Rorty and Beyond

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17

Reality is More Practical Than Truth

Rorty on Truth versus Justification

John Shook

Rorty notoriously denied that there is any practical difference that truth can make to the reasonableness of our beliefs. We should assent to well-justified beliefs. We should pursue better-justified beliefs through expanded inquiries. Beyond that, we cannot, and practically speaking, do not, pursue truth. What we call "truths" are just our better-justified beliefs, or our aspirations for the best-justified beliefs. Apart from our efforts at developing and improving justifications, and refining our methods for reaching reasonable justifications, the concept of truth has no epistemic role to play and no practical difference to make.

Rorty's views on truth and justification can appear to be counterintuitive. Priming familiar intuitions about the real "truth" of beliefs in order to sketch counterexamples has occupied many of Rorty's critics. Upon closer examination, a typical counterexample fails to support a sound argument for the independent practicality of truth apart from the context of justification. Implications of Rorty's position on the question of realism are outlined in the concluding section. Rorty's further views about justification, such as relativizing justification to linguistic communities, are not defended here.

IS TRUTH A MATTER OF LIFE OR DEATH?

This passage concisely states Rorty's views on this non-practicality for truth:

> Trying to do the right thing will lead us to do just the same things we would do when we try to justify our actions to ourselves and others. We do not have any way to establish the truth of a belief or the rightness of an action except by reference to the justifications we offer for thinking what we think or doing what we do. The philosophical distinction

> between justification and truth seems not to have practical consequences. This is why pragmatists think it is not worth pondering. (Rorty 2007, 44–55)

Uwe Steinhoff represents the typical dissent from Rorty's stance on truth. He thinks that there is a large practical difference between truth and justification. He illustrates his position in this way:

> For example, in the following situation A there are some facts which would normally indicate that the water in the pool in front of me is mixed with an absolutely lethal poison. However, there is considerable counter-evidence which outweighs the more worrying indications. In other words, all things considered, my belief that the water is not poisoned is justified. I scoop up some water, thirstily open my mouth—and at this moment my companion says "Well, your belief that the water is not poisoned may be justified, but perhaps it is not true." (Steinhoff 1997, 358)

Steinhoff contrasts situation A with Situation B:

> There is again a pool in front of me. This time there are no indications that the water is poisoned. But there are indications that it tastes bad. However, the counter-evidence outweighs these indications. All things considered, my belief that the water does not taste bad is justified. Again I am at the point of drinking it when my companion says, "Well, your belief that the water does not taste bad may be justified, but perhaps it is not true." (Steinhoff 1997, 359)

Steinhoff additionally stipulates that "the belief in situation A is as well justified as the one in situation B. And both beliefs are equally strong" (Steinhoff 1997, 359). He draws the conclusion that one would be more reasonable to drink the water in situation B than situation A. Why? Because there might be poison in A's pool of water, and it is unreasonable to choose a course of action possibly leading toward one's unnecessary death. Since "the truth" matters so much here—a life depends on it!—there appears to be plenty of practicality to truth. No one in that position should drink the water, we are led to think. The truth appears to make a practical difference to evaluating choices to drink from that pool of water, a difference not captured by the way that a belief that "the water is not poisoned" happens to be justified in A. We should not be misled by appearances—"the truth" does not really make a practical difference. Realities make all the practical difference to the outcomes of such situations.

The way that truth is inserted into each of Steinhoff's situations at the end is the place to begin. His situations begin with truths, but they are components to justifications for belief. Why might there be poison in the water? Because "there are some facts" indicating poison in the water. These realities are apparent enough to someone in situation A. Accessible truths in evidence are not what Steinhoff is talking about when he says that "the truth" makes a practical difference. The important truth for Steinhoff is about a reality obscured from our view, hinted at by the companion at the end. Perhaps "the water is poisoned" is really true, even if believing that it is

not poisoned can be justified now. Rorty can agree; he also distinguishes justification and truth, but "truth" at most indicates "even more justified." When the truth about that water is someday known after more testing, then we can tell ourselves, "The water was (or was not) poisoned all along." Verified realities are what we really want, and practically need. Steinhoff resists Rorty's position, insistent about realities beyond the range of justification that are able to determine our fate. The starker contrast must therefore be drawn between evident realities and unknown realities. Rorty denies that unknown realities, and whatever may be true about them, have any practical role for justifying beliefs or evaluating their reasonableness. As we form, test, and assent to beliefs, we can't know what can't be known, even if we wish that we did. Only what is accessible in a situation could be used for considering and justifying a belief. Enlarging the scope of accessible realities is always smart; holding justification accountable to unknowable realities is not.

All the same, Steinhoff depicts the companion as reasonable and wise. Let's continue the story. Suppose "the drinker" decides to drink the water anyways. We can pass judgment on this drinker's choice, without any observations from "the companion." Perhaps the companion wouldn't drink that water. However, a belief that "the water is poisoned" is not justified for the companion, since Steinhoff stipulates that the same facts are sufficiently appreciated by both the drinker and the companion. Does the companion use better reasoning methods? Steinhoff does not say that the companion is a better reasoner. The companion cannot be in possession of a better justification for "the water is probably poisoned" either, since that places the practical difference on justification but not on truth, just as Rorty expects. If it must be "the truth" that makes the practical difference, that companion cannot know more about the water than the drinker. Indeed, the companion must agree with the drinker that the water is probably not poisoned, by the same facts and reasoning. For all we know from Steinhoff's description of situation A, the companion might drink that water, too. Of course, we are instead led to think that the companion is somehow smarter for hesitating. Nevertheless, only a more cautious disposition, and not a better justification, could stop the companion from drinking that water too. The dispositions and habits of one's character make large practical differences to one's choices, but that is not at issue between Rorty and Steinhoff. In sum, the presence and the utterance of the companion makes no practical difference to assessing the reasonableness or unreasonableness of the drinker. And yet the companion is always there, dutifully mentioning what might be true. How does the companion lend plausibility to Steinhoff's argument?

Steinhoff needs the companion to speak of truth, not because the companion has more information or intelligence, but rather because that "might not be true" dictum primes our intuition that the probability of poison is higher than just what the facts are indicating. That hunch of ours, as spectators on the scene, lends urgency to the companion's laconic dictum about the "truth." "Don't drink the water, you fool!" is what we want to shout before it is too late. Not only is the risk of death obviously higher in situation A than in B, but we are led to imagine that the actual risk in A is higher than the level estimated by the drinker. "I wouldn't drink that water," we say

to ourselves. What is wrong with that foolish drinker? Now, Steinhoff doesn't really want us to fault just the drinker's rashness. The argumentative point of situation A is that "the truth" is the key difference, making the drinker's action so unreasonable. The companion is an argumentative trick, an intuition pump, to prime our sense that certain realities are unreasonably ignored. The real truth is out there to potentially kill the drinker, we imagine. If only that drinker would pause to consider the realities, and not just the evident facts or the belief's justification!

It seems obvious to Steinhoff that the truth can falsify the drinker's belief to render it unreasonable, over and above all registerings and weighings of the facts. Steinhoff is effectively telling us that unless and until a person has gone beyond considering all relevant facts and attaining a balanced justification for a belief, by additionally thinking about what is true, that person is not reasonable enough. If you are going to even think about drinking potentially poisoned water, you had better know what you are doing. The drinker can't know what the water really is, in Steinhoff's scenarios, because known beliefs must really be true, and not just thought to be true. "Sure, you think the water isn't poisoned, but for all that, it might really be poisoned." Doesn't that sound like a reasonable thing for that companion to utter at just the right moment? Once that intuition pump starts working, we judge that the drinker is not a knower, and hence unreasonable. What made such a practical difference? Only truth itself, concludes Steinhoff.

TRUTHS AND REALITIES

Rorty is not refuted by scenarios like Steinhoff's situations. No intuition pumps are needed to explain Rorty's view that truth by itself cannot make a practical difference, and "the truth" cannot account for the unreasonable drinking in situation A. Closer scrutiny into the companion's dictum about truth shows why.

What does "your belief might not be true" practically do for the drinker? Since the drinker is already aware of the available poison-indicating facts, the drinker has already considered that the water might be poisoned. No additional information about evidential facts comes from the companion, in the given situations. If the companion had instead said, "Your belief may be justified but you overlooked some evident facts about poison," or "Your belief may be justified but you should try an additional test for poison," then that advice would constitute useful information. No one should presume that all potential evidence has been completely appreciated, or that every sort of performable inquiry has been attempted and conducted perfectly. Perhaps a whole community of inquirers could approach those ideal standards for some empirical matters, but no single individual will. Steinhoff's situations assign no such role for the companion, since that would alter the justificatory factors, instead of isolating attention on "the truth." Aside from prejudicing our intuitions, there is no epistemic role for the companion, so the companion can be set aside. What is left about situation A to consider? The role of the drinker is crucial.

Focusing on the drinker's decision, in light of all available facts, a choice to drink the water is obviously risky and foolish, and that is a fair verdict with which the drinker would likely agree. People sometimes make unreasonable choices in the face of evident facts, expecting that other evident facts reduce the probability of disaster. If I decide to ride my motorcycle without wearing a helmet, my companion can tell me, "Well, your belief that this motorcycle ride won't end in a crash may be justified, but perhaps it is not true." What is my reply? "Thanks for the warning," would be a civil response. Uncivil responses might also come to mind. Unless my companion knows something that I don't—a rainstorm is approaching, or my motorcycle needs repairs, and so forth—then my decision is made in light of available information. Let's all agree that my decision is unreasonable. What role has "the truth" played? The evident facts are playing the crucial roles, not "the truth." What makes my helmetless motorcycle ride so unreasonable are obvious facts about motorcycle stability, skull fragility, and helmet safety, which I already understand.

Returning to Steinhoff's two situations, "the truth" has played no practical role at all. Whatever the companion may say along the lines of "perhaps that belief is not true" cannot be relevant to our verdict upon the drinker's foolishness in situation A. We would make the same assessment if no companion was present. Yet we are spectators here, too. We can also say to ourselves, "That drinker's justified belief that the water is not poisoned might not be true." We can say this because we are told about evident facts in situation A indicating the possible poisoning of the water. Have we found a practical role for the truth? No. The thought that "the water is possibly poisoned" has already occurred to the drinker, who adequately appreciates the available facts, according to Steinhoff's portrayal. If we disagree with the drinker's choice to drink that water, that difference cannot be because the drinker has failed to appreciate something about the situation that we have noticed. Like that droll companion, we have no informative comments to make to the drinker, either. We could make a different sort of practical difference in situation A, by pulling the drinker away from that water, or scolding the drinker for taking an unnecessary risk. But those interventions are not about "the truth," but instead about our different appetite for the risk.

The drinker is unreasonable, we can all agree. We feel bound to sternly interject a dire warning in situation A. What would our intervention really be about, if not truth? The drinker's rash temperament, not ignorance or irrationality, is responsible for that unreasonable decision. Ignoring "the truth" is not. Justifying the belief that the water is probably not poisoned is based on weighing all evident facts, not on the "truth" of that belief. There is nothing to learn about the possible truth in this situation except for acquiring more facts or weighing them more rationally (if that is possible). But those useful procedures adjust the level of justification, so they cannot help Steinhoff isolate truth as the practical difference-maker. That is why the companion is not depicted as more knowledgeable about the water, more skilled at empirical inquiry, or more capable with probability inferences. Anyone would suffice, actually. If someone knows more about the water in situation A, then that makes a practical difference. Yet that practical difference is due to the way that

someone has a better fact-based justification. Again, "the truth" in itself is irrelevant to anyone's evaluation of the reasonableness of drinking water. Maybe no one else in the world would take a drink too—but that caution has to do with risk-aversion, not truth.

Rorty points out that an appeal to the truth can have a cautionary meaning, when used as a reminder that a belief is justified only relative to available evidence, and better inquiry in other contexts could alter a belief's justification (Rorty 1991, 128; See, also: Rorty 2007, 41). For pragmatism, this meaning to "truth" is simply an appreciation of fallibilism and opportunities for learning. This "cautionary" use of truth by itself adds no evidentiary information within an ongoing situation, which is what Rorty claims. The other two meanings for truth noted by Rorty—the "endorsing" use of "That's true" (to express agreement with another's belief), and the "disquotational" use in sentences of the form "S" is true if and only if S—do not convey evidentiary information either. If there is more evidence to consider in a situation, that potentially alters the justification to a belief formed in that situation. The role of the companion's dictum about truth in Steinhoff's situations is not cautionary in Rorty's sense. Yet Steinhoff does not say what sort of precaution the companion is trying to provide. Again, the drinker already appreciates how the balanced justification toward the belief that the water is not poisoned is based on available facts. Would the drinker prefer that additional relevant facts could be discerned here? Presumably so, and Steinhoff does not depict the drinker as uninterested in learning more, since that depiction would shift attention away from truth and toward the drinker. The generic way that empirical beliefs are fallible and justifications are revisable is not what the companion is trying to point out.

If neither the companion, nor we readers, have anything informative to contribute about this specific situation A, attention must turn to the drinker. Perhaps the companion knows more about the drinker than we do. Yet we could guess—what sort of person would take a drink of that water under such conditions? As Steinhoff stipulates, the drinker won't die of thirst that day. Drinking that water is optional, not urgent. After considering the facts, the unreasonableness of the drinker's poor choice has to be mainly about personal motivations and dispositions to take that risk, and not about "the truth," whatever that might turn out to be. Telling someone that their belief may be wrong can be a roundabout way of asking someone to rethink an unwise action before it is too late. A paternalistic use of phrases such as "You might be wrong about that" is not among Rorty's meanings for truth, since he was not trying to distinguish illocutionary meanings associated with "truth." Whatever Steinhoff's companion was trying to express with "perhaps it is not true," that comment is not an observation exposing a practical difference between the truth of a belief and the justification behind it.

KNOWLEDGE AND TRUTH

Rorty, like James and Dewey before him, did not reject common sense realism about the world around us. What appears phenomenally does not exhaust all reality, and

intelligence not only learns this well, but relies on it. Realities are doing far more than just what we are able to notice and appreciate. Detecting and tracking how realities do what they do is essential for assembling justifications for beliefs based on evidence. Where does any "truth" beyond those realities make a difference to those endeavors? Pragmatists deny the common philosophical view that a belief's justification is ultimately explained by its truth.

Good reasons account for justified beliefs. Good reasons for beliefs about the world should be related to realities rather than unrealities. Good reasons are surely practical, since practicalities, one would suppose, involve realities rather than unrealities. Pragmatism affirms this supposition more consistently and coherently than rival philosophies exaggerating truth's role in justification and reasonableness. All can at least agree that the real presence of factual evidence, in order to help justify a belief, should be connected in some way to the reality that the belief is about. Present realities serve as indications of other realities inaccessible at present. The factual truths in evidence, essential to Steinhoff's stage-setting for his drinking situations, are the practical realities that matter to justification. Accessible realities, related to farther realities while relevant to present situations, are intermediate practicalities worth pondering during the process of justification. Pragmatism takes its stand here, seeing no further role for "truth" in the abstract. Labeling accessible realities as "truths" is unnecessary unless we simply want to endorse their salience, and calling them "facts" only points to their intermediary roles within inquiries.

Suspicious of "the truth" in the abstract, pragmatism stands apart from philosophies inserting "the truth" among knowledge's criteria. Pragmatism prioritizes practical know-how aiming at competency in our dealings with the world. Propositional knowledge is grounded in that practical arena of conduct; pragmatism cannot fully define knowledge apart from that context. Epistemology, and theories of knowledge generally, are not good company for pragmatism. Knowledge taken in isolation from inquiries and situated endeavors can take vicarious forms, depending on presumed contexts.

An indubitable certainty of a belief attached to phenomenal perceptions or feelings can strike one as a kind of immediate knowing. Asking about truth in that context would be pointless, where certainty suffices. In other contexts where pursuing justification seems inappropriate, where one's belief simply gets things right without needing reasons, such a belief seems to many people like another kind of knowing. Knowledge is just true belief, for those contexts. So long as differing contexts are distinguished, multiple ordinary meanings for "knowledge" do not trouble pragmatism. Pragmatism accommodates all sorts of evident matters commonly labeled as "facts" or "truths" in that endorsing sense acknowledged by Rorty. Most empirical matters beyond the undeniable and unimpeachable do call for explicit reasons supporting beliefs, so justifications are apt if not obligatory. Pragmatism denies that "the truth" of the belief should be a criterion for knowledge in those contexts. That simplifies matters dramatically for pragmatism, as Rorty's stance shows.

Theories of knowledge about knowledge as justified true belief get lost in mazes of Gettier problems and intractable externalist versus internalist debates (see, for example, Borges, Almeida, and Klein 2017). If a "theory" of empirical knowledge

must be extracted from pragmatism, knowing requires well-justified belief. Reasonable justifications connect accessible matters with inaccessible matters, so knowing is both internal and external in a way (although pragmatism denies the reality of anything subjective by ontological dualism's standards). For pragmatism, propositions called "true" are simply what have been learned and known.

On pragmatism's view of the purpose for justification, "truth" as the goal of all inquiry could be nothing more than "ideally justified" knowledge. However, imagining how that goal can be reached is futile, so it remains a formulaic notion at best, for gesturing at empirical science's self-correcting strivings. Peirce treated truth as what would be known through ideal inquiry: "The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth" (Peirce 1992 [1878], 139). But this idealization characterizes scientific inquiry at most, and not ordinary meanings of "true." Putnam allows "truth" to range over broader territory: "We speak as if there were such things as epistemically ideal conditions and we call a statement 'true' if it would be justified under such conditions" (Putnam 1981, 55). As for Rorty, he had no use for idealized truth conditions under any circumstances, especially if that sort of truth dictates reality (Misak 2013).

Since truth as idealized inquiry is not Rorty's idea, we shall return to the main question, the impracticality of "the truth." Pragmatism expects intelligence to discover how there are better and worse ways of justifying beliefs, without any guiding light from something called "the truth." Rival philosophies preoccupied with "the truth" insist that a good justification for a belief has to somehow involve that belief's truth.

IS KNOWLEDGE ABOUT FORTUNE OR FATE?

Rorty's position on justification versus truth is defensible: appealing to "the truth" makes no practical difference to the reasonableness of beliefs, beyond the support supplied by justification. Truth, over and above accessible facts, seems irrelevant to justified beliefs. That broad dismissal should be scrutinized further. Could the truth of a belief help explain why that belief can be justified? Good justifications should be conducive to arriving at true beliefs, more so than to false beliefs. If so, then the truth could still make an indirect practical difference for justification, beyond practicalities considered during inquiries. On the other hand, perhaps it is impractical to justify beliefs, and truth can explain why. If so, then the truth practically replaces justification, rendering inquiry irrelevant. If the latter stance seems unreasonable, as it should, then justifications remain important because they lead to more truths than not. These opposed views can agree that there is a practical difference between truth and justification: the first expects better justifications to usually justify true beliefs, while the second view expects true beliefs to usually be better than justified beliefs.

Consider this issue from the perspective of a character that we shall call Fortuna. Fortuna thinks that the difference between knowledge and lucky belief is not truth,

for both knowledge and lucky belief can get things right. Justification is what makes the difference, for Fortuna. However, justification seems impractical to Fortuna. Fortuna explains, "I'd rather have lucky belief than knowledge, because lucky belief is more practical. When I have lucky belief, I do not have to expend the time and effort for justification. Lucky belief is more efficient. Getting things really right is always more practical: having truth is easier than getting both truth and justification. Besides, justification never guarantees truth. If justification ensures truth, then knowledge would simply be justified belief, but that is silly. The best justification may fail to reach truth, so the idea of truth is irreplaceable. It is better to have truth itself. Not only is truth quite different from justification, it is truth that I practically want, far more than justification. From moment to moment, wasting time on justifications is not only inefficient, but often harmful."

From Fortuna's perspective, Rorty is wrong about truth and justification. Rorty thinks that the difference between justification and truth is merely philosophical, without practical consequences. For Fortuna, it is far more practical to have truth than justification.

The other stance on the difference between truth and justification can be voiced by a second character, called Fatum. Fatum begins by agreeing with Fortuna that a belief can be true without justification, but ends by finding that justification is more practical than truth. Fatum describes this perspective: "A belief about how things are can be asserted with a proposition as a fact, which may or may not be among the real facts. If it is one of the real facts, the asserted belief is true; otherwise that belief is false. Reality dictates the true and the false. Whether a belief is true or false has nothing to do with whether a belief is justified or justifiable. That is why an unjustified belief may be true, since reality determines a belief's truth, not justification. Justification is a mental way to appreciate that a belief is true, but justification never contributes to making a belief true. If mental processes make beliefs true, then minds control reality and error would be rare, but that irrational notion is highly impractical. Reality is independent of what all minds happen to think, and so is truth. Justification never guarantees truth. It is highly practical to understand that any justification may yield a belief that fails to be true. Throughout life, proceeding as if most or all beliefs are true is generally inefficient, and inevitably dangerous."

Fortuna and Fatum think that keeping truth and justification conceptually distinct has important practical consequences. They cannot agree on much else. Fortuna seems careless about avoiding false beliefs, while Fatum makes noticing false beliefs a top priority. Someone who thinks like Fortuna is living mostly in the moment, where time is scarce and indecision tends to make problems worse. Fortuna's fast thinking focuses on meeting hard realities in the here and now. Fatum regards Fortuna with suspicion. Even if Fortuna's intuitive style permits some efficiency in the short run, real harms will be experienced eventually, especially in unfamiliar situations. Fortuna has no method for anticipating when and where a reliance on luck won't be intelligent. Fatum would advise Fortuna that slowing down to form justified beliefs is more practical over the long run than just hoping for true belief. For Fatum, beliefs having justifications are more likely to be true than beliefs

arising any other way.[1] Fatum concludes that having justifications is more practical than just having true beliefs.

Fortuna sees little wisdom in Fatum's advice. According to Fatum, each belief is already true or false, regardless of justification. If a justification cannot make a belief more true, then what use is justification? Justifications can easily make beliefs seem like they are more likely to be true, but justifications cannot really make beliefs more likely to be true. Fortuna is not impressed by the way that justifications only increase one's degree of confidence, since hard realities do not change just because one feels more confident. From Fortuna's perspective, thinking of a justification for a belief is a pointless exercise. No one thinks about justifying a belief already thought to be false, so one only thinks about justifications for beliefs already thought to be true. Justifications cannot make false beliefs into true beliefs, or true beliefs into false beliefs, just as Fatum says, so one is left with the same beliefs thought to be true, and those are the beliefs for action. Fortuna always acts on beliefs taken for true, and does not waste effort by acting on beliefs taken for true with justifications. Of course, any belief taken for true may turn out to be false in reality, Fortuna reminds Fatum, but adding justifications cannot increase or decrease the probability of having more true beliefs in the long run. Fortuna concludes that having truth is always more practical than having justification.

TRUTH VERSUS JUSTIFICATION?

Which is more practical, truth or justification? Perhaps an equivocation is dividing them on this issue. Fatum asserts that "justification never contributes to making a belief true." Fortuna agrees, and adds, that "justification never contributes to making a true belief." But Fatum never meant to say that. If justification cannot guide the formation of true beliefs, there is no point to any justification. Fortuna is equivocating on the word "making." Those two statements are not equivalent: something real "makes" a belief true, while something mental "makes" a true belief. Still, Fortuna would uphold both statements.

Fortuna sees how all beliefs have a mental origin—letting "mental" cover all psychological processes, conscious, and subconscious, able to contribute to a belief. "Something mental makes a true belief" is automatically correct, since something mental makes every belief. What is so special about a mental process labeled as "justification"? Mental justification is unconnected with truth or true belief in advance, Fortuna reminds Fatum, since facts do not make beliefs until factual truth is evident, when justification is no longer needed. All the same, Fatum maintains that mental justification should contribute to affirming true beliefs, and justification should contribute more to true beliefs than false beliefs. That expectation sounds like wishful thinking to Fortuna. "I seem to leave true belief to chance," Fortuna says to Fatum, "but so do you, since you cannot say which justifications will point out more true beliefs than false beliefs." Fortuna adds, "You can only tell which justifications have led to more true beliefs so far, but reality is independent from all justification, so

any justification may lead to more false beliefs in the future too." Taking a chance on a belief taken for true is no worse than taking a chance on a justification taken for truthful, from Fortuna's viewpoint. In fact, the first option is usually smarter, since the second option wastes effort on justifications in situations where indecision can be deadly.

Fortuna and Fatum still agree that there is a practical difference between truth and justification. For Fortuna, forgetting about truth and only thinking about justified beliefs would be disastrous, since it is the true beliefs (not the justified beliefs) which mean that one has survived to live another day. For example, picture Fortuna and Fatum walking through a forest where tigers roam. An odd sound is heard. When Fortuna has the sudden idea "that is a tiger lurking in the underbrush," that belief is taken for true and Fortuna turns to flee. Fatum has the same thought too. While believing "there is a tiger" just as strongly as Fortuna, Fatum tells Fortuna, "Our belief that there is a tiger may be false." Fortuna realizes this, but ignores the cautionary advice. Suppose that the belief "there is a tiger there" is actually true—Fortuna ignores Fatum and runs away while Fatum looks closer to find out whether the belief is justifiable, and the tiger pounces on Fatum instead of Fortuna. Or, suppose that the belief "there is a tiger there" is actually false—Fatum wastes ten minutes of effort poking around in the underbrush, while Fortuna gets ten minutes of running exercise. Fortuna's options of "running/running" is better than Fatum's options of "dying/searching," and therefore justification is less practical than truth.

Fatum can think of a way to deny that conclusion. Justifiable beliefs are more likely to be true, for Fatum. In the true belief scenario, Fortuna's belief arose from a fast-mental process, a process that was justified—since justification leads to more truths than not. In the false belief scenario, Fortuna's belief arose from a fast-mental process that was not justified, since the belief was false. In the first scenario, a justified belief was quite practical (since running was necessary), and in the second scenario, an unjustified belief was impractical (since running was unnecessary). Fatum judges that justified belief is at least as practical as truth, if not more so. As for Fatum, in the true belief scenario, the searching yielded a justified belief since that tiger proved to be real, while that searching in the false belief scenario yielded a justified true belief, "No tiger is there in the underbrush," which Fortuna did not learn. Searching is more practical for Fatum since searching consistently leads to justified *and* true beliefs, more frequently than Fortuna's chancy ways. Fatum concludes that justified belief is at least as practical as truth, and usually more practical. Although telling Fortuna that "the belief that there is a tiger may be false" was a cautionary expression by Fatum, it was clearly more than that for Fatum, by stating the practical difference between a mere true belief and a justified true belief.

Fortuna has some questions for Fatum about these scenarios. "I only had one belief, that there is a tiger, from a single mental process. I did not have a justified process, and an unjustified process, forming my belief. I couldn't appreciate whether my belief was true or false, since I was running away, but I couldn't tell if my process was justified or unjustified either? It is often hard for someone to tell if a belief is true, but it should be easier to see if one has formed a justification or not. I do

not usually check for justification, but you do. Perhaps I am too hasty. But are you unable to tell whether your deliberate mental processes are justifications or not?"

Fortuna has trapped Fatum with these questions. Fatum thinks that one should first form justified beliefs, and then assent to those beliefs in the expectation that justified beliefs are more likely to be true. How can one assent to the right belief, if one cannot tell whether that belief is justified while forming that belief? Fatum cannot endorse this perplexity. Fatum should admit that having justification or not must be no mystery to a thinker when assenting to a belief. It cannot be the case that a careful thinker like Fatum is always left unsure whether a belief has any justification. To be sure, even Fatum could never be sure that a belief is highly justified, since everyone has cognitive limitations and biases, but the difference between better and worse justifications should be appreciable by typical thinkers.

REALITY AND FALLIBILITY

Fatum must retract his assessment of Fortuna's belief: "There is a tiger there." Retroactive evaluations of justification can be helpful, but they must serve situational assessments of justification while beliefs are formed and affirmed. Only situational assessments of justifiability, conducted by the believer, are ultimately informative for the believer. Situational assessments can and should include reliable retroactive evaluations—if others can tell that my method for believing is usually unjustified in light of facts, then I should assess beliefs differently—but ultimately my justifications are my assessments, even if I conform to more intelligent methods.

Justifications are situational and transparent to the believer considering them. Other hidden or inscrutable contributions to belief-formation are labeled as something other than "justification," such as instinct, compulsion, rationalization, and so on. Fortuna's intuitive approach to belief-assent is inadequately justified, Fatum thinks, so Fatum's understanding of better justifications must be situationally accessible to Fatum, if not to Fortuna. Otherwise, anything Fatum says about Fortuna's mental processes are non-informative, irrelevant, and lack practicality. Let's review the tiger situation again. When Fortuna has the sudden idea "that is a tiger lurking in the underbrush," that belief is taken for true and Fortuna turns to flee. Fatum has the same belief too, but tells Fortuna, "Our belief that there is a tiger may be false." Fatum's thought about their belief is just a thought, so far. It does not show that Fortuna's belief is false, or even unjustified, and it has no bearing on whether Fatum's belief that "there is a tiger lurking in the underbrush" is true or false, or justified or not. Fatum is not more reasonable or practical for having had this thought; it does not amount to actionable information. Fortuna already realizes that this belief may be false and is fleeing anyways. Fatum thinks the belief is true (to believe proposition P is to take P for true) and looks closer to discover the real tiger.

For Fatum, believing "it is true that there is a tiger" and "I do not know that there is a tiger" are compatible thoughts, since knowing the tiger must await the discovery of the real tiger. What is this difference between believing that P is true and knowing

P? Fatum expects that difference to be justification. Fatum has been forced to admit that justification for a belief cannot simply depend on that belief's truth, prior to knowledge. Before seeking out the tiger, Fatum thinks, "My belief that there is a tiger is not yet justified, but when I discover the tiger, my belief will be justified." If Fatum admits, "My belief is not justified yet," then how can Fatum judge Fortuna's belief to be unjustified? Fatum cannot make that assessment yet. As Fortuna turns to flee, all Fatum can say is "Your belief that there is a tiger might not be justified." But this is no news to Fortuna, either. Fortuna already realizes how this belief may be false, and may be unjustified, while turning to flee. Fatum has no practical information to convey to Fortuna at that moment. Fortuna would be right to reply, "Your thought that there may be no tiger, and there may be no justification for that belief either, make no practical difference to me."

When *can* a belief be justified, according to Fatum? Fatum has taken the position that only justified beliefs should become beliefs, and that beliefs become justified when known. These two ideas are incompatible. If one can hold a belief to be true before knowing it, then one holds a belief to be true before it is justified, but then one should not believe it at all, according to Fatum. Surely it is possible to believe things as true before knowing them to be true, and it is possible to justify a belief before knowing that is true. Otherwise, one must believe P, justify P, verify P, and know P, all simultaneously in the same moment. There might be some kinds of beliefs that occur in this manner (certain perceptual beliefs, or mathematical conclusions, perhaps). Fatum does not suppose that most beliefs are like that, and surely not that "there is a tiger lurking in the underbrush." Fatum must shift to a different position: justified beliefs should become beliefs, and the justification of P is a process occurring before believing P to be true, and before knowing P to be true.

Unlike the truth of a belief, which depends for Fatum on the factual reality that the belief is about, whether a particular belief is justified cannot simply depend on that factual reality. Beliefs should be related to, and dependent on, realities—all can agree on the practicalities to such relationships. However, making justification depend solely on independent reality is impractical. The point to forming justified beliefs is that they must be formed while somewhat ignorant of the actual truth. We seek to justify beliefs before knowing their truth; if one already knows a true belief, no justification is sought. Explaining how one knew a true belief is not "justifying" it—perhaps "rationalizing" (or "confabulating") aptly labels what one offers in order to retrospectively account for rightly believing. Of course, if one cannot know without prior justification anyways (if knowledge is never just true belief), then we must form justifications for beliefs while not knowing their truth. Either way, ignorance of the real truth is a precondition for a process of justifying a belief, and having luckily true belief counts as being ignorant (as Fortuna gladly admits).

This revised position allows Fatum to hold that (1) reality makes a belief true or not (the "real truth" condition), while (2) justifying a belief requires a process involving more than the real truth (the "prior justification" condition). What is needed for the process of justifying a belief does not have to include the reality that the belief is about. This revised position entails two additional points: (3) while

justifying a belief, one cannot yet know whether it is true (the "ignorance" condition), and (4) while holding a justified belief, one can think that it may be false (the "fallibility" condition). Call these the "Four Fatum" conditions. The last condition allows one to think, "I believe P is true and P may be false," showing how believing P need not be a psychological state of stubborn certainty. This fallibility condition is not about drawing a philosophical contrast between all empirical facts and some "actual reality" in general so that any learning might yet be wrong. Brandishing a metaphysically ultimate reality that may stay unknowable yields philosophical skepticism, not common sense fallibilism, and that extreme skepticism is dismissed by pragmatism (see Rorty 2000, 57–58; and on Rorty's ability to sustain the distinction, see Williams 2003).

Fortuna can agree to the Four Fatum conditions. They still fail to motivate Fortuna to refrain from fleeing upon believing that there is a tiger in the underbrush. Fatum's warnings that "there may not be a real tiger" and "believing there is a tiger is not yet justified" do not motivate Fortuna, either. Such thoughts are not practical, for Fortuna. Fortuna is practical about quickly leaving the scene. Fatum's method of searching for the tiger seems to be the least practical option, since it exposes Fatum to the risk of death. It is far more practical, it appears to Fortuna, to try to avoid terrible outcomes. Fortuna still sees a big practical difference between truth and justification. Since Fortuna had realized that a tiger may truly lurk, that made running away so practical, while Fatum's search for justification was impractical by comparison. Fortuna had said from the start that luckily true belief is, in general, more practical than always trying to be justified. If Fortuna had said to Fatum, "There may truly be a tiger there" before fleeing, Fatum could have realized the impracticality to searching for a tiger and hence the impracticality to having a justified belief in this situation. Perhaps Fatum cannot grasp the practical difference between truth and justification, Fortuna wonders. Fatum's dictums are irrelevant and impractical, and Fatum's focus on justifying beliefs can be very impractical.

Fortuna does not make a good case for Fatum's impracticalities. Fortuna has a low toleration for risk, and that temperament is the actual basis for Fortuna's opinion that Fatum's interest in justifications is so impractical. Telling Fatum that "there may truly be a tiger there" is not really about the truth but only about Fortuna. Fatum's emphasis on justification is not impractical just because timid hearts cannot deal with much risk. And Fatum need not be obsessed with completing inquiries about all matters. After all, Fatum now has a revised position which does not require discerning the truth for acquiring a justified belief; thanks to the "prior justification" criterion, justifying a belief requires a process involving more than the real truth. Processes leading to more true beliefs than false beliefs are able to better connect accessible facts with whatever the beliefs are about. Tracking connections among facts toward a potential tiger should make even an intrepid inquirer like Fatum halt at some point, before a tiger manifests itself. At the point where Fatum finds it reasonable to halt this inquiry, the belief "there is a tiger there" has become fairly well justified. Fatum's inquiry is quite practical for reaching a well-justified belief, before a tiger's reality becomes obvious.

OBJECTIVES OF INQUIRY

Neither Fortuna nor Fatum can make a good case that the other's course of action is unreasonable. Temperament is their biggest difference, and through that lens each one can only perceive the other as foolish. However, from a broader standpoint, Fortuna's flightiness is less practical in the long run than Fatum's inquisitiveness.

Although Fortuna usually stays very safe, few new facts about the world are learned, and the advantages of tracking connections among things are missed. Fortuna imagines that truth is what makes the positive practical difference to smart decisions, but the truth is doing no such thing; Fortuna's sensitivity to familiar signs of danger and proclivity for hasty risk-aversion are the decisive factors. Fortuna's vast ignorance about the world's ways means that Fortuna has relatively few true beliefs, even fewer justifications for them, and hardly any confirmations that they are indeed true. Overall, having beliefs that happen to be true no longer sounds so beneficial for Fortuna's course of life.

Fatum misses few opportunities to inquire into connections among interesting matters. Fatum's initial view that the truth accounts for the justification of beliefs had to be abandoned. Inquiries into evident and accessible facts account for justifying (or failing to justify) one's beliefs. Fatum came to understand how good justifications must be pursued, and can be acquired, in the absence of truth. All those justifications, even those that never reached their objectives, are useful discoveries. They allow Fatum to reasonably halt inquiries around the point where prudence dictates greater caution. Because Fatum is acquainted with a large variety of facts about connections between evident and not-yet-evident matters, avoiding genuine dangers is much easier. Under surprising conditions when there is little time for inquiry, Fatum could resort to imitating Fortuna's hasty timidity. Most conditions permit extensive or even exhaustive inquiry so that many more facts can be exposed and explored.

Rorty thinks that a difference between justification and truth is merely philosophical, without practical consequences. Fortuna and Fatum initially disagree with Rorty, in divergent ways. At the start of our dialogue with Fortuna and Fatum, Fortuna held that it is more practical to have true beliefs than justified beliefs, while Fatum held that it is more practical to have justifications for true beliefs. Both turned out to be mistaken. What Fortuna acts upon are alarming beliefs however they happen to arise, and regardless of whether they are true or ever understood to be true. The truth of beliefs makes no practical difference to Fortuna's activities. Encountered realities make all the practical difference, of course—reality is more practical than truth. As for Fatum, what Fatum acts upon is a curiosity about how evident facts are connected with less evident matters, and an interest in finding out whether beliefs can become well justified or not. The truth of beliefs makes no practical difference to Fatum's activities, either. The truths actually making a practical difference to beliefs sooner or later come within the scope of inquiries into potential justification. Encountered realities make all the practical difference, once again. Fatum still thinks that only reality can ultimately make a belief true or not. That view is not mistaken

if interpreted properly. All the realities for inquiry, from initial evident facts through connected matters brought into evidence, through to an encounter with the belief's object, contribute to understanding a belief's truth or falsity. Realities unconnected with those objectives of justifications make no difference, to either appreciating a belief's truth or benefiting from learning about the world. Truth adds nothing to justification, and reality is more practical than truth.

If Fatum grants all that while still insisting that some reality quite apart from inquiries determines a belief's truth no matter how justification works out, what can be said? Two further points might suffice to defend Rorty's view on justification and truth, reducing the role of truth to impotency. First, it is not unreasonable to foresee how properly conducted inquiries into somewhat familiar matters can typically culminate in determinations of truths (fallibly, as always). Some inquiries are halted by environing circumstances or depleted materials, but long experience with successful inquiries encourages confidence that more inquiries into related matters will result in truth determinations. (For example, a chemist expects that a sample of liquid has a low, neutral, or high pH value.) In those contexts of inquiry, the envisioned truth is taken to be out there, yet our projections are due entirely to prior inquiries. The object of belief is simply the culminating objective of justification, and "the truth" adds nothing. Second, inquiries into unfamiliar matters, where investigatory tools cannot be trusted and environing circumstances go well beyond our control, forbid us from high hopes that any truth can be approached and determined. What the object of belief is actually like can only be sheer speculation, since we cannot clearly characterize the objective of justification. (For example, an astrobiologist suspects that hints of an unusual molecule on a distant world may be a sign of alien life.) In that sort of context, "there is life on that other world" is too vague to have a truth value, since the meaning for the term "life" cannot be preset too strictly and what counts as a sign for alien life is presently indeterminate. The object of belief is as inchoate as the process of justification, and there is nothing for "the truth" to attach to.

These two points explain why our capacity to envision how a belief has a definite object allowing reality to determine its truth has to be proportional to our capacity to plan and conduct an inquiry into such a thing. Where there is envisioned truth, there is a projected objective of inquiry; where there is no projected inquiry, there is no truth. Pragmatism affirms this correlation with the tenet that a belief's object is, for all practical purposes, the objective of inquiry. Truth is accordingly just the culmination, envisioned or at least projected, of our inquiries.

CONCLUSION

Truth entirely outside of inquiry can be abandoned by philosophy. Where does that leave reality? Realities remain where they always have been. The empirical world is always with us, and we are within it. Eliminating any independent and practical role for "the truth" has nothing to do with eliminating the real world around us.[2] Philosophies endorsing a metaphysical correspondence or identity between truth and reality accuse pragmatism of denigrating or dismissing reality. Deprived of

independent reality, pragmatism reduces the world to only whatever shows up for us, according to these rationalistic philosophies.

Pragmatism disputes that accusation of anti-realism or phenomenalism. What can become evident through inquiry is surely real, and becomes evident because things are so thoroughly interconnected that each novel phenomenon is a robust reality leading on to more things awaiting our acquaintance. Because realities are endlessly conducive to more realities, inventive inquiries will never exhaust the opportunities for more learning and enlarged activity. Reality is endlessly more practical than truth.

NOTES

1. William Alston typifies a realist view of truth and is aligned with this view of justification: "It is part of what is meant by 'being justified in believing that p' that one has satisfied conditions that guarantee a significant likelihood that the belief is true" (Alston 1997, 241).

2. See Gary Gutting's defense of Rorty's compatibility with this common sense realism in: (Gutting 2003, 41–60). As Gutting notes, Charles Taylor defends that empirical realism despite disagreeing with Rorty on other matters in: (Taylor 1990).

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