

***A Further Reply to Rockmore***  
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It is my pleasure to turn once more to the exchange with Tom Rockmore. I appreciate his critical remarks as they have forced me to express my position more radically.

We agree on a number of points. We both wish to avoid an overly simplistic appeal to a contextual understanding of meaning. But when Rockmore wants to make a stronger claim that context functions not only to understand meaning, but also to justify truth claims, is this really offering a stronger position? Is it reasonable to separate definitively meaning from truth claims? Don't truth claims have meaning?

Here, I start with the rejection of the well-known definition of knowledge as "justified true belief". It seems to be pretty obsolete for it does not allow analyzing the majority of cognitive phenomena, which should be excluded from the epistemological subject matter (hypothetically false or less justified beliefs that, in fact, function within society as knowledge). Knowledge according to my concept means *every ideal (e.g., possible) pattern or scheme of activity and communication, the content of sign-symbolic systematization and social memory, that mediates practical relations of man to the world and to human beings*. If someone produces knowledge, he/she may *hope* for its truthfulness. But no additional justification can *guarantee* this outcome. A theoretical statement can be true or false independently of any post-hoc experimental efforts to justify or falsify it. Being true does not mean a reflexion of independent reality, but rather fruitfulness in construing further knowledge. Truth value is usually introduced into knowledge in a form of another knowledge, which persuades someone to prefer this or that knowledge result. Hence, truth value becomes a part of meaning when one wishes to evaluate knowledge results and to choose the best one. And truth values or claims are certainly and equally context-dependent like any knowledge or meaning.

Rockmore makes one more point, appealing to my case with geometry. He assumes that one might prefer one version of non-Euclidean geometry over alternatives. But the correctness of a non-Euclidean approach to geometry, he argues, depends, in turn, on prior views about what constitutes an appropriate approach to geometry, including current conceptions of geometrical proof, axioms, postulates, and so on. What does this mean? Is theory choice independent from intellectual background? And is it really so that one prefers a theory over another prior to, or without, any appeal to its correctness (in correspondent, coherent, pragmatist or whatever sense of the word)? And what do these "prior views" mean if not an intellectual context formed in the educational process and previous experience? In order to underline this very condition the similarities in social and cultural context of Gauss, Lobachevsky and Bolyai were singled out in my analysis.

There is one significant term Rockmore uses that deserves additional attention — "correctness". Rockmore rightly makes "correctness" dependent on the intellectual context of a theory. But that is not the whole story: "correctness" exemplifies also a mysterious "fact-objectivism". According to Rockmore, a rough way to put the point is that "meaning" refers to what the author conceivably has in mind in, say, formulating a

theory, but "truth" refers to the correctness of the cognitive claim. Thus "meaning" might imply a relationship between signs and that they stand for, "but 'truth' refers to the relation [of what?] to the facts or reality" (Rockmore 2013, 23).

Unfortunately, I cannot agree with this. Meaning does not refer solely to the individual mind; rather, to human interaction (Wittgenstein's critique of the private language). Where, then, are the meanings of such ideas as "time", "market", "substance", "God", "equality" etc. rooted? Whose brains can bear responsibility for the meaning of such concepts? The mind of a grown-up, healthy, educated, male European individual? The collective mind of European intellectual history? The mind of mankind in its historical continuity? Meaning seems to be not "private" but "objective" entities shared by, and even determining, individuals' lives. I wonder, as well, where Rockmore situates this relation between the mind and reality— inside or outside the individual mind? Can a relation between idea and reality be situated anywhere else — not in these two realms but in the "third world" of communication and practice? And are there any "objective facts" which are understandable and construed not in a particular theoretical and practical context but "exist as they are"? I am afraid that there are no facts and objects at all existing independently of our intellectual and practical constructions. Even the heavens with stars, planets and their orbits represent our constructions outside of which something can perhaps exist, but it would have no shape, no weight, no direction, no meaning, and no truth value. A queer existence, isn't it? Seven years ago, Pluto lost the status of a planet, which it had on discovery in 1930, and, accordingly, the very notion of planet was radically revisited. It has clearly demonstrated that "planet" is a kind of scientific convention and not "an objective fact". Hence, the demarcation of meaning and truth makes hardly any sense.

How then could I appear to Rockmore as a proponent of a view that claims to truth do not depend on but are rather independent of context? This misunderstanding and his criticism of my alleged position is due to my manner of picturing the particular context of human existence. I meant that the humans are doomed to be free — we cannot act according to our inborn instincts and have no other choice except to choose (to think, to doubt, to evaluate etc.). We are tragically free and at the same time always determined by the context, which is an intentional object of our choice.

To put it another way: context forms an "horizon" (Rockmore's term) in which knowledge — meanings, justifications, truth values, experiences, possible contents of artefacts and social relations etc. — is possible. For knowledge in all its forms is possible only in the world of the acting and communicating human being. But underdetermination of knowledge by context means that there is no context without human beings who produces this context as a sphere of complex interconnections with and within the world. In this sense, every context is an artefact. Human beings cannot avoid creating it. The same is God who cannot help creating the world. Is God then dependent?

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## References

Rockmore, Tom. 2013. "Further reply to Kasavin: Context, Meaning and Truth." *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective* 2 (3): 22-24.