

NEITHER VERIFIERS NOR VERIFICATORS: THE REFUTATION OF THE THEORY  
OF „TRUTH-MAKING“

## 1. Introduction

There are two rival theories of “truth-making” which can respectively be called “objective” and “subjective”. In this paper, we will show that they are both incorrect. Following our argument against “truth-making”, we are going to suggest new arguments in support of the claim that the very concept of “truth” is redundant in logic. Instead, we (re)introduce the concept of “right examining” (*peirastic*) of situations and propositions.

## 2. Objective “Truth-makers”

Russell used the term “making true” for the first time in 1918 in his lectures “The Philosophy of Logical Atomism”, where he specifies that there are “two propositions corresponding to the same fact, [and] there is one fact in the world which makes one true and one false” (1956, 187; italics mine). Russell’s motives for embracing this conception was, what can be called, Wittgenstein’s “propositional theory of truth” elaborated in “Notes on Logic” (Sept. 1913), according to which sentences are not names of facts, as Frege believed they are true. Facts render (Wittgenstein never said “make”) them true or false.

Despite that, Wittgenstein’s propositional theory of truth was directed against Frege’s conception that propositions are names of facts, its point was Fregean. It namely holds that (i) true/false are only propositions; (ii) propositions are matched with their truth-values. Russell added to this conception that truth-values are pieces of reality.

In this form, the propositional theory of truth suggested a “truth making conception” that scarcely was a theory. Indeed, it was not clear what exactly *makes* a proposition true. Be this as it may, this conception was widely used in the 1930s, for example in (Schlick 1979, ii, pp. 311, 361) but rather as an intuition. This conception became a theory only in 1940 in Russell’s *Inquiry into the Meaning und Truth*, where he replaced particulars of his ontology with bundles of events. Indeed, only such things like events, or processes, can produce (“make”) something for example, truths.

Recently the theory of “truth making” was revived in (Mulligan, Simons, Smith 1984). The authors maintain that what makes propositions true are above all “moments”. A

moment is “an object which is of such a nature that it cannot exist alone, but requires the existence of some other object outside it” (p. 290). Moments are “all events, actions, processes, states, and conditions” (p. 292).

We hold that the theory of Mulligan–Simons–Smith can be made more comprehensive if we accept that “truth-makers” are moments in the common usage of this word—as instants. Thus what “makes” it true that Socrates dies is the moment (instant) of Socrates’ death. This is a *change* which took place in one temporal point. Incidentally, the theory of Mulligan-Simons-Smith was interpreted this way also in (Künne 1991, p. 144).

### 3. Verifiers

Analyzing further the concept of change, we can discern its two types: (i) produced intentionally by subjects usually they are called *actions*; (ii) changes which are not known as produced intentionally by a subject. Such changes are called *events*. The latter specification makes the concept of “truth-making” rather problematic. It tacitly suggests that the matter is an agent, and that the “truth-makers” are committing actions. In other words, it presupposes a form of panpsychism.

Apparently, this urged Russell to replace in 1940 the concept of “truth-makers” with “verifiers”. Russell used the term verifiers for the first time in *Inquiry into the Meaning and Truth* where he stated: “When an empirical belief is true, it is true in virtue of a certain occurrence which I call its ‘verifier’. I believe that Caesar was assassinated; the verifier of this belief is the actual event which happened in the Senate House long ago.” (Russell 1940, pp. 227, 243). Recently, the term was used also by Bogusław Wolniewicz who maintains that “a verifier of a proposition *a* is an elementary situation such that, if real, it makes *a* true” (Wolniewicz 1982, p. 381).

Perhaps the best grounding of the verifiers as moments–instants/actions–events is to be found in Adolf Trendelenburg. Following Aristotle, this author came to the idea that there must be something in common between abstract thinking, intuitive perception, and also matter. This uniting thing is the *movement*. We can make this idea of Trendelenburg clearer specifying that the change unites mind and matter inasmuch as the mind recognizes as true only the changing elements of matter.

Of course, verifiers are also some states, for example, that “this cube is white”. As Donald Davidson had noted, “truth-makers” are “both doings and also having of relations and properties” (Davidson 1980, p. 130). This difficulty can be met with Trendelenburg’s principle that we have a kind of movement even by states, and also in logic, where we

apprehend spatial differences as changes of one place to another. Indeed, even by pure logical thought—by syllogism—we have nothing but “subordinated, over-ordinated [*übergeordnete*], next-ordinated [*nebengeordnete*] concepts, from the mutual relation of which something new appears” (Trendelenburg 1840, i, p. 145).

All these elucidations make the theory of verifiers rather attractive. Nevertheless, there is an argument against it that this theory cannot resolve in principle. The argument in question was suggested by Wittgenstein and is “from the senseless propositions”: What *makes* the senseless propositions senseless? (Wittgenstein 1922, 4.063).<sup>1</sup>

#### 4. Verificators

An alternative type of “truth-makers” was introduced by some German-speaking philosophers, which as if tried to evade Wittgenstein’s puzzle about senseless propositions. According to this argument, the truth is made by the cognizing mind, not only by states of affairs. It is thus easy to understand why there are propositions (such like the senseless propositions) with no counterparts in reality. We will call this *pragmatic* “truth-maker” *verificator*—in order to discriminate it from the *verifier*. There are at least six cases of this argument, each of them enriching it with a new element.

(i) Kant introduced a two-dimensional act in cognition, according to which we must not only set out the data of experience and their relations; we must also check their origin in an act of apperception. This checking opens a new, pragmatic dimension of our knowledge, which is considered a result of subjective action. In other words, the ultimate “truth-maker” of Kant is the cognizing person.

(ii) Kant’s pragmatic tendencies were further developed by Hermann Lotze. Lotze’s case is especially interesting since it communicated impulses to both analytic philosophy and to the pragmatists (especially via William James). Lotze’s task was that of Plato in *Theaetetus*: to secure *knowledge*, which is to be extracted and separated from perception that just registers states of affairs. The difference between perception and thinking can be expressed this way. Whereas the different ideas we think belong together (*zusammengehören*), by perception (also when we image, daydream, etc.) the ideas we perceive—simply meet at random (*zusammengeraten*).

According to Lotze, the mind produces “kaleidoscopically” a multiplicity of pictures (*Bilder*) (Lotze 1843, p. 72). In contrast, thinking consists in that it goes through the ideas

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<sup>1</sup> Another problem are the logically complex statements. (cf. Cox 1997)

which perception finds together for a second time. Only those which it considers to intrinsically belong together, the secondary thought connects finally. So thinking consists in *producing* of justifying “satellite thoughts” (*Nebengedanken*) which accompany the kaleidoscope of the stream of consciousness.

(iii) Similarly to his teacher, Lotze’s student Frege maintained that the judgment acknowledges the truth of the content; otherwise, it would be a mere combination of ideas (*Vorstellungsverbindung*). In fact, the judgment is an *acceptance* of something (a thought) as true or rejecting it as false. And vice versa: “whenever anyone recognize something to be true, he makes a judgment” (Frege 1979, p. 251). This acceptance, however, is nothing but an act (*Tat*), so that the meaning of proposition is the very *act of inquiring after* (checking) its truth-value.

(iv) The novelty Husserl introduced in the pragmatic tradition in German philosophy of testing the data of knowledge was the incorporation of the intellectual intuition in it. He maintained that by every judgment there are two elements: (a) checking act of judging—it has as a correlate a state of affairs (*Sachverhalt*); (b) tacit intellectual-intuitive “complete covering [*Deckung*] between the meaning-intention of the utterance and the perceiving of the *Sachverhalt*” (Husserl 1900, I, iv, § 36). It remains tacit despite that it can be articulated. However, if we express it, we will have another tacit “truth maker”, and so on *ad infinitum*.

(v) A solution similar to that of Husserl was also adopted by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*. (This, of course, does not mean that Wittgenstein borrowed it from Husserl.) Wittgenstein’s claim was that before, or parallel with, the matching sentences with reality we must constitute its sense (Wittgenstein 1922, 4.06). (He thus hoped to do justice to the senseless propositions.) Wittgenstein, however, developed this intuitive point in more concrete terms—in the concept of “use”: “Sign does not determine a logical form unless it is taken together with its logical-syntactical employment.” (3.327). Indeed, I know better the circumstances in which I call *p* true when I experience these circumstances in change—in use.

This conception was developed further in Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*. So that for “both Wittgensteins” the logical atoms, propositions, were products of practices. In other words, they were result of *pragmatics* that have their ways of performing: in the first case, of the lonely practice of picture making, in the second, of the practice of active communication.

(vi) The *ontology* of the intuitive pragmatism of Husserl—Wittgenstein was developed by Husserl’s pupil Adolf Reinach. According to Reinach’s theory of judgment, “the same factual material” can be apprehended differently, so that about one and the same fact different judgments can be made. Thus the judgments “this rose is red”, “redness inheres in this rose”, “this rose forms the substrate of this redness” are based on one and the same “factual material” (see Smith 1987, p. 201). Every one of the judgments has specific ontology different from that of the facts about which they are. The specific entities apprehended in the acts of judging are called *Sachverhalte* (*states of affairs*). Recently, the ontological scheme of Reinach’s theory of judgement was revived in (Mulligan, Simons, Smith 1984).

## 5. Truth as Rightness by Examining

To the theory of judgment of Reinach we oppose a Tractarian conception that states of affairs are not different from facts. Our ontology holds that objects are concatenations of forms so that an object both has, and also is, a multitude of forms. All possible states of affairs are (topologically) constituted of different facets, which are nothing but forms of objects (cf. Milkov 2001). In both reality and in the judging mind, change happens in one and the same way: different forms of objects, or different objects, are connected one to another in order to constitute new objects or states of affairs. Such new connections, the emergence of new “verifiers”—take place in a form of clicking over the actual forms or objects which until this point in time were only implicit. Thus in specific moments (instants) only some (not all) of the forms or objects are “activated” in order to occur in what Reinach called *Sachverhalte*. The activated forms and objects, however, are not radically different from the remaining, “shadow”, forms and objects—from the facts.

The experience of judging is just an examination of different configurations of objects, states of affairs and facts. The logical task is to recognize what we seek: to “recognize the structural properties of propositions [or of facts] by mere inspection [intuiting] of the propositions [or the facts] themselves” (Wittgenstein 1922, 6.122). By such recognizing, we assess a form (*Gestalt*) as *right* or correct, or as wrong or incorrect. In such cases we do not speak in the moral terms of “truth” or “falsehood”. Hence, we are not *verifiers*, and *Sachverhalte* are not *verifiers*.

The liberated from the truth logic is identical with formal ontology: they both investigate the compositionality of objects and states of affairs. This single formal

discipline—let us call it *mathesis universalis*—studies structural properties: how wholes are built out of moments and simples, how these moments contact one another and also wholes and form wholes, how they are ordered, etc. It is both mereology and topology.

## 6. *Peirastic* Instead of Truth-Seeking

This conception can be supported with Russell's programmatic paper "What is Logic?" written in his most creative period (October 1912). Russell insisted in it that "logic is the study of the forms of complexes. ... 'True' and 'False' are extra-logical" (Russell 1993, p. 55). Some days later he wrote: "I can't get on with 'what is logic?', the subject is hopelessly difficult. ... I feel very much inclined to leave it to Wittgenstein." Unfortunately, Wittgenstein's intuitions on this point were much more Fregean than these of Russell. He soon turned back to the old myth that logic is concerned with the truth. Thus, Russell's "hopelessly difficult" project remained unrealized. It was partly revived—spontaneously, because following similar intuitions—by both Ramsey and the early A. J. Ayer who maintained that the problem of truth is "merely a linguistic muddle".

Investigating the origins of the concept state of affairs (*Sachverhalt*), Barry Smith has recently suggested that it derives "from juridical use of the term '*status*' in the sense of *status rerum*. ... Here *status* is defined as the question which grows out of a given legal conflict." (Smith 1996, pp. 324–5) Indeed, the question under examination receives different apprehension from different parties in the litigation. Every one of these apprehensions has autonomous ontology.

Our claim is, in contrast, that there is, indeed, a strong forensic sense in the concept of state of affairs (*Sachverhalt*). This, however, arises since states of affairs and situations are the content of our practices of judging, and judging is nothing but examining and deliberating of the aspects of the states of affairs, or the facts (as already mentioned, for us they are not radically different).

The very discipline of right judging is to be called for the better dialectic, or *peirastic*. It is nothing else than the pragmatic checking of the facts and propositions which we found at Kant–Lotze–Frege–Husserl–Wittgenstein–Reinach, minus the belief that this checking helps to find the truth. Often it is accompanied with models which *mathesis universales* supplies as cannon by examining the situation, or the proposition. Thus, *peirastic* is a science-cum-practice enterprise, in the same way in which the medicine and jurisprudence are.

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