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## **THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF TRUTH IN SH. PERPERYAN'S EVALUATIVE VIEWS**

### ***Abstract***

The article is devoted to the epistemological views of the Armenian philosopher, thinker Sh. Perperyan, in particular, the problem of truth in the context of axiological analysis. The article discusses issues related to forms of cognition, peculiarities of worldview, essence, nature, types of truth and a number of other epistemological problems. The article analyzes the axiological, epistemological ideas of Perperyan. An attempt is made to reveal the relationship between humans and truth, the process of evaluating the truth. Issues related to the problem of truth such as the existence of truth, the possibility of achieving it, the causes and the importance of striving for truth are discussed through comparative analysis.

**Keywords:** *truth, logical truth, ontological truth, value of truth, deception, delusion, lie.*

### ***Introduction***

Being one of the most significant representatives of Western epistemological thought in the XX century, Sh. Perperyan has left an indelible mark on the history of knowledge and philosophy, making invaluable contributions to fields such as metaphysics, ethics, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and other areas. From his young age, Sh. Perperyan was surrounded by the educational and academic

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environment of the Armenians, following in the footsteps of his father, the renowned teacher, philosopher, writer, and educator, Reteos Perperyan. The pursuit of enlightenment and self-education guided his academic journey, which continued in Paris, where he encountered prominent intellectuals such as philosopher, metaphysician, and psychologist Henri Bergson, sociologist Émile Durkheim, psychologists Jean, Dumas, and others.

Dedicated to Sh. Perperyan's most significant contribution to knowledge and philosophy, the aim of this article is first of all to properly study, analyze and reveal the work and legacy of the great thinker. It seeks to introduce, nationalize, familiarize, and remind the Armenian public of the intellectual genius of their people. The article's purpose is also to present the creative thought, which has been preserved by the author's disciples through Western-Armenian languages.

The main goals of the article are to uncover Sh. Perperyan's epistemological views, the definition of truth, its limitations, its essence, and the evaluation of truth from an ethical perspective.

The foundational issues of the article include the unveiling of the relation to truth and the fundamental evaluation in the context of Sh. Perperyan's ethical teachings. The issues discussed have been the focus of thinkers throughout history, but to this day, they maintain their relevance, as no single definitive answer or consensus has been reached. The presented issue is framed through foundational and general shifts in perspectives, drawing from the works of thinkers such as Aristotle, Hegel, and Descartes.

#### ***Logical Truth***

In Sh. Perperyan's value-based aspectual system, the value of truth has an important position. Being a versatile intellectual with diverse interests, Sh. Perperyan did not limit his searches and mental searches to the path of finding the truth, while not contradicting his religious beliefs and not betraying Christian ideas. The author considers truth as an intrinsic value that corresponds to the essence of man and complements it. The opposite of truth appears as a weakness, a defect, "in a broad sense, a kind of evil that is inaccuracy and, in some cases, mistake". Man strives for truth, since it is an integral part of his own essence.

A number of philosophical theories have been formed around the question of truth (correspondence, authoritarian, cohesion, obviousness, pragmatic, etc.), each of which has shown its own unique approach to the definition, nature,

existence, and other issues of truth. Here, Perperyan's views are mainly influenced by classical philosophy, in particular, the theory of correspondence of truth.

Before evaluating truth from an axiological perspective, we must understand what truth is and what its essence is. The author begins his transformation from the classical philosophical approach, according to which truth is defined as the correspondence between thought and reality. This approach has its roots in ancient Greek philosophy. The most prominent representative of the correspondence theory of truth is Aristotle, who first presented this view in his work "Metaphysics". According to him, "To say that something exists when it does not exist in reality, or to say that something does not exist when it does exist, means to speak falsely; however, to say that something exists when it exists in reality, or to say that something does not exist when it does not exist in reality, means to speak the truth".<sup>1</sup> In other words, the judgment is true when it corresponds to objective reality. Following the theory of correspondence, Sh. Perperyan also sees the thought as achieving truth in matching objective reality as accurately as possible. And here we can conclude that the author accepts the existence of objective reality and a single truth, considering the task of man to find, see, and recognize this single truth. Sh. Perperyan considers truth to be the relationship between the human mind and the world, accordingly distinguishing two types of truth, depending on what it is matched to. In the case when epistemology corresponds to reality, truth is **logical**, when, on the contrary, reality corresponds to what is known, truth is **ontological**. But the relationship between these two is difficult to understand, since truth is essentially used alone, without explaining what it is; in everyday speech, we say "**to know the truth**". As a result, it might seem that truth is some kind of object that needs to be known or understood, yet in the case of pragmatic truth, it is precisely the acknowledgment of that knowledge that is called truth. Therefore, truth is not an object that must be known, but a relationship between the object and the mind. Sh. Perperyan tries to find the answer to the question of where the final value lies—whether it resides in the mind or in the object, whether it is in the correspondence of the mind or in the object, and which values are acquired through their "adjustment". Should truth be one or two values, or should the two values be considered

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle 1998, 107.

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separately and compared? Through the transformation, considering the two types of truth, the author attempts to reach the single value that connects them. "By opposing these two directions, they must cut off their isolated paths, and they must unite their force and recognize the true value of truth".<sup>2</sup>

In the attempt to explain the essence of logical truth, Sh. Perperyan proceeds from the position of rationalism, linking the knowledge of truth to human consciousness and internal abilities. Another notable representative of the rationalistic approach to revealing the truth is H.V. Leibniz, who introduces the concept of "baroque truth." Here, truth is presented as the realization of the relation of internal interactions and has an open, practical nature of knowledge.<sup>3</sup> The "baroque truth" is transformed within Kant's perspective, becoming the "categorical imperative," thus strengthening truth as an idealistic, normative form of knowledge. The intersection of idealism and reality shows the overall goal of baroque truth, the principle of which is found in human introspection, resembling the transcendental forms of knowledge.<sup>4</sup>

In order to understand logical truth, Sh. Perperyan suggests addressing certain epistemological questions, as the path to understanding logical truth is a process of perceiving the external world. How does a person perceive and understand the world, how do they find the truth, and how, therefore, do they become enlightened? Sh. Perperyan distinguishes three stages in the process of grasping logical truth. Every time we discover reality, whether outside or within us, as our first experience, we encounter the challenge of its understanding. Therefore, this also involves the value of the logical truth's assertion. The first step in the process of world recognition is the *sensory perception* of the world. "The phenomena that can exist in the general and partial sensory experiences, which are referred to as sensory or perceptual phenomena".<sup>5</sup> Sensory phenomena are related to the connection between humans and the world – the eyes see light, the ears hear sounds, and so on. This sensory experience has its own particular value, for instance, when the eyes see well or when the sounds are clearly heard. This value is especially noticeable in those who have lost the sharpness of their sensory perception, such as blind individuals who once could

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<sup>2</sup> Perperyan 1976, 87.

<sup>3</sup> Leibniz 1983, 405.

<sup>4</sup> Kant 1980, 293.

<sup>5</sup> Perperyan 1992, 184.

see, or those who have lost the sharpness of their hearing. When a person stays in the dark for a long time, it's like they forget the light and lose the ability to see. Therefore, sensations not only provide locations but also create experiences; a person not only perceives the world but also experiences their own feelings. This is why there are certain phenomena, such as "beautiful colors", "beautiful sounds", and so on. Colors are beautiful because different parts of the eye work together to capture them, and one color does not conflict with another – they harmonize and become integrated. "Sensation will be colored by the sensory. In the opposite case, it will be filled with discomfort. Therefore, this sensory acquaintance itself can already represent a certain kind of value".<sup>6</sup> Here, Sh. Perperyan subtly presents the unique capability of a person to perceive the world, which is mediated by physical sensations, but is beyond them, spiritual. Truth is revealed within the soul and through the soul. The author's understandings are always aligned with the Platonic approach to knowledge, according to which "...the soul turns towards the enlightening of truth and goodness, it perceives and knows them".<sup>7</sup>

We reach the final stage of world recognition when, through our senses, we not only experience sensations but also find the connections and differences between them and have insights. In other words, we comprehend and perceive the fundamental aspects of the external world. Here, the author distinguishes a fascinating feature of human perception, according to which the fundamental elements, which have consistency in their components, are perceived more clearly by humans than the fundamental elements that lack this consistency. This indicates that similarity and repetition of features make recognition easier. For example, harmony is pleasant to the ear, as sounds have correspondence and coordination, while dissonant noises and chaos create discomfort. "Consistency has a rhythm. Thus, we can see a primary value of recognition. Successful understanding provides us with clear conclusions".<sup>8</sup>

Apart from these two, there is a true conceptual phenomenon, where we can distinguish the specific essence of the individual, the general from the particular, recognizing the specific essence of the individual through the general. "These are the phenomena that can manifest in the universal, but with a narrower meaning,

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<sup>6</sup> Perperyan 1976, 88.

<sup>7</sup> Platon 2017, 260.

<sup>8</sup> Perperyan 1976, 89.

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these are called the true conceptual phenomena".<sup>9</sup> For example, when we recognize the shape of a chair, we know its structure, material, and significance. When we see a chair, we can identify it as such because the shape of the chair in our mind corresponds to the object in front of us. Thinking is exactly the manifestation of the third stage, as it is here that we not only recognize the phenomena and objects around us or within us but also see the connections and relationships between them. Continuing the process of thinking, Sh. Perperyan introduces the concept of "knownness" (perception) in his work. The forms are, as fundamental constructs, purely mental; it is the mind that provides them with this structure. These forms are placed before the thought process and, through their relationships, are "perceived" in the mind in a "known manner".<sup>10</sup> The logical truth is known by the name of this perception. The concepts in the mind are often symbols and forms. For example, a sign, which is a symbol of meaning, apart from these signs, contains a personal meaning, transforming the concept through the signs. The mind, which is presented with this symbol, indeed finds the meaning, but cannot define it as desired because the mind already "prescribes" the predetermined meaning. Here, of course, we can delve deeper into the various fields of human perception, especially regarding subjective perspectives and conceptualizations. According to the established understanding, through intellectual capabilities and possible perceptions of a certain value, by identifying the meanings through distinct features, people differentiate between one another. "For example, the same creative work can be perceived differently by two people, resulting in different meanings. The crucial point here is that none of these meanings can align perfectly with the intended meaning conceived and shown by the creator beforehand. For instance, there are cases when a literary work is reinterpreted by different critics, with each presenting different perspectives, often conflicting with one another. However, when the creator explains the motivation, meaning, and background of the work, it becomes clear that the other interpretations are not accurate. Such situations, naturally, are possible in other areas of life as well. However, here, the author presents a situation that is not accompanied by such conflicting inaccuracies. After all, in this particular case, the intended meaning is the only truth in the given context, and other interpretations are merely speculations or attempts to find a truth that may

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<sup>9</sup> Perperyan 1992, 184.

<sup>10</sup> See Perperyan 1976, 90.

or may not succeed. Continuing with the concept of perception, the main characteristic of the act of understanding, which is the ability to create meaning, is the transformation of the notion. Inspired by Cartesian views, Sh. Perperyan refers to it as the "light of knowledge". "...The thought, when expressed, emits a kind of light, the light of knowledge, which is not a feeling in itself but something that reveals its form and makes the objects of thought perceptible".<sup>11</sup> According to Descartes' well-known perspective, knowledge has a divine light granted by God, which helps reason to free itself from the limitations of the body and to think clearly and distinctly. The light emitted by the mind always illuminates, and for this reason, we say that thought always thinks something. The original direction is not the thought itself; thought is what illuminates the original. The concepts, through their relationships, are the evident principles of perception, just as external objects are the evident principles of sensory perception. The truth of knowledge is the relationship of the mind with the original, where this original, through its relationships, becomes evident for the mind. Perception is the only measure of truth.

### ***Lie, Delusion, Deception***

Continuing the search for the true value of truth, Sh. Perperyan attempts to find the answer to the question: why do people make mistakes? If the mind is inherently capable of placing its concepts within a framework and perceiving them in their integrity, then how is it that the mind still tends to assert things that are not true, or that a person cannot consistently affirm things in a clear manner? Before answering this question, Perperyan first clarifies the difference between errors and ignorance, pointing out that these two concepts are not the same. Ignorance does not necessarily imply error. Deception occurs when something is falsely accepted as true, even when it is not. In the case of deception, this false assertion is sincere, and the person who makes it is genuinely convinced of its truth.

In the case where the assertion is false, it is not simply a deception, but a lie. A lie involves the assumption that the speaker knows the truth but deliberately, with intent, conceals it by presenting lie as truth. Every lie contains both truth and error, as the liar may know the truth but substitute it with an incorrect assertion. If the liar knows the truth and deliberately asserts the lie, then in the case of deception, the person is unaware of the truth. The concept of deception here is

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<sup>11</sup> Perperyan 1976, 90.

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similar to *delusion*. The relationship between truth and deception aligns with Hegelian philosophy, according to which the knowledge of truth is a historical process. Humanity strives continuously towards the discovery of true knowledge. This process involves overcoming errors and delusions.<sup>12</sup>

It is also important to mention the concept of *I/e*, which, according to Hegel's definition, is the inconsistency between the knowledge a person possesses and the recognized reality.<sup>13</sup> Knowledge, which from the first perspective separates a human from truth, is in fact an inseparable part of the path to reaching it. In this way, Hegel says: "It must be said that knowledge begins with ignorance, because what is already known to us no longer requires recognition. ... But it is also true that the process of knowledge extends from the known towards the unknown".<sup>14</sup>

According to Sh. Perperyan, a deception is the result of the theory of the mind, and this theory has causes that fall into two categories: objective and subjective.<sup>15</sup> Objective causes are found within the realm of the mind. The process of thought can be complex and unclear. The mind, therefore, cannot always make precise judgments. Just as sensations can be vague, so too can the mind, as reasoning becomes tangled in complexities. The causes that are clearly defined within the mind, such as obvious truths, certain knowledge, mathematical principles, and so on, generally avoid mistakes. However, there are causes that are more complex and confusing for the mind, such as human relationships, internal conflicts, moral dilemmas, where the mind struggles to fully grasp the intricacies of the situation. As a result, mistakes are made in judgment.

Another reason for making mistakes is subjective, which is not the thought itself, but the emotions, the feelings. "... Feelings, when they overwhelm the mind, cause it to lose its pure cognitive essence, and from the depths of these feelings, it sends out its rays of reality, which, within these feelings, change and appear in a different way to the mind".<sup>16</sup> Descartes also seeks the cause of mistakes within human consciousness, stating that the foundation of mistakes is not the objective elements of reality, but rather human intellect and will. "... When I examine myself and reflect on the nature of my mistakes (which are a

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<sup>12</sup> See **Hegel** 1929, 320.

<sup>13</sup> See **Hegel** 1929, 320.

<sup>14</sup> **Hegel** 1929, 252.

<sup>15</sup> See **Perperyan** 1976, 94.

<sup>16</sup> **Perperyan** 1976, 94–95.



demonstration of my theory), I notice that my mistakes depend on two causes: my cognitive and selective abilities, or in other words, my freedom of choice, that is, simultaneously my intellect and will".<sup>17</sup>

Thus, by identifying the causes and foundations of mistakes, Perperyan also presents the condition for not making mistakes: "The condition for not making mistakes lies in the absence of action, that is, in the process of not judging through our sensory experience".<sup>18</sup> Therefore, it is crucial to constantly strive for accurate self-awareness through self-examination, self-assessment, and self-improvement. The method of judgment without passion requires self-consciousness, self-awareness, and a clear understanding of our motivations, guided by the pure value of truth. In this way, the subjective causes of mistakes will be significantly reduced, leaving only the objective ones. The potential for overcoming these objective causes lies in the application of scientific methods and practices, where the challenge is to transform the uncertain into clarity.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, according to Sh. Perperyan, in the context of trauma-based truth, truth is achieved through the process of thought, through truth-based reasoning, truth judgment, meaning, that guide the mind towards truth. We can also observe that the mental process is linked to immediacy, and truth can be attained when this immediacy is acted upon.

In the context of another perspective on truth – ontological truth – we attain truth by understanding the essence and being of things. Here, the focus is on how an entity or being aligns with its essence, and its existence manifests through its actions. A human being is a true person when their human essence is realized in their actions. "Essence, in the ontological sense, is the form through which every action, when realized, becomes true in its substance. When a being fully embodies its essence, it is a true being".<sup>19</sup> Ontological truth is also a form of relationship, but it is not between thought and reality, but rather between reality and the concept (Idea) that gives rise to it. In this context, the true value of truth lies in the degree of correspondence between the reality and the idea behind it. The more

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<sup>17</sup> Descartes 1994, 46.

<sup>18</sup> Perperyan 1976, 95.

<sup>19</sup> Perperyan 1976, 96.

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closely reality corresponds to the idea that precedes it, the greater the true value of that reality.

In concluding and comparing the two types of truth, Sh. Perperyan ultimately reaches the unified conception of truth, according to which truth exists both in the world and in the self, and is the reality that can be grasped by thought. "Truth, we can say, in the broadest sense, is immanent, or the concept exists both in the world and in the self and is present in thought... Truth, fundamentally, is the immanence of reality in the system of concepts. As a result, the success of thought is the realization of this immanence".<sup>20</sup>

In considering truth from an evaluative perspective, the key is that it precisely defines the concept of the subject in relation to its inherent understanding. Truth is valuable to the extent that the success of thought is directed toward reaching that concept. In this regard, Descartes writes: "If someone were to claim that the essence of a living being is a breathing human, without properly clarifying the concepts of "human" and "breathing"... then they would be uttering words but, for the most part, saying nothing".<sup>21</sup> A person's given ability to think is ultimately a desire to uncover the hidden secrets of their own essence, nature, life, and the surrounding world in order to reach the concept of truth. A similar perspective is also held by N.A. Berdyaev, who views truth as being synonymous with the highest form of justice.<sup>22</sup> Recognizing the importance of truth, Berdyaev views it as a path to salvation, and the striving to attain truth becomes the meaning of life.<sup>23</sup> We see that here, as in the interpretations of Sh. Perperyan, truth becomes one of the fundamental philosophical questions – an answer to the revelation of the meaning of life.

According to Sh. Perperyan, every value is a pleasure, a delight in creation. Truth, as a value, causes this delight because the mind strives toward the real, and when it finds it and recognizes its reality, this striving is fulfilled, leading to satisfaction, which in turn brings joy. Therefore, truth is joy, and as joy, it is a value. "Certainly, above all, a person embarks on their work with the necessary knowledge for success. In addition to the functional mind, a person also has truth – the instinct for discovering the real in its purity, the striving for it. The world,

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<sup>20</sup> **Perperyan** 1976, 99.

<sup>21</sup> **Descartes** 2019, 333.

<sup>22</sup> **Berdyaev** 1991, 391.

<sup>23</sup> **Berdyaev** 1990, 84.

the more it reveals itself through its reality, the greater the spiritual joy and success it brings, which constitutes a type of value".<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> **Perperyan** 1976, 100.

## ՃՇՄԱՐՏՈՒԹՅԱՆ ԻՄԱՍՏԱՍԻՐԱԿԱՆ ԸՄԲՈՒՆՈՒՄԸ Շ. ՊԵՐՊԵՐՅԱՆԻ ԱՐԺԵՔԱԲԱՆԱԿԱՆ ՀԱՅԱՅՔՆԵՐՈՒՄ

ՎԱՐԴԱՆ ԿԱՐԱՊԵՏՅԱՆ

### Ամփոփում

Հոդվածը նվիրված է հայ փիլիսոփա, մտավորական Շ. Պերպերյանի իմացաբանական հայացքներին, մասնավորապես՝ ճշմարտության հիմնախնդրին՝ արժեքաբանության համատեքստում: Քննարկվում են ճանաչողության ձևերին, աշխարհընկալման առանձնահատկություններին, ճշմարտության էությանը, բնույթին, տեսակներին առնչվող հարցեր և իմացաբանական մի շարք այլ խնդիրներ: Վերլուծության են ենթարկվում Շ. Պերպերյանի արժեքաբանական, իմացաբանական ընկալումները: Փորձ է արվում բացահայտել մարդու և ճշմարտի փոխհարաբերությունը, ճշմարտական արժեքի գնահատման գործընթացը: Համեմատական վերլուծության միջոցով քննարկվում են ճշմարտության հիմնախնդրին առնչվող այնպիսի հարցեր, ինչպիսիք են ճշմարտության գոյությունը, դրան հասնելու հնարինությունը, ճշմարտությանը ձգտելու պատճառները և կարևորությունը:

**Բանալի բառեր՝** ճշմարտություն, տրամաբանական ճշմարտություն, *ontological* ճշմարտություն, ճշմարտական արժեք, սխալ, մոլորություն, սուր:

## ФИЛОСОФСКОЕ ПОНИМАНИЕ ИСТИНЫ В АКСИОЛОГИЧЕСКИХ ВЗГЛЯДАХ Ш. ПЕРПЕРЯНА

ВАРДАН КАРАПЕТЯН

### Резюме

Статья посвящена эпистемологическим взглядам армянского философа, мыслителя Ш. Перперяна, в частности, проблеме истины в контексте аксиологического анализа. В статье рассматриваются вопросы, связанные с формами познания, особенностями мировоззрения, сущ-

ностью, природой, видами истины и рядом других эпистемологических проблем. Анализируются ценностные, эпистемологические представления Ш. Перперяна. Делается попытка раскрыть взаимосвязь между человеком и истиной. Посредством сравнительного анализа обсуждаются такие вопросы, связанные с проблемой истины, как существование истины, возможность ее достижения, причины и важность стремления к истине.

**Ключевые слова:** *истина, логическая истина, онтологическая истина, ценность истины, ошибка, заблуждение, ложь.*