

The concept of truth is founded on the rejection of egocentric subjectivism.¹ - To what extent does that statement capture the essence of the notion of truth? How would you attempt to define 'truth' in such terms?

Egocentric Subjectivism and Truth

It seems a contradiction to say I don't exist. What seems problematic is to say that other things exist. Obviously we don't need to prove our own existence. Skeptical philosophers have seen even necessary to demonstrate the existence of an external world. They have made among other objections: how do we know we are not dreaming? An egocentric subjectivist would go far enough to say that he only exists, or that it is sufficient to say so. If philosophers seek above all Truth, what is then the truth of the egocentric subjectivism? The answer is that we can in fact ground the concept of truth in the rejection of the egocentric subjectivism.

The egocentric subjectivist thinks he knows he exist, but what is to know? Especially what is to know a truth? To know something implies that there is always the possibility that other subjects know what I know. We need to be able to direct others to know what we know. In this sense an egocentric subjectivist doesn't know anything.

If for example I see a chair, could I say that the chair exists Independently of my perception of it? If I were an egocentric subjectivist I would say that either nothing exists, or that I can't say anything about what exists Independently of being perceived by me. A subjectivist would say we don't see things but our representations of things. We don't see a chair but an eye that sees a chair, or as the bishop Berkeley put it: to be is to be perceived. The question is: What is a chair without someone to perceive it? If nobody sees the chair does it just disappear? If we divide what exists between the subjects who perceives everything, and the object which is perceived is obvious that an object can't exist in isolation without a subject who perceives it. We have an indissoluble link between subjects an object. For an egocentric subjectivist the world is just his perception, nothing exist apart from his perception, or he can't say what it is independent of his perception. The problem with this view is that we know that not all perceptions are true or correct. For example, we thought we saw a cat, but it ended being another animal. The question is how from the

subjectivist egocentric point of view would we explain the case of illusions, and hallucinations?

For one part we can be sure about what appears in our consciousness as perception, but we can't be sure it is correct or true, and we cannot make it so. An egocentric subjectivist position falls then short to explain the notion of truth, which shows then, that there is a third element beyond the subject object distinction, or that this subject object division is just fictional, or is some kind of error.

What is the essence of truth? And what relation does it have with the rejection of egocentric subjectivism? There are many definitions of truth, but in all we have a constant which could point to its essence, and that is the notion of correspondence between saying and fact, or as Aristotle said: "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, and of what is not that it is not, is true". Correspondence implies comparing, if for an egocentric subjectivist the world is just product of his mind and nothing else, and this means that he is the only one who exists, with what is he going to compare his world? For an egocentric subjectivist he is his world, or the world is he, but we can't say that the world is true or false, the world just "is". There is no truth for an egocentric subjectivist. For an egocentric subjectivist the only thing that exists is he, but because there is no truth for him, he can't even know that he exists. What is more there is not even a "subject". The fact that we have a word doesn't mean that it necessarily refers to something existent. The egocentric subjectivist would just be creating truths.

In the center of the definition of truth is the idea of correspondence between saying and fact. Aquinas defines truth as *adaequatio intellectus et rei*, or the correspondence of intellect and thing. The problem with the idea of correspondence, or likening in the definition of truth is how we are going to compare, or find the correspondence between two dissimilar things, that is sayings and facts, or judgments and facts. We can only compare two things when they are of the same kind. It is said that an idea is true when it corresponds to its object, but how can we compare an idea with a particular object, for example the idea of tree with a particular tree. One way out of this problem is to interpret the correspondence or likening as to say that a thing is this and not that. The act of likening should consist in this: to be able to say that something is this and not that. We can notice that we should be able to say what something "is", and from here we see that truth is related with our

sense of being, and because of that with the problem why is there instead of nothing. Knowing then what truth is would be equivalent to know what is being. Truth depends then of our sense of being. In order to say that something exists we need to be able to say what it is. If we can't say anything about something, then it is just nothing. Or as Hegel said "pure being is the same as pure nothing". With this we see a connection between truth, being and language. As Heidegger says "language is the home of being".

We can ask if language presupposes a plurality of subjects, if this is so then, the egocentric subjectivism would be plain false. It seems from this that the egocentric subjectivist position is obviously wrong, but first, how is it possible that we ever end up holding this view? We need to see what the wrong presuppositions in a discourse are that could take us to hold this view, or to say so, where is the wrong turn that drives us to such dead end.

We can examine the Cartesian doubt, which can be used as an example of a kind of opinion in which it is said that we can only be sure about our internal mental states, but not that they necessarily refer to something external or objective. Descartes says that he knows at least that he exists because he is in no doubt thinking. He can be sure of what appears in his consciousness; this is about his internal mental states: and what appears in it is that he is thinking then, concludes he exists. Now, the problem is how from his existence is he going to deduct the existence of the world and in it of other subjects? He needs to recur to the aid of a benevolent God to guarantee the existence of an external world. To this, he reasons, that he has the idea of perfection, but how did he come to have the idea of perfection if he himself is not a perfect being; there must be then a perfect being which is the source of the idea of perfection. God is this perfect benevolent being who would not deceive us about the existence of external things. The idea of God is then what completes Descartes's *Metaphysics*. He uses as we saw, a variation of the ontological argument to prove the existence of God, and because of this we can consider the idea of God as postulate or axiom in Descartes's *Metaphysics*. For this his *Metaphysics* is not egocentric subjectivist, the truth is in the mind of God. The question is not how he came to have the idea of perfection but, to any idea at all, how did he come to have reason, and above all language? Was he born with reason? Or did he born already with a language? Descartes says that he exist because he is thinking, but what is to think? Can we think without language? Does not the fact that he uses language presuppose the existence of

other subjects or an intersubjective world? Or is it possible something like a language for one subject, a private language, or what Wittgenstein describes in his *Philosophical Investigations*: “*The words of this language are to refer to what can be known only to the speaker; to his immediate, private, sensations. So another cannot understand the language.*”? Could there be a private language that talks about private objects? Descartes makes a distinction between things internal and external to us, as he says in his meditation 3: “I have ideas that are like images of things. The most common cause of error is the judgment that these ideas are similar to things that exist outside of me.” The question is, what is internal and what external to us, could there be something like an internal thing? Again the fact that we have a concept like internal things not necessarily must refer to something existent. We can say that internal is what I can only experience, for example a tactile sensation or pain, but then everything that is sensory is internal, and the distinction internal external doesn't apply to what is sensorial. Can we equate internal with private? We can say that private is what I can only experience, for example: what I am imagining, thinking, or the intensity of my pain. But one thing is to experience and other to know what I am thinking, or if I am in pain or not. It could always be possible that others know what I am thinking or the level of my pain. The question is, if words in language can refer to just internal or private things. Wittgenstein (*philosophical investigations 258*) gives an example that greatly illustrates this:

“I want to keep a diary about the recurrence of a certain sensation. To this end I associate it with the sign "S" and write this sign in a calendar for every day on which I have the sensation.—I will remark first of all that a

definition of the sign cannot be formulated.—But still I can give myself a kind of ostensive definition.—How? Can I point to the sensation? Not in the ordinary sense. But I speak, or write the sign down, and at the same time I concentrate my attention on the sensation—and so, as it were, point to it inwardly.—But what is this ceremony for?

for that is all it seems to be! A definition surely serves to establish the meaning of a sign.—Well, that is done precisely by the concentrating of my attention; for in this way I impress on myself the connexion between the sign and the sensation.—But "I impress it on myself" can only mean: this process brings it about that I remember the connexion *right* in the future. But in the present case I have no criterion of correctness. One would like to say: whatever is going to seem right to me is right. And that only means that here we can't talk about 'right'."

As we see with the above case, if the meaning of words in language is just something internal to us then we don't have criterion of correctness, there is no way to see if we are wrong, because what seem right to us would be right. There is one option in every moment which is to be right, or true, and because of that, truth lose its meaning because there is no falseness. For an egocentric subjectivist everything is internal because he only exists. Then in this case there is no truth, because there isn't a way to know when something is false, what

seem true in every moment would be true. In egocentric subjectivism there is no truth because everything is true in every moment, there is no other option.

We notice the existence of something with its contrary, for example whiteness with blackness. If everything were white we would not notice whiteness, in the same way if there is not falseness, there won't be truth. As we saw if the meaning of words is internal, every meaning is going to seem true or right. If the rules and signs of a language refer to just something internal there is no way to test its coherence. Signs and rules of a language must refer to something external. For something external with must understand the context of practice with other subjects. For example the concept of time: any definition we give of the concept of time would be circular, and we will end up saying it is what clocks measure. This is because the concept of time is a set of rules, which are in the end based, or have its root, in set of social practices of measuring time.

If something exists but we are not able to say what it is, then it is nothing. The egocentric subjectivist thinks that he only exists, but because he is not able to test the coherence of his language, then he is nothing. We must start with the premise that we have a coherent language; this implies the existence of other subjects and with this the rejection of egocentric subjectivism.

We can base then the concept of Truth in the negation of Egocentric Subjectivism, but now we have the task to define what exactly truth is. We have moved the weight from the I know to the we know, but what is the ground of the we know?

To know a truth then requires that not only I, but others know it. But this just the requirement, what we need to answer is what is the fundament of knowing something. What makes that something be this and not that. This would depend of the meaning of being. To answer then what is the essence of Truth; we would need to answer first the question: What is there something instead of nothing?