Does Truth Really Matter?
On the Irrelevance of Truth[*]

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1. Introduction

"What is Truth?" Pilate asked Jesus after he declared that he came into the world to testify to the truth. Philosophers ever since (and naturally also before and independently from this Christian background) have pursued different approaches to answer this question — some of them trying to give a conceptional analysis of truth, others focussing on the term's extension, some looking for an universal, 'objective' truth independent of human minds, others claiming that truth is never independent of the beholder and defending subjective or intersubjective concepts of truth according to which truth is context-dependent, negotiable, constructed or even relative. And of course, there is also a long sceptical

tradition claiming that there is no truth at all and philosophy's search for truth is in vain.

If there is one true sentence about truth, then it is true that philosophers over the last 5,000 years or so have not come to any mutual agreement on the nature, the meaning or the extension of truth and the outlook for the future does not precisely give us any hope that this might change.

However, there are innumerable political, social, cultural, intercultural and multicultural conflicts and challenges that the world, reluctantly or not, has had to deal with in recent years, and will continue to have to deal with in the near future[1], and if the philosophical community wants to contribute its analytical skills and methodological impartiality to the cause of coping with these conflicts and challenges, the aforementioned philosophical perspective on truth does not really hit its target. In other words: There is a huge reality gap between philosophical theory of truth and the requirement of finding relevant solutions for our fundamental practical challenges.

This is the intellectual context under which the recent paper by Thomas Becker "Is Truth Relevant? On the Relevance of Relevance" (2014) has to be read. Being a linguist by profession (and a philosopher by heart), he claims that philosophical truth does not matter — neither in our daily life nor in social political and academic discourse, and not even in scientific theories. Instead we are striving for relevance — which has to be understood as a technical term in linguist theory, first introduced in H.P. Grice's cooperative principle (1975) and elaborated further by Sperber & Wilson's Relevance Theory (2002, 2004, 2012), which I will briefly introduce in section two of my paper. Becker uses his own interpretation of this linguistic term in order to create a philosophical program one might well call *Relevantism*[2] — which is based on the simple idea that we *de facto* prefer a relevant sentence over a true sentence. I will introduce this issue in section three of my paper, and in section four, I want to address two major concerns with Relevantism.

Finally, I want to give a few examples of how to apply Becker's Relevantism to actual conflicts in cultural, intercultural and multicultural contexts — even though my intention is not to give concrete instructions concerning how to cope

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[1]   I neither say nor think that the world population in earlier ages did not have to cope with similar or equally important issues nor do I see current challenges as somehow unique or special among the big challenges of mankind.

[2]   Becker never used the label 'relevantism' himself and I doubt that he would have liked it. He rather understood his approach as a renewed version of philosophical pragmatism (which was the second important intellectual source for his research), but nevertheless I think the term gives a fair characterisation of Becker's rather unique theoretical approach to truth. However, my usage of 'relevantism' does not involve any connection to relevance logic (where 'relevantism' sometimes is used to describe a position rejecting classical logic), which Becker was well aware of but never referred to in his actual research.

with real problems, but rather to illustrate how the theoretic apparatus of Relevantism can help us to analyse, understand and illuminate our understanding of such conflicts (this last section deserves a much more detailed investigation than this paper allows for).

2. The Linguistic Theory behind Relevantism: Cooperative Principle and Relevance Theory

The Fregean idea that formal logic offers a fully reductive calculus for natural language (cf. Frege 1879) has fallen out of favour today, but was very influential for logicians and philosophers of language until the 1970s. For those influenced by the pragmatic concerns of Ordinary Language Philosophers such as J.L. Austin and Gilbert Ryle in the 1940s, including (the later) Wittgenstein (1991), however, this view was put in question. C. I. Lewis had already struggled with the Fregean analysis of material implication in 1918 and thereby he paved the way for modal logic as an axiomatic calculus that is not compatible with the attempt to reduce natural language to logic (cf. Lewis 1918 and Lewis/Langford 1959). I do not think that it is only a temporal coincidence that the soundness and completeness of modal logic became widely acknowledged within logic at around the same time that H. P. Grice (1975, 1989), among others, established pragmatics as an independent research area within the philosophy of language and linguistics, especially since Grice was very concerned about the classical logician's interpretation of material implication, which does not at all represent our natural language intuitions about conditionals. I want to illustrate this with an example by Becker:

> A and B share an apartment and both are lazy when it comes to housework. One night, A says to B: "If you do the dishes tonight, I will give you 100 Euros". B intuitively understands: "If I do not do the dishes tonight, A won't give me 100 Euros" — even though A has never claimed this.[3]

If one interprets a conditional by the material implication of classical logic, then the conditional is false if and only if its antecedent is true and its consequent is false. If A does not want to be a liar, she only needs to make sure that B receives 100 Euros after doing the dishes. However, she is free to do with her money whatever she wants if B does not do the dishes — that means that she can as well give it to B anyway. The material implication is true, if the antecedent is false — period.

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[3]   Becker used variants of this example in several lectures and seminars, for example in his inaugural lecture at the University of Bamberg: https://www.uni-bamberg.de/kommunikation/news/wissenschaft/artikel/mit-scharf/ (Nov 24, 2015), to illustrate pragmatic concerns about material implication. For similar concerns about the logical disjunction and the modal operator in formal logic, cf. Becker 2002.

Whether the consequent is true or false does not matter. So, does B have any reason to believe that he won't receive the 100 Euros if he does not do the dishes? If B strictly interprets *what is said* according to the rules of material implication, B does not.[4]

That is the story classical logic tells us and many students in introductory logic classes today are highly puzzled about this *reality gap* between propositional logic and natural language since obviously, in an everyday situation there is not much wrong with B's intuitive understanding.

In order to explain such reality gaps, which we often find in our formal analysis of natural language, Grice introduced his well-known co-operative principle:

> Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. (Grice 1975, 307)

He also listed nine maxims in four categories (mirroring the four Kantian categories) that are entailed by the co-operative principle:

Quality
  1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
  2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Quantity
  1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
  2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Relation
  Be Relevant.

Manner
  1. Avoid obscurity of expression.
  2. Avoid ambiguity.
  3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
  4. Be orderly.

It is a common misconception of Grice's theory to understand this principle and these maxims as normative. Even though these maxims may well function in a

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[4]   Or at least, B still has a 50-50 chance that he will receive the money anyway since nothing is said about the case that he does not do the dishes, and B could apply practical reasoning and calculate probabilities, benefits and costs, but that is another part of the story that would lead us astray here.

guidebook for undergraduate essay writing, Grice does not want to tell us how we *should* speak, instead, he accounts for how communication *actually* works and what a reasonable hearer is not only entitled to infer from a statement, but also does infer from a certain statement under normal conditions.[5] Inferences are at the core of Grice's theory, and given the aforementioned dissatisfaction with the inference rules of classical logic in many practical situations, Grice's intention behind the co-operative principle was to close the reality gap between logical reasoning and our reasoning in everyday situations.

In the example above, B (assuming both A and B are reasonable speakers of English) is entitled to expect that A follows the given maxims when offering her the money for doing the dishes. So, if she *meant* "If you do the dishes, I will give you 100 Euros, and if you do not do the dishes, I will give you 100 Euros as well" she would have withheld information (and thereby violated the first Maxim of Quantity) — or even more drastic: There was no relevance (violation of the Maxim of Relation) for A for offering the deal, since she could have given B the money without this obscure way of expressing her generosity, which is a violation of the first Maxim of Manner. So, if B assumes that A is a co-operative speaker (and if he did not assume that, then why would he even bother considering her offer?), he can well infer that his dish-washing is not only sufficient, but also necessary for him in order to receive the money. *What is meant* by A's statement is "If you do the dishes, I will give you 100 Euros, and if you do not, I will not" since as a co-operative speaker, A would not violate any of the maxims which are inherent in reasonable communication.[6]

In order to distinguish these '*what is meant* inferences' in the realm of pragmatics from the *implications* of '*what is said*' in the realm of classical logic (or semantics), Grice calls them *implicatures*. So, it is an implicature, but not an implication of A's statement, that it is necessary for B to do the dishes in order to receive the money, and we can infer to this implicature by reference to the cooperative principle and its maxims which I listed above.

Even though Grice's theory of implicature is widely accepted both in linguistics and the philosophy of language, there have been numerous modifications and improvements in the recent decades, most of them regarding the number and nature of maxims (e.g. Harnish 1976; Horn 1984, 2004; Kasher 1976; Levinson 1983, 2000). The most influential modifications have been made by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson (1986, 1993, 2004) whose 'relevance theory' reduces Grice's nine maxims to one: "Be relevant", but also includes a full cognitive theory explaining how language users proceed through pragmatic inferences.[7]

Sperber and Wilson agree with Grice's implicature theory that human communication is based on pragmatic inferences such as the one in the dish-washing example. However, they do not only criticise Grice's maxims, but Sperber and Wilson also attack the cooperative principle in general and want to substitute it for a cognitive and a communicative principle of relevance (2004, 610):

> Cognitive Principle of Relevance:
> Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance.
>
> Communicative Principle of Relevance:
> Every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance.

Even though Becker appreciated Sperber and Wilson's "most drastic cut" (2014, 606), namely their reduction of the Gricean maxims to the relevance maxim, he criticises them for their further deviation from their theoretical heritage:

> Unfortunately, Wilson and Sperber threw the baby out with the bathwater and abandoned both the cooperative principle and the relation of cooperation and practice. Furthermore, they revised the everyday meaning of the term relevance and transformed it into a technical term. I regard these departures from Grice unnecessary if not detrimental. (Becker 2014, 606)

For this reason, Becker was not particularly happy about the recent developments in relevance theory (especially because these developments narrowed the theory down to a cognitive linguistic theory), and based his approach on a more Gricean background. For him, the cooperative principle is fundamental for all human interactions (deeply intertwined with human nature, see section three), which allowed him to leave the realm of pure linguistics and transform his 'relevantism'

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[7] There are different readings and versions of 'relevance theory', especially since Sperber and Wilson's position changed drastically over the recent years from a Neo-Gricean theory to an independent cognitive theory which more and more denies (and even criticises) its Gricean heritage even though it is, in my opinion, still obvious. I can't go into detail here, but Huang (2007, 182-208) gives a good summary of these recent developments towards a cognitive theory, which Becker (2014, 607-614) criticises.

into an alternative approach toward a philosophical theory of truth — which I want to shed light on in the next section of this paper.

3. The Philosophical Impetus of Relevantism: Not quite a Theory of Truth

Becker justifies his claim that cooperation is the basis for all human interaction by reference to recent discovering in evolutionary biology, quoting Tomasello 2014:

> Tomasello 2014 presents a detailed description of the evolution of cooperativity in human beings. Cooperativity is "wired" in social insects and also in mammals like wolves and apes, which can be observed in their cooperative hunting behavior. Tomasello describes the qualitative leap in the development of human cooperativity: "Humans but not apes engage in cooperative communication in which they provide one another with information that they judge to be useful for the recipient" (2014, 36). The critical difference between cooperativity with humans and with other mammals is the human ability to represent the perspective of others (2014, 56, 137f.), thus they are able to judge what is relevant for the partner playing his role in the cooperative activity. Apes do not have this ability. (Becker 2014, 610)

This allows Becker to give Grice's cooperative principle a certain reading not all linguists would agree with, but which does justice to the more universal character of Grice's implicature theory:

> Social animals like us are geared to expect cooperative behavior from their neighbor; his expectation is innate and corroborated (and qualified) by experience. Cooperativity of our fellow human beings is the default assumption that can, of course, be overridden by negative evidence. However, the question is raised: on what grounds can we reduce the Gricean quantity maxims to the relevance maxim?[8]

Again, the problem here can best be illustrated by an example, here from Becker 2014:

> If somebody, let's say from India, asked me "Where did you grow up?" I could think of at least three possible answers:
> a) In Haar.
> b) In a suburb, 500 yards outside the city limits of Munich.
> c) In Munich.

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[8]   I think it is quite obvious that the maxims of quantity and modality can be reduced to a renewed relevance maxim: If somebody gives too much information, this extra information is not relevant; if somebody gives not enough information, the given information is not relevant neither; and if somebody presents information in such an obscure way that it cannot be understood by a reasonable speaker, such an obscure statement could not be relevant. Thus the crucial maxim which needs further clarification is the quality maxim, and that is the reason why I leave quantity and modality aside here.

Option a) would be true but obscure (as nobody in India will have heard of that suburb) and therefore irrelevant. Option b) would be true but unnecessarily prolix and therefore less relevant. Option c) would be literally false but it would still be relevant as it triggers true inferences as 'He grew up in an urban environment, is familiar with Bavarian culture etc.' I would use the false answer c) and not even consider the true alternatives. (Becker 2014, 613)

This example shows why a true answer often does not play any role for cooperative behaviour in everyday situations. However, such a simple example certainly cannot be enough to declare that all philosophical attempts to find truth are irrelevant. For this, a more theoretical answer is needed and Becker finds inspiration for such an answer in Jorge Luis Borges's *Library of Babel* (Borges 1999, 2007): This library "holds an infinite set of books, each of them finite, containing all combinations of letters (22 letters plus space, period, and comma). It contains every text possible in every language that can be transliterated by the set of those 22 letters […] Hence, the library contains a detailed and true history of our future, an infinite number of false ones, the 'Persae' of Aeschylus (and his 'Egyptians'), the exact number of times that the waters of Ganges have reflected the flight of a falcon, and so forth" (Becker 2014, 602). But this library would not really be useful since it would be hard to find the relatively few true sentences among its inventory — especially if we do not have any criterion for truth. One might be inclined to say that we would need instead something like Becker's *Library of Baghdad* — an adaption of Borge's *Library of Babel*:

The Library of Baghdad is different: its books contain only true sentences (not a single false one) in impeccable English, without a single misprint. It contains, just like the Library of Babel, an infinite set of true sentences derived logically or by other recursive definitions from a basis of true and known sentences compiled by a large committee of scholars. All the sentences differ from each other, not a single sentence is recorded twice, and all sentences are of finite length. (Becker 2014, 602)

Becker claims that this library would be as useless as the *Library of Babel* due to the recursive nature of natural languages like English and other ways of adding 'infinity'. This means that the library would not only include "1 is less than 2", but also "1 is less than 3", "1 is less than 4" etc., and it would include an infinite number of disjunctions with one true disjunct like "Human beings have 11 fingers and human beings have 12 fingers, or (!) Paris is the capital of France." Becker writes:

The library would even be less useful if it contained the true sentences whose truth has not been established by experts so far (e.g. the distance between the first and the second occurrence of the letter 'e' in this paper), as almost all of these truths contained in the library of Baghdad do not matter at all; what matters are the very few sen-

tences that happen to be relevant. Therefore, the point of assertion is to pick out the most relevant proposition of an infinite number of true, known and justifiable ones. Relevance is both as relevant and as easy to overlook as the air we breathe because our cognition rejects almost all of the irrelevant information in our environment. (Becker 2014, 603)

The Baghdad Library thought experiment allows Becker to disregard truth in many cases as irrelevant, since even a list of all true sentences would be useless — since our time on earth is limited and only the few relevant sentences among all the true sentences matter for us. This is what I would sum up under the label 'Relevantism' — the theoretical position that relevance is more relevant than truth and our cognitive apparatus strives for relevant rather than for true answers. Becker would not have agreed with the message in the provocative title of my paper, nor with this definition hinting at that truth is irrelevant. Instead, he sketches a picture of a philosophical theory of truth mostly influenced by the German philosopher Harald Wohlrapp (2014) and borrows the "web of belief" metaphor from Quine and Ullian (1978) Wohlrapp's theory more or less resembles: "[T]he truth both of a descriptive sentence and of a normative sentence is derived from its 'practical relevance'" (Becker 2014, 595, cf. 614-616). Becker was highly interested in such a pragmatic interpretation of truth, and in this sense, truth was not irrelevant for him. However, the more substantial interpretations of truth were indeed irrelevant for him:

> Objective truth can be hoped for but will never be reached by human research, which is harmless as long as our practice is successful. (Becker 2014, 615)

However, there is undoubtedly a certain circularity involved when claiming that truth is only relevant because truth is derived from practical relevance — and it is not clear whether this is to the benefit of the theory or not. In my opinion, Becker's Relevantism offers a strong instrument for analysing actual conflicts, disagreements and misunderstandings because relevance is a neutral term with regard to a philosophical theory of truth. For claiming that we only strive for relevant answers, it does not play any role whether truth is philosophically defined in a universal, ultimate, objective, intersubjective, relative or any other imaginable way — and there is nothing wrong with philosophers trying to find *really true* sentences — as long as they are aware that *real truth* can be established in practice only if it is practically relevant.

4. Two Concerns with Relevantism:
What is relevance and why is it not self-contradictory?

There are two major concerns about Relevantism I want to shed light on. The first one has to do with the definition of 'relevance', the second one is a concern many philosophers have with relativist or pragmatic approaches to truth: How does Relevantism deal with the criticism that it is self-contradictory, since the relevantist's central claim that truth does not matter in itself requires a certain level of truth in order to be an acceptable claim both within and outside of academia. But first things first.

What is relevance? A theory claiming that human beings strive for relevance seems to have an explanatory problem when it cannot account for its central term: relevance. However, Grice's usage of the term 'relevance' is not exactly clear, and the way Becker uses it leaves room for different interpretations. Becker leans on Sperber and Wilson's *Relevance Theory* which brought 'relevance' as a technical term into theoretical linguistics and philosophy of language, but also criticises the Sperber and Wilson's 'overtheoreticalisation' of a very intuitive term with a clear meaning in everyday language (cf. Becker 2014, 606).

For Becker, relevance is self-explanatory since it is both innate in human cognitive apparatus, and is in general a principle of nature which lead him even so far as to explain evolutionary theory in terms of relevance: *The survival of the fittest* meant for him *The survival of the most relevant* and it was one of his last, and unfinished, research projects to support this idea with substantial evidence from the natural and cognitive sciences.[9]

According to Becker, the meaning of relevance is easier to grasp by an example than by a precise definition: If you want to assemble an IKEA Billy Bookcase, you do not ask for a thumb-thick instruction book explaining all the different possible ways of putting wooden boards together and an overview over several hundred different types of screws and screwdrivers and whether you might or might not use them for this job. Instead, you simply want a new home for your books, do not want to waste too much time on its assembly and — if possible — you do not want to lose a finger by misapplying a dangerous tool which is complicated to use and which you first have to find in your messy tool collection somewhere in the cellar. That is the reason why IKEA furniture only comes with brief instructions with self-explanatory drawings and with all the required screws, nuts and easy-to-use tools.

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[9]   I only know about this project from personal conversations, but have never seen anything in writing. His intellectual inheritance still has to be reviewed. Therefore, I cannot provide any further references here. However, his understanding of 'relevance' as an inherent principle of nature is so crucial for his theory that I think it is necessary to mention it here even without appropriate reference.

But then one might want to ask how to find out whether a solution or a theory is relevant. And the answer is: It is relevant if and only if it leads to successful practice. Furniture assembly instructions are relevant if and only if they are a real help towards assembling the furniture in the intended way, and an ethical theory is relevant if and only if it helps us to understand, analyse or even solve a practical problem. One unfortunate aspect of this understanding is that relevance only manifests itself in retrospect: I only know with certainty whether some instructions are relevant if I follow them through and my bookcase does not fall apart immediately. However, there are certain indicators that help us to predict the relevance of a certain *theory*[10] — and those indicators can be mostly determined by practical reasoning, education, life experience, expert opinions etc. A big difference between relevance and truth is that relevance always applies to something or someone. *For me,* a tourist map is in most cases relevant if and only if it helps me get directions to the city's main attractions, but somebody else might have different expectations — for example, a tourist map must include all seafood restaurants, ice cream places or barber shops in order to be relevant *for him or her.* Expectations also change in various situations: If I, for some reason, urgently need a new haircut in a foreign city, a map including all the barber shops would be more relevant for me than a map including only tourist attractions.

Yet there seems to be a problem in claiming that truth is irrelevant in the aforementioned way — a problem many relativists and sceptics fail to handle: Claiming that there is no objective truth presupposes that the claim "there is no objective truth" is objectively true, otherwise it would be pointless to make.[11] How does Relevantism deal with this objection? Even though it does not claim that there is no truth (see section three), Relevanitsm means that *real truth* is irrelevant (or, at least, it is less relevant than relevance) and by applying its own standards, Relevantism therefore also claims that it is irrelevant whether Relevantism is *really true* or not. Instead, the benchmark for Relevantism is whether it is relevant or not, and as we have seen above, relevance can only be established in retrospect (I only know whether the 'emergency barber shop map' was actually relevant after I found a place and got my new haircut there) and depends on the situations and persons involved. But how can it not be relevant to think about relevance? As Becker points out in his analysis of Grice's theory of implicature, "it takes quite some intellectual effort not to behave according to Grice's rules" (Becker 2014, 611) — and it takes even more intellectual effort not to think

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[10]   I use the term 'theory' here in a very broad sense, according to which also very practical things like building instructions, street maps and train schedules are theories if they serve "a particular purpose and its design should be determined by that purpose" (Becker 2017, 28; cf. Becker 2014 and Wohlrapp 2014)

[11]   There are varieties of sceptical and relativistic positions and I do not want to adjudicate on all of them here, but the serious variants all offer a strategy against this objection.

according to Grice's rules. Relevantism, in this sense, is a very practice-oriented position — and the idea that relevance is more important than truth can itself orient people in many situations in which they might be blinded by their otherwise hopeless search for an ultimately and *really true* answer. In this sense, Relevantism is relevant.

5. Relevantism and its application to a modified trolley problem

In this last section, I want to illustrate the mechanism behind Relevantism by applying it to the well-known trolley problem (cf. Foot 1978) in a modified version:

> A tram is running towards a dead-end which causes the train to jump off the track. The tram driver will inevitably die if this happens (there are no other passengers on the tram). His only option to survive is to steer the tram on to another track, where his pregnant wife is standing and will inevitably be killed by the train if the driver decides to choose this option. Even though he is fully aware of this horrible consequence, he decides to change the path of the tram in order to save his own life over the life of his pregnant wife.

I think that the vast majority of people (including myself) would intuitively agree that the tram driver's decision was not a very noble thing to do, most people would also say that is was not a moral decision and many people would even go as far to say that it was immoral.[12]

However, there might be cases in which the tram driver's decision was the most relevant decision — even from an external perspective. Imagine the situation that his pregnant wife suffers from an incurable disease, having only a few weeks left to live and also giving the unborn child only a minimum chance of survival. Imagine also that the couple has four more children at home who would have to grow up as complete orphans if their father was killed in this tram accident. Under such circumstances, the driver chose (in my opinion) the most relevant option for his family. Even though it might not look like the most moral decision at first glance, the driver chose the best outcome not only for himself, but also for his children — as tragic its consequences may be.

One might argue that I changed the whole ethical dilemma by including this exceptional additional scenario afterwards — and therefore it seems unfair to crit-

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[12] There are huge numbers of discussions about ethical dilemmas in the literature comparable to the one given. I want to distinguish between "not doing the moral thing" and "doing something immoral" since in such an extreme situation, there is no free choice: saving your own life is a natural thing to do and should not be morally condemned. It certainly is noble (and maybe also moral) to sacrifice your life for another person's life, but it is hard to see a moral imperative here.

icise those who formulated their moral opinion before they knew about the tram driver's specific family background. But this, again, is the *reality gap* which I referred to at the beginning of my paper which the theory of Relevantism might help to overcome. 'Textbook philosophy' can never account for all specific ethical problems in reality, but can only account for more generalised ethical dilemmas and provide normative guidelines which might give relevant orientation in many cases, but certainly do not yield an ultimate moral solution in every single situation.

Ethical, cultural and multicultural conflicts are too complex to be grasped in every detail by philosophical theory. That is why such conflicts cannot and should not be accounted for without taking the most relevant outcome into consideration.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, I have discussed Thomas Becker's central idea that 'relevance' is more relevant than truth. His approach — which I introduced under the label 'Relevantism' — is grounded in the Cooperative Principle introduced by H.P. Grice and on Sperber and Wilson's reduction of Grice's nine maxims to the maxim of relevance — but also on the central ideas of philosophical pragmatism, especially those of William James (cf. Becker unpublished).

Relevantism closes the reality gap between philosophical theory and practical life which a theoretical analysis can never fully grasp in every detail and in which a relevant solution often — if not always — is preferable over a true solution.

This especially applies to ethical, cultural and multicultural conflicts and challenges which often are so complex and intertwined that there is not a single 'true solution' (or at least that there is no hope to find a true solution within the constraints of time). There are, however, often many relevant ways to handle those situations.

Even though "the notion of practical relevance or practical rationality has not been made sufficiently precise yet" (Becker unpublished), there are certain indicators pointing us in the relevant direction as I pointed out in section four. Most of those indicators based on the life experience and education of the humans involved — and a general access to education might therefore be the most relevant imperative in order to cope with challenges and conflicts in our practical life.

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