

TRUTH

In the universal history of philosophy it is perhaps impossible to find a definition of truth which has not, to some extent, already been formulated by the philosophers of Ancient Greece. Conversely, however, it is also certain that the universal history of philosophy, in essence, simply consists in a permanent force of human thought, directed at certain times and from certain viewpoints at a redefinition of the nature and essence of truth. By virtue of this, we shall address ourselves to this theme; we shall explore four conceptions of truth which appear to us to be representative and the most relevant in the context of an original philosophical culture, such as was the culture of Greece during the classical period. In this cultural context various concepts of truth will evolve; we shall call them *ontological-existential*, *epistemological*, *logical* (with specifications pertinent to this area) and *pragmatic*. At the same time we shall attempt to consider the degree to which each one of these concepts appears in other cultural contexts, with the emphasis and bias which they receive in a specific sense from the sensibility proper to these

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other cultures—Eastern and Western in the various periods—; the object being to indicate the common and distinctive features of their conceptions.

1. In a primary sense, which is the most original and fundamental among the ancient Greek philosophers, truth coincides with “that which is,” with Being; and although truth is represented in thought and expressed in language by means of real (or true) propositions, it is a creation of neither thought nor language. Rather, thought and statements manage to be true *because* Being, which is simply reproduced by thought and language, is no less than truth itself. “You are not white,” says Aristotle, “because we think in a true manner that you are white; rather, because you are white, those who say you are are saying the truth”.¹ If we are after a more precise definition of truth, in the sense in which a perfect identity between being and truth is established, Aristotle again offers us one: “when any thing pertains to being, it equally pertains to truth”.² In this definition Aristotle is simply recognizing the most common conception of truth in the whole pre-Socratic tradition. Truth is the *demonstration* of being itself in its authentic capacity; it is the *a-letheia* or awakening of being, the initiation of being which appears *as such*, that is to say, the identity between *being* which appears and being which *appears*, the identity between being and the appearance of being.

Let us add to this definition of truth an ontological definition of truth “on account of the authenticity” with which being manifests itself and “on account of the identity” of being with its manner of appearance. It is this notion of truth which we find in Parmenides, when, in the context of his fixed conception of the One Being, he says that the path of truth lies in the fact that “being exists, and it is impossible for it not to exist,” and that the path of error lies in the fact that “being does not exist, and it is necessary that it does not exist”.³ This is the same notion of truth that we find in Heraclitus, who, in the context of his dynamic conception of being, supports the

¹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, IX, 10, 1051^b, 7.

² *Op. cit.*, II, 1, 993^b, 31.

³ Diels, 28, B, 2ff.

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idea that to know truth is equivalent to knowing *nature* (or essence) which remains immutable throughout the process of change which all things undergo, for "knowledge consists in saying and practicing truth according to *nature*, by heeding this same nature".⁴ Even if nature is easily concealed, as Heraclitus says in another of his fragments, truth consists in the discovery of nature.

Now, as an authentic demonstration of being and as the identity of being with its state of discovery, truth requires—in the order of its knowledge—a specific attitude on the part of the person to whom it manifests itself; and this attitude must also be an authentic attitude which corresponds to the genuine form of man's being. It is not possible to have access to truth without following a process which is in accordance with reason, intellect and the form which is authentically ours, and dispensing with the testimony of meanings which express a relationship with the body. This is what Parmenides and Heraclitus, the Pythagoreans and Plato, all demand if one is to be able to know and say what is the truth. Is it not this which Plato had in mind when he said "it is not admissible to attain what is pure through what is impure," or else, "as long as we have a body and our soul (or essence) is united with this wicked element, we shall never achieve what we desire, in other words, truth."⁵ In effect, truth as the authenticity of being can only be present in and before an authentic form of existence on the part of the person to whom it displays itself as such. But are these two different things, or do they coincide: *truth* as the authenticity of being, and the *intellectual attitude* as the authentic form of existence of the person to whom truth makes itself evident as such? In one place at least Plato ponders this question: "intelligence ($\nu\omicron\upsilon\delta\epsilon\varsigma$) is either the same as truth or it is the property most similar of all things to truth, and the most true".⁶ Let us now examine how this question presents itself and is resolved in other areas of the culture.

The ontological-existential definition of truth, such as we have presented it in its two aspects, has met with an especial reception and has contained a very particular expression in the philosophical culture of Eastern peoples, above all on account

⁴ Diels, 22, B, 112.

of the impact of the various religions (Mosaic, Mohammedan, Christian and Buddhist) on the thought of Jewish, Arabic, Hindu and Christian philosophers. For these philosophers, just as for the Greek philosophers, truth coincides with being; in addition there is the understanding that things are true by the fact of being what they are and by the degree to which they are what they are. However, since the time of Philo of Alexandria it was understood that Being is One, indeterminate and infinite; that in some manner or other everything that is, is, because it is a manifestation of this indeterminate and infinite One-ness. The result of this, nevertheless, is that for these philosophers we are not able to know truth or being which may be in its own nature (or essence); where being is concerned, we know that *it is not* something determinate, that *it is not* something finite, and where absolute truth (God) is concerned we likewise know that which is not, but we do not know that which is. In this way truth cannot be known except by what it is not, by *via negationis*; but the negative path, far from awakening being and truth, instead stretches a curtain over them. Truth coincides with being, but it does not consist in the *a-letheia* of the Greeks, in being in its state of discovery, but rather in being in its state of concealment. Truth is hidden behind whatever is shown. Principally due to their temperament, Eastern philosophers have shown a tendency towards an ontological-existential conception of truth, but a conception with a negativist and occultist character, towards a "Meomnological" conception of truth. Just as they conceive of being and truth from an infinity-oriented philosophical viewpoint, they also consider that if words define and determine some things as opposed to others, there is no word which nominally serves to express being and truth; they consider that truth is ineffable, that access to truth requires *ekstasis*, a purifying existential attitude which elevates thought above all relationship with "things." This conception of truth is monotonously echoed by Eastern philosophers, from Philo the Jew (and later also Maimonides) and Jamblichus, the Syrian philosopher, to the Arabic philosophers, Al-Kindi, Alfarabi, Avicena and Algazel, who in this area follow the model of neo-Platonic philosophy,

⁵ Plato, *Phaedon*, 67b; 66b.

⁶ Plato, *Philebus*, 65d.

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and the Buddhist philosophers of India and Japan, the Confucianists, Taoists and Buddhists of China, *before* the westernization of these latter countries. Of course, this same concept of truth has had its spokesmen in the West; it has been shared unanimously by philosophers such as Plotinus, the Pseudo Dionysius, Juan Escoto Eriugena, San Buenaventura and, in the initial stages as well as in the height of the Renaissance, Nicolas de Cusa and Giordano Bruno: absolute truth is “incomprehensibly comprehensible.”

One variation of this same concept of truth, but one which is more akin to the ancient formulation of the Greeks, was maintained during the Western scholastic period. For scholars truth is one of the “transcendentals,” meaning by this that *verum* (together with *ens*, *unum*, *bonum*, *res* and *aliquid*) is one of the forms in which being manifests itself. More recently the German philosopher Martin Heidegger turned to this same ancient formulation of the Greeks, but from a more *existential* and less *contemplative* point of view. Heidegger newly defines truth as *a-letheia*, as the state of discovery of being, starting from human existence (“being yonder”). Truth and the state of discovery of being are coincidental, according to Heidegger, with one of the essential forms (the “authentic” form) of being in the human existence: knowing, with its “state of openness,” its initiation of being—on the contrary, the inauthenticity of existence, the *decline and fall* of existence in *its* world, conceals being and truth. “The ‘state of openness’ is an essential form of being, of ‘being yonder.’ *There is only truth up to the point at which and while ‘being yonder’ is.*” “Being—not entity—only exists up to the point at which truth is. And truth only *is* up to the point at which and while ‘being yonder’ is.”⁷ This existential conception of truth is nevertheless founded on the original fact, namely that truth can only be revealed starting from an immediate and everyday contact with our “being in the world,” and in this sense it is distinct from the more contemplative type of existential conception with which we have associated certain philosophers like Parmenides, Heraclitus and Plato in ancient times.

⁷ M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 44, c.

2. Aristotle also formulated a definition of truth which was later called "theory of truth by correspondence," and which we shall at this point simply call "epistemological definition of truth," with the object of leaving open—precisely as an epistemological problem—what is to be or has been understood by the term "correspondence" with regard to this definition, in which the term does not even appear. The Aristotelian definition establishes:

"To say of that which is *that* it is not, or of that which is not *that* it is, is false, whereas to say of that which is *that* it is, or of that which is not *that* it is not, is true."⁸

In this definition Aristotle bases truth on a property of the propositions. What is true is the proposition which *says* of what is *that* it is, or of that which is not *that* it is not. In accordance with this definition, it has traditionally been understood that the truth of a proposition must "correspond" with that which things are or are not in themselves. The way in which this correspondence is produced and understood is another matter. Aristotle rejects the fact that beings which really exist (individuals) exist in the exterior world in the way in which thought conceives of them and expresses them in propositions such as "you are a *rational animal*," "you are *white*," in which universal "forms" are always apparent; but he upholds the idea that universal forms do potentially exist in the individual, and that these forms can be "abstracted" from the individual and represent him or "correspond" with him as regards his generic and specific determinations.

Perhaps the epistemological concept of truth is one of the most common in the West; and it is the concept to which the philosophical calling of Western peoples has been most inclined. Nonetheless, it is as well to indicate certain differences as well within the general concept of truth as we are considering it here, because the term "correspondence"—which is decisive in this respect—has not been understood in the same manner. In reality, Western scholasticism simply followed the Aristotelian definition in this area: epistemological truth is *adaequatio rei et intellectus*. "That which is true, says Saint Thomas, resides in the under-

⁸ *Metaphysics*, IV, 7, 1011b, 27.

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standing as to what extent this fits the known object.”⁹ In as far as this refers to the present definition, this was in general the pattern of knowledge in the ancient and scholastic theory of knowledge. Truth still consists in a *relation* of correspondence, which is purely *external*, of understanding with things, and this only happens to be the inheritance of understanding, as in Aristotle, by way of abstraction.

In modern times, however, from Galileo to Descartes, and from Descartes to Leibniz—in whose countries modern philosophical culture was born and culminated—truth is something more than an external relation of correspondence between thought and things. “Reality” comes to be reduced to “mathematic thought,” in accordance with the new ideal of knowledge ciphered in mathematical science, in *mathesis universalis*. Truth now consists in a relation of *identity* between “thought” and “thing,” or rather, in a “pre-established harmony” between understanding and the object of knowledge. Thus, in spite of the fact that Leibniz makes a distinction between the “truths of reason” and the “truths of fact,” in conclusion he reduces the former to the latter, thereby following the same pan-mathematical ideal of knowledge. In essence, as in any mathematical proposition, *any* proposition is true in as much as it expresses a relation of identity between the subject and predicate of the proposition, in as much as it is a proposition or “identical truth,” and there is no other “exterior” thing, except the *same* thing as is expressed and *projected* in the true proposition. (The signification of the term “correspondence” should be limited to this precise meaning). In this same direction, and with regard to reference to basing the relation of “correspondence” in thought and not in “exterior” things, Kant declares that truth in effect consists in a relation of correspondence between “knowledge” and the “object” thereof; but he specifies that, given the fact that the faculty of knowledge has no immediate relationship with “things in themselves,” the relation of correspondence is only established through the forms or categories of understanding, in such a way that the relation of correspondence between knowledge and the object thereof is, strictly speaking, a relation of correspondence between

⁹ St. Thomas, *S. Theol.*, I, q, XVI, a. 1.

knowledge and the forms of understanding, and it is in this relation that truth consists. That which contradicts the forms of understanding is false. The Aristotelian definition of truth is in this way converted into a "transcendental definition of truth."¹⁰

In contemporary philosophy at least two important definitions of truth have been formulated. In these definitions there is, to a degree, a return to the Aristotelian definition, but, similarly, they differ from it in various areas, particularly in respect of its adherence to a semantic type of planning. One of these is the *phenomenological* definition of truth as expressed by Edmund Husserl. This philosopher has been an influence in the principal centres of culture in Western Europe (and later in Latin America as well) from the turn of the century until just recently. The other is the *semantic* definition of truth as elaborated by Alfred Tarski, who has had a strong repercussion throughout English speaking cultural centres, in England, and in the United States. With regard to Husserl's formulation, truth consists in the *identity* or perfect adequation between the object or objective situation, as is found *mentioned* in the significative purpose of an expression or proposition, and the object or objective situation as is *given* intuitively in acts of sensitive perception. An expression or a proposition is true when the object mentioned by it—an object which is constituted by a series of identifying acts which give a meaning, or mention—coincides with the object given directly in acts of perception which *fulfil* what is mentioned. When a proposition is true in this sense, the proposition fulfils a "cognitive function."¹¹ The semantic definition of truth which Tarski set forth, notwithstanding the fact that its purpose was to "do justice to the intuitions adherent to the classical Aristotelian conception of truth"—in the words of the author—does not in fact follow this conception to the letter. If the Aristotelian definition of truth can be translated into formulae such as "the truth of a sentence consists in its accordance (or correspondence) with reality," or, "a sentence is true if it designates an existing state of things," these formulae do not define truth by reference to the sentences themselves, which

¹⁰ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B, 84.

¹¹ Cf. E. Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, Sixth Investigation.

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are, in short, the only ones we can qualify as true—and which, in Tarski's view, can only belong to a specific formalized language—but which define it by reference to *objects* or states of things which these sentences describe or about which they speak. Thus the predicate "is true" (or "is false"), is defined *within* the unique level of a language-object, within a "natural" language, in which there is no room to distinguish expressions on *metalinguistic* levels (Tarski calls it "semantically obscure" language). But within a natural language, which is semantically obscure, it is not possible, without contradictions, to define the terms "true" and "false" (consider, for example, the sentence "this proposition is not true"; the predicates "is true" or "is false.") According to Tarski, the only way to define "is true" without incurring contradictions or antinomies, would be to first *mention* (in *suppositio materialis*, to use the mediaeval terminology) the sentence to which the predicate "is true" applies, and then take this predicate as a metalinguistic expression, and finally declare that the necessary and sufficient condition of the truth of this sentence is in the *use* which we make of it; that is, in the fact that what it affirms (the sentence in *suppositio formalis*) occurs. For example:

The sentence: "The snow is white" is true if, and only if, the snow is white.¹²

This theory of truth has been criticised on the basis of the fact that the predicate "is true" cannot be attributed to sentences in general, but only to concrete "propositions." The objection has been made that a similar sentence such as "the snow is white" can express different propositions in accordance with the different circumstances and persons who express it, in such a way that it is not possible to establish a perfect equivalence (if, and only if) between the truth of "the white snow" and the snow is white. Those who defend this theory uphold that the semantic definition of truth only provides an analysis of what it means to say, in general, that a sentence is true, and that the problem of deciding whether a sentence is in fact true or false is not a matter of semantics, but of special sciences.

¹² A. Tarski, "The Semantic Conception of Truth and the Foundations of Semantics," *Reading in Philosophical Analysis*, Appleton, N.Y., 1949, pp. 52ff.

3. Within what we have been calling the Greek culture of the classical period, there was likewise the formulation of a definition of truth, also referring to propositions, in which it was established and understood that a proposition is true when it is *coherent*, consistent or compatible, with another or other propositions previously declared to be true. This is the notion of truth which is present throughout the syllogistic theory of Aristotle:

All mammals have lungs	All As are Bs
All bats are mammals	All Cs are As
Therefore: All bats have lungs	All Cs are Bs

Following this definition of truth, which we shall call the *logical* definition of truth “by the coherence, consistency or compatibility of one proposition with another (or others),” a proposition is true in as much as it coherent with and deducible from the propositions which demonstrate it, or, similarly, in as much as it impossible that it and its contradictory proposition are derived or simultaneously demonstrable from the same pre-mises. In formal deductive systems, it is the custom to say that a sentence is true (or valid), in this sense, when it is impossible that it and its contradictory sentence are theorems demonstrable at the same time from the same original sentences. Of course, from the times of Aristotle it has frequently been thought that this logical definition of truth protects a close relationship with epistemological truth, that there is a “correspondence” between the logical-deductive structure of propositions and the structure of reality, but in a strict sense the emphasis should be placed on the *logical* coherence of one proposition with others. Therefore, here too, it will be as well to await the changes of meaning in the term “coherence.”

When, in the 11th century, Saint Anselm proves, by means of geometry, that the proposition “God exists in the mind and in reality” is true because it follows logically (as from an axiom) from the proposition “God is so great that one cannot think of anything greater” and from the proposition “to exist in the mind and in reality is more than to exist simply in the mind,” this logical concept of truth appears for the first time with considerable impact in Western scholasticism. Once again, the vocation of

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Western culture to this conception of truth would remain demonstrated not only by the fact that philosophers such as San Buenaventura, J. Duns Scotus, Descartes, Leibniz and Hegel defended Saint Anselm's proof of the truth of this proposition, but also by the fact of philosophical discussions which, even in our time, continue to arouse its formulation.¹³ But more particularly, Hegel maintained that even if truth can be defined as the logical coherence of one proposition with others, it can only be concluded from this that there are true propositions which are isolated by their coherence with other isolated propositions, or "independent," however original they may be (as occurs in mathematics), because there are no "atomic" truths or facts. Truth is absolute; that which is true is the whole system of the propositions of philosophy, and the truth of a proposition coincides with its coherence and unity with the whole system of philosophy.¹⁴ This means, as was maintained by the neo-Hegelian Harold Henry Joachim, that any true proposition extracts its meaning of true from the entire system of the propositions of philosophy. It is quite clear, as Bertrand Russell pointed out later, "that in as much as one accepts this theory, no thinking is erroneous; as soon as one rejects it, all thinking is an error."¹⁵

The Hegelian conception of truth by coherence is a metaphysical, monistic and absolutist conception. Running counter to this conception, various and important contemporary philosophers, some of whom belonged to the so-called "Club of Vienna"—such as Rudolf Carnap and Otto Neurath—and others to the "School of Berlin"—such as Carl Hempel—have elaborated a theory of truth by coherence which is more akin to the style of investigation and scientific thought. This theory has been widely diffused and criticised in England and the United States. In this theory it is upheld that a proposition is true when it is coherent with the system of propositions adopted as true by the authorized scientists

¹³ Cf. *Philosophical Review*, Vol. LXIX (1960) and Vol. LXX (1961). One of the questions discussed here is whether the proof of Saint Anselm is an ontological proof, as it has been qualified since Kant, which tries to demonstrate that God exists, or whether it is an exclusively logical-axiomatic proof, in which the argument is misply to demonstrate that a *propositio* about the existence of God is logically deducible from an original proposition.

¹⁴ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, I, 1.

¹⁵ B. Russell, *Philosophical Essays*, 1910, p. 155.

and scholars of our time. In order for a proposition to be true it must not only be coherent with the principles of logic, and well formulated in a logical sense, but it must be equally coherent—with regard to its “descriptive” content—with the system of propositions which is accepted by contemporary science. What is this system of propositions which decides the truth of other propositions? It is fundamentally the system of propositions which are expressed in the space-time language of physics—in “physicalistic” language. In the last instance, the system of basic propositions for deciding the truth of some other proposition is made up of observational propositions which refer to what is seen, heard or touched, immediately, such as “here is a blue cube” or “now I can see a blue cube here,” but translated into physicalistic formulae, in which registration is made only of positions and movements mentioned by means of spatial-temporal coordinates, such as would be expressed in a purely “behaviouristic” language. If all other propositions are true by their coherence with these latter observational propositions, and by comparison with “exterior” things, either these latter propositions are true by comparison with things or with an exterior world, given that these latter propositions are declared true by virtue of the fact that they are *accepted* by the scientists of the time. The truth of a proposition results from its coherence with other basic propositions, and the truth of these latter propositions is, in the last analysis, *conventional*, and depend on the fact that they are accepted by the scientists of each epoch.¹⁶ The problem entailed by this theory of truth by coherence consists in clarifying whether the basic or observational propositions have a “phenomenal” meaning; in which case they denote “things;” or whether their meaning is purely “conventional,” in which case the theory of truth in which they are grounded must confront all the problems to which the relativism of its formulation in turn gives rise.

Closely related to the previous theory of truth we find the theory which is upheld by certain contemporary French philosophers, who represent the “structuralist” philosophy. To quote

¹⁶ Otto Neurath, “Sociology and physicalism,” *Logical Positivism*, ed. A. J. Ayer, The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1959, pp. 282-317. Carl Hempel, “On the logical positivist’s theory of truth,” *Analysis*, Vol. II, 1934-5.

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just an antecedent, Maurice Merleau-Ponty formulated this structuralist conception of truth by saying that, in physical science, "that which is verified, speaking with propriety, is never a law, but a system of complementary laws... the truth of physics is not to be found in laws considered one by one, but in the combination of laws."¹⁷ Naturally, in the structuralist conception of truth, it is necessary to lay aside the conventionalistic element which adheres to the previous doctrine of truth. But the concept of truth which we have developed in the present section with the various allusions has certainly not been an expression exclusive to the philosophical thought of Western countries. Although with less frequency in the culture of Eastern countries, philosophical systems have been elaborated there in which the truth of a proposition is understood as its inclusion in a deductive and propositional system, or in a higher unity of thought. It will suffice to record the logical-deductive Nyaya system and the Vaishesika system in the philosophy of India.

4. In a fourth sense, and from the time of the ancient Greek philosophers, truth has also been defined as a *social function*, as an instrument to satisfy certain practical necessities, as a practical utility. In its origins, this concept of truth is associated with the eristic art practised by the Greek sophists,¹⁸ and evolves into a series of contradictions. In effect, in the "atomistic" conception of society held by the sophists, truth on the one hand fulfils and consists in a "social" function to the extent to which, on the other hand, it satisfies an "individual" interest; furthermore, the personal interest which it is meant to satisfy is directed at singling out—by the manner of refuting those who hold the belief that truth is objective and in the manner of demonstrating that truth consists in that which appears true to each individual—the fact that truth is subjective. But "subjective truth" is another contradiction which destroys the very concept of truth. Nevertheless the important factor lies in the fact that, even when this subjectivistic and contradictory concept of truth was later overtaken by the attack represented by the Socratic conception of science, the practical and utilitarian meaning of truth proceeded

¹⁷ M. Merleau-Ponty, *La Structure du Comportement*, Librairie Hachette, 1957, chap. III, p. 198.

by preserving that area in which Socrates identifies virtue with science and declares that virtue consists in knowing that which is useful and that which is prejudicial, in order to be able to act.¹⁹ This would be the antecedent among the ancient Greeks of what we should prefer to call the *pragmatic* conception of truth to underline its practical and activist meaning.

It is nonetheless necessary to point out that the activist concept of truth has developed in two fundamental directions in accordance with the interpretation which is given to the expression "practical truth." In one of these directions the practical meaning of truth tends to be interpreted as practical utility or satisfactory practice with respect to the needs and interests of the individual; in this sense the pragmatic concept of truth is inclined to be more individualistic, at times skeptic, as can be seen from certain philosophers during the Renaissance, coinciding with the dominant individualism of the time, in Michel de Montaigne and Pierre Charron in France, who transform the theoretical concept of truth into a practical ideal of the knowledge of life, by renewing the ancient Epicurean concept of truth; and as can be seen later on in the case of F. Nietzsche, who constantly upholds a pragmatic notion of truth in this sense. William James, on the classical representatives of contemporary pragmatism, maintains that the truth of an idea or of a proposition consists solely in its *verification*, and that by verification one should simply understand "practical determined consequences of the idea verified." "Truth," says James, "far from being an end in itself here, is solely a preliminary means towards other vital satisfactions;" in such a way that this is the same as saying that "it is true because it is useful."²⁰ But in conclusion, James adds, truth in any given moment is "truth *for each individual*," truth is what such and such a man thinks at such and such a moment with the greatest amount of satisfaction *for himself*."²¹ This has not yet become that existential notion of truth which is so frequent in Eastern cultures where the philosopher aspires to the *ekstasis* in order to lose his individuality in absolute truth. We are dealing now with a notion of truth in which the philosopher claims to achieve

¹⁹ Plato, *Menon*, 89a.

¹⁹ Plato, *Menon*, 89a.

²⁰ W. James, *Pragmatism*.

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and affirm—by his actions—his individuality. This theory of truth has also been one of the conspicuous expressions of Western philosophical thought; in the United States, in the first place, whose principal representatives are the philosophers Charles Sanders Peirce, William James and John Dewey; in England, where the philosopher F. C. S. Schiller has defended this theory. Giovanni Papini in Italy and W. Jerusalem in Germany have also upheld a pragmatic conception of truth.

The other direction in which the activist conception of truth has developed must recognize the Marxist theory of truth. For Marx and the Marxist philosophers, truth consists not only in a practical activity, but also, and primordially, in a *social and transformatory* practical activity. In the activist definition of truth upheld by Marxism, essential elements which arise are the notion of the human individual as an individual conditioned and constituted "by the aggregate of social relations," and the notion of knowledge as a practical, transformatory and revolutionary activity.²¹ The fact, then, as to whether a thought is true is based on whether this thought "reflects" a reality, a social reality, because, in effect, whoever formulates it reflects in it his own social condition, his class situation and his group interests, the social *status* of the historical period in which he is inscribed; it relies, moreover, on its practical-transformatory character, for true thought alone can reflect a social reality, in as far as it is also a *product* of the revolutionary *praxis*. Truth always reflects a social situation, but not passively; to do this it must be a reflection which in turn actively transforms the social reality which it makes manifest. The Aristotelian definition of truth is transformed, in the activist definition of truth, into two *parallel* meanings which only have in common their opposition to a contemplative interpretation of that definition. For pragmatism it follows that truth consists in an accord between thought and reality, but only if by "accord" one understands that thought *leads* to what is *worthwhile*, to what, in any event, is better than if we were in disagreement with that reality. For Marxism the Aristotelian definition is equally as valid, on the condition that by "accord" one understands that thought actively reflects, (that

²¹ *Op. cit.*

²² Cf. K. Marx, *These über Feuerbach*, Thesis II, VI and XI.

is, by transforming it,) a determined social reality. "The question of knowing whether an objective truth corresponds to human thought is not a theoretical question, but a practical one. Man must, in practice, demonstrate truth, that is, the reality and the power and the objectivity of his thought. The discussion about the reality or non-reality of a thought which is isolated from praxis is a purely scholastic question."²³ This last version of the activist conception of truth constitutes, *mutatis mutandis*, the guideline which orientates theoretical-practical philosophical thought in all those countries in which the philosophy of the *praxis* of Marx has been adopted as the root and inspiration of all their cultural manifestations. In countries of Eastern Europe, such as Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Rumania, Yugoslavia; in the Soviet Union; in mainland China; in South-East Asia, North Vietnam; in the Far East, North Korea; in the Caribbean, Cuba; to mention just the most salient geographical and cultural contexts.

²³ K. Marx, *op. cit.*, Thesis II.