

## SUMMARY NOTES ON TRUTH:<sup>1</sup>

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### Nature of Truth:

- A. Coherence Theory: Truth is defined in terms of internal propositional consistency (Spinoza; Hegel; Blanchard):
  - 1. All statements within a system must be logically consistent in that same system for the conclusion to be true.
  - 2. If the system is logically connected and is consistent within itself and occupies a proper relationship with other judgments in that system, then, it is true. If it does not, it is.
- B. Pragmatic Theory (Charles Peirce; William James; John Dewey):
  - 1. Truth is understood in terms of experience, practice, results, or that which works.
  - 2. If true assumptions lead to actions that have utility or bring beneficial results, they are considered true.
- C. Intentional/Subjective Theory:
  - 1. A truth statement must correspond to its referent in the real world or the statement possesses no more value than one's own mere opinions.
  - 2. If this is the case, then there can be no objective truth.
  - 3. Truth is defined in terms of emotions, feelings, sincerity, or intentions.
  - 4. Statements and affirmations do not contain truth-value as in objectivism; instead, truth is rooted within the subjective characteristics of an individual.
- D. Correspondence Theory of Truth (Aristotle):
  - 1. Truth is that which corresponds to reality;

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from H. Wayne House & Joseph M. Holden, *Charts of Apologetics and Christian Evidences* (Grand Rapids: Zondervans, 2006), 20-21.

2. Truth is telling it like it is.
3. It identifies things as they actually are.
4. It can never fail, diminish, change or be extinguished.

## **II. How Can Truth Be Known:**

### **A. Let's explore the various ways in which "truth" can be known:**

1. Correspondence view: Truth is what corresponds to reality and is known through objective means (Aristotle, Bertrand Russell):
  - a. It identifies things as they actually are.
  - b. It tells it like it is.
  - c. It does not diminish, change, fail, or extinguish.
2. Relativism (Protagoras; Joseph Fletcher):
  - a. Denies universal, totalizing, absolute truths that apply to all people, at all times, and everywhere.
  - b. Relativists appeal to personal autonomy, power structures, situation, and autonomy rather than an objective foundation as the basis for truth, values, and meaning
3. Subjectivism (Edmund Husserl; Martin Buber; Jean-Paul Sartre):
  - a. We have some kind of direct contact with object of belief. We know objects through experience or reason.
4. Rationalism (Rene Descartes; Benedictus de Spinoza; Gottfried Leibniz):
  - a. Look to reason instead of empirical data for origin and justification of beliefs.
5. Empiricism (John Locke; David Hume; George Berkeley):
  - a. Source of knowledge comes from experience of one or more of the 5 senses.

6. Pragmatism (William James; John Dewey; Charles Sanders Peirce):
  - a. If something has utility, that is, if it accomplishes something beneficial, then it is true. If true assumptions lead to actions that have utility or bring beneficial results, they are considered true.
  - b. Truth is not absolute.
  - c. Truth is tentative for we are in culture; we are not above culture.
  - d. Disagree with relativism. We can know what is true but it is always tentative. Thus, we must always be open to further inquiry.

### **III. Understanding postmodernism** (Jacques Derrida; Michel Foucault):

- A. **What are some of the major tenets of postmodernism? This is from a portion of a lecture by Ravi Zacharias-which I have adapted here:<sup>2</sup>**
  1. There is no reference for words. Rather, there is a limitless instability in language. Words do not have an ultimate point of reference.
  2. We manufacture reality by the words we use.
  3. Rhetoric radically suspends logic.
  4. We use words like a “hall of mirrors.”
  5. There are no laws of logic that governs our human discourse.
  6. There are no boundaries for meaning.

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<sup>2</sup> Contending for the Truth: Ligonier Ministries 2007 National Conference.