«Death» of Truth – the Apotheosis of Deflationism

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Abstract

The article investigates some aspects of concept of truth. The author proposes the arguments that defines the specifics it in the context of modern epistemology. Ways of representation of the correspondence theory of truth, the causes of the crisis in its perception and evaluation are analyzed. The article is the publication of studies of the analytic heritage of the truth. The subject of the article is basic aspects of the development of a rational experience of the deflationary theory of truth as well as the specific features of methodological approaches of its representatives. The article investigates some aspects of other theories of truth. The author proposes the arguments that defines the specifics it in the context of modern epistemology. Ways of representation of the correspondence theory of truth, the causes of the crisis in its perception and evaluation are analyzed. In this article author presents main results of his studies concerning the analytical tradition in the European philosophical movement.

Keywords: truth, deflationism, correspondence theory of truth, deflationary theory of truth.

Introduction

Philosophy seems to act as a particular area of human activity, as knowledge investigating the so-called «eternal questions» pointing out their special existential content, experience. This position can result in skepticism about any attempt to solve these issues, as well as about metaphysics (philosophy) that formulates the «useless» questions that do not assume «specific» answers. F. Wiseman's thesis that «a philosopher when wishing to get rid of a question shouldn't do one thing: give the answer. The answer is not given to a philosophical question, it is eliminated» emphasizes the actualizing skepticism quite convincingly. Philosophical questions are eliminated by clarifying the meaning of words that constitute this issue. But this is not enough, mere clarifying the meaning of individual words does not give us anything beyond the context of the question itself.

For example, two questions concerning our research «What is truth?» and «What is the truth?» actually are two quite different questions: the latter is the question about what exactly, which objects (thoughts, beliefs, propositions, statements, etc.) are true; while the former one is the question of what it means to say that thoughts, beliefs, propositions, statements, etc. are true.

As you can see, these two far from being «useless» philosophical questions that have resonance in the sphere of (inter) (poly) (trans) disciplinary scientific research, yet require a semantic adjustment the essence of which can be expressed in such a way: two of the above-mentioned issues represent the truth in two ways - as a definition and as a criterion.

In order to reveal the feature of these questions, it must be said that it is not so much the questions but signs of deep concern of mind. However, it is possible to look differently at the

problem of «eternity» in philosophical questions, not from the side of their ambiguous interpretation, but from the side of their everlasting significance and relevance for humanity and for each of us.

Truth, Good and Beauty are the eternal human values, everlasting and absolute. In the history of mankind there occur the eras when the need for their total revaluation is declared in full voice. But the values themselves still remain inviolable, they do not change, but the attitude towards them does. Such transformations are especially obvious with regard to Truth.

Literary review
The notion of truth has always been used by mankind to justify their claims to power, exclusivity, superiority. But at the same time, it appears extremely vulnerable when falling a victim to human arrogance and hypocrisy. The human mind distorted, deconstructed Truth having denied its right to exist, having claimed that truth is born as heresy and dies as a superstition. This is how F. Nietzsche wrote: «The 'true' world - an idea which is no longer good for anything, not even obligating — an idea which has become useless and superfluous..»..

As it appears in the context of the problem under consideration, truth seems to be a kind of idol that has had its day, has lost its value. However, the true peace is identical to the quasi one, i.e. it is objectified in subjective. In this regard, any claim of scientific truth to be objective is, at least, incorrect.

The crisis of classical science eventually found its expression in the crisis of the traditional gnoseological concepts, as evidenced by the discussions around classic (correspondence) theory of truth, the main idea of which was formulated in antiquity by Plato and Aristotle and consisted in correlation of thought with reality. If that occurred, then, the statement about some extra-linguistic reality was recognized true, while the reverse characteristic signified the falsity of such constructions. Whatever it was, but the correspondence theory of truth is still the most common, especially in the topos of natural sciences.

The development of science in the late XIX - early XX centuries attested to the fact that the theories which were considered to be true and verified turned out to be not true in the strict sense that presented the classical theory of truth in somewhat unfavorable light. One of the problem issues appeared the issue of controversy of true and false statements within the correspondence theory of truth, especially caused by the discoveries in the field of quantum physics.

The construction of semantic theories, the analysis of set theory paradoxes, the interest to the analysis of scientism (language of science), the intensive development of logical-semantic apparatus by the efforts of G. Frege, B. Russell, L. Wittgenstein, and other philosophers has caused a considerable resonance for the theory of truth, when the truth began to be considered in relation to the atomic elements of knowledge: propositions and theories, when for many types of sentences the meaning of truth proved to be unclear.

An important point in this process was A. Tarski's work «Concept of Truth in Formalized Languages» where truth is not considered as a metaphysical essence, but as a property of comprehensible sentences which (property) they may or may not possess. A. Tarski strives to accurately formulate the basic idea of the correspondence theory of truth for each individual sentence. Generalizing the statements concerning conformity on the example of the famous «Snow is white...». A. Tarski formulates a scheme which expresses the attribution of the predicate «is true» to the specific sentences:
«X is true if and only if it is P»,
where «X» is the name of the sentence, and «P» - the sentence itself.

Thus, in A. Tarski's theory, the general idea of conformity is transformed into the idea of individual sentence conformity virtually describing a fragment of reality. The content of the sentence itself acts as a fact in this context. The so-called «T-scheme» suggested by A. Tarski sets the criterion of material adequacy: the statement «snow is white» will be true when and only when a fact of snow whiteness takes place in extralinguistic reality, i.e. verification of this or that statement directly depends on its correlation with the actual state of affairs being described.

Logical positivists considered this conformity as confirmability of a sentence or a theory by experience. Initially, final confirmation (verification) of at least some of the sentences seemed possible, that guarantees truth thereof. However, it turned out that full confirmation requires an infinite set of the test options what is, actually, physically impossible. Therefore, only partial

confirmation is feasible which does not guarantee the absolute truth of the theory. Having refused the notion of truth on the basis of such an obvious fact, within logical positivism it was replaced with the concept of partial confirmation that allows us to characterize logical positivists as deflationists.

The principle of verification and the concept of confirmability were comprehensively criticized by K. Popper. In his view, if confirmation does not give confidence in the validity of the sentence or theory, then what is its function? It is possible to confirm anything, and therefore, it is of no use. But we have an opportunity to refute the theory that gives us full confidence that it (theory) is false. If confirmability cannot be final, then the refutation (a contradiction between the theory and the facts) is final serving as a criterion of falsity. Only one fact is sufficient for refutation, and that is why, it is quite reasonable.

K. Popper is convinced that we are able to establish the falsity of theories. But then, why do we reject them? Because we hope to build a true theory. Truth for K. Popper acts as a regulatory ideal, inducing scientists to refuse the disproved theories and to formulate the new ones. The philosopher believed that if there is no criterion of truth (as we remember, confirmability cannot serve as such), there is a criterion of falsity as a contradiction of theory to facts. We cannot point out truth for sure, but we can detect a lie with confidence. Yet, the idea of truth is necessary, because we can speak about the falsity only if it is opposed to its negation - truth.

Besides, truth substantiates the feasibility of scientific progress: by rejecting false theories, we strive to create a true theory. However, it became obvious that K. Popper's conviction that contradiction of the theory and facts as undoubted evidence of the falsity of theories is both historically and methodologically wrong. The history of science testifies that any new theory contradicts certain facts, and such contradictions get eliminated in the process of theory development and specification or reinterpretation of facts. However, such contradictions never disappear completely.

In case of theory and fact contradiction, actually one can only state its presence, but what caused it - falsity of the theory or incorrect fact – it is problematic to determine. Hence, it appears that just as confirmability does not substantiate the validity of theory, similarly, falsifiability does not substantiate its falsity. Thus, the very notion of truth appears to be unnecessary for science and can be eliminated from methodological constructions.

The progress in W. Quine and R. Carnap's research of scientific knowledge was considerable, in particular, their views on the functioning of the system of concepts and ideas, conceptual systems. Similar to K. Gödel's ideas of incompleteness theory, R. Carnap and W. Quine showed that systems of concepts and ideas do not solve those problems at which they are aimed. A number of issues are solved beyond these systems by means of common sense, through a dialogue. In this context, it is worth thinking of R. Carnap's «language framework» as of a certain style creating new rules for dealing with language.

The notion of «language framework» implies the distinction between two levels of question of existence: internal and external. Internal questions are the questions on the existence of objects for which, actually, «language framework» was constructed. They are raised within the scope of this «framework», this very «framework» allows to formulate answers to these questions. External questions concern that area of life to which this language framework belongs.

«Language frameworks» partly solve the problem of metaphysics - science relation which is sharply raised within positivism. But demarcation of science and metaphysics is conditional in R. Carnap's works. He does not consider «metaphysical issues» as hopelessly unsolvable. They can be considered positively by building appropriate «language frameworks», by specifying terminology, the meanings of names and the conditions of sentence validity. That is, virtually any philosophical issue, including the one concerning the essence and nature of truth and validity is in the plane of linguistic problems, and therefore, the problem of truth should be solved not by philosophy of science, but by philosophy of language.

The criticism of «language framework» concept found its reflection, in particular, in W. Quine's works. His article «Two Dogmas of Empiricism» is devoted to understanding the phenomenon of dogmas of empirical philosophy and the philosophy of science, in which the philosopher develops the philosophy based on the principles of scientific accuracy and pluralism.

W. Quine points out the following dogmas: dichotomy of analytic and synthetic judgments, as well as reductionism. Let us remind that as early as I. Kant lived, he already distinguished

analytical and synthetic judgments. By analytical he understood those judgments where the predicate expresses only the content that has already been installed into the subject, and by synthetic ones those where the predicate complements the subject with new features. As to W. Quine, he named the sentences analytical the validity of which derives from the language in which they are formulated, and synthetic – those sentences the validity of which requires a direct appeal to the facts.

But the «dogmatic» distinction of analytical and synthetic judgments reinforces the concept of R. Carnap's «language frameworks». In particular, analytical judgments serve as a retainer of «language frameworks», namely, when accepting this or that language framework, we accept a certain set of analytic sentences. In R. Carnap, analytic sentences actually define what is called a language framework. To construct a language framework means to construct a certain vocabulary, to define the rules of sentences and text formation. Besides, it is necessary to come to an agreement about the meaning of words and the conditions of sentence validity. If this is done, then we have a set of analytic sentences which are true by virtue of how the framework has been constructed.

Accordingly, the truth itself will be entirely dependent on a particular framework, serving each one separately, testifying to proliferation of truth as a natural result of proliferation of language frameworks. But as it is not quite correct to claim that the theory propositions within one language framework are more true than within another one, it seems appropriate to abandon the very notion of truth replacing it with a more «flexible», for example, trustworthiness. But this, from our point of view, is the tendency toward pragmatized deflationism.

W. Quine is skeptical about dichotomy of analytic and synthetic judgments. He distinguishes only synthetic sentences, true by virtue of experience and convention, sentences true by virtue of agreement. The philosopher considerably extends the class of conventions up to logical laws and mathematical axioms.

Statements within the natural sciences are also conventional (determined by convention). Synthetic sentences are true by virtue of experience, but such situations are possible when it is appropriate to sacrifice some sentence of pure mathematics and logic in order to preserve the position of natural science. That is, there occur difficulties in the agreement between theory and empiricism that entails the correction of logical apparatus of science. Most often, those fragments of knowledge are corrected that are directly associated with the experience.

The second W. Quine's «dogma» is the dogma of reductionism, by which he understands the position assuming reducibility of the knowledge substance to the structures of experience. That is, it is claimed that language structures are intelligent in that measure in which they are filled with the empirical content, describe the empirical facts. Otherwise, they are simply a collection, a set of symbols.

W. Quine recognizes the defining role of experience in cognition, but the philosopher admits that theories do not necessarily describe the empirical facts and do not necessarily serve as premises in concluding empirical facts. They can be connected with empirism indirectly through other theories. The entirety of our so-called knowledge or beliefs, - W. Quine declares, - is a human structure which is in contact with experience only partially, peripherally, when redistribution of truth-value meanings in a number of statements becomes necessary. This is confirmed by the thesis about marginality of truth that testified the apotheosis of deflationism.

According to J. L. Austin, the question of truth is that it is «itself is an abstract noun, a camel, that is, of a logical construction, which cannot get past the eye even of a grammarian. We ask ourselves whether … Truth is a substance, …a quality …or a relation (correspondence)…. What is it that we say is true or is false? Or, how does the phrase 'is true' occur in natural language sentences?»

As it has been already said, the problem of linking the truth value with statements within an ordinary language actualized the deflationist tendencies regarding the notion of truth. So, A.J. Ayer says: «it is commonly supposed that the business of the philosopher who concerns himself with 'truth' is to answer the question 'What is truth?' and that it is only an answer to this question that can fairly be said to constitute a «theory of truth». But when we come to consider what this famous question actually entails, we find that it is not a question which gives rise to any genuine problem; and consequently that no theory can be required to deal with it».

According to the philosopher, all questions of the form «What is the nature of X?» are requests for a definition of the specific application of a symbol «X». There are sentences in which

«X» occurs and which are to be translated into equivalent sentences, which do not contain «X» or any of its synonyms. Applying the presented scheme to the question 'What is truth?' when «X» is truth, we obtain the sentence like (proposition) p is true». As A. J. Ayer notes: «in all sentences of the form «p is true», the phrase «is true» is logically superfluous».

So, to say that the sentence is true just means its assertion, whereas to say that it is wrong – means to affirm its denial, contradiction. This proves that «truth» and «false» concepts do not denote anything extra, but operate in sentences only as signs of affirmation and negation. In this case, as A. J. Ayer testifies, it is absolutely senseless to analyze the notion of «truth».

The tendency to deflationate the concept of truth, at least in the range of ordinary language, finds its continuation in the concept of «late» L. Wittgenstein. So, in his opinion, «the truth of certain empirical statements refers to our system of references» and «in the use of the expressions «true or false» there is something misleading». Since there are no single truth criteria for all languages and language games, the thinker suggests to abandon the category of «truth» by replacing it with the category of «authenticity». Authenticity, according to L. Wittgenstein's concept, is not simply of what a person is convinced but of what he cannot be unconvinced.

J. Austin when criticizing the ideal of exact and logically precise knowledge describing the facts, considers that such methodology of analysis, built on empiricism and logicism, is incorrect. The British philosopher connects it with the insufficient accuracy of our feelings, possibility of overlapping the sensation and a physical object. Actually, we operate only the data which are the designations of the most familiar uses of our sensations. These designations, of whose truth we are sure, should be called «judgments of sensory perception». In this connection, J. Austin as well as L. Wittgenstein emphasizes the need to replace the category of «truth» with the category of «trustworthiness».

However, the idea of compliance of judgments to the facts as a criterion of truth, according to J. Austin's position, can't be completely rejected, it must be only complemented. Thus, in many situations, the question not about the validity or falsity of perception is raised, but about its relevance, adequacy, accuracy, etc. For example, what kind of promises, true or false, it is possible to name the election pledges of candidates for the state positions?

Because of this, J. Austin suggests to replace the correspondence theory of truth with the «theory of communication», which, in his opinion, will extend the range of the theoretical description of experience. A characteristic feature of any language game as a form of experience is that we believe in it, accordingly, the meaning of words is not concretized by means of logic, but in the process of their (words) application. And therefore, there is no doubt that the belief in the authority (including the authority of truth) is part of the act of communication that we all carry out constantly.

The consequence of this criticism is D. Davidson's theory of interpretation and the principle of charity. D. Davidson does research in the field of correlation of truth, language and reality, transforming the theory of meaning into the theory of interpretation, which is represented by the philosopher as the theory of understanding the opponent's idiolect, in which an important place is taken by the principle of charity - the principle which determines the validity of the assumption that both a proponent and an opponent can see things as they are, that speakers point to the same events, facts and phenomena just calling them in different ways.

Research results and conclusion

In other words, when interpreting the utterances of our interlocutor, we must trust that he sees the world as «correctly» as we do. Moreover, we also have to trust his ability to efficiently build not only the pattern of his thoughts, but actions as well. Due to the excessiveness of the notion of truth and conventional nature of D. Davidson's semantics, not those beliefs that adequately represent reality will be considered true, but beliefs within a single coherent system of views, a kind of likeness in perception.

Summing up, we can specify that deflationism deprives the notion «truth» of epistemological and ontological completeness considering it excessive. The notion of «truth» is exclusively a category of linguistics and is confined with a language framework. Truth is just a link between object language and meta language, developing the common hierarchy of meta languages. In this case, the meta language reference isn't discussed at all.

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