

Truth and the Quest for Definition

Patrick O. Aleke

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6949-1854>

Department of Philosophy

St Joseph's Theological Institute, South Africa

patpoma@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract

The controversies in contemporary truth discourses can be traced directly or indirectly to the Fregean choice of “thought” as the truth bearer, Ramsey’s redundancy thesis, Tarskian semantic conception, and Davidson’s defence of the indefinability of truth. The common feature of these four positions is an inadequate treatment of the “what is” question. Because of the neglect of this kind of question, the consequence is that truth has been reduced to a thin concept (that is a reduction of truth to logical, semantic or linguistic analysis of the truth predicate, or analysis of intentional signs at the expense of intentional acts) and subsequent quest for the deflation of truth. I argue that such an approach to the philosophical investigation of truth is at best inadequate and at worst bound to fail. Hence, I propose that an adequate exploration of truth must first address the “what is” question, rather than just assuming it. Further, I argue that to realise this, it is vital to take into consideration the wider context in which the truth question arises, that is, the human quest for knowledge and self-transcendence; and it is the conception of truth as critical correspondence that is capable of sufficiently answering the question.

Keywords: truth; correspondence; intentional subject; critical realism; cognitional analysis

Introduction

The question “what is truth?” hardly features in contemporary philosophical investigations of truth. There seems to be some conspiracy against it. Some philosophers, for instance Lawrence Johnson (1992) and Paul Horwich (1998), claim that raising the question about the nature or definition of truth has no philosophical import because it is a trivial question. Put differently, their view is that with regard to



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truth, the “what is” question or the quest for definition is philosophically irrelevant. This contemporary situation is contrary to the ancient and mediaeval approaches in which the “what is” question is explicitly addressed, as is the case with Aristotle in the *Metaphysics* (IV.7, VI. 4), and *De Anima* (III. 8) and Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa Theologiae* (Question 16) (1920) and *Questiones Disputate de Veritate* (Question 1) (1952). The difference in the attitude of the ancient and medieval philosophers, and that of contemporary philosophers towards exposition of the concept of truth, challenges one to ask why the “what question” is considered trivial at present? Is it that truth is so self-evident that raising the question “what is truth?” becomes superfluous? It could hardly be the case that truth is self-evident, considering the ceaseless controversies among truth theorists.

In this paper, I argue that it is neglect of the “what is” question about truth that lies at the heart of contemporary truth controversies. Any philosophical investigation that truncates the “what is” question is bound to fail to adequately account for truth; since reduction of the truth discourse to an analysis of the logical, semantic and linguistic uses of the truth predicate presupposes the question: What is truth? This is because the “what is” question is the primary question for intelligence and without addressing it, the “why” and “how” questions are at best incomplete or vague. Further, I will argue that it is the conception of truth as correspondence that is capable of attending to the “what is” question without presupposing truth. This is because of its relation with realism. Nonetheless, it is not any version of the correspondence theory that is capable of exhaustively and sufficiently attending to the question: What is truth? For instance, any version of the correspondence theory that is founded on naïve realism and its spectator theory of knowing, does not fully articulate the conception of truth as correspondence.

The Neglect of what Truth is in Contemporary Philosophical Investigations

As already indicated in the introduction, the quest for a definition or the nature of truth was vital for the philosophical investigation of ancient and mediaeval philosophers. Aristotle, for instance says: “to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true” (*Metaphysics* 1011^a 26), while Thomas Aquinas defined truth thus: “*Veritas est adequatio rei et intellectus*” (“Truth is the correspondence of thing and intellect”). If the quest for a definition or description of truth was not trivial in the ancient and mediaeval times, where does the contemporary neglect of the quest for a definition owe its origin?

The neglect of the quest for a definition of truth or the consideration of its nature in contemporary philosophical investigations—especially in the analytical tradition—could be traced to Frege, who in his *The Thought: A Logical Inquiry* opined that “it is probable that the content of the word ‘true’ is unique and indefinable” (Frege 1956, 291). Frege’s consideration is a consequence of his rejection of the correspondence theory of truth and his quest for logical primacy, so as to defend his version of objectivity that is in clear contrast with subjectivity. Hence, Frege concluded that truth

value can only be attributed to thought which is on the third realm, that is, the realm of sense; as opposed to the realm of the subjective (that is “the inner world of ideas”) or the realm of objects (that is, “the outer world of material, perceptible things”) (Frege 1956, 308). According to Frege (1956, 302), “thoughts are neither things of the outer world nor ideas.”

Frege’s choice of thought as the sole legitimate truth bearer is guided by his rejection of psychologism and his quest for the defence of his notion of objectivity, since the realm of thought is timeless and changeless, and so the truth of thought is eternal and invariant. Psychologism is the position that philosophical accounts of truth can draw from the psychology of those who make truth claims.¹ Frege rejected psychologism because if truth is dependent on the psychology of those who make truth claims, then it would be subjective and not objective. It is precisely because of this that Frege argues that truth-values are attributable only to thoughts but not the subjective realm (Frege 1956, 308). In as much as Fregean rejection of psychologism is vital “for the articulation of his objective of pointing out that thoughts rather than ideas are truth-bearers, the exclusion of the centrality of the intentional subject and his acts in order to defend the objectivity of truth is mistaken” (Aleke 2018, 5). In fact, as Michael McCarthy argues, the central issue in Frege’s rejection of psychologism is the restoration of the autonomy of logic “to its proper autonomy as the a priori science of pure thought” (McCarthy 1990, 49). Psychologism is primarily concerned with the subject matter of logic (McCarthy 1990, 47) and should not necessarily lead to the elimination of the role of the human subject in the philosophical investigation of truth.

Contrary to Frege, acknowledging of the centrality of the role of the conscious intentional subject in the quest for truth does not render truth subjective. In fact, the question of truth would not arise in the first place if there are no intentional subjects who raise the question. Besides, issues concerning logical laws of truth would not arise if there are no intentional subjects who make truth claims. Granted that the truth value of the proposition <Nigeria is a West African Country> is not relative to the person who makes the assertion and the place and time it is made; it takes a knowing subject to know the truth value of the proposition. Hence, without subjects, the question of the truth and its objectivity would not arise.

In consigning thought as the truth bearer to the realm of sense, Frege (1956) seems to presume that there is eternal thought without a thinker and his act of thinking. In other words, for Frege to defend his conception of the objectivity of thought and truth, he consciously or unconsciously truncated the knowing and thinking subject. Consequently, he emphasised the intentional sign (thought) at the expense of intentional acts (cognitional acts of the subject) (cf. McCarthy 1990). Nonetheless, his efforts, in neglecting the question concerning the nature of truth, did not succeed in relegating such question to oblivion. His approach to the philosophical investigation of truth gave rise

1 I am grateful to the second reviewer for recommending this point.

to other controversial issues, of which the more prominent concern the ontological status of thought (proposition) and fact and of the relationship that exists between the two. Taking lead from Frege's defence of the realm of sense, Julian Dodd (2005; 2008) argued that Fregean thoughts (or propositions) and facts belong to the realm of sense and that there is no difference between them since they are identical. The meaning of proposition that is assumed in this article is its standard meaning as the content of a declarative sentence. This is the conception of proposition that is common among truth theorists (cf. Alston 1996; David 1994; Horwich 1998; Lonergan 1992[2013]; Rasmussen 2014; Vision 2004). It is not within the scope of this article to explore the nature of proposition, but suffice to say that as used in contemporary analytic philosophy, proposition is not an ambiguous term. Its usage here should not be confused with the art of proposing and the proposal that is made.²

Put differently, Frege's conception of thought and truth gave rise to identity theory of truth and its challenges, as exemplified by versions of the identity theory defended by Jennifer Hornsby (1997 [2001]) and Julian Dodd (2005; 2008). In his version of the identity theory of truth, Dodd equates true thoughts with facts (Dodd 2008). Thus in his objection against the correspondence theory, Dodd (2005) contends that the correspondence theorist seeks correspondence where there is only coincidence, since according to him thoughts and facts belong to the Fregean realm of sense. The major problem with Dodd's paradigm is that saying that true thoughts (or true propositions) are facts, does not address the fundamental question "what is truth?" since it presupposes an understanding of truth. He does not seem to acknowledge that if true thoughts are identical with facts, there is a need to ask "what makes a thought true in the first place?" Therefore, to say that some thoughts are true entails that some thought are false. The situation of Hornsby's contention that "true thinkables [propositions] are the same as facts" (Hornsby 2001, 664) is similar to that of Dodd because there is a presupposition of truth if it is true thinkables that are identical with facts. One could easily ask "with what are false thinkables identical or are there no false thinkables (propositions)?" Since an exploration of the challenges of the identity theory of truth is beyond the scope of this paper, I will not dwell further on it. Hornsby (1997[2001]) and Dodd's (2005; 2008) defence of the identity theory is alluded to here to illustrate that Frege's (1956) neglect of the question concerning the definition or nature of truth is a contributing factor to contemporary truth controversies.

Another philosopher who considers the quest for the definition of truth a futile project is Donald Davidson. According to him, it is pointless to try to define truth in terms of correspondence, coherence or warranted assertibility. He articulates his claim thus:

All attempts to characterize truth that go beyond giving empirical content to a structure of the sort Tarski taught us how to describe are empty, false, or confused. We should

2 I have made this clarification about proposition in response to the second reviewer, who pointed out that the use of proposition is ambiguous.

not say that truth is correspondence, coherence, warranted assertibility, ideally justified assertibility, what is accepted in the conversation of the right people, what science will end up maintaining, what explains the success of science or of our ordinary beliefs. (Davidson 2001, 190)

In Davidson's view, any attempt at defining truth is not only wasted labour but also folly. The basis of his contention is that truth, like other concepts that are of importance to philosophers, cannot be reduced to more basic concepts since they are primitive concepts. He writes:

For most part, the concepts philosophers single out for attention, truth, knowledge, belief, action, cause, the good and the right, are the most elementary concepts we have, concepts without which (I am inclined to say) we would not have concepts at all. Why then should we expect to be able to reduce these concepts definitionally to other concepts which are simpler, clearer, and more basic? We should accept the fact that what makes these concepts so important must also foreclose on the possibility of finding a foundation for them which reaches deeper into bedrock. (Davidson 1996, 264)

Davidson's indefinability thesis is to be understood within the context of his philosophical conversion since, in his earlier writings, he defended the correspondence theory of truth (Davidson 1984), then debunked it and defended the coherence theory (Davidson 2001) but also rejected it in defence of his indefinability thesis. While I will not treat the details of the Davidsonian turn, it is worthwhile to examine whether the quest for a definition of truth is a folly project, as Davidson argues.

The attempt to define truth would have been folly if Davidson's conception of definition is the classical Aristotelian understanding in which the definition of a thing is attained by identifying its proximate genus and specific difference. If this is the only conception of definition, then one would say that truth has no proximate genus and specific difference. In fact, it is because of this that mediaeval philosophers, like Thomas Aquinas and Francisco Suarez, referred to truth as one of the transcendental properties of being since it is trans-categorical. Nonetheless, since what Davidson means by "definition" is not Aristotelian, it cannot be assumed *prima facie* that it is folly to seek the definition of truth.

What then does Davidson's indefinability thesis about truth really rest on? Since he argues that truth cannot be defined because it is a primitive concept, that is, it is irreducible to a more basic concept, it seems that his contention rests on his understanding of philosophy. He takes philosophy to be conceptual analysis or a sort of conceptual engineering. This is a philosophical perspective that some philosophers of the analytic tradition hold in esteem. According to this perspective, to do philosophy can be summarised as conceptual or linguistic analysis. Therefore, any concept that cannot be analysed to a more basic concept is primitive and indefinable. Two problems that come with the reduction of philosophy to conceptual or linguistic analysis are that: 1) adequate attention is not paid to divergence of methods in the various philosophical

sub-disciplines; 2) it is forgotten that the primary locus of truth is the human quest for knowledge and self-transcendence. To address these two problems, there is a need to go beyond conceptual or linguistic analysis to cognitional analysis (and even analysis of intentionality).

Moreover, it would not be folly to seek to define truth if it is taken for granted that there are different kinds of definition. Definition, so understood, is the delimitation of a concept in order to have a common theoretical framework. In this light, Bernard Lonergan (1992[2013]) classifies definition into two kinds, namely nominal and explanatory definitions.³ Nominal definition contents itself with the correctness of the usage names and terms, while explanatory definition goes further than a mere analysis of the correct use of language to give “insight into the objects to which language refers” (Lonergan 1992[2013], 36). Radical indefinability is thus not defensible because any philosophical endeavour entails raising the “what is” question, whether explicitly or implicitly. And so, it is not different when truth is the issue in question, since any philosophical investigation requires that one should at least understand the subject matter to be considered. Put differently, it is not the quest for the definition of truth that amounts to folly. It would rather be folly to raise the question of truth without raising the fundamental question for intelligence regarding it, that is, what is truth? The easiest way to any “what is” question is to seek at least an implicit definition.

In fact, Davidson seems to be aware that the defence of radical indefinability of truth is not a viable option. He opines: “Even if we are persuaded that the concept of truth cannot be defined, the intuition or hope remains that we can characterize truth with some fairly simple formula. What distinguishes much of the contemporary philosophical discussion of truth is that though there are many such formulas on the market, none of them seems to keep clear of fairly obvious counterexamples” (Davidson 1996, 265).

Regardless of Davidson’s philosophical conversion, implicit definition of truth is assumed in his philosophical enterprise. That is why he consistently defended the relationship between truth, meaning and radical interpretation in his truth conditional semantics.

Nevertheless, the ignoring of an explicit definition of truth by Frege and Davidson, has a huge consequence for the philosophical investigation of truth. The consequence is the explosion of minimalist and deflationary theories of truth. This explosion is heralded by Ramsey’s (2001) redundancy theory and Tarski’s (1944) semantic theory, since the deflationary theories explicitly or implicitly accept the sufficiency of the equivalence schema (it is true that p if and only if p) or Tarskian Convention T (x is true if, and only if, p is true). Consequently, they contend that truth has no nature and is no property. Even Horwich, who acknowledges that truth is a property, argues that it is not a genuine

3 Irving M. Copi, Carl Cohen and Kenneth McMahon identify five types of definition. They are stipulative, lexical, precisising, theoretical and persuasive (2016, 79–93).

property. His acknowledgement, therefore, is a sort of backhanded compliment. Furthermore, a closer look at the equivalence schema and the Tarskian Convention T shows that minimum correspondence is at least assumed. For instance, to say that “it is true that grass is green, if and only if, grass is green” implies that the truth of the proposition is ascertained if it is confirmed that what is said corresponds with what is actually the case.

The dominance of the deflationary theories—Quine’s (1960; 1990) disquotationalism, Dorothy Grover’s prosententialism and Paul Horwich’s minimalism (Horwich 1998, 2001)—results in the rejection of truth as a human value since truth is reduced to logical, semantic, linguistic and anaphoric functions of the truth predicate in propositions and sentences. Although the deflationists and minimalists intended to bring to an end the truth controversies caused by the substantive theories, the consequence of their attempt to dethrone truth is a drastic one. This is exemplified by Rorty’s quest for the elimination of truth because of its lack of social or practical relevance (Rorty 1991; Rorty and Engel 2007) or his restriction of truth to mere cautionary use and Kevin Scharp’s call for replacement of truth (Scharp 2007; 2013). Due to space and the limited scope of this paper I am not going into the details of the problems and difficulties with the deflationary and minimalist theories. Nonetheless, it is worth pointing out that the irony of the contemporary truth controversies is that deflationists and minimalists assume more than their theories permit. In all their defences they assume that their positions should be accepted. In other words, they assume that their various philosophical positions regarding the truth predicate are true. In that case, there is more to truth than logical, semantic, linguistic and anaphoric uses of the truth predicate. This implies that the quest for the definition of truth is inevitable.

The Necessity of the “What is” Question in Truth Investigation

In this section I will draw from the philosophical position of Bernard Lonergan (1904–1984). Lonergan was a Canadian Jesuit philosopher-theologian whose philosophical position in general and whose conception of truth in particular are inspired by the works of St Thomas Aquinas. He calls his philosophical approach generalised empirical method. This is because his cognitional theory is tripartite: experiencing (empirical consciousness), understanding (intelligent consciousness) and judging (rational consciousness) (Lonergan 1967; 1992[2013]). According to Lonergan, the three-levelled consciousness is necessary for the attainment of knowledge (and truth). However, none of the levels, independent of the others, leads to knowing. In other words, experiencing, understanding and judging by themselves independently do not result in knowing (and consequently to truth). In his philosophical approach, an explicit analysis of one’s cognitional theory is essential for an adequate account of truth since the quest for truth arises within the wider context of human knowledge. Such exhaustive cognitional analysis is vital in order to account for the relationship between knowing, being, truth and objectivity. Hence, Lonergan recommends that one should be attentive to the activities one is performing when one is involved in the process of knowing

because being attentive, intelligent and reasonable is necessary for the attainment of knowledge and truth. This is why Lonergan argues that the aim of *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* “is not to set forth a list of the abstract properties of human knowledge but to assist the reader in effecting a personal appropriation of the concrete dynamic structure immanent and recurrently operative in his own cognitional activities” (Lonergan 1992[2013], 11). This suffices as a brief introduction to Lonergan’s philosophical approach, since it is not within the scope of this article to exhaustively explore Lonergan’s cognitional theory.

Considering the controversies that rock the contemporary philosophical investigation of truth, it is prudent to say that neglect of the question concerning the nature of truth, or an attempt at defining truth, contributes immensely to the controversies since there is some presumption that the meaning of truth is simple and obvious. This presumption is a popular fallacy (Lonergan 1992[2013], 581). To avoid such a fallacy, it is necessary to consider what the nature of truth consists of. Without denying the semantic, logical, linguistic and anaphoric functions of the truth predicate, which the deflationary and minimalist theories emphasise, it would not be out of place to ask: “What makes it possible for the truth predicate to aptly perform those functions?” To answer that question, one needs to go beyond the analysis of the uses of the truth predicate. An explanatory definition is required.

The theory of truth that can give such definition is the conception of truth as correspondence. However, it is not all versions of the correspondence theory. Without giving a detailed defence, I opine that the versions of the correspondence theory in the analytic tradition cannot provide an adequate definition. Here I mean the understanding of truth as the relation of correspondence between propositions (or whatever the truth bearer might be) and fact (Vision 2004), or as Hilary Putnam’s formulation states: “Truth involves some sort of correspondence relation between words or thought-signs and external things and sets of things” (Putnam 1981, 49). The basic problem with different versions of the correspondence theory of truth in the analytic tradition is that they are based on common sense or naïve realism and its distorted cognitional theory, and consequently the spectator theory of knowing, in which knowing is reduced to just taking a look, that is, the reduction of knowing to immediate intuition or merely experiencing. Attentiveness to data or experience, no matter how intense it might be, cannot be equated with knowing. It is just a component of the human cognitional structure and process. Therefore, any definition of truth that is based on it will be defective.

I consider as an adequate paradigmatic definition of truth that which is proposed by Bernard Lonergan. That is, the “relation of knowing to being.” Being, so understood, is “the objective of the pure desire to know” (Lonergan 1992[2013], 373). Being, therefore, is anything that can be known, whether empirical (material) or immaterial. In other words, being is that which is real. Hence, the notion of being is not restricted to empirical or physical realities. The major point is that the question of truth arises if and

only if there are beings, and if there are beings that are capable of knowing (that is, beings capable of attentive experiencing, intelligent understanding and reasonable reflection and judging). Put differently, truth is an issue because there are intentional subjects. The question of truth is adequately raised within the context of human knowing. Hence, “knowing is true by its relation to being, and truth is a relation of knowing to being” (Lonergan 1992[2013], 575). Two important points to note here are: 1) that a philosophical investigation of truth must not only assume the role of the conscious intentional subject or (knowing) subject but must explicitly be taken into consideration, since the context in which the question “what is truth?” arises, is that of the quest for knowledge and self-transcendence; 2) a philosopher’s conception of truth is influenced by the cognitional theory he/she subscribes to, his/her understanding of being, his/her notion of objectivity, and his/her vision of the world.

Concerning the centrality of the knowing subject and the need for an explicit elaboration of his activities, it should be noted that the question of truth arises because human beings are capable of various conscious acts like experiential, intelligent, rational and deliberating acts. In the absence of the knowing subjects the question of truth will not arise. That is why Heidegger contends: “*There is truth only in so far as Dasein is and so long as Dasein is*” (Heidegger 1953[2008], 269). Hence it is a limitation that in the investigation of truth within the analytic framework, the subject is truncated while emphasis is placed on intentional signs, like propositions, thoughts, beliefs and statement at the expense of the intentional acts of the subject, in the name of the preservation of objectivity. The desire to truncate the subject and its conscious intentional operations so as to elevate intentional signs arises because of the tendency to think that truth is “a ‘system’ joined together from propositions, to which one could appeal” (Heidegger 1989[1999], 242). The elevation of the intentional signs or contents, whether they are psychological (Cartesian ideas), logical (Fregean thoughts) or linguistic (Wittgenstein), to the detriment of intentional operations or activities results in the distortion of the notion of truth and objectivity (McCarthy 1990, 323).

Regarding the second point, there is a direct link between a philosopher’s cognitional theory and the adequacy or inadequacy of his elaboration of the concept of truth. It is because of this that neither naïve realism nor idealism is capable of articulating a sufficient nature of truth. This is because they reduce the complex human cognitional structure to just an aspect of it. While the spectator theory of knowing that characterises naïve realism reduces knowing to empirical consciousness (or perceiving/experiencing), idealism reduces knowing to intelligent consciousness. Both are defective because human knowing is characterised by cumulative and cyclic acts of experiencing, understanding and judging, that is, empirical, intelligent and rational consciousness (Lonergan 1992[2013], 399). Without a comprehensive examination of human cognitional process, a philosopher’s theory of truth will be inadequate. A comprehensive exploration must acknowledge that human knowing is composed of attentive experiencing, intelligent grasping and reasonable act of judgment. So, just as in knowledge, truth does not arise without a conscious act of judgment after

experiencing, sufficient understanding, marshalling and weighing of evidences. Truth, therefore, “is a property immanent within rationally conscious acts of judgment” (McCarthy 1990, 325).

Loneragan avers the indispensability of the act of judgment with regard to truth: “Truth pertains to the judgment inasmuch as it proceeds from a grasp of virtually unconditioned, inasmuch as it conforms to the being it affirms, and inasmuch as it demands an intrinsic intelligibility in being as a condition of the possibility of knowing” (Loneragan 1992[2013], 580). By virtually unconditioned, Lonergan underscores “that for anything to be known some necessary and sufficient conditions need to be satisfied before one could say that one has knowledge” (Aleke 2018, 47). It is only when a subject knows all the conditions for the truth of a judgment and can attest that all the conditions are satisfied, that the judgment is said to be virtually unconditioned.

Put differently, a philosophical investigation of truth that is isolated from the context of human knowing is at best inadequate, since there will not be sufficient evidence to show that there is knowledge of that which is the case, or mere guessing.

Neglect of the irreplaceable role of the act of judgment in the philosophical investigation of truth in the analytic tradition is what leads to inadequate attention being given to the question “what is truth?” An empiricist orientation towards truth and even idealism is ill-equipped to address the question of the nature of truth sufficiently. This is because they are not capable of articulating the progression from cognitional theory through epistemology to metaphysics, which is necessary for a comprehensive understanding of the nature of truth. This progression is vital because human knowing is intentional. It is in taking into account the intentionality of cognitional process that the question of truth arises. McCarthy (1990, 318) articulates: “Because propositions and the sentences that express them are intentional, epistemology needs to be completed by metaphysics, which analyzes [sic] the objects of knowledge to which these intentional signs refer. When they are assembled in this cumulative order, cognitional theory, epistemology, and metaphysics form a comprehensive account of cognition that advances from knowing through knowledge to the nature of the known.”

It is only critical realism that accounts for the cumulative order as it explicitly analyses the three indispensable operations—experiencing, understanding and judging—that amount to the act of knowing. The question of truth arises in this context, because the subject needs to ask: 1) Is that which is experienced or perceived that which is presented to the senses? 2) Is that which is inquired about and understood sufficiently, that which is experienced? 3) Is that which is grasped as virtually unconditioned and reasonably affirmed that which is understood sufficiently? It is when these three questions are answered affirmatively that knowledge, truth and objectivity are attained. Because of the critical role of the human subject in the quest for truth, McCarthy (1990, 326) affirms that: “Epistemic objectivity and truth are the fruit of an authentic and normative subjective achievement. As human beings, we can respond to the demands of our native

intelligence and rationality and, by meeting them, achieve a limited knowledge of the real.” It is noteworthy to point out that McCarthy’s affirmation does not imply that truth is subjective or relative to the knowing subject. He acknowledges that a truth claim which is reasonably affirmed is “objective and self-transcendent” (McCarthy 1990, 324–325).

Why then is the critical realist capable of adequately addressing the questions of knowledge and truth, while the naïve or common-sense realist or idealist is not capable of doing so? The situation arises because they have different visions of the world. To the idealist and naïve realist, the “world is a picture” to be seen or looked at, whereas to the critical realist the world is “the universe of being” (Lonergan 1967, 236). Lonergan’s affirmation of the “universe of being” highlights that, although there are multiple distinct beings that are irreducible to one, they form a community or universe of being when the vision of the whole is taken into consideration. This is the case because “being is only divided from within” and “apart from being there is nothing” (1992[2013], 401).

Put differently, Lonergan’s critical realism can properly investigate the nature of truth because its two-fold consciousness (that is, the intentional consciousness and consciousness of the operations of agent) leads to the realisation that intelligibility is neither projected nor constructed, but discovered in data as a result of inquiry and insight (Walmsley 2008, 20). Just as intelligibility does not arise from projecting or constructing, also knowledge and truth are not projected or constructed. “The realizations that we can ‘discover’ intelligibility through insight-into-data and that we can grasp sufficiency of evidence through judgment” (Walmsley 2008, 22) and so attain knowledge and truth, indicate that the quest for the nature or definition of truth necessitates the exploration of the cognitional theory that is foundational for any philosophical investigation of truth. By contending “that intelligibility is not extrinsic but intrinsic to being,” it is not assumed that there is an intelligent designer. Neither is belief in God assumed. “By the intrinsic intelligibility of being is meant that being is neither beyond the intelligible nor apart from it nor different from it” (Lonergan 1992[2013], 523). In other words, intelligent beings are capable of understanding reality because there are patterns in reality that are discoverable by intelligent beings.

The advantage of an explicit exposition of the nature of truth or a quest for the definition of truth, is that when it is understood within the context of the search for knowledge and self-transcendence, it becomes clear that the subject (or subjectivity properly understood) is not to be relegated to oblivion, as Frege (1956) did in order to account for truth and objectivity. Rather, it is realised that objectivity comes into the scene because of the capacity for an authentic subjectivity of human subjects. In other words, subjectivity and objectivity are not contradictory opposites as Frege (1956) and Nagel (1979) (who consider “externality and detachment” to be the principal feature of objectivity) portray. Contrary to the conception that objectivity and subjectivity are antitheses, they are complementary. This is because, as Lonergan argues, “the principal notion of objectivity” is reached within a “patterned context of judgments.” In other

words, it is when there is “plurality of judgments that satisfy a definite pattern” (Loneragan 1992[2013], 400) that the notion of objectivity is sufficiently articulated. And there is a possibility of making judgements because there are knowing subjects, since the existence of just one knowing subject would not have brought the notion of objectivity to the fore.

Conclusion

I have traced the contemporary truth controversies to the neglect of the “what is” question and the truncation of the knowing subject and his or her role in the quest for truth. Nonetheless, if the quest for a definition is to be addressed adequately, it is not sufficient to acknowledge the human subject qua *object*.⁴ It is essential to explicitly expound on the role of the human subject qua *subject*, that is the human subject as agent or intentional subject. This is because to sufficiently attend to the question “what is truth?” there is the necessity to move beyond the conceptual analysis of cognitional contents to the analysis of “cognitional operations.” Without such movement, the contemporary truth controversies will continue since exclusive emphasis on the semantic, logical and linguistic uses of truth predicate in sentences will distort the notion of truth. This is because such emphasis would neglect the question: Why is the truth predicate capable of performing semantic, logical and linguistic functions? However, an explicit definition of truth or exposition of the nature of truth would show that sentences express propositional contents and propositions are true if they are intentional signs of intentional objects (that is, propositions are true if what is expressed is what is actually the case). For instance, the proposition <Thabo Mbeki is a South African> is true if Thabo Mbeki is indeed a South African citizen. And so “truth is the relation of knowing to being.” Nonetheless, one can still ask: Is the relation self-evident? Is it given a priori? Of course, the relation is not self-evident to be detected by computers and robots. Rather, in affirming that “truth is the relation of knowing to being,” two points are emphasised: 1) that truth is neither projected nor constructed but discovered; and 2) that it takes conscious and intentional subjects (human subjects or even subjects that have intellects that are similar to that of human beings) to discover that the relation between knowing and being holds. So ultimately, a philosophical investigation of truth that neglects the role of the human subject is bound to fail, or at least would be inadequate.

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4 Regarding the human subject as object is the attitude of exploring the subject as if it is just another object for discussion or investigation without emphasising that it is the performer of all cognitional activities.

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