth into five main varieties: the correspondence theories, the coherence theories, the pragmatic theories, the redundancy and the semantic

theory. Künne covers more or less the same ground, although in much more detail.

2

In the *Times Literary Supplement*, quoted from back cover.

of dealing with truth-talk,³ but they often fail to tell us more than that a proposition is true when things are as the proposition presents them to be (this is more or less what Künne's theory amounts to) – and we would, I suspect, like to know more. The theory to be outlined here aims to do just that, to tell us more, and thereby to satisfy, at least to a certain (meagre) extent, the natural curiosity of the mind as regards the nature of truth. Now, this natural curiosity might be just the kind of inclination of the mind, an inclination to ask certain questions or proceed along certain chains of reasoning, that Kant and Wittgenstein diagnosed (in different but kindred ways) as the path that the mind cannot resist travelling upon, but that leads inevitably to paradox and nonsense. Be that as it may, I will take that path nevertheless, and see where it leads. My goal will not be a *definition* of truth, nor will I strive to give the necessary and sufficient *criteria* for determining whether a statement is true or not – rather, the point of the theory expounded here is to try to shed light on how truth “works”, not in the pragmatists' sense, but in the sense of how our conceptual system operates with the notion of truth, how it handles truth, how we use and understand this notion.

This theory is therefore meant to have more empirical content than many contemporary theories (including Künne's) and to draw on contemporary work in cognitive science. Conceived this way, it can afford, I believe (or hope), to be a bit less precise on some terminological issues. Namely, I will not dwell long on the issue whether it is utterances, sentences, statements or propositions that are the real truth-value bearers, or how these concepts may best be defined. I will opt for statements, as that what is said by an utterance of a sentence, the thought expressed, and I will consider statements to be *abstractable*, in the sense that two people can make the same statement (have the same thought) and that the same person can make the same statement (have the same thought) on different occasions.⁴ I believe that sentences are unfit for the role of truth-value bearers, and so are utterances, the former because they are abstract grammatical structures, the latter because they are spatio-temporally bound and unfit for abstractability; as for propositions, they carry so much philosophical baggage that it is best to avoid them (otherwise one would have to confront Russell's and other strange views on what the constituents of propositions are, what their metaphysical status is, etc.). However, sometimes the term ‘sentence’ fits better in context (especially when the sentence is written down, so there is nobody around to actually make the statement); so I will lead a double life, as Quine would put it.

Before I begin presenting the theory, I would like to give an example of the kind of statements I would like this theory to deal with. Theories of truth in analytical philosophy, and theories of meaning belonging to this school of thought in general, tend to focus on examples such as the notorious “The cat is on the mat”; I believe this prevents them from appreciating the full range of our cognition and conceptual apparatus. Try this for a change: “The world is a dangerous place”, or: “Democracy has prevailed [...]”.⁵ Would you say these sentences are true? Most people would agree that the first one certainly is (the same would go for the second, I believe, if one inserts “in eastern Europe”; with “in Iraq” it's more troublesome). But is there a simple, easily spatio-temporally locatable state of affairs that they mirror, which makes them true? I don't think so.

1. Truth as a kind of rightness/goodness of fit

Künne (2003: ch. 7.2) presents Putnam (in his best known and most controversial “internal realist” phase, cf. his 1981) as advocating the conception of

truth as *idealized rational acceptability*, and he presents Goodman's approach (cf. his 1978) as a version of this conception that Künne calls *permanent acceptability*; and he presents convincing arguments against these conceptions (some due to Putnam himself). But Künne seems to neglect a strand in the conceptions of truth endorsed by these two philosophers, and this is an important strand that they share, where Putnam takes his cue from Goodman. Putnam says: "Truth is ultimate goodness of fit" (1981: 64, italicized in the original), and also: "Truth [...] is [...] some sort of ideal coherence of our beliefs with each other and with our experiences as those experiences are themselves represented in our belief system [...]" (49–50, italics in the original beginning with "as"). This is reminiscent of Goodman's claim (1978: 132) that we should "subsume truth [...] under the general notion of rightness of fit", and also of this one (17): "a version is taken to be true when it offends no unyielding beliefs and none of its own precepts". Goodman also made some other very interesting points about truth which are mostly forgotten nowadays, undeservedly so (he spoke of metaphorical truth; he noted that truth is irrelevant for non-verbal and non-assertive symbol-systems, whereas they themselves are not irrelevant; he pointed out that truth is neither necessary nor sufficient, for, as regards the former, a convenient though less exact approximation may better serve our purposes, and, as regards the latter, many truths are trivial or redundant; finally, he claimed that rightness of works of art "is neither identical with nor utterly alien to truth; both are species of a more general notion of rightness" (133).

This view of *truth-as-fit* is the starting point of the theory that I would like to set forth here. As for "idealized rational acceptability", it is unacceptable anyway (even independently of the Künne/after Putnam criticisms, that is), for if we may presume that it is rational to accept what is true, such a conception will lead us into circularity (because it will entail that it is rational to accept what is ideally rationally acceptable). Now, this notion of fit is left largely unelucidated in Goodman and Putnam, and that's where the work of the linguists and cognitive scientists George Lakoff and Ray Jackendoff comes in. Lakoff says (1980: 179; cf. also 1987: 294), as if continuing Goodman's and Putnam's thought: "We understand a statement as being true in a given situation when our understanding of the statement fits our understanding of the situation closely enough for our purposes". Jackendoff says (2002: 327), drawing partly on Tarski's terminology: "[...] it makes sense to regard a

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This validity is open to question. Künne's *modest account of truth*, as he terms it, is condensed in the following formula: for each x (x is true iff there is a proposition p such that (x is the proposition that p , and p)), cf. (2003: 337). Now, in spite of Künne's attempts to convince us otherwise, this formula seems to me to be either incoherent or circular. For, in its last occurrence, what 'p' replaces is the making of a claim (to the effect that p), whereas in its first occurrence it stands for an object (a proposition). So, interpreted one way, the biconditional is incoherent, for the same bound variable doesn't always range over the same things; interpreted another way, so that the variable 'p' does always range over the same objects, namely propositions, it is circular, because the predicate 'is true'

would have to appear in the final conjunct of the formula taking 'p' as argument in order that a claim be made and the formula be valid. I might be wrong about this diagnosis, so I apologize preventively to Professor Künne if I have misunderstood and misrepresented the key claim of his fine book. Nothing further in my paper hinges on this point, however.

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I will not delve here into the intricate issues of context-sensitivity and ambiguity, for, important as they may be, they would lead us astray.

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Insert "in Iraq" or "in Eastern Europe" or whatever you like between the brackets.

clause as referentially satisfied by a conceptualized situation. The judgement of a declarative sentence's truth value then follows from how it is referentially satisfied". Jackendoff's theory of a "common cognitive structure" that serves as the locus of convergence for meaning acquired through language, inference, background knowledge, perception and action (273) seems to be just what we needed to elucidate this notion of fit. The fit-effect happens, therefore, in our conceptual system: it takes as input the meaning conveyed by language, the data of perception, the operations of inference and whatever relevant knowledge we have stored and delivers the "that's true" impression as output (where 'that' refers to a thought/statement, be it our own or somebody else's communicated to us via language; TRUE is also a concept we have, that gets expressed via the word 'true' and the corresponding words in other languages). This seems to be, in an extremely rough sketch, how we use and understand the notion of truth, how our cognitive system handles it. In any case, this view presents truth as a *human* concept, as something intimately tied to the workings of our minds – and not as some abstract relation that obtains between propositions (or whatever) and something else (whatever that may be) independently of what we are able to understand or conceptualize. Admittedly, some aliens that we may someday run into (if they are not already here) may correctly be said to be right about something – and then we may correctly ascribe truth to the statements they make (to their thoughts). But this brings nothing crucially new into the picture – in as far as they are intelligible to us, we will extend our concept of mind to include their minds also, but truth will still remain closely tied to the way (our, their, some, any, all) mind(s) construe reality. Why? Because there's no God's Eye point of view, and our (mutually intelligible) minds are the best we've got.

However, there is more to be said as to the "fit" in question – for one prevailing idea in contemporary theories of truth seems to be that what makes statements true, or their truth-makers, are always one and the same kind of thing. And this seems wrong to me.

2. Multiple fit

The central hypothesis of this paper is that there are several different "things" that a statement may need to fit in order to be deemed true, several different criteria it may need to satisfy; moreover, what it needs to fit depends on the type of statement and the circumstances of the utterance of the sentence that expresses it. Amongst these "things" are the following (the list may not be exhaustive):

- the criterion of internal consistency;
- sensory data (which are rarely completely free of the influence of conceptualization);
- data from memory (long-term and/or short-term; semantic and/or episodic);
- non-verbalized beliefs (given in the "language of thought" i. e. conceptual structure but not expressed in language);⁶
- other parts of discourse.

Since the criterion of internal consistency is, so to speak, eternal,⁷ whereas the data of perception are always subject to change (both in the sense that things change in front of our eyes, and that these data "enter" and "exit" our short-term memory, with only some of them sticking around by being stored in long-term memory),⁸ that leaves the data from memory, non-verbalized

beliefs and other parts of discourse as relatively stable, though not immutable, parameters of evaluation. I would like to call these last three factors *the sedimented background*. Most statements will need to be checked against all or at least some parts of the sedimented background (i.e. all or some of the three constituents, not the whole of each of these factors, of course). Only statements of pure logic and mathematics, and statements about our current (external or internal, i.e. informing us of something going on outside or inside the body) sensations can be free of demand of fit with the sedimented background, the former being true by virtue of internal consistency alone,⁹ the latter by virtue of fitting the data of sensation.¹⁰

Let us now take up our two example sentences, i.e. “The world is a dangerous place” and “Democracy has prevailed [...]” – and see how they are assessed for truth. But in order to be assessed, first they have to be *understood* – and it seems that a whole lot of conceptualizing will be going on in understanding them.

Take the first sentence, “The world is a dangerous place”. What does it take to understand it? Well, we’ll have to conceptualize some sort of a whole, because that’s what the world is – but in this context it is a *qualified* whole, namely the word ‘world’ does not here mean something like a totality of facts, objects or appearances, but rather it is meant to have us conceptualize the Earth, and, even further, just the whole of human affairs (since somebody dying in an earthquake would not count as evidence toward the truth of the sentence as it is normally understood). The point of the sentence, therefore, is that danger lurks in human affairs, that harm often comes to participants of human interaction. It is also interesting to observe that we can only fully grasp what is meant by “the world” by the time we reach the end of the sentence and apply some kind of operation of mental adjustment (for if someone begins a sentence with “The world...” he might be some kind of neo-wittgensteinian, for all we now) – the choice of how we conceive of the world (in a proto-Wittgensteinian or a proto-Heideggerian way, so to speak) is triggered by what comes after in the sentence.¹¹ Finally, the rhetoric *bite* this sentence displays

6 Cf. Jackendoff (2002: 123 or 273). Are they always, i.e. in principle, expressible in language? I suppose so, if we put enough effort into it, but I prefer not to commit myself on this issue.

7 One of the reviewers has pointed out that “the criterion of ‘internal consistency’ is ‘eternal’ only relative to a chosen logic, since we (presently) do not dispose of some ‘universal logic’”. But, by “internal consistency” I mean only the minimal requirement of non-contradiction, which (I suppose) every logic should fulfil. I hereby thank both reviewers for their suggestions and comments. My gratitude also goes to the participants of the Harvard Metaphysics & Epistemology Workshop, where I first presented this paper in February 2009.

8 So there is a partial overlap between the demand of fitting perceptual data and fitting data in short-term memory; however, short-term memory comprises much more than the data of perception, e.g. recently heard sentences, recently thought thoughts, etc.

9 Of course, to say this is to make a claim that belongs to the domain of the philosophy of logic and the philosophy of mathematics, and to contradict certain theories in these domains that have something else in mind as the truth-maker of logical and mathematical statements. I think the claim is correct, but I will not argue the issue here.

10 I do not mean to imply that observation statements can be *reduced* to statements about sensations, only that an observation statement has to *fit* the data of sensation in order to be deemed true.

11 This shows that compositionality, i.e. the operation of meaning composition, can’t be a mechanical process, that the meaning of the whole sentence will exhibit some kind of *Gestalt* features – as Lakoff has been one of the first to point out (cf. his 1987, *passim*).

as contrasted with the almost synonymous “The world is dangerous” is due to the seeming category mistake that consists in calling the world “a place”, since it is, conceived as an all-embracing totality, the *set* of all places and not itself a place – and this conceptual “tension” arises because this meaning of “world” is still present in the back(ground) of our mind, even if it cancelled by the rest of the sentence. This tension makes the sentence cognitively loaded, unusual (stylized).

So, what makes it true? It is recognized as true and assented to by most people in a matter of seconds (if not sooner), but this is hardly by virtue of them assessing some sort of nearby state of affairs, such as a cat resting on a mat. Rather, to recognize this sentence as true takes everything we’ve got, to put it that way – our conceptual system will have to consult some of the data stored in memory, some of our non-verbalized beliefs, some of the content of “nearby discourse” (e.g. a newspaper article on a terrorist attack that was perhaps recently read by both interlocutors and that maybe caused one of them to utter the sentence in question) and perhaps even perceptual data (if it is some poor soul’s misfortune at the hands of another person, currently taking place in front of the interlocutor’s eyes, that gave rise to the remark, instead of the article). A lightning-quick process of assessment and adjustment will have to take place in our conceptual structure for the “it’s true” effect to strike us. Much more than observing a cat on a mat, or a cat *being* on a mat, I’d say. Is there even an objective, mind-independent state of affairs that makes this sentence true? Surely, there are events and happenings that would count as evidence for the truth of this sentence, but it seems that its truth is not a mind-independent matter. The truth of this sentence is response-dependent; it is closely tied to whether we recognize it as true. How we understand it and what we (choose to) take into account whilst assessing it is crucial.¹²

The same goes, *mutatis mutandis*, for “Democracy has prevailed [...]”. What is involved in understanding this sentence is some sort of a democracy-ICM (idealized cognitive model):¹³ a mental model of a system of institutions and processes that constitute democracy. The point of the sentence is that the political life of a country (two more complex conceptualizations) fits, more or less, the democracy-ICM (or, rather, it fits the standards set by this model). How do we assess this sentence for truth? Again, by giving it everything we got – by sending our cognitive system on a mission through the sedimented background. And is it (objectively, absolutely) true that democracy has prevailed in Iraq? Or is it (objectively, absolutely) false? Again, this is hardly a mind-independent matter – it depends on what we focus on, what we deem important, etc.

I would like to stress here that sentences such as these are by no means rare or exceptional in human cognition and communication – they are just as frequent, and just as easily understood, as “The cat is on the mat”. So we should pay them their due.

3. Truth is a family

As truth-makers are not one kind of things, neither is truth itself, I contend – it seems that there are different kinds of truths, and that they constitute a family. The central examples of truth, the prototypes, are mathematical truth, everyday or commonsense truth (“There is a cat on the mat”), and scientific truth. But there are other, more marginal or derivative, kinds: artistic truth, metaphorical truth,¹⁴ ethical or moral truth, political truth. Whether a type

of truth is central or derivative is a matter of empirical research, the same as whether a whale is considered by people to be a prototypical mammal – it is determined by investigation of our cognitive system, by looking into what people most easily classify as “a truth”, and where they begin to diverge. So this is an empirical hypothesis.

What is the relation of these kinds of truth and the factors of fit from the previous section? Well, as I already noted, mathematical (and logical) truth need satisfy only the criterion of internal consistency;¹⁵ as for the other kinds, all the factors come into play, their respective role depending on the features of the particular statement (its particular subject, its generality, the nature of the concepts it employs, etc.) and the context (both linguistic and non-linguistic) of the utterance. Internal consistency will figure as a less important desideratum in artistic truth than in scientific truth, and so will agreement with observation (i.e. fit with sensory data) – but a particular artistic claim to truth might engage much more of our cognitive system than a scientific claim to truth (e.g. it will engage much of our episodic *and* semantic memory, whereas the scientific claim will engage only some parts of semantic memory). In any case, I agree with Goodman that art and science, while not being identical of course, are not “utterly alien” to each other either – there are many affinities between them, for they both engage our cognitive system and aren’t too picky about which parts of it they exploit. Our cognitive system surely isn’t internally subdivided into a “science-module” and an “art-module”.

4. Question of bivalence

What about the claim that every statement is either true or false? I think this is a good *approximation*; moreover, it is biologically founded. Truth and falsity are not just abstract logical and philosophical notions – our *brain* and the rest of our physiology actually register our awareness of telling a lie (and a part of lying, other than the intention to deceive, is to utter a statement one believes to be false), and this fact is relied upon by lie-detector tests. Experts on interrogation are trained to recognize other tell-tale signs of lying – and this is only an extension of something that everybody is familiar with anyway. Young children know the difference between lying and telling the truth very well, and the sentence “You/he/she are/is lying” is one you’ve certainly heard extremely often during your childhood.

So our very *body* acts in accordance with a certain principle of bivalence, it will react to our awareness of speaking falsely.¹⁶ However, as I said, bivalence is only an approximation. To deem a statement true has a lot to do with

¹² Cf. MacFarlane’s (2005) influential recent article on this issue.

¹³ The term is Lakoff’s (cf. his 1987, *passim*; definition on p. 68).

¹⁴ The latter two are by no means the same thing. We could deem a novel to be a “true” depiction of the human condition even if it contained no metaphors (other than those that our conceptual and linguistic system can’t do without, so that they are hardly even noticed – cf. Lakoff & Johnson 1980).

¹⁵ “Other parts of discourse” might also be relevant, in the sense of the axioms and other theorems, as well as the rules of inference, a particular statement is deduced from. However, each deduction can be presented as one long conditional, so the matter comes down to internal consistency again.

¹⁶ Not under all circumstances, of course – cf. irony. The relevant circumstances are those where we intend to induce a belief in another person. Theory of mind most certainly has a role to play here as well.

our purpose, perspective, etc., so there will be all kinds of in-between evaluations: kind of-true, partly-true, mostly-true, from-a-certain-perspective-true, etc. These evaluations will depend on how good the fit of the statement is with the aforementioned factors.

5. The normativity of truth

Undoubtedly, certain uneasiness will have settled on most readers by now: do I mean to say that truth is whatever somebody, or some community, deems true? Absolutely not! Truth is never the same thing as what somebody believes to be true, and is never the same thing as what is (currently) justified, either. Truth (properly understood, i.e. sufficiently “purified” to free it from obvious threat of paradox) has an immanent normative aspect to it – it is an ideal towards which we strive but of which we can never be certain that we have achieved it. Now, this ideality is not to be explained by invoking some transcendental authority (be it “the facts”, God and his Eye, or whatever) which would play the role of the final judge of truth – rather, it is cashed out in terms of *the possibility of challenge to truth-claims*. Whatever somebody, or some community, claims to be true, it can always be challenged: if you think they are wrong, and you are disrespectful enough, you can always say: “No, you are wrong, and here are my arguments!” The possibility of this challenge presupposes some notion of universal human rationality, namely the supposition that, even if we don’t understand each other or are unable to come to a common view on some issue, it is at least in principle possible that we achieve this mutual understanding or shared view. This is a regulative ideal, of course, but I think it is a good one to have, and it is not open to refutation, due to logical reasons (an existentially quantified claim, such as “there is a common view that we will finally achieve”, can never be refuted, no matter how long it is not fulfilled; it can only be verified, if and when it is fulfilled). So, whenever a perfect “fit” is claimed for some statement, it is always open to challenge, but for our challenge to have any point to it we need to presuppose that our challenger can understand us and can rationally assess our arguments – or at least that s/he could in principle do so if we were only patient enough with them.

Our correspondence intuition, which is perfectly sound (a crucial part of a child’s cognitive development is that it comes to understand that objects are “stable”, i.e. independent of its consciousness), but seems never to be explicable by way of a satisfactory philosophical theory,¹⁷ can also be accounted for in this way – what X believes to be the truth never equals the truth, because somebody else might correct him by having a *better insight*, by *seeing things as they really are*.

Between the absolute and the relative, then, there is the *objective*. Truth-claims cannot be absolute – we know of no authority that would finally convince us that we have reached the truth and put us to rest (long gone are the days when Descartes could have claimed that he knew of one); but to consider them relative is hopeless also, and leads to paradox (Wittgenstein’s Private Language Argument is often used to show this). So it is best to see truth-claims as objective:¹⁸ they are meant to present us how things are, not just as the presenter sees them, but demanding that any rational person see them that way. They are not of the form “Things are thus-and-so relative to P(resenter)”, but rather just “Things are thus-and-so (and you’d better see it that way too)”. So they demand our acceptance, they are moves in a game of trying to achieve a shared view of the world, but they always remain open to challenge.¹⁹

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Joško Žanić

Istina: teorija višestrukog podudaranja

Sažetak

Ova teorija pokušava rasvijetliti kako razumijevamo i rabimo pojam istine. Teorija se nadovezuje na neka gledišta Putnama i Goodmanana, no razvija ta gledišta tvrdeći kako se istina sastoji u tome da se iskaz podudara ("fits") s jednim od sljedećih parametara ili s više njih: kriterij interne konsistentnosti; osjetilni podaci; podaci iz pamćenja; ne-verbalizirana vjerovanja; drugi dijelovi diskursa. Opća kognitivna struktura, koja, prema Rayu Jackendoffu, služi kao točka konvergencije za značenje preneseno jezikom, pozadinsko znanje, opažanje, zaključivanje, itd., identificira se kao medij podudaranja koje rezultira kognitivnim učinkom: »to je istina«. Teorija također tvrdi kako je istina pojam-obitelj, obuhvaćajući različite vrste istine. Ukazuje se na to da istina ima normativnu dimenziju, koja se obrazlaže kao mogućnost izazova tvrdnjama koje pretendiraju na istinitost, što pak pretpostavlja regulativni ideal univerzalne ljudske racionalnosti.

Ključne riječi

istina, višestruko podudaranje, normativnost, kognitivna struktura

17

Cf. Walker (1997), Künne (2003).

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"Objective" is here taken to mean something like "obligatory for any rational agent", not "mind-independent" (as it commonly does today). So, truth is argued here to be mind-relative, but for a set of communicating minds, there will still be a notion of objectivity in this sense.

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I wasn't concerned here with the meaning of the word "true" (this word functions differently in different languages anyway). But let me note that I think that its content has a descriptive and a normative/evaluative component. The content of the descriptive component shifts with the type of statement (for a mathematical statement it will come down to "is internally consistent"; for an observation-statement it will come down to "fits sensory experiences"; etc.); the normative component is always the same ("Accept the statement!"), but it can be cancelled (e.g. in the sentence "If p is true, then...").

Joško Žanić

Wahrheit: Theorie der multiplen Übereinstimmung

Zusammenfassung

Diese Theorie versucht zu durchleuchten, auf welche Weise wir den Begriff der Wahrheit verstehen bzw. sich dessen bedienen. Sie knüpft an manche Standpunkte Putnams und Goodmans an, baut sie überdies aus, indem sie behauptet, die Wahrheit bestehe darin, dass die Aussage mit einem oder mehreren der folgenden Parameter konform gehe („fits“): Kriterium der internen Konsistenz; Sinnesdaten; Gedächtnisdaten; nicht verbalisierten Glauben; sonstigen Diskursteilchen. Die allgemeine kognitive Struktur – die nach Ray Jackendoff als Konvergenzpunkt für sprachlich übertragene Bedeutung, Hintergrundwissen, Wahrnehmung, Schlussfolgerung usw. fungiere – wird als Medium des Übereinstimmens identifiziert, das in der kognitiven Das-ist-Wahrheit-Auswirkung resultiert. Die Theorie erklärt ebenso die Wahrheit für einen Familienbegriff, indem sie diverse Wahrheitsvarianten erfasst. Es wird auf die normative Dimension der Wahrheit hingewiesen, die als Möglichkeit der Herausforderung an die Wahrhaftigkeit präntendierenden Beteuerungen substantiiert wird, was allerdings ein regulatives Ideal der universellen menschlichen Rationalität unterstellt.

Schlüsselwörter

Wahrheit, multiple Übereinstimmung, Normativität, kognitive Struktur

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La vérité : la théorie de la correspondance multiple

Résumé

La présente théorie tente de mettre en lumière notre compréhension et notre utilisation de la notion de vérité. Elle rejoint certains points de vue de Putnam et de Goodman, mais les développe en estimant que la vérité est une affirmation qui correspond (« fits ») à un ou à plusieurs des paramètres suivants : critère de la cohérence intérieure ; données sensorielles ; données de la mémoire ; croyances non-verbalisées ; autres parties du discours. La structure cognitive générale – qui, d'après Ray Jackendoff, sert de point de convergence à la signification transmise par le langage, la connaissance d'arrière-plan, la perception, la déduction etc. – est identifiée comme intermédiaire de cette correspondance qui entraîne l'effet cognitif : « c'est vrai ». Cette théorie affirme en outre que la vérité est une famille de notions qui englobe différentes sortes de vérités. Il est souligné que la vérité comporte une dimension normative qui s'explique comme la possibilité de défier les affirmations prétendant à la vérité, ce qui suppose un idéal régulateur de la rationalité universelle de l'homme.

Mots-clés

vérité, correspondance multiple, normativité, structure cognitive