

A Wittgensteinian Argument Against Pluralism of Truth

François-Igor PRIS

frigpr@gmail.com

April 2012

Absolutist thesis about truth (Pascal Engel 2011)

- Truth is one, objective, absolute (not relative), not vague and not partial.

My proposal:

- Later Wittgenstein and Heidegger (combine philosophy of language and ontology)

W: family resemblance, language game, rule, rule-following problem

H: *Dasein*, distinction between *truth as correspondence* and *truth as openness of Dasein* (aletheia)

Both W and H are what I call Normative Naturalists. (There are natural LGs, that is, natural normative practices, governed by (in general) implicit rules which themselves are natural.)

Positions about Truth (I)

- **Monism** (« Truth is one »): A. The concept of truth is unambiguous (the nature of truth is uniform across discipline or sector of discourse). B. There is a single truth property that statements can have (the essence of truth).
- **Pluralism**: A. The concept of truth is ambiguous (the nature of truth varies across discipline or sector of discourse). B. There is more than one truth property that statements can have.
- Pluralist motivation: « 'p' is true » has different meanings and reasons for different statements p.

Positions about Truth (II)

- **Truth « chauvinism »** denies that all discourses are truth apt (e.g., expressivism in ethics).
- **Deflationism**: truth is a « thin » (not substantive) property. Truth does not have any essence. The predicate « true » is a syntactical device (for instance, for Paul Horwich the predicate « true » is a generalization device). For Davidson (1996), truth is a primitive predicate which is implicitly defined by a theory of truth applied to the sentences of the language.

Tarski's DS: 'p' is true iff p

In a sense, deflationist accepts the disunity of truth.

- **Functionalism**: (for any statement x) x is true iff x has a property which plays the truth-role. (C. Wright (1992), M. Lynch (2001))

Platitudes about truth, or the *a priori* role of truth

Austin: theory of truth is given by a list of platitudes about truth.

Crispin Wright (2001)

- - transparency : to assert (believe) that p is to present p as true
- - epistemic opacity : some truths may not be known or be unknowable
- - embedding: truth aptness is preserved under various syntactic operations
- - correspondence: for a proposition to be true is to correspond to reality
- - contrast: a proposition may be true without being justified and vice versa
- - stability: if a proposition is ever true, then it is always true
- - absoluteness: truth is absolute, there are no degrees of truth

Crispin Wright does not include the normativity of truth – truth is the correctness condition of belief – in this list of platitudes.

M. Lynch: Platitudes define the “nominal truth” (concept of truth, not the real essence of truth).

Functionalist Dilemma

- (A) Is truth a second-order property (the functional role) or (B) it is the realizer of the role?
- If (A), then functionalism is similar to deflationism.
- If (B), pluralism of realizers. Such extreme pluralism undermines the pluralist motivation.
- Traditional functionalism cannot combine (A) and (B).
- C. Wright (2001, 2003) and M. Lynch (2009, 2011) try to combine (A) and (B). They defend a form of pluralism - alethic functionalism: the concept of truth is one, but there are different properties of being true – different realizations of the concept of truth (correspondence, superwarrant, coherence, and so on). M. Lynch: « *Truth is one and many.* »
- Pascal Engel (2012): alethic functionalism is incompatible both with the uniformity and substantiveness of the norm of truth for belief. It leads either to pluralism of norms of truth for belief or to deflationism)

Michael Lynch's (2011) version of alethic functionalism : Truth as an *immanent* (in properties of being true) functional property.

An *immanent property* is manifested by other properties, that is, it is a priori that its conceptually essential features are a subset of features of these properties. F is immanent in M: part of being M is being F. (So, the notion of immanent truth allows to connect the role and the realization.)

My (tentative) Wittgensteinian non-metaphysical monism (pluralism)

- Combine (A) and (B) pragmatically (or within NN). → not all realizers are acceptable (immanency of the truth-role is not yet immanency of the truth itself)
 - 1). The concept of truth is unambiguous (and given by a list of platitudes about truth – the functional role of truth), but it has different uses- « realizers » (against metaphysical monism), so that there is no single truth property, but a family of truth properties connected by a FR. The functional role of truth is pragmatically (naturalistically) anchored in its uses. FR is a restriction on realizers of the role (against metaphysical pluralism and alethic pluralism).

Ex. In ordinary life « correspondence to fact » is a truth property. (« 'Snow is white' is true iff snow is white ».) In physics: correspondence to fact of nature. In mathematics: Correspondence to abstract object?
 - 2). In fact, I combine 1. with the substantive principle of correspondence because it is the most natural ordinary view on truth. (No FR between, e.g., anti-realist coherence and realist correspondence to fact.)

Why correspondence?

- It is one of the platitudes about truth. Moreover, I think, that it is the most basic platitude. Other platitudes can be deduced from it.

Three basic platitudes about truth (M. Lynch)

- Objectivity (truth is correspondence to fact)
- Truth is the norm for belief (compatible with the view that truth itself is not a normative notion. But I think that it is.)
- Truth is the aim (end) of inquiry

Close relations between these platitudes?

Plan

- Against pluralism of the concept of momentum in physics
- Against pluralism and relativism of truth in physics (a few remarks)
- Against pluralism of truth
- The essence of truth

The concept of momentum in physics,

p

The concept p has different forms:

- $P=mv$ (the Newtonian mechanics)
- $P=\gamma mv$ (the relativistic mechanics)
- $p= -i \hbar \partial/\partial x$ (the quantum mechanics)

Physicist's first intuition is monistic: there is momentum *tout court*

Pluralistic intuition (philosophical): there are different concepts of momentum: p_N , p_E , p_Q , ...

A more subtle intuition refutes pluralism

The pluralist intuition disappears if one takes into consideration the connections (explicit or implicit - pragmatic) between different forms of p :

(p_N connections p_E) connections p_Q

What is the *nature* of the connections? Answer: the Wittgensteinian family resemblance.

The causes of pluralism

- The cause of pluralism: ignoring pragmatic connections between different uses of a concept (FR)
- Two causes of this cause:

Pure intellectualism

Pure pragmatism (in the sense of the first-order pragmatics of language games. Pragmatism of relations between them – the second order pragmatics = semantics – is ignored) **or extreme contextualism.**

Meaning and meaning-use

- I introduce the distinction between the meaning of a concept and the meaning-use of the concept (in a context) there is a FR between uses
- Both pure intellectualism and pure pragmatism ignore the semantic meaning – the meaning of a concept (but not in the sense of the purely « nominal meaning »: *p is the quantity of mouvement*).
- The concept *p* is one, but it has different uses.
- Smooth (invisible, natural) move from one form of the concept *p* to another form of it.

How to prove Wittgensteinian monism (FR between uses of p)?

- FR is a pragmatic notion. FR is both natural and normative (justifiable) at the same time.

It is helpful to clarify the notion of concept:

- **Concept = FR** (Wittgenstein). **Concept = rule** (W and Kant). So, **FR=** implicit common **rule** (W).

Ex. p_N is a limit case of p_E . p_Q is obtained by quantization of p_N . And so on.

Generalization argument

- Theory of relativity and quantum mechanics are generalizations of the Newtonian mechanics
- So, the relativistic and quantum concepts are generalizations of the corresponding classical concepts
- But what is generalization? Is talking about generalization justified?
- I think: to understand generalization in terms of the Wittgensteinian problem of rule-following
- To generalize a concept (rule) is to extend it to new domains of application
- QM as a generalization of CM: the Hamiltonian superstructure plays the role of a common rule for QM and CM. Quantization is just a change of aspect of this rule.

The process of development of science

Theoretical level ...FR... (extension of knowledge)



FR



Practical level ...FR... (extension of knowledge)



(Experiment, measurement, use of technology, and so on.)

a natural normative process (in the sense of W's NN) of extension of knowledge

Kantian synthetic unity of apperception

- I think that we can also talk about the Kantian synthetic unity of apperception (a naturalized version of it is equivalent to the W-rule).
- Robert Brandom (2011) gives an analytic interpretation of KSUA.
- Three normative tasks to accomplish to integrate a new judgement into a SUA: (1) critique (exclude contradictions), (2) ampliative (deduce consequences), (3) justificatory (to justify the consequences and the whole system)
- To apply a naturalized version of it to analyze the process of development of science. It is very similar.

The correspondence principle

- The generalized principle of correspondence between CM and QM (due to Heisenberg) is the principle of generalization.
- Equivalently: the principle of unity
- FR, common implicit rule, common concept, generalization, natural extension, principle of correspondence, unity,... is the same

Conclusion about the concept of momentum, p

- P is the *quantity of mouvement* – nominal (*a priori*) definition. This formal rule must be pragmatically anchored into its uses (\rightarrow W-rule).
- The concept p is unambiguous. It refers to the W-rule for p (or FR « relation » between different uses of p).
- There is no common property to all uses of p .
- There are different properties of being p connected by a FR.
- The disjunctive property p_N or p_E or p_Q or ... is *a post factum* explicitation of a common implicit rule.

Pluralism/relativism of LGs, or pseudo-pluralism/relativism in physics

There are connections between **pluralism**, **relativism**, and **contextualism**.

Pseudo-relativism:

- $(P = mv)$ is true from the point of view of N-LG and false from the point of view of E-LG.
- $(p = \gamma mv)$ is falsetrue

Contextualism: $(P = mv)$ is true in N-context, and false in E-context. $(p = \gamma mv)$ is falsetrue (T. Williamson: contextualism is relativism tamed.)

Absolutism: N-LG is a limit case (approximation, and so on) of E-LG.

Cause of relativism: ignoring pragmatic connections.

Historical pseudo-relativism

- Ptolemy's system vs Copernican system
- « The Sun moves around the Earth » was a self-evident *hinge proposition*. Now it is a false empirical proposition.
- Pragmatic view: The Copernican system turned out to be superior.

The inverse dependence between pluralism of p and pluralism of truth: $(P = mv)$ is true (truth as correspondence?), $(p = \gamma mv)$ is true, $(p = -i \hbar \partial / \partial x)$ is true (truth as coherence?). P is one, but different uses. → Truth is one, but different uses.

Against Pluralism of Truth

- Ordinary life truths
- Truths in physics
- Truths in mathematics ($2+2=4$)
- Truths in fiction (Anna Karenina loved Wronski)
- Moral truths?
- Esthetical truths?
- Jurisprudential truths?

Pluralistic intuition: there are different kinds of truth (correspondence to a fact, coherence, superwarrant, social agreement, and so on).

Pluralistic motivation: there are different reasons for being true, different meaning-uses of 'true', different truthmakers in virtue of which true propositions are true

To argue against pluralism we need a theory of truth, that is, a theory of properties of truth, including the trivialities about the use of the predicate 'true' and the ontological notions of truthmaker and supervenience of truth over being.

Mixed Inferences Argument (Williamson (1994), C.Tappolet (1997))

- (1) Waddling penguins are amusing. (This is a comic fact.) (2) That penguin waddles. (This is an ornithological fact.) (3) Therefore that penguin is amusing. (This is a comic fact.)
- Pluralism: comic truths, ornithological truths
- **My interpretation:** mixed inferences are direct **material inferences** from (2) to (3) (supervenience of the comic truth on the ornithological truth). There is FR between the comic and the ornithological truths (two uses of one and the same truth).
- Deflationism « solves » the problem superficially.
- Tarski's DS: « 'p' is true iff p » is just the formal rule for Aristotle's substantive theory of truth as correspondence:
“To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is , or of what is not that it is not, is true” (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Γ 7.27)

The Truth of “Mixed” Conjunctions

The argument of mixed conjunctions is due to C. Tappolet (2000):

“Each conjunct has to be true in the same way”.

- ‘This cat is wet and it is funny.’ (Tappolet 2000)
- ‘Waterboarding is painful and waterboarding is wrong.’ (M. Lynch)

Ex. An argument against realizer functionalism: for normative proposition and for non-normative one the concept of truth has two different kinds of realizers. If truth is the realizer, there are two different kinds of truth (say correspondence and warrant). What is the realizer (truth) of the conjunction?

M. Lynch also thinks that the realizer functionalism undermines one of the motivations for adopting pluralism, since it implies that true propositions do not form a real kind.

I think that in both cases truth is correspondence to fact, but the correspondence itself is realized differently.

Edwards (2008) argues that Tappolet’s problem is not only a problem for alethic functionalism/pluralism but also a problem for the correspondence theory of truth. But the correspondence theorist as well as alethic pluralist can account for the truth of conjunctions without the need to appeal to some generic truth property by holding that the truth of a conjunction is derivative, dependent upon the truth of each of its conjuncts, but not vice versa.

My proposal: to fill up Tarski's DS (the truth-role) with pragmatic/naturalistic « substance », to connect it with the world

- I transform Tarski's DS into a W-rule of correspondence (comprising a set of paradigmatic cases of use of correspondence)
- For any true proposition p « 'p' is true iff p » is the following W-LG: « 'p' is true *is* p », or « 'p' is true *is the same* as p ».
- Ultimately, the W-rule is anchored into a LG of its use.
- The DS and the *a priori* conceptual role of truth naturally supervene (in the sense of being made explicit) on the assertive LG.
- David Lewis (2001): the correspondence theory is a version of the redundancy (deflationist) theory. Identity theory is a version of correspondence theory.

The correspondence and the W-spontaneity of a LG

- A correspondence between a proposition (subject) and object is being established as a result of transformation (making explicit) of an (assertive) instinctive LG (having instinctive spontaneity) into reflective LG (having reflective spontaneity).
- The correspondence can be more or less explicit (a LG has degrees of reflectiveness, or explicitness). It is violated iff the reflective spontaneity is violated. (ex. a false proof in maths)
- The rule of correspondence is just the explicitation of the spontaneity, and vice versa, the spontaneity is the implicit rule of correspondence.
- The spontaneity is the pragmatic normativity.
- The correspondence and the spontaneity of a LG are two sides of the same normative coin.
- **Hypothesis: truth is the norm of assertion.** And ontologically, truth and knowledge are the same (thanks to the connection between LG_{inst} and $LG_{reflect}$). So, the norm of truth for assertion is the norm of knowledge. (T. Williamson: knowledge is the unique essential norm of assertion)
- Spontaneity is the pragmatic truth (truth is the sense of correctness of a rule-following).
- Tarski's formal rule misses the Wittgensteinian naturalistic spontaneity.

W's instinctive LG = Heideggerian Dasein

- Spontaneity (LG) ... openness of Dasein (the ontological essence of truth)
- Degrees of reflectivity of a LG ... degrees of openness of Dasein

Heidegger: two kinds of truth: truth as correspondence and truth as openness of Dasein (**aletheia**). The former is grounded in the latter.

Dasein knows itself.

Heidegger: « The true is *what is known*. It is just what corresponds with the facts ».

C. Wright's minimalism

- Wright (1992, 1993, 2001) goes a bit beyond deflationism.
- Wright's inflationary argument : the norm of truth is distinct from warranted assertibility. It is substantive.
- (For Lynch and other functionalists the norm of truth for belief or assertion is just a platitude: norm of the truth for assertion is *being warranted*).
- The new norm (stronger than warranted assertibility) is *superassertibility* (a statement is superassertible (superwarranted) if some actually accessible state of information justifies its assertion and which will continue to do so no matter enlarged upon or improved.

Truth is a norm of correctness distinct from warranted assertibility.

- (A) It is true that p iff p is warranted. (premiss)
- (B) It is true that *not* p iff it is not true that p . (DS)
- From (A and B): It is warrantedly assertible that *not* p iff it is *not* warrantedly assertible that p . (Conclusion) False.
- Truth is a norm of correctness distinct from warranted assertibility. They diverge in extension. (Crispin Wright)

Pascal Engel's Extended Realism (2007)

- Wright's minimalism is the default anti-realistic position (« realism has to be earned »). → pluralism (e.g., correspondence theory in physical world, superassertibility in ethics or mathematics)
- Pascal Engel (2007, 2012): the norm of truth for belief and assertion registers the norm of knowledge.
- Motivation: deontic interpretation of the norm of truth is problematic. Better: we ought to believe that P iff P is true and justified.
Classical epistemology: knowledge is true justified belief.

Truth is not a norm of rational belief?

- The *deontic interpretation* of the **norm of truth for belief**: *a belief that P is correct iff P is true because we ought to believe that P iff P is true.*
- Wedgwood (2002): « according to this principle, any belief in a true proposition is correct even if the belief in question is grossly irrational; so how can this principle explain the norms of rational belief ?»
- Another interpretation of the norm of truth is **teleological**: *A belief that P is correct iff P is true because only true beliefs achieve aim involved in believing)*

P. Engel's proposal (2007, 2012): **The norm of truth for belief and assertion is a norm of knowledge**

We can talk about truth only in domains where we are able to know.

- The concept of knowledge is unambiguous and substantive.
- The norm of truth would be uniform and substantive (monism about the norm of truth, not necessarily monism about truth. Pluralist picture leads to a pluralism about the norm of truth (Engel 2012)).
- And such position is the default realism.
- More unified account of truth.
- **Non-metaphysical monism: there is no single property of being true, but a single norm of truth.** (Compare with my Wittgensteinian view.)
- « Extended realism » is P. Engel's proposal about the norm of truth together with his previous position – Minimal realism.

Pascal Engel's Minimal Realism (2002)

- (1) Truth is a “thin” notion satisfying the platitudes
- (2) Truth is not simply a logical device
- (3) Propositions or the contents of beliefs are truth-bearers. We need to have an independent account of these contents.
- (4) It is not pluralistic, since truth has a uniform core-meaning defined by its role but which is realized in different ways from domain to domain.

It also says that

- (5) minimalism about truth does not imply minimalism about truth-aptness
 - (6) In each domain, truth-aptness is to be judged after the realist criterion of the independence of a domain from our responses, and of verification transcendence: our best conceptions might be false.
 - (7) In each domain, realistic truth in the sense of (6) is the norm of our inquiries.
- (4), that is, **ambiguous status of truth**, leads to the same problem as truth functionalism. MR faces the Functionalist Dilemma.

Pascal Engel's views

- Combination of the functional role of truth with the substantive correspondist theory of truth. (Realism) (in his talk 2011)
- The concept of truth is given a priori by the platitudes about truth, but it has different uses-realizers.
- Different kinds of correspondence realize the truth-role.
- The importance of ontology: truth supervenes on truthmakers. (« Identity Makers » 2003) *There is no theory of truth without a theory of being.*
- A proposition is true in virtue of a truthmaker.
- Different kinds of truthmakers realize the correspondence and the truth-role.
- My proposal: P. Engel stays on the *ontic level*. We need to go to the properly *ontological level* of Dasein.
- **FR between different kinds of truthmakers. Dasein is background.** Dasein (LG) in maths, in physics, in fiction, and so on. Correspondence is NN-supervenience, explicitation.

Scope Problem (Lynch 2009) for the correspondence (representationalist) theory of truth.

- Intuitively, the CTT (RTT) has a limited domain of application. (*Prima facie*, CTT cannot explain, for example, moral and mathematical truths which play the role of counterexamples.) → pluralism (CTT, warrant, coherence, ...)
- My proposal: there is no FR between CTT, warrant, coherence, ..., and the most natural (in the W sense) is the CTT. Moral and maths truths can be incorporated into CTT either by a natural extending the latter or by naturalizing the former.
- Edwards (2012) proposal: to use D. Lewis' notions of **natural properties** and **eligibility**.

Lewis vs Wittgenstein

My comparison

- Lewis (1983): **natural property** (the members of the corresponding class share smth significant in common) (natural theory, natural referent, natural relation of reference (T. Williamson))
- W: **FR**
- Lewis (1983): **eligibility** (meaning is not simply matter of use. Naturalness ought to be taken into consideration).
- W: uses are governed by **rules**, they ought to be natural/spontaneous. Natural extension of uses.

Douglas Edwards' (2012) Solution to the Scope Problem (II)

- Truth is a **natural** property in the Lewis sense.
- But there is nothing in common between correspondence, warrant, coherence, and so on. And the conjunctive property or second-order property are not natural.
- Which theory to choose? CTT is a **natural** theory.
- How to be with counterexamples? The naturalness of CTT trump the counterexamples. According to the principle of **eligibility** a theory may not fit perfectly with language use.
- May be they are not counterexamples at all.
- I think this argument is similar to my Wittgensteinian argument above.

Conclusion

I propose the following non-metaphysical monist theory of truth:

- (A) Truth is the correspondence to fact.
- (A) is a W-rule.
- The norm of truth for beliefs and assertions is a norm of knowledge.
- Ontologically truth and knowledge are the same.
- The functional role of truth (the nominal concept of truth) is obtained as a result of an *a priori* conceptual analysis (making explicit) of its uses.
- The truth-role is pragmatically/naturalistically anchored into its uses (the kinds of correspondence and truthmakers).
- There are FR between uses of the predicate « true », which ultimately are grounded in *Dasein*.
- Other theories of truth, such as coherence TT, warrant TT, superwarrant TT, and so on, are excluded because they are not natural (there is no FR between them and CTT).

References

- Douglas Edwards (2008, 2012, et al.) See *Academia.com (Internet)* or his *Homepage*
- Pascal Engel (2002, 2007, 2011, 2012, see his *Homepage*)
- David Lewis (1983, 2001)
- M. Lynch (2001, 2009, 2012)
- Ch. Tappolet (1997, 2000)
- Weatherson, B. (2003)
- Wedgwood (2002)
- Williamson 2007 *The Philosophy of Philosophy*
- T. Williamson (1994, 2000, 2002)
- Cori D. Wright and Pedersen (2011)
- Crispin Wright (1992, 2003, 2010)
- And others

Thank you!

Danke!