Editorial Introduction to 'Truth: Concept Meets Property'[1]

Jeremy Wyatt

1. Concepts vs. properties

The papers in this special issue investigate a range of topics that pertain to the distinction between the *concept* and the *property* of truth. The distinction between property concepts and the properties that they pick out is a mainstay within analytic philosophy. We have learned to distinguish, for instance, between our ordinary concept SIMULTANEOUS and the property *simultaneity* that it picks out.[2] The significance of this distinction is borne out in the theories of reference that were developed, for instance, by Putnam (1975), Kripke (1980), and Lewis (1984). If we apply any of these theories to SIMULTANEOUS, they will generate the result that this concept refers to the relativized property *simultaneity*, even if many users of the concept take simultaneity to be absolute.

2. The concept-property distinction in truth theory: Alston's constraint

Undoubtedly, then, it is important to draw the general distinction between property concepts and properties themselves. What, though, is this meant to show us about truth? Arguably, the *locus classicus* for thought on this topic is the work of William Alston, who observes of the concept-property distinction that "discussions of truth are led seriously astray by neglecting it."[3] Alston brings out the relevance of the distinction to theories of truth as follows:[4]

"[S]ince the concept of [property] P we employ is our guide to thought and talk about P and to further investigation of P, it puts constraints on an account of the nature of P. If an account of heat is to deserve that title, it must be an account of what feature of a perceivable object is responsible for sensations of heat when that object is perceived. Otherwise it is not an account of *heat* but of something else. When there is a "strong" extensional divergence (not just the property's being present when the commonsense concept has no application, as with extreme degrees of heat, but when the concept applies when the property is absent, as with *fish*), the constraint is weaker. But still a biological account of a kind that did not imply its inclusion of a goodly share of the objects that fall under the everyday concept of *fish* would not be properly termed an account of the nature of fish. This kind of constraint clearly applies to truth."

Alston's contention is that when we inquire into the nature of a property *P*, the ordinary concept of *P* serves to guide our inquiry. It does so by underpinning a constraint that can be formulated as follows:

---

[2] In what follows, I'll use small caps to denote concepts and italics to denote properties (and for emphasis).
[3] 2002, p. 12.
[4] Ibid. p. 15. He also takes the distinction to be of central importance within truth theory for an additional reason. This is that it reveals the possibility that the property *truth* might have characteristics that aren't represented by the ordinary concept TRUTH—we'll take this issue up in § 3.1.

Alston's constraint: A theory *T* of the nature of property *P′* is a theory of the nature of property *P* only if *T* entails that sufficiently many of the entities that we would ordinarily take to exemplify/fail to exemplify *P* exemplify/fail to exemplify *P′*.

Alston's constraint, or something like it, plays a significant role in a number of approaches to the study of truth, including some of the approaches that are represented in this issue. Accordingly, it should be worthwhile at this stage to make a few quick observations about the constraint.

Firstly, Alston's constraint has it that the ordinary concept of *P* guides our inquiry into the nature of *P* via that concept's *extension* (and anti-extension). Without a doubt, this suggestion enjoys a great deal of plausibility. As philosophers, we often want to know how our theories, which we design to solve pressing problems, connect up with ordinary thought about the topics that those theories are meant to address. We ask questions like: 'In devising this complex philosophical theory, which is putatively about property *P*, have I departed so much from ordinary thought about *P* so as to have changed the subject, or have I managed to provide a fresh and useful perspective on *P*?' Alston's constraint plausibly suggests that we can look to the extension of our ordinary concept of *P* in answering this question.

However, it must also be acknowledged that Alston's constraint is *indeterminate*. In particular, it leaves indeterminate how many of the entities that we would ordinarily take to exemplify/fail to exemplify *P* must exemplify/fail to exemplify *P′*, according to *T*, for *T* to count as a theory of the nature of *P*.[5] Does this compromise the constraint's ability to regulate our inquiry into the nature of *P*?

Perhaps not. After all, there may nevertheless be clear-cut cases of theories that are, or aren't, theories of *P*. For instance, Alston argues that what are often called 'epistemic theories of truth' aren't really theories of the nature of the property/relation *being true*, since the class of propositions that they categorize as truths is highly dissimilar to the class of propositions that we would ordinarily categorize as truths.[6]

---

[5] Alston makes a similar observation at ibid. pp. 13-14.

[6] Ibid. p. 15.

It might be wondered how this extensional argument against epistemic theories relates to Alston's *intensional argument* against such theories (1996: ch. 7, §§ vii, viii). The details, I think, are a bit subtle. Call the class of propositions that we would ordinarily classify as being true *O*. By contrast, call the class of propositions that would be classified as true according to a particular epistemic theory of truth *E*. If, as Alston argues, there must be a *high degree* of dissimilarity between *O* and *E*, then this is presumably because the ordinary *concept* of truth and the concept of truth that is delivered by the given epistemic theory are highly dissimilar. In other words, if we discover this massive extensional divergence, then it must presumably be traced to an *intensional* divergence. For this reason, the challenge to epistemic theories based on Alston's constraint looks to complement Alston's intensional argument against such theories.

By contrast, the challenge via Alston's constraint should be distinguished from Alston's *counterexample argument* against epistemic theories (1996, ch. 7, §§ v, xii). This is so for at least two reasons. The latter trades, in effect, on the premise that *O* and *E* are distinct, whereas the former trades on the stronger premise that *O* and *E* are highly dissimilar. Moreover, the conclusion of the latter looks to be that epistemic theories, if they are indeed theories of truth, are *false*. By contrast, the conclusion of the former is that epistemic theories aren't even theories of truth to begin with.

That said, if the degree of dissimilarity between the class of propositions that are truths according to *T* and the class of propositions that are truths according to our ordinary thought turns out to be weaker, then it may be possible for two theorists to stand in *irresolvable disagreement* about whether *T* is in fact a theory of *being true*.[7] Suppose, for instance, that we ordinarily regard indicative aesthetic sentences as expressing propositions and that we would regard a proper subclass *A* of these propositions as being true.   Then if the class *B* of propositions that are categorized as truths by, say, a particular correspondence theory T_C is disjoint from *A* but is, bracketing this, identical with the class of propositions that we would ordinarily take to be true, then it seems indeterminate whether T_C should be categorized as a theory of *being true*. Thus, it may be that given Alston's constraint, theorists who disagree as to whether T_C is a theory of *being true* must eventually agree to live and let live.[8]

A third, related point is that Alston's constraint entails that the border between *descriptive* and *revisionary* theories is indeterminate. Again, this needn't undermine the constraint's efficacy, as there may be clear cases. If Alston is right about 'epistemic theories of truth,' then it would presumably be best to describe such theories not as descriptive theories of *being true*, but as proposals for how we should modify our ordinary thought about truth (e.g. because such modifications promise to generate solutions to certain skeptical problems).

By contrast, it may be that we can reach no determinate verdict on whether T_C is a descriptive or a revisionary theory. This would presumably mean that when evaluating T_C, the best that we can offer are *conditional* assessments along the lines of: 'If T_C is taken to be a descriptive theory, then…, and if T_C is taken to be a revisionary theory, then…'

Alston's constraint thus promises to usefully regulate our inquiry, even as it allows for certain indeterminacies. Moreover, the constraint helpfully points up the significance of the distinction between descriptive and revisionary theories. As we will see, getting clear on this distinction is of paramount importance when grappling with the projects of contemporary truth theorists—a prominent example being the project of Kevin Scharp. We will also see that the Alstonian idea that the ordinary concept of truth guides our inquiry into the nature of truth itself is productively adopted by certain contemporary theorists, including both Scharp and Douglas Edwards.

3. The contributions to this issue

I'll now turn to the contributions to the issue, offering summaries of each. In doing so, I'll point to some ways in which I take them to interestingly relate to one another. I'll then close by offering some brief concluding remarks.

3.1. Asay

---

[7] Moreover, it may be that their disagreement is *faultless*, in the sense that is articulated by Kölbel (2004) and/or that it is *merely verbal*, in the sense that is articulated by Hirsch (2005).
[8] Note that since it is a correspondence theory, T_C will presumably not be compromised by Alston's intensional argument.

Alston's treatment of the concept/property distinction is significant for an additional reason that we have yet to take up, one that involves what Paul Boghossian has called "the biggest decision a theorist of truth must make."[9] This is the decision of endorsing either a *deflationary* or a *substantivist* theory of truth. Put very roughly, a deflationist about truth maintains that truth lacks explanatory power and/or that there is no interesting property in which being true consists, while a substantivist about truth denies one, or both, of these claims.[10] Alston shows us that the critical decision between deflationism and substantivism actually involves two decisions. The first is whether to endorse a deflationary or a substantivist account of the ordinary concept TRUTH. The second is whether to endorse a deflationary or a substantivist account of the nature of *being true*.

When it comes to the deflationism/substantivism issue, then, there are at least four possible combinations to consider.[11] Let *conceptual deflationism/substantivism* be shorthand for a deflationary/substantivist view about the concept of truth and *metaphysical deflationism/substantivism* be shorthand for a deflationary/substantivist view about the property *being true*. Then the four possibilities are these:[12]

(SS) Conceptual substantivism + metaphysical substantivism

(SD) Conceptual substantivism + metaphysical deflationism

(DS) Conceptual deflationism + metaphysical substantivism

(DD) Conceptual deflationism + metaphysical deflationism

Alston is well-known for advocating (DS), and arguably, Crispin Wright (1992; 2013) does so as well. A prominent proponent of (DD) is Paul Horwich (1998), and the proponents of (SS) include William James (1907) and Gila Sher (2016a).

Jamin Asay, by contrast, is a notable champion of (SD). Asay defends a version of *primitivism* about the concept TRUTH, according to which TRUTH is "substantive, fundamental, and foundational."[13] He takes TRUTH to be substantive in the sense that it enjoys explanatory power, e.g. in theories of linguistic meaning. However, Asay argues that this substantivist view of the concept TRUTH doesn't commit him to a substantivist view of *being true*. While he is happy to grant that *being true* is a property, he argues that it is an abundant, rather than a sparse property and is, in that sense, insubstantial.[14] A signature

---

[9] Boghossian (1990: n. 17).

[10] For more subtle treatments of these issues, see Asay (2013); Edwards (2018, ch. 2); Eklund (this issue); Scharp (this issue); and Wyatt (2016, forthcoming).

[11] I say 'at least four' because it may be that we obtain additional possibilities when we distinguish between the concept TRUTH and the words 'true' and 'truth'—as, for instance, Asay urges us to do. Moreover, we may obtain even more possibilities if we draw a distinction between deflationary and substantivist *methodologies* in truth theory, as is proposed by Sher (2016b).

[12] For related discussion, see Bar-On and Simmons (2007) and Eklund (this issue).

[13] Asay (2013: p. 81).

[14] See Asay (2013, ch. 4; 2014). On the distinction between sparse and abundant properties, see e.g. Lewis (1983).

thesis of Asay's views on truth, then, is that the concept TRUTH is substantial, but *not* in virtue of picking out a substantial property.

In his contribution to this issue, Asay expands upon his primitivist theory of TRUTH by arguing that TRUTH is a highly distinctive concept—a concept "unlike any other." Along the way, Asay defends a number of rather bold theses. His main contention is that TRUTH is a component of every propositional thought and that it should thus be categorized as an *ability*, rather than a representational device. Specifically, Asay identifies TRUTH as the ability to have propositional thoughts. He defends these views by constructing a Fregean argument to the effect that TRUTH is omnipresent. He also points out a number of apparent deficiencies in rival theories of the nature of TRUTH and TRUTH's connections with propositional thought, including deflationary theories.

Additionally, Asay argues that given his views about the nature of TRUTH, we should hold that TRUTH is prior to words such as 'true' and 'truth,' in the sense that one could possess TRUTH while not being able to speak a language containing such words. In suggesting this, Asay takes himself to be an ally of Frege and Tarski. By contrast, in maintaining this view about the relative priority of TRUTH and what we might call *alethic vocabulary*, Asay positions himself as an opponent of those, such as Horwich, who take possession of TRUTH and the ability to use alethic vocabulary to go hand in hand. In closing, Asay offers some germinal suggestions regarding the empirical relevance of his hypotheses about TRUTH.

3.2 Eklund

Matti Eklund's essay, like Asay's, is a significant contribution to the ongoing debates about deflationism. Eklund's main objective is to investigate how, exactly, the deflationary outlook on truth should be formulated in light of the centrality of the concept/property distinction. He begins by reflecting upon a familiar deflationary thesis, that truth is somehow *exhausted* by a schema such as (E) or (D):

(E) (The proposition) that p is true iff p

(D) (The sentence) "p" is true iff p.

Whether the focus is on (E) or (D), Eklund's contention is that this thesis should be understood as being not (or not merely) about the concept TRUTH, but about the property *being true*. However, when it is framed in this way, Eklund argues, it is difficult to see how the thesis could be both viable and properly deflationary. He evaluates several proposals as to what a deflationary stance on *being true* amounts to—due to Lynch, Damnjanovic, Edwards, Asay, and myself—and argues that all of them are problematic.

In lieu of these analyses of deflationism, Eklund forwards a view that he calls *indeterminism*, which consists of two main claims.[15] The first is that to be a competent user of the concept TRUTH or the word 'true,' all that is required is that one be disposed to accept all of the instances of (E) or (D). This idea is standard fare in the work of deflationists such

---

[15] Indeterminism is importantly distinct from another view about truth that Eklund (2010) calls 'rejectionism.'

as Horwich. The second is that TRUTH and 'true' are *semantically indeterminate*, so that there is a plurality of properties each of which could be ascribed in using TRUTH or 'true.' The role of either (E) or (D), according to the indeterminist, is to capture what all of these properties have in common. Eklund's conclusion is that theorists who find themselves attracted to deflationism should seriously consider endorsing indeterminism.

3.3. Scharp

Kevin Scharp is a well-known advocate of a *replacement theory* of truth.[16] According to Scharp's replacement theory, the concept TRUTH is an inconsistent concept in that due to the semantic paradoxes, some of its constitutive principles have untrue instances. Among these constitutive principles are:

(T-In) If ϕ, then 'ϕ' is true

(T-Out) If 'ϕ' is true, then ϕ.

Because TRUTH is an inconsistent concept, says Scharp, we shouldn't rely on TRUTH in theoretical contexts—e.g. when offering theories of meaning for natural languages. Rather, we should rely on a pair of successor concepts ASCENDING TRUTH and DESCENDING TRUTH that are governed respectively by analogues of (T-In) and (T-Out):

(AT) If ϕ, then 'ϕ' is ascending true

(DT) If 'ϕ' is descending true, then ϕ.

In his contribution, Scharp defends his replacement theory as part of a broader *conceptual engineering project* for truth. One of Scharp's aims is to determine whether there is any property *being true*. To this end, he draws on what he describes as twelve 'logical platitudes' about truth, which include (T-In) and (T-Out). Scharp observes that no property satisfies all of these logical platitudes. While there is a plurality of *aletheic properties*, each of which satisfies a proper subset of the platitudes, none of these properties, argues Scharp, is very similar to what we would ordinarily regard as the property *being true*. In light of these results, he concludes that there simply is no property *being true*.[17]

This is, without a doubt, welcome news for deflationists who side with A.J. Ayer, Robert Brandom, Dorothy Grover, W.V.O. Quine, and certain time slices of Frank Ramsey and P.F. Strawson in maintaining that *being true* doesn't exist. That being said, Scharp goes on to argue, by drawing on a framework that I develop in Wyatt (2016), that there are significant respects in which the various aletheic properties are substantive. This means that while Scharp can happily join the ranks of prominent deflationists about *being true*, he rejects an across-the-board deflationism about the aletheic properties.

Regarding the possible combinations of deflationism and substantivism, then, it is fair to describe Scharp as endorsing combination (DD), insofar as he takes the concept TRUTH to be explanatorily inert and denies that there is any property *being true*. It should be emphasized, though, that if the topic is shifted from TRUTH and *being true* to ASCENDING

---

[16] He defends his replacement theory at length in Scharp (2013).

[17] Note that Scharp's argument here trades on an idea that bears a close resemblance to the idea expressed by Alston's constraint.

TRUTH, DESCENDING TRUTH, and the alethic properties in Scharp's plurality, he will gravitate not towards (DD), but towards (SS).

In this connection, Scharp goes on to suggest that since each of the aletheic properties is picked out by a corresponding *aletheic concept*, we can ask which of these aletheic concepts we should add to our conceptual repertoire. As noted above, Scharp contends that ASCENDING TRUTH and DESCENDING TRUTH would be welcome additions, because e.g. we can formulate attractive truth-conditional semantic theories by using these concepts in lieu of the defective concept TRUTH.

Scharp's proposal looks to be interestingly related to the indeterminism that is detailed by Eklund. Both Scharp and the indeterminist posit a plurality of properties. A critical difference, though, is that *none* of the properties in Scharp's plurality satisfy both (T-In) and (T-Out), whereas *all* of the properties in the indeterminist's plurality are meant to satisfy (E) or (D). In light of this, it seems fair to wonder whether Scharp has shown that upon inspection, the indeterminist's plurality turns out to be empty.

3.4. Moltmann

In her contribution, Friederike Moltmann subtly directs our attention to the ways in which we speak about truth in natural language, a topic in which truth theorists have long taken a keen interest.[18] Just as Eklund holds that there is a plurality of properties that can be ascribed using TRUTH and Scharp holds that there is a plurality of properties that satisfy subsets of the logical platitudes about truth, Moltmann holds that there is a plurality of *truth-related predicates* in natural languages. These truth-related predicates include the familiar 'true,' as well as what Moltmann calls *predicates of correctness* (e.g. 'correct' and 'right'), *predicates of satisfaction* (e.g. 'satisfied' and 'implemented'), and *predicates of validity* (e.g. 'valid' and 'obtain').

Moltmann defends a number of intriguing claims about truth-related predicates. One is that they apply to a range of objects which she describes as either *attitudinal* or *modal objects*. These objects include beliefs, claims, requests, promises, speculations, impressions, permissions, and laws. Moltmann argues that the notions of truth, correctness, satisfaction, and validity can be applied *partially* to such objects, which she takes, among other considerations, to motivate a truthmaker semantics for applications of these notions. Given that so many truth theorists focus on non-partial attributions of truth to propositions or sentences, this more expansive take on truth-talk in natural language should help to drive productive debate about this issue.

Another of Moltmann's contentions is that in analyzing familiar indicative sentences that contain 'true' alongside a 'that'-clause, we shouldn't interpret the 'that'-clause as standing for a proposition. She presents substantial syntactic and semantic evidence which indicates that in this setting, the 'that'-clause actually stands for a contextually supplied claim, suggestion, or hypothesis—that is, for an attitudinal object. This analysis, too, is striking, as it departs from the received wisdom about truth ascriptions of this sort.

---

[18] She also explores this issue in Moltmann (2015).

A further conclusion by Moltmann is that in light of her results regarding truth-related predicates, it follows that deflationary analyses of truth-talk are on the wrong track. For one thing, deflationists typically take 'true' to primarily apply to propositions or sentences, as in (E) and (D).[19] Moltmann contends that this claim is simply false, since the subjects of truth ascriptions are attitudinal or modal objects. Moreover, it wouldn't seem that we can construct variants of (E) and (D) for the full range of truth-related predicates. 'Correct,' for instance, seems inapplicable to propositions. When applied to sentences, it ascribes grammaticality rather than truth, so that replacing 'true' with 'correct' in (D) would yield a schema with infinitely many false instances.

It is clear, then, that Moltmann rejects standard forms of deflationism about truth-talk. Whether this commits her to rejecting deflationism about the concept TRUTH is an interesting question. It is tempting to suggest that she endorse a *pluralist* view of thought about truth, according to which speakers have a plurality of what we might call *truth-related concepts*, including e.g. TRUTH, CORRECTNESS, SATISFACTION, and OBTAINING. Provided that those concepts stand for properties (or relations), one wonders whether Moltmann would regard these properties as substantial or insubstantial.

3.5. Barnard and Ulatowski

When setting out his conceptual engineering project, Scharp draws on what he calls 'logical platitudes' about truth. In their contribution, Robert Barnard and Joseph Ulatowski examine an additional claim that is sometimes categorized as a platitude, or truism, about truth—that truth is *objective*.[20]

Barnard and Ulatowski point out that in light of familiar conversations on airplanes, in classrooms, and during holiday meals, it probably seems likely to a fair share of philosophers that ordinary subjects are disinclined to accept the claim that truth is objective. In particular, many of us would probably hypothesize that ordinary subjects—or at least those between, say, 18 and 29 years of age—tend to be attracted to some form of relativism about truth.

However, Barnard and Ulatowski provide empirical data which challenge this hypothesis. In their study, they administered questionnaires involving three probe statements that one might use to express the idea that truth is objective and one probe statement that one might use to express the idea that truth is non-objective, in virtue of being determined by hypothetical consensus:

(F) When a claim is true, it expresses a fact

(O) When a claim is true, it would remain true even if no one had ever discovered it

(U) When a claim is true, it is true for everyone

(A) If everyone agrees with a claim, then it is true.

---

[19] Notable outliers, of course, include Ramsey (1927) and Strawson (1949).
[20] See e.g. Lynch (2009, p. 8).

They found that self-identified non-philosophers tended to agree with (F) and (O), to disagree with (U), and to strongly disagree with (A). They also found that self-identified professional philosophers tended to agree with (F) and (O) and to strongly disagree with (A), while they tended to agree with (U).

As Barnard and Ulatowski note, their data are limited when considered in connection with fully general hypotheses regarding ordinary thought about truth. Even so, their findings provide indispensable information for theorists interested in this topic.

For one thing, it is worth stressing that they have taken care to generate *empirical data*. Insofar as hypotheses regarding ordinary thought about truth are empirical, such data would seem to be essential to their evaluation.[21]

Their data also indicate that in connection with the objectivity of truth, ordinary thought is importantly nuanced. In particular, it seems inappropriate to flatly maintain that ordinary subjects take truth to be objective or that they take it to be non-objective. Rather, the more accurate description is that according to the ordinary way of thinking about truth, truth is objective along some dimensions and non-objective along others.[22]

Thirdly, Barnard and Ulatowski's findings point to a degree of convergence between ordinary and philosophical thought about truth that some philosophers will no doubt find surprising. With regard to truth's objectivity, the central bone of contention between ordinary subjects and professional philosophers looks to be the *universality* of truth, as expressed in (U). Along the other three dimensions, however, philosophers' views look to align with those of ordinary thinkers. Thus, the perhaps tempting view that truth relativism runs rampant in the wild and that trained philosophers have learned to tame their baser, relativistic instincts simply doesn't measure up to the data as they stand.

What bearing do Barnard and Ulatowski's results have on the four possible combinations of deflationism and substantivism? It seems quite clear that conceptual deflationists can happily refrain from taking (A) to characterize ordinary thought about truth, given that (A) isn't entailed by (the classes of instances of) schemas such as (E) and (D). Whether non-philosophers' disagreement with (U) presents a problem for conceptual deflationists is a bit more delicate, given the ambiguity in (U) that Barnard and Ulatowski discuss in their § 4. In light of this, perhaps the best approach would be to administer a revised study that involves both readings of (U) and to then determine how the results bear on conceptual deflationism.

Whether either (F) or (O) are inimical towards conceptual deflationism is a complex question. This is because its answer turns on issues such as whether one can be a deflationist about truth while granting that the world (or certain stretches of it) are mind-independent and whether we should take ordinary thinkers to operate with a deflationary concept FACT.

For my part, I suspect that Barnard and Ulatowski's results are welcome news for conceptual deflationists—especially since they challenge the anti-deflationary view that ordinary thought about truth is relativistic.[23] What bearing their results prove to have in

---

[21] For discussion of additional data, see Barnard and Ulatowski (2013, 2019); Bourget and Chalmers (2014); Fisher, et. al. (2017); Kölbel (2008); Ulatowski (2017); and Wyatt (2018).

[22] Though see Barnard and Ulatowski's discussion in their § 4 of a potentially relevant ambiguity in statement (U).

[23] Perhaps less welcome are the data that I discuss in Wyatt (2018).

connection with conceptual deflationism/substantivism and metaphysical deflationism/substantivism, though, will have to be addressed in future discussions.

3.6. Edwards

The final contribution comes from Douglas Edwards, who offers an in-depth examination of the claim that truth is a *relational property*. Edwards suggests that we should distinguish this claim from another claim that is superficially similar—that truth is an *extrinsic property*. For truth to be extrinsic in the sense that Edwards has in mind is for truth to be a property that an object has or lacks in virtue of things other than the object. For truth to be relational, by contrast, is for truth to be a property that an object has or lacks in virtue of standing, or failing to stand, in a relation to some other object.

Using this distinction, Edwards surveys a range of major theories of the nature of truth, both substantive and deflationary, with the aim of determining whether these theories entail that truth is extrinsic, relational, both, or neither. He finds that all of the theories entail that truth is extrinsic—other than identity theories, which entail that it is intrinsic. Likewise, he finds that all of the theories—other than deflationary, primitivist, and moderate pluralist theories—entail that truth is relational, with the latter three kinds of theory entailing that truth is non-relational. In short, then Edwards finds that all of the theories that he surveys entail that truth is either extrinsic or relational, or both.[24] This result is striking, as it may be tempting to think that only correspondence theories can do justice to the idea that truth is a relational property. If Edwards is correct, the plausibility of this idea fails to lend support to correspondence theories, as many rivals to correspondence theories can do justice to it as well.

Edwards points out that his results raise a significant methodological question. As Alston taught us, the *concept* of truth seems to place a constraint on theories of the nature of truth. Should we, then, take extrinsicality or relationality to be among the basic features of the concept of truth?[25] Put somewhat differently, is it the case that a theory *T* is a theory of the property *being true* only if *T* entails that truth is extrinsic or relational?

Edwards argues that neither extrinsicality nor relationality are basic features of the concept of truth in this sense. However, he also suggests that there are certain other platitudes about truth—due to Lynch, Wright, Dummett, and Horwich—which must be upheld by a theory if that theory is to qualify as a theory of *being true*. This can be accomplished, according to Edwards, if the theory in question takes truth to be extrinsic, relational, or both, though he allows that there may be other ways for a theory to uphold these platitudes. Accordingly, it seems desirable, if perhaps not essential, for a putative theory of *being true* to take truth to be extrinsic, relational, or both.

With regard to the four possible combinations of deflationism and substantivism, Edwards' results would seem to be compatible with all of these views. As for the

---

[24] I would note that Edwards doesn't discuss relativist theories of truth. It would seem, however, that contemporary relativist theories (e.g. Kölbel (2004)'s non-indexical contextualism and MacFarlane (2014)'s assessment sensitivism) take truth to be extrinsic and non-relational. Accordingly, such theories comport with Edwards' findings.

[25] Alston would call these the "constituent features" of the concept; see Alston (2002, p. 13).

connections between Edwards' contribution and the other contributions, it would be quite interesting to see whether Edwards' hypothesis that neither extrinsicality nor relationality are basic features of the concept of truth could be confirmed empirically. In particular, it would be interesting to evaluate this hypothesis in connection with both philosophical and ordinary thought about truth, following Barnard and Ulatowski. Such a line of inquiry might reveal, for instance, that different populations think in notably different ways about either, or both, the extrinsicality or relationality of truth—much as Barnard and Ulatowski (2013) found in connection with the idea that truth involves correspondence. Insofar as we should evaluate theories of truth's nature by determining how well they accommodate ordinary and/or philosophical thought about truth, such a result would raise pressing questions for theorists of the metaphysics of truth.[26]

4. Concluding remarks

To close, let me say that one of the main reasons that I find this special issue particularly exciting is that it vividly displays not only the topical, but also the *methodological*, diversity in contemporary studies of truth. We have Edwards and Eklund doing analytic metaphysics, Asay engaging in largely *a priori* analysis of the concept of truth, Barnard and Ulatowski doing experimental philosophy, Moltmann doing syntactic and semantic analysis together with natural language ontology, and Scharp examining the concept and metaphysics of truth through the lenses of the semantic paradoxes, formal theories of truth, and conceptual engineering. Faced with this impressive methodological diversity, it is incumbent on us to determine which methods for inquiring about truth are likely to be especially illuminating. To my mind, the answer is likely to be catholic: 'All of them, when suitably combined.' If this is correct, then we must work to synthesize these and other methods with the aim of producing increasingly comprehensive and insightful theories of truth.[27]

References

Alston, W. (1996) *A Realist Conception of Truth*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Alston, W. (2002) Truth: concept and property. In *What Is Truth?*, Schantz, ed. New York/Berlin: de Gruyter. 11-26.

Asay, J. (2013) *The Primitivist Theory of Truth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Asay, J. (2014) Against *truth*. *Erkenntnis* 79: 1. 147-64.

Barnard, R. and J. Ulatowski (2013) Truth, correspondence, and gender. *Review of Philosophy and Psychology* 4 (4): 621–638.

---

[26] I investigate some of these questions in Wyatt (2018).

Barnard, R. and J. Ulatowski (2019) Does anyone really think that ⌜φ⌝ is true if and only if φ? In Aberdein and Inglis, eds. *Advances in Experimental Philosophy of Logic and Mathematics.* Bloomsbury Academic. 145-71.

Bar-On, D. and K. Simmons (2007) The use of force against deflationism: assertion and truth. In Greimann and Siegwart, eds*. Truth and Speech Acts: Studies in the Philosophy of Language.* London: Routledge. 61–89.

Boghossian, P. (1990) The status of content. *The Philosophical Review* 99: 2. 157-84.

Bourget, D. and D. Chalmers (2014) What do philosophers believe? *Philosophical Studies* 170: 465–500.

Edwards, D. (2018) *The Metaphysics of Truth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Eklund, M. (2010) Rejectionism about truth. In Wright and Pedersen, eds. *New Waves in Truth*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 30-44.

Fisher, M., J. Knobe, B. Strickland, and F. Keil (2017) The influence of social interaction on intuitions of objectivity and subjectivity. *Cognitive Science* 41: 1119–1134.

Hirsch, E. (2005) Physical-object ontology, verbal disputes, and common sense. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 70: 1. 67-97.

Horwich, P. (1998) *Truth*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

James, W. (1907) *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*. New York: Longmans.

Kölbel, M. (2004) Faultless disagreement. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 104: 1. 53-73.

Kölbel, M. (2008) "True" as ambiguous. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 77 (2): 359–384.

Kripke, S. (1980) *Naming and Necessity*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Lewis, D. (1983) New work for a theory of universals. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 61: 4. 343–77.

Lewis, D. (1984) Putnam's paradox. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 62: 3. 221-36.

Lynch, M. (2009) *Truth As One and Many*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

MacFarlane, J. (2014) *Assessment Sensitivity: Relative Truth and Its Applications*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Moltmann, F. (2015) 'Truth predicates' in natural language. In Achourioti, Galinon, Martínez-Fernández, and Fujimoto, eds. *Unifying the Philosophy of Truth*. Dordrecht: Springer. 57-83.

Putnam, H. (1975) The meaning of 'meaning.' In Gunderson, ed. *Language, Mind, and Knowledge*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Reprinted as ch. 12 of *Mind, Language, and Reality: Philosophical Papers, vol. 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 215-71.

Ramsey, F. (1927) Facts and propositions. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplementary*, 7/1: 153–70.

Scharp, K. (2013) *Replacing Truth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sher, G. (2016a) *Epistemic Friction: An Essay on Knowledge, Truth, and Logic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sher, G. (2016b) Substantivism about truth. *Philosophy Compass* 11: 12. 818-28.

Strawson, P.F. (1949) Truth. *Analysis* 9: 6. 83-97.

Ulatowski, J. (2017) *Commonsense Pluralism About Truth: An Empirical Defence*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Wright, C. (1992) *Truth and Objectivity*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Wright, C. (2013) A plurality of pluralisms. in Pedersen and Wright, eds. *Truth and Pluralism: Current Debates*. New York: Oxford University Press. 123-53.

Wyatt, J. (2016) The many (yet few) faces of deflationism. *The Philosophical Quarterly* 66: 263. 362-82.

Wyatt, J. (2018) Truth in English and elsewhere: an empirically-informed functionalism. In Wyatt, Pedersen, and Kellen, eds. *Pluralisms in Truth and Logic*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 169-96.

Wyatt, J. (forthcoming) Truth and insubstantiality: the metaphysics of deflationism. In Lynch, Wyatt, Kim, and Kellen, eds. *The Nature of Truth: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives*, 2nd ed. Cambridge: MIT Press.