The Metaphysics of Truth: Anti-Deflationism and Substantial Pluralism

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Abstract

Two central themes of Douglas Edwards's *The Metaphysics of Truth* are anti-deflationism and substantial pluralism. In Part I of this paper I discuss Edwards's grounds for rejecting deflationism and suggest a few additional grounds. In Part II I discuss Edward's truth-pluralism and respond to his criticism of my correspondence-pluralism. While these pluralisms share significant features, their differences also raise several important questions.

I. Anti-Deflationism

Deflationists, according to Edwards, "aim to remove truth as a notion of significance for philosophical study, and indeed as something that can play a key role in metaphysical theories" (Edwards 2018: 2). Deflationary theories of truth come in two forms: radical deflationism, such as the redundancy theory, which rejects the view that truth is a *property*, and moderate deflationism, such as Horwich's (1990/8) minimalism, which rejects the view that truth is a *substantive* property. Moderate deflationism "holds that truth is a property but denies that there are interesting metaphysical things to say about it" (*ibid.:* 22). Edwards focuses on moderate deflationism, but his criticisms apply to radical deflationism as well.

In moderate deflationism, a "key role is afforded to instances of the ... schema...

(E) <p> is true iff[1] p" (*ibid.*).

"The deflationist theory and conception of truth yield a picture where no substantive theory of truth is needed. The deflationist conception of truth essentially says that the E instances are sufficient to explain *all* that needs to be explained about truth." (*Ibid.:* 25, my italics) These instances *exhaust* the theory of truth. Deflationism's limited conception of the content of the theory of truth is matched by its limited conception of the roles truth (or, on deflationism's narrow construal, the truth predicate) plays in human life. Truth plays just two technical linguistic roles: a tool of generalization and a tool of oblique reference. Instead of uttering the

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[1] If and only if.

infinitely many instances of the law of non-contradiction, we can simply say "Every sentence of the form '~(P &~P)' is true", and instead of asserting all the principles of general relativity, we can simply say "General relativity is true".

Deflationism is characterized by the following principles:

Basicness:	The instances of (...E) are basic. This means that 'we do not arrive at them, or seek to justify our acceptance of them, on the basis of anything more obvious or immediately known' (Horwich 2001: 559).
Completeness:	The instances of (...E) explain all the uses of the truth predicate.
Purity:	The instances of (...E) are given without making any essential connections between truth and other concepts.
Insubstantiality:	The instances of (...E) do not imply that there is a substantive property of being true. [*Ibid.:* 25]

The last is strengthened to: "no substantial theory of truth is needed" (*ibid.*).

Edwards's Criticism of Deflationism. Edwards contests the deflationist characterization of truth as satisfying the above principles:

1. *Truth is not basic.* "There are a number of different explanations offered to show how the instances of (...E) are *derived,* and are not basic" (*ibid.:* 42). Perhaps the most important of these is Tarski (1933), according to which truth is a *semantic* notion and as such has to do with the relation between language and the world. This relation is a correspondence relation which involves the notions of *reference* and *satisfaction.* Truth is defined in terms of these notions and this makes it a *derived* rather than a basic notion. As a result, the equivalence schema, too, is not basic.

2. *Truth is not complete.* This follows from claim 1 above: "if the (...E) instances are not basic, then we can identify features of truth that are not captured by them, namely those features that are involved in the derivation of the instances. The features of truth outside of the (...E) instances will be that, in some cases, there is a connection between truth and reference ..., and that there is a connection between truth and assertion. Both of these things are features of truth that are not explained in terms of the (...E) instances, so Completeness fails." (*Ibid.:* 52-3)

3. *Truth is not pure.* It follows from claims 1 and 2 that "there are essential connections between truth and [other] notions. If this is the case, then Purity no longer holds, as truth cannot be understood as something which has no essential connection to other concepts." (*Ibid.*: 53)

4. *Truth is not insubstantial.* There is "an inconsistency with regard to the insubstantiality feature" of deflationism. This "feature requires ... a metaphysical distinction" between substantial and insubstantial properties. But "the deflationist is unable to state the metaphysical aspect of [her] view about truth: the deflationist cannot claim that truth is different from the other types of properties she wants to contrast truth with [such as magnetism], for to do so would be to make metaphysical distinctions the deflationist cannot make." (*Ibid.*: 57)

Accordingly, the deflationist characterization of truth as insubstantial is incorrect. Truth is a substantive notion and a theory of truth requires more than the E-schema in order to adequately account for it.

I fully agree with Edwards's criticism of truth-deflationism.[2] But I would add a few additional criticisms, which point to epistemic, methodological, and explanatory shortcomings of this doctrine: (a) Edwards criticizes deflationism on the ground that it neglects the *metaphysical* dimension of truth. Another, complementary, criticism is that it neglects its *epistemic* dimension. The concept of truth plays a central role in the human pursuit of knowledge, and understanding this role is essential for understanding this concept. None of this is either recognized by, or can be pursued within, the deflationist theory/conception of truth. (b) The deflationist theory of truth is limited to a simple definition schema, one that overlooks the fine content, intricacy, and multi-dimensionality of truth (Sher 2004). Even Tarski's (1933) definitional account of the contribution of *logical structure* to truth (see discussion in Sher 2016, Section 8.5) has no room within the deflationist theory. (c) According to deflationism, the *only* contribution of truth to humans is the

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[2] Edwards also considers *global* deflationism, namely, deflationism as a general philosophical methodology, and criticizes it as well. I also share his criticism of this universal version of deflationism.

use of the truth predicate as a technical tool for expressing generalization and oblique reference. It is quite clear, however, that this claim is overly narrow, and as such false. First, the claim that the *only* (or even the *main*) contribution of truth to humans is a certain technical-linguistic use of the truth predicate is false in light of the importance of truth as a norm of inquiry. I will elaborate on this in Part II, but it is not hard to see that the main role(s) of truth in inquiry is (are) very different from the narrow technical role which is acknowledged by deflationism. Second, and more generally, an adequate account of the contribution of truth to humans must be able to answer such questions as: "What would humans lose by losing truth – the concept, norm, and human value of truth – as in an Orwellian 1984 world or in a contemporary post-truth world?". It is clear that the loss will be far greater than the loss of a technical device of generalization and oblique reference. Deflationists might object that such questions concern *truthfulness* rather than *truth* and that truthfulness is an altogether different thing than truth. But this is something they have not established. Both Williams (2002) and Sher (2021) contest this claim, and it is doubtful that deflationism has resources to overcome these criticisms. Williams, for example, points out that in the absence of truth, truthfulness is empty: "If you do not really believe in the existence of truth, what is the passion for truthfulness a passion for? ... [I]n pursuing truthfulness, what are you supposedly being true to? This is not an abstract difficulty or just a paradox. It has consequences for real [life]." (Williams 2002: 2). And throughout his book, Williams talks about "the value of truth [not truthfulness]" (*ibid.:* 6), using a genealogical story to connect the *need for truthfulness* with the *value of truth*.

Further criticisms of the deflationist theory and conception of truth can be found in, e.g., Wright (1992), Gupta (1993), Shapiro (1998), and Bar-On and Simmons (2007).

II. Substantial Pluralism

A. *Edwards's Truth-Pluralism.* Edwards is a substantivist about truth, and the form his substantivism takes is pluralism as opposed to monism. Why pluralism? According to Edwards,

truth has to do with the relation between language and the world, and there are diverse relationships between language and the world in different domains or fields of discourse. This source of the pluralist approach to truth is essentially the *scope problem* (for which Edwards gives references to Lynch 2001, 2009 and Sher 2004), namely, the problem that there are significant differences between the conditions under which a truth-bearer is true in different fields. Edwards, as we shall shortly see, offers his own variant of the scope problem. Both the original and Edwards's scope problems suggest that an adequate theory of truth has to explain not only the significant features that are common to all truths but also the significant features that distinguishes between truths in different fields. That is, according to the pluralist approach, an adequate theory of truth has to account not just for the *unity* of truth (although this is an important task) but also for its *diversity.*

As far as the *unity* and the *diversity* of truth are concerned, Edwards follows Wright (1992), Lynch (2009), and me (Sher 2004, 2016) in viewing its unity as consisting of general principles that all truths are said to satisfy and its diversity as requiring "different theories of truth ... for different domains" (*ibid.:* 95). He also follows Wright and Lynch, but not me, in regarding the unifying principles of truth as *platitudes* or *truisms*. (For me, they are substantive principles.) For Edwards, the platitudes of truth include:

- Truth is the property that is the goal of inquiry/assertion/belief.
- T is a property that is distinct from justification, warranted assertibility, ...
- To have the property of being true is to tell it like it is.
- To assert P is to present P as having the property of being true.
- "a is F" has the property of being true iff the object referred to by "a" has the
  property referred to by "F". [Based on *ibid.:* 125]

The *diversity* of truth, for Edwards, as for Wright, Lynch, and me, is *substantive*. The plurality of truth gives rise to a theory whose goal is "to give us a rich, varied, and powerful explanatory framework which gives interesting answers to questions about how sentences are true.... In doing so, it demonstrates the vitality of questions about the nature of truth" and their role in metaphysics. (*Ibid.:* 3)

The underlying idea is that "[i]n asserting or believing, an assertor or believer typically aims to hit the truth" (*ibid.:* 123). The unifying principles of truth give "an indication of what the constraints on a theory of truth are, namely, that it must give an account of truth which exhibits [the] features [indicated by the unifying principles]". The pluralist theory of truth explains "how sentences [belonging to different domains] get to have [the truth] property". (*ibid.:* 124) This is a "significant explanatory project". For each domain, according to Edwards, there is "a *distinct* property which, in accordance with the nature of the domain, *determines* truth in this domain. To establish which property determines truth in a domain we need to examine carefully the domain in question." (*Ibid.:* 125) Edwards calls his truth-pluralism "determination pluralism" (*ibid.:* 122). "[T]he structure of determination pluralism ... is as follows: truth is given as the property that is exhaustively described by the truth platitudes. This property is the property possessed by all true sentences, regardless of domain. For each domain there [is] a property that determines possession of the truth property, and these properties are held fully distinct from the truth property itself." (*Ibid.:* 153)

The account so far gives the impression that there are *multiple* properties F that determine truth in diverse domains, such as the moral, institutional, arithmetic, biological, chemical, physical, comic, aesthetic, religious, social, and modal domains (see *ibid.:* 66). Accordingly, there are multiple theories of truth (sharing the same unifying principles). Surprisingly, however, in Edwards's version of truth-pluralism, this large plurality shrinks, or at least appears to shrink, to a *duality*. Truth-*pluralism* shrinks to truth-*dualism*. This is because Edwards distinguishes only two types of truth, based on a metaphysical distinction between two types of properties: *abundant* and *sparse* (explained below). Each of the diverse domains of truth falls under exactly one of these two types. Edwards's variant of the scope problem says that a single theory of truth cannot distinguish between domains with sparse and abundant properties. His version of truth-pluralism accordingly says that "it is not just that different theories of truth are best suited for different domains, but that truth *has* to be understood differently in different domains, for we

cannot get the general distinctions we made between different domains in terms of sparseness and abundance up and running without a pluralist approach to truth" (*ibid.:* 83).

Sparsity and Abundance as a Basis for Truth-Pluralism. Truth, for Edwards (as for Tarski and others, including me), has to do with the relation between mind and world. What distinguishes Edwards's approach is its focus on one aspect of this relation: how predicates are related to the properties they refer to.[3] There are two different relations between predicates and properties, according to Edwards: (i) the predicate is *responsive* to the property, (ii) the predicate *generates* the property. This implies a distinction between two types of properties: (i) a property is *sparse* if the predicate is responsive to it, (ii) a property is *abundant* if it is generated by the predicate. In the case of a *sparse* property, "there [is an] objective propert[y] 'out there', so to speak" (*ibid.:* 67), and we, humans, construct a predicate to represent it. In the case of an *abundant* property, there is no "objective property out there". We construct a predicate and this predicate "projects" the property. The property exists only as a projection of the predicate: it is, essentially, the extension of the predicate. (The use of "sparse" and "abundant" for such properties is associated with the view that it is easy to construct predicates and project them to properties but harder to find properties out in the world. The properties projected by predicates are, in this sense, abundant; those found in the world independently of the predicates are sparse.)

Now, Edwards connects this duality of properties to a duality of truths. One type of truth is applicable to sentences with predicates denoting *sparse* properties. Truths of this type are *responsive* to the world, *representational* and *realistic*. They are *correspondence* truths. The second type of truth is applicable to sentences with predicates denoting *abundant* properties. Truths of this type are *generative, non-representational,* and *non-realistic.* They are

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[3] He is also interested in the relation between singular terms and the objects they refer to, which he sees as central to our understanding of *existence*. But I will not discuss this part of the book here.

superassertibilist.[4] When *F* is a sparse property, "a is F" is true *because a* has the property *F*. When *F* is an abundant property, *a* has the property *F because* "a is F" is true.

Edwards also correlates the distinction between types of truth with a distinction between domains or fields of discourse. In the first place, the distinction between domains creates a genuine plurality: predicates are divided into kinds according to their functional role and content, and each type of property is associated with a domain, or field, of discourse. There are many such domains: physical, biological, mathematical, moral, institutional, etc., hence, at least potentially, many types of truth. As we have seen, however, this plurality is reduced by Edwards to a mere duality by the claim that each domain is uniquely associated either with sparse properties or with abundant properties. Accordingly, all domains are divided to two groups, each with one of the two types of property, sparse or abundant, and there are two types of truth: *correspondence* and *superassertibilist* truths. Physical, chemical, and biological truths are correspondence truths; mathematical, moral, and institutional truths are superassertibilist truths.

Are there any other types of truth, according to Edwards? It is hard to say. He does mention coherentist and pragmatic truths as examples of non-representational truth, and in one place he says that "if the domain is representational, then we need to decide between different correspondence theories" (*ibid.:* 126). But he does not follow up on these comments in any way that generates a philosophically significant *plurality* of types of truth.

It appears, then, that for Edwards, the *plurality* of truth is, in the end, largely a *duality*: the duality of *correspondence* truth, applicable to sparse domains, and *superassertibilist* truth, applicable to abundant domains.

One may wonder why Edwards finds the distinction between sparse and abundant properties so important in the field of truth; in particular, why it is so important to give a special treatment to domains with abundant properties. Edwards's paradigm of such a domain is the

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[4] "Superassertibility is a form of durable warrant to assert a sentence; a warrant which is available at some stage of inquiry, and then persists through all subsequent stages" (*ibid.:* 92).

institutional domain. His example of an institution is the Governorship of New York and of a predicate belonging to this institutional domain – "is the Governor of New York" (*ibid.:* 72). The property denoted by this predicate is an institutional property, and its distinctive characteristic – the characteristic that makes it an abundant property – is that it "depend[s] on the collective acceptance of a community in order to make sense. It is only because we collectively accept and engage in a communal practice which allows there to be ... governors that there are ... governors. Moreover, it is only because an individual is collectively accepted to occupy an institutional position – usually because they have met some specified requirement – that they do so. ... [T]here is no explanatory work for [an institutional] property to do that cannot be done by a person's being taken, accepted, or believed, to have this property. ... [I]nstitutional properties, such as being the Governor of New York, are generated by institutional predicates, as opposed to those predicates being responsive to sparse properties." (*Ibid.*) It is the significance of this dichotomy that is supposed to justify the exclusive focus of Edwards's truth-pluralism on the abundance vs. sparseness of properties in different domains.

B. *Relation to Correspondence-Pluralism.* Edwards compares his own truth-pluralism with my *correspondence-pluralism*, or *manifold-correspondence* (Sher 2004, 2005, 2015, 2016).[5] Three major points of comparison are:

1. Both truth-pluralism and correspondence-pluralism recognize the *joint* centrality of *unity* and *diversity* for our understanding of truth.

2. Whereas truth-pluralism identifies the unity of truth with the universal satisfaction of the "platitudes" of truth, correspondence-pluralism identifies the unity of truth with the universality of certain *substantial* (non-platitudinous) general principles, including correspondence.

3. While both truth- and correspondence-pluralism regard the plurality of truth as domain-

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[5] Henceforth, by "truth-pluralism" I will mean "Edwards's truth-pluralism" and by "correspondence-pluralism" I will mean "Sher's correspondence-pluralism".

dependent, truth-pluralism identifies the plurality of truth with the *duality* of

correspondence and superassertibility, associated with the duality of sparse and

abundant properties, whereas correspondence-pluralism identifies the plurality of truth

with a potential *multiplicity* of forms or patterns of correspondence.

Edwards describes correspondence-pluralism (manifold-correspondence) as follows:

> Sher lists the three main components of manifold correspondence as:
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> > A. *Correspondence is, in a deep sense, a matter of both world and mind.*
> > B. *Correspondence need not have a simple form, like mirror, copy, or isomorphism; it might have a far more intricate form.*
> > C. *Correspondence might take several forms, varying from field to field.*
> > (Sher 2016: 189...)
>
> To elaborate on feature C, she earlier says:
>
> > The forms [correspondence] takes depend both on what aspect of reality a given thought targets and on the cognitive resources available to us for reaching it. Abstracting from differences, this connection holds between a given thought and reality when the aspect of reality it targets is, directly or indirectly, yet systematically, as it says it is. (Sher 2016: 186)
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> Sher's motivations for moving to a pluralist form of correspondence are partly due to the thought that the standard causal model of correspondence is unsuitable to explain truths about mathematics and logic. She develops detailed examples to show how such accounts of correspondence can be given in these areas. The idea is to retain the unity of truth through truth always being correspondence, but to acknowledge that there are different correspondence relations in different domains. [Edwards 2018: 100]

Edwards asks whether correspondence-pluralism threatens his own truth-pluralism. His

answer is negative. While he emphasizes that the two approaches have much in common and

their disagreement is secondary, he is critical of correspondence-pluralism. His main criticism is

that correspondence pluralism cannot handle truth in *abundant* domains, i.e., domains with

abundant rather than sparse properties. No correspondence conception of truth, according to

Edwards, can handle such domains:

> The first thing to note is that, given that Sher's view is a representation theory of

truth, it is – like all representational theories – committed to the idea that the truth of a sentence is dependent on the existence of the objects and properties that the sentence is about. Correspondence cannot avoid this idea, even if we take it that parts of reality are constructed by us. As a consequence, this view cannot avail itself of the idea that some properties are instantiated because their corresponding predicates are true of objects, as this would require cases where truth is not dependent on how reality is, due to some aspects of reality being dependent on truth. As a result, such a view needs an independent account of abundant properties if it is to be able to capture both sparse and abundant properties. This view would thus need an entirely separate account of how aspects of reality are constructed that does not depend on truth in the way I ... describe... [it]. [*Ibid.*]

And he elaborates:

[F]or a correspondence model to make sense ..., we need to have the idea that the portion of reality in question is there prior to reference being made to it. This is what Sher means ... by the idea that our thoughts 'target' that reality. You can't hit a target that isn't there, and truth cannot depend on reference if the entities being referred to do not exist prior to the claim being made. As a consequence, it has to be the case that [e.g.,] social and institutional entities exist prior to the assertion of sentences about them. The problem with this way of thinking about these domains is that the creation of social and institutional properties is not a one-time thing, where a property is created by stipulation and then is there for all to refer to whenever they wish; rather the existence and the nature of the property is only sustained by the practice of continuing to refer to it, attributing it to things, and maintaining collective beliefs about it. [*Ibid.:* 102-3]

On the correspondence model ... constructed reality is there, constructed by us, complete with all its entities, and thus something that fits the representational model of truth, even if reference is not causal. The problem is that this is a poor account of constructed reality, and it does not properly account for the continued existence of institutional entities. [*Ibid.:* 103]

Another issue raised by Edwards concerns the breadth and flexibility of truth- and correspondence-pluralism. Comparing the two, he says:

One of the virtues of my approach is that it can appeal to a wide variety of theories that have vastly different views of a domain. For example, my approach is consistent with an expressivist approach to ethics, and anti-realist approaches more generally, as they can adopt the abundant model for the moral domain. Is this the case for plural correspondence, though, or is the view unable to account for genuinely anti-realist options? [*Ibid.:* 100-1]

The main bones of contention between truth- and correspondence-pluralism are (i) the *universality of correspondence*, and (ii) the *basis for the plurality of truth*s. The other issues can be subsumed under these.

(i) *The Universality of Correspondence.* The explanation given for the universality of correspondence by correspondence-pluralism is based on the epistemic roots of our concept and norm(s) of truth. Edwards does not consider this explanation, probably due to his decision to limit his attention to the metaphysical dimension of truth. Correspondence-pluralism traces the epistemic roots of our concept/norm(s) of truth to central features of what we may call *the basic human cognitive-epistemic situation* (see Sher 2016). This situation involves a number of elements that stand in significant tension with each other. Two of these are:

(a) It is a distinctive characteristic of humans, one that reflects the epistemic dimension of their humanity, that they are interested in knowing the world as it is, and in its full complexity, not just practically but also theoretically. Human civilization values such knowledge not just as a means for some other end, but also for its own sake.

(b) Attaining knowledge of the world as it is, in its full complexity, however, is neither easy nor straightforward for humans. The world is highly complex relative to our cognitive capacities, or, what comes to the same thing, our cognitive capacities are very limited relative to the complexity of the world. As a result, we are prone to error.

Now, the tension between (a) and (b) explains why we need a concept and norm(s) of truth in the first place and why they are so important to us. Given that humans aims at knowing the world *as it is* yet are *prone to error*, it is essential for them to have (i) a concept of truth that distinguishes, in a useful way, between statements and theories that get the world right and those that do not, and (ii) a norm, or norms, that guide them, in an informative manner, toward making/developing correct rather than erroneous statements/theories.

But can humans make use of such a concept and norm(s), as far as their epistemic goals are concerned? Are they not so limited (or is the world not so complex) that their pursuit of

knowledge is destined to fail with or without a concept and norm(s) of truth? To answer this question we need to consider another element of the human cognitive-epistemic situation.

(c) Humans' limitations notwithstanding, their cognitive capacities are not insignificant. And these capacities are further magnified by the human ability to play an active role in the process of knowledge, including discovery or construction of new, indirect, cognitive routes to the world, design of new research program and experiments, revision and creation of concepts, figuring out how to solve new problems and sidestep new obstacles, and so on.

As a result, a concept and norm(s) of truth are, or at least can be, of use for humans.

These considerations imply, however, that to satisfy the *epistemic function* of truth, a concept/norm(s) of truth has (have) to be a *correspondence* concept/norm(s). Coherentist, pragmatic, or superassertibilist concept/norm(s) are insufficient. They do not focus on what, given the basic human cognitive-epistemic situation, they need to focus on, namely: the *connection* between *true sentences* (theories) and the *world*. This is the ground (or one of the main grounds) for correspondence-pluralism's claim that truth is a correspondence concept, norm(s), property,[6] and that the pluralism of truth is a correspondence pluralism.

(ii) *The basis for the plurality of truth*s. Both truth- and correspondence- pluralism focus on the mind-world relation that underlies truth, but they focus on different aspects of this relation. *Truth-pluralism* focuses on the *direction of determination* between *predicates* (mind) and *properties* (world); *correspondence-pluralism* focuses on the different *patterns* available to *mind* (sentences, theories) to *reach* facets of the *world* of different kinds.

In truth-pluralism, as we have seen above, the plurality of truth is based on the observation that the determination relation between predicates and the properties they refer to can, in principle, go in two directions: (i) the predicate determines the property, and (ii) the

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[6] I will explain the relation between the concept/norm(s) of truth and the property of truth in (ii) below, fn. 10.

property determines the predicate. In the first case, we come up with a predicate and the property is simply the extension of the predicate. In the second case, we come upon a property in the world and we construct a predicate to represent it. In case (i), the predicate *governs* the property; in case (ii), the predicate is *responsive* to the property. The properties *generated* by predicates are *abundant:* they do not need to exist in the world independently of the predicates, they are the extensions of whatever predicates we come up with. The properties that *generate* predicates are *sparse*: they have to exist in the world independently, and prior to the construction, of their predicates.

Truth-pluralism is based on two assumptions: (a) Properties in general are divided into *sparse* and *abundant* (a property is abundant iff it is not sparse). (b) Domains of discourse (fields of knowledge) differ from each other with respect to the sparsity and abundance of their properties; some domains have sparse properties, others have abundant properties. This is the way truth-pluralism ends up as a dualism: truth in sparse domains is *correspondence*, truth in abundant domains is *superassertibility*.

Where does correspondence-pluralism stand with respect to the sparsity-abundance duality? Correspondence-pluralism holds that the *determination* relation between *predicates* and *properties* is in principle *bi-directional*. The connection between predicates and properties is a dynamic, back-and-forth connection. Starting with a target in the world, we construct words (concepts) to speak (think) about it, and using these words (concepts) we may reshape this target, discover new things about the target as well as new targets, and so on. This process holds both with respect to facets of the world that are independent of us and those that are not, including human artefacts of various kinds, physical and mental, concrete and abstract.[7]

This approach is *holistic* in the sense of *foundational holism*, a new type of holism

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[7] See further discussion below.

developed in Sher (2016).[8] Its main idea is that the human pursuit of knowledge, including the correction of errors, is, generally, holistic in the sense of involving multiple interconnections both between independent units of knowledge and between mind and world. In both cases the interconnections can in principle take multiple forms, exhibiting a diversity of patterns, some linear or tree-like,[9] others not. It is this multifaceted, holistic, and both mind- and world-oriented structure that is manifested in the relation between predicates and properties according to plural-correspondence.

If we accept this view, then Edwards's main criticism of correspondence-pluralism, namely, that it unduly neglects the sparsity-abundance division, does not hold. On the foundational holistic approach, every property is, in principle, partly sparse and partly abundant. At different times one of these features may be more dominant, but in the long run, the two balance each other. As a result, correspondence-pluralism can in principle deal both with truth-bearers that refer to properties that Edwards regards as sparse and with truth-bearers that refer to properties that Edwards regards as abundant.

This holistic approach to truth does not draw a sharp division between sparse and abundant properties. Nor does it draw a sharp division between the metaphysics and the epistemology of truth. The world is as it is, but we can cognitively access it only in ways that are available to us. Such ways sometimes lead us to see the world correctly (as it is), sometimes mislead us to see it incorrectly (as it is not). It is the difference between, and the prevalence of, both that make the concept/norm(s) of truth – correspondence truth – so important for us.[10]

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[8] As its name indicates, it is a *foundational* alternative to *foundationalism*: a holistic method for pursuing foundational projects – foundations without foundationalism.

[9] As required by foundationalism. (See Sher *op.cit.*)

[10] This holistic approach also explains the relation between the property of truth and the concept/norm(s) of truth mentioned earlier. What we said above about the bi-directionality of the connection between predicates and properties also holds for concepts/norms and properties, including the concept/norm(s) and property of *truth*. Let us begin with the concept of truth. The

We are now ready to meet Edwards's challenge to the scope of correspondence pluralism. If all properties are both sparse and abundant, then correspondence-pluralism is not limited to domains that are classified by Edwards as "sparse" domains. Edwards recognizes that correspondence-pluralism provides detailed examples of correspondence in fields where the common, causal, template of correspondence does not apply, such as logic and mathematics.[11] But he claims that its ability to handle logical and mathematical truths does not establish its breadth. Why?

> [I]t is notable that [Sher's] two key examples of areas where [manifold] correspondence is useful are mathematics and logic, two areas where realist intuitions are powerful. [*Ibid.:* 101]

This claim is a bit surprising. For one thing, many philosophers are anti-realist with respect to mathematics and logic. Furthermore, most truth-pluralists use mathematics and logic as examples of fields in which a non-correspondence type of truth is at play. For example, Wright (1999: 225) uses the mathematical field as an example of a field for which the suitable notion of truth is coherence. Indeed, Edwards himself uses mathematics as an example of an area that may not be suitable for correspondence truth:

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concept of truth determines which property is the property of truth, and the property of truth determines what features the concept has. In this respect, the concept and property of truth are similar to the concept and property of water. The concept of water determines that the property corresponding to "water" is H_2O rather than, say, C_2H_6O (which is the property corresponding to "ethanol"). And the difference between the properties of being H_2O and being C_2H_6O determines that the concept "water", but not the concept "ethanol", is a concept of a source of life. The bi-directionality of the relation between concept and property is dynamic, and it often unfolds in stages, in a back-and-forth manner.

Some concepts are also associated with a cluster of norms. The concept "truth", like the concept "justice", is of this kind. A justice-bearer (such as a human act or policy) has the property of being *just* iff it satisfies the *norm(s) of justice*, as it (they) apply to justice-bearers. Similarly, a truth-bearer (such as a sentence or theory) has the property of being *true* iff it satisfies the *norm(s) of truth*, as it (they) apply to truth-bearers. This "iff" is not only extensionally, but also explanatorically, bi-directional.

[11] See citation from p. 100 of his book earlier in subsection B: *Relation to Correspondence-Pluralism.*

> Take the correspondence theory of truth... . Such a [theory] is plausible for the truth of beliefs about objects in the material world, such as trees and mountains, but is poorly suited to account for the truth of mathematical ... beliefs. ... This opens up the idea that truth may be best thought of a correspondence for discourse about the nature and state of the material world, but understood differently – perhaps in terms of superassertibility – for discourse about mathematics. [*Ibid.*: 106-7]

Correspondence-pluralism recognizes both the differences and the similarities between different domains. It demonstrates that, and shows how, correspondence-truth is applicable both in mathematical and in material domains, namely, by exhibiting different correspondence-patterns in these domains. While material correspondence normally affirms the reality of material individuals (planets, atoms, humans), mathematical correspondence can eschew mathematical individuals, thus avoiding Platonism. Here is how correspondence may work: mathematical reality consists of 2nd- and higher-level mathematical properties, such as cardinality properties, which apply to properties of individuals. (E.g., the property of being a moon of Earth has cardinality ONE). Mathematical individuals, such as numbers, are mere *posits,* constructed by us as a bridge between our 1st-order mathematical language and the 2nd-level reality of mathematical properties and structures.[12] Thus, while "Earth" refers to its denotation, a celestial individual, directly, "1" refers to its denotation, the cardinality property ONE, indirectly, through the *posited* mathematical individual *1*, correlated with the cardinality property ONE. Accordingly, 1st-order mathematical truths correspond, through a two-step correspondence pattern, to higher-level facets of reality. For example, the truth of "1+2=3" corresponds to the reality of the DISJOINT UNION of ONE and TWO being THREE: "1+2=3" is true iff (on the level of posits) +(1,2) is 3 iff (on the level of reality) DISJOINT-UNION(ONE,TWO) is THREE. (For further details and explanation, see Section 8.4 of Sher 2016.)

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[12] One may ask why we use a 1st-order language to describe a 2nd-level reality. The answer may be that humans think better when they think in terms of individuals and their properties than in terms of properties of properties and their properties. This motivates them to think about the higher-level reality in terms of a lower-level model of this reality, using posits.

What about other traditionally non-correspondence domains, such as the moral domain? Edwards recognizes that it is open to the correspondence theorist to approach the moral domain by "'try[ing] to figure out whether there is, or should be, something objective in our moral judgments, ... and if there is, what kind of thing it is'" (Sher 2015: 209, cited in Edwards 2018: 101). In a recent development (Sher, work in progress), correspondence pluralism has made a further step forward by considering the possibility that correspondence in the moral domain is correspondence with *moral values* or principles. For example, "Action A is just" is true iff action A reflects the *value* (satisfies the *norms/principles*) of *justice*. This value is *not* mind-independent, but it *is* real and objective. Indeed, this value (which developed in our human civilization) is integrated in human reality in ways that significantly involve *causal* relations. Peter Railton (1995) captured this idea by introducing the notion "subject-ivity", which he distinguished from "subjectivity". Subjectivity is the kind of mind-dependence, such as a whim, that lacks objectivity, hence is unsuitable for truth; but *subject-ivity* is mind-dependence of a kind that does not obliterate objectivity. Moral values (norms, principles), according to Railton, are mind-dependent in the sense of subject-ivity: they are mind-dependent, yet objective, and on my construal, real.

Edwards, as we have seen above, focuses on social institutions, which he regards as "constructed reality". One of the main differences between us is that he draws a sharp distinction between constructed and unconstructed reality, while I do not. Edwards recognizes that it is possible for the correspondence pluralist to "reject the idea that all aspects of reality are independent from thought and language" (Edwards 2018: 101). Still, he never lets go of the all-or-nothing idea that there cannot be correspondence without reality being all there prior to our speaking about it, rather than things appearing and disappearing, being affected by what humans think and do, etc. (See, e.g., *ibid.:* 103-4) The correspondence pluralist rejects this approach. Reality – even *natural* reality – changes in time: islands appear and disappear, trees grow and die, and so on. Similarly, humans' generated objects, like the American Constitution, come into

being, change in time, and may cease to exist (while preserving their identity). The American Constitution is more intimately connected to the human mind than islands or trees. But there are many facts about it and many correspondence-true statements about it (which are grounded in those facts). Truths about the American Constitution have both *causal* and non-causal elements. For Edwards, however, the causal–non-causal distinction, too, is an all-or-nothing affair: either reference/truth is fully causal or it has no causal elements at all. As a holist who emphasizes the multi-dimensionality of truth and reference, the correspondence-pluralist recognizes multiple combinations of causal and non-causal elements in truth and reference, hence multiple patterns of correspondence that combine both.

Addressing the relation between Edwards's and my approach to the social domain straight on, let me first note that there is much in common in our approach: we both recognize that the social domain is truth-apt yet not fully mind-independent. But on my view, this does not prevent this domain from being a correspondence domain, while on Edwards's view it does. On my view, reality need not be fully mind-independent in order to support correspondence truth. Indeed, even in domains that for Edwards fall under correspondence truth, reality is not completely mind-independent. The separation between, say, "mountain" and "hill", is human-dependent, but this does not change the fact that "Everest is a mountain and not a hill" is correspondence-true. Some mind-dependencies interfere with correspondence truth, other do not. Those that are *subjective* in Railton's sense do, those that are *subject-ive* do not. The bearers of genuine physical, mathematical, moral, and social truths are often partly mind-dependent. "The American Constitution has seven articles" is correspondence-true and subject-ive. It corresponds to our social reality, which is subject-ive yet real. "The American constitution sanctions dictatorship" is correspondence-false. Its falsehood is also due to our social reality which is subject-ive yet real (though it is due to a different facet of this reality). What matters for the truth-value of these sentences is not their "practical role" in our life (*ibid.:* 91), or whether they are "'fated to be ultimately agreed upon by all who investigate'" (*ibid.:* 92), or whether we have some non-

correspondence "durable warrant to assert [them,] a warrant which is available at some stage of inquiry, and then persists through all subsequent stages" (*ibid.*). What matters is whether they *correspond* to those facets of human-reality that these sentences target.

Finally, let me turn to Edwards's point on the flexibility of pluralist theories of truth. What kind of flexibility is appropriate for such theories – accommodating all the different conceptions of truth in the philosophical literature or treating the question of what truth is as an open question, both with respect to which conception of truth is true and with respect to what patterns are exhibited by truth in different domains? There is something appealing in the first attitude – the attitude of "let a thousand flowers bloom". Furthermore, it is important to recognize that traditional correspondence has scope difficulties and that these explain, and justify, philosophers' attempts to look for alternatives to traditional correspondence. However, this attitude must be balanced by certain epistemic duties. In particular: (i) the duty to pursue the truth in all fields of knowledge, including philosophy, and (ii) the duty to look for new solutions when the available solutions are inadequate. Based on the reasons presented in the entry on the universality of correspondence above, together with well-known problems that arise for the major alternatives to correspondence-truth, I believe that the truth about truth is that it is based on correspondence (though not traditional correspondence) principles, rather than on coherence, or pragmatic, or expressivist, or other non-correspondence principles. And as for the scope problems of traditional correspondence, correspondence-pluralism offers a new solution to these problems, thus taking the air out of the claim that by rejecting *traditional* correspondence we are committed to a *non-correspondence* approach to truth. I conclude that the proper flexibility of a pluralist theory of truth is flexibility with respect to the patterns of correspondence-truth rather than flexibility with respect the large diversity of existent conceptions of truth. Indeed, the deep differences between the existent conceptions of truth provide another reason for preferring correspondence-pluralism to truth-pluralism. The correspondence, coherence, pragmatist, and expressivist conceptions of truth are so different from each other that it is not clear whether they

are all conceptions of the same thing, truth. A pluralism that resides within the bounds of *one* conception of truth is preferable to a pluralism that sanctions a multiplicity of *incompatible* conceptions of truth.

There is more to the debate between truth- and correspondence-pluralism (for example, whether the unity of truth is based on *platitudinous* or on *substantive* principles)[13], but let me end on a unifying note. The debate on the plurality of truth is secondary to the deep agreements that truth- and correspondence-pluralism have about the theory of truth: (a) The theory of truth is, and ought to be, a substantivist rather than a deflationist theory; (b) The scope problems of truth call for a pluralist theory of truth. These are the main issues; the rest is largely a matter of detail.

A last note concerning unity: Edwards applies his pluralist principles of truth to the philosophical theory of existence as well. This is a move I have not discussed in this paper. But as a move toward augmenting unity in philosophy it is important and welcome.

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[13] See Sher (2004, 2016).

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