

Truth ETF, Winter Sem. 1999-2000

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01 The word "truth" in various languages shows very different etymological roots as well as very different original meanings. For European ways of thinking, most influential was the Greek understanding: ALÉTHEIA meant originally, i.e. pre-conceptually and pre-philosophically, something uncovered, ALÉTHEUEIN meant to uncover. One of the most influential European Philosophers, Martin Heidegger, worked nearly all his life with a philosophical conception based programmatically on this old Greek meaning. In my view, it is not necessary to exaggerate our European being influenced by the old Greeks.

02 The European thinking (and living) has been influenced by other traditions, also, especially by the old Hebrew tradition. This fact was not acknowledged enough, till now, in our philosophical thinking about truth. But there are also further traditions in various languages, especially well to be discerned and seen in those ones, which are directly rooting in Sanskrit, e.g. The problem is that all these old traditions did not know conceptual thinking. So, they all can represent a sort of inspiration for us to interpret them philosophically – with a considerable delay, of course.

03 In these lectures we shall try to elaborate in first steps a conception of truth based on the old Hebrew tradition, but in accordance with one Czech tradition which started about the end of the XIII. century, was promoted by John Hus, was popular during the two hundred years of the Czech reformation, disappeared during the following nearly two centuries of contra-

reformation and finally found a certain renaissance in Palacký, Masaryk and in some Masaryk's disciples, especially J.B.Kozák, J.L.Hromádka and Emanuel Rádl. Very interesting are some texts of Jan Patočka published after November 1989, only. (Only one of them was known for a circle of his friends or disciples, before.)

04 Nevertheless, our main interest will be systematic, not historical. In every case, where we shall deal with some documents or citation, we shall underline the thoughts (ideas) themselves, and we shall try to think them over in our view of their actual validity and applicability. Our aim is to try to elaborate an alternative conception of truth in comparison with all those which are founded on the Greek philosophical presupposition (or, better to say, prejudice). So we have first to present this Greek conception (or pre-conception). And we shall start with an analysis of a prejudice hidden in the etymological roots of the Greek term for Truth, i.e. ALÉTHEIA.

05 ALÉTHÉS means „uncovered”, ALÉTHEUEIN means „let to be uncovered”, ALÉTHEIA is therefore „being uncovered”. So we have to ask: what has to be uncovered? The Greek answer is: the being, TO ON. To be uncovered means to be open to us, to our approach, to our inner eyes, so: to be here, before us. This: „to be here”, hic et nunc, is conceived as EINAI. TO ON is: what is now here, open to our inner sight. Of course, sometimes, there are things, which are open for our senses, too. But all information given to us by our senses are uncertain, they are mostly erroneous, if not pure illusion. Changing things are, therefore, not to be observed as true reality. True reality should not change at all: only unchangeable reality is really real (!).

06 Only unchangeable reality can be really known – any knowledge of changing things is really impossible (according Aristotle – knowledge = EPISTÉMÉ). According this conception, also Truth is, must be, unchangeable. So, the problematic, really unacceptable idea of the only one, but unchangeable Truth, is no longer valid. We have to change it. But how?

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7 We have to make an end with all those metaphysical conceptions, with the whole metaphysical thinking (= regarding not-moving things as better or even "true" realities).

08 Instead, we have to orient our enquiries to movements and changes, i.e. to the problem of "individual" events (= events as units, as internally united, unified changes). Such an internally based unification cannot be objectified without fatally losing any possibility of understanding their true character of "wholes".

9 The main "realities", which are no "res", no things, but not nothing, and which cannot be observed as objects, are: subjekt (I, me, self), world (universe), Truth. But there are many other ones.

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9a Critical analysis of the „adaequation-theory” of truth (Heidegger). A coin: where is the or similarity between a real coin and an idea (a thought) of a coin? The problem is in not making the difference between the act of thinking and the „object” of thinking (intentional act x intentional object).

10 Sub-ject, World (as a whole), Truth (x but also ”concept” etc.). What is common to these exceptional ”realities, which are no ”res”, ”no-things”, but not nothing? Which are singular, unique, ”individual” (= atomic in original sense of the Greek word)? It is important: the problem of truth is not to be reduced to epistemology – it is a cosmological problem.

11 As we shall later see, in a world without sub-jects, no truth could ”work” or ”operate”, no truth could ”exist” (or better: ”in-sist”). So, we have to ask: what is the position (or function) of sub-jects in our world, in our KOSMOS or Universe?

12 The world is a plurality of subjects – and so it could not be observed as a Universe, if there were no ”agent” of its unification into one World (as a whole).

13 Sciences don’t acknowledge any non-objective ”reality”, they don’t even respect any non-objective aspect of any ”concrete” reality. So they really lost the Universe by dividing it into abstract parts among one another of them. What they present us is no ”universum”, but only a ”pluriversum” (Patočka). The situation of all sciences, nowadays, is a proof of that.

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14 The problem of Truth cannot be substituted by another problem, i.e. of finding a ”concrete” truth or of a concrete true understanding things or situations. The fundamental philosophical problem is how true or false knowledge is possible, and not only knowledge, but all possible activities, even Life itself (life is impossible where no such alternatives exist x causality).

15 One single interpretation of Aristotle’s sentence is acceptable: the ”place” of Truth is in LOGOS – namely, if we understand the word LOGOS cosmologically. Also LOGOS cannot be reduced to a ”thing”, to an ”ob-ject” – but only through LOGOS the Truth can ”act”, work, it can ”operate”.

16 Coming back to 3Esdras chap. 3 + 4 : a) all the Earth calls upon the Truth (truth x unrighteousness); b) the Truth ”lives”, endures, is always strong; c) the Truth ”is” the strength, the power, the majesty, the kingdom (!); ”Blessed be the god of Truth” (God of truth).

17 The Truth in this tradition is something else than in the Greek one – not only that these Jews have thought in a different way, but the same ”thing”. We have to acknowledge this fundamental break: something else is meant, is intended – not only with another thinking equipment. (An analogy: crown – a coin, c. of a flower, king’s c. – succeed or relinquish the c., etc.)

(ETF, 1.11.99 – Sybe Schaap)

ETF, 8.11.99

18 So we need a new start, new beginning. Let us hear what another language tells us – the Czech one – and what we can find in various relics in other languages. Connection between what should be and orientation in space: right side – you are right, righteousness. In Latin: recte, corrigere, correctio. In German: rechte Seite – Recht haben, richtig. In Czech: pravá strana – pravý (true), správný (correct), spravedlivý (just, right-ous), spravedlnost (justice), spravedlivost (righteousness), právo (right – human rights), opravdový (true, genuine), pravítko (ruler), praviti (to say, to tell with emphasis), opravit, oprava (correct-ion), upravit, úprava (adjustment, adaptation, modification), popravit, poprava (execute, execution), napravit, náprava (make right, reparation, atonement), etc.

19 Orientation in nature or in a country, in landscape – not to be lost. A man is oriented, if he knows his surroundings or environs (as they really are) and if he is clear about what he wants to reach, where he wants to go. These two necessary parts or components, constituents of every being oriented must never be separated.

20 There is a profound similarity in the old Hebrew understanding of ´-m-a: truth and faith must never be separated. It is necessary to rely (place reliance) upon the reliable. If you rely upon something not reliable, that it is no ”real” (true) faith. And if there is something reliable, but nobody is relying upon it, than it is no ”real” (actual) truth. To be truthful and faithful must go together, and it makes something like a basis for the true orientation in your life. So, let us try to analyse this ”being oriented in a situation” in general.

ETF, 22.11.99 – Sybe Schaap

ETF, 29.11.99

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