

1 Truth Through the Spectrum of Social Perspectives

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6 **Abstract**

7 This piece of writing on the theme ?Truth? is a exercise based on philosophical, social science
8 and literary material. The truth with different names— existence, reality , fact, facticity
9 attracted the attention of galaxy of established authors across disciplines. The status of truth
10 has been attempted here discussing epistemological, linguistic, critical, constructivist,
11 poststructuralist and postmodernist perspectives. It may be concluded that the concept of
12 truth has still remained present in old and new volumes equally, but has lost its prominent
13 position in theory and logical discussions. The concept moved from unifying and universal
14 agreement to the disarrayed concept- either denial of its essentialist core, and designated post
15 modernist anti - essentialist relativism in later year theorist. The debate now concentrates not
16 on truth as such but on ?about truth?. And the ?hype-real? simulations of the real presents
17 before us many versions of truth detached from its existential truth at a higher order.

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19 **Index terms**— ?Truth?, existence, reality, fact.

20 **1 I. Introduction**

21 truth has been attracting philosophers, saints, scientists, the development economists or the statesmen, spiritualists
22 and common men generally feel comfortable with truth and not with falsehood . Truth is both a practical and
23 moral urge simultaneously.

24 Truth has been still an unabated theme of social science and humanities literature. There is no dearth of
25 references on truth or its variants with different connotations like existence, fact/ facticity , reality and hyper-
26 reality even. Many truths, multiple truths, half truths, contextual truths: truth-real and truth-perceived are
27 another types that give us entanglements that requires solution. But what is the best answer for truth? Is it
28 science or the conscience? In the absence of agreed upon truth or universal truth, the debate in private and
29 public domain is natural to arise.

30 In the wake of emergence of the knowledge societies or information society, there has been a great demand for
31 a clearer concept of truth and criteria of truth. The credibility of institutions , persons and other agency can
32 be faithfully believed if it operates within the premises of truth. Mahatma Gandhi upgraded the status of truth
33 when he proclaimed that truth is God.

34 If social sciences aspire to be akin to sciences than it should take worry of validation of truthful statements
35 . However, in behavioural sciences, the Author : Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra Haryana. E-mail :
36 satruttomar@yahoo.fr positivist basis of truth is shaken and perhaps we are bound to stay at middle position in
37 objective and subjective truths.

38 **2 II. Objectives of Study**

39 There are two objectives in this conceptual piece that operate in the exercise. 1. To clarify the concept of Truth
40 in relation to reality/ facticity. 2. To place the truth in different social science perspectives.

8 PERSPECTIVE-IV A) CRITICAL OR EMANCIPATORY PERSPECTIVE ON TRUTH

41 3 III. Method

42 To seek the concept, status in philosophical and social science literature has been explored. The literature on
43 truth and the literature on different perspectives embedding 'truth' / reality was collected and analysed. However,
44 no empirical data or quantitative analysis was made but literary survey was conducted and the concept of truth
45 was put in different categories of perspectives.

46 4 IV. The Concept of Truth: The Meaning

47 There are a large number of authors or social theorists who interchangeably used the concepts -truth, fact/
48 facticity and hyperreality. Further, the Oxford dictionary of sociology mentions the meaning of 'Truth' with
49 specification of 'fact'. Thus, 'True facts about something rather than the things that have been invented or
50 guessed'. This indicates the natural truth based on facts observed and not the facts made or created. P.V
51 young,(1966:10) defined truth as fact in general and mentions thus -" Facts must be seen as physical, mental , or
52 emotional occurrences or phenomenon which can be affirmed with certainty and are accepted as true in a given
53 world of discourse. ' Foucault (1977) attached the truth with a particular discourse which is subject to change.
54 Being antifoundationalist for Foucault, truth was relative and contextual but not absolute and universal.

55 5 V. Truth: From Different Perspectives

56 Truth as a concept is a very difficult subject and warrants treatment in multi perspectives. Derek Layder (2006:
57 128) suggested that truth must be seen from different perspectives. Earl ??abbie (2004:43-44) recommended
58 to look at truth /reality, assuming it more The truth is subjected to appraisal ??Chisholm,1987: 6-7) as it
59 encompasses two elementsone is 'believing' in some position of 'true' or 'false' , and another is 'reasonably
60 perceiving something'. Further, If something is believed as 'beyond reasonable doubt' and 'more reasonable than
61 another' it means that truth is liable to be perceived by individuals with arbitrary but reasonably, he declares.

62 However, essential truth is rooted in humans' passionate embrace of authenticity. Here, truth is not an
63 objective thing but is emotional in nature. Indian philosophical thinking recognizes soul as the best test for the
64 truth. Greek thinking also recognizes soul in deciding the truth or falsehood . Yet, pragmatism considers truth
65 as socially existing and not absolute. In Black feminist epistemology, -truth lies in pre existing knowledge
66 system and is believed accordingly. Knowledge remains based in beliefs and beliefs are assumed to be true ??
67 Collins, 2000). Yet, there may be categories of believers, non-believers and agnostic affecting the concept of
68 truth. Similarly, 'truth value' components i.e. negation (rejecting), conjunction (acceptance) and alternative
69 propositions are examined for affirmation of truth statements. Truth value of a statement may also be decided
70 by its correspondence or lack of it to an empirical reality outside (Howarth: 2002).

71 6 Perspective-II a) Existentialist view

72 Sartre, an existential phenomenologist and philosopher, viewed existence (truth) as 'nothingness' devoid of any
73 real existence with any meaning and objective.

74 He attributed three characteristics of existence of the world-namely (i) shapeless (ii) purposeless (iii) uncertain
75 and doubtful.

76 It helps understand his stand point on ultimate reality of the world. Sartre developed a phrase- "Je pense
77 donc Je suis" (I think therefore I am) Otherwise, all reality outside consciousness is illusory and subject to
78 decay and disappear. Yet, he recommends that we should study human realities rather going after 'essence' than
79 existence. Later, following Sartre, Foucault declared that there is no absolute truth/reality and even knowledge
80 that depended upon discourse dominating over in a time with some ideological forte. It is significant to mention
81 that Oriental view on existence represented by Indian Hindu reformer and the founder of Arya Samaj Maharishi
82 Dayand of India of 19th century, a religious reformer, states that world is not purposeless. However, there is a
83 purpose of God not of individual or collective humanity.

84 7 Perspective-III a) The constructivist idea of truth

85 Absorbing partially the pragmatist view of truth / reality, Berger and Luckman (1966) emphasised that reality
86 is socially constructed through institutionalization of habits of practical life that typify them. Goffman (2007)
87 an interactionist -sociologist, stressed that whatever is presented in open social space, remains a managed affair
88 and there is a difference every time in backstage reality and front stage presentation in an attempt to idealization
89 of self identity showing difference between cultured appearance and manner. He states -'Mythology and our
90 popular magazine are full of romantic stories in which the villain and the hero both make fraudulent claims that
91 are discredited? . Here, this sign-accepting tendency puts the audience in a position to be duped and misled. (p
92 61). Whatever truth/ reality is produced creatively by actors in relationship to each other.

93 8 Perspective-IV a) Critical or emancipatory perspective on 94 truth

95 The emancipatory social philosophers of Frankfurt school like Althusser, Habermas and Gramsci emphasized the
96 role of ideology of the time to bring distortions to reality narration, under the capitalistic operations, through the

97 organ of public opinion which include media , universities, army and writings (Habermass : 2005), while putting
98 forward the idea of communicative action he observed that the ideal speech situation was transgressed by distorted
99 communication made by state apparatus and the truth was suppressed. Gramsci (The Prison Notebooks) also
100 highlighted earlier the hegemonic control of ruling class through media means in their favour at the cost of reality
101 that not appeared. Chomsky (2000) in the series through his monumental work stressed that capitalistic U.S.A
102 was acquiring the 'manufactured consent' and exercising over rest of the world to manipulate the opinion in the
103 developing countries to cover up its hidden capitalistic agenda.

104 All it is through the false propaganda communication .

105 **9 Perspective-V a) Post -structuralist view of truth: Truth is 106 unfoundational**

107 Post-structuralist French philosopher Foucault was more interested in the effects of truth than the truth itself.
108 He viewed that there is 'a battle' 'for Truth' or at least around truth "?.. and battle "about the status of
109 truth?.." (p 208) . By truth he didn't mean "ensemble 2012(D D D D) C Year

110 of truth" which are to be discovered and accepted , but it was ensemble of rules according to which the true
111 or false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the "true". For post-structuralists, the truth is a
112 'produced commodity' which is transmitted under control of political and economic apparatus i.e the university,
113 army, writing and media. Further, every society has 'regime of truth' accumulated after ideological struggle .
114 And the dominant discourse of the time has the power to push the effects of truth, identifiable. However, the
115 truth cannot be neutral and objective but a subjective category and is historically determined.

116 **10 Perspective-VI a) Post-Modern view : The hyper-real truth**

117 The issue of reality /truth becomes further complicated in the post-modern age of " hyper-reality" and
118 "simulacra" where the difference between real and the images or between signs and simulations of the real
119 has blurred (Baudrillard:1981). The hyper reality is all about a reality which is 'more real than real ' and
120 simulacra is the product of that hyper-reality. The phenomenon has uprooted the necessity of a real world or
121 the true world. 3-D Video games, films, animated images on internet , animated sites of the simulation which
122 promote a physically non-existent virtual world and which is not only better but also utopian . There is a
123 promised and projected utopia built on the death of the real. The result is that the reality is doomed and the
124 question of truth becomes undesirable. It is in the interest of the media promoters to promote hyper reality as
125 it is a vast space which can supersede public rationality and can remove it from the plan of logic and take them
126 in a world which is so 'other worldly'.

127 Advertising focuses on removing the real and the rationality and produces exaggerated, inflated images and
128 claims. The audience forgets the difference between real and non real. The question is whether we are comfortable
129 with the unreal real or false? VI.

130 **11 Conclusions**

131 From the above exercise based on pertinent literature mainly of philosophy and social science, some conclusions
132 can be drawn however, with some risk of inherent disagreement. The theme of truth has not been receded even
133 from new age literature. Of course, the concept of truth is expanded from philosophical adventurism to social
134 analysis. 1. The emerging negative and alternative components are developed in methodological and theoretical
135 literature and social sciences. 2. Post -structuralism gave a diversion to the concept as Foucault says now the
136 'Battle is not for truth but about truth'.

137 3. Similarly, Post -Modernist Baudrillard 'Moved to focus on 'hyper-real', not on real or truth. The status
138 of truth concept shifted from moral and universal acceptance to utilitarian purposes serving pragmatist ends.
139 Today, there is no real truth but truth claims. 4. In the last, status of Truth has changed as social progressed in
140 different period of academic and other writings. ¹



Figure 1:

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