

OPEN ACCESS: “EPISTEMOLOGY”

eISSN: 2663-5828;pISSN: 2519-6480

Vol.11 Issue 12 December 2022

ON THE HEALTH IMPLICATIONS OF THE POVERTY OF TRUTH

ASOGWA, Christopher Ikechukwu

Senior Lecturer, Department of Philosophy, University of Nigeria,
Nsukka Enugu State, Nigeria.

Abstract Every epistemology, nay theory of Knowledge must give a befitting account of truth as against falsehood, error or lies. Thus, truth is concerned with questions such as: what it is to be the truth? Can one ever be sure that one has discovered the truth? Can we ever have reasonable assurance that we have the truth? What are the necessary and sufficient conditions of a statement being true? An inquiry for truth is a request for information either about what is said when something is asserted as true or about the condition under which it might rightly be so asserted. Issues and more like the above have created the problems of definition of truth, how to be certain about truth and how to know the truth, which in this essay I have chosen to refer to as the poverty of truth. In this essay, using the methods of philosophical exposition and analysis, I argued that truth is never definable, knowable and certain, and that these (which I have chosen to understand as the poverty of truth) have serious implications in matters of health.

KEYWORDS: Epistemology; health; truth; post-truth; logic; probability; certainty; illusion; inductive logic; knowledge.

In the religious domain the commandment is to always tell the truth. In the political life of nations politicians have always been accused of not living up to the truth of their campaign promises. Individuals in families have always been exhorted to always tell the truth. Sweepingly, one is always reminded that to tell the truth is not an insult. And, that any system founded on truth will never fail. Traditions, norms, folkways and folklores are wound around truth. So much have come to bear on the idea of truth. This is to the extent that issues about truth have been taken for granted. But, more often than not, as I argued in this essay, regarding truth as definable, knowable and certain remained a product of assumption or uncritical thinking, even as our lives are unavoidably built around truth.

This essay is on truth, the poverty of truth (which in this essay is used to refer to the definition of truth, knowledge of truth and being certain about truth) and the implication of these in health matters. The problem of this essay is not just about truth, defining truth, knowing truth and being certain about what is truth but extends to the implications these in matters of health. This is a problem in health matters because ambiguities, vagueness and ambivalence have come to bear on the understanding of truth have serious implication in matters of health. The issues of defining, knowing, and certainty of truth should be taken more seriously because truth is becoming more and more crucial to human life. As Franca (2019, 266) puts it:

What is new is that the worry about truth has entered the public language, becoming the concern of a lot of intellectuals, journalists and political scientists, so that the literature about the theme has increased impressively. In this respect, we should rather say we live in a *post-post-truth era*, as the problem of truth (truth as a problem) has become generally acknowledged: the notion of truth has gained a new and unexpected importance in our lives.

It is the main aim of this essay not only to expose truth and argue that truth is not definable, knowable and certain but more, that these have serious implications in matters of health. Therefore, one purpose/objective of this essay is to do a philosophical exposition of that which is called truth. In line with the above this essay has another purpose/objective of representing truth as always be bedeviled by the problems of definition, knowing and as being certain, which like cases of goodness or happiness, would always end in obscurity. Truth as being undefinable, unknowable and uncertain are what in this essay I have called the poverty of truth because these are not attainable. The third objective/purpose of this essay is to draw attention to the implications in matters of health of the poverty of truth (truth as being undefinable, unknowable and uncertain).

II

Towards the realization of the first objective of this essay, which is the exposition truth, let me philosophically expose what has sufficed as truth – theories of truth, definitions of truth, proofs of truth, and/or criteria of truth. In line with the above, the concept of truth has drawn serious and critical attention from philosophers. This is because

Non-philosophers generally speak of T referring to ‘what is true’, i.e. *true contents*; philosophers instead generally speak of T as referring to the *concept*, the *conceptual function* we call ‘truth’ and that we express by the predicate ‘true’. It is not simply a methodological distinction. Very often, we cannot get to the end of discussions about T just because we refer to true contents, (Franca 2019, 267).

Some of these have traditionally been rendered as theories of truth. And, to these, I now must focus my attention.

One major, theoretical definition of truth is that which sees truth as the uniformity of the intellect in judgment with the objects of knowledge. The objects of knowledge – persons, places, things, etc – are other than the knowledge of them. However, these objects are what is availed the knower by the intellect. Thus, if the availed in knowledge agrees with the object as it is then the correspondence theory of truth is in place. The correspondence theory considers truth as correspondence of part to part or whole to whole and in which belief has little or no role to play. The accordance theory or the common sense theory as the correspondence theory is sometimes referred to holds that "we ordinarily think that, when we hold a belief, say, about the physical world, the belief is made true or false not by other beliefs but by something in the physical world to which it refers" (Aja: 2016:71). Correspondence of an idea to its object has most times been regarded as the most apt criterion for truth. That is "If an idea of an object and the object are in accord or conform to one another, then the idea is said to be true" (Sahakian and Sahakian 1970: 11). Thus, Correspondence is rather not just a criterion of truth, as some people tend to represent it, but one of the classical theories or definitions of truth. Thus,

The correspondence theory holds that the nature of truth is such that the equivalences hold. Certainly, the theory cannot pretend that mastering the truth term teaches you the theory of that nature, any more than it teaches you how to recognize the worldly situations that make statements true (Devitt, 2001: 602).

But, the time lag argument faults the theory in a very serious way. The time lag argument put simply, is that since there is always intervening time in perceiving the percept (perception), the perceived may only correspond with or represent an old form of the object in question. For instance, since the light from the sun comes to the earth in eight years it then means that the sun as we know it today is the truth of what the sun was eight years ago. Secondly, the

correspondent theory of knowledge does not take into consideration the fact that many factors may be involved in the correspondence of an object to that availed in knowing. For instance, one who has jaundice may have distorted correspondence. This is the causal argument against the correspondent theory of truth. Three, the phenomenon argument against the correspondent theory of truth insists that the theory must clarify the issue of what could be known as truth. That is whether truth is about things-in-themselves (noumena) or things-as-they-appear (phenomena). Four, smacking of the Leibnizian monad, the correspondent theory of truth must explain how an individual's experience can correspond with the outside world since one's experience remains very personal. Five, the correspondent theory of truth does not consider false and untrue statements as such. Six, the correspondent theory of truth seems to trust the experience too much as having the wherewithal or what it takes to give truth, which is doubtful.

The coherence theory is another of the classical theories or definitions of truth. When all facts in a case are consistent/cohere, then coherence is in place. It is obvious that by implication coherence includes other criteria of truth. It insists that facts or ideas must cohere, form an integrated whole. Edgar S. Brightman was one of the major proponents of the coherence theory of truth. He once wrote (1925: 61) that "any judgment is true if it is both self-consistent and coherently connected with our system of judgments as a whole". Hegel is regarded as the originator of the coherence theory of truth. According to Sahakian and Sahakian (1970:14) "essentially, coherence is another more technical name for reason". Or, as Blanshard puts it, "certainly, this ideal goes far beyond mere consistency. Fully coherent knowledge would be knowledge in which every judgment entailed, and was entailed by, the rest of the system" (Blanshard, 2001: 107).

The development of the coherence theory of truth was a form of revolt against the correspondence theory of truth. In the main, it was felt that the establishment of correspondence between judgment and reality is near if not impossible. In coherence theory, truth is agreement or coherence between judgments themselves (Aja, 2016:72). The idea of the coherence theory of truth is something that fits into place in a collection or system.

The coherence theory otherwise referred to as the consistency theory refers in its simple form to "an inner or formal consistency in the particular system under consideration, quite apart from any interpretation of the universe as a whole" (Eboh: 2017: 42). And, in its enlarged form it refers to the consistency and, or coherence in an "all-inclusive and self-consistent whole of reality"(Eboh; 2017:42). Thus, smacking of idealism, coherence theory of truth is a complete system of an existing order of propositions about existence with which any further proposition must cohere to become true. In truth as coherence, the reality is reduced to ideas as in propositions. Hence, "insofar as

every judgment is merely partial when separated from the whole, it is to some extent one-sided and possesses only a degree of truth. From this viewpoint, truth grows and it would never be complete or final until it encompasses all of reality" (Eboh: 1996:44).

One has only to "assume coherence as the test, and you will be driven by the incoherence of your alternative to the conclusion that it is also the nature of truth" (Brand Blanchard, 1941), which does not say much. Two, coherence definition of truth properly treated can only be a property of judgment seldom concerned with facts to which correspondence suffices. Validity is its domain but regrettably, validity is not equal to truth.

Then there is that otherwise referred to as the pragmatic theory or definition of truth. An idea, and, or thing for the pragmatic is true if it is functional, if it works, if it creates utility and if it yields satisfactory results. No doubt, pragmatism prevails if the idea of absolute truth is dashed. This as a theory of truth holds relativism in high esteem. If pragmatism holds workability as that which confers validity on matters of truth then true ideas are result-oriented to be meaningful, and effective. Truth then belongs to relative circumstances either as coherent or correspondent or nil. It has been advanced that the pragmatic theory of truth is veritable because:

we have to accept that "truth" can be dynamic. New insights have changed and will also change in the future our perception of the world Today, we are confronted with a public domain, where scientific truths are doubted as "fake news" and unfounded claims are called "alternative facts" (Klimck, 2020: 59-60).

One can understand the above better with William James' locution that "true ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate and verify; false ideas are those that we cannot" (James: 1975:160). Every belief is true, according to pragmatism, if it works. This is more so since in the pragmatist's view absolute truth is not attainable or for that matter is it necessary.

One, the pragmatic theory of truth suffers serious privation in the fact that not all workable ideas are necessarily true. For instance, believing in God as existing because when one call on Him in times of trouble calmness is restored does not make the existence of God necessarily true. Two, though the negative pragmatism as enunciated by William Ernest Hockings (that if something or an idea fails then it is not true) is always true, the workability of an idea is not a guarantee for its truth. Three, critics of the pragmatic theory of truth hold that terms such as workability and effectiveness used in pragmatism lack proper definition.

At this point, I found *the Realms of Philosophy* (Sahakian and Sahakian, 1970) highly informative. This work offered much in the form of other ways truth has been defined or characterized, and why such systems of proof of truth, criteria of truth, and/or definitions of truth remain inadequate.

Naïve realism is a definition of truth that has in its closet adherents like Mc Cosh and Thomas Reid. Naïve realism holds that there is no more to reality than as it appears to the senses; it is aimed at simplifying reality against complicated approaches. However, as a definition of truth, naïve realism oversimplified its proof of truth and reality – things are not always what they are seen to be as there is always more than meets the eye in things as seen. More so, ultimate reality may not always be perceptible e.g. electricity current. This is a very serious shortcoming.

Feeling, which is much more like hunches, is the common-sense criterion of truth. That is ‘if I feel like’ then truth is in place. No doubt, we appeal a lot to feeling when we are in search of truth or true situation. But, feeling has the major shortcoming of being vague and ill-defined. More so, feelings conflict with one another hence we have cases of mixed feelings. Furthermore, feeling is “quite sterile and useless in almost every instance of scientific and philosophical research”, (Sahakian and Sahakian; 1970: 7).

Customs and Tradition have also been given as a definition of truth. In our daily lives, in moral matters and political matters, we often understand that which is customary as always the truth. When these customary ways of doing things become established they become traditional. Thus, truth is the customary and traditional or put differently customs or traditions prevalent certify this or that as truth. However, customs and traditions as a definition or criterion of truth are invalidated on the shortcoming that the *traditional or customary* may not always be true.

Time has also been adduced as a criterion for truth. There is always the feeling among many people that what has stood the test of time is always the truth. Hence, for many, the ultimate test or criterion for truth is to find out whether that which is being judged has stood the test of time. However, standing the test of time as a criterion of truth has the very obvious shortcoming that if time becomes a criterion for truth then many false testaments of life would have become true but unfortunately they are not.

Intuition has also been hoisted as a system of proof of that which is to be accepted as truth. Intuition is thinking which is done on the level of the unconscious; a dynamic process of thought which penetrated the static limitations of logic. Intuition has also been defined as truth which comes from one knows not where (Sahakian and Sahakian; 1970: 8). But, a close look at intuition as a proof of truth shows that it has very serious shortcomings. One, It is not a conclusive test of truth. Two, a lot of conditions might go wrong if intuition is relied upon every time to provide the solutions to problems of life – it hampers human progress. Three, It is rather a source of truth and not a criterion.

Revelation, sometimes, is regarded as a criterion of truth. To say that revelation is a criterion of truth is to say that for this or that to be true it must

have come from God, gods, or revealed as such. It is almost like intuition but for the fact that revelation comes from God, gods, or revealed as such. However, revelation has a major setback in the fact that it is, like intuition, a source of truth and not a criterion.

Sigmund Freud as a psychologist and George Santayana (Sahakian and Sahakian; 1970: 8) held the instinct as the sole and most effective test of that which claims the glorified status of being truth. In other words, they claim that the instinctive is true. That is also to say that if an instinct exists for a thing then that thing is true, must exist. However, instinct as a criterion of truth has many shortcomings. The notion of instinct is a vague concept, it is not always well defined, it lacks in scientific support, the objectives of certain instincts are hard to find out, the idea of the number and kinds of instincts are discrepant and much of what we know today go beyond instinct hence to fixate truth with that which is instinctual is nihilistic and redundant.

The majority has also been regarded as a criterion of truth. The majority as a criterion for truth refers to decisions based on the idea of the majority of a given number of times, people, etc. It has also been referred to as the Plurality or *Consensus Gentian*; hence one always hears that the majority carried the day, etc. This majority criterion for truth holds even when it is a simple plurality or just mere plurality as when votes are used to decide cases. But, this criterion for deciding the truth may not solve problems in science and philosophy. It might be funny using this method to determine the cause of HIV/AIDS, for instance. Majorities have sometimes been wrong and what is universally believed is not necessarily true.

Authorities have always been cited as certification of the truth of issues or to prove points in all facets of life. This is because such authorities/resource persons are believed to be versatile in the areas concerned. However, its major shortcoming is that authorities sometimes conflict and contradict themselves.

Consistency has at other times been advanced as a criterion of truth. Consistency as a criterion of truth implies that whatever lacks in contradiction is always true. This is loose or mere consistency. However rigorous consistency contends, according to Borden Parker Bowne in his method of rigor and vigor, that consistent statements or proportions must follow necessarily from one another (see also Sahakian and Sahakian, 1970:13). This has its shortcomings. One, truth is more than merely eliminating contradiction as implied in mere consistency. Two, rigorous consistency is a closed system that cannot always stand the challenge of incompatible but possibly inclusive data. In other words, assumption is its prop but which is collapsible.

III

This essay is designed to be philosophically expository and analytic. The design being partly philosophically expository is to enable a good presentation of what *truth* has been construed to be. The design being analytical would also

enable the essay deliver on a major thrust of the essay, which is that truth cannot deliver on the issues of being definable, knowable and certain, which elsewhere in this essay I have called the poverty of truth. The methods of philosophical exposition and philosophical analysis would be used to draw attention to the implications of the poverty of truth – (that truth cannot deliver on the issues of being definable, knowable and certain) to matters of health. Materials for this essay were extant literature on the subject of truth as contained in books, journals and other sources of literature. As a qualitative research based on library information the use of the above sources of data were compelling and are validated on the background that these sources of data were some of the best authorities in this subject area.

IV

It is obvious, based on available literature that history of philosophy is replete and awash with efforts to understand truth. It is one of my convictions that even though truth is an epistemological concept, it has the habiliments of axiological or metaphysical concepts like beauty, goodness or time. It is also my conviction that most of the time when people talk about the truth they mostly prevaricate between truth in terms of beliefs and statements and truth in terms of things as existing in the real world. Hence, one of the findings of this essay is that truth is not definable, as a concept. That is, there is no single attempt at defining truth that cannot be severely faulted. It is also another finding of this essay that to the extent truth is about beliefs and statements, to this extent truth is not knowable. It is also a finding of this essay that the concept of truth is never guaranteed as certain. It is also another finding of this essay that most writers on truth are guilty of ampliative inference that is drawing conclusions beyond what the enabling premises can grant and sustain. Let me now present my arguments in support of the.

V

Sundry attempts at definition of truth have not solved the problem of what truth is. And, the starting point is that truth is a vague term, which according to the first finding means that truth is not definable. This vagueness derives from its oscillation between being about beliefs and statements (about things) and being about things in the real world as such. Hence truth even if, as often, aptly captured in the mind may never fit into anything in the real world of experience where it is needed. The vagueness of truth is further perpetuated by this oscillation because if truth implies necessities whether these are in the forms of beliefs or statement then truth is said to be descriptive, if truth implies a successful guide, it is said to be instrumental, it is also said to be ontological when it refers to beings (reality) and when truth implies a way of life or permanent disposition it is said to be habitual (existential). But, the fact remains as Lynch put it that:

In court, witnesses swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. One is expected to know what this means, and in some sense, it is clear that we do. Yet at the same time, truth seems so stubbornly abstract that, like Pontius Pilate, we treat questions about its nature as rhetorical. We cowardly avoid it, courageously pursue it, and lament its distortion, but when pressed to say what truth is, we find ourselves tongue-tied and frustrated. The nature of truth seems a mystery. (2001:1)

In whatever habiliment truth is dressed it must play and fulfill the role of standing up to its name. This is a role that truth must play insofar as it tries to raise its head in the fold of epistemology. But in this knotty commitment of truth, one must be mindful of certain disarming facts about truth to the extent truth is more about beliefs in things and statements. These are conditions any understanding of truth must fulfill, which are that every concept of truth must:

admit of its opposite, falsehood ... it seems fairly evident that if there were no beliefs there could be no falsehood, and no truth either, in the sense in which truth is correlative to falsehood ... the truth or falsehood of a belief always depends on something which lies outside the belief itself Truth and falsehood are properties of beliefs and statements, (Russell, 2001:18).

The nature of truth which (1) allows truth to have an opposite, namely falsehood, (2) makes truth a property of beliefs, and (3) makes it a property wholly dependent upon the relation of the beliefs to outside things makes it obvious that the nature and meaning of truth bars it from grasping the actual object of truth. In other words, the meaning of truth is not about any object as such but beliefs and statements about such objects. Hence, Russell (2001: 17) would not have put it better when he wrote: "How are we to know, in a given case, that our belief is not erroneous? This is a question of the very greatest difficulty, to which no completely satisfactory answer is possible". Or as Franca (2020: 286) put it,

“On the other side, it is assumed that searching for T or believing that what one believes is true are wrong attitudes, so nihilism is a new and preferable human status: we have finally discovered that we should not appeal to T. Briefly, we have here the idea of the “post-T era” with opposite evaluations.

Concerning truth and certainty, let me take this argument to the realm of logic. And, the argument here is that inductive logic which underwrites the concept of truth never guaranteed truth as certain. Historically, the commitment of logic is divided into two – that concerned with validity and that concerned with truth. These form the two branches of logic as traditionally recognized – deductive or formal logic and inductive or informal logic. It is within the

realm of inductive logic that truth applies. This is not a demeaned role. This is because inductive logic has to underwrite any assembled conceptual model of nature, that is justify accepted generalizations on nature and those of everyday life as true or otherwise. As Copi (2001: 511-512/1974:400-401) held, every inductive argument must show its premises as providing final proofs for the truth of its conclusions. More so, as getting at universal propositions through particular facts of experience is referred to as inductive generalization. Furthermore, there is almost unanimity among philosophers that inductive logic is concerned not with validity of arguments but rather with probable inferences which serve as evidence on which truth is based, the soundness of arguments for which one has no conclusive evidence. Hence Popkin and Stroll (1993: 240) held inductive logic as coincidental with the concept known as probability.

Hence, truth as correspondence fails in so far as there is a lack of certainty in correspondence of the object of knowledge with the known. Or, as Russell (2001: 18) put it, "It is, however, by no means an easy matter to discover a form of correspondence to which there are no irrefutable objections." Epistemology, any logic is yet to answer the question of whether one can, especially through the correspondence theory of truth, attain certain and independent knowledge of the familiar world.

Or can one from the inductive logic domain turn to the theory of truth as coherence in this search for certainty. Unfortunately, this concept of truth is almost the idea of formal logic to which validity should apply and not truth as such. Ideas in the mind may attain certainty in coherence or otherwise irrespective of whether these ideas are true or false. More so, coherence as the definition of truth fails in solving the problem of certainty because there is no proof that there can be only one coherent system. Furthermore, searching for certainty of truth in the coherence theory of truth could be misleading because, in fact, 'coherence' presupposes the truth of the laws of logic, (Russell, 2001: 19).

In the light of inductive logic the pragmatic theory of truth is no less wanting in providing a solution to the problem of certainty of truth. And, William James leads to a good understanding of this, thus:

True ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate, and verify. False ideas are those that we cannot. That is the practical difference it makes to us to have true ideas; that, therefore, is the meaning of truth, for it is all that truth is known-as.... The truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth happens to an idea. It becomes true, is made true by events. Its verity is, in fact, an event, a process: the process namely of its verifying itself, its verification. Its validity is the process of its validation. (James, 2001: 212-213)

However, persuasion, for instance, has always worked the magic in dire situations but may never be true. That is, pragmatic theory of truth is not even about any truth being sought for in inductive logic. If the truth sought by logic is that of particulars and universal – uniformity of nature - then regrettably the pragmatic theory of truth is essentially defective.

Furthermore, Immanuel Kant refrained from giving, as a convention, a definition of philosophy. Rather, he rightly reminded that philosophy asks four questions or raises possible answers to four questions (*Critique of Pure Reason* A 805-806/B 833-834.). One of the four questions according to him is “what can I know?” Any discerning mind has it not lost on it that any organized attempt to answer the question of what could be known ends in a theory of knowledge. In a sense, “theory of knowledge is a search for certainty” (Eboh: 2017:39). However, certainty exists only where there is truth. Thus, this traditional problem of philosophy issued in a branch of philosophy – epistemology. In epistemology knowledge is the central theme hence in certain traditions philosophy is treated as having three independent major branches: epistemology, metaphysics, and Axiology. (Aja, 1996. 10 – 44). In this tradition validity and truth (logic) become functions of epistemology alongside other commitments as gnoseology or theory of knowledge, philosophy of lang., and philosophy of science.

Hence, for want of a better way to put it, I have chosen to call this installment of argument in support of the thesis of this essay as the haunting of Kant's ghost. There is no better way of proving that truth is never certain, definable or knowable - an illusion than this. According to Kant knowledge is limited to phenomena (things as they appear to us). According to him, noumena (things as they are) are thinkable but unknowable, thus, contemplation of the truth or reality of *things as they are* issued in antinomies. I consider it a good presentation of this argument what Putnam said:

Either truth is simply the state of being verified, or it transcends what the speaker can verify, he argues, and if it transcends what the speaker can verify, it is not a property whose presence the speaker can “recognize.” And if the truth is a property whose presence (in some cases, at least) the speaker cannot recognize, then the speaker's alleged “grasp” of the notion of truth becomes a mystery. (Putnam, 2001: 705)

The rejection of truth as certain, definable and knowable is in order since skepticism and ambiguity dogs the way in so far as people play pawn on wrestling truth from phenomenon and still present it as noumena. Truth, to the extent it is more about beliefs in things and statements, as phenomena is too subjective to be defined, known and certain; truth to the extent truth is more about beliefs in things and statements, as noumena is unascertainable to be certain, defined and known. Hence,

One reason for this skepticism is that a plurality of kinds of truth seems to imply a plurality of truth concepts. And a plurality of truth concepts entails that the word "true" is ambiguous ... The ambiguity of truth would have several ill consequences, (Lynch, 2001:726).

VI

This essay has much bearing on matters of health. Hence, the third objective of this essay, to which I now must turn, is to show that non-definability of truth, unknowability of truth and uncertainty of truth (which I call the poverty of truth) has implications on matters of health. One argument in support of this objective of this essay is that most writers on truth are guilty of ampliative inference, most discourses on truth infer too much and most writers on truth commit intentional fallacy. And, by this I mean to say that most writers on truth say one thing but mean another, bring their preconceived intentions into the meaning of truth or infer or input more than necessary even when they should be aware of the bogusness of such. For instance, following the outbreak of diseases like Ebola virus, Corona Virus and now Marburg the situation was such that the public got more confused than informed. This is actually a serious implication of the poverty of truth. It is in this sense that I interpret the meaning of what Lynch wrote when he averred thus:

Rather, I note that two facts stand out when looking at all these problems together. First, each traditional theory of truth is more plausible in some domains than in others. Second, all of the theories mentioned are assuming that the question "What is truth?" has a single answer. In other words, most of the players in the contemporary debate over truth share an unnoticed allegiance to a certain type of monism: truth has but one underlying nature if any nature at all. (Lynch, 2001: 725)

Hilariously, Eboh (2017: 49) defined truth as, "The faithful adherence of our judgments and ideas to the facts of experience or the world as it is: but since we cannot always compare our judgments with actual situations, we test them by consistency with other judgments that we believe are valid and true, or we test them by usefulness and practical consequences" Eboh's is a near-perfect rendering of the ampliative inference in the explication of truth. But, this is the summary of the argument here. Truth to the extent of being about beliefs in things and statements, and in essence limited to our beliefs and judgments, which in their relationships can be certain has serious implication in matters of health. However, the ampliative creeps in when it is expressed as the case that these beliefs and judgments must correspond, cohere, be identical with or work well with the world as it is or facts of experience especially in health matters because it becomes about life and death. Marian David made sense in explaining this mix-up in these words:

What, then, is it for a proposition to be true? According to the correspondence theory of truth, a proposition is true if it corresponds to a fact and false if it does not correspond to any fact. The correspondence theory has its competitors. One of them, the identity theory, offers a surprising simplification. It holds that true propositions do not correspond to facts, they are facts, and vice versa, (David, 2001: 683).

Regrettably, in matters of health, a clear case as above may never be the case. Hornsby (2001: 664) was more categorical when she wrote “The identity theory is encapsulated in the simple statement that true thinkables are the same as facts”. In matters of health we have a serious problem if in actual sense truth should be no more than Walker put it thus:

The coherence theorist holds that for a proposition to be true is for it to cohere with a certain system of beliefs. It is not just that it is true if and only if it coheres with that system; it is that the coherence, and nothing else, is what its truth consists in. In particular, truth does not consist in the holding of some correspondence between the proposition and some reality which obtains independently of anything that may be believed about it. (2001: 124)

This is more so if one goes to the extreme of holding that the correspondent theory of knowledge holds that if the availed in knowledge is in fidelity, agrees with the object as it is then the correspondence theory of truth is in place. The correspondence theory considers truth as correspondence of part to part or whole to whole and in which belief has little or no role to play. But the question remains as to how one can explain and defend the truth in matters of health to the extent truth is more about beliefs in things and statements as certain, knowable and definable?

It is also a disturbing implication of this essay that while men are busy pursuing truth as that which is certain and knowable, much would have gone wrong in matters of health. And that much more harm would have been occasioned in human health via strict devotion to that which we call truth because energy is being wasted on finding a proper definition of truth, which is ruse and may never yield much. Therefore, the need should be in trying to forge a formidable foundation of the necessary conditions obtaining which something is adjudged to be true as such. Thus,

We should apply this obvious observation to the concept of truth: we cannot hope to underpin it with something more transparent or easier to grasp. Truth is, as G. E. Moore, Bertrand Russell, and Gottlieb Frege maintained, and Alfred Tarski proved, an indefinable concept. This does not mean we can say nothing revealing about it: we can, by relating it to other concepts like belief, desire, cause, and action, (Davidson, 2001: 624).

On the level of practice, let me draw attention to a very challenging implication of non-definability of truth, unknowability of truth and uncertainty of truth (which I call the poverty of truth) in matters of health. The implication of the poverty of truth has put in the way of health matters are about lies and post-truths in serious matters like health as occasioned by hinging human existence on the spurious ideal called truth. To do my best in expressing how the poverty of truth has occasioned lies and post-truth in matters of health let me briefly explain these two terms. Lies are opposite of truth. Lies are denial of that which is there. According to Buffacchi “The point about telling a lie is that the liar accepts that there is a truth, knows what the truth is, but decides to tell a different story. A lie refers to specific facts that have precise spatio-temporal coordinates,” (2021: 349). Hence, I agree in-completely with Sam Leith (2017) that the liar honors the truth by denying it because whereas the liar has a direct relationship with the truth value of what he or she is saying, and implicitly honors the truth by denying it, the bullshitter simply doesn’t care about whether his or her statement is true, half-true or outright false: he or she cares only about what it achieves. Here we are in the territory not of logic but of rhetoric. For instance, consider the case of HIV/AIDS. The existence of a cure for this scourge is still being denied when we are on the other hand informed that with proper intake of Anti-retroviral, one can safely have sex, children and still live as long as one can. The lie in this looks obvious but who is supposed to change the lies. Referring to post-truth as occasioned by the poverty of truth let me borrow from Buffacchi thus,

rather than simply referring to the time after a specified situation or event – as in postwar or post-match – the prefix in Post-Truth has a meaning more like ‘belonging to a time in which the specified concept has become unimportant or irrelevant’. This nuance seems to have originated in the mid-20th century, in formulations such as post-national (1945) and post-racial (1971).⁷ Similarly, the prefix ‘post’ in Post-Truth is not a chronological reference to something that occurs ‘after’ truth, instead it is a statement about the fact that truth is no longer essential, that truth has become obsolete and that truth has been superseded by a new reality.” (2021: 349).

This post-truth implication is a very unhealthy one. For instance, when the truth of lockdown, social distancing and masking (of, noses. Mouths and faces) during the heat of covid-19 became obsolete and were superseded by a new reality for several reasons, the post truth set in. the post-truth took the forms cramping people up in overcrowded spaces, making vaccination against the disease voluntary, and unannounced withdrawal of forceful washing of hands, nose and mouth masking, etc. hence in the post-truth implication of the poverty of truth smacks of what Miranda Fricker (2007) in (Buffacchi, 2021: 249) calls ‘hermeneutical injustice’, which refers to those cases when someone

is not able to make sense of an experience due to prejudicial flaws in shared resources for social interpretation, or in other words, when someone is harmed by a sort of gap in collective understanding which makes one's own experiences unintelligible. As Buffacchi wrote:

I suggest the following working definition of Post-truth: Post-truth is a deliberate strategy aimed at creating an environment where objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion, where theoretical frameworks are undermined in order to make it impossible for someone to make sense of a certain event, phenomenon, or experience, and where scientific truth is legitimized.. (2021: 350).

At personal level with regard to health matters the poverty of truth has serious implications. The healthcare personnel is most of the time put in a fix while dealing with patients. Most of the time patients would want to know what is wrong with them and their chances of treatment, recovery and or survival. What sustainable truth should the patients be told? Is it truth as correspondence, coherence or the pragmatic truth? If a patient who came for a check-up dies out of the shock of what correspondent truth the doctor told him about his state, what actually killed the patient? On the other hand if the doctor tells a patient that everything is alright (pragmatic truth) and the patient indulges in what the patient should not, who should be blamed for the patient's death?

VII

In concluding this essay, it must be restated that It is the main purpose of this essay to argue that truth is never definable, knowable and certain, which has implications in health matters. In line with the above this essay argued that the poverty of truth (truth as indefinable, unknowable and uncertain) would almost always end in creating issues in health matters. And, it must be noted that "answers to philosophers' questions about the relation between language and the world have traditionally taken a form that we now call theories of truth." (Hornsby, 2001: 675). And, these answers cannot issue in anything certain, definable or knowable – at most they are probable. Hence, we must be mindful of Lynch when he reminds that "these considerations suggest that our semantic or conceptual account of truth must be uniform across context" (2001: 727). Ultimately, i trust that the objectives of this essay were achieved. These objectives are as stated earlier.

VIII

Future research on truth should be geared towards establishing viable conditions for truth because if it is not definable, knowable or certain then other areas of human endeavors stand to have issues. Establishing viable conditions for truth is the kind of response required for infantile quibbling such as "mom – what are you thinking? Surely you know there's no such thing

as truth”, (Feder, 2003). This would in other words mean searching out the foundation of truth and the different ambits of approach which are not the same thing as seeking a definition of truth. More so as “the assimilation of lying to other forms of intentional deception makes sense if one is adopting a utilitarian approach to the issue of truth-telling”, (Jackson, 1991: 5-9). This, if done, would add more to human existence that would be valuable on the long run. It is also believed that going about truth in this recommended way would make philosophy contribute in more practical ways to the solution of myriads of health problems of man. Philosophy as praxis abhors antinomies more so at a time when human life is at crossroads on many frontiers.

REFERENCES & NOTES

- AJA, E. (2016) *Elements of Theory of Knowledge*, Nigeria: Auto-Century Publishers.
- Buffacchi, Vittorio(2021), Truth, Lies and Tweets: A Consensus Theory of Post-Truth.Philosophy and Social Criticism 2021, Vol. 47 (3) 347 – 361
- Brightman, Edgar S. (1925) *Introduction to Philosophy*, New York Henry Holt and Company.
- Blanshard, Brand (2001) “Coherence as the Nature of Truth” in Lynch, Michael P. (edited) (2001) *The Nature of Truth Classic and Contemporary Perspectives A Bradford Book*, Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Press.
- Blanchard, Brand (1941) *The Nature of Thought*. London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd.
- Copi, I.M. and Cohen, Carl (2001), *Introduction to Logic*. New Delhi, India: Prentice-Hall of India Private Limited, 9th edition. Compare: Copi, I.M. (1972), *Introduction to Logic*. London: Collier and Macmillan Limited, 4th edition.
- D’Agostini, Franca (2019) “Misunderstandings About Truth” in *Church, Communication and Culture Vol. 4, 2019 – Issue # Special Issue on Post-Truth* 266-286.
- David, Marian (2001) “Truth as Identity and Truth as Correspondence” in Lynch, Michael P. (edited) (2001) *The Nature of Truth Classic and Contemporary Perspectives A Bradford Book*, Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Press.
- Davidson, Donald (2001) “The Folly of Trying to Define Truth” in Lynch, Michael P. (edited) (2001) *The Nature of Truth Classic and Contemporary Perspectives A Bradford Book*, Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Press.
- Devitt, Michael (2001) “The Metaphysics of Truth” in Lynch, Michael P. (edited) (2001) *The Nature of Truth Classic and Contemporary Perspectives A Bradford Book*, Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Press.
- EBOH, B.O.(2017) *Basic Issues in Theory of Knowledge*,_Nsukka: Fulladu Publishing Company.

- Feder, Judith (2003) “Why Truth Matters: Research Versus Propaganda in the Policy Debate” in *Health Services Research 2003 June 38(3)* 783-787 USA: Chicago, Hospital Research and Education Trust
- HAMLIN, D.W. (1970) *The Theory of Knowledge*, London: The Macmillan Press.
- Hornsby, Jennifer (2001) Truth: “The Identity Theory” in Lynch, Michael P. (edited) (2001) *The Nature of Truth Classic and Contemporary Perspectives A Bradford Book*, Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Press.
- Jackson, Jennifer (1991) “Telling the Truth” in *Journal of Medical Ethics 1991, 17, 5-9 March 1, 1991 10.1136/jme 17.15 (http://jme.bm.com)*
- James, William (1975) “Pragmatism Conception of Truth” in Alburey Castell edited *Essays in Pragmatism*. New York: Hafeur.
- Kant, Immanuel: *Critique of Pure Reason* (A 805-806/B 833-834.).
- Klimck, Markus (2020) “Scientific Truths in Modern Times” in *Colombian Journal of Anesthesiology April-June 2020 Vol 48 Issue 2 Pp.59 60*
- Leith, Sam. 2017. “Nothing Like the Truth.” Times Literary Supplement, August 16, 2017.
- Lynch, Michael P. (edited) (2001) *The Nature of Truth Classic and Contemporary Perspectives A Bradford Book*, Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Press.
- Lynch, Michael P. (2001) *A Functionalist Theory of Truth* Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Press.
- Popkin, Richard H. and Stroll, Avrum (1993) *Philosophy Made Simple, second edition*. New York: Broadway Books.
- Putnam, Hilary (2001) “The Face of Cognition” in Lynch, Michael P. (edited) (2001) *The Nature of Truth Classic and Contemporary Perspectives A Bradford Book*, Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Press.
- Russel, Bethrand (2001) “Truth and Falsehood” in Lynch, Michael P. (edited) (2001) *The Nature of Truth Classic and Contemporary Perspectives A Bradford Book*, Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Press.
- Sahakian, S. Williams and Sahakian, Abel Lewis (1970) *Realms of Philosophy*. Philippines: Schenkman Publishing Company, Incorporated.
- Walker, Ralph C. S.(2001) “The Coherence Theory” in Lynch, Michael P. (edited) (2001) *The Nature of Truth Classic and Contemporary Perspectives A Bradford Book*, Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Press.