FUNCTIONALIST ACCOUNT OF TRUTH WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MIXED CONJUNCTION

Abstract:

A theory of truth is an explanation of the nature of truth and set of rules that true things obey. A theory of truth is basically an attempt to enlighten on the nature of truth and formulate a set of laws that 'true' things follow. When we recall a memory, or analyze a statement, or appeal to evaluate within our brain, in fact, we are in quest for truth. Different theories of truth try to understand it from different perspectives. Attempts to analyze truth down the history can neatly be divided into two: Classical and Contemporary theories. The classical or otherwise known as the traditional theories of truth are, Correspondence theory, Coherence theory, Pragmatic theory. Contemporary theories or otherwise known as modern theories of truth are mostly deflationary theories. Over and above these two categories we shall discuss a new theory of truth known as Functional theory of truth. When we analyze contemporary theories of truth, such as functionalist theory of truth, specifically alethic pluralism which commits the problem of mixed compound and also suggest the solution for the same.

Key words: Functionalist theory of truth, alethic pluralism, mixed conjunction, property**.**

I

Functionalist Account of Truth

Functionalist theory of truth is motivated by Ludwig Wittgenstein's common sense theory of truth, which states that different statements can be all true without being true in the same way. This has led to the formulation of 'alethic pluralism' at a later stage, a theory which proposes that truth is a multifaceted concept.

Michael P. Lynch has famously propounded his pluralist theory of truth. According to him, truth is a functional property, that is, truth has a particular function and it can be realized in different ways. When we conceive Truth as one, it means that there is only a single property named by "truth" which all and only true propositions are expected to share. On the contrary if we conceive truth as many it suggests that there is more than one way to be true and also there is more than one property they are sharing. Before diving deep into pluralistic theories of truth, it would be wise to inquire what is meant by truth for them. A pluralist theory of truth is a theory which suggests

that there is more than one property through which we mark a proposition as true. What is a truth property? A property, in any discipline, be it Philosophy, Mathematics, or Logic, is a distinguishing feature of an object; a blue object is said to have the property of blueness.

Truth properties are those properties that help us determine truth in propositions. Needless to say, they are functional properties that are defined in terms of their functional roles, in other words, in terms of the sum of their relational features. Among these functional roles of properties, to have the grip of truth is just to have the grasp of that property in function. Advocating plurality of truth, Lynch remarks that if there is more than one property that could determine the propositions as true, we have to address the question as to how would we identify which properties are those? [1]. An answer to this question would lie in our understanding of concepts like, Objectivity, Norm of Belief and End of Inquiry.

(A) Objectivity

The definition of Objectivity could be simple; it is, the belief that p is true if, and only if, with respect to the belief that p, things are as they are believed to be [2] . The truth of a belief depends on how things are; not on how I or anyone else might wish them to be[3] (ibid). For example, if one believes that 'roses are red' just when roses are indeed red, it marks objective truth. That is, with respect to your belief that p, things are as they are believed to be. When I believe that roses are red, it is not my act of believing that made it true, on the contrary, what I believe namely that the roses are red happens to represent the objective truth.

The philosophical convention that concern my belief or disbelief of a proposition, can be put in the principle called Belief Schema: The belief that p is true if, and only if, with respect to the belief that p, things are as they are believed to be. Similarly Truth Schema defines the truth proposition: The proposition that p is true if and only if p [4](ibid). The BS and TS are the twin hall marks of objectivity according to Lynch, and these two conditionals in fact represents the possibility of error and ignorance. The former opens up the possibility that what we believe to be so may not be the case, and the possibility of error that we may not believe what is. Traditionally epistemologists have devised a tool to escape from this twin difficulties, namely error and ignorance, called justification. Accordingly we may hold a belief only if it is a warranted belief. However, there are difficulties with regard to warrant, for instance we cannot hold the following: (w) p if and only if the belief that p is warranted.

[1]Lynch, Michael , *Truth as One and Many,* Oxford University Press, 2009: p.70
[2]. Edward, Douglas, *Truth and Pluralism: Current Debates,* Oxford University Press, 2018: p.46.
[3]. ibid
[4]. ibid

If one had lived in the 10th century one might have been warranted in believing that earth is flat when it is not[5] and there are certainly some propositions, such as the propositions that 'It rained on this spot 15,000 years ago,' or that 'The number of stars in the universe now is even,' for which we lack evidence, either for them or for their negation [6](Hence they are undecidable. Hence Lynch mentions that truth is not only objective but also valuable. The above discussion also reveals yet another truism about truth, that is, 'Truth is the good in the way of belief'[7].

(B) Norm of belief

It is prima facie correct to believe that p if and only if the proposition that p is true[8]. In one of his papers P. Boghossian mentions that the norm of belief depends on the person's cognitive attitude he or she adopts at that time, such as imagining, assuming and hoping. Note that each of this is governed by norms specific to that, for instance, imagining can be sharp or vague, and hopes can be rational or irrational. But note that believing is categorically different from these, it is neither imagining that p, nor assuming that p, nor hoping that p. It can be accurately weighed only in terms of truth, argued thus, belief is indirectly responsive to truth.

(C)End of Inquiry

Truth is the natural end of our inquiry. Charles Sanders Peirce, an important philosopher of the 19th century, in one of the papers titled 'How to make our ideas clear' draws the close knit relation between truth & objectivity, truth & belief, also between truth& inquiry. By inquiry he simply refers to the process of asking and answering questions on matters pertaining to the sublime, for instance, 'Where do we come from?' Even when I ask where my two wheeler's key are, that too is a seeking for truth but in the former instance the nature of truth gets a different colouring. In both these instances, while pursuing inquiry, we pursue the truth only indirectly by explicitly pursuing reason and evidence.

[1]Even as we argue that truth is indeed the end of inquiry, we should keep in mind the fact that we don't always pursue the truth, indirectly or otherwise, and sometimes, believing what is true is not the best thing, some falsehood might be better to believe in certain circumstances and some trivial or dangerous truths may not be worth pursing, all things considered. But these cases are the exceptions on the way to the rule: other things being

5. Skorupski, John, *The Domains of Reasons*, Oxford Publication, 2012: p.129
6. op. cit Lynch p.10).
7. ibid
8. ibid

equal, true beliefs are worth pursuing [9] . To sum up, it is not only correct to believe a given true proposition, other things being equal, true propositions are also worth striving for [10].

The functionalist proposal is identified as a promising approach to truth since truth is conceived as a higher-order property that plays the truth-role. The truth-role itself is defined by appeal to some "truisms" such as 'Truth is the goal of inquiry' and 'When a statement is true, things are as it says they are' and the like. Just as different actors can be Hamlet in different productions, different properties can play the truth role in different discourses.

II. Alethic Pluralism

Crispin James Garth Wright (1942), a British philosopher of language is foremost among philosophers who have brought pluralism of truth into contemporary conversations. As a leading figure among advocates of pluralism about truth, he in his work Truth and Objectivity published in 1992 argued that a truth predicate is any predicate which satisfied certain platitudes about qualified truth. Alethic pluralism (AP), the variety of pluralistic theory of truth proposed by Wright, holds that there are different, but substantial, truth - properties in different discourses.

When we sit to scrutinize pluralism, we can understand that there are three modes of pluralism that can be discerned. What are these different 'kinds' of truth? What does the claim mean exactly? Let's have a quick analysis of this. Mode A refers to Simple Alethic Pluralism, (SAP). Mode B refers to the norms of truth that differ in distinct situations, the analogy of Wittgensteinian family resemblances may be used to discern meanings that may be useful, in so far as we know what the latter were supposed to be. It does seem, on the face of it, that 'game' is a very interesting concept for discerning truth as well, and it may be the case that we could locate a handful of similar cases between norms of truth and norms of games once you scrutinize them cautiously. Mode C, refers to one concept that is variably satisfiable in domain-specific ways. In other words, there is One Concept but Many Properties. Though all these three modes are quite interesting, we shall confine ourselves to Simple Alethic Pluralism.

III. Simple Alethic Pluralism

When we claim Truth as Many it means there is more than one way to be true, a claim technically put forth by

Simple Alethic Pluralist (SAP). SAP renders out the idea that truth is more than one concept of truth, and true means something like 'true for' [11](ibid p.55). According to Simple Alethic Pluralist we have two options to attain

[9]. Lynch 2009: p.12
[10]. ibid p.13
[11]. ibid p.55

a falsity, first is, a proposition is false when it is not true in any sense (that is neither true1 nor true2 nor true3 etc.). Alternatively Christine Tappolet might claim that there are as many concepts expressed by false as there

are concepts expressed by true, in some domain x is false, means x is not true in that domain, that is, that x lacks the property ascribed by the word true in that domain. We shall take this latter position to be that of simple alethic pluralism [12].

It was in fact Wright's formulation of truth pluralism that was packed in a new form by Lynch and was called as Simple Alethic Pluralism (SAP). This is the thought that 'true' has no single meaning; Wright's formulation of truth pluralism speaks of the plurality of truth predicates. Associated with each of these concepts there will be corresponding predicates and properties so much so that if the concept of truth changes from domain to domain, the content of the truth predicate and the nature of the truth property will also change accordingly. Thus, there are different concepts, predicates and properties that are linked with the word 'true'. On this view, there are different concepts, predicates and properties associated with the word 'true' in altered domains of discourse. SAP holds that the meaning of 'true 'varies from domain to domain at both conceptual level and property level. Recalling the differences between concept and property noted above, SAP proposes that there are different concepts of truth in different domains of discourse. For instance, the concept of truth in a discourse about the material world is identified with the concept of corresponding to fact, while the concept of truth in Arithmetic is identified with the concept of coherence. It varies at the level of concept as different concepts are associated with 'truth' in different domains, and it varies at the level of property as different properties are associated with the different concepts in different domains. Like the deflationist, the pluralist takes it that the essential features of truth are given by certain platitudes. Moreover, both views reject the assumption of traditionalists, namely that if judgments are true, they must be true by corresponding to some mind-independent facts.

Among the multitudes of problems SAP confronts while putting forth truth pluralism, one of the striking problem is problem of mixed compound. Let's analyze the difficulty with mixed compound.

(A) Mixed Conjunction

A related problem is concerned with the truth of mixed compound propositions. Williamson in his work *A Critical*

[12]. ibid

Study of Truth and Objectivity, and Tappolet in his paper *Truth Pluralism and Many-valued Logic: A Reply to Beall,* point out the difficulty mixed compound propositions may raise to logicians. Explicating the Problem of Mixed conjunction (first used by Douglas Edward 2008) Edward and Tappolet point out that while in the SAP view, truth (both as predicate and property) is knitted to specific domains of discourse, our reasoning frequently mixes statements from different domains. Consider the following example:

(1) This cat is wet

(2) This cat is funny

(3) Therefore, this cat is wet and funny

According to a standard way of validity, validity preserves truth, that means, a valid argument is one where if the premises are true, then the conclusion must be true. While the validity of arguments is understood as a necessary preservation of truth, how could we understand the validity of this argument on the SAP view? According to the rules of conjunction if both conjuncts are true, obviously the conjunction will be true. But 'This cat is wet and funny' is a compound claim and the conjuncts are raised from different domains of discourse. There could come up some confusion over what truth predicate could apply to this conjunction. Tappolet observes that there is a core rule regarding conjunction, namely that a conjunction is true iff its conjuncts are true, it is false otherwise. But in this case, different truth predicates seem to get applied to the conjuncts and to the conjunction, and hence principle is under threat.

Consider yet another case,

"Murder is wrong and two and two creates four."

Intuitively, the conjuncts of this proposition are from two different domains. What explains then, the truth of the conjunction itself? In response, the advocate of SAP may say that a conjunction is true just when its conjuncts are both true. But this reply begs the real question, which concerns not the conjuncts but rather the sense in which the conjunction itself is true. The logical crisis sited through these two examples suggest that in such contexts we need a general truth predicate, however SAP will offer none.

Though the problem is presented in the context of mixed conjunctions, it seems apparent that the problem extends farther than conjunctions. The problem is not just for conjunctions but for the truth of disjunctions and conditionals

as well [13.] These considerations suggest that even those who favour pluralistic theory of truth must pay heed to the virtues immanent in the univocal concept of truth that fulfilled certain logical needs, needs that emerged from the universality of reason. This also recommends that if pluralism is going to be coherent, it is must find a way to acknowledge the breadth of reason.

Truth predication to general statements also invite trouble: a generalization is a case of taking one or a few facts and thereby making a broader and more universal statement. For instance, if all the boys you know play with toy cars, you might make the generalization that all boys play with cars. This in fact refers to a huge branch of logic called induction. Scientists usually make generalizations based on their respective researches; here the norm is that greater the availability of data, the more accurate the generalization will be. Generalizations may be just like stereotypes, therein they are typically wrong and harmful. Usually, it is best to stay with specifics and avoid generalizations. Even more simply, according to Lynch SAP makes nonsense of blind generalizations involving truth (2004). Pluralistic logic also tend to commit the fallacy of equivocation, a fallacy that occurs when we confuse several meanings of a word or phrase. On occasions when accidentally or deliberately we mix up different meanings of words, we are using the word equivocally. If we do that in the context of argument, we commit the fallacy of equivocation.

Considering the problem of mixed conjunctions, Douglas Edward argues that primarily the problem of mixed conjunction is not a problem at all and if it persists it can be solved easily. If we think that the whole problem of mixed conjunction is about how conjunction reflects the correspondence theory of truth, it is important to note that this is not a problem of alethic pluralist. According to Douglas Edward, Tappolet's problem is not exclusively a problem for alethic pluralism, on the contrary, it is a problem of correspondence theory of truth, and the question seems to be, whether a generic notion of truth will lead to a monist theory of truth?

In order to make things clearer let's consider the example,

Delhi is the north of India; it is true, because it corresponds to a fact

Protons have positive charge; it is true, because it corresponds to a fact.

Now we can make the conjunction of this two,

Delhi is north of India and Protons have positive charge - does it corresponds to a fact?

13. ibid.

Douglas Edward tries to resolve the problem that emerges out in mixed conjunctions thus: imagine that we consider the idea of truth as correspondence to a fact, and we have two conjuncts, p and q and their relationship can be expressed by the following way: p is true and q is true iff p & q is true as per S (standard truth table for conjunction). But the biconditional, i.e., p corresponds to a fact, and q corresponds to a fact iff p & q corresponds to fact, fails as the left hand side is true, but the right hand side is false [14] . This asserts that the truth of the individual conjuncts should be logically prior to the conjunction itself, in other words, the conjunction, p & q is true in virtue of the conjuncts p being true and the conjunct q being true, but not vice versa. And also, we may take note, Edward points out, that as per the standard norms for conjunction, p & q is true not only because p is true being correspond to a fact and q is true being correspond to a fact, but also because of the rule that if p is true and if q is true, as per the rule of conjunction, if the two conjuncts are true then the conjunction will be true. The point in brief is this: we read from the left to right, which means that p & q is true because p is true and q is true, but not vice versa. Equally important is the fact that a statement's truth depends on the rule, the norm for the compound statement, and not merely on the corresponding reality.

Therefore the fact that conjuncts are true in different ways does not affect our diagnosis of the truth of the conjunction: what matters at this stage is that the conjuncts are true, not the specific ways in which they are true [15]Further the fact that the conjunction is true is dependent on the truth of the individual conjuncts, Far from being obsolete, is actually necessary to establish the truth of the conjunction [16.]

When statements from different discourses are brought together, either in mixed compounds or mixed inference, then truth itself plays the truth role. The fact that different properties play the role of truth for its parts doesn't change the fact that, if either has a property playing that role for it, then the compound is true. The truth of the component — however it might be grounded — is what determines the truth of the proposition. Likewise, even if different properties manifest truth for the premises (1), (2), and conclusion (3), the inference from (1) and (2) to (3) is such that, if (1) and (2) have properties that manifest truth, then so too must (3). This way functionalist aims to solve the problem of mixed compounds.

[14]. Edward, Douglas *How to Solve the Problem of Mixed Conjunction,* Analysis 68 (2) , 2008, pp.143-149
[15]. Edwards 2008: p.148.
[16]. ibid.

Concluding Remarks: One of the problems alethic pluralism confront is the problem of mixed compound, it happens when we conjunct different domains of discourse. When statements from different discourses are brought together, either in mixed compounds or mixed inference, then truth itself plays the truth role. The fact that different properties play the role of truth for its parts and it doesn't change the fact.

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