

Differences of truth in mathematics, ethics and art



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The rational mind's profound and abstract speculations since time immemorial has been the nature of truth, a deeply rooted philosophical conundrum[1], whose thought itself has revolutionized the realistic value possessed by the areas of knowledge. Truth itself preoccupies a substantial role in our daily conversations, but its multi-dimensional nature has perplexed even the most profound thinkers like Plato and Aristotle as well as recent philosophers who have failed in uncovering this mystery lying at the heart of human culture. Although the word ' truth' is tagged with the purpose of a utilitarian role, we humans mould it into a form recognized by the conceptual framework of our human mind, otherwise known as a schema. Hence the question of the value of truth involved in any statement is believed to be a consequence of the social constructivism based on beliefs and our rearing. Over the past years, truth has been dealt with individually in terms of its approach towards an array of knowledge areas. The ' extent' is an underpinning of the diverse perspectives that truth holds in a variety of areas of knowledge. Thus, it indicates not only a difference in the form of truth but also a similarity involved in deciphering the existence of truth. My essay ventures to explain the extent to which truth has been given varied significance in three distinct areas of knowledge; mathematics, arts and ethics in terms of the characteristics which define them.

Since the abstract nature of truth has posed to be a universal dilemma, various theories have been formulated to gauge the truth value of any statement. Mathematics is often considered the language of certainty[2]and well-known for its infallibility and abstract thought. What makes mathematicians and philosophers believe that mathematics is closest to the

absolute truth is its logical structure of methodology and judgments, and its influence on solvability to achieve an absolutely correct or incorrect answer. The mathematical truth is bound by certain rules and barriers which encompass this area of knowledge, hence a more constrained approach built on pure logic, and deductive-reasoning influences the truth involved in a mathematical stand-point. "In mathematics a statement must be true or false" is a clichéd saying and reflects the overall understanding which defines the outcome. Most mathematicians agree the fact that the set theory forms the firm foundation upon which the complex structure of math has been erected. But what intrigues these mathematicians is that can such an abstract area have any real life applications? A glimpse into the history of mathematics would surely assert the above question. For example, a number of theories in the past were thought to be a mere theoretical phenomenon but today behold a firm position in the real world. The Non-Euclidian Geometry was first considered as an idealistic branch of mathematics, but today has carved its way into the theories of relativity. In the present global situation, the population of the world has crossed the six billion mark and threatens to exponentially make its' way up through the population charts. For example in China, in order to curb the population rush in the country, the government has pressed upon having one baby per family. From the mathematical view-point, the objective truth lies in the fact that in order to restore the habitat around us it is vital to take such a step in the interest of the future generations. From the ethical stance, their version of truth is completely antipodal because the basis of a truth-value in this statement is a reflection of ones emotional self rather than a projection of a logical mind. In ethics, hence, an argument is a rhetoric affair where people need to be

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persuaded what I believe rather than proving the trueness involved in my proposition. I feel that my observation into this example is a projection of the extent to which one event holds a different stance from the spectacle of the truth value supporting the claim. What defines a stark line of difference between math and ethics as deciphered from the above example is the conflicting nature of moral opinions and that there are no observable facts to base the truth value on in an ethical viewpoint. The difference in moral opinions amongst people may be lead by the cognitive apparatus of the individual. Since ethics is considered to be a matter of personal concern, influenced by previous knowledge and experiences of the individual, the moral differences would explain that in ethics, there is no underlying truth to be discovered. But what defines morality in ethics is the position of ethical relativism, the belief that ethical view-points are relative to one culture or another. One of the most indignant moral issues at hand is abortion. Every individual agrees the medical procedures which culminate into an abortion. But there seems to be an equally repulsive response when it comes to agreeing the morality of abortion. In short, the matter of abortion has its agreement on medical science but doesn't touch upon the area of medical ethics. So, at all points of time, the entire scenario is a relative representation of a statement and it is an appearance but not the reality. I have always observed myself making hollow as well as emotionally driven promises and always have the statement " Promises ought to be kept" at the back of my mind. This seems to be a moral principle, but it cannot be categorized as a factual claim. But on close observation, the truth factor within the statement shows close relations between such a statement and a mathematical proposition. If the phenomenon of promise is known and the

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true essence of its obligation is understood, there exists a relation between ideas. Though relativism and subjectivism are parallel in certain terms, art as an area of knowledge has been considered as a representation of reality. Friedrich Nietzsche aphorism " We have art in order not to die of the truth", self-consciously asserts the fact that this world has art in order to live the truth.

Though the ways of knowing have paved the path for the route to attaining truth in these three areas of knowledge, where reasoning, emotion and perception have dominated the approach to the ultimate reality in math, ethics and arts respectively, the truth value in each of its statements has a certain similarity. The form of assumptions which are utilized in proving a certain statement to be true is a recurring observation in all three areas of knowledge. The kind of truth that art is striving to convey to us may be completely different from the way an individual may perceive it. Hence how do we judge a piece of art if it holds completely different opinions in the minds of 2 people? When viewing a work of art, it may evoke an emotion, and the recognition of this emotion may be an indication of the truth. However, there is a common view-point amongst people that photography has revolutionized the way truth is perceived since it portrays a much more accurate picture of the entire scenario. Since the photo is a mere observation and appearances are truly deceptive. It is established that the truth involved in a painting is not prejudiced but a projection of the individual's personal interpretation, hence speaks about the viewer. Truth in terms of art is a reflection of beauty and is completely devoid of any form of logic.

Truth has been shaped in numerous ways pertaining to the satisfaction of the individual contesting the truth in his mind. There is one single truth in relation to a statement and through the exploration into three distinct areas of knowledge, I have understood that the method of approaching the subject is what defines the truth involved in it. Plato himself argued to a great extent that there is a definite answer for anything to be considered good or bad, if one exercises his deductive reasoning skills as opposed to what the Sophists believed that such statements are a matter of subjective truth and is totally based on human interpretation and his desire.