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# Alethic pluralism and the value of truth

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## ABSTRACT

I have two objectives in this paper. The first is to investigate whether, and to what extent, truth is valuable. I do this by first isolating the value question from other normative questions. Second, I import into the debate about the nature of truth some key distinctions hailing from value theory. This will help us to clarify the sense in which (and to what extent) truth is valuable. I then argue that there is significant variability in the value of truth in different areas of discourse. I shall call this the *axiological variability conjecture* (AVC). I illustrate and substantiate AVC by contrasting the occurrence of disagreement in two paradigmatically evaluative areas of discourse, *viz.* matters of taste, on the one hand, and morality, on the other. I claim that there is a reasonable tendency to care much more about settling moral disagreements than taste disagreements and that this difference has to do, at least partly but significantly, with the different value that truth exhibits in these two areas of discourse. I then turn to the second objective of the paper—namely, to discuss how pluralistic accounts of the nature of truth may deal with the value of truth in light of AVC. I will argue that AVC is a problem for all versions of truth pluralism that are committed to the following two theses: (i) that truth is a value concept; and (ii) that this characteristic of the concept has to be reflected in the metaphysical nature of any admissible truth properties—i.e., all the various properties that are admissible (qua truth properties) in the pluralist account are value-conferring properties and thus intrinsically valuable. In so doing, I will focus primarily on Michael Lynch’s functionalist incarnation of truth pluralism. Lynch terms this “Manifestation Alethic Pluralism” (MAP). My reason for this is twofold: first and foremost, MAP is a paradigmatic exemplification of a model of truth pluralism that is committed to both (i) and (ii); second, MAP has, to date, enjoyed the most discussion, and currently provides the most developed account of truth pluralism. However, I argue that MAP lacks the resources to account for AVC. Owing to this, I suggest two ways out for an advocate of MAP, which force various structural changes in her view.

## 1. Introduction

Is truth valuable? One may consider this to be a rhetorical question. Very few would deny that truth is *somehow* valuable. In fact, most of the time we care deeply about getting things right, both in our scientific and more mundane enquiries. For instance, many of our social and intellectual practices reveal our care for truth: we praise those who make scientific discoveries; governments, as well as private institutions, invest money (although perhaps not enough!) into education and research; on a smaller scale, we tend to trust more those who have true beliefs, and when we discover that our beliefs about certain important matters are false, we are disposed to rectify them—or we at least feel the pressure to do so. Thus, there is clearly a sense in which truth is valuable with respect to both our mundane and less mundane enquiries. Truth's value is distinct from, yet harmonious with, the way in which other epistemic goods—e.g., justification, understanding, and knowledge—are valuable and contribute to the overall epistemic value of our enquiries.

Even so, understanding exactly *how*, and to what extent, truth is valuable is no easy task. Moreover, there is substantive disagreement between philosophers on these issues. Indeed, the debate regarding the value of truth has, for the most part,<sup>1</sup> been based on the presupposition that there's only one kind of truth. In other words, the debate has assumed the truth of alethic monism—i.e., the thesis that truth is univocal. More recent debates from the nineties onwards<sup>2</sup> regarding the nature of truth, however, have seen the emergence and development of a family of views that are in opposition to alethic monism insofar as they maintain that truth is (not only one but also) many. This cluster of views is known as *alethic pluralism* and has been promoted by a number of prominent figures working within the debate on the nature of truth, including Douglas Edwards, Michael Lynch, Nikolaj Jang Lee Linding Pedersen, Gila Sher, and Crispin Wright.<sup>3</sup> The emergence of these pluralist views calls for some reshaping of what Crispin Wright has dubbed *the traditional debate* on the nature of truth, as well as various questions that lie at the debate's core. In particular, the issue regarding whether truth is valuable should be understood in such a way as to allow for alethic pluralism. In this paper, I am primarily concerned to investigate how we should conceive of the value of truth within a pluralistic

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<sup>1</sup> A notable exception is, of course, Michael Lynch who will play a prominent role in what follows.

<sup>2</sup> Pluralist accounts of truth have been on the market since Crispin Wright's publication of *Truth and Objectivity* (Wright 1992).

<sup>3</sup> Edwards (2011), (2012), (2013), (2018); Ferrari, Moruzzi, Pedersen (2020); Lynch (2001), (2004b), (2006), (2009a); Pedersen (2006), (2010), (2012), (2014), (2020); Pedersen & Wright (2013); Sher (2004), (2005), (2013), (2015); Wright (1992), (1998), (2001), (2013).

framework. Thus, I will not address here the intricate debate between alethic monists and alethic pluralists.

More specifically, in this paper, I shall pursue two main objectives. The first regards whether, and to what extent, truth is valuable by isolating the value question from other normative questions, and by importing from value theory some important axiological distinctions in the debate regarding the nature of truth (Section 2).<sup>4</sup> This will help us to clarify the sense in which, and to what extent, truth may be valuable. With this in hand, in Section 3, I argue that there is significant variability in the value that truth displays in different areas of discourse. I shall call this the *axiological variability conjecture* (AVC). I illustrate and substantiate AVC by contrasting the incidence of disagreement in two paradigmatically evaluative areas of discourse, *viz.* matters of basic taste and matters of fundamental morality. As a matter of fact, people tend to care much more about settling moral disagreements than settling taste disagreements. I claim that this difference can be accounted for, at least partly, by adducing the different value that truth has in these two areas of discourse. My second objective, which will be carried out in Sections 4-6, is to explore how pluralistic accounts about the nature of truth may deal with the value of truth. I will argue that AVC is a problem for all versions of truth pluralism that are committed to the following two theses: (i) truth is a value concept, and (ii) that this property of the concept has to be reflected in the metaphysical nature of any admissible truth properties—i.e., all the various truth properties that are admissible within the pluralist account are value-conferring properties and thus intrinsically valuable. My argument focuses especially on Michael Lynch’s functionalist incarnation of truth pluralism—what he calls “Manifestation Alethic Pluralism” (hereafter MAP). My reason for focusing on Lynch’s MAP is twofold: first and foremost, it is a paradigmatic exemplification of a model of truth pluralism that is committed to both (i) and (ii); second, Lynch’s account is, to date, the most discussed and developed version of truth pluralism. I will show that Lynch’s MAP, as originally stated, has serious issues in accounting for AVC. Owing to this, I develop two ways in which MAP can be amended in order to account for AVC.

Before getting to the heart of the matter, let me specify a few provisos that will guide my discussion throughout this paper. Since my primary objective is to discuss the value of truth in the context of alethic pluralism, I will assume, without argument, that some kind of pluralistic picture of the nature of truth is correct. In making this assumption, I take on-board a variety of basic commitments that are typically endorsed by pluralists. First, I take truth to be a property

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<sup>4</sup> By axiology I mean, as generally understood, value theory—i.e. the philosophical study of value.

of propositions, and thus I endorse propositions as the content of our assertoric speech acts, as well as of our mental attitudes. Second, I assume that propositions can be intuitively grouped into different domains of discourse in accordance with their subject matter. How exactly to draw the line from one domain to another is certainly no easy task. Indeed, there may be overlap between domains.<sup>5</sup> Third, and finally, following Wright (1992) and Lynch (2009a), I take on board an all-inclusive approach to questions concerning the truth-aptness of assertoric uses of sentences in context. This means that I take assertoric uses of sentences about as wide a range as possible of subject-matters for expressing truth-apt contents—i.e., propositions, for the sake of this paper. Thus, when used *assertorically*, sentences from all kinds of descriptive and evaluative domains of discourse—e.g., physics, biology, mathematics, jurisprudence, taste, aesthetics, morality, etc.—express genuine propositional contents.<sup>6</sup> It is, of course, a controversial issue whether judgements in some of these domains—especially the domain of taste—express truth-evaluable propositional contents. However, for the purposes of this paper, I will not take issue with this controversy.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. The Value of Truth

Discussions concerning the value of truth are part of a broader debate regarding the normative role—or roles—that truth exerts upon judgements in the context of enquiry.<sup>8</sup> For this reason, it is important to sharply distinguish the value aspect (or, equivalently, the axiological aspect) from other aspects of truth's normative profile. These aspects include (in addition to the axiological aspect): (1) the idea that truth is the aim of enquiry (teleological aspect); (2) truth is that which we ought to believe in our inquisitive pursuits (deontic aspect); and (3) truth is the standard of correctness of our beliefs (criterial aspect).<sup>9</sup> Thus, when we ask the question of whether, and to what extent, truth is valuable, we are asking a question about one specific aspect of truth's normative role in enquiry—an aspect that, for the purposes of this paper, I will deal

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<sup>5</sup> Nikolaj J.L.L. Pedersen and Cory Wright take predication to be our guide in domain-individuation: in order to understand what is the subject matter of a given sentence, and thus what is the domain to which the proposition expressed belongs to, we have to look at the predicative expression in it—see Pedersen & Wright (2018). See also Edwards (2018).

<sup>6</sup> As Wright argues at length, this much is not sufficient to engender a commitment to realism—see especially Wright (1992).

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., Cappelen & Hawthorne (2009), Ferrari & Wright (2017); MacFarlane (2014).

<sup>8</sup> For the purpose of this paper we can understand enquiry as the practice of gathering, weighing and assessing evidence which is aimed at forming, managing, and relinquishing beliefs and sharing true information. It is widely accepted within the philosophical community that, so conceived, enquiry and its characteristic products—beliefs and judgments—are subject to alethic norms—see, for instance, Dummett (1959); Gibbard (2005); Horwich (2013); MacFarlane (2014); Shah & Velleman (2005); Wright (1992).

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of these different aspects of truth's normative profile and how they relate to each other see Ferrari (2018a).

with in isolation from the other aforementioned normative aspects.<sup>10</sup>

The intuitive idea that truth is valuable can thus be put in the following terms: truth is valuable at least in the sense that, in pursuing enquiry, it is (somehow) good to believe what is true (i.e., true propositions), while it is bad to believe what is false (i.e., false propositions). I assume that this intuitive thought is correct—i.e., that truth is somehow valuable (while falsity has disvalue). The aim of this section is to investigate in what sense (or senses) truth is valuable. To begin, it will be useful to distinguish between three ways in which the axiological principle can be read:<sup>11</sup>

- A. Truth itself is what makes believing true propositions valuable/good.
- B. The state of affair of believing true propositions is valuable/good.
- C. To have the goal of believing true propositions is valuable/good.<sup>12</sup>

As I see it, what needs to be explained is why, and in what sense, having beliefs with true propositional content is valuable. Thus, I take something along the lines of (B) to be our explanandum, while (A) and (C) are among the possible explanans. For, (A) says that it is truth itself, thanks to its very nature, that explains why it is valuable to believe true propositions. (C), by contrast, holds that it is something to do with our dispositions in pursuing enquiry that explains why it is valuable to believe true propositions. I will elaborate on this shortly. A more precise formulation of our explanandum, (B), consists in the following:

- (VT) For every proposition,  $\langle p \rangle$ , which is an appropriate object of a subject's (S) enquiry, it is valuable that S believes  $\langle p \rangle$  if, and only if,  $\langle p \rangle$  is true.

How should we understand the logical structure of (VT)? First of all, VT is a wide-scope principle, meaning that the axiological operator 'it is valuable that' ranges over the entire biconditional. This captures the intuitive idea that what is valuable is the state of affairs of having true (and only true) beliefs, as opposed to the more problematic idea that it is valuable to believe any specific proposition,  $\langle p \rangle$ , whenever  $\langle p \rangle$  is true.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the range of

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<sup>10</sup> One may wonder—as an anonymous referee from this journal has done—whether this is a legitimate move: can we really separate the axiological aspect of truth's normative function from the other aspects mentioned above? I've dealt with this important question in some other works—Ferrari (2016) and Ferrari (2018a). See also McHugh (2012); McHugh & Way (2015); Thomson (2008). It would lead us too far astray to argue for this in the context of this paper, so I will just assume that the axiological function of truth's normativity is independent of the other functions.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Lynch (2020).

<sup>12</sup> The expression 'to have the goal' in C should be understood in dispositional terms—i.e. it does not have to be always manifested and transparent to the subject in pursuing enquiry.

<sup>13</sup> For a discussion of wide *versus* narrow scope normative principles see Broome (2007); MacFarlane (2004);

propositional quantification is meant to be restricted to those propositions that are appropriate objects of enquiry—where by ‘appropriate’ I mean, roughly, those propositions that are not only relevant but also important for S’s enquiry. Despite these qualifications, which undoubtedly help to screen out some important worries, the axiological principle requires further refinements in order to be adequate. However, the formulation above is refined enough for the purposes of this paper. What really matters here is the following question: what can alethic pluralists say to account for the truth of (VT)? Before addressing this question (which will be the focus of Sections 4, 5, and 6), we need to do two things: first, to outline more generally the available strategies in accounting for the truth of (VT); second, to discuss an important aspect of variability with respect to the value that true beliefs have in different domains of discourse (Section 3).

With a better grasp of the structure of (VT) in hand, we can now clarify how the term ‘valuable’ should therein be understood. To this end, it will be useful to borrow some important distinctions from debates in axiology. A first distinction concerns the contrast between *final* and *instrumental* value. In particular, it concerns the question: do we value having true beliefs for their own sake, or only instrumentally? A second distinction concerns the contrast between *conditional* and *unconditional* value, in particular the question: is the value of having true beliefs unconditional or conditional upon the satisfaction of certain contextual conditions (enablers/disablers)? A third distinction concerns the contrast between a property being *intrinsically* valuable versus its being *extrinsically* valuable. Thus, is the source of the value of having true beliefs intrinsic, or extrinsic, to the nature of truth?

In this paper, I will not express any specific commitments regarding the first and second distinctions. This is because it is the third distinction that is significant in debates concerning the nature of truth.<sup>14</sup> For, the way in which we answer the question about whether truth is intrinsically or extrinsically valuable significantly impacts the nature of the truth property. In order to see why, allow me to rephrase the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction more explicitly for the case of truth:

INTRINSIC      Does the source of the value of having true beliefs come from the very

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Shpall (2013).

<sup>14</sup> Let me briefly mention the fact that the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction is orthogonal to both the conditional/unconditional category—as Bader (2015) argues, happiness is for Kant intrinsically and finally valuable but its value is only conditional on the presence of the good will—and also of the final/instrumental category—as Korsgaard (1996) has shown, a rare object like a Gutenberg Bible, although it is valued for its own sake, has its axiological source in relational properties (its rarity) with external things.

nature of truth (in line with explanans (A) above)?

EXTRINSIC     Or, does it come from something external to truth's nature—e.g., from the value of having the goal of forming true beliefs qua conducive to intellectual flourishing (in line with explanans (C) above)?

How exactly should we understand INTRINSIC? The debate on intrinsic versus extrinsic properties is rich and intricate, and various models of intrinsicity have been developed. For the sake of this paper, it may be largely immaterial *which* specific model of intrinsicity we endorse. However, given the specific application of the concepts 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' in the context of this paper, the so-called *in-virtue-of* model may be the most suitable.<sup>15</sup> At the core of this model, as applied to the case of truth, is the idea that there is something about the very nature of truth that makes it an intrinsically valuable property—indeed, a value-conferring property. Something (e.g., a thing, a state of affairs, a property), *x*, is intrinsically valuable if and only if *x* is valuable solely in virtue of how *x* itself is. That is, a thing, *x*, is intrinsically valuable if and only if there are some properties (*P*<sub>1</sub>, *P*<sub>2</sub>, ..., *P*<sub>*n*</sub>) such that *x* has *P*<sub>1</sub>, *P*<sub>2</sub>, ..., *P*<sub>*n*</sub>. Thus, *P*<sub>1</sub>, *P*<sub>2</sub>, ..., *P*<sub>*n*</sub> are part and parcel of *x*'s nature, and *x* is valuable entirely in virtue of having *P*<sub>1</sub>, *P*<sub>2</sub>, ..., *P*<sub>*n*</sub>. The thought, then, would be that truth has intrinsic value in the sense that its value is grounded in characteristics that are part of its very nature—i.e., by its very nature, truth is a value property. Thus, the 'intrinsicist' explanation of (B) would be the following: what confers value to the state of having true (and only true) beliefs is truth being valuable in the way it is. Thus, being in a state of true belief is intrinsically valuable because its value is wholly grounded in the intrinsic value of truth. By contrast, truth has extrinsic value just in case its value is

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<sup>15</sup> See Bader (2013) and Witmer, Butchard, & Trogon (2005). For the purposes of this paper, I'm ignoring the distinction between possessing intrinsic value and being valued intrinsically which plays an important role in the dialectic of Bader's paper in order to allow for cases of things possessing intrinsic value but which are valued both intrinsically and extrinsically. This could be the case for the value of truth as well—however, this would make no difference for the dialectic of this paper. That said, two alternative models of intrinsicity are, among others, the duplicate model due to Lewis and Langton, and the relational model due to Francescotti. The duplicate model says that a property *P* is an intrinsic property of a thing *O* if and only if no *O*-duplicate is such that it lacks *P*—Lewis (1986): 61–62; Langton & Lewis (1998). It is perhaps worth noticing that it may not be straightforward to adjust the duplicate model to cover the kind of cases I'm interested in for the project of this paper—namely the case of intrinsic/extrinsic characteristics of properties rather than of objects. In fact, when we are talking about the intrinsic characteristics of properties it is rather unclear what would count as property-duplicate. Thus, for the purposes of this paper, the duplicate model may be the least adequate among the various model. The relational model says that intrinsic properties are those properties which, in instantiating them, the bearer does not stand in some relation to a distinct thing or to its surroundings. Thus, suppose *O* has property *P*; then, as we modify things other than *O*, and thereby modify the relations *O* bears to other things, *O* will continue to be *P*—Francescotti (2014). Although this model may be more flexible than the Lewis and Langton one in accounting for the application of the concepts 'intrinsic'/'extrinsic' to properties, overall the *in-virtue-of* account seems to offer the best model for the case at hand. Many thanks to an anonymous referee for helping me in clarifying this issue.



grounded in characteristics that are external to truth's nature. Thus, the 'extrinsicist' explanation of (B) would go as follows: something wholly extrinsic to the nature of truth—e.g., our dispositions in pursuing enquiry—explains why the state of affairs of having true (and only true) beliefs is valuable, but truth itself does not confer this value.

### 3. The Axiological Variability Conjecture (AVC)

In this section, I explore and substantiate a conjecture concerning the variable axiological significance that disagreement manifests in different areas of discourse. Let us label this conjecture AVC.

We disagree about all sorts of things—from very mundane topics about whether a certain food tastes good to extremely sophisticated matters concerning the scientific status of string theory. Moreover, we tend to react differently in certain contexts of disagreement, depending upon the subject matter. But how should we characterize disagreement? MacFarlane distinguishes between various accounts of disagreement in order to show that, for each competing semantic theory (e.g., contextualism, relativism, expressivism, etc.), there is a kind of disagreement that can be both predicted and explained by the theory.<sup>16</sup> Although I sympathize with a pluralistic approach to the nature of disagreement, for the purposes of this paper, I will be naïve and assume an account of disagreement in terms of the incompatibility of the propositions believed by the disputants. Thus, in believing a certain proposition,  $\langle p \rangle$ , a subject is committed to take  $\langle p \rangle$  to be true and to take any proposition,  $\langle q \rangle$ , which is semantically incompatible (either contrary or contradictory) with  $\langle p \rangle$ , to be false.<sup>17</sup> Thus, when a relation of disagreement occurs between A and B—because, for example, A believes  $\langle p \rangle$  while B believes  $\langle q \rangle$ , where  $\langle p \rangle$  and  $\langle q \rangle$  are semantically incompatible—both parties are committed to assess their respective opponent's contrary judgement as false. This much follows from basic logical principles governing truth, falsity, and negation.

With this characterization of disagreement in hand, one may ask: what kind of critical normative assessment of the opponent's contrary judgement is licensed in the context of a disagreement? More specifically, for the purposes of this paper: does an attribution of falsity to a contrary judgement always incorporate an axiological criticism—i.e., an attribution of disvalue to our opponent for judging the way that she does? The conjecture I will explore and

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<sup>16</sup> See MacFarlane (2014), Chapter 6.

<sup>17</sup> Note that this is the case also within standard versions of truth relativism—e.g. Kölbel (2003); MacFarlane (2014)—which endorse a non-relativised object-language truth predicate which is unrestrictedly disquotational. I will not discuss truth relativism in this paper.

substantiate in this section is that, even within the broadly evaluative areas of discourse for which a rampant realist treatment of truth seems harder to defend, there is significant variability across legitimate reactive attitudes, which crop up in response to instances of disagreement in different subject matters. These reactive attitudes concern, primarily, attributions of fault to someone for holding a contrary opinion in a particular context of disagreement.

In what follows, ‘fault’ should be understood in terms of ‘alethic fault’, as is standard in the so-called (alethic) faultless disagreement debate, that is, as intimately connected to the normative function(s) that truth exerts on judgements.<sup>18</sup> An alethically faultless disagreement is a disagreement where neither disputant is alethically at fault for having the belief she has. A disputant is alethically faultless in believing a certain proposition  $\langle p \rangle$  if, and only if, in believing  $\langle p \rangle$  she is not violating any of the normative functions that truth exerts with respect to the domain to which  $\langle p \rangle$  belongs. Given that, in the pluralist framework adopted in this paper, truth plays a variable normative function depending on the subject matter at issues, the notions of alethic fault and alethic faultlessness should be understood in a pluralist manner as well. Thus, if  $\langle p \rangle$  belongs, say, to a domain where truth plays only the criterial function, then the subject in believing  $\langle p \rangle$ , where  $\langle p \rangle$  is false, will be committing a criterial fault. However, she won’t be deontically and axiologically at fault because truth is deontically and axiologically inert in the domain to which  $\langle p \rangle$  belongs. With this in hand, we can say that a subject who believes  $\langle p \rangle$  in the context of a disagreement, is legitimated in attributing a specific kind of alethic fault (let’s say, axiological fault) to someone else having a contrary belief just in case truth plays the corresponding normative function(s)—in this case, the axiological function—in relation to the domain to which  $\langle p \rangle$  belongs. Reactive attitudes, as I understand them in this paper, concern the normative assessment of a contrary view on the matter on which the disagreement is about. What reactive attitudes are licensed in a given disagreement will then depend on what is the topic of the disagreement.

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<sup>18</sup> Alethic fault has to be kept distinct from the kind of epistemic fault associated with the normative function(s) that justification exerts on judgements—this is because truth and justification potentially diverge in extension (it may happen that a belief is true but unjustified or false but justified). As I’ve argued elsewhere, since truth may exert different normative functions (criterial, axiological, deontic, teleological) depending on the subject matter at issue, the notion of alethic fault comes in a variety of forms: thus we will have a notion of criterial fault—which may be legitimately attributed to a contrary opinion in the context of a disagreement whenever truth exerts its criterial function—a notion of axiological fault—which may be legitimately attributed to a contrary opinion in the context of a disagreement whenever truth exerts its axiological function—and a notion of deontic fault—which may be legitimately attributed to a contrary opinion in the context of a disagreement whenever truth exerts its deontic function—see Ferrari (2018a). Whether we can make sense of the idea of a disagreement in which no (alethic) fault whatsoever can be legitimately attributed to a contrary opinion in the context of a disagreement depends on whether we can make sense of a normatively inert notion of truth (I discuss this issue in Ferrari & Moruzzi (2020).

The suggestion is to account for this variability in reactive attitudes with reference to variability in the axiological significance of disagreement based on the subject matter about which the disagreement arises. We can then model the variability in the axiological significance of disagreement by means of the idea that the kind of value (if any) of true beliefs varies in tandem with metaphysical and epistemological variations in subject matter. Of course, AVC is neutral with respect to the explanatory question of what explains what. That question will depend on whether we take explanans (A) or explanans (C) in Section 2 above as the right explanatory model. I will return to this important issue in Section 6.

The first step in substantiating AVC is, then, to compare two distinct occasions for disagreement about paradigmatically evaluative matters—i.e. disagreements about basic taste<sup>19</sup> and disagreements about some fundamental moral issue.<sup>20</sup> Let us begin with an example of a disagreement about basic taste:

A: Joe’s apple tart is delicious.

B: I disagree. Joe’s apple tart isn’t delicious.

Let us assume a few things about this case. First, A and B are fully attentive. Second, they have tasted the same apple tart. Finally, let us assume that their judgements are grounded in their gustatory reactions to the piece of tart they have respectively experienced.

The disagreement between A and B about Joe’s apple tart is taken by some philosophers to be a paradigmatic example of faultless disagreement, whereby both parties simply agree to disagree, peacefully accepting a difference of opinion. In this paper, I will not take a stance on whether (at least some paradigmatic cases of) taste disagreements are completely faultless.<sup>21</sup> For what is needed in order to corroborate AVC is the weaker claim that no attribution of disvalue to a contrary opinion is licenced in (at least some paradigmatic cases of) disagreements

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<sup>19</sup> I here draw an intuitive distinction between matters of basic taste which are based on our gustatory reaction to a given object of gustatory experience—e.g. the taste of oysters—and more refined aesthetics judgements concerning, e.g. matters of fine art or music, for which some kind of expertise and knowledge might play an important role. I don’t want to claim that there’s always a neat separation between these two subject matters—there may be many borderline judgements falling in the intersection of these two areas. For my purposes it is sufficient that there are some clear cases of basic taste judgements as opposed to judgements about matters of refined aesthetics.

<sup>20</sup> See Ferrari (2016) and Ferrari (2018a) for further details. It’s worth flagging out at this point that the comparison between taste and moral disagreement that I offer should not be understood as based on some empirical data. I don’t have such data (at least, not yet). The comparison is based on intuitive judgements—in the philosophical sense of ‘intuitive’, i.e. based on rational intuitions concerning fairly idealised scenarios—about what we would typically expect as legitimate reactions to situations of disagreement in these two domains.

<sup>21</sup> On this issue, see Ferrari & Moruzzi (2020); Kölbel (2003); MacFarlane (2014); Wright (2006), (2012). If it turns out that there is at least a domain where we have cases of fully faultless disagreement—i.e. in which truth exerts none of the aforementioned normative functions, with the exceptions, perhaps, of the teleological one—then this would require an even more radical adjustment in the structure of alethic pluralism. I discuss this possibility in Ferrari & Moruzzi (2019).

about taste. Although A is committed to regarding B's contrary belief as false, there seems to be no ground for the legitimacy of an attribution of axiological fault—i.e., of disvalue—to B's judging the way that she does.<sup>22</sup> In many ordinary contexts, in which we take the gustatory sensibilities of our opponent to be free of any impairment, it would strike us as bigoted or even arrogant if we were to insist that our opponent's judgement is bad or otherwise amenable to some negative axiological assessment. A rather natural and effective explanation of this fact is that truth is axiologically inert, as it were, in the domain of basic taste. Put more prosaically, having true (and only true) beliefs in matters of basic taste has no value (nor disvalue). The fact that truth is axiologically inert might be owing, in turn, to radical accounts of relativistic and subjectivist metaphysics and epistemology within the taste domain. On such accounts, the instantiation of basic taste properties—e.g., being tasty—as well as the justification for a judgement about taste depend entirely on the gustatory sensibilities of the beholder—i.e., her gustatory responses.<sup>23</sup>

Before turning to a discussion of the normative significance of disagreement about fundamental moral matters, let me discuss a possible objection in relation to my assessment of basic taste disagreement.<sup>24</sup> One may argue that instead of claiming that truth is not valuable in the domain of basic taste we could endorse the less radical view that truth is less valuable in that domain than in other domains—in accordance with views that take the value of truth to be a matter of degrees.<sup>25</sup> The motivation for adopting this view instead of the one developed in this paper is given by the following consideration: although we may be willing to put up with

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<sup>22</sup> It may be worth drawing a distinction here between (alethic) fault/faultlessness and other kinds of normative fault/faultlessness that an agent may be subject to in the context of a dialectical confrontation. In addition to alethic fault/faultlessness we may have the following notions: epistemic faultlessness (the subject has been epistemically responsible in the way she has formed her belief and managed the evidence in the context of the confrontation); conversational faultlessness (the subject has by and large abided by the conversational maxims operating in the context of the confrontation); prudential faultlessness (the subject has by and large respected the social conventions pertaining to the situation of dialectic confrontation); moral faultlessness (there's nothing morally reproachable in the way the subject has behaved in the situation of dialectic confrontation). All these kinds of faultlessness are, perhaps in different senses, normative kinds of faultlessness. Moreover, they are all, at least to a certain extent, normatively independent of each other in that they respond to different conditions of legitimate attribution in the context of a dialectical confrontation. Surely, a subject in the context of a confrontation may be legitimately regarded as alethically at fault (under some precisifications of the notion of alethic fault) because she holds a false judgement, without being at fault in any other sense—she may have been epistemically responsible and she may have behaved impeccably from a conversational, prudential, and moral point of view. In this respect, there would be nothing to blame the subject for. Or, a subject may be alethically faultless in judging, e.g., that foie grass is delicious even though she may be blamed for issuing such a judgement on moral grounds. With this in hand, one may introduce the notion of faultlessness simpliciter and stipulate that a subject S is faultless simpliciter just in case S is faultless in all these different dimensions of faultlessness—in other words, alethic faultlessness would just be a necessary but not sufficient condition for faultlessness simpliciter. Many thanks to an anonymous referee for bringing this issue to my attention.

<sup>23</sup> See Ferrari & Moruzzi (2020) for a fully worked out epistemology and metaphysics of taste along these lines.

<sup>24</sup> Thanks are due to an anonymous referee for pressing me on this issue.

<sup>25</sup> See, e.g. Treanor (2018).

other people's false beliefs in matters of basic taste, we prefer to have true beliefs to false one for ourselves. In this respect, when we are assessing our own beliefs, we are not indifferent to their truth—in fact, we are not indifferent to trading our true beliefs for false ones, even when it comes to matters of basic taste. And this is naturally taken to suggest that truth is (perhaps to a minimum degree) valuable in the domain of basic taste too. I believe that this proposal, as intuitive as it may seem, is problematic. If we take seriously the idea that taste disagreements are faultless in a rather robust sense of the term—i.e. both deontically and axiologically faultless—then it's hard to square this with the thought that when it comes to my beliefs I prefer (in the axiological sense) to have true beliefs to false ones. How do we explain this perspectival shift? Recall that if I'm committed to regard my belief that *p* as true, I'm also committed to regard your contrary belief as false. This follows from basic principles concerning truth and negation. If truth is always preferable (in the axiological sense) to falsity, this should be the case regardless of the perspective from which the belief is issued and/or assessed. In this sense I would be fully legitimised to issue a negative axiological assessment of your contrary view. As a consequence, taste disagreements would still elicit—in a perhaps weaker sense—an assessment of a contrary view as somehow off colour and worse than mine. And this seems problematic for the reasons discussed in this paper. Perhaps, some form of axiological perspectivalism could be offered to develop a workable proposal capable of assuaging this worry. It's not my intention here to critically assess this proposal. Instead, I would like to suggest an alternative explanation of the plausible thought that we do prefer having true beliefs to false ones—an explanation which is fully in line with the proposal developed in this paper. The core point of my suggestion is to take our preference for truth relative to a certain subject matter to track functionally whatever normative role truth plays with respect to that subject matter. Whereas in relation to some subject matters this preference is, as it were, axiologically loaded, in relation to other subject matters it is detached from any axiological aspects. Allow me to elaborate the suggestion a bit further. Following Shah and Velleman's characterisation, I take it to be a constitutive aspect of a belief (in the context of rational deliberation) that of being teleologically linked to truth. Given this fact, whenever we endorse a certain belief, we are not indifferent to truth simply because to believe *<p>* (for any *<p>* whatsoever) is to take *<p>* to be true. Thus, in this admittedly minimal sense, believing is never indifferent to truth—not even in relation to matters of basic taste. This already gives us some explanation of why, even when it comes to matters of basic taste, we prefer—in this rather minimal sense of 'prefer')—to have true beliefs instead of false ones. Moreover, depending on the specific metaphysics of taste we take on board, there may be a further sense, slightly more robust, in which we are not indifferent

to the truth of a proposition about basic taste. This second sense of ‘preferable’ is linked to the criterial aspect of truth’s normative profile. If we grant that truth is the standard of correctness of belief in the domain of basic taste, then we are not indifferent to truth there because we are not indifferent to having correct beliefs rather than incorrect ones. Both ways of showing concern for truth are fully compatible with the proposal of this paper and do not require assuming that truth always plays an axiological function in relation to matters of basic taste.<sup>26</sup>

Consider now, as a sharp contrast case, a disagreement about some fundamental moral issue:

C: Torturing people is always morally deplorable.

D: I disagree. Torturing people is sometimes morally acceptable.

Again, let us assume that C and D are fully attentive, both are well-educated, intelligent individuals who have thought deeply about the issue under discussion. The disagreement between C and D concerning the moral acceptability of torture is a paradigmatic example of a heated dispute, the presence of which is perceived as weighty and problematic. In sharp contrast to the taste case, the parties in these kinds of moral disagreement do not happily tolerate the presence of divergence in judgement. For these reasons, we should expect disagreements about fundamental morality to license both parties to issue a rather robust kind of critical assessment of their respective opponent’s contrary judgement. Thus, an attribution of disvalue—if not of *impermissibility*—to the opponent’s holding a contrary view should be expected. A natural and effective explanation of the substantive kind of normative significance manifested by disagreements about fundamental moral matters is that truth is axiologically potent in the moral domain. Put more prosaically, having true (and only true) beliefs about fundamental moral matters is highly valuable. The fact that truth is axiologically potent in relation to judgements about fundamental moral matters may be owing to metaphysical and epistemological features that are peculiar to the moral domain, and which differ significantly from those characterizing the domain of taste.<sup>27</sup>

That being said, before proceeding, let me be very clear about one important issue that could help the reader to avoid any misunderstanding about my project. I do not intend to claim that all disagreements about taste are the same, nor that they all function in the way just described (the same consideration applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to disagreements about moral

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<sup>26</sup> See Ferrari & Moruzzi (2020).

<sup>27</sup> See Ferrari (forthcoming) for a detailed discussion of a metaphysical and epistemological picture that offers an explanation of the peculiar axiological function that truth exerts in the moral domain.

matters). In addition, there may be some intra-domain variability. This is, of course, entirely consistent with the picture I am offering in this paper. Indeed, in a way, the more variability the merrier. All that is required for the purpose of defending the plausibility of AVC is that there are at least some paradigmatic cases of disagreement about taste and moral matters, respectively, that fit the bill. Although it is important for pluralists to give an account of domain demarcation that allows them to draw accurate generalizations concerning domain-specific theses, it is nevertheless an issue that I cannot tackle in this paper.

If the foregoing discussion constitutes a sufficiently compelling first step in support of AVC, then we are well-placed to draw some minimal metaphysical consequences. Advocates of monistic conceptions of truth, which endorse the idea that taste discourse is truth-apt and take the property of truth to be a value property (i.e., to be intrinsically valuable), are not able to account for AVC. This is because alethic monists take truth to have a uniform nature across all domains and, if truth's nature is that of a value property, then it confers value to the state of affairs of having true beliefs across all domains—the taste domain included. If, however, my analysis of disagreement about taste is on the right track, then this cannot be right. Let us label this concern the *axiological scope problem*, in analogy with Lynch's original scope problem for monistic and substantivist theories of truth.<sup>28</sup> In order to avoid the axiological scope problem, three main strategies are available:

- i. To keep monism and reject intrinsicism—by taking the value of truth to have its source in some factors that are entirely extrinsic to truth's nature (extrinsicism);
- ii. To reject monism—by endorsing some form of alethic pluralism—and keep intrinsicism;
- iii. To reject both monism and intrinsicism, and instead endorse pluralism and extrinsicism.

In this paper, I shall not be dealing with option (i). This is because my main focus is on truth pluralism and questions about whether, and how, truth pluralists can account for the (variable) axiological aspect of truth's normativity. Nonetheless, in Section 7, I will briefly discuss the dialectic between alethic monists and alethic pluralists in connection with normative issues. In the next section, I will introduce alethic pluralism. In Sections 5 and 6, I will focus on Michael Lynch's manifestation pluralism, showing that the axiological scope problem is particularly

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<sup>28</sup> See Lynch (2009a) for a detailed discussion of the scope problem. As Horwich (2018) points out, deflationists about truth can't be intrinsicists about truth's value so they are forced to adopt an extrinsicist strategy—see also Ferrari (2018b); Wrenn (2010), (2015).

threatening to his view (paradigmatic of its kind), which endorses the two theses mentioned above, *viz.* that truth is a value concept and that this characteristic of the concept has to be part and parcel of the nature of any admissible truth property.

#### **4. Alethic Pluralism(s)**

In its most generic formulation, truth pluralism is the thesis that there are a plurality of ways of being true. This contrasts with truth monism: there is just one way of being true. While alethic pluralism comes in a variety of forms,<sup>29</sup> the most prominent incarnations of pluralism share much in common. First, they are all domain-based. This means that there are several ways of being true because different properties are truth-relevant in different domains. For instance, the property of corresponding to reality may be the property relevant to the truth of the proposition that Alice is 176 cm tall; the property of cohering with a set of axioms (e.g., the axioms of Peano Arithmetic) may be relevant to the truth of the proposition that prime numbers become less common as they get larger; the property of being super-assertible may be relevant to the truth of the proposition that torturing people is always morally deplorable.

Second, they all adopt the so-called two-stages network analysis, which can be summarized as follows:

Stage 1 A set of core features (truisms or platitudes)<sup>30</sup> concerning truth is assembled, which specifies its theoretical role within a network of other concepts (such as belief, assertion, correctness, enquiry, etc.);

Stage 2 Whatever property satisfies the theoretical role defined in Stage 1 is an admissible realizer of the concept and thus falls under the concept.

While the first stage is what guarantees the unity of truth at the conceptual level, the second stage potentially gives us metaphysical plurality. Thus, after the two stages of analysis, we arrive at a theory of truth that is monistic at the conceptual level (there is just one truth concept) but open to pluralism at the metaphysical level (there may be different properties functioning as the truth property in different areas of discourse). Whether we have an actual plurality of truth properties will depend on whether the metaphysical and epistemological differences between the various areas of discourse are substantive enough to require different truth

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<sup>29</sup> See Wright (2013) for an opinionated overview of the plurality of alethic pluralism.

<sup>30</sup> The term ‘truism’ is used by Lynch to replace the term ‘platitude’ which is employed by Wright who follows the more entrenched terminology in the tradition of the so-called Canberra Plan—see Nolan (2009). I will use these terms interchangeably.



properties.<sup>31</sup> Arguably, they are, which much of the discussion in Wright (1992) aims to show. AVC may then be taken as an additional manifestation of such differences.

Third, the most prominent incarnations of pluralism are (either implicitly or explicitly) committed to understanding the expression ‘satisfies the theoretical role’ in a strict sense. This is to say, they are committed to the following thesis:

*Strict Requirement:* Any truth property must satisfy the theoretical role as defined by all the platitudes with no exception.<sup>32</sup>

As we will see in Section 6, the strict requirement will play an important role in assessing the adequacy of Lynch’s version of alethic pluralism in relation to the axiological scope problem and AVC.

Thus far, I have outlined some of the main features that are shared by the most prominent versions of alethic pluralism. However, there are also important differences. The most significant divide concerns the metaphysical structure of truth pluralism, in particular the question about whether truth is *metaphysically* both one and many, or just many. The divide is best known in the literature as the strong *versus* moderate divide. Moderate pluralists maintain that the network analysis is to be combined with not only a unique concept, but also one single property, *viz.* the generic truth property, which is metaphysically realized by different properties in different areas of discourse. Strong pluralists, by contrast, reject the existence of a generic truth property and maintain that there is one truth concept and many local truth properties operating in different areas of discourse. Moderate pluralism is certainly the dominant view within the alethic pluralism debate and, since the publication of *Truth as One and Many*,<sup>33</sup> Michael Lynch’s Manifestation Alethic Pluralism (MAP) has become the most discussed and representative incarnation of pluralism. For this reason, in the next section I will focus on MAP and show that, at least in its current form, MAP is structurally unable to account for AVC. Moreover, focusing on Lynch’s version of moderate pluralism is of strategic significance because Lynch, more than anyone else working within the nature of truth debate, has discussed the issue of the value of truth at great length, in fact taking it to be the most pressing challenge for deflationary accounts of truth. That being said, the argument I will develop in the next section, in connection to Lynch’s version of truth pluralism, generalizes to all kinds of pluralism, which take truth to be a value concept—i.e., as having something like VT among the

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<sup>31</sup> On this, see Ferrari & Moruzzi (2019); Lynch (2009a); and especially Wright (1992).

<sup>32</sup> The label is first introduced in Ferrari & Moruzzi (2019), although the concept of strict requirement is extrapolated from the discussion in Nolan (2009).

<sup>33</sup> Lynch (2009a).

core platitudes, which implicitly define the concept—and adhere to the strict requirement. As a matter of fact, Lynch’s manifestation pluralism is the only version of pluralism that explicitly includes an axiological principle among the core platitudes of the concept, although it is not the only version of pluralism to endorse the strict requirement.<sup>34</sup>

## 5. Lynch’s Manifestation Pluralism

Lynch works with the following core truisms (Lynch 2009a: 12):

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|---------------------|--|
| Objectivity (O)     | For every proposition, <p>, the belief that p is true if, and only if, with respect to the belief that p, things are as they are believed to be. |
| Norm of Belief (NB) | For every proposition, <p>, the belief that p is correct if, and only if, <p> is true.   |
| End of Inquiry (EI) | For every proposition, <p>, ( <i>ceteris paribus</i> ) if <p> is true, then believing <p> is a <i>worthy</i> goal of inquiry.                    |

Qua moderate version of alethic pluralism, Lynch’s MAP takes truth to be metaphysically both one and many, meaning that it includes (among the various truth properties) a generic truth property (henceforth, GT). GT is characterized as the property of the concept truth. That is, GT is the only truth property that essentially satisfies all the core truisms: O, NB, and EI.<sup>35</sup> Lynch conceives of the metaphysical relationship between GT and domain-specific properties, such as correspondence and super-assertibility, in terms of manifestation, which he defines as follows:

Let us say that where property F is immanent in or manifested by property M, it is a priori that F’s essential features are a subset of M’s features. Since it is a priori that every property’s essential features are a subset of its own features, every property manifests itself. So manifestation, like identity, is reflexive. But unlike identity, it is non-symmetric. Where M and F are ontologically

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<sup>34</sup> The argument I’ll develop in the next section is to a certain extent orthogonal to the debate internal to alethic pluralism concerning whether strong or moderate forms of pluralism should be preferred. As a matter of fact, no strong pluralist I know of includes among the platitudes implicitly defining the concept an axiological principle on the line of VT—they are thus, de facto, immune to the specific argument developed in the next section targeting Lynch’s MAP. However, if they were to include an axiological principle among the platitudes, they would encounter similar difficulties. Nevertheless, there are reasons to suspect that moderate pluralists have to face extra challenges in relation to normative issues due to the metaphysical structure of their proposals. The thought, in brief, is that the thinner generic truth becomes (metaphysically) the harder it gets to cook up a robust enough notion of metaphysical conferral.

<sup>35</sup> See Lynch (2009a): 74.

distinct properties—individuated by non-identical sets of essential features and relations—and M manifests F, F does not thereby manifest M.<sup>36</sup>

Let T1 be a domain-specific truth property, which manifests generic truth (GT) in D1. According to manifestation pluralism, the essential features of GT will form a subset of the essential features of T1 in D1. Since the three core truisms aforementioned express essential features of GT, these essential features are *ipso facto* part and parcel of the nature of any property that manifests truth in a given domain. Moreover, assuming the plausible principle that any essential feature of a property is also intrinsic, we arrive at the view that the core truisms express intrinsic features of any property manifesting truth in a given domain.

Now that we have outlined the core structural features of Lynch's MAP, we can proceed with a discussion of whether, and to what extent, MAP can account for the value of truth. The first step is to notice that the third core truism, (EI), encompasses two theses: first, a teleological thesis, according to which truth is the aim of enquiry; and second, an axiological thesis, according to which believing a true proposition is valuable. This double aspect of (EI) is rendered explicit in some of Lynch's recent work on the value of truth.<sup>37</sup> For instance, in Lynch (2015), (EI) is replaced by the following principle:<sup>38</sup>

GOAL            Having true beliefs is of value, and therefore should be the goal of inquiry.

Furthermore, in Lynch (2020), GOAL is further split into two self-standing principles:<sup>39</sup>

GOAL\*            The state of affairs of having true beliefs is valuable.

END              It is valuable to pursue truth—that is, to engage in practices that have the state of affairs of having true beliefs as their goal.

Both GOAL\* and END contain axiological terms, with GOAL\* being a purely axiological principle, indeed, a less precise version of (VT). END, moreover, is a combination of an axiological and a teleological principle. Thus, it appears that there is plenty of textual evidence that Lynch takes (EI) to include an axiological principle in line with (VT). I therefore suggest that we replace (EI) in the core truisms of MAP with the following two principles:

(AE)            For every proposition, <p>, other things being equal, if <p> is true, then

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<sup>36</sup> Lynch (2009a): 74–75. For a detailed criticism of the metaphysical structure of the manifestation relation, see Pedersen (ms).

<sup>37</sup> See, for instance, Lynch (2009b), (2015).

<sup>38</sup> Lynch (2015): 277.

<sup>39</sup> Lynch (2020): 6.

believing  $\langle p \rangle$  is an aim of enquiry.

(VT<sub>L</sub>) For every proposition,  $\langle p \rangle$ , other things being equal, if  $\langle p \rangle$  is true, then believing  $\langle p \rangle$  is valuable.

While both principles are certainly crude, and some careful tuning is required in order to forestall easy objections, and since nothing important (at least for the purposes of this paper) hinges upon which particular formulation of (AE) and (VT<sub>L</sub>) we endorse, I suggest we stick to the formulations above. Moreover, I suggest that we understand (VT<sub>L</sub>) as (VT) above. Altogether, this shows that, of the three main options listed at the end of Section 3, Lynch's MAP clearly exemplifies strategy (ii): while it rejects a monistic account of the nature of truth, it nonetheless retains the idea that truth is intrinsically valuable—indeed, that truth is *essentially* a value property—alongside the strict requirement.

## 6. Manifestation Pluralism and the Axiological Scope Problem

In this section, I will first argue that MAP, in the form developed by Lynch, is subject to the axiological scope problem, owing to which it cannot account for AVC. Then, I suggest two possible ways out for advocates of MAP. The first is to keep (VT) among the core truisms characterizing the concept of truth while slackening the strict requirement, thereby allowing for more flexibility in how to conceive of the link between the truth concept and various truth properties, including (GT). The second way out that I offer to advocates of MAP recommends that we keep the strict requirement but remove (VT) from the core truisms.

My first step here will be to argue that opting for strategy (ii), as illustrated at the end of Section 3, is not an effective strategy for Lynch's original version of MAP in addressing the axiological scope problem, thus accounting for AVC. Given the structure of MAP illustrated above, it is clear that MAP is committed to taking all of the various admissible truth properties as value properties—i.e., intrinsically valuable. To this end, the argument goes as follows. Since (VT), or something along these lines, is a core truism of the truth concept, it is also an essential feature of generic truth (GT), meaning that (GT) is essentially a value property. (GT) is immanent in all the ontologically distinct properties ( $T_1, \dots, T_n$ ) manifesting truth in their respective domains ( $D_1, \dots, D_n$ ). This means that all of the essential features of (GT) will be essential features of ( $T_1, \dots, T_n$ ). (VT) will then be an essential feature of all the domain-specific truth properties that manifest truth (in their respective domains). Thus, for all  $T_i$  and  $D_i$ , if  $T_i$  manifests (GT) in  $D_i$ , then  $T_i$  is essentially a value property in  $D_i$ . This entails that it is an intrinsically valuable property in  $D_i$ . Altogether, this entails that MAP leaves no space for an

axiologically-inert, domain-specific truth property. As a result, MAP is unable to account for the peculiar nature of taste disagreement given that an attribution of falsity to a contrary opinion would always provide grounds for legitimately attributing disvalue to such an opinion.

What are the options for a MAP-inspired moderate pluralist who wants to effectively account for the axiological scope problem? I believe that there are three routes available to this end:

- (a) To keep (VT) as a core truism and reject the strict requirement of the network analysis;
- (b) To abandon (VT) as a core truism and keep the strict requirement of the network analysis;
- (c) To reject truth-aptness for the domain of basic taste.

I take option (c) to be the least propitious for any defender of alethic pluralism (of whatever kind). As mentioned at the beginning of the paper, it is part of the original motivation of the view to be as inclusive as possible with respect to the candidate domains of application for alethic pluralism. Moreover, opting for (c) may be highly problematic for two reasons. First, it might be hard to motivate the rejection of truth-aptness in the taste domain without risking a loss of motivation for preserving truth-aptness in other, relevantly similar, evaluative domains (the comedic domain and the aesthetic domain seem to be uncontroversial examples here). Second, rejecting the truth-aptness of taste judgements while keeping a pluralist picture of truth for the other domains would require a bifurcation in the semantic treatment of natural language expressions. Indeed, it would require that we integrate something like expressivist with truth-conditional semantics. This might be a daunting task. Moreover, it would significantly decrease the attractiveness of truth pluralism, particularly given that one of the main advantages of truth pluralism is to secure semantic uniformity while also allowing for some flexibility in accommodating epistemological and metaphysical variations in relation to different subject matters. Thus, in what follows, I will ignore this option.

Let us discuss option (a) first. By rejecting the strict requirement, MAP would allow for the possibility of having a domain-specific truth property with an axiologically inert nature—i.e., truth properties that are not value properties—while at the same time retaining (VT) in accounting for the core features of the concept of truth. However, if the strict requirement is rejected, then some re-engineering of the structure of MAP is in order. In particular, we need to rethink the connection between the truth concept and (GT), allowing for more flexibility. The main options on the table for an advocate of MAP would then be the following: either to require

that any truth property satisfies *most of the truisms* that are analytic of the truth concept; *or* to require that any truth property satisfies *all of the core truisms* characterizing the truth concept; *or* to require that any truth property satisfies *most of the core truisms* characterizing the truth concept. Recall that (VT) is taken by advocates of MAP to be a *core* principle characterizing the truth concept, and thus surely among its most important principles. In this respect, the second option will not help in addressing the axiological scope problem because it would require satisfaction of (VT) by every domain-specific property manifesting truth in a given domain. This leaves us with the first and third options. These, I take it (at least in the context of this discussion) are dialectically equivalent, not least because (VT) is considered by Lynch to be among the core truisms.

Adopting either of these two options would call for a significant modification of the nature of the generic truth property (GT). As specified above, Lynch takes (GT) to be the only truth property that has, essentially, all of the core truisms of the truth concept. Abandoning the strict requirement would mean abandoning this very conception of (GT), impoverishing *ipso facto* the nature of (GT) by depriving it of its status as a value property.

Given that we have retained the claim that the truth concept is a value concept—that is, (VT) is still among the core truisms—option (a) does not exclude the possibility that some domain-specific property manifesting truth in a given domain is intrinsically valuable, thus reflecting one of the core truisms characterizing the truth concept. However, the source of the value of such a property would not consist in the fact that it has (GT) as an immanent part of its nature. In this respect, option (a) would still allow for an intrinsicist strategy in accounting for the value of having true beliefs in those domains where we expect truth to be valuable. To give a brief illustration of this point: suppose that we take the occurrence of disagreement in domain  $D_1$  to be axiologically significant because, in  $D_1$ , it is valuable to have true (and only true) beliefs. Suppose, furthermore, that  $T_1$  is the property manifesting truth in  $D_1$ . On these stipulations, nothing in option (a) excludes the possibility of explaining why, in  $D_1$ , it is valuable to have true beliefs by making reference to intrinsic features of  $T_1$ —features that  $T_1$  possesses intrinsically, independent of having (GT), which, in this proposal, is axiologically inert, being an immanent part of its nature. In this respect, we can claim that domain-specific truth properties, including correspondence, super-assertibility, and coherence, are all value properties, while whatever property manifests truth in the taste domain—e.g., a kind of normatively-deflated truth property<sup>40</sup>—would be axiologically inert and thus not a value-

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<sup>40</sup> See, for instance, Ferrari & Moruzzi (2019).

conferring property. This would be an effective strategy for advocates of MAP in addressing the challenge posed by the axiological scope problem, while helping to account for AVC in a way that preserves some elements of the intrinsicist strategy (*viz.* option (ii) at the end of Section 3). The thought is, briefly, the following. The fact that truth is axiologically potent in some domains but axiologically inert in others is what explains why truth has an axiological function in relation to certain subject matters (e.g., morality) but not to others (e.g., taste). With this in hand, we can explain the fact that disagreement has a variable axiological significance in relation to these subject matters. This fact, in turn, accounts for variations in the legitimacy of attributions of fault (and, derivatively, our perception of such variations as manifested by differences in importance that we tend to attribute to disagreements ranging over different subject matters).

Let me now discuss option (b). I take this option to be a version of the extrinsicist-pluralist strategy, as mentioned at the end of Section 3. More precisely, it is a version of option (iii). The biggest advantage to this option is that it retains the original metaphysical structure of MAP. The idea at the core of this option is that removing (VT) from the list of core truisms characterizing the concept of truth deprives the concept of truth of its axiological character. As a consequence, no domain-specific truth property would be an intrinsically-valuable property. Thus, no truth property in *itself* is ever the source of the value of having true (and only true) beliefs. What explains why it is sometimes valuable (and, at other times, not) to have true (and only true) beliefs is, respectively, the presence or absence of domain-specific and circumstantial factors that are external to the nature of whatever property manifests truth in that domain. It is not among the aims of this paper to provide a full story of how such an extrinsicist strategy would work in detail. A promising avenue might be to locate the source of the value of having true beliefs in our disposition for caring about the subject matter at issue.<sup>41</sup> For instance, we might locate the source of the value of having true moral beliefs in our dispositions for caring about fundamental moral issues. It is because we care deeply about human welfare and flourishing that we care about the truth of moral issues and about solving fundamental moral disagreements, such as whether torturing people is morally deplorable. As discussed above, the domain of basic taste sharply contrasts with the moral domain. On many occasions involving disagreement about matters of taste, we do not seem to care very much about solving the dispute in light of the truth. Indeed, the absence of any such disposition to care about taste explains why there is no value (nor thereby *disvalue*) involved in believing the truth about matters of

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<sup>41</sup> See Ferrari (2018b) for a more detailed extrinsicist account of the value of having true and only true in the context of a discussion of Horwich's minimalist conception of truth.

taste. The challenge posed by the axiological scope problem would then be met by referring to variability in our dispositions to care (or not) about different subject matters. This variability in our value-dispositions is also what accounts for AVC. We tend to react differently in relation to disagreements about different subject matters in virtue of the fact that our value-dispositions concerning these different subject matters vary. Since we care deeply about moral matters, we also care about having true beliefs about moral issues, owing to which we care about settling disagreements in accordance with the truth(s) of the matter.<sup>42</sup>

If this extrinsicist and pluralist strategy can be worked out in detail, then it could provide advocates of MAP with an alternative way out of the axiological scope problem. As I have already mentioned, it also has the advantage of almost retaining the structure of MAP. This is because the only required modification would consist in removing the axiological principle from the core truisms. In this respect, the new set of core truisms will feature the following principles:

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|---------------------|--|
| Objectivity (O)     | For every proposition, <p>, the belief that p is true if, and only if, with respect to the belief that p, things are as they are believed to be. |
| Norm of Belief (NB) | For every proposition, <p>, the belief that <p> is correct if, and only if, <p> is true.   |
| Aim of Enquiry (AE) | For every proposition, <p>, ( <i>ceteris paribus</i> ) if <p> is true, then believing <p> is an aim of enquiry.                                  |

(AE) is devoid of any axiological aspects but still captures the teleological aspect of the original truism, (EI), adopted in Lynch (2009a). Advocates of MAP can still claim that, at least sometimes, it is valuable to have true and only true beliefs. Owing to this, they do not have to give up the intuitive idea that truth has, at least sometimes, value. What they cannot do is, of course, claim that truth itself is the source of value, in other words, that truth's metaphysical nature is that of a value property.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Recall that this strategy also denies truth monism, so if moral truth is constructed as some anti-realist property then no presupposition of moral realism is triggered by talking in terms of "settling the disagreement in accordance with the moral truth".

<sup>43</sup> Although I think that this option might be the most economical one for advocates of MAP, Lynch himself might not be satisfied with it since, as it can be evinced from some of his works on the value of truth—especially Lynch (2004a), (2004c), (2009b), (2009c)—he has strong sympathies for an intrinsicist account of the value of truth—in fact, he argues at length that deflationary conceptions of truth are inadequate because they cannot account for the peculiar value that truth exhibits in enquiry and this can be the case only if the value of truth is taken to be intrinsic.



Let me conclude this section by showing that, whether the two possible ways out (as outlined above), are functionally distinct depends on whether the following transparency principle (TP) is deemed reasonable in relation to semantic notions—and, in particular, in relation to truth:

- (TP) If a given property is a value-conferring property in virtue of its very nature—i.e., it is intrinsically valuable—then the corresponding concept has to be a value concept, or, equivalently, if the concept, *C*, of a given property, *P*, is not a value concept, then *P* cannot be an intrinsically valuable property.<sup>44</sup>

If we take this transparency principle on-board for the case of truth, then option (a), but not (b), would be compatible with the possibility of having some intrinsically-valuable domain-specific truth properties. If, however, it turns out that we have strong reasons for rejecting the transparency principle in the case of truth, then the difference between options (a) and (b) would only be nominal insofar as it would have no consequence for how to modify MAP in order to address the axiological scope problem. Something that favours the transparency principle in the case of truth, and, more generally, semantic notions, regards the way in which these notions are acquired by means of a purely conceptual analysis devoid of any empirical (or otherwise *a posteriori*) input. In this respect, what property (or properties) are admitted by our analysis and what they consist in is something that can be established purely *a priori*. Thus, nothing concerning the nature of a given semantic property is hidden from mere *a priori* reflection on the nature of the concept.<sup>45</sup>

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Moreover, depending on how the view is cashed out in detail, the extrinsicist strategy may fall prey to Lynch's normative anti-particularism argument developed in some of his work on the value of truth.

<sup>44</sup> This principle, in its most general formulation, is false for, e.g. natural properties, since there are cases of such properties having intrinsic characteristics that are not reflected in the (ordinary) concept associated with that property. A much-discussed example is the property of being water for which the relation between the property and the concept is opaque (or, at least, it has been historically opaque) since being composed of H<sub>2</sub>O is an intrinsic characteristic of the property which is not reflected (or, was not reflected) in the ordinary concept of water.

<sup>45</sup> Lynch, however, seems committed to deny this transparency principle since he thinks that among the essential, and thus intrinsic, characteristics of the nature of (GT) there is a feature—i.e. that of being multiple realisable—that is not among the truisms characterising the concept. This is not the appropriate venue for a detailed discussion of this point, since, from a purely functional point of view nothing really substantive hinges on whether Lynch is right in denying the transparency principle—as I have said, if that's the case, then the two options explored in this section would functionally collapse without changing much concerning either the importance of the axiological scope problem for MAP or the effectiveness of the strategy(ies) offered here. However, there are reasons to think that Lynch is wrong in denying that multiple *realizability* is not part of the truisms (if it is part of the essence of the generic truth property). In fact, it is not clear at all why you can't just reflect on the truth concept in the pluralist framework and, through a purely conceptual exercise, reason your way to multiple realizability. Of course, whether truth is multiply *realised* won't be transparent since it will depend on (perhaps contingent) features characterising the various domains of discourse which are not accessible via purely conceptual reflection from the nature of the truth concept. Thanks are due to Nikolaj Pedersen for helpful discussion on this issue.

## 7. Concluding Remarks: Pluralism and the Nature of Truth

Let me briefly sum up the main points of this paper. If the conjecture regarding the axiological variability of truth is correct, and we moreover have at least one domain of discourse where truth is axiologically inert (i.e., where there seems to be no value (nor disvalue) associated with having true and only true beliefs), then MAP, in its original formulation, is subject to the axiological scope problem. I have offered to advocates of MAP—and, more generally to any pluralists who endorses the thesis that truth is a value concept in light of the strict requirement—two possible strategies to modify their view in order to account for the axiological scope problem, and thereby for AVC. Both strategies require some structural modification of alethic pluralism. An interesting consequence of the two options I have outlined in the previous section is that the generic truth property (and, moreover, in option (b), the truth concept) becomes, to a certain extent, deflated. One of the substantive features that was taken to be a core aspect of the generic truth property has been removed.<sup>46</sup>

As a way of concluding our discussion, let me briefly review how the results of this paper fit into the broader context of the debate about the nature of truth. As I have already mentioned, this paper is not aimed at defending alethic pluralism *per se*. At this stage, one could take the results of my discussion as pointing to some structural weaknesses of alethic pluralism. This may seem grist to the monist's mill. I do, however, believe that there are compelling reasons in support of alethic pluralism. First, there is the traditional scope problem, as mentioned above, discussed by Wright and Lynch (*inter alia*), which shows that if we have reason to at least be substantivist (as opposed to purely deflationist) about truth's nature, then there is pressure to take truth to amount to different properties in different areas of discourse—e.g., taste, aesthetics, morality, mathematics, etc. This is because there are important metaphysical and epistemological differences between these various areas of discourse, which no substantive and monistic theory about the nature of truth is flexible enough to account for. Notoriously, however, the original scope problem does not affect deflationary accounts of truth, since such accounts of truth are metaphysically and epistemologically unsubstantiated, and thus compatible with all kinds of metaphysical and epistemological variation in the aforementioned areas. Here, the key objection against the deflationary account of the nature of truth is that they

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<sup>46</sup> If that were the only substantive aspect of truth that advocates of MAP need renounce to it wouldn't be too problematic. However, one may think that similar concerns to those discussed in this paper in relation to (VT) also apply to the case of another core truism—namely Norm of Belief (see, for instance Ferrari & Moruzzi (2020) which argues that given certain metaphysical and epistemological assumptions that seem palatable in the domain of taste, Norm of Belief (NB) too might have to go). If this were the case, it would have the consequence of deflating the nature of generic truth even further, calling into question the inherent stability of MAP and its alleged advantage over other models of truth pluralism—in particular over the strong variety of alethic pluralism.

are structurally unable to account for the normative nature of truth. In other words, they cannot account for the fact that truth exerts a distinctive standard of correctness,<sup>47</sup> while also being unable to account for the fact that truth is a value-conferring property.<sup>48</sup> Thus, if pluralists want to win the battle against deflationists, then it is crucial to argue that truth is normative in a way that cannot be explained by a deflationist. As we have seen, the claim that truth is always a value-conferring property is untenable in light of AVC, even for advocates of alethic pluralism. Moreover, as I have argued elsewhere, deflationists can always adopt what I call an ‘extrinsicist’ strategy to account for the value of truth, which is well aligned with the second strategy that I have suggested here on behalf of Lynch’s pluralism. Thus, one important set of normative challenges to deflationism lacks bite in the dialectic between deflationists and pluralists. However, Wright’s arguments are still in place and pose a serious challenge to deflationism, which can be effectively run from a pluralist perspective.<sup>49</sup>

Thus, to recapitulate, the scope problem, as developed by Wright and Lynch, gives us good reason to consider accounts regarding the nature of truth, which are monistic and substantivist, to be inadequate. Moreover, Wright’s inflationary arguments provide us with reasons to reject accounts of the nature of truth that are monistic and deflationist.<sup>50</sup> As a result, we may have good reason to prefer alethic pluralism over its rivals. However, one key lesson of this paper is that, despite the important dialectical role played by normative issues concerning truth for pluralists seeking to debunk rival views, there is still work to be done by pluralists in relation to truth’s normativity.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Wright (1992), Wright (ms).

<sup>48</sup> Lynch (2004c), (2009b), (2009c).

<sup>49</sup> See Ferrari & Moruzzi (2020) for a critical assessment of Wright’s argument in the context of alethic pluralism.

<sup>50</sup> Among the various other challenges to deflationary accounts of truth, the so-called ‘success argument’ plays a prominent role—see Gamester (2018) for a discussion of the argument and Horwich (1998) for a reply.

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