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PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACHES TO TRUTH AND THE PROBLEM OF ITS CRITERIA

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Abstract

The concept of truth has been one of the central problems of philosophy since antiquity. Philosophers have proposed different theories to explain what truth is and how it can be identified. This article analyzes major philosophical approaches to truth, including correspondence theory, coherence theory, and pragmatic theory. The study evaluates the criteria used to determine truth and examines their strengths and limitations. The findings suggest that while no single theory fully explains truth in all contexts, a combined approach provides a more comprehensive understanding. Truth remains a fundamental category in epistemology and scientific inquiry.

Keywords

Truth, epistemology, correspondence theory, coherence theory, pragmatism, knowledge

Introduction

The problem of truth occupies a central place in epistemology, the branch of philosophy concerned with knowledge. From Plato and Aristotle to modern philosophers, thinkers have attempted to define what truth is and how it can be verified. Without a clear understanding of truth, it becomes impossible to distinguish knowledge from opinion.

Traditionally, truth has been understood as agreement between thought and reality. However, different philosophical schools have developed alternative explanations. The purpose of this article is to analyze major theories of truth and identify their main criteria.

Methods

This study is based on qualitative philosophical analysis. Classical and contemporary philosophical texts were examined to identify definitions and criteria of truth. Comparative analysis was used to evaluate three major theories: correspondence, coherence, and pragmatic theories. Logical and conceptual clarification methods were applied to assess consistency and explanatory power.

Results

The correspondence theory defines truth as conformity between a statement and objective reality. Aristotle famously described truth as saying of what is that it is. According to this view, a statement is true if it accurately reflects facts.

The coherence theory argues that truth depends on logical consistency within a system of beliefs. A statement is true if it coherently fits within an interconnected network of propositions.

The pragmatic theory, developed by philosophers such as William James and Charles Peirce, defines truth in terms of practical consequences. A belief is considered true if it works effectively in practice and leads to successful results.

Each theory provides a distinct criterion. Correspondence emphasizes factual accuracy, coherence stresses logical consistency, and pragmatism focuses on practical usefulness.

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Discussion

Although the correspondence theory appears intuitive, it faces difficulties in explaining abstract or moral truths. The coherence theory offers strength in systematic philosophy and mathematics but may allow multiple consistent yet conflicting systems. Pragmatism highlights the dynamic and functional nature of truth but risks reducing truth to mere utility.

Modern epistemology often integrates elements from all three approaches. Scientific truth, for example, requires empirical correspondence, theoretical coherence, and practical applicability. Thus, truth may not be a single-dimensional concept but a multi-layered one.

Conclusion

The philosophical analysis of truth demonstrates that no single theory fully captures its complexity. Correspondence, coherence, and pragmatic theories each provide valuable insights and criteria. A comprehensive understanding of truth requires integrating factual accuracy, logical consistency, and practical effectiveness. Truth remains essential for knowledge, science, and rational discourse.

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