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A Plurality of Pluralisms

Crispin Wright

1. Background

I have only recently come back to this debate. I left it for about ten years and more or less stopped thinking about the issues, so it's been a great pleasure to find that others have been running on with it in the meantime and saying very creative and interesting things of, I think, considerable potential significance across wide areas of philosophy.

First a bit of autobiography. I got interested in thinking about truth in a very general pluralistic way—you know: maybe truth doesn't always consist in the same kind of thing; nothing more specific than that—for two broad reasons. One was because it looked as though making some sense of different *kinds* of truth might help to explain why the traditional debate about truth turned out to be sterile and incomplete. Maybe the reason why the correspondence theorists, the coherence theorists, and the pragmatists couldn't get anywhere was because they were all over-generalizing. Of course, there were other problems with their proposals. Correspondence, for instance, notoriously had explanatory difficulties actually making out some interesting notion of correspondence and explaining what the terms of the correspondence relation were. But the general idea of truth being determined by *fit*, by accuracy of some sort, doesn't go away just because when you press, you find it's hard to explain its parameters. It's more resilient than that. What really seems wrong with correspondence is that it seems a tendentious way to think about mathematics, for instance, and a bad way to think about the comic: one doesn't want to be saddled with some metaphysics of 'out there' comedic facts to which one's impressions about comedy may correspond just by being willing to apply 'true' to ordinary ascriptions of 'funny'. The 'out there' view is doubtless a possible view—it's something someone *could* think (and Someone, in Oxford, probably does). But it doesn't seem that it sits well with our ordinary conceptions of truth and comedic discourse; one wants to think differently about the import of 'true' in such a discourse.

So that was one thought: that maybe the right thing to say about the traditional debate is that it couldn't get anywhere because actually all the protagonists were saying locally plausible things, thinking about different paradigms, thinking about different areas of truth, and their mistake was one of overextension. This idea connected with my desire to resist *deflationary* accounts of truth, which of course originally drew a large part of their credibility, for those who found them credible, from the failure of the traditional debate. In general, I distrust philosophical accounts of anything that say, 'There's not much here, it's not as interesting as you think it is.' I don't want to be told that something isn't interesting. I want to be told, 'It is *more* interesting than you think'—because one has missed certain ramifications and nuances, for example. So, perhaps just as a matter of temperament, I wanted to find a way of avoiding the collapse into deflation, and I saw that collapse as primarily motivated by the sterility of the original debate and a different diagnosis of it: that the truth debate was bad because the antagonists weren't talking *about* anything, because 'the nature of truth' is not an authentic subject. That's not the right account of the matter, in my view.

That was one motivation. The other was my long-standing interest in the debates about realism and objectivity, Dummett and Wittgenstein, and all that. Dummett had given us a model of those debates, or some of those debates, where what's at stake are differing conceptions of the form that statement-meaning takes in the region of discourse in question. And I thought that he was right, up to a point, because if you are a correspondence theorist about truth, you are thinking of meaning as consisting in, so to speak, correspondence conditions. And if you are not a correspondence theorist, you may still say, 'I am thinking of meaning as truth-conditional', but you are not thinking of truth-conditions in the same way. So it does look as though there would be implicitly differing conceptions of meaning in play if you conceived of the different disputes in that way. But that was not exactly what Dummett had in mind. Rather, his anti-realist *rejected* truth-conditional semantics—presumably because no way of thinking about truth was in view except correspondence—proposing an assertibility-conditional model instead. And here, I thought, Dummett got into trouble trying to sustain the meaning-theoretic model of the disputes, because he couldn't actually construct any assertibility-conditional accounts of meaning. Indeed, Timothy Williamson is still complaining, forty years later, that Dummett never gave us a proper theory of meaning.[1] Well, it's true, he didn't. And he didn't because you *can't*, and you can't because assertibility conditions, except in the area of mathematics, which Dummett was focusing

[1] Here is a characteristically acerbic expression: 'Dummett's requirement that assertibility be decidable forces assertibility-conditional semantics to take a radically different form from that of truth-conditional semantics. Anti-realists have simply failed to develop natural language semantics in that form, or even to provide serious evidence that they could so develop it if they wanted to. They proceed as if Imre Lakatos had never developed the concept of a degenerating research programme.' (Williamson, 2006: 181)

on, aren't recursively characterizable, since—for the most part—all kinds of Quinean holisms and empirically grounded conceptions of evidence enter into one's notion of the assertibility-conditions of an arbitrary empirical statement. Generally speaking, the assertibility-conditions of a statement are not purely *recursively semantically* determined, so of course a proper semantic theory can't fully characterize assertibility-conditions.[2] So my thought was just that if we've got differing notions of truth, or differing conceptions of what truth consists in—and I wasn't yet thinking about distinctions between the range of different ways of capturing the pluralist idea—then you didn't need to engage any of that. You could just allow that truth-conditions are fine across the board; that disquotational—Davidson-style—semantics is fine across the board (as far as it goes, whatever it's supposed to illuminate exactly). What's really varying is the way in which the various discourses engage with reality, the kind of truth that applies. So, if disquotational semantics is an adequate basic semantics, then the realist/anti-realist debate is not a semantic debate in the end.

So, that was me reacting against my inspirational teacher and wanting to say something that addressed the same concerns and removed some of the wrinkles.

2. Three modes of pluralism

If you are starting from an interest in the above two issues, it's obvious that there must be lots and lots of different ways of fleshing out the basic idea. What are these different 'kinds' of truth—what does the claim mean exactly? There is a big space, here, of ways of trying to explicate the alleged plurality. But it does seem to me that there is a basic constraint on any plausible proposal in this direction, which drives my reservations concerning some of the 'disjunctivist' things that Pedersen has proposed (see Pedersen 2010; 2012; Pedersen & Edwards, 2011; Pedersen & Wright 2013). I think we have to take seriously the *appearance* that generated the traditional debate. It wasn't just a clumsy mistake to look for an analysis of truth *per se*, to try to say what truth consists in. There is a strong intuition (I hate to call it that—contemporary philosophers are radically confusing themselves by their use of the term 'intuition', but the term is entrenched) of some kind of unity, or univocality if you are thinking at a semantic level. That has to be reckoned with by any plausible account. So, as Michael Lynch puts it in *Truth as One and Many* (2009)—and I think this is spot on—the first problem for any kind of pluralism is to save the *unity* alongside the plurality; you have got to have a robust account of why these are all forms of *truth* or all species of *truth*, of why we use the same word, why we

[2] I take an opportunity to discuss these issues further in Wright (2012).

seem to talk in terms of a single concept. If you haven't got an answer to that, you have lost the subject matter.

So I want to impose that constraint, and then my interest in what follows is just the large variety of prima facie possible ways to address it. I think there are even more possible answers than the ones to be reviewed. It's important to keep that in mind, as well as the apparent strengths and weaknesses of these answers. The issues here are open. But I am also going to suggest—of course, you would be disappointed if I didn't!—that with minor adjustments and developments, the proposal in *Truth and Objectivity* (1992) is still roadworthy. I don't say it cannot be improved on! Indeed, we'll review a proposal that I think, if it can be stabilized, will improve on it in certain respects. But I do think that a version of the proposal made in *Truth and Objectivity* still runs. Maybe you will be able to persuade me otherwise.

I think it's helpful to think in terms of four basic *modes* of pluralism, as I am going to call them. And then there are sub-types under those modes. Here are the first three modes:

Mode A. There is a mode of *Simple Alethic Pluralism*, or as Lynch (2004) called it, *SAP*. This is the thought that 'true' has no single meaning, so it's a thesis at the level of *concept,* or of *sense*.

In order to give *SAP* a chance, it's not going to be the thesis that 'true' is like 'bank', or 'rent', or 'spare'. It's going to be the thesis that 'true' is like: 'fixing', or 'dispensing', or 'poor', as in

> Fixing dinner, fixing a race, fixing the car;
> Dispensing a prescription, dispensing justice, dispensing sweeties to the class;
> Poor relation, poor performance, poor wee thing.

These aren't ambiguities exactly. You don't have to learn each type of use separately. They are witness to a phenomenon that we haven't studied enough, which is center-stage in a very interesting but neglected book by the late James Ross called *Portraying Analogy* (1982). It's a feature of linguistic competence that it is creative in the following way (this is not Chomskyan 'creativity' or anything like it): it's creative in the sense that it's acceptable and commonplace to *stretch*. If you are skilled at using language, you will use words in new contexts, in stretchy ways that don't amount to metaphor. When someone stretches, it's not that he uses words so bizarrely that we think, 'What's he doing? That's absurd . . . Oh, I see, what he is suggesting is the following comparison.' A metaphorical meaning, as it were, pops up as a creature of linguistic incongruity. (Though in saying that, I don't mean to propose any particular conception of what happens when a metaphor is coined, or when it's entrenched for that matter.) But to have recourse to stretching is not to coin a metaphor. It is to exploit a degree of elasticity of meaning, contrasting with ordinary borderline vagueness. It's not a question of, as it were, pulling away from the core cases, in the way you may stretch the concept *red* as you run down from the paradigms into the borderline areas; that's not the

kind of stretching concerned. No, you just pick a word that isn't ordinarily used in a certain kind of case and you use it in a different kind of case; and doing so is fine because there are relevant similarities that let the word be understandable in the new kind of context; there is elasticity of an intelligibly exploitable kind.

So, someone who wanted to argue for *SAP*, it seems to me, would do well to do some work on Ross's book, which is chock full of interesting data, and see whether a case could not be made that 'true' has the relevant kind of elasticity, and indeed whether we are not exploiting that in using it to talk about propositions about comedy and religion and chemistry and whatever else. *SAP* should be the thesis that there is a relevant species of semantic elasticity in the truth-predicate, and that it's manifest in its various applications when you look carefully.

I haven't done that work; I don't have a developed view about what the outcome would be. But I am, I confess, skeptical that an interesting alethic pluralism might eventuate. (But let's not just discount the proposal; it should be on the table and thought about.)

Mode B. Analogy of meaning needs to be distinguished from Wittgensteinian *family resemblance*s, insofar as we know what the latter were intended to be. Anyway, we have Wittgenstein's own prototype of 'game' to go on. It does seem, on the face of it, that 'game' is a very interesting concept for something like the reasons he gives and that maybe there are lots of concepts that turn out to be in a similar case when you look at them carefully. On the usual account, the *concept* of game is univocal: 'game' doesn't stretch its meaning as you apply it to croquet and to war games and to mind-games, and so on. It's not that there is analogy in the Ross sense. It's rather that there's semantically relevant analogy at the level of *reference*. A family resemblance concept is associated with a multiplicity of marks that are canonically relevant to its application. You can argue about the application of a family resemblance concept and the argument will consist in adducing and weighing the presence of the relevant marks. There is some scope for discretion; you can judge what weight to give to the marks and how many of them you need to be present. But all of that is at the level of semantic value and reference and is not so to speak in the concept. Chess and tennis are not games in different senses of the word, and it is not a stretch to apply the same word to both. But GAME, though univocal, has no necessary and sufficient conditions of application, only canonically relevant marks.

Surely, that's a possible shape for a concept to have. Whether it is what the historical Wittgenstein had in mind or not, I don't know. (But if you are teaching the *Investigations*, you will probably outline something like that notion.) In any case, family resemblance, so conceived, is a possible mode of pluralism that contrasts with *SAP*, as I am thinking of *SAP*. And again someone drawn to pluralism about truth might be tempted by the idea that maybe the right way to think about the variety in the notion is that certain *marks* of truth in different areas present this kind of Wittgensteinian pattern of a network,

crisscrossing, overlapping, but not amounting to necessary conditions, nor sufficient conditions.

However, this looks to me an unpromising way to regard truth. The postulated 'marks' of truth don't come to mind in the same way that they do with games. 'Let's look at truth as applied in physics and compare it with truth as applied in comedy. Which marks of truth do we find in common in those two areas and which go missing? Which are found in only one?' The question falls a bit dead. I don't know what a 'mark' of truth is in the intended sense. There are different kinds of reasons in the two areas for thinking something true, but that difference is not to the point.

Now, when I wrote *Truth and Objectivity*, what I had by way of a template for an alethic pluralism were basically just those two models: analogy of meaning and family resemblance. I had read and talked to Jim Ross, I had read Wittgenstein, and I wondered, what could a competitive alethic pluralism be? Neither of those two models seemed to promise terribly well, so the question that exercised me was: how else might one elaborate the thesis in such a way as to address the two overarching issues that I was interested in?

What I eventually came up with in *Truth and Objectivity* prefigured what I later said rather better, namely, the account in 'Truth: A Traditional Debate Reviewed' (1999). That paper proposed that the way to think about the unity and the plurality in truth is this: there is a single *concept* of truth, and the *property* it presents can vary from area of discourse to area of discourse. This is a bit like how Lynch (2009: 60–62) interprets my view when he invokes the parallel of a flexible definite description, allowing that there is some uniform content associated with the concept, but that the content is not 'rigid'—it's variably satisfiable. However I don't really think that I was thinking of 'true' as having a complex descriptive sense; I wanted to say that the concept is also unanalyzable, so there would be no question of producing a definite description providing a paraphrase of it.

This thought was intended to be consistent with another idea I found attractive. I was drawn to the kind of thing that Michael Smith (1994) and Frank Jackson (1998), following suggestions of David Lewis (1970), were saying about one form of conceptual analysis, what I called a *network analysis*. Specifically, I was approaching the view that the right thing to think about the quest for an analysis of the concept of truth might very well be that what the philosopher should do is to give a sensitive description of its *constitutive connections with other concepts*, which, when done sufficiently well and in a properly elaborated way, will identify that concept, or capture its conceptual essence, in an essentially relational or 'networking' way. The nature of the fit between the concept so characterized and the property presented would then be that the property realizes, or *models*, what goes into the network analysis.

I also thought that when you are going to attempt a network analysis, you better start with stuff about the concept that we are likely to agree about.

Otherwise there is no obvious beginning point. But I don't think I ever thought that one should start with *incontestable* platitudinous a priori first principles—there is going to be some discussion of what goes into the list; there needs to be a process of ordinary philosophical critical reflection. Anyway, that was the general set-up: we were going to try and do a network analysis of the concept of truth. The program would consist in trying to tabulate some plausible initial, suitable-looking claims, looking for counterexamples, refining them in the light of those (or junking them altogether) and thereby trying to build up a picture of what seem to be the essential interrelationships between the concept of truth and others that feature in the resulting network of principles.

I think that activity characterized like that actually fits a great deal of what passes for philosophical 'analysis'. We hardly ever sit down and try to generate an explicit analytical equivalence, X is F iff, ... We repeatedly got burned trying to do that; we hardly ever said anything interesting or correct, or anyway both interesting *and* correct. But we do say interesting and correct things, I think, sometimes, when we do it well, when we are trying to 'network', trying to explore mutually identifying connections between concepts. That seems a better direction in which to start, and a more fruitful way to proceed.

The major difference between this form of pluralism and family resemblance pluralism thus emerges as the following: that we are going to say, if we are following this program, that to be a truth-property requires satisfying *everything* in a stable, complete, and correct network of truth-specific principles. There is no flexibility about how many principles need to be satisfied, no weighting of the relevant principles against each other. Whereas to be a game is to satisfy perhaps most, perhaps enough of the more significant, of the characteristics that will feature in a compendious description of the marks that we treat as game-relevant. GAME thus has a kind of vagueness, or a discretionary aspect to its applications, which a concept that allows of the kind of network analysis proposed for truth does not. That's the big difference, I think, with the family resemblance proposal: the network of truth-involving principles constitutes a set of interrelated, exceptionless conditions. There is no analogue of the idea of relevant but neither necessary nor sufficient marks as in the case of GAME.

That's **Mode C** pluralism: one concept, variably satisfiable in domain-specific ways. One concept, many properties. It's about as far as I got in my earlier work.

3. Predicates and properties

Thinking again about all this, I have become uneasy about the best construal, for the pluralist purpose, of the relation between concept and property. I was thinking of it then in what I take to be broadly Fregean terms, so that concepts

are taken as senses of predicates, or open sentences, which are thought of as presenting a property in much the way that a Fregean term will express a singular concept associated with it as its sense and thereby present that object, as its reference, which uniquely falls under that concept. So a concept would be a mode of presentation of a property in just the way the sense of a Fregean singular term is a mode of presentation of the object to which the term refers. But reflecting on it now, it doesn't seem that's at all a happy way to conceive the matter, although it has been implicit in the discussion we have been having today at various points. It's a bad fit if we want to take into account certain of the intuitive differences between predicates and terms and what it is respectively to understand them.

Predicates don't denote properties as terms denote objects—at least not if the sense of a predicate is a *satisfaction-condition*; and that the sense should be the satisfaction-condition seems imposed if, crudely, to understand a predicate is to know how something has to be if the predicate is to apply to it. But, of course, in general many things may meet that satisfaction-condition. To understand a singular term on the Fregean model, on the other hand, is to know how an object has to be if it is to qualify as *the* referent to the term: the sense is a satisfaction-condition but with an inbuilt constraint of uniqueness. Now, if that's the model, we should think of a predicate as presenting, not an associated property but the *plurality* of things that satisfy it. That's what happens when you run the comparison straight through. The referent of a singular term is the thing that satisfies the condition that constitutes its sense; so the referent of a predicate should be the *things*—the plurality (though perhaps just a plurality of one, or zero!)—that satisfy the condition that constitutes *its* sense.

Someone may reply, 'Very well. An extension, or set, will represent the plurality determined in that way, so we may as well conceive of the reference of a predicate as a set, the extension'. But that's a further, noncompulsory step, and we will then have 'Concept HORSE'–type difficulties describing the relations between the predicate and a singular term standing for the relevant set. So while we can, at a cost, conceive of predicate reference as to sets, the closest analogy, if you follow the Fregean singular-term model through, is one of divided reference among the satisfiers.[3] In either case, though—the set or the satisfiers—the predicate does not refer to the property; the property is what its satisfiers have in common. In sum: we should think of the sense of a predicate, conceived on the Fregean model, not as presenting the relevant property, but rather as presenting the plurality—the satisfying things; and the relation of the sense, or concept, to the property is that it's *by having* that property that the

[3] Whether *this* conception can avoid 'Concept HORSE' problems will depend on whether 'divided' reference can be explained as a mode of reference contrasting with that of 'The things of which "F" is true.'

relevant things are able to satisfy the sense, to meet the satisfaction-condition. So we need to think of the relation between concept and property rather differently to the way that I, and perhaps others, have generally been thinking about it in this context.

So, what is the relation between the predicate, 'is a horse' and the property of being a horse? The model I am suggesting we drop says that the property is what the mode of presentation—the sense, or satisfaction-condition—presents, as the sense of a definite description presents the object the definite description stands for. What I suggest we replace it with is the generic idea that the property concerned is that property possession of which, necessarily, fits an object to meet the satisfaction-condition of the predicate. This idea allows for both 'sparse' and 'abundant' realization. If, in a spirit of abundance, we count *being such as to satisfy F* as itself a property, then it is a property possession of which, necessarily, fits an object to satisfy F. But we may equally well regard being composed of H_2O as that property that, necessarily, fits a sample to satisfy the sense of 'is water', however exactly the latter should be specified. When we go for abundance, the nature of the associated property will be transparent in the sense of the predicate; when we approach matters in the metaphysically sparser spirit, it may not be at all obvious, or even a priori assessable at all, what property fits something to satisfy the predicate concerned.

Mode C pluralism says: one concept, many properties. But the train of thought we just ran through suggests that the pluralist does best not to think of 'true', as used in different regions of discourse, as presenting, or referring to these various properties. The domain-specific truth properties should rather enter the fray as those properties possession of which somehow *fits* a proposition to satisfy the truth-predicate for the domain of discourse to which it belongs. And the nature of these properties, although not presumably a posteriori, should not be expected to be immediately explicit in the sense of the predicate 'true', but will take reflective analysis and philosophical argument to disclose.

I don't say this changes very much, at least for the purposes of a Mode C view. But it does bring out, what perhaps was obvious anyway, that a properly developed alethic pluralism is going to have to include a substantial investment in the metaphysics of properties and, associatedly, the semantics of predication.

4. Lynch's objections

Let's go back to Mode A pluralism (*SAP*): the idea that 'true' varies in meaning. In his 2009 book, Lynch lays down four objections to *SAP* that I think are good to rehearse, so that we can consider which of these objections lapse under other modes, and which, if any, remain.

The first objection is originally due to Christine Tappolet (1997). If 'true' varies in its meaning, what does validity of argument consist in? It seems that all that can be said is that a valid argument is one where necessarily if you start off with propositions to which 'true' applies in one or another sense and you reason via the argument concerned, you will wind up with conclusions to which 'true' applies in some sense. As an account, that sounds objectionably metalinguistic. However, if you say instead that there should be some *property* preserved by valid inference—but bear in mind now that, according to *SAP*, we have a truth-predicate that has some kind of semantic elasticity about it-what is that preserved property? So it appears a significant problem to explain what valid inference is for an *SAP* view.

Tappolet (2000) has also raised the 'compound statements' objection (as have others; see Williamson 1994). If predications of 'true' are regarded as having a variable meaning in some way, and now we take, for example, a conjunction where one conjunct is correctly described as 'true' in one meaning of 'true' and the other is correctly described as 'true' in another meaning of 'true', and we say on that basis that the conjunction is true, on what meaning of 'true' is *that* true? If for example, 'true' means *superassertible* as applied to p and *corresponds to the facts* as applied to q, what does it mean as applied to p & q? It looks like a good question.

Lynch's third objection reflects that a different question applies to generalizations. Suppose Socrates says lots of things: he talks about comedy, he talks about cosmology, he talks about the weather, he talks about the color of Xanthippe's eyes. And we remark that everything he said is true. One question is what it takes for our generalization to be correctly described as 'true'—what sense of 'true' is that? That's a counterpart of the question about conjunction. But another question is in what sense we are using 'true' when we report that everything he said is *true*. What is the sense of 'true' as it occurs in our report? That seems to be a separate (though related) problem.

Lynch's fourth objection is that the general *normativity* of truth becomes unaccountable on any *SAP* story. Why? Of course, not all agree that truth *is* normative. But those who agree that truth is normative think it is so not because it just so happens that all the variable meanings of 'true' share a kind of normative implicature. That would be remarkable. Could it be better than a coincidence that the elasticity that we have allegedly exploited in using this same word in different areas always retains a normative aspect? That would be very puzzling. It could be so; it could happen. But maybe one should smell a rat.

A defender of *SAP* may of course have various responses to these objections. But my question here is, how many of them carry over to apply to Mode C (that is, the *Truth and Objectivity* proposal): one concept, many properties? Lynch thinks: all of them. I think: none of them! You may think, some do, and some don't. Here are my reasons for saying that none of them do.

The validity objection will apply if there is independent reason for thinking that validity has to be preservation of a single property, or if that's somehow a given. If validity has to be so conceived, then reasoning in a way that crosses domains, using bridging premises, may very well generate what we regard as valid inferences that don't preserve a single property, because the conclusion is, if true at all, true in virtue of having a truth-property that none of the premises have. So we will not have preserved any single property, although there is still an intuitively valid inference. But to run this objection, you first need to ground the idea that validity has to be preservation of a single property. And so far as I can see, there is no independent motivation for that.

Jc Beall (2000), in the first round of discussion of the issue, gave a logician's answer to the objection in terminology, which I think is distracting, but whose point is substantially correct. Beall said what's important is preservation of a *designated* property. There can be several designated properties: superassertibility, coherence, correspondence—these can all be designated with respect to different domains. And as long as a mixed—domain-crossing—inference preserves designation, that's good enough for validity.

Lynch replied to Beall, 'Who on Earth cares about *designation*?'[4] But the underlying point, I take it, Beall was making, which is the one I am now making, is that truth-preservation can be agreed on all hands to be preservation of *falling under the concept of truth*. The apparatus of different designated values gives us a useable model for a system in which there are different ways of doing that. What makes the propositions that fall under the concept of truth interesting is that they fall under the concept of truth: that's what is important to us. It's quite enough for the interest and point of the notion of validity that valid argument ensures conclusions that fall under the concept of truth when the premises do. That there are different ways of falling under that concept is no obstacle to this.

So I am inclined simply to deny that there is any good motivation for the thought that validity has to consist in preservation of a single *property*. Our interest is in the concept of truth, and hence in any property that realizes the concept. Another way of putting the matter: As long as we preserve the *abundant property* of falling under the concept of truth, we have a notion of validity that is perfectly good and intelligibly of interest to us.[5]

What about the additional part of the third objection, the bit that goes beyond the mixed-compounds objection? The question was, what are we saying when we say that everything Socrates says is true? What's the meaning of the token of 'true' in that assertion? The answer should be: we are saying that everything Socrates said falls under the concept of truth.

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[4] Lynch (2004: 388–389).

[5] Lynch (2009: 66–67) briefly considers a similar suggestion.

Does Mode C incorporate some kind of threat to the normativity of truth? No, it doesn't—because we will surely have built it in to our network analysis that truth has whatever normative features should properly be included.[6] Platitudes about normativity will surely be in there, if—as I agree—they are part of the concept. So Mode C is certain to have resources to accommodate the normativity of truth.

It seems to me that the objection of Lynch's four against *SAP* that maybe survives—and that is anyway the most interesting—is the compound-statements objection. How does that look in a Mode C setting? How does the objection go now? The question will not now be, for instance, what's the meaning of 'true' as applied to a conjunction? Rather it will be, what property does a conjunction have, when, for example, one of the conjuncts (say, an ethical statement) is superassertible in a domain where superassertibility is the truth property and the other (say a mathematical statement) is coherent in a domain where coherence is the truth property? There is, on any natural understanding of the notion, no domain of discourse to which the subject matter of such a conjunction belongs. What property—superassertibility, or coherence, or neither—is the truth-property for the conjunction? What can we say?

I think this is a good—in other words, a prima facie awkward!—question, but I think it's a version of a very old question: one that is not a question that is triggered by pluralism but was already there for monism. Insofar as I see an objection here, I think it's simply a version of the objection that people made to the logical atomists about compound statements generally. Atomic propositions are true by dint of correspondence to atomic facts. So when a conjunction of such propositions is true, to what fact does the conjunction correspond? If you reply, 'The fact, obviously, that p and that q', that's question begging, because you just helped yourself to a conjunctive expression to denote a fact. And the concern was: what in a world of atomic facts *is* a conjunctive fact?

In a lecture at Harvard, considering the corresponding problem about negation, Russell once suggested that there were negative facts and apparently he almost caused a riot![7] And understandably so, because there aren't any negative facts, one wants to say—or at least I want to say.[8] And you might want to say, in the same spirit, that there aren't conjunctive facts either. There can be the fact that p and that fact that q, but there isn't any extra thing: the conjunctive fact to which their conjunction corresponds.

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[6] I here record that Douglas Edwards, Michael Lynch, and Nikolaj Pedersen, who each listed putative truth-platitudes at various points in the discussions at the Dublin workshop where this paper was first presented, all included a couple that are normative: for instance, *It is bad if you miss the truth*, *truth is the end of enquiry*, and so on.

[7] See Russell (1956: 211–212).

[8] I am tempted to agree with Peter Simons (in the Dublin workshop discussion) that there are *lacks*; but lacks are not facts.

So we have the precedent of that old discussion. How do we make sense of the truth-values of conjunctions, given that we have so far got nothing further than an account of what confers truth on their conjuncts? We don't want to invoke a special category of conjunctive facts—the truth-makers for the individual conjuncts should somehow be enough. That is why conjunction is a truth-*function*. Settle the truth-values of the conjuncts and you have already settled that of their conjunction. But how can they be enough? They are not enough *on their own*. But how can we harness their conjunctive—as it were, their collaborative—force without postulating an extra conjunctive fact?

It's an old and teasing issue. But whatever the solution, it is going to be something that lets us say the right thing. And the right thing to say is that what makes the conjunction true is that the first conjunct is true AND the second conjunct is true! That's the right answer. We have to be allowed to *use* conjunction (or negation, or any other truth-functional operator) in characterizing the truth-conferrer. If you are not allowed to do that, you are lost. And now, whatever the nature of the license to use conjunction in explaining the truth-conferrer for a conjunction, whatever we need to say to demystify that response, the Mode C theorist can say the same, in response to the compound-statements objection. The difference is only that the Mode C pluralist's account will appeal to different truth properties on the two sides: the conjunction is true, for instance, because the first conjunct is superassertible under ideal ethical reflection AND the second coherent with the iterative conception of set.

Just now, I did my best to convey the impression of a problem. Actually, I don't *really* think there is a problem here at all, but there is a perspective in which it seems that there is a problem: a dilemma, that only a conjunctive fact is up to the task of making for the truth of a conjunction, but that there are no conjunctive facts—there are only 'atomic' or otherwise basic facts. But let it be that I am wrong and that there is something very hard to reconcile here. Then it seems to me that this is a problem whether we are monist about truth or pluralist. Let it be a good problem. If there is a solution, there is no reason to think that solution won't be available to the pluralist.

So I am not moved by the objections that Lynch highlighted for *SAP* and then sustained against the *Truth and Objectivity* account, at least not before further discussion.

5. Modeling the platitudes—Edwards's dilemma

A distinct objection is due to Douglas Edwards (2011). Roughly speaking, the objection is as follows: I am proposing that to qualify as a truth property is to satisfy the axioms in the network analysis (or the 'platitudes', as I shall usually continue to say). But the problem is that if you formulate those platitudes *without domain restriction*, then the various proposed candidates—other

than, perhaps correspondence—don't seem to satisfy them. If I just lay down the platitudes unrestrictedly and affirm that superassertibility, say, provides a model of them, I'll be wrong. Any good case for saying that superassertibility models the platitudes will be subject to special assumptions about the relevant domain. Such a case, when we can make it, will, admittedly, be an a priori case; it will be made by reflection and reasoning, not empirical science. But the a priori case will be made under the hypothesis, itself presumably a priori if correct at all, that the domain has certain relevant features. And of paramount importance for superassertibility in particular is the circumstance that the domain in question be *epistemically constrained*.

I guess that is obvious, but I'll spell it out. Superassertibility is a property with this feature: that if a proposition is superassertible then, given time and world enough, you can get evidence for its truth. This is so because for a proposition to be superassertible is for there to be a state of information which a subject can access and on the basis of which he can then believe or assert that proposition in an epistemically appropriate way—where epistemic appropriateness is then stable under improvements to his state of information. That's the intuitive idea. So clearly he must be able to get into the initial state of information—as it were, the superassertibility base—and if he does, he will then be in a position to assert the proposition in question.

So a superassertible proposition has to be one for which evidence is available, at least in principle. But that's not true of truth in general, at least according to our folk-philosophical ideas. We, most of us, want to say that there are areas where we may hit on the truth as it were serendipitously, without being able to find out or even get weak evidence that we have. It's in the nature of truth, we tend to think, that that should be a possibility, at least in some areas of enquiry. So if we formulate the truth-platitudes unrestrictedly, then as soon as someone says: superassertibility models these, the reply will come, 'Not so fast; it depends on what you are talking about'.

The modeling claim is thus subject to special provisos about the domain that we are considering. Indeed, that is the whole point: it is because domains of discourse have special variable features—epistemic constraint, lack of epistemic constraint, the presence of a core conception of the nature of the domain (as maybe provided by the iterative conception of set) coherence with which will do for truth, or the lack of any such core conception—it is because these features vary, that what it takes for a property to behave like the truth property will vary. So there won't be any unrestricted satisfiers of the platitudes other than truth itself, in general.[9]

[9] It may be suggested that correspondence is an exception, but I actually take exception to that claim. I think if you understand correspondence in a substantial way, it may very well be that there are regions of discourse where it doesn't actually deliver what we want. I think you have to deflate it in a certain way before it seems obvious that correspondence to fact behaves in the ways mandated by a good network analysis.

So, the first horn of Edwards's dilemma says: if the platitudes are formulated unrestrictedly, we don't have a plurality of satisfiers of the platitudes. The second horn then charges simply that if we *restrict* the platitudes—if we formulate them in such a way as to speak of a specific domain—they stop being platitudes and become substantial, controvertible claims.

I am inclined to think the force of the second horn is illusory and may depend upon conflating two different notions of 'restriction' of the platitudes. So far as I can see, it will not compromise the platitudinous status of what we say if, rather than saying, for example, that truth is one thing, justification another, or that to assert is to present as true, we affirm instead that in ethics, truth is one thing, justification another, or that when discussing comedy, to assert is to present as true. I therefore wonder if the idea that explicitly domain-restricting the platitudes has the effect of, as it were, controversializing them and does not depend on considering instead domain-restricted versions in which mention of a *candidate modeling property* is made in place of 'true', so that what we get is, for instance, that in discussion of comedy, to assert is to present as superassertible; or that in ethics, justification is one thing, superassertibility another. These are indeed controversial claims. But why are they the relevant kind of restriction?

So I am a little uncertain about how the second horn of Edwards' dilemma is exactly supposed to go. But what I wish to say in response is in any case that I want nothing to do with either horn. More accurately, I do want to formulate the platitudes purely generally and to affirm that truth properties satisfy them as generally formulated. But I want to allow the scope of the quantifiers in these general formulations to vary. In each case, there will be an implicit 'For all p' quantifier. And what we vary in order to construct the various models of 'true' is the range of that quantifier. So we don't mention domains in the way we formulate the platitudes; we don't say, 'In ethics. . . .' That truth in ethics is under consideration is, so to speak, behind the scenes. We simply let the quantifiers vary over different domains of discourse, and we find—so claims the pluralist—models that will vary depending on that varying range.

That was the intended proposal. So, whatever exactly are the problems on the second horn of Edwards's dilemma, I believe we should be able to avoid them. Whether the proposal escapes other problems is for discussion. But if Edwards's objection depended on my being forced to pick one of those two horns, well, as far as I can see, I am not so forced. I propose to slip between them in the way I have just outlined.

So, my interim conclusion is: none of the objections to the *Truth and Objectivity* account that have so far proved influential should move a proponent of that account. (Probably, there is only one such proponent!) That's not of course to say that other approaches may not prove superior in other respects.

6. Mode D and the conferral relation

Now we come to the fourth pluralist mode. The first three were: analogy of meaning, family resemblance, and one concept/many properties. **Mode D**, the fourth mode is: one *property*/many properties.

In this mode, we bring the issue of pluralism down to the level of reference, semantic value, or however we now want to think about predicate-semantics and properties. The mode of the pluralism is, broadly, of the kind that Michael Lynch has been defending in all his work on this topic: there is a to be single property of truth, and there are many *other* satellite properties hanging around in its vicinity which are somehow of interest, are somehow doing something to service the application of the truth-property. So we have got the One property, Truth, and the Many properties—I'll call them the B-list—including correspondence, coherence, superassertibility, assertibility at the end of enquiry, fully deflated truth[10] . . . and there might be others: some theorists may very well want to include (one or more) relativistic properties in the B-list.

The attractions of this approach are obvious. If we go for Mode D, we get certain advantages straight off the bat. There is no special problem for the Mode D pluralist with valid inference. If you thought there was a problem before, there certainly isn't one now because valid inference can simply be truth-preservation—(unless, of course, *that* account is problematic). Anyway, there is no *special* problem. And there is no special problem with compound statements—unless it's the old problem we touched on above, whatever exactly that problem is. There is no problem with normativity, assuming it goes with the very concept of truth that it's normative in the ways that people think. In effect, we restore all the advantages of monism and lose all the objections, good or not, that the other modes of pluralism were felt to trigger.

The downside is that now we have to take on a new issue. We have got to say, now, how the truth property relates to the B-list properties. And it's a constraint on saying something useful that we explain how having a B-list property can, in the right circumstances, *confer* truth on a proposition. So all the action now has to do with the conferral relation. How are we to understand conferral? We have these many properties that are somehow truth-relevant, and we want to say that having one of those properties can, in the right circumstances, confer truth on a target proposition. How does that happen?

Here are some of the proposals about conferral that are worth consideration.

(i) *Simple existential generalization*. To be true is to have some property that gets on the B-list. There will be conditions for entry onto the B-list. Certain

[10] I mean the property of truth that Horwich, e.g., grudgingly admits when he allows that truth can be a property in a sufficiently thin sense by saying 'every term that functions logically as a predicate stands for a property' (1998: 141–142).

properties meet them. To be true is simply to have such a property: truth is just a generalization of the B-list in that way.[11]

Lynch (2009: 66) and Edwards[12] have objected that this property—the property of *having some B-list property*—doesn't itself satisfy the platitudes. This is not obvious to me. If the B-list properties have, one and all, been selected so as to satisfy the platitudes so that each of them, for example, is potentially extensionally divergent from justification, then won't the property of having some B-list property likewise be potentially extensionally divergent from justification? The issue needs detail. But I think we are owed a clear counterexample by those who doubt it.[13]

Notice that on this account, the conferral relation is in any case very straightforward: it is simply *entailment*. The way in which a B-list property confers truth is by witnessing the existential generalization. What could be simpler than that? It would be nice, if—assuming the Simple Existential generalization proposal does indeed fail—we might preserve this feature some other way.

(ii) *Proto-functionalism*. Now some more intellectual autobiography. When Lynch first started talking in functionalist terms, suggesting that my real thesis—or what at any rate I *should* be saying—is that truth is a *functional* property, I had an ambivalent reaction. I had a vague sense of unease—of a risk of perhaps unnecessarily encumbering the pluralist thesis with hostages. But it also seemed harmless if the suggestion was merely that we could see the platitudes as defining a 'role' and the B-list properties as playing it. It was only much later that it dawned on me that there is a bad confusion here. Let me run that past you.

The proto-functionalist says: truth is a functional property—a *role property*—with the B-list properties as *realizers*. So compare truth with *kidney*: surely an archetype of a functional property. Kidney is a functional property in the sense that to be a kidney is to play a certain characteristic functional role, namely, to filter the blood. That's what kidneys do 'by definition', as we are wont to say. It is why it is possible for there to be such a thing as an *artificial* kidney: anything will be a kidney that discharges the characteristic role or purpose of kidneys, even a machine. But notice that it is the *instances* of the property of being a kidney that discharge the function; it's *the kidneys* that discharge the function. And it's something they do in virtue of having other non-functional properties: there will be an analogue of the B-list—a list of characteristics that enable an object to perform that role, perhaps by giving it a certain kind of microstructure. There are no conceptual limits on the design of an artificial kidney; all you have to do is come up with something that does that job. But

[11] This is Lynch's former view. See Lynch (2004).

[12] In earlier drafts of Edwards (2011); see also Lynch (2008; 2009: 66).

[13] For an argument to the effect that the property favored by the simple existential generalization approach satisfies the truisms of Lynch (2009), see David (2013) and Pedersen and Wright (2013).

when you have done that, it will be the relevant properties designed into it that qualify it, that enable it to discharge the functional role.

But here is the disanalogy: we don't want to say that a proposition's being true is *the proposition's* playing a certain functional role. That's what we should say if we thought that truth is a functional property in the way that *kidney* is. Functional properties are properties that objects possess that have a certain function. If truth were a functional property, it would be a property whose possession marked its bearers—propositions, beliefs, or whatever—as things that fulfill, or are apt to fulfill, a certain function. But it doesn't. To call a proposition 'true' is not to ascribe a function to it.

That level—the level of the bearers—is not where the putative functionality of truth is. The functionality is at second-order. It is intended to be the *truth properties* that play a certain functional role. So there is a property connected with truth that is functional, in an extended sense of 'functional' maybe. But it is the B-list properties that have this property—that perform the function—and the bearers of the B-list properties that have the property of truth. So there is simply no relevant model of conferral to be elicited from the tie between realizer and role properties. Truth is not a role property.

This is a decisive objection to what I am calling proto-functionalism. Again, the functional property in the vicinity simply isn't a candidate for the interpretation of the predicate 'true' as applied to the usual bearers of truth. The functionality, if there at all, is to be found one order up, as a characteristic of the *properties* that are available to interpret the truth predicate. So, I don't think proto-functionalism—that is, the initial functional thought—is a starter; I think there is a muddle there. But I don't want to make too much of this; it's only the 'proto' version of the view.

(iii) A third proposal for the conferral relationship is that between *determinate and determinable* properties. This is entailment, once again, but this time, in contrast with proposal (i), without generalization; there is no implicit existential quantifier. You shouldn't say that being red is having some property in the list: crimson, vermilion, scarlet, ... We don't know how to enumerate the list. Being red is a property in its own right. Of course, it's true that if something is red, then necessarily it will have some property in a certain range of shades; there will be a determinate of red, where red is determinable, some specific shade of red that it has. But that's not the right thing to say about the logical structure of the property of redness. Redness doesn't have a quantifier in it, so to speak.

It would be nice if we could fruitfully model the conferral relation on the relation between a determinate property and the determinable property of which it is a determinate; that would again be pleasingly simple. Of course, it would not be the end of the game. We would need to say something about the metaphysics of the relation. But at least we could take ourselves to be on

relatively safe ground; we know that there is a robust conferral relation associated with determinate-determinable that we can appeal to.

But there is a major problem with this suggestion. When you really do have an instance of the determinate-determinable relation, the different determinates under the same determinable *compete in the same conceptual space*: they exclude each other. An object cannot be both crimson and vermilion; the determinates are alternative modes of the determinable: they crowd each other out.[14] Of course, we—pluralists—want to say that about, for instance, superassertibility and correspondence too. These are essentially different ways of being true within the domains of application where they are respectively relevant. But the difficulty is that, in a region of thought where, for example, correspondence is our favored conception of truth, there will still be such a thing as superassertibility, and a proposition's being superassertible need not compete with its corresponding. There is no exclusion of the kind we would expect with distinct determinates under a common determinable. In short: being crimson and being vermilion are always incompatible, and always ensure being red. But being superassertible and corresponding are not incompatible, and where one is a way of being true, the other is not.

So whatever the relationship between the B-list properties, it's not the same as the relation between determinates under a given determinable. We need to look again.

(iv) A fourth proposal for the conferral relation is Lynch's newly introduced notion of *manifestation*. The B-list properties, he avers, *manifest* truth.

Lynch's treatment (2009) gives a firm impression that the way to understand his proposal is something along the following lines. Lynch likes the idea of the kind of conferral that runs from determinate to determinable, but he thinks that determinate-determinable is only a special case of a *more general* conferral relationship. The manifestation relation that he introduces is intended as something that encompasses the relation between determinate and determinable as a special case, but also covers other kinds of conferral, in such a way as to take us past the problems associated with taking determinate-determinable as the prototype.[15]

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[14] Lynch (2009: 86, fn. 4) makes the same point.

[15] For example, Lynch writes: 'The manifestation relation is similar to the determinable/determinate relation. It is *a priori* that the essential features of redness, whatever they are, are a subset of the features of being scarlet. Consequently, if one understands that something is scarlet, one has all one needs to understand that it is red. But according to the traditional distinction, determinables cannot determine themselves, so the relations are distinct.' The claim about redness and scarlet is false, for reasons about to be noted in the main text. Lynch goes on to draw further distinctions between the relations: determinates, but not manifesting properties, are subject to linear ordering; and determinates, but not manifesting properties, are mutually exclusionary: nothing that is scarlet at a single point and time can also be crimson at the same point and time (2009: 75). These points are well taken but, as it seems to me, simply emphasize the difficulties in the suggestion that manifestation can, as it were, borrow conferral-powers from the determinate-determinable relationship.

Let us first consider Lynch's original formulation of manifestation. In essentials, I take it to be the following: for one property to manifest another is for it to be the case that every feature that the latter property, the *manifested* property, has *a priori essentially*, is possessed by the manifesting property, though not necessarily possessed essentially. In other words, if all the a priori essential properties of F are also properties of G, then G manifests F (Lynch 2009: 74–75). But wait: that's not actually true of determinates and their determinables. So if the idea was to be that manifestation can give us a generalized form of the kind of conferral that operates in the determinate-determinable case, which carries over to cases that aren't determinate-determinable, then the problem is that the generalization misgeneralizes the base case. It is easy to think of a priori essential features of redness, for example, that crimson doesn't have. There are any number of essential features of redness that its determinates do not have—and moreover any number of a priori essential such features, features that anyone who grasps the notion will recognize as essential to it but which one or more of its determinates may lack. These are features, broadly, that belong to its relative generality. Red is more general than crimson; that's an essential feature of red. And from it follow a large class of features—you can elaborate them at leisure—that crimson won't share. So there is a structural difficulty with the attempted generalization: determinates do not, in general, *manifest* their determinables in Lynch's sense.

Let me not overstate the significance of this. The point speaks only to what seems to be the motivation for the notion of manifestation as Lynch introduces it in *Truth as One and Many*. It could still be true that manifestation in that sense gets us a form of conferral. But it won't get us conferral in the way that determinate-determinable does, because it doesn't generalize that relationship. The reason why it gets us conferral, if there is one, has to be something independent. So a proof is needed. What is the argument for thinking that this relation ensures a kind of conferral or sufficiency? Why can't it happen that F manifests G, according to the letter of the definition, even though there are possibly Fs that are not G?

I think that is a fair question. But there is a distinct objection that is actually lethal to the proposal of *Truth as One and Many*. I'll present the objection and then discuss whether the revised proposal newly offered by Lynch is able to block it.

The objection is that it is, near enough, *self-refuting* to suppose that the alethic B-list properties all manifest truth. Why so? Well if they do, it will presumably be an a priori essential feature of truth that it is so variably manifested. It will be in the *nature* of truth to be capable of variable manifestation, and this aspect of its nature will be accessible to reflective philosophy, so presumably a priori. More, it will be an a priori essential feature of truth that it is manifested by the B-list properties that do manifest it. But it's not even a feature, let alone an a priori essential feature, of the B-list properties that they

manifest *each other*. (The need for this additional observation is what makes the self-refutation 'near enough', rather than strict.) So, right there, we find an essential feature of truth that the B-list properties don't have, namely being capable of variable manifestation by the B-list properties. According to the letter of the *Truth as One and Many* characterization, truth itself is *not* manifested by the B-list properties!

Does Lynch's new proposal[16] walk free of this problem? The reformulated proposal has it that we need to restrict attention within the class of features of the manifested property not just to those that are a priori essential but to those that are elicitable from the *nominal* essence, purely on the basis of conceptual reflection. G manifests F if G has every feature that belongs, a priori, to F's *nominal* essence.

Does this help? Well, obviously enough, only if the case is not merely that it doesn't belong to the nominal essence of truth that it is capable of variable manifestation, but that it cannot be elicited just by *conceptual reflection on the nominal essence* that is capable of variable manifestation. So what constitutes the 'nominal essence' here? If the nominal essence is given by the pluralist's initial network analysis, and the network is such that necessarily, on reflection, it is capable of variable realizations by different models, the objection will stand.

Lynch might respond by denying that variable manifestability is part of the nominal essence of truth, on the grounds that this feature is not evident purely in virtue of grasping the truth concept.[17] I think that's a difficult position to take, but let's explore the issue.

Let's distinguish three proposals that Lynch might make. They are, respectively, that G manifests F just in case:

I Every feature that is included in the nominal essence of F is possessed by G; or
II Every feature that is, in some sense, transparent in the nominal essence of F is possessed by G; or
III Every feature that is elicitable by conceptual reflection on the nominal essence of F is possessed by G.

Now, provided the nominal essence includes all the principles that feature in the network analysis, proposal III is exactly what is needed to set up the objection. So Lynch needs to support one of the other two. One problem we have here is that it is not clear what Lynch is proposing to take as included in the 'nominal essence'. But I think there are foreseeable difficulties whatever is said about that.

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[16] First made in his presentation at the Dublin workshop. See Lynch (2013).

[17] Lynch made this suggestion in discussion at the Dublin workshop.

Lynch faces a dilemma: does the nominal essence embrace all the network platitudes that he wishes to countenance or is it narrower? If it is narrower, well then, by what principle is its extent to be determined and which of the platitudes do we properly exclude? But if it embraces all the platitudes, then proposals I and II won't help with the objection unless 'included in' or 'in some sense, transparent in' are not closed under deduction and reflective analysis. So we will be limiting the range of features of truth that are relevant to its manifestability by other properties to what is available via a certain kind of *relatively straightforward* reflection. And we mustn't idealize this notion or we risk inflation into proposal III and the reentry of the objection. For again, Lynch's view has to be, presumably, that the fact is out there to be accessed by conceptual—philosophical—reflection that truth is variably manifestable! Take the nominal essence (as characterized by the platitudes), think about it clearly, reason in the appropriate way, and you will figure out that, Yes indeed, this has to be a variably manifestable property. So Lynch will have to cut that process off somewhere, and the cutting off has to be something that involves refusing to idealize, but insisting that the features of F that are relevant to the issue of its manifestation by G go no further than those that, limited as we are, with intelligence quotients below a certain threshold, and so on, we can recognize as belonging to F's nominal essence. The question is then this: how can any distinction drawn in those terms—terms that make essential play with our logical and imaginative limitations—be of any *metaphysical* significance? How can manifestation, so characterized, be a metaphysical relation?

In summary, my concern is this. The basic idea of manifestation is that manifesting properties must possess all those features that belong to a certain special class of the features of the manifested property. The crucial issue is what that special class is and how it is to be characterized. And remember that we are looking for a relationship between two properties such that when it obtains, if something has the one (manifesting) property, it *must* have the other (manifested) property: we want *conferral* here, guaranteed as a matter of metaphysics. It seems to me that once you start putting constraints on the sought-after special class of features that have to do with our *concepts* of the manifested properties concerned, and especially constraints that somehow exploit the potentially *limited* nature of those concepts—the extent to which we don't think things through all that far, or our concepts themselves may be superficial, and so on—once you start doing that, you risk putting the kind of metaphysical guarantee that conferral should consist in, and which we do have with the prototype of determinate-determinable, out of range. My worry is that anything in the direction of the revised proposal offered by Lynch as a response to the original self-refutation objection is very likely to run into this kind of snag. We don't want a bar that turns on our conceptual limitations when what we actually want to arrive at is a guarantee, at the level of the nature

of the properties concerned, that when the one applies, it brings it about that the other applies.

So, in sum: as far as proposal (iv) is concerned, I am stuck on the issue of manifestation and how to characterize that relation in such a way as to get the right results. I think that we have not yet been shown how to do that, and in particular that Lynch's new suggestion (2013) remains problematic for the purpose.

7. How better to think of conferral

(v) *Edwards's proposal*. There is a beautifully simple Mode D suggestion due to Douglas Edwards (2011, 2013). Familiarly, many philosophers have found it helpful, in a variety of ways, to compare truth and *winning*. When we play chess, we are normally, or should be, aiming to win. When we play the language game, we are normally, or should be, aiming to say true things. The broad comparison is to be found in Michael Dummett and earlier in Wittgenstein. Lots of people have used it. Truth is an end of thought and talk, it is suggested, in the way that winning is an end of game-play.

I want to recommend at least an aspect of this analogy. Winning, for its part, seems to wear a kind of pluralism on its sleeve. It is obvious that different things amount to winning in different games. Depending on what game you are playing, it suffices to accomplish different things in order to win. If you are playing chess, you had better checkmate your opponent; if you are playing draughts, you had better take all his pieces; if you are playing football, you and your team had better score more goals than the opposition within the period of the game; if you are playing croquet, you need to peg-out. Winning is variably realizable. But it's not a family-resemblance concept—there is no network of overlapping and crisscrossing features that tie together what it is to win in the four mentioned games; the different winning positions have in common only and purely that they are winning positions. Nor is 'winning' ambiguous or, in these uses, elastic. There are not shades of difference in meaning as 'winning' is transferred from chess to draughts to football to croquet. There is just one concept being applied here and, it is very tempting to say, there is just one property. It is the property you have whenever, in a game, you have done the appropriate thing for winning in that game.

So, the proposal will be—no doubt it will need refinement—that just as conditionals like the following are true in games:

> If you are playing chess, then if you checkmate your opponent's king, you have won.
>
> If you are playing draughts, then if you take all your opponent's pieces, you have won,
>
> . . . .

so conditionals like these (I'll call them *Edwards conditionals*) are true in different regions of discourse:

> If you are talking morals, then if you say something superassertible, you say something true.
> If you are talking set theory, then if you say something coherent with the iterative conception of set, then you say something true.
> If you are talking Big Bang cosmology, then if you say something that actually corresponds to what went on back then, then you have said something true.
> . . . .

The essential thought is that, in a very intuitive sense, just as winning consists in doing different things in different areas, so saying something true consists in doing different things in different areas. And these constitutive relationships are *necessities*: they surface in the (conceptual) necessity of the kind of compound conditionals illustrated. Thus conferral is, so to speak, entailment within the scope of a hypothesis. It is entailment within the scope of a master antecedent: if you are talking ethics, if you are playing chess, . . . that is the idea. The embedded conditional holds in all worlds in which the master antecedent is true.

This seems to me to be the best proposal about conferral so far made—and hence the best of all Mode D accounts. It gives the shape of the view that we (alethic pluralists) should strive to make out if we are going for Mode D. And the advantages of Mode D were explained above. But there is a problem. In the case of winning, the correctness of the conditionals leaps at you, if you understand them. It is not at all controversial that if you are playing chess, and you checkmate your opponent's king, you have won. If someone thinks that is controversial, they don't know what chess is. But if I were to affirm that in moral discourse, if you were to say something superassertible, you would have said something true, that will doubtless start a philosophical discussion—and one in which it will not be a good move to allege that to dispute the conditional is to show that you do not understand what moral discourse is! Maybe the superassertibilist can prevail in the discussion; maybe she can at least successfully maintain the thesis against all comers. But her claim does not seem to stand comparison with the obvious and uncontroversial correctness of the corresponding conditional about chess. Indeed, it doesn't present as a *conceptually* necessary truth at all.

A possible first thought by way of response is that this can just be a case of the Open Question point, to which it can therefore be simply replied that conceptual necessities can be unobvious. I say, 'Do you know that the following formula has no solution in the positive integers: $x^n + y^n = z^n$?' That it doesn't have a solution is, I think, a conceptual necessity; it's Fermat's only recently established 'Last Theorem'. But it has never been obvious to anyone.

It may be doubted, though, whether a parallel with Fermat's Theorem makes for a convincing reply. Of course, conceptual necessities can be intricate and involve remote consequence relations. The difficulty here, though, is that it won't do just to say, 'This claim about moral discourse and the notion of superassertibility, although conceptually necessary, is one of these unobvious cases, so it needs a bit of discussion'. The trouble is that we don't have a model of the *kind* of discussion of which this might in principle be the conclusion, so that we could announce: 'We have finally learned that truth in ethics is superassertibility!' That is because philosophy is not mathematics. We did all along know what it would be to determine that Fermat's Last Theorem is conceptually necessary (if indeed that is the right reading of the purport of the theorem. Let us for present purposes assume that the truths of pure number theory are conceptual necessities). It would be to construct a fully explicit mathematical demonstration, and Andrew Wiles did that, eventually. But there are no salient, accepted first principles about morality and truth, such that a fully developed theory based upon them might yield an ingenious deduction of the moral Edwards conditional.

Even to one sympathetic to it, the moral Edwards conditional doesn't feel like the recognition, or conjecture, of a remote-consequential conceptual necessity in the kind of way needed to sustain an analogy with Fermat. If it were conceived as that, we should want much better—certainly a different style of—argument for it than we have been hearing! No; it feels much more like a *proposal*. It's a case of—as so often in philosophy—'Look at [some targeted notion] like this. If you look at it like this, you can explain, simplify, and clarify lots of issues'. If the mark of conceptual necessity is analyticity, it may be felt, then either there should be some procedure that proves the Edwards conditional, or it should be among a certain basic set of principles that all who grasp the concepts involved are disposed to accept. But it doesn't impress as either.

But let's go carefully. There are examples of claims that might be conceptually necessarily true—I mean: which *are*, if true, conceptually necessarily so—for which we can get no conclusive proof and that are not basic either. So there is *scope* for something like this kind of proposal in the arena of conceptual necessity. Think, for example, of Church's Thesis, that every effectively calculable arithmetical function is general recursive. Church put his thesis forward as part of the enterprise of trying to say what the intuitive notion of an effectively calculable function comes to, of giving a mathematically exact characterization of it. You probably know the history: we had all these different, independently arrived at proposals—general recursiveness, Turing computability, Markov algorithms, and so on, and so forth—and these all proved to be coextensive. So a lot of mathematicians thinking about the intuitive notion and trying to give it a mathematically exact account converged in different ways on the same extension. In the nature of the case, there can be no proof of Church's Thesis, because the thesis is a proposal to bring the notion of effective calculability under a certain kind of formal or technical discipline which it otherwise doesn't have yet;

it's an intuitive, informal notion. A proof of the thesis could only work with formally disciplined notions, so there is a sense in which Church's Thesis is *beneath* proof. The theorists who analyzed it and converged with each other were doing the best that could be done with an intuitive notion, and their proposals were essentially conjectural, although the fact that they converged strongly suggests at least that they had the same notion in mind and hence—though this is a nice point—that their conjectures are all correct.

So there is an example of a (possible) conceptual necessity which is neither an obvious first principle nor derivable from such. It seems a reasonable view that if Church's Thesis is true, that it is so is attributable solely to the nature of the concept of effective calculability, the intuitive notion, and the nature of the concept of general recursiveness, the exact notion characterized mathematically. If Church's Thesis is true, it is conceptually necessarily true: the notions of effective calculability and general recursiveness have, of conceptual necessity, the same extension. That's the plausible upshot. But there is and can be no proof of it, in the way that Fermat's Last Theorem, or indeed any less arcane theorem of number theory, is provable. But nor is it epistemologically basic and part of ordinary conceptual competence to know.

So, is that a better precedent for the pluralist's discourse-specific conditionals about truth—the Edwards conditionals? Maybe the suggestion should be that the Edwards conditionals connecting truth in different discourses with various of the B-list properties are in the same kind of case as Church's Thesis, and have, if true, that same kind of grounding in the concepts concerned. They are, if correct, in the same camp as the game-winning conditionals, but the grounds for so regarding them, as in the case of Church's Thesis, are necessarily conjectural and inconclusive. Should we take up this suggestion?

Well, I already mentioned what is, I think, reason for discomfort with this parallel, too. The Edwards conditionals seem *essentially controversial* in a sense that exceeds anything entrained just by the point that, as with Church's Thesis, we have no conclusive demonstration of their truth. That there is and can be no conclusive demonstration of Church's Thesis means that someone who wishes is free to doubt it. But such a person is not free to regard their doubt as *justified*: all the evidence, though not conclusive, speaks for the thesis. Whereas if I assert a moral Edwards conditional, 'If you say something superassertible in morals, you thereby eo ipso say something true', some consequentialist will spring out of the cupboard and reply, 'That's the most absurd notion I have ever heard. You have completely misunderstood the nature of morality if you think that'. Such a theorist does not suspect that there may be counterexamples. He regards the Edwards conditional as mistaken across the board, and the idea of moral truth as conferred by superassertibility as embodying a profound philosophical mistake. And he seems, in some sense, to be *at liberty* to do so. There seems no option of a similar stance with respect to Church's Thesis. The identification of general recursiveness with effective calculability

might—just might—prove extensionally mistaken. But everyone appreciates the arguments for it and no one is at liberty to think that it is utterly (philosophically) misguided.

So: if we want to regard Edwards conditionals as candidates for conceptual necessity, we need to do something to reconcile that view of them not merely with the seemingly inescapable lack of conclusive grounds on their behalf but with their philosophical *controversiality*. The account of conferral that the parallel between the game-winning conditionals and the Edwards conditionals facilitates is highly attractive: but to earn the right to it, we need to say something to explain how someone who grasps all the relevant concepts is somehow left at liberty to regard the conditionals not merely as at best inconclusively argued for but as involving some kind of systematic mistake. What can be said to address this obligation? I shall conclude by outlining, very speculatively, one possible approach.

The first thing to do is to develop a template for argument *in support of* an Edwards conditional. We want to explain how it might best be argued that in the right domains—perhaps ethics, perhaps comedy—superassertibility, for instance, should confer truth: that it should hold, locally, as a matter of conceptual necessity that when a statement is superassertible, it is true and that its truth is grounded in its superassertibility. And to be clear, because we are working under the aegis of Mode D pluralism here—one property, many properties—the necessity we seek to argue for is that *the property* of truth applies when and because a statement of the domain in question is superassertible. We can assume that we already have the result—call this the Modeling Assumption—that superassertibility locally satisfies a correct network analysis of the concept of truth, modulo the inclusion perhaps of certain a priori certifiable principles that are specific to the domain in question. (We better be able to make that assumption or there is no case for superassertibility as a local truth-conferrer in the first place.)

To fix ideas, consider the case where a participant in the discourse concerned understands the word 'true' actually to *mean*: superassertible. Then the Modeling Assumption should entail that this will make no difference: that there need be nothing to distinguish the agent's use of 'true' in that discourse from that of another agent, of matching competence and opinions, who by 'true' just means philosophically unconsidered *truth*. The profiles of the uses of 'true' by the two agents are going to match. And, since we can idealize the agents—suppose them perfectly rational, humane, empathetic, and whatever else may seem relevant—that is as much as to say that the profiles of the concepts of superassertibility and truth will locally match.

So the Modeling Assumption, the suggestion is, entails that, in the region of discourse concerned, there is no operational distinction between fully competent exercise of the concept of the modeling property—superassertibility—and fully competent exercise of the concept of truth; and hence that the application

of the former concept ensures the application of the latter. Since the superassertibility of a statement ensures that it will fall under the concept of superassertibility, it will follow that this conditional holds: that if a statement in the discourse in question is superassertible, it will fall under the concept of truth.

We are not quite there. To complete the case for the Edwards conditional, what is needed now is an argument from concept to property—an argument for the transition from falling under the concept of truth to having the property of truth. *Argument* is needed because on certain conceptions of concepts and properties this is not a trivial transition. It is not a trivial transition on any conception whereby the concept of a property—equivalently, if you will, the sense of a predicate that putatively attributes the property—can imperfectly reflect what it takes to possess the property in question. In that case, there may be scope for overextension: scope for cases ('Fools' cases) that fall under the concept but lack the property it imperfectly presents. But it *is* a trivial transition when our metaphysics of properties is suitably *abundant*: when properties are essentially tied to well-determined satisfaction-conditions of predicates and their natures fully manifest in those senses. (Call this metaphysical assumption Abundance.) If the property of truth is linked in that way to the sense of 'true', the transition we need is assured. An abundant metaphysics of properties will give us that the application of the concept ensures the application of *the property* of truth. To have the property of truth, so conceived, *is* to fall under the concept, as characterized by the network analysis. That's all there is to it.

The Modeling Assumption coupled with Abundance thus gives the result that superassertibility suffices for truth in the domain of discourse in question; and that is tantamount to the result that the Edwards conditional holds. It's a very simple argument in outline: for any statement s in the region of discourse in question,

(i) If s is superassertible, s falls under the concept of superassertibility.
(ii) If s falls under the concept of superassertibility, s falls under a concept whose competent exercise is operationally indistinguishable from that of the concept of truth (by the Modeling Assumption.)
(iii) If s falls under a concept whose competent exercise is operationally indistinguishable from that of the concept of truth, s falls under the concept of truth.
(iv) If s falls under the concept of truth, s has the property of truth (by Abundance).

What next? Well, for someone who regards this argument—or a more explicit, rigorous development of it—as cogent, the epistemological situation of an Edwards conditional, so supported, is clearly unlike that of Church's Thesis. We are not restricted to quasi-inductive or indirect evidence. A fully explicit, rigorous version of the line of argument sketched will deliver a philosophical proof, of sorts. But I say 'of sorts' because any argument of this character is

surely going to be open to challenge. You would imagine that our consequentialist of a few paragraphs back might be inclined to try to make trouble for the Modeling Assumption on the foreseeable grounds that truth for claims about the maximization of satisfaction, for instance, will not stand interpretation in terms of superassertibility. But the more significant point is that argument for an Edwards conditional, if it is to be to the intended purpose, needs to do more than establish the conditional: it needs to show that the conditional stands interpretation as a claim about *conferral*. It is not just that when superassertible, a statement of the relevant domain is true—as if by extensional coincidence. The intended thesis is that superassertibility is there the *ground* of truth. How does that result fall within the compass of the outlined template? How is it supposed to be shown?

It is at this point, I think, that the controversiality is accommodated that I said we needed to address. For the obvious and reasonable move is to appeal to a version of the principle of inference to the best explanation. To possess the abundant property of truth is to fall under the concept of truth; and until more is said, the best explanation of a statement's falling under the concept of truth is that it has the only substantial property that has been shown to model the postulated network analysis of the concept. It is only if a second such substantial property is shown to do that that the issue of mere extensional coincidence arises. And naturally—provided of course that it is granted that superassertibility does meet the Modeling Assumption—the consequentialist will hold that there *is* a second such property: that of correspondence to the facts about maximization of satisfaction. So there is the nub of the controversy, located exactly where it ought to be, at the issue whether consequentialism can indeed provide an adequate model of moral truth.

So much for controversiality. But what about conceptual necessity? Even if superassertibility proves to have the field to itself, the point remains that the argument for conferral rests upon the good standing of an abundant conception of properties—or at least that of an abundant conception of the property of truth—and Abundance is a philosophical *proposal*: a recommendation about how best, at least locally, to think about the idea of a property, which will be supportable, or not, by characteristically inconclusive considerations of conceptual cost-benefit profile, intuitive satisfaction, explanatory fruitfulness, and so on. The case for such proposals in philosophy will still be reflective and a priori. But it seems a stretch to insist that, if acceptable, a principle of this character should be regarded as holding of conceptual necessity, just in virtue of the nature of the concepts involved. The credentials, even when impressive, seem to be of a different character.

Obviously, we are here on the cusp of some very profound and difficult issues about the nature of good philosophical theory and the standing of its theses. Anything I say within the space remaining to me here is going to be superficial. But one proposal that seems to me broadly faithful to the phenomenology, as

it were, of good philosophical argument and negotiation, is that we should see a thesis like Abundance not as a description of the Platonic metaphysical nature of properties, nor as embodying a partial analysis of the notion of property that we actually have, but as a motivated *recommendation*: a recommendation that we build into the concept of a property the intimate relation that Abundance involves with predicate-satisfaction—that so to do addresses central purposes, connected with the logical, semantical, and metaphysical roles of the notion. If the recommendation is accepted, the crucial final step in the argument-template for the Edwards conditionals *will* be grounded purely conceptually. And if the other assumptions of the argument—the Modeling Assumption, and the coextensiveness of concepts with the same operational profile (step (iii))—may in the best cases be regarded similarly, the relevant Edwards conditionals will be conceptual necessities.

That, then, is one strategy for upholding the analogy with the game-winning conditionals and so availing ourselves of the mode of conferral which the latter illustrate, consistently with acknowledgment of the controversiality of the Edwards conditionals. The issues are clearly very open, but here I can do no more than end on this suggestive note.[18]

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