

Concern for Truth

Lajos Brons¹

Abstract: Davidson was right when he said that the idea of truth as a goal or norm makes no sense — truth is not something we *can* aim for, and whenever we *say* that we aim for truth, what we are really aiming for is some kind of epistemic justification. Nevertheless, the notion of a concern for or with truth can be understood in (at least) three ways that do make sense: (1) it can refer to a philosophical concern with the nature of truth, theories of truth, and related philosophical problems; (2) it can refer to a concern (or aim) for ‘strong’ justification; and (3) it can refer to an attitude or ideal of truth(fulness). Concern for epistemic justification can be found in the Chinese and Indian philosophical traditions as well, and is probably universal among philosophical and scientific traditions. Assessing the third sense of concern for truth is more complicated, but considering that a lack of desire for the truth of one’s theories and ideas seems anathema to science and philosophy, it seems likely that something like this concern is universal among philosophical and scientific traditions as well. Concern with truth in the most literal sense — that is, a philosophical concern with truth in its basic sense as captured in Tarski’s schema — appears to be rare, however, and may even be unique to the Western tradition.

Keywords: truth, justification, goals of inquiry, comparative philosophy, Donald Davidson, pragmatism.

1. Introduction

Among philosophers, it appears to be commonly taken for granted that truth is (or should be) the goal of inquiry,² but it has also been suggested that truth was not an important concern in classical Chinese philosophy,³ and Donald Davidson (1997, 1999) has questioned whether the idea of truth as a goal (or value, or norm) even makes sense.

When we say we want our beliefs to be true we could as well say we want to be certain that they are, that the evidence for them is overwhelming, that all subsequent (observed) events will bear them out, that everyone will come to agree with us. It makes no sense to ask for more. Of course, if we have beliefs, we know under what conditions they are true. But I do not think it adds anything to

¹ I would like to thank Jeremy Wyatt, Joe Ulatowski, and unidentified others for comments on earlier versions of this paper.

² See, for example, the many quotes in David (2001, 152).

³ The *locus classicus* is Munro (1969, 55): “In China, truth and falsity in the Greek sense have rarely been important considerations in a philosopher’s acceptance of a given belief or proposition; these are Western concerns.” The most influential paper defending this position is Hansen (1985).

say that truth is a goal, of science or anything else. We do not aim at truth but at honest justification. Truth is not, in my opinion, a norm. (1999, 461)

To the casual eye, this suggests three conflicting positions: (1) everyone is concerned with truth; (2) only some cultures/traditions/people are concerned with truth; or (3) no-one is (really) concerned with truth (because this concern makes no sense). Regardless of whether this accurately summarizes the disagreement (or merely sketches a sloppy caricature), it raises an important question: What exactly do we mean when we attribute to some person or tradition a concern (or lack thereof) for or with truth?

It should be fairly obvious that, phrased this broadly, the question is not likely to have a single or simple answer, but that is entirely intentional. One of the main points of this paper is that attributions of a (lack of) concern for/with truth and similar claims can mean very different things. Something like this can, perhaps, already be gleaned from the two propositions used here, 'for' and 'with'. At least, it seems to me that having truth as a goal (of inquiry) is a concern *for* truth and that having a philosophical interest in concepts and theories of truth is a concern *with* truth. However, while I think that a distinction like this is important, I do not believe that these prepositions are a reliable way to make this kind of distinction.⁴

Closely related to this 'with'/'for' difference is a difference between a concern as something that is to be studied or understood and a concern as something that is to be achieved. A concern for truth as a goal of inquiry is a concern in the second sense. One would have such a concern if one would believe that having true beliefs is valuable, or useful, or something like that, and that (the right kind of) inquiry can provide us with such true beliefs. Stephen Stich's claim that "once we have a clear view of the matter, most of us will not find any value, either intrinsic or instrumental, in having true beliefs" (1990, 99) seems a clear example of a lack of concern for truth in this sense. However, given that Stich's claim is based on arguments about truth and related notions, it is also an expression of a concern (with truth) in the first sense. For Stich, having true beliefs has no value because there are indefinitely many alternative categories of belief that could serve our epistemic and other purposes just as well. These alternative categories (TRUE*, TRUE**, and so forth) play similar (epistemic) roles and are based on alternative accounts of reference and on alternative truth conditions, but this means that these alternative categories are in many ways very much like truth, which may lead one to wonder whether Stich really rejects the concern for truth (as a goal of inquiry). It seems that, instead, he merely broadens what this concern

⁴ Not in the least because I would not be surprised if others have different intuitions about the difference between 'for' and 'with' in this context. Notice also that 'for' and 'with' are not the only prepositions that commonly occur with 'concern'. A Google search suggests that 'concern about' is nearly as common as 'concern for', for example, but a concern *about* (the) truth (of something) seems to connote worries or suspicions of falsehood, and that is not a kind of concern that is of concern here.

could be about.⁵ Davidson, in contrast, argued that this concern makes no sense. We do not aim at truth or some other Stichian truth-like category like TRUTH*, but at justification,⁶ and therefore, what we call a ‘concern for truth’ is really a concern for justification.

In this paper, I will be making three main claims. The first is that Davidson is right in his remark that “we do not aim at truth but at honest justification”, and thus that, in some sense, the concern for truth makes no sense. Despite this, my second main claim is that the notion of a concern for/with truth can be understood in (at least) three ways that *do* make sense: (1) it can refer to philosophical investigations into the nature of truth and closely related matters; (2) it can refer to a concern for (a kind of) justification; and (3) it can refer to an attitude or ideal of prioritizing truth(fulness). My third, and somewhat more cautious, claim is that while the second and third of these concerns are very probably universal among philosophical traditions, the first is a much more uncommon concern. This third claim will be based mostly on a discussion of Dharmakīrti’s definition of *prāmāṇa*, Mozi’s 墨子 “three tests”, and a somewhat enigmatic passage by Zhuangzi 莊子 on assertability and truth.

Sections 2 to 5 of this paper will discuss truth and adjacent notions such as justification, culminating in the aforementioned distinction between three different kinds of concern with or for truth. Sections 6 to 8 discuss some relevant concepts and ideas from Indian Buddhist philosophy and ancient Chinese philosophy, focusing on a few short passages by the aforementioned three philosophers. The final section 9 summarizes key findings.

⁵ Imagine a people with a diet that consists (almost) entirely of potatoes. For these potato-eaters, the words ‘food’ and ‘potato’ are effectively synonymous. One of the potato-eaters’ philosophers, a wise woman named Imoigai, tells them that they do not need to be concerned about food, as there are other things — namely, FOOD*, FOOD**, and so forth (examples could include rice, bread, and bananas) — that could fill their bellies just as well. To the potato-eaters this might sound as outrageous as Stich’s suggestion that true beliefs have no value may sound to most of us. What is more important, however, is that (contrary to what she says) Imoigai’s suggestion does not at all imply giving up a concern for food; it merely broadens the ‘food’ category. The same could be said about Stich’s claim: he does not really reject the concern for truth, but merely broadens the second-order category of truth-like categories of beliefs. (Notice that claiming that there really is only one truth-like category, while there are nearly infinitely many different kinds of food, and thus, that the two cases are fundamentally dis-analogous, would be begging the question against Stich. Without the possibility of alternative truth-like categories that are based on alternative accounts of reference and alternative truth conditions his argument cannot get off the ground.)

⁶ A Stichian response to an interpretation of concern for truth as concern for justification could be that we do not really aim at justification, because JUSTIFICATION* or JUSTIFICATION**, and so forth, would work just as well. As in the case of truth (and potatoes/food, see previous footnote), I do not see this as a rejection of the concern, but merely as a broadening, however.

2. Basic 'Truth' and the Grammar of 'Justification'

In its most basic sense, 'truth' just means 'being the case' or something very similar. This idea is expressed, among others, in Alfred Tarski's (1936) influential schema, ' p ' is true if and only if p , or less abstractly, "grass is green" is true if and only if grass is green. W.V.O. Quine (1986) called this "disquotation". There are ongoing philosophical debates about whether anything more substantial can be said about truth, but as far as I can see, there is widespread agreement about this basic notion of truth (albeit not necessarily about Quine's interpretation thereof, nor about the appropriateness of the term 'disquotation'). Moreover, it is more or less for this reason that 然 *ran* and *satya* or *sat* are the closest equivalents of 'truth' in classical Chinese and Sanskrit, respectively: the first can often be translated as 'being the case' just as well (or even better), and the second also means something like 'real' or 'reality', which is another notion that is closely related to 'being the case'. (We'll return to these non-English terms and their meanings/translations in sections 6 and 8 below.)

The quotation by Davidson in the introduction above suggests that we sometimes confuse truth with justification. A belief is justified if it is supported by solid evidence or an irrefutable argument or something like that. Or in other words, a belief is justified if it satisfies appropriate criteria to be accepted as true (*i.e.*, if it passes the criteria for assigning 'truth' status), but justification and truth do not guarantee each other. A belief may be true and not justified (because we have no evidence for it), but the reverse can also happen. Given all the evidence we had, our belief in classical, Newtonian mechanics was entirely justified until we found contrary evidence, for example.

Truth and justification are often considered to be properties of beliefs. To believe something is to hold it true. Believing p is to hold p true. To believe p is to believe that whatever p says is the case. So, if p is a true belief, then the believer holds p true and is right in doing so because p actually is true. And, if p is a justified belief, then the believer holds p true and is justified to do so because she has solid evidence or an irrefutable argument for p , or something else that qualifies as justification.⁷

There are hierarchical conceptual relations between the three notions discussed thus far. Justification is something like having good reasons to believe, and to believe something is to hold it true. Hence, the concept of 'justification' depends (among others) on the concept of 'belief', and the concept of 'belief' depends (among others) on the concept of 'truth'. The concept of 'truth', however, does not depend on either of the other concepts. This does not necessarily mean that it is a primitive concept (although I think it is), but it does mean that it is the

⁷ I am ignoring some complications about the nature and content of beliefs and the relation between propositions and beliefs here. Arguably, we do not believe propositions, but propositions describe what we believe, and those descriptions are more or less accurate relative to context and purpose (Bach 1997; Brons 2019).

most basic of the notions considered here (or in other words, it is *relatively primitive*).

These conceptual relations between ‘truth’, ‘belief’, and ‘justification’ produce some murky waters, however. To have a justified belief that p is to be justified to believe p , which is to be justified to hold p true because that is what believing means. But if one is justified to hold p true, then it appears that one is entitled to call p true, and because of that, we sometimes use words like ‘true’ or ‘truth’ when we are really talking about justification.

Given the pivotal role of ‘justification’, it is worth paying some attention to this term’s grammar. ‘Justification’ is a nominalization of a ditransitive verb ‘to justify’. Ditransitive verbs, like ‘to give’, have three arguments.⁸ For example, in “Hanako gives Tarō a manga”, the three arguments are Hanako, Tarō, and a (contextually specified) manga. This sentence can be formally represented as $give(h,t,m)$, in which h stands for Hanako, t for Tarō, and m for the manga given. If Hanako gives a manga, then that manga is being given. Hence, the active voice sentence “Hanako gives Tarō a manga” implies the passive voice sentence “a manga is given”. Conversely, the passive voice sentence “a manga is given” implies that there is someone giving that manga to someone else. For this reason, formal representations of passive voice sentences typically involve existential quantification, and a correct representation of “a manga is given” is $\exists x,y[give(x,y,m)]$, and not something like $given(m)$, which would obscure both the grammatical and semantic relation between ‘to give’ and ‘given’ and the fact that giving always implies a giver and receiver.

The same applies to ‘justification’. In “the litmus test justifies Hanako to believe that the solution is acidic”, we have three arguments: the litmus test (that acts as ‘justifier’), Hanako, and the belief that the solution is acidic.⁹ In the same way that “a manga is given” implies that there is someone giving that manga to someone else, “the belief that the solution is acidic is justified” implies that there is something justifying that belief to someone. In other words, justification always

⁸ In linguistics, an *argument* is a syntactic element required by a verb to complete the meaning of that verb as predicate. Intransitive verbs (like ‘to sleep’) have only one argument, transitive verbs (like ‘to hit’) have two, ditransitive verbs have three, and zero-valency verbs (like *llueve* in Spanish) have none.

⁹ Notice that Hanako would still be justified (by the litmus test) to have this belief even if she does not actually hold it. Hence, the third argument is not necessarily Hanako’s belief that ϕ , but just *the* belief that ϕ . In the epistemological literature this is called ‘propositional justification’ (having justification to believe that p), which is distinguished from ‘doxastic justification’ (justifiedly believing that p) (Silva & Oliveira 2022). From the grammar-based formal perspective adopted here, propositional justification is something like $\forall x[R(x,e) \rightarrow](e,x,b)$, “for any x that stands in relation R to e , e justifies belief b to x ” (notice that I do not know what exactly ‘ R ’ stands for, that it could be argued that the conditional should be a biconditional, and that the J predicate does not imply that x holds belief b); and doxastic justification is $J(e,s,b) \wedge B(s,b)$, “ e justifies belief b to s and s believes b ”. (I am again ignoring some complications about the contents and nature of beliefs here. See two footnotes before this one and Brons 2019.)

involves (at least) three things: a belief that is justified, some kind of ‘justifier’ (such as evidence) that provides the justification, and some kind of audience to whom that justification is provided.¹⁰ For this reason, *justified(b)* (i.e., “belief *b* is justified”) is as deceptive as *given(m)* — it obscures the semantic relation between ‘justify’ and ‘justified’ and it obscures the fact that justification always involves a justifier and an audience.

Often, ‘to justify’ is more like ‘to give away’ as in “Hanako gives away cake”, however. In this sentence, no receiver is specified, but that obviously does not mean that there are no (intended) receivers. The implied third argument (i.e., the receiver or receivers) in this case is anyone or everyone or some contextually saliently restricted subset thereof. The same applies to a sentence like “the Eötvös experiment justifies the belief that inertial mass is gravitational mass”: the implied third argument (i.e., the audience) here is anyone or everyone or some relevant subset thereof.

These examples illustrate an important distinction, namely that between cases where some particular individual or group of individuals happens to be justified to believe something and cases where anyone or everyone is (or would be) justified to believe something. The first kind of case could be called ‘subjective’ or ‘perspectival justification’ and the second ‘intersubjective justification’, but considering that the requirements for the evidence (i.e., the justifier) in the second kind of case also tend to be stricter than in the first, and that the distinction may be a spectrum rather than a dichotomy, ‘weak’ versus ‘strong justification’ may be more appropriate terms.¹¹

It is worth repeating that justification does not imply truth (or *vice versa*), even in case of strong justification. In the previous example, there (probably) was strong justification for the belief in classical mechanics, until counter-evidence was discovered. Nevertheless, strong justification appears to be misidentified as truth quite often, partially for the reason already mentioned above (i.e., justification entitles one to say that something is true), but partially also for another reason. If no distinction between weak and strong justification is made, and when justification is thought of as implicitly weak, then ‘truth’ is the only available label for anything stronger (i.e., for strong justification).

¹⁰ Notice that it is technically incorrect (from a grammatical perspective, at least) to call this audience the ‘subject’. The (grammatical) subject of the verb ‘to justify’ is the evidence or justifier (i.e., that what *does* the justification). The justifier justifies the belief to someone, and the thematic role of that ‘someone’ is that of audience.

¹¹ Strong justification is some kind of doxastic justification (see two footnotes before this one): $\forall x[R(x,e) \rightarrow](e,x,b)$, “for any *x* that stands in relation *R* to *e*, *e* justifies belief *b* to *x*”. What distinguishes it from doxastic justification in general is that it has especially stringent criteria for what qualifies as a potential justifier or evidence *e*.

3. Pragmatism and the Notion of a “Test of Truth”

The best known (alleged) example of this misidentification of some kind of (strong) justification as ‘truth’ is pragmatism. In “William James’s Conception of Truth” (1910), Bertrand Russell argued that pragmatists like James confuse truth with criteria for assigning ‘truth’ status, or in other words, with justification. To what extent James indeed made this mistake is debatable, however. Indeed, he wrote that “the true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief” (1907, 42) and that “ideas [...] become true just in so far as they help us to get into satisfactory relation with other parts of our experience” (34), but the latter is followed almost immediately by the following passage:

Any idea upon which we can ride, so to speak; any idea that will carry us prosperously from any one part of our experience to any other part, linking things satisfactorily, working securely, simplifying, saving labor; is true for just so much, true in so far forth, true *instrumentally*. (34; original emphasis)

And elsewhere, he distinguished ‘absolute’ from ‘temporary truth’:

The ‘absolutely’ true, meaning what no farther experience will ever alter, is that ideal vanishing-point towards we imagine that all our temporary truths will some day converge. (106-7)

Furthermore, in *The Meaning of Truth*, he emphasized that pragmatists accept a realist understanding of truth, which grounds truth in a “reality independent of either of us” such that “with some such reality any statement, in order to be counted as true, must agree” (1909, 117/283).

It seems to me then, that a charitable reading of James suggests that he did not so much confuse truth with strong justification, but was merely sloppy in his terminology. Realist truth or ‘absolute truth’ is just truth in its most basic sense (*i.e.*, truth as being the case); and ‘instrumental’ or ‘temporary truth’ is really strong justification. That he used the term ‘truth’ (or ‘the true’) for this latter notion (and often omitted the adjectives, leading to much of the confusion) is not inherently fallacious. As I argued above, if we are justified to believe that something is true, then we are entitled to call it true.

On the surface, Charles Peirce’s conception of truth appears very similar to the second block-quote by James above. According to Peirce, “the opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth” (1878, CP5.407; see also 1901, CP5.565). The phrases ‘fated to be ultimately agreed’ and ‘ideal vanishing-point’ (in the quotation by James) suggest very similar ideas indeed, but there are significant differences hiding below this superficial similarity. While James anchors his realist notion of truth in a ‘reality independent of either of us’, Peirce’s notion of reality is less clear. At one time he wrote that “reality is that mode of being by virtue of which the real thing is as it is, irrespectively of what any mind or any definite collection of minds may represent it to be” (1901, CP5.565), but at another time he wrote that “the real [...] is that which, sooner or later, information and reasoning would finally result in, and

which is therefore independent of the vagaries of me and you" (1868, CP5.311). While the first of these statements appears to express a kind of realism similar to James's, the second is more conducive to an idealist interpretation. Furthermore, while for James the ultimate point of convergence is *ideal* — it is the perfect correspondence with reality (independent from us) that we can (perhaps) asymptotically approach, but never really reach — for Peirce the ultimate point of convergence is a future agreement between opinions: it is the final *opinion* after all the evidence is in. This might suggest that Peirce's used the word 'truth' to denote some kind of justification indeed, but I find his writings too enigmatic to draw any kind of firm conclusion on this matter.

In case of Richard Rorty, the best-known 'neo-pragmatist', there appears to be less reason for such hesitance, on the other hand. In his *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979), he argued against traditional, mainstream philosophical epistemology, which aims "to make truth something more than [...] what our peers will [...] let us get away with saying" (176). 'Truth', for Rorty, is an honorific, or a rhetorical category. To call something 'true' is merely stating that it is (socially) justified to believe that thing in a given time and place. Hence, Rorty's 'truth' is some kind of justification.¹²

The misidentification of (strong) justification as 'truth' is much more widespread, however. Perhaps, the most obvious example outside (neo-) pragmatism is the notion of a 'test of truth' — at least, insofar that term is taken literally, that is, as a test of *truth*. A positive result on such a test provides evidence or some other kind of reason to believe that something (*i.e.*, that what is tested) is true, but that is justification. There are no perfect tests, moreover, so there is no guarantee that a so-called 'test of truth' is actually truth-tracking — it may fail. But even a perfect test (*i.e.*, a test that never fails) would only provide justification. One reason for this is that there is no way for us to *know* that the test is perfectly truth-tracking — to know that, we would need a second, independent way to access truth that allows us to test or calibrate our test. Another, and more fundamental reason is that even a perfect test can only provide evidence and evidence is (or provides) justification (*i.e.*, a reason for acceptance as true).

4. Truth, Justification, and Goals of Inquiry

In "Truth Rehabilitated" (1997), Davidson wrote that:

Truth is not a value, so the 'pursuit of truth' is an empty enterprise unless it means only that it is often worthwhile to increase our confidence in our beliefs, by collecting further evidence or checking our calculations. From the fact that we will never be able to tell for certain which of our beliefs are true, pragmatists conclude that we may as well identify our best researched, most successful, beliefs with the true ones, and give up the idea of objectivity. [...] But I think they

¹² However, it does not seem to be a variety of *strong* justification, as the requirements are social more than evidential.

should have done better to cleave to a view that counts truth as objective, but pointless as a goal. (6-7)

It is debatable whether Davidson's characterization is accurate for all varieties of pragmatism. As explained above, it seems to me that James did not literally *identify* "our best researched, most successful, beliefs with the true ones", but proposed to *treat* the former as true, while at the same time, he retained a separate notion of what Davidson calls 'objective' truth (even if James did not always clearly keep these two notions apart). More important here, however, is that the last sentence in the quotation by Davidson illustrates that, for him, 'truth' always refers to the basic, disquotational notion. Davidson rejects truth as a norm, value, or goal because truth in this sense *cannot* perform such a role. For something to function as a norm (*etcetera*) it needs to be evaluable, but truth is not — that is, when we *try* to evaluate whether a certain proposition is true, we look for evidence or other reasons to believe it is true, or in other words, for justification. We cannot assess truth itself, all we can assess is justification, and because of that, "we do not aim at truth but at honest justification" (Davidson 1999, 461). It is for this reason that, when taken literally, the notion of a concern for truth or pursuit of truth makes no sense — truth is not something we can pursue.

Nevertheless, Davidson offers an escape hatch in the first sentence of the quotation: "the 'pursuit of truth' is an empty enterprise *unless* it means only that it is often worthwhile to increase our confidence in our beliefs, by collecting further evidence or checking our calculations" (emphasis added). Since collecting evidence or checking calculations is looking for (better) epistemic justification, this means that the notion of a concern for truth or pursuit of truth only makes sense if what it really means is a concern for (or pursuit of) strong justification.

There is, however, another way to make sense of the notion without interpreting 'truth' as standing for 'strong justification'. In the quotation by Davidson in the introduction of this paper, he says that "when we say we want our beliefs to be true we could as well say we want to be certain that they are" (1999, 461), but this I find a dubious claim. If I, like Davidson, believe that we can never be completely certain which of our beliefs are true, I can still very much *want* them to be true. The desire for truth does not necessarily imply a desire for certainty. And neither does aiming for truth (in the basic, disquotational sense) *necessarily* require strong justification. If I would have no way to find out whether I have arrived at my destination, this does not imply that I cannot have that destination.¹³ Similarly, truth can be a kind of chimerical ideal that in some sense always stays out of reach.¹⁴ We aim for strong justification in practice, then, *because* truth is the

¹³ You could climb a mountain in thick fog, for example (as I have once done unintentionally). If the fog is sufficiently dense (as it was), and you lack technological means to determine your position, you may have no way to know whether you have reached the top. However, that does not imply that reaching the top is not your goal (or destination) anymore.

¹⁴ James's 'ideal vanishing-point' suggests a similar notion of truth as some kind of chimerical ideal. See previous section. See also Brons (2022).

ideal, and strong justification is (presumably) how we maximize the probability of success (without ever knowing whether we actually succeed). It seems to me that when we say, for instance, that Donald Trump is not concerned with truth, we mean something very much like this: for Trump, truth is not an ideal.

5. Three Kinds of Concern for/ with Truth

The word 'truth' in the notion of a concern for or with truth can mean (at least) three different things: (1) it can be truth in the basic, disquotational sense as captured in Tarski's schema, (2) it can be strong justification, or (3) it can be truth as some kind of chimerical ideal, leading to an aim for strong justification in practice. Concern with truth in the first sense motivates philosophical inquiries into the nature of truth, the concept of 'truth', theories of truth, truthmakers, and so forth, although such inquiries sometimes unwittingly lump together truth and strong justification.¹⁵ A philosophical tradition, then, would lack a concern with truth in this sense if it does not involve theorizing about the nature of truth and so forth. If, however, in that tradition there is theorizing about strong justification, or if strong justification is a typical goal of inquiry, then it is concerned with truth in the second sense. It could be considered misleading to call this a concern for *truth* as it is really a concern for strong justification, but as explained above, that is often exactly what we mean when we talk about 'truth'.¹⁶

The third understanding of a concern for truth (*i.e.*, truth as chimerical ideal) is an attitude more than a philosophical project. To say that someone else or some other tradition is not concerned with truth in this sense is to say that they lack this attitude, or give truth and truthfulness a lower priority than (we think) we do, at least. Someone or some tradition that lacks a concern for truth in this sense is not interested in maximizing the probability that their beliefs are true (*i.e.*, in securing strong justification), and would be willing to promote lies and falsehoods if those serve their purposes. These purposes do not have to be nefarious or selfish, however — it may be the case that a philosophical tradition finds social harmony more important than truth, for example. In that case, it would advocate promoting (known) falsehoods if that would serve this preferred social good.

These three kinds of concern for or with truth are independent from each other. Having or lacking one kind of concern for truth does not imply having or lacking any of the others. One can even lack a concern for truth in the third sense and still be interested in truth as a philosophical problem (*i.e.*, have a concern with truth in the first sense). A more problematic combination would be a concern for truth in the second sense and a lack of concern for truth in the third sense, because

¹⁵ Many so-called coherence theories of truth are really coherence theories of justification, for example.

¹⁶ Although this may sound like an empirical claim, it is not. Rather, it is an implication of Davidson's point that whenever we say that we aim for truth or that we want our beliefs to be true, what we really mean is that we aim for (strong) justification or that we want our beliefs to be (strongly) justified.

this could lead to a mixed set of criteria for calling something 'true'. That is, some of these criteria would be motivated by the second concern and thus aim for strong justification, while other criteria would be motivated by the corollary of the lack of the third concern, namely, whatever is given priority over truth(fulness). For example, in case of this combination, one of the criteria for assigning 'truth' status to some claim might be that doing so is expected to have beneficial effects with regards to social harmony.

To assess whether someone or some tradition has or lacks these kinds of concern for or with truth, we need criteria to recognize and distinguish them. Given that strong justification is sometimes confused with truth, it is especially important to keep these — and thus the first and second concerns — clearly apart, but we also need a way to recognize the third kind of concern with truth. If the notion of assigning 'truth' status to p is understood as saying that, or acting as if p is true, then some x lacks the third kind of concern with truth (*i.e.*, truth as ideal) iff x has (non-negligible) non-epistemic criteria for (either implicitly or explicitly) assigning 'truth' status. Or in other words, if someone or some tradition has at least one important criterion other than strong (epistemic) justification to call some statement 'true' (or act as if it is true), then and only then, does this person/tradition lack the third kind of concern with truth. (As we will see later, this criterion is rather difficult to assess in practice.)

Distinguishing truth from strong justification in other philosophical traditions is complicated by the lack of obvious translation equivalents. Under the influence of a confusion of truth and strong justification, a Sanskrit or classical Chinese term might be commonly translated as 'truth', while its meaning really is closer to 'justification'. Hence, the question is, if we cannot rely on translation, how do we distinguish whether a philosopher is writing about truth or about justification? This is not just a problem in the interpretation of non-Western philosophers, moreover, as due to the aforementioned confusion, the word 'truth' also does not always mean 'truth' in its basic, disquotational sense in the writings of Western philosophers either.

Let Λ be a term that can be interpreted as denoting either truth (in its basic, disquotational sense) or (strong) justification. Then, from the preceding, two basic guidelines for making the distinction can be inferred.¹⁷

(1) If in a given context, Λ is held to be a property that can be tested or revealed by evidence or argument (or something relevantly similar), then Λ should be interpreted as denoting (strong) justification in that specific context.

(2) If in a given context, Λ is held to denote a property that is absolute and irrevocable, then Λ should be interpreted as denoting truth in that specific context.¹⁸

¹⁷ I call them 'guidelines' because I do not think they are strong enough to deserve to be called 'criteria'.

¹⁸ This second guideline might seem new, but this irrevocability is implied by the basic meaning of 'truth' as being the case. If something is the case, then new information cannot change that.

Two things should be noted about these guidelines. First, they apply to occurrences of Λ in specific contexts because the same word may denote truth in one sentence or context and justification in another, possibly even in the same text. Second, the two guidelines are not mutually exclusive. That is, some Λ in some specific context might satisfy both. In that case, that Λ in that context would denote a kind of justification that is perfectly truth-tracking.

With these guidelines in hand, we can return to assessing the apparent conflict between the claim that everyone is concerned with truth and the claim that only some cultures/traditions/people are concerned with truth (see this paper's introduction). Because it turns out that there are different kinds of concern with or for truth, the question that needs to be answered is: Which (if any) concerns for/with truth are universal and which are not? Fully answering this question would require more than one short paper, however, so I will only make a start at answering it here by looking briefly at some terms and ideas from Indian Buddhist philosophy and ancient Chinese philosophy.

6. Dharmakīrti's Definition of *pramāṇa*

As mentioned before (in section 2), the term *satya* or *sat* is probably the closest Sanskrit equivalent to 'truth', although it can also mean 'reality'. As far as I know, Buddhist philosophers made no attempt to define or analyze *sat(ya)*, but they did discuss what makes something *sat(ya)*. Or more specifically, they discussed what makes something *paramārtha-sat* rather than mere *saṃvṛti-sat*.¹⁹ The first of these terms means 'ultimate reality', 'ultimately real', or 'ultimate truth'; the second means 'conventional reality', 'conventionally real', or 'conventional truth'. What makes something *paramārthasat* is having *svabhāva*, literally 'self-being', which can be thought of as a kind of ontological independence.²⁰ Hence, these debates are not about truthmakers, but about the mark of reality, and *sat(ya)* in that context does not mean 'truth', but 'reality'.

Sat(ya) is not the only Sanskrit term that can be translated as 'truth', however. A second, and probably more important term is *prāmāṇya*. This term is derived from *pramāṇa*, which is usually translated as 'means of true knowledge' (or something similar), which implies that the literal meaning of *prāmāṇya* is something like 'the property of being a means of true knowledge'. *Prāmāṇya* is part of the compound *prāmāṇyavāda* in turn, and if *prāmāṇya* is translated as 'truth', then *prāmāṇyavāda* should be translated as 'theory of truth'.²¹ The question, however, is whether *prāmāṇya* should be understood as referring to basic, disquotational truth or to some kind of (strong) epistemic justification.

Something can stop being the case, of course, but that does not change the fact that it was the case.

¹⁹ I added the interpuncts to emphasize that these are compound terms including *sat*.

²⁰ See, for example, Siderits (2022). For a good discussion of the notion of *svabhāva*, see Westerhoff (2009). On *svabhāva* as ontological independence, see Brons (2023).

²¹ For discussions of *prāmāṇya* as 'truth', see Katsura (1984) and Chatterjee (2017).

By far the most influential definition of *pramāṇa* is that given by Dharmakīrti in his *Pramāṇavārttika*:

A source/means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) is uncontradicted (*avisamvādin*) acquaintance/cognition (*jñāna*). Uncontradictedness [of the acquaintance of a thing] is [that] thing's constant action (*i.e.*, constant effect). (§2.1)²²

The key term in this definition is the adjective *avisamvādin*, which contrasts with *visamvādin* (the *a-* prefix means 'not'). *Visamvādin* means 'contradictory', 'disagreeing', 'inconsistent', 'incoherent,' and so forth, and consequently, the most literal translations of *avisamvādin* are 'uncontradicted', 'non-contradictory', or 'coherent'. It should be noted, however, that the term is translated in a number of different ways by others, most commonly either as 'trustworthy' (*e.g.*, Van Bijlert 1989; Dunne 2004) or as 'non-deceptive' (*e.g.*, Dreyfus 1997; Stoltz 2022).

Dharmakīrti defines *pramāṇa* as *avisamvāda*, and the latter in turn as constancy of effect. What exactly this means he did not explain, however. He did not write an autocommentary on this part of the *Pramāṇavārttika*, possibly because Devendrabuddhi wrote his commentary in close collaboration with Dharmakīrti, making an autocommentary unnecessary (Yiannopoulos 2023). In that commentary, the *Pramāṇavārttikapañjikā*, Devendrabuddhi explains that sometimes:

one may not be certain of the difference between a [genuine] perception and a spurious perception when they occur; in such cases the actual perceptual awareness is known to be trustworthy [*avisamvādin*] through the engagement of a subsequent instrumental cognition.²³

In other words, we can trust that a perception of a thing is genuine if it coheres with subsequent perceptions or other cognitions, such as inference. Devendrabuddhi also suggested that the same criterion does not apply to inferential knowledge, which makes sense considering that valid inference is already coherent by definition. A cognition (*jñāna*), then, cannot be taken at face value, but must be examined and tested before accepting it as true. According to the first guideline specified in the previous section, this means that we are dealing here with strong justification and not with truth.²⁴

As mentioned above, the two guidelines are not mutually exclusive, and Jonathan Stoltz (2021) suggests that for Dharmakīrti, *pramāṇa* is truth-tracking indeed. I'm not convinced, however. In Devendrabuddhi's explanation, there is a cognition *a* about which we are uncertain, followed by another cognition *b* that coheres with *a*. That second, coherent (*avisamvādin*) cognition justifies the acceptance of *a* as true, but does it irrevocably guarantee that *a* is true? Did

²² My translation. The original Sanskrit is: "pramāṇam avisamvādi jñānam arthakriyāsthitiḥ avisamvādanam".

²³ Translation by Dunne (2004, 377). Notice the translation 'trustworthy' for *avisamvādin*.

²⁴ On Dharmakīrti's definition of *pramāṇa* as a coherence theory of justification, see Brons (2022, chapter 9).

Dharmakīrti and Devendrabuddhi really believe that as soon as you have two coherent cognitions, any later contradictory cognition would inherently be false, as Stoltz's suggestion seems to imply? This I find highly implausible.

There can be little doubt that Buddhist philosophers were concerned with truth in the second sense, that is, they were very much concerned with (strong) epistemic justification. (This is true for other schools of Indian philosophy as well.) Furthermore, they were also concerned with truth in the third sense — knowledge or understanding of certain, specific truths was a major goal, if not the main goal, of inquiry. (This is also true for other schools of Indian philosophy.) I see no evidence for a concern with truth in the first sense, however: no definitions of 'truth', no theories of truth, no discussions of truthmakers. There are metaphysical and epistemological debates that came close, but those were never about truth in its basic, disquotational sense. Moreover, even if Stoltz is right that in Dharmakīrti's view, *pramāṇa* is reliably truth-tracking, this would only mean that he had a notion of *justification* that is reliably truth-tracking and would not change the arguments for that notion into a theory of truth in the sense of the first kind of concern with truth.

7. Mozi's 'Three Tests'

One of the most widely discussed candidates for a 'theory of truth' in ancient Chinese philosophy is that of Mozi's 墨子 'three tests' (三表, *san-biao*; a better translation of the term might be something like 'three benchmarks' or 'threefold benchmark', as 表 *biao* does not mean 'test').²⁵ In the chapter "Fei-ming I" ("Against Fatalism"; 非命上), Mozi argues that there must be a standard to separate theories that must be accepted from those that must be rejected.

然則明辨此之說將柰何哉？子墨子言曰：「必立儀，言而毋儀，譬猶運鈞之上而立朝夕者也，是非利害之辨，不可得而明知也。故言必有三表。」何謂三表？子墨子言曰：「有本之者，有原之者，有用之者。於何本之？上本之於古者聖王之事。於何原之？下原察百姓耳目之實。於何用之？廢以為刑政，觀其中國家百姓人民之利。此所謂言有三表也。」

Master Mozi said: "(You) must establish a standard. To speak without a standard is like determining the directions of sunrise and sunset on a spinning potter's wheel. (In this way) the distinctions between right and wrong and between benefit and harm cannot be obtained and known clearly. Therefore, there must be three tests [or benchmarks — see above] for theories." What are the three tests? Master Mozi said: "There is the basis; there is the source; there is the application. In what is the basis? The basis is in the deeds of the ancient sage kings above. In what is the source? The source is in the truth of what is examined by the eyes and ears of the common people below. In what is the application? (It is) in the adoption (of the theory) for government policy, and the observation of

²⁵ See, for example: Hansen (1985); Fraser (2012); McLeod (2015).

its benefits for the ordinary people and the state [or people of the state]. These are what is called the ‘three tests.’” (§2)

Chad Hansen (1985) wrote about this passage that:

Commentary and interpretation of these three tests invariably treat them as three theories or three criteria of truth: a pragmatic theory, an empirical theory, and an unsavory traditional authority theory of truth. (511)

He disagrees with this kind of interpretation, however, and argues that Mozi’s ‘three tests’ concern assertability rather than truth. While I agree that the passage is not concerned with truth in its basic, disquotational sense, I disagree that it is about assertability. To a large extent, Hansen’s argument rests on the fact that 言 *yan* (*i.e.*, that which is to be tested) literally means something like ‘sayings’ or ‘words’ rather than ‘theories’, but this ignores the context of the passage — Mozi is not talking about utterings in general, but about theories and ideas with social or political implications, like fatalism (which is the topic that gives the text its title). Hence, in this context, ‘theories’ or ‘theoretical claims’ is an appropriate translation of 言 *yan*. Furthermore, the argument is not about what can and cannot be said, but about whether such theories/claims (like fatalism) should be accepted or rejected.

In Hansen’s characterization of the traditional view, the ‘three tests’ consist of three theories of truth. An alternative interpretation is that the ‘three tests’ are three criteria for (strong) justification: *a pragmatic criterion, an empirical criterion, and an unsavory traditional authority criterion of justification* (as in the quote by Hansen, though notice that the order is reversed relative to that in the quote by Mozi). The critical question, however, is whether the three criteria are *epistemic* criteria. Two things need to be kept in mind when trying to answer this question. First, the text dates to the 5th or 4th century BCE and originates in a culture where science and technology on the one hand and philosophy on the other were more separate than they used to be in the Western (*i.e.*, Greek) tradition. Hence, it would be anachronistic (if not downright absurd) to require something like scientific experiments to assign the ‘epistemic’ status. Second, the context of the ‘three tests’ is social and political philosophy. They are intended to be applied to theories that may have significant social, political, and/or economic effects, especially when they inform government policy.

The so-called ‘pragmatic criterion’ is the third of Mozi’s ‘three tests’, that is, to base government policy upon the theory and see whether that has desirable effects. Given the second point just mentioned, this is by far the most obvious way to test a relevant theory. What Mozi recommends in this ‘test’ is essentially to experiment with theories: try them out and see whether they work. If they work, then this gives us some reason to believe that they might be true.

The ‘empirical criterion’ is the second ‘test’, but the ‘empirical’ characterization is a bit peculiar. I suppose it is partially based on translations like that by Mei (1929) who has ‘verification’ for 原 *yuán*, which really means

something like 'source' or 'origin'. The source/origin, says Mozi, is in what is examined/noticed (察) 'by the eyes and ears of the common people'. While the reference to eyes and ears may seem 'empirical', the requirement that these are the eyes and ears of 'the common people' — that is, not just *one* pair of eyes and ears, but hundreds — is not. In fact, this seems much more similar to coherentist arguments along the lines of C.I. Lewis's witness analogy.

[The] example of the relatively unreliable witnesses who independently tell the same circumstantial story, is another illustration of the logic of congruence; [...]. For any one of these reports, taken singly, the extent to which it confirms what is reported may be slight. And antecedently, the probability of what is reported may also be small. But congruence of the reports establishes a high probability of what they agree upon, by principles of probability determination which are familiar: [...]. (1946, 346)

The reason why you need many pairs of eyes and ears is that a single witness is not very reliable, but if you have many, and they all agree, then you have good reason to believe that what they tell is true. And similarly, when it comes to theories that might have social or political implications, you have better reason to believe that they are true if many people have accepted them on the basis of their own, independent observations (*i.e.*, their eyes and ears) than when this is not the case.

The 'unsavory traditional authority criterion' is the first of Mozi's 'three tests', namely, that the theory is 'based' (本) in the actions of the ancient sage-kings. It is not perfectly clear how to interpret this 'test', but I do not think that Mozi meant that the theory itself had to be propounded by the sage-kings. If that is what he meant, there would have been no need to refer to their deeds or actions (事). Rather, what I think he meant is that the actions of the ancient sage-kings are the same (in relevant respects) as the actions of a government that would adopt the theory as a basis for its policies. Furthermore, it does not seem accurate to call this an 'authority criterion'. From the perspective of the ancient Chinese, the records of the actions of the sage-kings are like a universally accepted set of experimental data (*i.e.*, they believed uncritically that whatever the sage-kings did worked; they were sages after all). For a theory to be acceptable, it must cohere with those data.

This obviously is not the only possible interpretation, but if my interpretation is right, then what Mozi was arguing is that we are justified to hold theories with social and political implications true if (1) they cohere with accepted data in the form of the records of the actions of the ancient sage kings; (2) they are accepted by most people on the basis of their own, independent observations; and (3) they work if they are put to the test by basing government policy on them. It seems to me that Mozi held that a theory must pass all three of these 'tests' (or satisfy all three of these criteria) to be accepted as 'true', and not just one of them, which raises the question of what to do in case it passes some, but not all. (Suspend judgment, perhaps?) But regardless of that question, interpreted as such, these

are clearly epistemic criteria — they are concerned with reasons to believe that a theory is true, even if they are applicable only to theories of a particular kind (namely, those with significant social or political implications). Consequently, Mozi's argument would be an example of the second kind of concern for truth, that is, the concern for strong justification.

A question remains about the third kind of concern. Was Mozi concerned more with social harmony and related values than with truth? If the answer to that question is 'yes', then he would lack this kind of concern for truth. Although Mozi seems to argue in his book on ghosts 明鬼下 that people should believe in ghosts because that belief would be beneficial for social harmony, the general question whether he prioritized social harmony to truth is not easy to answer, however. If the kind of theories that Mozi was interested in typically claim that they produce beneficial social and/or political effects, then a concern with those beneficial effects is effectively indistinguishable from a concern with the truth of those theories. Consequently, that Mozi emphasized the beneficial effects of such theories is not evidence that he considered truth of lesser importance and thus lacked a concern for truth (in this sense).

8. Zhuangzi on What Is *ke* and What Is *ran*

While the quote by Mozi discussed above may not be about assertability, the latter notion does play an important role in ancient Chinese philosophy. The Chinese character used for this notion is 可 *ke*, which literally means 'possible', 'permissible', 'admissible', and so forth, or 'can' as a verb. A famous example of its use as 'assertability' can be found in the opening sentences of Gongsun Long's 公孫龍 *Bai Ma Lun* 白馬論:

「白馬非馬」，可乎？曰：可。

Is "a white horse is not a horse" *ke* (admissible)? It is *ke*.

The term also plays an important role in a passage in the "*Qiwulun*" 齊物論 chapter by Zhuangzi 莊子, but an even more central term there is 然 *ran*, meaning 'true', 'the case' (or 'being the case'), 'being so', and so forth. Like 可 *ke*, 然 *ran* has many different meanings. Moreover, the meaning of a Chinese character (where 'meaning' really should be understood as meaning 'English translation') differs depending on use — the same character used as a verb would have a very different meaning/translation than when it would be used as a noun, or as an adjective, or as a grammatical function word or auxiliary. For these two reasons, I have left *ke* and *ran* untranslated in the following passage.

可乎可，不可乎不可。道行之而成，物謂之而然。惡乎然？然於然。惡乎不然？不然於不然。物固有所然，物固有所可。

What is *ke* is *ke*. What is not *ke* is not *ke*. A path is created by walking it, a thing is called as it is by it being *ran*. How is it *ran*? It is *ran* by being *ran*. How is not *ran*?

It is not *ran* by being not *ran*. Things have what makes them inherently *ran*; things have what makes them inherently *ke*. (§2.6)

So, what are we to make of this passage? Unsurprisingly, perhaps, interpretations differ widely, and indeed very different translations are defensible. Given the flexibility of *ke* and *ran*, the following is one possible translation:

What can be said (*i.e.*, is assertable) can be said. What cannot be said cannot be said. A path is created by walking it, a thing is called as it is by it being so (*i.e.*, by being what it is). How is it true? It is true by being the case. How is it not true? It is not true by not being the case. Things have [the characteristics] that make them inherently so (*i.e.*, the way they are); things have what makes [speaking about them] inherently possible.

Again, very different translations are possible, but regardless of how exactly the passage is translated, Zhuangzi says here that something is *ran* by being *ran* and not *ran* by being not *ran*. This may seem like a trivial tautology, but I find it strikingly similar to Aristotle's famous statement that "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" (*Metaphysics* 1011b25).²⁶ This similarity is significant, I think, because if Aristotle's statement is considered to be an expression of the first kind of concern with truth (specifically, an attempt to explain the basic, disquotational notion of truth), then — unless my interpretation is mistaken, of course — so should Zhuangzi's. However, even if my interpretation is *not* mistaken, this isolated, short fragment in a single text hardly counts as evidence for sustained philosophical inquiry into the nature of truth (in the basic, disquotational sense), and I am not aware of any other evidence for the first kind of concern with truth in Chinese philosophy (see also Brons 2016).

9. Conclusions

Davidson was right when he said that the idea of truth as a goal or norm makes no sense — truth is not something we *can* aim for, and whenever we *say* that we aim for truth, what we are really aiming for is strong(er) justification (see section 4). Nevertheless, the notion of a concern for or with truth can be understood in (at least) three ways that do make sense: (1) it can refer to a philosophical concern with the nature of truth and related matters; (2) it can refer to a concern (or aim)

²⁶ In this interpretation/translation, Zhuangzi says that something is true by being the case and that something is not true by not being the case. If *c* stands for something (like a state of affairs) being the case, and *p_c* is an accurate propositional representation of that what is the case if *c* (*i.e.*, of that state of affairs), then this can be represented formally as: "*p_c* is true if *c*, and *p_c* is false if not *c*", which is equivalent to "*p_c* is true iff *c*". In the same notation, the remark by Aristotle becomes: "if *c*, then not *p_c* is false, and if not *c*, then *p_c* is false, and if *c*, then *p_c* is true", which is also equivalent to "*p_c* is true iff *c*". Hence, if this interpretation is correct, what Zhuangzi and Aristotle are saying in these two passages amounts to the same thing.

for strong justification; and (3) it can refer to an attitude or ideal of (trying to achieve or approach) truth(fulness) (see section 5).

While it may seem peculiar to use the phrase ‘concern for truth’ to refer to a concern for strong justification, this is quite justifiable, as we often mean ‘justification’ when we use the word ‘truth’ (see sections 2 and 3), and moreover, it seems to me that in many cases this is exactly what the notion of a concern for truth comes to: a concern with criteria for assigning ‘truth’ status, that is, justification. Concern for truth in this sense may very well be universal among philosophical traditions. Of course, this does not mean that *all* philosophers have occupied themselves with criteria for (strong) epistemic justification, but that in all of the philosophical traditions for which we have an abundance of textual material, there have been discussions about criteria for accepting some ideas as true and rejecting others as false. Sections 6 and 7 illustrate this with examples from Indian Buddhism and ancient Chinese philosophy, respectively.

The third kind of concern for truth is a bit harder to assess because of the indistinguishability of prioritizing a theory’s predictions *versus* the truth of that theory. If a theory holds that adopting a certain policy will have beneficial economic effects, for example, then the way to test that theory is to see whether it has those effects indeed. If you have the third kind of concern for truth (*i.e.*, truth as ideal) then that evidence, and thus those effects, is what you would be looking for. But if you lacked this kind of concern for truth and were more concerned with economic effects instead, then you would be looking for those beneficial economic effects as well. Insofar ancient Chinese philosophers could be accused of prioritizing social harmony over truth, this kind of indistinguishability might make it impossible to actually make that call (see section 7). Moreover, lacking the attitude of wanting one’s theories and ideas to be true seems anathema to science and philosophy, which is another reason to be very suspicious about a suggestion that ancient Chinese philosophy (or any other philosophical tradition) was not concerned with truth in this sense.

While the second concern for truth is probably universal among philosophical traditions, and the third may very well be universal as well,²⁷ the first probably is not. Concern for or with truth in this sense refers to theorizing about, and/or attempting to explain or define ‘truth’ in its basic, disquotational sense (see section 2). This seems largely a Western concern. It appears to be absent from the Indian Buddhist tradition, and mostly absent from ancient Chinese philosophy as well (see also Brons 2016). *Mostly*, because Zhuangzi *might* be a counter-example. There is a passage in the *Zhuangzi* that *could* be interpreted as claiming that something is true if it is the case and not true if it is not. However, other translations are possible and it is impossible to be sure about what exactly

²⁷ Notice that I am suggesting that the third concern is probably universal among philosophical traditions, and thus that every tradition is in some way or other concerned with truth in this sense. I am not claiming that all philosophers (let alone all people) in all traditions were or are concerned with truth in this sense (although I think that the vast majority were/are).

Zhuangzi meant, and moreover, this one short passage is surely insufficient to support a claim that ancient Chinese philosophy as a whole was concerned with truth in the first sense. (See section 8.)

The introduction of this paper distinguished three conflicting positions: (1) everyone is concerned with truth; (2) only some cultures/traditions/people are concerned with truth; or (3) no-one is (really) concerned with truth (because this concern makes no sense). To a large extent, this apparent conflict seems to be based on equivocation. Taking that into account, we can conclude that (i) all philosophical traditions are probably concerned with truth in some sense, that is, they are concerned with strong justification and probably also share truth(fulness) as an ideal; but (ii) not all traditions are concerned with truth in another sense, namely, not all traditions are concerned with the nature of truth, theories of truth, and related philosophical problems. In fact, it may very well be the case this last kind of concern (*i.e.*, a concern with truth in the first sense distinguished in section 5) is unique to the Western philosophical tradition. Perhaps, this paper's most important conclusion, however, is that attributing a concern for truth or lack thereof to someone or some tradition without specifying what exactly is meant by 'concern for truth' is virtually meaningless.

References

- Aristotle. 4th c. BCE. *Metaphysics*. Translation: 1984, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, edited by Jonathan Barnes. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Bach, Kent. 1997. "Do Belief Reports Report Beliefs?" *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 78: 215-41.
- Brons, Lajos. 2016. "Recognizing 'Truth' in Chinese Philosophy." *Logos & Episteme. An International Journal of Epistemology* 7(3): 273-86.
- Brons, Lajos. 2019. "Patterns, Noise, and Beliefs." *Principia* 23(1): 19-51.
- Brons, Lajos. 2022. *A Buddha Land in This World: Philosophy, Utopia, and Radical Buddhism*. Earth: Punctum.
- Brons, Lajos. 2023. "What is Real?" *Organon F* 30(2): 182-220.
- Chatterjee, Amita. 2017. "Truth in Indian Philosophy." In *A Companion to World Philosophies*, edited by Eliot Deutsch & Ron Bontekoe, 334-45. Malden: Blackwell.
- David, Marian. (2001). "Truth as the Epistemic Goal." In *Knowledge, Truth, and Duty: Essays on Epistemic Justification, Virtue, and Responsibility*, edited by Matthias Steup, 151-69. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Davidson, Donald. 1997. "Truth Rehabilitated." In (2005), *Truth, Language, and History*, 3-17. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Davidson, Donald. 1999. "Reply to Pascal Engel." In *The Philosophy of Donald Davidson*, edited by L.E. Hahn, 460-1. Chicago: Open Court.
- Dharmakīrti. 6th/7th c. *Pramāṇavārttika*. Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon. <http://www.dsbcproject.org/canon-text/book/298>.

- Dreyfus, Georges. 1997. *Recognizing Reality: Dharmakīrti's Philosophy and Its Tibetan Interpretations*. Albany: SUNY.
- Dunne, John. 2004. *Foundations of Dharmakīrti's Philosophy*. Boston: Wisdom.
- Fraser, Chris. 2012. "Truth in Moist Dialectics." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 39(3): 351-68.
- Gongsun Long 公孫龍. 4th/3th c. BCE. *Gongsun Longzi* 公孫龍子. The Chinese Text Project. <https://ctext.org/gongsunlongzi>.
- Hansen, Chad. 1985. "Chinese Language, Chinese Philosophy, and 'Truth'." *Journal of Asian Studies* 44(3): 491-519.
- James, William. 1907. *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*. In (1978), *Pragmatism and the Meaning of Truth*, 1-166. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- James, William. 1909. *The Meaning of Truth: A Sequel to "Pragmatism"*. In (1978) *Pragmatism and the Meaning of Truth*, 167-352. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Katsura Shoryu. 1984. "Dharmakīrti's Theory of Truth." *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 12(3): 215-35.
- Lewis, C.I. 1946. *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation*. LaSalle: Open Court.
- McLeod, Alexis. 2015. *Theories of Truth in Chinese Philosophy*. London: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Mei, Y.P. 1929. *The Ethical and Political Works of Motse*. London: Probsthai.
- Mozi 墨子 . 5th/4th c. BCE. *Mozi* 墨子 . The Chinese Text Project. <https://ctext.org/mozi>.
- Munro, Donald. 1969. *The Concept of Man in Early China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Peirce, Charles S. 1868, "Some Consequences of Four Incapacities." In: *Collected Papers*, Volume 5, 264-317. New York: Dover.
- Peirce, Charles S. 1878. "How to Make Our Ideas Clear." In: *Collected Papers*, Volume 5, 388-410. New York: Dover.
- Peirce, Charles S. 1901. "Truth," In: *Collected Papers*, Volume 5, 549-73. New York: Dover.
- Quine, W.V.O. 1986. *Philosophy of Logic*, Second Edition. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Rorty, Richard. 1979. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Russell Bertrand. 1910. "William James's Conception of Truth." In (2009) *Philosophical Essays*, 104-22. London: Routledge.
- Siderits, Mark. 2022. *How Things Are: An Introduction to Buddhist Metaphysics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Silva, Paul & Luis Oliveira. 2022. "Introduction." In *Propositional and Doxastic Justification: New Essays on Their Nature and Significance*, edited by Paul Silva & Luis Oliveira, 1-4. New York: Routledge.

Lajos Brons

- Stich, Stephen. 1990. *The Fragmentation of Reason: Preface to a Pragmatic Theory of Cognitive Evaluation*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Stoltz, Jonathan. 2021. *Illuminating the Mind: An Introduction to Buddhist Epistemology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tarski, Alfred. 1936. "The Concept of Truth in Formalized Languages." In (1956) *Logic, Semantics, Metamathematics: Papers from 1923 to 1938*, 152-278. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Van Bijlert, Vittorio. 1989. *Epistemology and Spiritual Authority: The Development of Epistemology and Logic in the Old Nyāya and the Buddhist School of Epistemology with an Annotated Translation of Dharmakīrti's Pramāṇavārttika II (Pramāṇasiddhi) vv. 1-7*. Vienna: ATBS.
- Westerhoff, Jan. 2009. *Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka: A Philosophical Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Yiannopoulos, Alexander. 2023. "Devendrabuddhi and Śākyabuddhi: Dharmakīrti's First Commentators." In *The Routledge Handbook of Indian Buddhist Philosophy*, edited by William Edelglass, Pierre-Julien Harter, & Sara McClintock, 393-403. London: Routledge.
- Zhuangzi 莊子. 4th c. BCE. *Zhuangzi* 莊子. The Chinese Text Project. <https://ctext.org/zhuangzi>.