

# Truth as Normative Power

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## Abstract

Ever since Aristotle proposed the definition of truth, people have not stopped discerning the concept of truth. Different from the traditional correspondence theory of truth, the modern understanding of the concept of truth emphasizes the role of justification. In the context of pragmatism, Bernstein agrees with the role of justification in understanding truth and appreciates Rorty's cautionary usage of truth to advance the work of understanding truth, but at the same time, proposes that the concept of truth contains the dimension of normative power, and it is this dimension that allows truth to avoid both metaphysical accusations and relativist reproaches while retaining the positive meaning of justification. From the correspondence theory of truth to the regulative ideal, to the cautionary usage, and finally, to the normative power, people continue to deepen their understanding of the concept of truth by means of criticism of criticism.

## Keywords

Correspondence, Justification, Regulative Ideas, Cautionary Usage, Normative Power

## 1. Introduction

In contemporary American pragmatism, although both Richard Rorty and Richard J. Bernstein are pioneers, people pay insufficient attention to Bernstein compared with Rorty. For Bernstein, as Jeffrey Stout said, "of the two friends, he is the more cautious reader and thinker. He is better at keeping his feet on the ground and at keeping his eye on a wider range of relevant considerations while sizing up a problem... One might also be tempted to view the difference between the two philosophers as merely stylistic or temperamental. But succumbing to either of these temptations would be to underestimate what is at stake, philosophically, in these differences and the significance of Bernstein's contributions to the discussion." (Stout, 2012: p. 187) For example, understanding Rorty and Bernstein from

the concept of truth helps to truly illustrate the uniqueness of Bernstein's philosophy. Like most pragmatists, including classical pragmatists and contemporary pragmatists, Bernstein believed that a pragmatic explanation of truth was possible. Specifically, we should link truth with our justificatory social practices, distinguish truth from justification, and avoid bad relativism and conventionalism. Unlike other pragmatists, on the one hand, Bernstein always emphasized that behind the debate about truth was the prejudgment (perspective or position), or in his own words, intuition or temperament<sup>1</sup>; on the other hand, Bernstein realized that relying solely on our intuitions will ultimately be unable to solve any problem, so argument and refutation based on intuition were necessary. (Bernstein, 2010: p. 110) Based on these principle requirements, Bernstein proposed the concept of truth that truth played a role in normative power in the I-thou reasoning practices.

## 2. From Correspondence Theory to Regulative Ideal

It is well known that the concept of truth first comes from Aristotle's explanation. "To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true." (Aristotle, 1941: IV, 7, 1011b) Later, in the history of Western philosophy, philosophers basically understood Aristotle's concept of truth as agreement, adequation, and the so-called correspondence theory of truth. For example, in the view of medieval philosophers, truth referred to *adequatio rei et intellectus*. Up to Kant, the concept of truth was still the agreement of cognition with its object. "The old and famous question with which the logicians were to be driven into a corner...is this: What is truth? The nominal definition of truth namely, that it is the agreement of cognition with its object, is here granted and presupposed." (Kant, 1998: p. 197) After the linguistic turn in philosophy, Tarski rewritten Aristotle's concept of truth in a more concise and clear way that "p" is true, if and only if p.

P is the ordinary language (object language) that we are familiar with, and "p" is the name of the object language. The problem now is that we cannot draw the correspondence connotation of truth from the relationship between "p" and p. Because, on the one hand, the concept of truth claims to be fully expressed by the relationship between "p" and p (if and only if: sufficient and necessary); on the other hand, the relationship between "p" and p means the correspondence

<sup>1</sup>Intuition refers to something like our hunches, our pre-analytic sense of the way things are, not something that is immediately or directly known. (Bernstein, 2010: p. 106) Temperament was a concept developed by William James in *Pragmatism*, and he believed that the history of philosophy was largely a conflict between human temperaments. "Of whatever temperament a professional philosopher is, he tries, when philosophizing, to sink the fact of this temperament. Temperament is no conventionally recognized reason, so he urges impersonal reasons only for his conclusions. Yet his temperament really gives him a stronger bias than any of his more strictly objective premises. It loads the evidence for him one way or the other, making a more sentimental or more hardhearted view of the universe, just as this fact or that principle would. He trusts his temperament. Wanting a universe that suits it, he believes in any representation of the universe that does suit it. He feels men of the opposite temper to be out of key with the world's character, and in his heart he considers them incompetent and 'not in it,' in the philosophic business, even though they may far excel him in dialectical ability." (James, 1975: p. 11)

between the reality(state of affairs, facts) and the statement(assertion, conviction), which requires us to explain the correspondence between the functional differences (statement and reality) on both sides of the relationship, which is beyond the scope of only the names of  $p$  and  $p$ . So, how do we further understand the correspondence theory of truth? Bernstein gave us the daily example of “it is raining outside”. To judge whether this sentence is true, we need to go out and see. If the conclusion of “see” is raining, then “it is raining outside” is true, and otherwise is false. However, our judgment is based on the premise of the understanding of this judgment sentence, that is, we know what “outside” and “is raining” mean, and we also know the use of “rain” here. Therefore, as long as we have learned to use language, we have the ability to make judgments (for example, through perception, etc.), namely asserting the correspondence between the statement and the reality (whether the statement is true). Such examples are everywhere in life, and indeed bring a lot of convenience to our life, so that the correspondence theory of truth has long been recognized by philosophers, and this is also its charm and attraction.

In contrast, there are also a large number of instances in our lives involving logically complex philosophical, scientific, mathematical, or historical assertions. In the face of these complex cases, we cannot just rely on “go out and see” to make judgment. The correspondence theory of truth began to loosen. A remedial explanation is that although we cannot rely on direct judgment, we can still resort to indirect procedures, namely to the mode of all kinds of reasoning. Yet new problems arise once again, because the ways of reasoning vary in the face of such things as past experience, aesthetic or moral judgments, mathematical or scientific assertions. So even if we resort to indirect reasoning, the available reasons before us do not help us to judge. Unless we stand in God’s perspective, the correspondence theory of truth will no longer be feasible. So it becomes clear that the correspondence theory of truth (the concept of truth) needs to be linked to whether we can provide reasons to justify it. Here is how we think about the relationship between two completely different related items (statement and reality): what such a correspondence is, how to test this correspondence, who will test this correspondence, and so on. It can be seen that when we separate truth from its practice of justification, the correspondence theory of truth since Aristotle will either be incomprehensible, or metaphysics, or both. (Wellmer, 2003: p. 32)

When the concept of truth is associated with justification, Tarski’s formula of truth can be rewritten as the case when the assertion  $p$  is true, if and only if the situation is that  $p$  is asserted. This gives us an opportunity to think about the possible role of the expression of truth in asserting practice. In the practice of assertion, the act of asserting is an act in the linguistic game of justified or unjustified. For example, when we have good reasons to make an assertion, we are entitled to make it; we can also believe in ourselves by perceiving it; or we choose to trust others when they have good reasons, etc. Thus, learning to use language changes from being a competent judgment to being learning to make a judgment in a

reasonable way. In this sense, the concept of truth can be further interpreted as the legitimacy of the assertion, that is, grounded or justified. Therefore, different from the correspondence theory of truth, the concept of truth is reduced to justification here.

Putting aside the difference between truth and justification, the discovery of the internal connection between them is a progress of inquiry because this does not exist in the correspondence theory of truth. Wittgenstein pointed out in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* that “to understand a proposition means to know what is the case if it is true.” (Wittgenstein, 2002: p. 25). This view constitutes the basic idea of truth-conditional semantics. What Wittgenstein means is: if we know the truth condition of a sentence, then we understand it. And an assertion, or the truth condition of a sentence, is the condition under which I am qualified to assert it. Correspondingly, if I learn a language or understand a sentence in that language, then I know under what conditions I am qualified to assert it. This understanding of truth, to a large extent, highlights the practical meaning of truth, that is, “know how” or what the condition of truth is. It is in the sense of this practice that we understand the concept of truth as a condition of assertability. And when we understand the truth as a guaranteed assertion, the truth also becomes an epistemological concept, or as mentioned above, we reduce truth to justification.

But it is also here that we are close to the heart of the problem. If we determine that there is a close connection between truth and our justificatory practice, then what is it exactly about? Here we encounter the interminable oscillation caused by the conflict between intuitions. The intuitive party A insists on the existence of external world (out there); the intuitive party B denies it and resorts to intersubjective (or better, social) practice. (Bernstein, 2010: p. 109) Both sides admit that their arguments are based on their own intuition, so intuition A accuses intuition B of falling into bad relativism<sup>2</sup>, while intuition B accuses intuition A of indulging in metaphysical realism. As James said, the mutual accusations of both intuitive sides show that he (she) sees each other as philosophically incompetent and not in it. In other words, both sides here just stand in their positions or perspectives to evaluate each other, so each sees more of himself than the other; both sides, therefore, are incompatible with each other or view each other as incompetent and not in it, rather than admit the differences (incommensurable) under the premise of fusion of horizons. It should be noted that although the two sides are opposed to each other here, they both criticize the correspondence theory of truth, and recognize the internal connection between truth and justification. Now we enter into the discussions of the logic of arguments of both sides.

Putnam has already shown that truth and justification differ in grammar. We are qualified or have good reasons to believe or make assertions under certain conditions, while the reasons we resort to may be inadequate in later practices. In other words, justification can be lost because it is relative to time, place, people, etc.; and the truth is not lost because truth is cross-contextual and time-free.

<sup>2</sup>Bad relativism refers to a relativism that claims that there is no truth (except the truth for me or my group), no objective facts, and no universally valid claims. (Bernstein, 2010: p. 109)

(Putnam, 1983: p. 84) Putnam's claim is also endorsed by Habermas and Apel. In the views of them, although there is an internal connection between truth and justification, if we reduce truth to justification, it will lead to the consequences of relativism. Because, no matter from the history (vertical), or from the contrast of different cultural traditions of the same era (horizontal), for different people in different traditions, he (she) have good reasons to believe or make assertions, but these reasons may be incompatible with each other. In particular, the paradigm shift revealed by Kuhn's theory of scientific revolution makes the natural science also fall into this state of incompatibility. Even so, however, no one is intuitively willing to admit that the history of natural science is absurd, or even if we deny the past, we cannot say that scientists of the past have no good reason to believe or assert their theories. Therefore, reducing truth to justification or equating cross-context and time-free truth with context-dependent justification will lead to relativism.

Thus, to show that there is a difference between truth and justification becomes the goal of Putnam, Habermas and Apel. A basic line of thought (intuition) is that there must be further conditions for truth beyond justification, so that justification must be true under these conditions. The question now is how to relate the further conditions of truth to justification. Putnam's approach was to define truth as the acceptability of reason under the ideal conditions of epistemology. Instead, Habermas saw the environment on which Putnam's concept of truth depended, namely, the ideal discourse situation, and interpreted truth as the content of the rational consensus realized in the ideal discourse situation. This is because, if we consider the different dimensions of truth involved in justification, if we consider justification's social dimension and the internal relationship between the reasons and the consensus, then the conditions of truth will certainly be related to the ideal conditions of both the epistemological, moral and communicative. It is in this sense that Apel, on the basis of Putnam and Habermas, provided one of the most comprehensive explanations of truth. "Putnam's and Habermas's explanation are complementary, as Apel has recognized; for while the idea of 'epistemologically ideal conditions' must refer to a linguistic community in order not to become empty or metaphysical, an ideal structure of communication cannot suffice alone to guarantee truth: there must be some proviso that all the relevant arguments and evidence are available to the participants in such a situation. Apel consequently has tried to combine Putnam's and Habermas's basic intuitions and to explain truth as the ultimate consensus of an ideal communication community." (Wellmer, 1993: pp. s110-s111)

The interpretation of truth as the ultimate and infinite consensus of the ideal community of communication makes truth become the regulative ideal. This idea of the regulative ideal has its rationality, because on the one hand, truth is understood by justification, but on the other hand, justification may always be insufficient. Therefore, the concept of truth contains, on the one hand, the internal connection with justification, on the other hand, the extra stuff beyond justification. This is, in Bernstein's opinion, Peirce's spiritual connotation of truth that "is

independent, not indeed of thought in general, but of all that is arbitrary and individual in thought; is quite independent of how you, or I, or any number of men think.” (Bernstein, 2010: p. 112) But to understand truth from the regulative ideal, even if we also point out that this ideal cannot be realized in real life, or make it clear that this ideal is only a conceptual necessity, what we insist on here is still a metaphysical realism, which implies in the most fundamental sense the God perspective outside our justificatory practice. It is also in this sense that we can understand Apel’s ultimate consensus as a constitutively regulative ideal that lies in the linguistic community and justificatory practice. Therefore, on the one hand, the regulative ideal of language community is inevitable; on the other hand, this regulative ideal makes us have to keep close to it which cannot be realized at all.

### 3. From Regulative Ideal to Cautionary Usage

From Apel’s idea of the ultimate consensus of truth, it is easy to conclude its final, complete and absolute features, which contain a morally perfect order and a situation of perfectly transparent intercourse. It is in this metaphysical sense that the idea of ultimate consensus is free of Derrida’s play and the order of signs. (Derrida, 1978: p. 292) Because this so-called complete transparency, absolute knowledge and moral perfection make all restrictions, ambiguity, vulnerability, timeliness, etc., in short, the human forms of communication disappear. In Derrida, it was the regulative ideal that made the possibility of something(human) to idealize no longer possible. In other words, the ultimate consensus of communication community rejects the possible conditions of communication. The negation of human communication contains the negation of human natural and historical living conditions, that is, the negation of human. The paradox of the regulative ideal of truth is that the ideal of the community of human communication is the end of the history of human communication. The ideal communication is the end of the communication, which is where the structure of the regulative ideal of truth cannot be distinguished from the metaphysical realism.

For the concept of truth, we now conclude that truth cannot be explained by justification, even if it is in the regulative ideal. It was in this sense that Rorty stated that truth and justification were two concepts unrelated to each other. For Rorty, in our reasoning practice, what mattered was justification not truth. “Since ‘truths’ and ‘facts’ are pretty nearly equivalent notions, I think it important to get rid of both. So I still want to defend the claim that there were no truths before human beings began using language: for all true sentences S, it was true back then that S, but there were no ‘wordly items’—no facts, no truths—of the sort Brandom believes in.” (Rorty, 2000a: p. 184) Thus truth in Rorty was only a semantic concept. What Rorty wanted to do was to cut off the internal connection between truth and justification, not in the traditional metaphysical sense, but to make the concept of truth no longer relevant to us. The strategy corresponding to Rorty’s approach was the deflationary theory of truth. This explanation can be expressed as follows: the assertion that “‘p’ is true” brings nothing to the assertion that p, because these two assertions have the same content, so that the semantic concept of truth has

nothing to do with the pragmatic concept of truth. It was in this sense that Rorty believed that the reasonable meaning of truth was only when it existed as the cautionary use. (Rorty, 2000b: p. 4) The cautionary use of truth mainly means to remind us that there may be objections that have not been detected by anyone yet. For Rorty, what was relevant to our reasoning practice was the justification of assertions and beliefs, and the goal of our inquiry was justification rather than truth.

Compared with the regulative ideal of truth, the deflationary theory of truth is indeed progress. Rorty noticed the metaphysical difficulties of equating truth with regulative ideal, so he reinterpreted the connotation of the concept of truth from the standpoint of criticizing metaphysical realism. But even so, there is a problem with Rorty's attempt to cancel (or trivialize) the concept of truth. On the contrary, we should retain the intuition of Putnam, Habermas and Apel, that understanding the concept of truth cannot be done without the internal connection between truth and justification.

Rorty's understanding of the concept of truth, that truth was only a semantic concept, made the meaning of truth as a "nature" of the assertion no longer possible, whether this nature meant the assertion was consistent with the reality itself, or the assertion was an ultimate consensus. In fact, as Brandom has clearly stated in *Making It Explicit*, truth was not a property of assertion. We call the assertion true because it is justified here, or the position we take in the social space of taking-and-giving reasons, and there is clearly no mysterious position of property. It was also in this sense that Rorty denied that truth can play a role in our justificatory practice or pragmatical explanation. But it was also at this conclusion (canceling the concept of truth) that Rorty showed his own problem. The concept of truth is not just a semantic concept but also a core feature of our reasoning practice. For reasoning practice, the concept of truth is not a cautionary usage, but is mainly constitutive.

What is the constitutive role of truth in reasoning practice? The key clue to answer this question lies in the grammatical distinction between truth and justification. Justification is influenced by time, place, people and other factors, while truth is cross-context and time-free. It is the cross-context and time-free grammar feature of truth marks its constitutive characteristics. "In the concept of truth a constitutive trait of our assertion and justification praxis is revealed: namely, that the timelessness and non-indexicality of the concept of truth make explicit what the implicit meaning of asserting and justifying is." (Wellmer, 2003: p. 42) In all our reasoning practices, the meaning of asserting and justifying is context-transcending and trans-subjective, and this meaning is the connotation of the concept of truth, as well as the content we actually express when we use the concept of truth. Without the context-transcending meaning implied in every reasoning practice, we cannot actually assert and justify. The constitutive role of truth in justification is reflected in the meaning of justification, and truth makes the meaning of justification clear.

While the cautionary usage of truth does once and for all keep the concept of truth out of metaphysical difficulties and leaves a place for the use of truth in

everyday life, it also renders truth somewhat insignificant, serving only as a warning that everyone is fallible. However, truth does much more than that; it makes what people think and do truly valuable in the name of truth. The understanding of truth as cautionary usage not only covers up the clarity of the meaning of justification, but also causes a paradox. While Rorty “spent decades denying that he is a relativist, and yet his fellow pragmatist, Hilary Putnam, kept arguing that Rorty’s views lead straight to ‘bad relativism.’ ” (Bernstein, 2010: pp. 109-110) First of all, for Rorty, because justification itself is completely dependent on context (relative to an audience), and truth is just a semantic concept (cautionary usage of truth), so even the context-transcending and trans-subjective concept of truth cannot help us beyond the justificatory context, so here the concept of truth is just a kind of empty rhetoric. Second, for Rorty, although we can’t once deny all our justifications, but it is always possible to deny a single justification, and the consequence then is although we are not denied all our justifications, there is no power beyond our justification, so we will deny all our justifications and unstoppable. In a word, the cautionary usage of truth is that justification is to deny itself. Unlike the metaphysical realism into which the regulative ideal of truth falls, Rorty’s cautionary usage of truth plunges him into the morass of bad relativism.

#### 4. From Cautionary Usage to Normative Power

Understanding the concept of truth only as cautionary usage is still not a legal way to solve the problem, and the key is to explain that only when we make the role of truth implicit in the meaning of justification clear, can we accurately understand the semantic concept of truth. Only then can we understand how truth depends on justification. In other words, truth and justification are mutually made here. In Bernstein’s words, “as reasonable disputants, we ought to try to do justice to those strongly held intuitions of our opponents...it is just the slings and arrows that we feel from those who oppose us that drive us to a more subtle articulation of a philosophical orientation.” (Bernstein, 2010: p. 124)

The mutual making of truth and justification is shown in two ways. On the one hand, Rorty’s so-called “vocabulary” is always in crisis in the debate about the truth of the “proposition”, so the “vocabulary” has become the object of the truth debate. This can be concluded from Rorty’s own comparison of the two ways of argument(reasoning and dialectics). “The ironist’s preferred form of argument is dialectical in the sense that she takes the unit of persuasion to be a vocabulary rather than a proposition.” (Rorty, 1989: p. 78) So, as Bernstein has repeatedly stressed, if Rorty still values the role of argument, then his understanding of propositional truth seems narrow. In other words, it is necessary for Rorty to expand the understanding of the role of truth on the basis of the affirmative argument. According to Rorty’s understanding of reasoning and dialectics, these two ways are only two extremes in the practical argument, and the realistic argument is often the combination of these two ways. So the other way around, we can only understand truth correctly when we admit that truth has always been potentially

associated with the appropriateness (justification) of vocabulary. In this sense, the question of the appropriateness of the vocabulary arises, that is, the question of the truth, thus excluding the concept of truth from the understanding of the vocabulary does not understand the truth correctly. On the other hand, as Wittgenstein showed in *On Certainty*, there is always an unsuspected paradigm at play in every language, which not only does not need to justify, but is the basic condition for us to determine the possible justification. In other words, the paradigm here is something that we cannot be established in advance. Wittgenstein told us that “the truth of my statements is the test of my understanding of these statements,” and that “the truth of certain empirical propositions belongs to our frame of reference.” (Wittgenstein, 1969: §80, §83) Thus, truth can be said to be the frame of our understanding.

Of course, the frame of reference of language is never from correction. “The mythology may change back into a state of flux, the river-bed of thoughts may shift.” (Wittgenstein, 1969: §97) However, this does not mean that the structure of truth changes, namely, paradigm or frame does not need to justify and establish basic conditions for the possibility of justification. This means that justification without truth is unimaginable, and justification works cannot be separated from the help of truth. Therefore, we cannot draw the cautionary use of truth from Rorty’s understanding of vocabulary, that is, the fallibility of vocabulary cannot be understood at a generalized level as the indifference of truth. It is in this sense that we should distinguish between two kinds of fallibility: the fallibility of justification of contextualized use of the concept of truth and the ignoring or denying of the structural characteristics of truth, namely, paradigm or frame. Confusing these two fallibilities leads us to Rorty’s paradox, which we have pointed out above. To paraphrase an example in natural science, Newtonian mechanics does not lose its power as science because of the emergence of quantum mechanics and the theory of relativity.

So how do we retain the intuition of the internal connection between truth and justification on the basis of affirming Rorty’s criticism of metaphysical realism? This is the normative power of truth that we need to analyze now. In fact, when we reveal that truth is related to justification, we turn to pragmatism or pragmatic illustration of truth. When we rewrite the semantic formula of truth as “the assertion *p* is true if and only if the situation that *p* is asserted”, we have the opportunity to think about the role of the concept of truth in our justificatory practice. The understanding of the assertion as the position we take in the linguistic game of justified or unjustified practice actually indicates that this practice is a normative activity. We can illustrate this activity with two theses: first, “the truth conditions of statements are only given to us as conditions of justifiability and assertability”; second, “assertions as validity claims are internally related to justification in a normative sense.” (Wellmer, 2003: p. 38) When we admit that the assertion is correct, we require to justify it, and the justified assertion means that the assertion is true. Here, there is a logical relationship between assertion, justification and truth. At this point, we do not need to distinguish between different kinds of truth claims,

such as empirical, aesthetic, moral, and so on. Because the meaning of truth here applies to all claims of truth.

Once we illustrate the semantic concept of truth from a pragmatic standpoint, we immediately need to pay attention to the distinction of perspective or position between the two sides of the taking-and-giving reasons of the linguistic game. Here our understanding of sociality (the structure of man) has changed from the perspective of I-we to the perspective of I-thou. (Bernstein, 2010: p. 121) For different participants in a linguistic game, a consistent thing is that making an assertion means that it is true. For a certain assertion, however, different people do not necessarily recognize its validity. Because different people have different perspectives of understanding the assertion, so even if they can understand each other's justification, they may not necessarily agree with each other, or recognize the universality of each other's justification. Therefore, between different perspectives, they recognize themselves but not each other, which is the distinction between "as true (or justified)" and "is true (or justified)". In Bernstein's words, "built into the very structure of social discursive practices is a distinction between what is 'merely' subjective and what is objective, what seems to be so and what really is so." (Bernstein, 2010: p. 122) It should be pointed out that as long as the distinction between perspectives in our reasoning practice occurs, or the concept of truth related to reasoning practice is possible due to the distinction between perspectives, the distinction applies to each participant of taking-and-giving reasons involved in the linguistic game. In other words, the distinction between perspectives is here structural or constitutive, not just empirical or simply involving more than two participants.

It is precisely because of the difference between perspectives that there is a gap occurring between truth and justification, or more accurately between "as true (or justified)" and "is true (or justified)". It is this gap that makes us want to try to clarify under what conditions an assertion is true, such as in the ideal conditions of epistemology or in the ultimate consensus. As we have shown above, all of these regulative ideals of truth fail to correctly understand the distinction between the perspectives behind the concept of truth, so they try to illustrate the truth in a virtually meta-perspective way, and then fall into the metaphysical dilemma that Derrida criticizes. When I just make an assertion from my own perspective, this assertion is logically true to me, so the internal connection between assertion, justification and truth is not obvious here. But when I want to explain or persuade others to agree with my assertion, I need to justify my assertion, then I will find the existence of another perspective of understanding the assertion, namely, the actual role of others in me here. At this time, the concept of truth becomes a question for me for the first time, and the same for others who have a different perspective from mine. Moreover, the reflection on the question of truth causes me and others to reflect on our own judgment of the assertion when there is no one else present, and to reflect on the relationship between the structure (or composition) of assertion and the truth. Furthermore, there are also structural differences between perspectives within each oneself. It is in this sense that we say that the

distinction between perspectives is the possible condition of the question of truth. And when truth is possible, it clarifies the structural meaning implied in assertions.

From my point of view, the position of others is not necessarily true; this is not to say that my perspective cannot have been wrong, and the same goes for others. What is important to emphasize here is that the habit of trusting oneself easily covers the distinction between perspectives. On the other hand, from my perspective, my position must be true, referring to the convinces, reasons, and proofs that I rely on to prevent myself from escaping from my assertion. If I doubt my assertion, it must be that what I rely on cannot convince myself, and the assertion can no longer be an assertion. Thus, by reflecting on my own role as the other of another, not only do I realize that the justification I give to others is not necessarily true, but also realize that what I take to be true may be false based on new experiences or justifications I have encountered. But all of this does not change the fact that to myself “as true” is also “is true”, and to I-thou “as true” is also “is true” for ourselves.

I-thou have a reason that something is true is something of consensus. In other words, truth is trans-subjective, or, as Gadamer says, truth is a kind of horizon fusion. And this is also what we have previously mentioned in Wittgenstein’s frame of reference, which is the structural feature that makes assertion and justification possible. For assertion and justification, truth is constructive, and it is the clarity of the structural meaning that assertion and justification imply, rather than just a semantic concept. In this sense, a rational consensus is the goal of the argument. But “rational” here refers to the reasons, that is, it is universal to all the participants in a linguistic game. Of course, I-thou therefore cannot provide any specific criteria for such a rational consensus, but can only say that all the participants who seek the reasons will treat the consensus as true under the normative power of truth. In this context, the so-called good reason is the reason that can help I-thou to reach a consensus, but a certain consensus can not become the criteria of good reason under the condition of universality, on the contrary, a consensus is only the application of good reason. Because the good reason is linked to the different perspectives in the consensus in an irreversible way that emphasizes the difference between perspectives. Therefore, I-thou cannot understand from a meta-perspective what the nature is that rational consensus or good reason is to truly become itself. The “rational” and “good” in rational consensus and good reason are therefore not an objective nature, but a normative power, or in Bernstein’s words, an intuition (temperament). It was in this sense that Bernstein interpreted the pragmatist (classical and contemporary) inquiry into the concept of truth as a progressive narrative<sup>3</sup> in which hypotheses were proposed, difficulties were located, and new strategies were developed to meet these difficulties. (Bernstein, 2010: p. 123)

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<sup>3</sup>“Narrative” plays a central role in the exploration of philosophy; every important philosopher is positioning his (her) work by telling stories; the story is about what happened before he (her) arrived; the story has its own hero and evil; “narrative” is the way that the philosopher creates and recreates his (her) own tradition and authority. (Bernstein, 1991: p. 31)

## 5. Conclusion

Like Rorty, Bernstein, from the standpoint of pragmatism (intuition), opposed the correspondence theory of truth, opposed the metaphysical understanding of the concept of truth, and advocated the role of justificatory practice in the understanding of truth. But unlike Rorty, Bernstein not only did not deny the idea of truth but also opposed the reduction of truth to justification and the semantic concept in the sense of being only a cautionary usage of truth. From the correspondence theory of truth to the emphasis on justification, from the regulative ideal to the usage of truth, from the cautionary usage of truth to the normative power of truth, truth has taken a journey of reconstruction in Bernstein, the journey not only does not end, and each stage is a useful defence to the correct understanding of the concept of truth. They guide us to enrich ourselves in our journey of understanding the concept of truth and to create a robust understanding of the concept of truth. Bernstein said the difference between him and Rorty “is that I began my philosophical career convinced by Dewey’s critique of the quest for certainty and his call for a reconstruction of philosophy. I never experienced the type of disillusionment that Rorty experienced. I never thought that one had to critique representationalism, traditional epistemology, and foundationalism over and over again. The task, as Dewey had indicated, was to reconstruct philosophy.” (Bernstein, 2010: p. 214) As for the concept of truth, it is important to reconstruct it on the basis of a critical understanding of all related interlocutors.

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