

ANTHONY CURTIS ADLER

Kant's Transcendental Alethiology: Truth from the Critique of Pure Reason to the Critique of Judgment

What is truth?

With this “old and famous question,” asked in the third section of the introduction to the transcendental logic in the *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft* (*Critique of Pure Reason*), Kant gives rise to an interpretative problem that, without being central to most Kant scholars' concerns, has nevertheless generated an extensive amount of literature (KrV A57/B82).¹ The difficulties surrounding Kant's theory of truth, however, have rather little to do with the ambiguity of his position. For, on the surface, Kant clearly ascribes in broad strokes to a “correspondence” theory of truth, the standard view that has, in one form or another, held sway since Aristotle: “The nominal definition [*Namenerklärung*] of truth, namely that it is the agreement [*Übereinstimmung*] of cognition with its object, is here granted and presupposed; but one demands to know what is the general and certain criterion of the truth of any cognition” (KrV A58/B82). Subsequent

¹ Kant's works will be cited parenthetically in the text, with page numbers referring either to the “Akademie” (Ak) edition of Kant's collected works [*Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, 29 vols. Ed. Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin: G. Reimer, 1902], or, in the case of the *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft* (KrV), to the A (1781) and B (1788) editions. Translations, unless otherwise noted, follow the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

passages remove all doubt that, in at least some form – and despite Gerold Prauss's insistence that the “here” refers not to Kant's own text but to the position being challenged – the correspondence theory of truth represents Kant's own basic framework for thinking about truth (Prauss 1969):

One quickly sees that, since the agreement of cognition with the object is truth, only the formal conditions of empirical truth can be inquired after there [...] (KrV A191/B236)

Truth, however, rests upon agreement with the object, with regard to which, consequently, the judgments of every understanding must agree. (KrV A820/B848)

The deeper difficulties with Kant's position arise from the entanglement of the first-order philosophical question (*What is truth?*) and the second-order interpretative question (*What is truth for Kant?*). This forbids a tidy distinction between philosophy proper, which asks basic questions, and the history of philosophy, which addresses these philosophical questions only through the detour of exegetical commentary. Kant's “Copernican revolution” transforms the philosophical enterprise so radically that the concept of truth could remain untouched. If philosophy can no longer pretend to talk about things as they are in themselves – if objects are knowable only as existing *for* the subject, organized through the faculties of cognition – then what can remain of the correspondence of knowledge to the object? Kant either does not really mean what he says, tepidly ascribing to a correspondence theory of truth simply because no other options were available, or he means by it something altogether different than the established, conventional understanding. Thus, for Norman Kemp Smith, Kant “is the real founder of the Coherence theory of truth,” even if “[h]e never himself employs the term Coherence, and he constantly adopts positions which are more in harmony with a Correspondence view of the nature and conditions of knowledge” (Kemp Smith 2003, p. 36). This is because “all that is most vital in his teaching and has proved really fruitful in its after-history” suggests the coherence theory of truth explicitly developed by Lotze, Sigwart, Dewey, and others, and ultimate-

ly derived from Hegel's restatement of Kant's logical doctrines (ibid.). For Kemp, in other words, it is not Kant's own formulations that stand in the way of ascribing a correspondence theory of truth to him, but the fruit of his critical project, which, beginning with Hegel, has led to a totally different understanding of truth. Somewhat more generally, the interpretive problem we face is that Kant's first critique sets in motion a philosophical development leading to new candidates for a theory of truth, indeed a complete transformation of the discourse surrounding truth, which comes to assume far greater significance as a *thematic question* – though not as a philosophical value – than before. This leads not only to more rigorous formulations of correspondence truth, namely the explicit clarification of alternative substantive theories of truth such as pragmatism and coherentism, but also, on the one hand, to the formulation of eliminationist and deflationary accounts, and, on the other hand, to Heidegger's understanding of truth as *disclosedness* and *un-concealment*, Foucault's genealogy of veridiction, relativist and perspectival accounts originating with Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, as well as rich considerations, originating with the Frankfurt School, of the political and social dimension of truth.² All this suggests that Kant's theory of truth only becomes comprehensible retrospectively – only in light of theories of truth that not only emerge in his wake, but that arise out of the “revolutionary” impulse of his critical project.

To lend plausibility to this claim, I will now give a rough sketch of how the *problematic* quality that correspondence theory assumes in Kant's first

² Because of the fragmented nature of the philosophical discourse on truth – a fragmentation reflecting the vicissitudes of the question of truth – it is difficult to gain even an overview of the range of approaches relevant for “retrospectively” appraising Kant's position. The best source of primary readings in the analytic tradition, focusing on the conflict between “deflationary” and “substantive” theories, is *Truth*, ed. Simon Blackburn and Keith Simmons, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. Richard L. Kirkham's *Theories of Truth: A Critical Introduction*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992, offers a comprehensive introduction to discussions of truth within analytic philosophy. A more ecumenical selection of readings, going back to Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and James and focusing on substantive theories, can be found in *Truth: Engagements across Philosophical Traditions*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2005.

critique paves the way to subsequent accounts of truth. We take our departure from Kant's well-known explanation, in the preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, of his "Copernican" revolution in philosophy.

If intuition has to conform to the constitution of the objects, then I do not see how we can know anything of them a priori; but if the object (as an object of the senses) conforms to the constitution of our faculty of intuition, then I can very well represent this possibility to myself. (KrV B xvii)

Nothing here demands an immediate rejection of the correspondence theory of truth. To the contrary, the correspondence theory of truth is implicit in how the question is framed: the "directness" in question suggests that knowledge, and hence truth, fundamentally involves a "vertical" relation between two strata that are so radically distinct as to involve a fundamental epistemological, and even ontological, ordering. And yet Kant nevertheless counters the understanding of this relation implicit in the correspondence theory of truth, according to which the *subjective* (=cognition) corresponds to, and hence directs itself toward, the *objective* (=Gegenstände, objects). What Kant claims, then, seems quite extraordinary. Correspondence truth, which itself implies the ordering of the subjective to the objective, only becomes comprehensible if we suppose that the objective in fact orders itself to the subjective. Correspondence truth resolves into two *contraposed* orderings.

It is hardly surprising that, in the wake of Kant, the correspondence theory of truth becomes less and less tenable. The first blow arrives with Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel – the development to which Kemp Smith alludes in the passage cited above. By rejecting the *thing in itself*, that ghostly vestige haunting Kant's *Critique*, the post-Kantian idealists make it even more difficult to think of truth as a relation of correspondence of knowledge to an objective reality radically exterior to it. Instead, the condition of the possibility of knowledge – and hence truth – is the absolute identity of subject and object. But if the subject and object are ultimately and originally identical, then not only must the deeper ground of correspondence

prove to be the coherence of this subject-object identity with itself, but *falseness* consists in the apparent non-identity of what is radically identical – and hence the correspondence theory of truth, which implies the non-identity of knowledge with its object, becomes the condition of the possibility of *untruth*. Thus, a tension emerges between discursive judgment, which implies separation, and a unifying intellectual intuition – a tension that is only really resolved when Hegel, rejecting the lingering nostalgia for a positive grounding in intellectual intuition, conceives of the dialectical proposition as the very means by which the absolute becomes manifest.³

More surprising, perhaps, is that two of the most radical revisions of the concept of truth, emerging not in the immediate aftermath of Kant's discrediting of dogmatic metaphysics but as distant philosophical developments, will also develop, albeit in quite different ways, the double order of Kant's "Copernican revolution." The first of these is Heidegger's hermeneutic concept of truth; the second, Tarski's "deflationary" account. Considered with a sufficient degree of conceptual abstraction, both make sense of the awkward "double order" by simultaneously taking it as the point of departure for thinking about truth and resolving it into a more comprehensible structure. With Heidegger, this involves reframing the double order as a "circle" – a cyclical interdependence between individual truths (disclosures of truth) and the already disclosed horizon within which alone disclosure can take place – no longer vicious but productive and originary, indeed constitutive for *Dasein* (human existence, roughly) itself.⁴ That an assertion is true (*wahr*) means that it is *entdeckend* – that it "discovers" entities in themselves (*das Seiende an ihm selbst*); it involves an *apophansis* – a "saying out" – that allows entities to be shown as they have been discovered (*ibid.*, p. 218). Truth (*Wahrheit*) thus comes to be conceived in terms of a discovery (*Entdecktheit*) of beings in their Being whose ultimate ground is the disclosedness (*Erschlossenheit*) of *Dasein* itself (*ibid.*, p. 221).

³ A crucial document, in this regard, is Hölderlin's fragment *Urteil und Sein*.

⁴ See Heidegger 1986, pp. 8, 152-4, 314-5.

For Tarski, a logician concerned primarily with the logical clarification of scientific language, the double ordering resolves into the simple logical biconditional of the T-Schema:

X is true if, and only if, p.

Here, *p* is any arbitrary sentence to which the word “true” refers – any true sentence, in other words – while *X* is the name of that sentence. Since the name of a sentence can be expressed simply by use of quotation marks, then this can also be rewritten, somewhat more perspicaciously, as:

“S” is true iff S.

This can be illustrated by the following, charmingly banal, assertion:

“The snow is white” is true iff the snow is white. (Tarski 1944, pp. 343-5)

Tarski’s T-Schema is not offered as a definition of truth *per se* but as a criterion for testing the material adequacy of a definition of truth in a language: a materially adequate definition of truth must imply all the equivalences of form T (ibid., p. 344). What matters for our very limited purposes, however, is that the *biconditionality* of the T-schema undermines the unidirectionality of correspondence as it is typically understood. One can no longer really speak of truth-bearers and truth-makers since there is no longer a unidirectional causal relation. The fact of the snow being white no more *makes* the statement true than the truth of the statement makes the snow white.⁵ In fact, it is not a relation between a proposition and reality; “The snow is white” is the sentential name for a proposition. We have entered into a purely formal-logical space.

Because Tarski and Heidegger’s theories of truth both develop from the fissure opened with the *Critique of Pure Reason*, it is not surprising that the

⁵ It is important that Aristotle’s own most basic definition of truth, which appears in *Metaphysics* 1011 b25, does not imply any unidirectional causal dependence. Hence Tarski is quite correct to regard his own semantic account as conforming “to the intuitive content of that of Aristotle” (ibid., p. 360).

richest and most compelling accounts of Kant's theory of truth – those readings concerned neither with narrowly exegetical questions nor with simply positioning Kant within a range of “options” wrested from their historical and philosophical context – take recourse to both of these theories, not despite but due to their very opposition. To substantiate this claim, I will consider two contrasting yet complementary examples: Gerald Prauss's “Zum Wahrheitsproblem bei Kant,” which rejects the interpretation of Kant as having a correspondence theory of truth, and Robert Hanna's “Kant, Truth, and Human Nature,” which offers a nuanced defense of it.

On Prauss's account, Kant invokes the nominal definition of truth as correspondence in the introduction to the transcendental analytic only to demonstrate the incapacity of formal logic to make sense of the question “What is truth?” let alone answer it. Formal logic, on his reading, leads to “precisely the starting point that, since Tarski, modern semantics has chosen” – a starting point that leads into the “wretched vicious circle [elende Dialele]” of which Kant warned and which in turn demands subtle technical means to rescue truth from paradox (Prauss 1969, pp. 176-7). Recognizing the sterility of a formal approach, Kant abandons formal for transcendental logic, which asks about the conditions that must be satisfied for there to be two such things that relate to each other as cognition and object (ibid., p. 179).⁶ Consequently, the sense of truth assumes a fundamentally different meaning: whereas the formal sense of truth is *non-falsity*, the transcendental sense of truth is *Wahrheitsdifferenz*, “truth-difference.” *Wahrheitsdifferenz* – a word not actually used by Kant – means neither the non-false, nor correspondence with an object, but object-relatedness as such (ibid., p. 181). It is this object-relatedness that allows the difference between truth and falsity to appear.

With this notion of a transcendental logic of truth, Prauss comes quite close to Heidegger's claim, in *Sein und Zeit*, that the truth whose location is the assertion or judgment depends on entities being discovered in their Being. For Prauss, as for Heidegger, there are two quite different senses

⁶ For an expanded account of “transcendental truth” in Kant, see Paek 2005. Paek draws a suggestive connection with Aquinas.

of truth: one original, the other derivative. The derivative sense of truth involves the logical predication of truth and falsity through an assertion or judgment. The original sense of truth transcends the opposition of the true and the false; it is only in relation to this original sense that the truth or falsity of a judgment can actually *say anything at all*, or amount to anything more than pure formalism. Prauss, to be sure, does not speak of the discovery of entities or disclosure, let alone *Dasein* and *Being-in-the-world*, but it is hard to understand what *Wahrheitsdifferenz*, as the condition of the possibility of object-relatedness, could mean if not the transcendental field within which the disclosure of entities could take place, or indeed the very disclosure of the difference between true and false.

For Hanna, Kant does ascribe to a correspondence theory of truth, even though it only accounts for part of his position. The very fact that Kant speaks of a nominal definition implies that there should also be a real definition, but whereas a nominal definition is merely verbal – a formula that can be substituted for the word – a real definition accounts for the substantive essence of a thing.⁷ The problem, for Hanna, is that allowing such a distinction between nominal and real definition seems to lead to three “unhappy interpretive results,” that, taken together, call into question whether Kant has anything substantive to say about truth. These are, in brief:

- (1) Kant considers the *nominal definition* “minimally acceptable but ultimately vacuous.” (Hanna 2000, p. 226)
- (2) Kant does not manage to achieve a real definition, suggesting, for Kant, “in the last analysis nothing substantive can ever be said about the concept of truth.” (Ibid., p. 227)
- (3) While Kant raises the possibility of “the universal and certain criterion of truth of any and every cognition,” he immediately rejects the existence of such a criterion, suggesting that, for Kant, the “question of the criterion of truth cannot be satisfactorily answered.” (Ibid.)

⁷ Regarding the meaning of the “nominal definition” for Kant, see Vanzo 2010. While Vanzo offers a more historically situated account of nominal definition in Kant, the gist of his reading agrees with Hanna.

Hanna, however, considers that such a conclusion is not warranted. For Kant, he argues, the definition of truth as “accordance of my cognition with its object” is “strictly and analytically correct, yet metaphysically and epistemically neutral.” Kant, consequently, ascribes to a “plausibly weak version of the correspondence theory,” one that shows a strong resemblance to Tarski’s semantic theory of truth. The real definition of truth, in turn, is equivalent to the “criterion of truth.” But because Kant rejects the possibility of a universal criterion of truth, he does not believe that there can be a single *real definition* of truth. Nevertheless, Kant believes that while there is no *single* criterion of truth, different kinds of truths have different criteria. Hence “truth has several different, equally legitimate, and systematically specifiable criteria” (ibid.). Consequently, Kant is neither an unhappy deflationist nor an advocate for a strong and substantive correspondence theory, but is instead a “constrained pluralist about truth.”

These two interpretations, their differences notwithstanding, share a similar tendency: both analyze a seemingly unified conception of truth in *two* vastly different directions representing opposite ends of the neo-Kantianism that dominated German and Austrian academic philosophy into the beginning of the twentieth century. This suggests, in turn, that both accounts, while seeking to defend Kant’s theory of truth, ultimately call its coherence into question. On Prauss’s account, logical and transcendental truth seem fundamentally disjoint, raising deep questions as to how the logical structure of truth relates to its transcendental structure. With Hanna, to be sure, the senses of truth are more clearly complementary: the real definition would seem to give a more concrete and substantial meaning to the neutral, weak correspondence theory claimed by the nominal definition. Yet even if he does not fragment the sense of truth, fragmentation enters his argument in a different way – through the very notion that there are multiple, equally legitimate criteria. While the real definition may *cohere* with the nominal definition, the real definition itself has fragmented into several real definitions whose relation to one another remains opaque.

To better understand what this means, let us take a closer look at Hanna’s argument for the existence of plural criteria in Kant. He begins by citing Kant’s argument for the impossibility of a *universal* criterion, which

first appears in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.⁸ The argument runs as follows: were there a universal criterion, applicable to all objects, then this would have to abstract away from all the content of cognition, and yet the truth concerns nothing else than just such content, and hence the very idea of such a criterion is absurd. In the *Jäsche Logic*, this same argument is cast in slightly different terms: a “universal material criterion of truth” is impossible, indeed self-contradictory, because as a “material” criterion it must concern the very differences among objects that, as a “universal” criterion, it abstracts away from (Ak 9, pp. 50-1). According to Hanna’s reading, Kant is disputing neither that truth can have universal or necessary features nor that it is possible to have criteria for truth; he is merely rejecting the “monolithic truth-theory of the Cartesians,” according to which a proposition is true if and only if it can be grasped through a clear and distinct intuition (Hanna 2000, p. 243)

But what are Kant’s plural material truth criteria? The first example that Hanna gives is the principle of non-contradiction. While this serves as a negative criterion for all judgments, it applies as a sufficient criterion only for analytic cognitions (ibid., pp. 244-5).⁹ This one example is enough to establish the minimal claim that there is at least one genuine criterion of truth. But as Hanna goes on to demonstrate, a material criterion can also be given for the other fundamental variants of judgment: synthetic a priori, and synthetic a posteriori. In the case of the former: this criterion is nothing else than “[t]he highest principle of all synthetic judgment,” namely that “every object stands under the necessary conditions of [the] synthetic unity of the manifold of intuition in a possible experience” (KrV A157-8/B196-7). In the case of the latter:

That coherence [*Zusammenhang*] of appearances determining one another with necessity according to universal laws, which we entitle nature . . . [is] the criterion of empirical truth, whereby experience is distinguished from dreaming. (KrV A451/B479)

⁸ See KrV A59/B83.

⁹ See also KrV A151/B190-1.

To clarify these three different criteria, Hanna applies the technical language of “isomorphic semantic projection” (Hanna 2000, p. 237). Each of the three criteria assumes the following form:

Proposition P is true *iff* P projects isomorphically onto X, where X is either:

- (1) every logically possible world (=analytic a priori cognitions)
- (2) every possible world of human experience (=synthetic a priori)
- (3) an actual or real world, but not every possible experienceable world (=synthetic a posteriori). (Ibid., pp. 244-8)

Such a presentation, however, should not lead us to think that the criteria can operate independently of Kant's account of the faculties of the mind. Rather, “each truth-criterion correlates directly with a distinct human cognitive capacity” (ibid., p. 247). Analytic truth is “conceptual truth,” resting in “our capacity for conceptualization and having thoughts – the faculty of understanding” (ibid.); “[s]ynthetic a priori truth is based on the possibility of human sensory experience...our capacity for pure intuition and pure productive imagination – the faculty of pure sensibility” (ibid.); “And synthetic a posteriori truth is based on the application of conceptual and judgmental rules to particular actual objects of perception, and therefore connects directly with our capacity for inner and outer empirical intuition – the faculty of empirical sensibility” (ibid.). This is to say, each faculty involves a certain kind of *disclosure* and each discloses its own object domain. The criteria of truth, in each case, involve the relation to this specific disclosure. While the criteria are described in terms of “isomorphic semantic projection,” the condition of this projection's possibility lies with the different cognitive faculties. Hanna's interpretation thus appears closer to Prauss's than might first seem to be the case; both, even without making any explicit reference to Heidegger, affirm the dependence of propositional truth on a more original – logically prior – moment of entitative disclosure. While this more original moment of disclosure can be juxtaposed to the *assertion* of truth through a “truth-bearing” judgment, it is nevertheless structured around the possibility of judgment – a connection

that leads into the heart of the transcendental deduction of the categories. For only thus can it constitute a domain of objects.

That there are not only multiple criteria for truth and multiple real definitions of truth, but multiple “fields of disclosure” achieved through distinct faculties of the mind, suggests even more strongly than before that truth is not only *plural* but *fragmented*. If a judgment or an assertion can still be said, in some minimal way, to correspond to objects, it is only because there is no single, homogenous object domain but multiple objects’ domains. Consider a geometry teacher standing in front of a circle drawn on the blackboard. She tells the class, “*Every point on that line is equidistant from the center.*” Is this statement true or false? If she is referring to the actual circular shape drawn on the backboard, it is strictly speaking false. Yet the actual line implies an idealized geometric space, and with respect to this her assertion is true, and indeed, for Kant, an a priori synthetic truth.

To speak of fragmentation assumes a relation to lost or broken unity. Pluralism, in contrast, is neutral if not tendentially positive – but only since it has relinquished the desire for a more radical, totalizing unity and is content to affirm difference. Hanna, by interpreting Kant as an alethic pluralist, risks underplaying the significance that totality will come to play not only in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, with its discussion of the regulative function of pure reason, but above all in the *Critique of Judgment*, which Kant will himself conceive as the means of uniting the two disjoint parts of philosophy – the respective doctrines of nature and of freedom – into a coherent whole (Ak 5: 176-9). Indeed, what takes the place of unification and totality, in Hanna’s reading, is *constraint*. Kant is a pluralist, but a “constrained pluralist about truth” (Hanna 2000, p. 227). It is precisely this constraint that keeps Kant from becoming either a “truth-relativist” or an “unconstrained pluralist,” allowing him to hold to a correspondence theory of truth and reject “non-classical truth-values” such as dialethism (ibid., pp. 247-248). The more precise nature of Kant’s constraint consists in the belief that:

There are precisely three types of truth, correlating one-to-one with the three basic semantic types of propositions, and then in turn with the three basic cognitive faculties making up our total capacity for cognition. Each of the three types of truth is a type of non-traditional correspondence. And since Kant is committed to the law of excluded middle or bivalence, each of the three types of truth is also a type of classical truth. (Ibid., p. 247)

The constraint in question ultimately involves totality – the total capacity for cognition. According to Hanna’s reading, the “three types” of truth are correlated with the *total capacity* for cognition; they are constrained to the totality of *human cognition*. The totality in question is inseparable from the inherent and radical finitude of the cognitive capacities of human beings. But granting that Kant’s pluralism is a constrained pluralism, and that he is neither a relativist nor a wild pluralist, it is nevertheless worth asking whether he is quite so constrained as Hanna would have him be. For indeed, cognition is only one of human beings’ capacities, and human nature is characterized both by the finitude of the understanding, constrained to possible objects of sensible experience, and by the infinitude of reason, whose peculiar fate, so Kant begins the preface of the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, is to trouble itself with questions that it cannot answer (KrV A vii). Can the matter of truth be constrained to cognition?

Hanna recognizes that, for Kant, “the capacity of cognition is only the first of two constitutive psychological capacities of the human person, the other being the capacity for desiring and willing – human agency” (Hanna 2000, p. 249). It is, moreover, the ultimate “primacy of the practical” – the need to hold open a space for human agency and morality – that compels Kant’s constraint. And indeed, while the plural meanings of truth are constrained to cognition, nevertheless “the very *sense* of the concept of truth ultimately derives from the special role it plays in human agency and morality” (ibid., p. 248). Truth is ultimately important and meaningful not only as the core value of cognition, governing the entire enterprise of science, but because “all important moral concepts of sincerity and insincerity, and veracity and mendacity, presuppose the concept of truth.” What matters in this regard is not whether my judgments are true but that I am

truthful, “non-cognitively aimed at truth.” For indeed: “Kant is telling us that truthfulness, not the truth, shall make you free” (ibid., p. 250).

Truthfulness, on my reading of Hanna’s argument, involves being “non-cognitively aimed at the truth,” because speaking truthfully cannot be reduced to trying always to say things that are factually true. Statements of fact are untruthful when they either imply an intention that does not exist or conceal one’s true intentions. If I ask for my neighbor’s hammer, saying “I only need it for a couple of days,” this may be factually true, but it is untruthful if, nevertheless, I intend to sell it rather than returning it when I’m finished with what I had to do. Conversely, if I tell my neighbor “I will return this hammer to you in a few days,” but I then get kidnapped, preventing me from returning it, the statement will be proved false, and yet the promise will still have been made truthfully if, in fact, I sincerely intended to return it. But while truthfulness plays a far greater role than truth in the second critique, I would argue that it does not exhaust the problem of truth in Kant’s critical philosophy. While one can plausibly argue that only these three types of judgments are fully and unproblematically truth-bearing, it is not clear that these three judgments belong exclusively to cognitive judgement. In a passage from the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant distinguishes between the two parts of the doctrine of elements: “an *Analytic*, as the rule of truth [*Regel der Wahrheit*], as the first part, and a *Dialectic*, as the exposition and resolution of illusion in the judgments of practical reason” (Ak 5: 16). While this division parallels the organization of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the order of the analytic is reversed: instead of moving from sensibility to concepts to principles, it will go from principles to concepts to sensibility (Ak 5: 16). The necessity for this inversion follows from the fact that the *Critique of Practical Reason* considers reason not in relation to objects but in relation to the will and its causality:

Here the law of causality from freedom, that is, from some pure practical rational principle, constitutes the unavoidable beginning and determines the objects to which alone it can be referred. (Ak 5: 16)

This leaves no doubt that certain non-cognitive judgments also involve truth and can indeed be said to be true or false. While we might perhaps still think of this relation as a correspondence – though to an object that is produced rather than given – it is hardly possible to think that correspondence applies to all truth in a single non-equivocal way. Moreover, whatever this truth is, it cannot be thoroughly assimilated to the analytic judgments that appear in the first critique and that Hanna attributes to the faculty of understanding. The truth of practical reason, if we may speak of such, involves the specific mode of givenness of the “practical rule,” which is “unconditional,” and “represented a priori as a categorical practical proposition by which the will is objectively determined absolutely and immediately,” and wherein pure reason is “immediately lawgiving” (Ak 5: 31). The consciousness of this “fundamental law” – its disclosure to consciousness – is a “fact of reason” that cannot be derived from antecedent data but “forces itself upon us of itself as a synthetic a priori proposition that is not based on any intuition, pure or empirical, although it would be analytic if the freedom of the will were presupposed” (Ak 5: 31). This peculiar “fact of reason” thus involves the synthetic a priori revelation of analytic truth. Because Kant says so little about this practical truth, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions as to how it could be understood, but it is, at the very least, clear that, because it combines features of both analytic and synthetic a priori truths, Hanna’s account of the criteria in terms of isomorphic projection cannot apply.

Having now considered the role of truth in Kant’s practical philosophy, and having seen that truth is not just an issue in pure cognitive judgments, we are in a better position to assess Hanna’s claim that Kant is a “constrained pluralist about truth.” It is, at the very least, clear that, even if Kant is a constrained pluralist, he is not as constrained as Hanna would have him be: the problem of truth, for Kant, escapes beyond the narrow fence imposed by the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

But if Kant’s alethic pluralism is not constrained to the sphere of cognition, this means that the several modes of truth are not ultimately kept together through the unitary nature of human cognition. This suggests that if it is constrained, it is only in a much weaker sense: while it is certainly

possible to map out the possible forms of truth, and while the bugbear of relativism can be happily kept at bay, nevertheless the multiple, though still finite, senses of truth cannot be unified through the underlying sense of objective correspondence. Moreover, the ultimate harmony between them cannot be taken for granted; they describe a fragmented field, riven with tensions. Whereas the three real definitions or criteria articulated by Hanna describe three nested domains – the world of logical possibility, the world of human sensible experience, the actual world – whose hierarchical relationship (the second is a special case of the first, and the third a special case of the second) forbids radical conflict, this is no longer so the moment we allow, at the very least, that practical reason has its own kind of truth. Suddenly, a rift opens between *nature* and *freedom*. The truth of freedom is not simply the sort of cognitive truth that is presupposed by truthfulness as an ethical virtue – ethics, after all, unfolds in a world whose objective truth must be acknowledged – but the sort of truth discovered in the promise; the truth of our membership, as finite rational beings, in the kingdom of ends. Such is the truth of our radical capacity for moral agency, which announces itself to us in the inner voice of conscience.

This brings us to the *Critique of Judgment*, which takes its departure from the rift between freedom and nature. Thus, in the introduction, he speaks of the “incalculable [*unübersehbare*] gulf fixed between the domain of the concept of nature, as the sensible, and the domain of the concept of freedom, as the supersensible [...]” (Ak 5: 175-6) Between the first and the second, no transition is possible; it is as if they were two different worlds. Nevertheless, reciprocal influence exists between them. The concept of freedom should realize its purposes in the sensible world, and nature must somehow be conceived such that its laws harmonize (*zusammenstimme*) with the realization of the moral law (Ak 5: 176).

Thus there must still be a ground of the *unity* of the supersensible that grounds nature with that which the concept of freedom contains practically, the concept of which, even if it does not suffice for cognition of it either theoretically or practically, and thus has no proper domain of its own, nevertheless makes possible the transition from the manner of thinking in

accordance with the principles of the one to that in accordance with the principles of the other. (Ak 5: 176)

Here the emphasis is no longer on the compatibility of nature and freedom but on the gulf between them. The use of the word *unübersehbar* – imperfectly translated as “incalculable” – to describe this gulf is itself telling. In ordinary German, this could mean either immense or obvious – either incapable of being seen to the end or incapable of being seen past. Allowing the ambiguity to stand, while keeping in mind the implicit reference to vision, would lead us to the following interpretation: the gulf is un-over-seeable since it discloses the absolute difference between these two modes of disclosure. The absolute absence of common ground between these two domains is not only disclosed as a positive fact, but discloses a new mode of truth *qua* disclosure. This new mode of truth does not promise to unify nature and freedom by envisioning a new ontological domain that unites freedom and nature under a higher-order concept. It is not a question, as it becomes with German idealism, of attaining the perspective of the absolute. Rather, it merely joins together nature and freedom – nature-truth and freedom-truth – by opening a field within which an encounter with both truths takes place.

This field, of course, is constituted through the faculty of the power of judgment. Significantly, the faculty of judgment does not constitute a domain (*Gebiet*); unlike the domains of nature and freedom, no special object belongs to it (Ak 5: 176). We could thus think of it as a pure field of truth – one where the question of truth is no longer bound up with ontology. This leads to a surprising conclusion: even though the *Critique of Judgment* has almost nothing to say about truth, it is in fact even more fundamentally concerned with it than the other two critiques. For it has to do not with a specific kind of correspondence to a specific object domain, but with corresponding and disclosure as such – or, as we might put it, the *truth of truth*. Such a conclusion is justified simply by recognizing the fundamental role of judgment in all three sorts of truth whose different criteria Hanna elaborated upon. Judgment is where truth happens.

If judgment is where truth happens, what are we to make of those kinds of judgment that are the special concern of the *Third Critique*: judgments

that, without *resulting* in truth, exhibit the very power of judgment? Such judgments, I propose, are not truth-bearing but truth-concerned. Without resulting in this or that specific true judgment, they nevertheless concern the very possibility of truth as such – a possibility that rests on both the amenability of nature for understanding and the ultimate coherence of cognitive and practical truth.

In the dialectic of the teleological power of judgment, Kant, having outlined the various philosophical systems of nature, then asks, “What do all these systems want?” For while they seek to explain our teleological judgments about nature, they end up either denying all truth to such judgments or, acknowledging the truth of such judgments, promise “to demonstrate the possibility of a nature in accordance with the idea of final causes” (Ak 5: 392). Neither of these systems, however, can attain its aim: both are equally impossible. For while the concept of a *natural goal*, as deployed in teleological judgment, applies to nature as an object of experience, it nevertheless subsumes the causal order of nature under a form of causality that is only thinkable through reason. For it to be possible to use this rational concept dogmatically for the determining power of judgment, we would have to guarantee the “objective reality of this concept.” While the concept of a thing as a natural end is conditioned by experience, being only possible “under certain conditions given in experience,” it cannot be abstracted from experience, but “is possible only in accordance with a principle of reason in the judging of the object” (Ak 5: 396). The concept of a thing as a natural goal is conditioned by experience but cannot be derived from experience. It is not to be understood, in other words, as a higher-order abstraction from experience, but involves an additional element, rooted in reason, that, as such, lacks objective reality.

Kant's solution to the impasse presented by teleological judgment appears in the 75th section of the *Critique of Judgment*. In making a teleological judgment, one is *not* saying that the generation of certain things in nature is only possible through a teleological cause, with purposes determining objective reality. Rather, one is saying that, because of the peculiar nature of our cognitive faculties, we are compelled to judge that the things of nature could not have come into existence otherwise than

through a purposive causality, and hence to think of a being that is productive in a manner analogous to an understanding, which realizes the ideas that it conceives by bringing them into existence through a series of mechanical causes (Ak 5: 397-8). Teleological judgments, this is to say, are not determinative judgments about reality but reflective judgments about a person's faculties of cognition.

The first principle is thus an objective fundamental principle for the determining, the second a subjective fundamental principle merely for the reflecting power of judgment, hence a maxim that reason prescribes to it. (Ak 5: 398)

This leads us to a striking conclusion: teleological judgments, as judgments about our own faculty of cognition, concern precisely what the ultimate ground of material truth is, the basis of the three criteria that, according to Hanna's reading, constitute the "real definition" of truth. And hence, while teleological judgments lack their own objective criterion, they are nevertheless judgments *about* truth. They are concerned, in a very fundamental way, with the sort of truth involved in cognition, even if they do not themselves say something true about objective reality. We might speak of a second-order truth, or, borrowing the language of post-Kantian German idealism, of a higher potency of truth born from the reflection on the very capacity for truth.

The same basic reasoning applies *a fortiori* to aesthetic judgment, the primary focus of the *Critique of Judgment*. Consider the following passage from the pithy deduction of the judgment of taste:

Now since the power of judgment in regard to the formal rules of judging, without any matter (neither sensation nor concept), can be directed only to the subjective conditions of the use of the power of judgment in general (which is restricted neither to the particular kind of sense nor to a particular concept of understanding), and thus to that subjective element that one can presuppose in all human beings (as requisite for possible cognitions in general), the correspondence of a representation with these conditions of

the power of judgment must be able to be assumed to be valid for everyone a priori. I.e., the pleasure or subjective purposiveness of the representation for the relation of the cognitive faculties in the judging of a sensible object in general can rightly be expected of everyone. (Ak 5: 290)

The faculty of judgment, for Kant, is the unifying faculty of cognition, since all cognitions take the form of judgments. Truth and falsity, in turn, apply in the first place to judgments; it is judgments that are said to be true or false. Hence, as far as the judgment of taste concerns the subjective conditions of the use of the faculty of judgment, it concerns nothing else than the subjective – as opposed to objective – conditions of truth. It is significant, moreover, that in just this context Kant deploys the concept of correspondence (*Übereinstimmung*), referring to the correspondence of a representation (*Vorstellung*) with the conditions of the power of judgment. This suggests that the power of judgment is a subjective power for correspondence that itself serves as the grounds for the specific correspondences of cognitions to specific objects on which knowledge depends. While the judgment of taste does not establish specific truths about the world, it conveys the potential for truth within the human powers of cognition; indeed, it is disclosive of the very truthfulness of experience. When we judge that something is beautiful, we judge that it is amenable to understanding, even though it has not yet been understood. The judgment of beauty is not objectively true – it says nothing about the object itself. But it promises truth.

This promise also involves the prospect of a deepening agreement among different minds. Hence taste, for Kant, comprises a form of *sensus communis*, by which Kant understands a capacity for judgment that, in its reflections, takes into consideration the a priori mode of representation (*Vorstellungsart*) of everyone else, thus escaping from the illusions that result from mistaking the private constitution of one's mind for objective determinations of reality (Ak 5: 293). That the *sensus communis*, in just this way, plays a vital role in the human search for truth appears clearly in the *Jäsche Logic*, where he remarks that the “external touchstone of truth is the comparison of our own judgments with those of others,” adding that:

[t]he common human understanding (*sensus communis*) is also in itself a touchstone for discovering the mistakes of the artificial use of the understanding [...] This is what it means to orient oneself in thought or in the speculative use of reason by means of the common understanding, when one uses the common understanding as a test for passing judgment on the correctness of the speculative use. (Ak 9: 57)

Aesthetic judgment not only attests to the truthfulness of experience, but helps orient us toward the truth.

The *Critique of Judgment* concerns judgment as such in terms of its own a priori principle. Such a principle could only be the principle of truth, the pure a priori condition of the possibility of truth independent of any objects whatsoever, be they empirical, purely a priori, or practical. Such a principle or a priori condition does not establish a *Gebiet*, an object domain in relation to which a judgment or cognition could be said to be true (or false). Rather, it is the condition for the unity of the specific criterion corresponding to the plural real definitions. We might think of this condition as a further criterion, but this would not mean that a universal criterion of the truth is possible after all. The criterion of unity does not establish a universal criterion for truth such as would apply to all specific objects even while abstracting from all specificity. Rather, the criterion for unity speaks to the possibility that different criteria, different objects, different truths can be brought together. Here, an analogy might be drawn with the concept of the transcendental tracing back, through the Scholastics, to Aristotle. Kant's rejection of a universal criterion of truth is, indeed, analogous to Aristotle's argument that Being cannot be regarded as a highest-order universal. While every entity partakes of Being, there is no single common sense of Being that can be derived by abstracting away from all particularity, since it is this very particularity that accounts for this entity being the kind of entity that it is.

Such an a priori condition of truth is nothing else than the *sensus communis*, human finitude in its essential finitude. Human finitude is the paradoxical condition of belonging both to the domain of nature and freedom, of being claimed by both domains – *suffering* both domains.

Accordingly, the primary concern of the *Critique of Judgment* is with feelings of pleasure and displeasure whose grounds, as far as they are disconnected from any interest in an object, are to be found a priori. These aesthetic feelings disclose the relations existing between different faculties of the mind. Hence, in the case of the judgment of taste, the feeling of pleasure is the very consciousness of “the purely formal purposiveness in the play of the powers of cognition of the subject” occasioned by a representation through which an object is given (Ak 5: 222). This feeling is rooted in an “inner causality”, which lacks any reference to a specific object of cognition; hence it contains “a mere form of the subjective purposiveness of a representation in an aesthetic judgment” (Ak 5: 222). Moreover, this disclosure does not produce knowledge of any kind; it does not result in some knowledge that would then render it irrelevant. Rather, “[w]e linger over the consideration of the beautiful because this consideration strengthens and reproduces itself” (Ak 5: 222). This tarrying suggests that the aesthetic experience involved in the judgment of taste not only *discloses* a field of truth that involves nothing less than the possibility of a relationship between the objective modes of truth, but that this disclosure is never just a *fait accompli*. Instead, it must be continually reaffirmed, and precisely because it is not the disclosure of an object but a pure disclosure – a disclosure of the very possibility of disclosure, or, in other words, of the ultimate amenability of the human mind to truth. Such an amenability is no longer guaranteed, as it was for Aquinas, through divine knowledge, but in the *sensus communis* as humankind’s plural finitude, revealed above all through aesthetic judgment and indeed through the historical cultivation of taste.

Bibliography

- Blackburn, Simon, and Simmons, Keith eds. (1992) *Truth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Hanna, Robert (2000) "Kant, Truth and Human Nature," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 8. 2: 225-250.
- Heidegger, Martin (1986) *Sein und Zeit*, 16th ed. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag).
- Kant, Immanuel (1902) *Gesammelte Schriften*, 29 vols. (G. Reimer: Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin).
- Kirkham, Richard (1992) *Theories of Truth: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: MIT Press).
- Medina, José and Wood, David eds. (2005) *Truth: Engagements Across Philosophical Traditions* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers)
- Paek, Chong-Hyon (2005) "Kant's Theory of Transcendental Truth as Ontology," *Kant Studien* 96: 147-160.
- Prauss, Gerold (1969) "Zum Wahrheitsproblem bei Kant," *Kant-Studien* 60. 2: 166-182.
- Tarski, Alfred (1944) "The Semantic Conception of Truth: and the Foundations of Semantics," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 4.3: 341-376.
- Vanzo, Alberto (2010) "Kant on the Nominal Definition of Truth," *Kant-Studien* 101: 147-166.