

1. At times the truth shines so brilliantly that we perceive it as clear as day. Matter and habit then draw a veil over our perception, and we return to a darkness almost as dense as before. We are like those who, though beholding frequent flashes of lightning, still find themselves in the thickest darkness of the night.

- Moses Maimonides, The Guide for the Perplexed

The presented quote by Moses Maimonides has a three-part structure: 1) the truth is capable of revealing itself to our human perception as clear as day at times; 2) however, due to our being shaped by the human faculties and capacities, matter and habit draw a 'veil' (the examination of which will be further discussed) over our perception of said truth; 3) this inevitably compels one's reason to consign in the 'thickest darkness of night' – or ignorance, despite its exposition before the 'frequent flashes of lightning' – by which we will understand the moments of conception and understanding of the world's singular and absolute truth.

In this essay, however, we will put at doubt the existence of such notion, the possibility of a total and an all-encompassing concept as such is proposed by Maimonides. By this we shall not understand an attempt to attack the values of truth and reason, but instead an attempt to deconstruct the western tradition of binary oppositions, the 'matter' and 'habit' of attributing one notion with more naturalness and primacy than other. Thus, we shall divert the spirit of this writing onto the context of Socrates' irony – one which allows us to both perceive the truth as clear as day and, still, to find ourselves within the 'thickest darkness of the night' by which we will understand the impossibility of conceiving truth at all.

In order to reach said objectives we shall examine the following structure: first, we will investigate the concept of truth and its grounds, its dissemination and, then, we will discuss the question of how is it even possible for a statement to be recognized with the dignity of truth; second, we will further examine the perception of truth, our matter and habit by which we do so and what does it mean for them to 'draw a veil over our perception' returning us 'to a darkness almost as dense as before', what is this 'before' and does it differ from supposed 'now' (terms which will be further discussed); lastly, we will conclude Socrates' irony regarding our subject matter – truth – by transcending the normal 'perception', in a sense of transcending the fallacy surrounding not only our truthful but also every other form of thinking, or, in a more characteristic language, we will attempt to prove the denaturalizing nature of our thinking being, how to overcome it and, thus, we will provide a positivistic approach towards the problem of truth.

1. The impossibility of subjective and objective truth.

For a starting point of this essay we shall take Merleau-Ponty's quote that "to understand the total function of philosophy, one should remember Socrates". Arguably, all of Socrates' philosophy emerges from one statement: "I know that I know nothing". Such words shall be of prime interest in our examination.

To better understand what Socrates meant by this, we shall use the proposed terms by Hanna Arendt who argues that not truth but *doxa* is the object of perception in our minds. *Doxa*, literally translated, means opinion, belief. For every person such a *doxa* must be held before conceiving truth, it is a presupposition which we shall posit as the beginning of all knowledge. If we did not hold a point of view, we could never appreciate a truth.

However, the question of is it possible for us to escape said *doxa* emerges. For its answer we shall examine what the Greek philosophers understood by it. A differentiation shall be made between *doxa* and subjectivity. The former is part of what the Greeks called a *koinon* spirit – that being the goal of achieving a common 'thing', in this sense a common truth – whereas the latter is part of our modern philosophy which primarily differentiates the binary opposition of subjective and objective. We could, however, argue that both subjective and objective are not adequate attributes to our *doxai* (our beliefs). Subjectivity entails the impossibility of referring beyond our understanding, whereof objectivity implies the necessary obedience to, in many cases, unknowable, transcendental or even non-real essences. Conversely, the *doxa* approach entails what Socrates called *dokei moi* – how the world reveals itself to me.

What is key is that the world may appear the same way for other people as well – as the Greek skeptics argue, there will always be differences, but there will also always be some shared 'things' between people's doxai. Indeed, that is what allows truth to 'shine so brilliantly that we perceive it as clear as day'. For Socrates not objective nor subjective form is that we shall examine when discussing truth, but its shared form, one which goes beyond the subjectivity of people, but does not fall into the fallacy of objective statements.

Still, how is this shared truth conceived; can we argue that this truth is true or instead another fallacy and misinterpretation; how is it disseminated and what are the grounds for making such statement?

To these questions Socrates answers that not the rhetorical traditions of state-nation identities shall be taken as source of wisdom, but instead the free dialogue between conflicting doxai. For in *rhetorike* no truth is shared: one doxa is imposed upon other doxai which, however, does not mean that it is shared, but instead only distributed. In *dialegethai* people abandon their initial beliefs so that a truly shared one could be reached. Here, we could finally give an answer to what a shared truth is: in the language of ancient philosophy we could describe it as a *koinon*, a common belief not in quantity but in quality, one which enmeshes in itself the worlds of people whilst constructing a shared one, a common world; and in the language of modern philosophy we could describe it as the synthesis between a thesis and an antithesis, or between one subjective view and another.

At this point in the essay, we could make a reference to Kant's article *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment* where the German philosopher strives for people to emerge from their self-incurred immaturity by having the courage to use their own understanding *publicly* – or, as Kant writes, "Sapere aude". What Kant meant was that, first, we shall not depend upon outer guidance in our journey of knowledge, we shall instead rely on our reason alone and, second, do such in the public sphere of rational beings. Here it is important to note that Kant differentiated two usage of reason – a private and a public one. For the private use of reason one shall consign to the external rules of institution and states, the civil laws and societal mechanisms in order to produce something for the greater being – that being the shared human organism in the form of a society; still, this does not mean that men should abolish their own thinking and instead become a nut in the machine, people must use their reason publicly as well, in the sense of contemplating and criticising said 'societal truth' – only in this public sphere are people really free to come to what Socrates argued to be a shared truth, or a doxa.

The hitherto analysis of shared truth and its dissemination was of crucial importance for one very peculiar reason: to understand the *matters* and *habbits* which allow us to both perceive truth 'as clear as day' and to 'return us to a darkness almost as dense'. Both Socrates' approach to a shared doxa conceivable only through dialogue and Kant's view of private and public use of reason depend on one of the most problematic topics in philosophy: the use of language.

If we could not speak nor write, then we would not be able to even think as well. For our ideas if not shared with people with whom we communicate, no certainty shall be reached for their truthness – one could argue that they will become mere subjective Humean impressions or one could even go further beyond and argue that in such case no possible line could be drawn between subjective and objective, between knowledge and ignorance, true and false.

Therefore, we always depend upon language to conceive truth, our matter and habit, taken as our shared language and systems of words and sentences, allow us to conceive the truth in our own doxa, but also to realize its limitations, its constraints or, as Wittgenstein put it, to know that "the limits of my language are the limits of my world".

2. The veil drawn over our perception of truth.

2.1 The structuralistic veil.

Still, how is shared truth even possible to be conceived? We could take Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralistic approach in the sense that to understand truth one shall first understand language. The meaning of language is made up of signs which have two sides – signifier and signified. They are in a static relation meaning that the signifier (that thing sensed as an input by the brain: word, picture, sound) provides the signified (the concept, the idea) with meaning. These signs are in a

structuralistic network where they gain their meaning through their differences: a cat is cat because it is not a bat, rat, gnat, etc., but because it is in relation with mammal, four-legged animal, fur, pet, the list goes on. Taking dictionaries, for example, all words are explained through other words which are further explained with other words until the initial word is reached. My use of narrative structures always refers to a public usage of said structures: I use language in one way, others in another, but they are all related to a shared object of speech, to a same signified and, thus, to the same ideas. Therefore, "now" we have perceived as clear as day the shining truth conceivable only as shared through the power of language.

## 2.2 Deconstruction of structuralistic fallacy.

Still, we could go even further beyond and argue that in such sense no truth exists at all. It is not a real notion in the sense of existent entity but instead a self-relational concept which gains its meaning through the ratification within itself. For truth can be only ratified by the conception of truth. This, however, is a problematic approach under normal circumstances. If we were to follow Derrida post-constructivistic approach, we shall posit the two following points:

A) signs of language do, indeed, gain their meaning through what Derrida called *Difference* – the space between signs which is both the active and passive product of the structuralistic network;

B) still, all signs contain within themselves other signs as well. For example, when we say a pig we can think of pink, big, pork, ham, farm, animal as well, but we may very well not. Thus, all signs have an embedded possibility of meaning which Derrida called *Trace* which is neither present nor absent but instead dependent upon the user of language: I may refer said pig to pink, big and cute, but others may refer to it as dorky, tasty, ham.

In this sense, we could argue that language is a highly subjective field: one where by speaking people can alter the meaning of words by changing the tones in their voices, but in writing are forced to take words in accepted common sense. Furthermore, if we were to return to Saussure's theory of language, we must say that signifiers could be linguistically altered *ad infinitum* whilst understanding none: for people speaking only one language, they cannot possibly understand the infinite amount of signifiers of other languages, although they relate to some well-known identity; but, still, language changes from time to time and from people to people – even agents of same language may use same signifiers but refer to different signifieds. As already mentioned, not absolute, nor innate ideas are to be at the core of human understanding, but our *doxai* which differ from one another. For example: in dialogues one may not understand the common meaning behind 'soul' and 'anima', or when some term proposed, taking 'philosophy' for instance, one may refer to it as a 'transformative force' whereas others as 'boring and dull'.

Therefore, in realising the impossibility of what Derrida called *Logocentrism*, meaning the demand for absolute truth through language and reason, we shall return to the "before", or the state of unknowingness of whether some things are more primary than others, of whether some notions have more truth in them than others. The goal of language is to show that there is no goal, that every notion is describable as true-in-itself and to lift the veil of our perception, or to even, in a sense, prevent perception if that would lead us to ruling and judging arbitrarily from unjustified point, thus, the shared goal of language and truth is to show that there is no truth, that we are to inevitably return to 'a darkness almost as dense as' before thinking that we have conceived *a/the* truth.

If we do not do so, we will unavoidably fall into the hermeneutic circle where our understanding are defined by our former understandings meaning that in our current understandings there will always be a trace of our initial misunderstandings, thus, truth will always be absolutely unconceivable.

## 3. Embracing the absurdity of truth.

Still, in the beginning of this essay we posited that no attempts to attack the values of truth and reason will be made. Despite this, the hitherto analysis may be described by some as nihilistic. Such claims, however, shall not be accepted. For the sake of a clear explanation, I shall posit Albert Camus's quote that "sciences are unable to cure men, for they begin and end in suppositions". What this essay argues is that no truth shall be conceived from the point of view of culture, language and sciences. They all consist of binary oppositions which unjustly give primacy to some notions instead of others.

But then the question of how should we perceive truth and knowledge arises. To that we shall, as paradoxically may sound, answer with culture, language and sciences. For the sake of a clear analysis, we shall postulate Hegel's idea that "the world marches on only if it is able to live with true contradictions". And although the field of language is highly subjective and undecidable, as Derrida argues, still "the publicity of my language guarantees the objectivity of its reference" (Wittgenstein). The only way to reach a fundamental concept, an absolute or even any truth, is to objectify the inescapable relativity. We argued that everything is far too relativistic – from our shared doxai, to the impossibility of true knowledge through the fallacy of language. But, still, the only positivistic approach may be that through the ever-lasting relativity of views, beliefs, uses of language, reason, we are slowly constructing a broader concept which we are yet to conceive. By embracing the absurd, by accepting that we are free to judge but by understanding to deny it, we must indulge in such arbitrary truth-makings, we must strive for an absolute purpose or goal, or truth, by denying it and instead providing new theories, new languages, new conceptions which will, possibly, transpose the Absurd into a Certain, into a Truth. These, precisely, are the 'frequent flashes of lightning', the frequent moments of transcending our current knowledge, faculties and understanding, so to lay the foundations of a more legitimate, more 'true' grounds which, however, we must not reject, but overcome (both in a Hegelian and Nietzschean stance).

Precisely, this is what in the beginning we declared as a context of Socrates' irony – the thinking of our thinking, the realization that we are not yet enlightened, not yet rational, but rationalistic creatures which will always 'find themselves in the thickest darkness of the night', which will always truth-seeking, but will always be bounded by the limitations of our own faculties, the constraints of our sciences, minds and rationalistic being. We shall never attempt not to think in suppositions, for such outset no science will be called as such; we shall never attempt to escape the 'dense darkness', for such outset no statement will be called 'beautifully shining'; we shall never attempt to escape the unreachability of an absolute truth, for such outset no statement will be called human.

#### 4. Conclusion

Therefore, I shall summarize the main points of this essay which attempted to prove that we perceive not truth, but our doxai as clear as day; for truth we cannot think outside the boundaries of our human faculties, of our capabilities as rationalistic beings which, however, are predetermined in the empirical sphere of matter and habit by which we shall understand not only our personal use of language and its subjectivity, but also the illegitimate use of sciences which, first, always emerge and end in presuppositions, second, are part of the ever-changing Historical legacy: for a process we cannot say that it holds the absolute essence of its product. And despite, it could be argued, the non-causality of History, we must always strive to construct said truth, we must always develop sciences, believe in fallacies, veil our perception as that is the only way to unveil it: embracing the ironic absurdity of truth is likely the only way out of it, or, as Camus wrote: "one must imagine Sisyphus happy" – a quote which we may preformulate as: one must imagine the truth as shining so brilliantly that we perceive it as clear as day, despite one being millenias-long lost in the thickest darkness of the night.