

TRUTH, JUSTIFICATION AND ETHNOCENTRISM

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I

Richard Rorty has developed and defended John Dewey's claim that truth is warranted justification. He has also extracted some consequences of such thesis in regards to ethnocentrism. Rorty's views have been frequently considered relativistic, mainly for problems in their formulations for which Rorty himself is to blame, but also for a wrong understanding of the claims he made. This paper starts by discussing Rorty's conception of truth and justification, in order to show its virtues and flaws especially in confrontation with Putnam's theses. After that, it aims to explore a concept of truth that includes elements of Peirce's and Dewey's views.

I wish to defend four claims:

(i) Rorty is right when he says that criteria for truth and justification are coextensive concepts, that is, that a proposition¹ is true if and only if it is justified on the grounds of certain given criteria.

(ii) Rorty extracts, from this first claim which I regard as correct, a conclusion that I believe is wrong or at least confused. This conclusion presents that a proposition is true if it is properly justified for a certain epistemic community, even if it is not for another. Thus, the truth of a proposition (or its justification) is a conventional and arbitrary property. I claim that a community could believe that a proposition is properly justified and that it is true, whereas another community could believe that the same proposition is not justified and is false. However, any person, as the subject of the enunciation

¹ I won't discuss whether truth makers are propositions, statements or beliefs. For practical reasons I will talk about propositions and I will use the variable p.

and from a historically situated position, could not believe that both communities are justified in their beliefs about such proposition. Therefore, nobody could say at the same time, unless he or she is in a privileged position *sub specie aeternitatis*, that two contradictory propositions could be simultaneously justified and true in two different epistemic communities.

(iii) From the contextual and conventional character of justification, Rorty extracts an ethnocentric claim, for which we can only justify our beliefs, on any given topic, to the members of an epistemic community to which we already belong. I think Rorty is basically right here, although his position has to be qualified, because it is necessary to make clear what an epistemic community is and what its extension is.

(iv) To accept that truth criteria and justification are coextensive is not incompatible with the affirmation of the existence of an objective truth, as well as of our moral obligation to look for it.

According to the usual interpretation of Rorty, his epistemology includes a contextualist and a conventionalist claim. According to the first claim, one is justified in believing p, if his or her belief satisfies the epistemic criteria of the system of beliefs of the community to which he or she belongs. According to the conventionalist claim, these criteria of justification do not have an ulterior justification beyond their very presence in the epistemic community in which they are given. From these claims, Rorty infers the ethnocentric view that he has made famous, and which he defines in the following way:

On my (Davidsonian) view, there is no point in distinguishing between true sentences which are "made true by reality" and true sentences which are "made by us", because the whole idea of "truth-makers" needs to be dropped. So I would hold that there is *no* truth in relativism, but his much truth in ethnocentrism: we cannot justify our beliefs (in physics, ethics, or any other area) to everybody, but only to those whose beliefs overlap ours to some appropriate extent. (This is not a theoretical problem of "untranslatability",

but simply a practical problem about the limitations of argument; it is not that we live in different worlds than the Nazis or the Amazonians, but that conversion from or their points of view, though possible, will not be a matter of inference from previously shared premises.) Rorty (1991, p. 31)

This is a reasonable statement, but it is necessary to make clear what *us* means, who is included in the word and who are the *others* with whom our beliefs do not overlap, and to whom can we not justify them. I lean to think that in this issue Rorty's problems emerge because he is not sufficiently Davidsonian. Perhaps if we address the topic of ethnocentrism we might clarify the questions with which we are now concerned.

According to Rorty, there are two kinds of ethnocentrism: the first one is inevitable, desirable and inclusive, whereas the second one is unacceptable and exclusive. Regarding the first, every society and individual is ethnocentric and can not help being so, because all of them assume that their beliefs are the true ones and that their values are the right ones. In this way, they all assume that all beliefs and values that are incompatible with their own are false or incorrect. Following Ramsey's redundancy principle, to believe in a proposition is to believe that it is true and that its negation is false. It is impossible to believe that one's own beliefs are false. One could claim, in order to avoid being considered ethnocentric, that one doesn't believe that his beliefs are *the* true ones, but just simply true. That formulation is, however, untenable because the concept of truth is normative in the sense that if I believe that *p* is a true proposition, I also believe that all others should believe so. In other words, I believe that they would believe –or at least that they should believe– what I believe, if they had the evidence that I have. The same happens with values which is why we can discuss about beliefs and values in an attempt to show the others something we think they have overlooked, as well as try to learn from others in such a way that they might help us see something we did not see. We are not concerned to do this with matters of taste, or in any case

we do it at a lesser degree, because we assume that taste is not normative. When we start discussing tastes, for instance, concerning a work of art or the quality of good wine, it is because we believe that in regard to these objects, there are some objective criteria and can thus reach some kind of objectivity.² This is not a dogmatic stand but simply expresses the nature of believing and valuing. All community is ethnocentric because it inevitably interprets any other individual or community in the light of his own worldview, regarding it as *another*. Such worldviews can only interpret *another* if it is similar to ours. The idea of a person or community entirely different from us or from ours is unintelligible. You can only be different if you are similar enough.

The undesirable and exclusive sense of ethnocentrism is such that in one community (or person), it considers itself axiological or epistemologically privileged in respect to others because it believes that its representation of the world or of the right values is the closest one to the very nature of things. This kind of undesirable ethnocentrism can go hand in hand with a form of intolerance because if you think that there is a right description of reality and that you are closest to it than anyone else, you might believe you have the right and the duty to impose it.³

The main difference between both kinds of ethnocentrism is in fallibilism. The first one believes that its beliefs are true but that they could be false. It feels epistemologically and morally obliged to revise its justifications and to adopt the beliefs that are best justified according its own criteria of justification. The second one doesn't admit any of those possibilities precisely because it believes that its beliefs are

² As Davidson (2004, 39) says: "In our unguarded moments we all tend to be objectivists about values".

³ Cf. "Noting that the same thing can usefully be described in lots of different ways is the beginning of philosophical sophistication. Insisting that one of these ways has some privilege other than occasional utility is the beginning of metaphysics". Rorty (2000, 88)

fundamentally true, that is, that no kind of evidence could show that they are false. It is clear that Rorty defends the first kind of ethnocentrism, but it is also true that in this topic, as well as in others, he seems to say what he does not mean.

Now, accepting an epistemic notion of truth, for which the truth values of a proposition do not transcend its forms of verification (whatever they may be), as well as the contextualist claim for which a proposition is true only if it is justified within an epistemic community, the obvious question is how should we understand a community of that kind. What characterizes an epistemic community is the existence of implicit social practices that underline the explicit agreements and disagreements. Those implicit practices are also agreements in regards to the justificatory activities, and can be seen as convergences in the level of beliefs, meanings attributed to expressions and actions, and intentional behavior. All these generate normative commitments that, according to Brandom, constitute cultural products shaped from the recognition of other people. The central idea, then, is that an epistemic community is constituted from certain shared social practices that produce the objectivity of concepts through communicative situations of the negotiation of the application of norms to specific circumstances. You can obviously belong simultaneously to several communities, which are always changing in its characteristic practices. On the other hand, both you and your community are changing reciprocally. This idea can be found in classical pragmatism which influences later ideas on intersubjectivity.

Epistemic communities do not have precise limits, but that is not problematic because it also happens with subgroups that belong to wider communities. An important point, however, is that truth is a relational property that relates a proposition, the way the world is and an epistemic community, and, therefore, includes some amount of indeterminacy. That is, if epistemic communities are constituted by shared practices and

they require the convergence of meanings, attributions of mental states and actions, given that those convergences are relational and are subject to some degree of indeterminacy, then belonging to an epistemic community is also a relational property and is subject to an amount of indeterminacy. This, as well, is not free of ideological and power relations. Akeel Bilgrami (1995) has shown how the current cultural presence of the West is so strong in the world that often non-Westerners consider themselves “the others” and adopt a western perspective to view themselves as living in the margins of the epistemic community that, nevertheless, they use to define themselves.

But it is important now to understand what Rorty means when he claims that we cannot justify ourselves to everybody but only to those who share beliefs with us. The relevant question is with whom are those beliefs necessary to share, who are *we* and who can be so different from us that it is not possible to regard them as *us*. Finally, what kind of consequences about truth contain the possible fact that we cannot justify ourselves to such others.

My claim is that in this case, the word *us* involves *all*, with which there are no others to whom we are not obliged to justify ourselves. Thus, I will opt for a kind of universalism with an inclusive ethnocentrism, based on an interpretation in which we assume that the others are similar to us because that is condition for interpretation. I might already have made myself clear in why I said that perhaps Rorty is insufficiently Davidsonian, either in his claims or in the way he expresses them.

The nature of interpretation is such that we can only understand the intentional behavior of the psychic life of another culture or person solely in the lights of ours. We could accept, as Rorty suggests, that both meaning and truth are relative to a system of beliefs, and that to accept it is conventional in regards to an epistemic community. The first claim can be understood in a double sense: the meaning and the truth value of

propositions can be fixed only within a system of beliefs and in regards to the semantic and epistemic criteria of such system. However the second claim is more problematic. What does it mean that the truth of a proposition is conventional in regards to an epistemic community? Does it mean that if the epistemic community had been different, that is, if it had had a different history, would it have a different system of beliefs? This is plainly true.

Here, the conventionalist would say that to accept a system of beliefs for an epistemic community is something arbitrary and irrational (in the sense of being unjustified), and that there are no criteria to prefer *our* system of beliefs on top of any other system, with which the justification as well as the acceptability of the beliefs in a system are equally arbitrary. I reject that view for I claim that the justified election between belief systems is rational, although from the criteria of *our* inevitable system of beliefs. The strength of the argument lies in that different belief systems are always translatable, that is, they are options in front of us with which the justified election of truth criteria is enlightened by our own and inevitable belief system, shared to some extent in our epistemic community.

What happens, then, with Rorty's view that we can only justify ourselves to those who share our beliefs? It is obvious that nobody could share them all and, following Davidson's principle of charity, everybody would have to share some of them. Furthermore, any belief system acknowledged by us as such should be regarded as sharing an important number of beliefs with us. This is, as it is well known, Davidson's (1984) claim, precisely designed to object the very notions of epistemic relativism and incommensurability.

Now, if we are to acknowledge somebody as an intentional agent it is necessary to recognize their massive number of shared beliefs with us. How can it be that we don't feel obliged to justify ourselves to them? Who would be those to whom we are not obliged to

justify ourselves? These questions suggest that an epistemic community is all those that can interpret themselves mutually, that is, all those that we acknowledge as intentional agents or, at least, all human beings. This will lead to a form of universalism with inclusive ethnocentrism, where meaning and truth are fixed within an epistemic community made by all rational agents, using the interpretation that we make from the criteria of our own epistemic community.

II

We will stop now in the details of the relation between justification and truth, for Rorty.⁴ One of the most acute criticisms to this Rortyan view comes from Putnam (1990). For Putnam, Rortyan conception of truth cannot explain the reform of our standards of justification beyond mere consensus. It also doesn't leave room for a notion of progress. Putnam (1990, 20) states his view about justification in the following claims:

In ordinary circumstances, (1) there is usually a fact of the matter as to whether the statements people make are warranted or not. (2) Whether a statement is warranted or not is independent of whether the majority of one's cultural peers would say it is warranted or unwarranted. (3) Our norms and standards of warranted assertibility are historical products; they evolve in time. (4) Our norms and standards always reflect our interests and values. Our picture of intellectual flourishing is part of, and only makes sense as part of, our picture of human flourishing in general. (5) Our norms and standards of anything — including warranted assertibility — are capable of reform. There are better and worse norms and standards.⁵

Rorty (1993, 449) rejects the first two principles and accepts the three last ones, but Putnam (2000) thinks

⁴ There is an interesting debate about this in: *Dianoia*, volume XLVIII, 51, 2003.

⁵ I have only included the five numbers to separate the claims.

that the only way to accept the fifth one is to also accept the first two ones, with which, on Putnam's judgment, Rorty would be contradicting himself. Further, for Putnam, the only way to be a fallibilist is accepting (5), that for him presupposes (1) and (2). Thus, for Putnam, either Rorty accepts (1) and (2) or stops being a fallibilist. Let us analyze this debate more carefully.

For Rorty, if a community C believes that proposition p is justified, then p is justified for C and there is not much to say about it, whereas for Putnam, C could believe erroneously that p is justified, while it is objectively true that the belief p is wrong. For Putnam C could believe that p is justified when p actually is not.

Now, for a Peircean perspective that Putnam once held and then abandoned, what is important is not whether C believes that p is justified, but whether C would believe it, in the scenario in which C had all relevant evidence – in ideal conditions- for and against p. That is, C could believe, wrongly, that p is justified, if Ci doesn't believe that p is justified, where Ci is C plus all the relevant evidence for and against p. In other words, Ci is an ideal community of C, or an idealized version of C, looked at from the criteria of C. If we are part of C, Ci is our ideal version.

If we belong to a different community from C, let's say D, and we ask ourselves if C's belief in p is really justified, what we are actually doing is comparing C's and D's criteria, that is, C's criteria and ours. If C's and D's criteria are different, then we could think that if the members of C had the evidence and information that we have about p, they would believe or should believe what we believe about p. Thus, if we are D, Ci would be equivalent to D. For this somewhat Peircean conception, to say that there is a fact of the matter for which p is justified, cannot mean something different that there is an intersubjective agreement about the truth of p in Ci, if we are C. In other words, there can be a fact, as Putnam says, for which p is justified, if what it means is that p is justified for a given community, that can be either Ci or

D. Rorty says that it will only be a fact in a sociological sense, and that is right if we are not C, but if we are C, we will be talking about what we think is an objective fact.

At some point, both Putnam as well as Rorty were close to a view of this kind. However, they separated from one another as Rorty abandoned it for a more contextualist view and Putnam moved towards a more objectivistic view.

Anyway, for Rorty (1993, 451-2) justifiability for an ideal community (Ci) is only justifiability for us as we would like to be. The question, again, is who is *us*. I hold that we are all those that can interpret each other, *all*, but from the point of view of the individual and community from which he or she makes such an interpretation. And we don't confirm what we think is justified today, but to what we think will be justified if we had all the evidence for and against it. The distinction between the actual *us* and the ideal *us* is the only distinction that we have in order to keep other distinctions that we shouldn't drop: what we think is true and what is true; what we think is justified and what we would believe in ideal conditions. This is the cautionary use of truth: Although p is justified, it could not be true, if we discover better criteria for justification.

The point is that the sentence "p is justified but is false" can only mean that p is justified for C although not for Ci considering that, for the person who says the sentence, is more reliable than C. But if my community is C and not Ci, because *ex hipotesi* Ci doesn't exist yet, how could the Ci's criteria seem more preferable than C to me? Taking as the subject of enunciation my own epistemic community, it would be contradictory to claim that p is justified for me but that it is false. What is acceptable is that I believe that p is justified but that it *could* be false. This means that although I believe that p is true and that it is well justified, I also believe that with new evidence I could eventually believe that it is false. The possibility of such new evidence and the falsehood

of *p* are entailed within the notion of an ideal community to which I could belong in the future, in which *p* would not be justified and, therefore, would be considered false. In such community we could in due course think that our actual criteria of justification are the best and that we could prefer other forms of justification.

But Putnam goes further. He says that it could be an objective fact of the matter that epistemic community *C* is completely wrong in believing that *p* is justified. The relevant question is to whom *C* would be wrong. For Putnam such a question is unnecessary, because truth is not a relational property between propositions, facts and epistemic communities, but a monadic property of propositions that, at least in some cases, transcend to epistemic communities. This, however, requires the existence or at least the intelligibility of a privileged or omniscient interpreter who is not part of any epistemic community. If we don't have such assumptions, or if it is not part of our epistemic considerations, *C*'s error would have to be in relation to *C_i*, which is nothing but *C* with new evidence and new criteria, or in relation to an epistemic community that we might call *D*.

From the point of view of the epistemic conception of truth that I hold, the concepts of truth and justification are always relational. You are right or wrong about certain and individualistic facts of the world, and it would be against the principle of charity, and therefore against the principles of intelligibility of discourse, to believe that a community could be totally wrong for another one who is interpreting it, in view of an objective world that they both share, especially if this other community is nothing but an idealized version that the first community has of itself.

A way to make clear this point is by asking two questions:

- (i) Could a massive number of beliefs of *C* be wrong (for instance about the nature of the Sun or human

sacrifices)? Yes, if this means that those beliefs are wrong in regards to another community *D* (ours), for example, which is the subject of the enunciation. But it wouldn't be possible that all *C*'s beliefs are wrong for *D*, because then it wouldn't be clear which ones are *C*'s beliefs for *D*.

- (ii) If we are *C*, could a massive number of our beliefs be wrong? We couldn't believe that our own beliefs are wrong, but we can (and should) believe that our beliefs *could* be wrong, that is, that in a future time, with more evidence and better reasons, we could modify our beliefs in such a way that we would stop believing what we believe now. That future time would be *C_i*, coming from our present point of view, *C*.

III

Now we must turn our attention more radically to the concept of truth. Although the concept of truth has some elements that are culturally variable, it is most likely that there are certain universal features. But what is universal is not the content of the concept but the normative conditions of use or the requirement of justification. When we say that a proposition is true, we feel obliged to justify it with reasons and we tend to believe that it should be believed (that is, regarded as true) by anyone that had the evidence that we think we have.

I will explore a view that is a combination of Dewey's and Peirce's views. I will hold that to say that "*p* is true" should be interpreted as: *p* is part of a theory, or of a system of beliefs, that is the best justified option on the grounds of the best evidence available, for the shared criteria of our epistemic community, in relation to the object in question, and according to the objectives we collectively have. This is not a reconstruction of how people use the word "true", but a stipulation of how it would be convenient to use it on a theoretical level in order to make it explicative. The common use of truth

tends to be correspondentist. But the problem is not only that it already presupposes some concept of correction, as was noted by Frege and Bradley. (Frege 1977, 3-4) y Bradley (1914). The problem is not, either, that the very concepts of *correspondence* and *fact* are very imprecise. The main problem is that correspondentismo doesn't say anything important. That is, we can be correspondentista without having the slightest idea of what to do in order to determine that a proposition is true. Although definition of truth and criteria of truth is not the same, if you take seriously Peirce's famous maxim (1998, 200-223), you don't understand the meaning of a concept unless you know how to use it.

Now, pragmatists have been insisting that the criteria we actually use (and should use) is justification, and since we need to distinguish, for cautionary reasons, between a true proposition and a well justified proposition, then we have to explain what kind of justification entitles us to say that a proposition is true. This is how the idea that a proposition is true if it is justified under ideal conditions emerged (Peirce 1931, 5. 564, 8. 13).⁶

If you accept this claim, it would be impossible to distinguish between truth and justification from an internal point of view, because if you accept that a proposition is better justified than other available options, you will believe in it and the fact that it is true. It would only be possible to distinguish between truth and justification in two cases: (i) In relation to the cautionary use, or (ii) from an external point of view, as when we say that somebody believes that p is justified but that we think it is false. Can we infer from this that a proposition can be true for an epistemic community while false for another one? Of course, if it is implied

that some people think is true what others think is false or, what amounts to the same, then they disagree with respect to the quality of their justifications. But it could not occur that somebody, from their own context of justification or epistemic community, believed that a proposition is true in one community and false in another because when claiming that a proposition is true they are implicitly assuming that they believe it and accept its criteria for justification.

Thus, from an internal point of view, truth and justification are coextensive concepts, although that is not the case from an external point of view, nor in ideal conditions, which is the cautionary sense. But there is a combination of both points of view. This is the case when you imagine that what you believe now, and what you think is justified in relation to your actual evidence and criteria, might now be justified in the light of new information that you don't know currently but that could very well emerge in the future in ideal conditions. However, we shall admit, with Rorty and other critics of Peirce, that the expressions "all possible evidence" and "the ideal end of research" are not clear at all. Therefore, this might be a better formulation: we call "true" a given proposition that we would be inclined to accept in case we had evidence that, in our eyes, would give us good reasons to prefer such a proposition rather than other possible ones. This permits us to accept that our actual beliefs are not the ones we would have in ideal conditions, which is the cautionary sense of truth. On the other hand, the end of research is just a regulative concept that helps us to conceive an ideal situation in which we would have all the evidence necessary to change our beliefs. Furthermore, to say that a proposition is true is to say that such a proposition is the one in which we would believe in ideal conditions, if we had enough evidence to fix our beliefs. Additionally, following Peirce, what we describe with those propositions we call true, is reality in itself. This is what Peirce says (CP 5.407):

⁶ This is Peirce's classical formulation: "The concordance of (a)...statement with the ideal limit towards which endless investigation would tend to bring scientific beliefs". "...truth more perfect than this destined conclusion, any reality more absolute than what is thought in it, is a fiction of metaphysics" Cf. also Dewey (1941).

The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate is what we mean by the truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real. That is the way I would explain reality.

Peirce is saying two important things here. On the one hand, he holds that truth is one kind of correspondence between our beliefs and the facts of the matter, although we call “facts of the matter” the events that would be described by the beliefs that we would have in ideal conditions. Another way to put things is by saying that truth is one kind of consensus, although not actual but potential; it is the kind of consensus we would reach in ideal conditions. On the other hand, this consensus does not depend only in the skills and characteristics of researches, but fundamentally in the way reality actually is, although the way to determine what reality is depends on our conditions of justification in regards to available evidence. That is, the facts are those aspects of reality that make our beliefs true or false; they are *truthmakers*, in ideal conditions of justification and evidence. In this topic Peirce (CP 5.444, 5.539) defends common sense, which is correlated with direct realism about objects of perception.⁷

But there is a concept in which this kind of “direct” or “natural” realism is even stronger than transcendental realism, because the latter admits the possibility of global skepticism, whereas the former doesn’t accept as intelligible a gap between our minds or our theories and reality, and it doesn’t admit global skepticism, not even as a logical possibility. We can conceive that in ideal conditions, there could be true propositions that we don’t currently see as justified. This is a way to understand Peirce’s principle of convergence without having to assume that in the long run our beliefs will really converge. It seems that early Peirce did think it, but we don’t have to think so. Christopher Hookway (2004) has shown that although young Peirce, before

⁷ Direct realism is a view closet o “natural realism” coined by Putnam (1999) and that can also be found in James.

1880, was inclined to a strong interpretation of the principle of convergence. In his later papers, convergence is only seen as a regulative ideal or a hope.⁸

The early Peirce thought that reality in itself limits our beliefs, in such a way that sooner or later it will compel us to abandon false beliefs (those which are unsuccessful for action) and will oblige us to accept true beliefs (those which are useful in dealing with the world). But the move from inevitable convergence to pure hope seems too radical. We can accept convergence as a regulative ideal and we can understand “truth” as the name that we give to this ideal agreement compelled to us by reality. We can also call “reality” the object named by such agreement.

In principle, researches working with the same kind of categories and concepts, or with the same goals in mind, could reach the same conclusions if they were exposed to the same or similar evidence. But it is not required that researchers working with different categories or goals will do it. These different descriptions will illuminate different aspects of reality without being incompatible. In this way, the principle of convergence can be compatible with epistemological pluralism.

A proposition is true or false only under a certain description of reality, or under a system of beliefs, because outside of it, it has no meaning and (no comma) therefore cannot be a truth bearer. This is an idea explained by Peirce himself (CP 5.448):

⁸ In conversation with Paul Carus, quoted by Hookway (p. 135) and published in Peirce’s complete works (CP 6.610), when Carus interprets convergence as an inevitable event, Peirce said that it is just a hope “...a hope that such a conclusion may be substantially reached concerning the particular questions with which our inquiries are busied.” In fact, when Peirce prepared in 1903 an other edition of “How to make our ideas clear”, he suggested two changes to W 3, 273. In the new version it says: “...all the followers of science are *animated by the cheerful hope...*” and “This great *hope* is embodied in the conception of truth and reality”. This information comes from Hookway (2004,135).

Although it is true that “Any proposition you please *once you have determined its identity*, is either true or false”, yet *so long as it remains indeterminate and so without identity*, it need neither be true that any proposition you please is true, nor that any proposition you please is false.

But that does not preclude that propositions can be objectively true, if all researchers that share such description have the tendency to converge in such truth value. The principle of converge gives light to the idea that when someone claims that a proposition is true, or when one believes it to be true, they are normatively committing themselves with the belief that if all other people had the evidence that they had and if they assigned the same meanings to the words, they would have to believe what one believes, and vice versa. At the same time, this someone is committing to the idea that if that community of individuals were exposed to the same observational evidence and could interchange opinions, in ideal conditions, they would tend to converge in their beliefs. Thus, what Peirce wants to do is make clear the theoretical commitments that you acquire when you have a belief or, what amounts to the same thing, when you say that some proposition is true.⁹

Upon reaching this point, we shall ask two questions: First, does it make sense to claim the existence of an objective truth? And, second, can the concept of truth be a regulative ideal, and can it work normatively in order to lead our behavior and research? Rorty would answer negatively to both questions, whereas I would answer affirmatively to them. The most justified beliefs in a given moment and given all the available evidence, for a system of beliefs, are objectively true for those who share such a system. If the system is ours, we are just talking about truth. The fact that there are other communities that have different beliefs or different

⁹ Hookway (2004, 147): “Peirce is not offering an account of what it is for a proposition to be true, Instead he is clarifying: (i) What commitments we incur when we take a proposition to be true. (ii) What commitments we incur when we seek truth in some area.

criteria for justification than us only shows that we are obliged to confront our beliefs in comparison to theirs, in order to correct ours or to help them to correct theirs, in the case that they want to. The concept of truth is normative in the sense that you are logically (and also empirically and morally) obliged to believe that the most justified propositions are true. But the concept of truth is also a regulative ideal, in that we are morally (and also empirically and logically) obliged to try to present our world views as most justified as possible. In other words, we are logically, epistemologically and morally obliged to search for the truth.

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