

JYU DISSERTATIONS 684

Teemu Tauriainen

Essays on Postdeflationary Substantive Theorizing about Truth



UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES

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Editors

Olli-Pekka Moisio

Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy, University of Jyväskylä

Päivi Vuorio

Open Science Centre, University of Jyväskylä

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation explores the prospects of postdeflationary substantive theorizing about truth. Postdeflationary theories define the concept of truth or the property of being a true truthbearer in a way that respects the deflationary desiderata of clarity, purity, and metaphysical simplicity, without a necessary commitment to the core negative thesis of the deflationary approach. Postdeflationary substantive theories acknowledge the complexity and explanatory utility of truth in understanding and defining other concepts and phenomena.

The motivation for pursuing this study arises from the so-called contemporary crisis of truth, where a substantive understanding of truth is subjected to widespread skepticism, critique, and even cynicism both inside and outside of philosophy in formal and mundane discourse. To better understand this crisis, particular attention is directed towards the deflationary critique of substantive theories of truth, which is a prevalent point of discussion in contemporary literature on western analytic philosophy. By exploring the limits and philosophical sustainability of deflationary critique of substantive accounts of truth, valuable insight is gained about the contemporary crisis of truth and the potential for substantive theorizing about truth in general.

This dissertation composes of an introduction and four original research publications that address two connected themes: exploration of the philosophical sustainability of deflationary critique of substantive theories of truth, and exploration of the prospects for development of the now popular substantive pluralist theories of truth. These themes constitute both negative and positive aspects in relation to analyzing the prospects of postdeflationary substantive theorizing about truth.

The first part of this dissertation focuses on arguing against the widespread deflationary readings of W.V.O. Quine's truth, who is widely interpreted as a prominent and influential deflationist in both the secondary literature on his philosophy and contemporary truth-theoretic debates more broadly conceived. The first essay demonstrates that Quine's immanent conception of truth involves commitments that are incompatible with general and theory-specific framings of the deflationary thesis. The second essay demonstrates conflicts between Quine's views and what has in recent literature been argued as strong and moderate variants of the deflationary thesis. In conclusion, these essays demonstrate that the widespread deflationary readings of Quine's truth are mistaken, thus removing a prominent thinker from the deflationists ranks while simultaneously casting suspicion towards the philosophical sustainability of the deflationary approach in general.

The second part of this dissertation explores the prospects of postdeflationary substantive theorizing about truth by analyzing the limits and prospects for development of the increasingly popular substantive pluralist theories. The third essay explores different ways in which semantic ambiguity poses trouble for current pluralist models. The fourth essay argues that to achieve the theoretical desiderata that pluralists ask from discourse domains, the latter ought to be individuated on ontological rather than topical grounds. In conclusion, these essays demonstrate that while current pluralist models involve shortcomings, they encompass potential for development and provide a viable prospect for sustainable postdeflationary substantive theorizing about truth.

Keywords: truth, truth pluralism, truth deflationism, truth inflationism, W.V.O. Quine, subject matters, discourse domains

TIIVISTELMÄ (ABSTRACT IN FINNISH)

Tauriainen, Teemu

Esseitä merkityksellisestä postdeflationistisesta totuutta koskevasta teoretisoinnista

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Tässä väitöskirjassa tutkitaan totuutta koskevan merkityksellisen teoretisoinnin mahdollisuutta postdeflationistisessa viitekehyksessä. Postdeflationistiset teoriat kunnioittavat deflationistien pyrkimystä määritellä totuuden käsite tai totuudenkantajien totuusominaisuus selkeällä, itsenäisellä ja metafysisesti yksinkertaisella tavalla ilman välttämätöntä sitoutumista deflationismin negatiivisiin väitteisiin. Merkitykselliset postdeflationistiset teoriat tunnustavat totuuden kompleksisuuden ja selitysvoiman muiden käsitteiden sekä ilmiöiden määrittelyssä ja ymmärtämisessä.

Väitöskirjatutkimuksen keskeinen motivaattori on niin kutsuttu nykyaikainen totuuden kriisi, jossa totuuden käsite ja ominaisuus olla tosi totuudenkantaja kohtaavat laajaa skeptisismää, kritiikkiä ja jopa kyynisyyttä filosofian ja tieteenalan sisä- ja ulkopuolella, sekä muodollisissa että vähemmän muodollisissa yhteyksissä. Tutkimus keskittyy erityisesti nykyaikaisen analyyttisen filosofian kontekstissa esiintyvään deflationistiseen kritiikkiin, joka on nykyaikaisen totuuden kriisin keskeinen osa-alue. Keskittymällä kyseiseen kritiikkiin, saamme arvokasta tietoa nykyaikaisesta totuuden kriisistä ja merkityksellisen postdeflationistisen totuutta koskevan teoretisoinnin mahdollisuudesta.

Väitöskirja koostuu johdannosta ja neljästä itsenäisestä tutkimusjulkaisusta, jotka käsittelevät kahta toisiinsa liittyvää teemaa. Ensimmäinen teema on merkityksellisen totuutta koskevan teorian deflationistisen kritiikin filosofisen kestävyuden tutkimus. Tämä osa keskittyy erityisesti W.V.O. Quinen laajalle levinneiden deflationististen luentojen kiistämiseen. Vaikka Quine tulkitaan vaikutusvaltaiseksi deflationistiksi sekä hänen ajatteluun käsittelevässä kirjallisuudessa että totuusteoreettisessa kirjallisuudessa laajemmin ymmärrettynä, ensimmäinen artikkeli osoittaa, että hänen immanentti totuuskäsityksensä sisältää deflationismin kanssa yhteensopimattomia sitoumuksia. Toinen artikkeli puolestaan osoittaa, että Quinen näkemykset totuudesta ovat ristiriidassa deflationismin sitovien ja vähemmän sitovien varianttien kanssa. Näiden artikkelien perusteella Quinen laajalle levinneet deflationistiset tulkinnat osoittautuvat virheellisiksi, näin poistaen vaikutusvaltaisen ajattelijan deflationistien tukijoukoista samalla herättäen epäilystä kyseisen ajattelusuuntauksen filosofista kestävyyttä kohtaan.

Väitöskirjan toinen osa käsittelee suosiota keräävien totuuspluralististen teorioiden rajoja ja kehitysmahdollisuuksia. Kolmas artikkeli analysoi semanttisen monimerkityksellisyyden aiheuttamia ongelmia pluralistisissa viitekehyksissä. Neljäs artikkeli argumentoi, että pluralistien tulisi kehittää näkemystään väitelauseiden aloista saavuttaakseen filosofisesti kestävä määritelmän totuuden alakohtaisesta vaihtelevuudesta. Yhteenvetona nämä artikkelit osoittavat, että vaikka nykyiset pluralistiset teoriat sisältävät ongelmia, ne eivät ole ylitsepääsemättömiä. Pluralistiset teoriat tarjoavat siten arvokkaan vaihtoehdon filosofisesti kestäväälle postdeflationistiselle totuutta koskevalle teorialle.

Keywords: totuus, totuuspluralismi, deflationismi, inflationismi, W.V.O. Quine, aihealueet, keskustelualat

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Teemu Tauriainen

Author Teemu Tauriainen
Department of social sciences and philosophy
University of Jyväskylä
tejutaur@jyu.fi

Supervisors Mikko Yrjönsuuri
Department of social sciences and philosophy
University of Jyväskylä

Panu Raatikainen
The unit of History, Philosophy, and Literary Studies
Tampere University

Reviewers Douglas Edwards
Department of Philosophy
Utica University

Matti Eklund
Department of Philosophy
Uppsala University

Opponent Sebastiano Moruzzi
Department of the Arts
University of Bologna

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TIIVISTELMÄ (ABSTRACT IN FINNISH)

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1 WHY TRUTH MATTERS

Above all, the search after truth and its eager pursuit are peculiar to man.

– Cicero *De Officiis* 1.13.

Few would disagree that truth is an important concept, and that the property of being a true sentence bears value in achieving success in our practices.¹ Sometimes, we value the ability to distinguish between what is real and what is mere illusion, and we value true beliefs when navigating the world and when making predictions about its nature. At other times, we oblige people to tell the truth in our classrooms and courtrooms, and we rely on experts, journalists, and politicians to tell us the truth and, hopefully, hold them accountable when they fail to step up to this standard. This does not mean that people should always believe or speak the truth, or that they can be mandated to do so. Philosophers are quick to point out that sometimes knowing and speaking the truth can do more harm than good, and at other times, false beliefs can bear immense value in achieving success in our practices. In this sense, truth is not the *only* standard based on which we evaluate the correctness of thought and discourse, and sometimes the epistemic value of knowing the truth is overridden by other values, such as practical utility and moral virtue. However, insofar as *some* standard for correctness of belief and assertion for epistemically relevant discourse is required, from both intuitive and theoretical perspectives, truth is a viable and valuable candidate.

Beyond these relatively mundane instances, truth also bears value for scientific theorizing. Truth helps define other concepts, such as knowledge, meaning, content, and validity, and aids in understanding scientifically relevant phenomena, for example, what is a general goal of inquiry that unifies both formal and nonformal fields of inquiry, such as sciences and journalistic pursuits. In addition, truth binds vastly different scientific disciplines such as physics,

¹ This dissertation focuses on the concept of truth, the property of being true, and the truth predicate. These constitute conceptual, metaphysical, and linguistics considerations in relation to Truth unqualified. Further clarification of the scope and limits of this dissertation are given in the Section 5.

mathematics, and history under one umbrella term “science,” and as far as all such pursuits aim to increase our knowledge and understanding about the world, they are appropriately concerned with discovering true beliefs about their domain. Without true sentences, it is difficult to see what epistemic agents in general are aiming at—in relation to what scientists, journalists, and politicians disagree with and what changes their minds when discussing the nature of the world—and what the preferred and ideal contents of our theories would be. More specifically, the notion of a true sentence has a crucial role in theory formation, in which we aim to construct theories that consist of true sentences that are inferentially connected to one another, and in which we evaluate the correctness of each theory via the ability of its constitutive sentences to be true or false in light of the appropriate evidence. In addition, because true sentences are the intermediary between our language, theories, and the extralinguistic and -theoretic reality that our sentences are oftentimes about, as premises of valid inferences, true sentences facilitate the possibility of deducing new truths from old ones and enable successful prediction making and the subsequent control of our environments. By studying the nature of reality, it is this reality that makes some of our sentences true or false independent of knowledge, justification, or opinion, so that sentential truth is rendered as a stable goal and a valuable resource that inquirers can indeed pursue rather than dictate or fabricate.²

However, despite the strong intuitive grounding for the meaning of truth and our fairly consistent pretheoretical ability to distinguish true contents from false ones, and the widespread significance that the concept of truth and the property of being a true truthbearer have both inside and outside of philosophy, the nature of this concept has proven immensely challenging to define: “Experts will recognize, of course, that most any claim about truth is controversial.” (Glanzberg 2018, 1) Historically significant challenges with defining truth concern clarifying the initially vague Aristotelian intuitions, dissolving of issues with ambiguities and paradoxes, debates on which are the most appropriate

² Again, all this does not mean that truth is the sole aim or standard of theorizing. Not all true sentences are worth discovering and others might be unworthy or even harmful to know in the first place. One reason for this is that we as human beings have limited cognitive capabilities and even the minutest aspect of reality allows for infinitely many true sentences to be said about them. Further, there are an infinitely many trivial truths and pursuing each of them is evidently not worth the effort. Because scientific activity is inherently human activity, believing and speaking the truth is not necessarily beneficial even in scientific discourse. Such conclusion is reflected in how truth is not the sole standard of theorizing when contrasted with a range of theoretical virtues like simplicity and fruitfulness. Nonetheless, the existence of additional standards does not water down the significance of truth as *a* goal and *a* standard of both formal and non-formal theorizing.

truth bearers,³ such as beliefs, propositions, or sentences; how the preferred truth bearers connect to the things that make them true, such as facts, states of affairs, or objects; whether the truth ultimately depends on the world⁴ or minds; whether truth is relative or objective, or immanent or transcendent to any particular system of beliefs; whether there can be any access to know about the truth; how to sustainably account for the truth and falsity of the full range of truth-apt discourse, such as physics, ethics, and mathematics; whether the nature of truth is unified or diverse over all truth-apt discourse; how the distinct aspects of truth, such as concept, property, and predicate relate to one another; whether truth as a concept is primitive and unanalyzable; and whether we can, even in principle, reach a satisfactory account of the nature of truth. Indeed, while humankind has historically placed great value on truth in both pretheoretical and theoretical discourse, and throughout the history of western thought, philosophers have placed importance on providing philosophically sustainable and substantive answers to the aforementioned problems, partly because of these problems, it has become increasingly popular to argue in favor of truth being an insignificant, redundant, or otherwise flawed concept or property that should be dispensed with from serious-minded discourse. Indeed, not all agree that truth is an important concept, and based on the persistent issues with defining truth and the metaphysical baggage involved with this notion, some see appeal in avoiding reference to it altogether, while others have used the problems with defining truth as leverage in arguing for its inherent futility.

The motivation for pursuing this dissertation emerges through this conflict between the widespread significance and utility that the concept of truth and the property of being true have been both inside and outside of philosophy, and in formal and mundane discourse, and the extensive number of challenges with defining this notion—especially the widespread skepticism and critique that a

³ In philosophical discourse, main proponents for truth bearers are beliefs, thoughts, ideas, utterances, types of sentences, statements, and propositions. I agree with Tarski's skepticism towards propositions (1944, 342) and Quine's similar elaboration (1986, 1–2). Edwards summarizes certain problems with propositions: "When it comes to propositions, things get a lot more complex, partly because it is not clear what exactly propositions are. Some take propositions to be structured entities composed of concepts; others take them to be structured entities composed of objects and properties; others take them to be unstructured entities; others take them to be sets of possible worlds; some take them to be abstract objects; others take them to be concrete. The differences between these views are so vast that it is impossible to give a general account of truth for propositions, full stop: one needs to have a particular view in mind. This is especially so as the account one takes may well have significant implications for the account of truth one can give. For example, if one thinks propositions are abstract objects, then certain correspondence theories of truth that take there to be causal relationships between a truth-bearer and the world are off the table right away." (2018a, 20) For similar reasons, I also agree with Quine's allegiance to Tarski in treating sentences as primary truth bearers. Note that treating sentences as truth bearers is compatible with them being interpretations of sentences or propositions.

⁴ This debate can be labeled as the (alethic) realist and anti-realist debate, where the respective positions can be defined in the following manner:

- a. For the realists, truth is a mind-independent matter, so that each truth-apt sentence is necessarily true or false independent of knowledge or justification as rendered by objective states of affairs.
- b. For some anti-realists, truth is a mind-dependent matter, so that, for example, what we at any given time know to be true is true.

substantive notion of truth faces in contemporary philosophical debates.⁵ Prominent strands of criticism toward truth utilize the problems with defining this notion as a fuel in arguing for its redundancy or insignificance, thus fortifying what some scholars have labeled as the contemporary crisis of truth, and subsequently motivating the need for exploring the tenability of such criticism and the prospects of substantive theorizing about truth that helps ground the value of this notion in sustaining healthy theoretical and societal practices.

⁵ Paul Horwich notes: "Hence the peculiarly enigmatic character of truth: a conception of its underlying nature appears to be at once necessary and impossible." (1998, 1-2) This can be seen as an iteration of an older claim made by Kant, according to whom providing necessary and sufficient criteria for truth in general is self-contradictory and hence impossible (Sher 2016a, 135).

2 CONTEMPORARY CRISIS OF TRUTH

We live at a time when, strange to say, many quite cultivated individuals consider truth to be unworthy of any particular respect. – Frankfurt 2006, 17

Experts on the history of philosophy will soon notice that skepticism toward truth is nothing new, for the notion has always enjoyed its critics throughout the history of western thought, and it has always been under attack from those who seek to corrode its nature, for example, by aiming to relativize the notion or by calling in question its significance or very existence.⁶ However, some distinctive phenomena also exist in the current time that justify the usage of the term *contemporary* crisis of truth (Sher 2023a).⁷ While the term “crisis” is initially vague and ambiguous, in the context of this study, it bears a semitechnical meaning that denotes a range of critical, skeptical, and cynical remarks toward a philosophically significant notion of truth. Initially, we can understand philosophical significance as the ability to help understand and explain other phenomena and the ability to define other philosophically significant concepts. While my goal is not to provide a comprehensive analysis of the aforementioned crisis, articulating its core features helps specify the focus of this dissertation on those aspects of this crisis that are relevant for western analytic philosophy, for which truth is one of the oldest, most interconnected, and central concepts.⁸ Before dissecting such strands of criticism further, it is valuable to articulate a fundamental difference between contemporary epistemic and alethic crises so that the focus of this dissertation can be constrained to the latter.

⁶ Historical studies on truth can be found from Künne (2003) and the extensive collection from Glanzberg (2018).

⁷ Sher distinguishes the current post-truth-crisis from its older variants based on ordinary and universality: “What distinguishes the current truth crisis from some of its predecessors is its ordinariness and universality. It arose under ordinary circumstances. It is not due to any specific corrupt regime or catastrophic event. Nor is it limited to a particular society or ideology. Ordinary, non-extreme life is losing hold on truth. ‘[T]ruth has fallen in the street, in the words of the ancient prophet Isaiah’” (2023a, 3).

⁸ Even further, one might argue that philosophically speaking truth is the *most* significant concept, for when speaking about any philosophically relevant subject matter like ethics, aesthetics, or metaphysics, we aim to speak the *truth* about such matters.

2.1 Contemporary Epistemic Crisis

One way to grasp the contemporary crisis of truth is to see it as part of a broader epistemic crisis characterized by the arguable increase of science denialism, thirst for alternative explanations for what traditional epistemic authorities have to offer, mistrust toward epistemic authorities, and the corrosion of the standard of epistemic justification that exists, for example, in political discourse. In this sense, an arguable increase has been noted in people's thirst for so-called "alternative" explanations to what epistemic authorities such as universities or governments have to offer, and an arguable corrosion of standards of epistemic justification have also been noted, especially in the political domain, where leaders of global superpowers justify their decisions based on intuition or "gut feeling." The latter phenomenon has frequently become a point of discussion in current philosophical debates, not least because of the so-called post-truth phenomenon, which is characterized by the reduction of significance that factual matters have in influencing public opinion and political decision-making.

Potential reasons for the emergence of such phenomena are the hyper specialization of academics and the atomization of scientific knowledge, which, in combination with insufficient resources for popularization, can lead to the disconnection between the layman and the scientific worldview. Other potential reasons are the politically motivated contentions that our scientific institutions might be politically biased, corrupted, poorly incentivized, or otherwise untrustworthy or incompetent. Such skepticism is only enhanced by the emergence of modern communication technology that amplifies the emergence of information bubbles and supplies an excess of seemingly viable information to justify a range of sometimes incompatible beliefs, simultaneously providing apt platforms for trolls, data falsifiers, plagiarists, and propagandists to spread mis-, dis-, and mal-information.

Note that while such concerns are largely epistemic in nature, concerning our ability to *justify* our beliefs and *know* about the truth, they also relate to the concept of truth, as misconceptions about the nature of truth can enable and amplify the problems by, for example, altering one's conception of the price of knowing about it. For example, if one holds that truth is something one can reliably conclude on via intuition or gut feeling, then nothing prevents one from finding it in places that offer seemingly viable information. In this sense, the epistemic crisis is only worsened if people operate with philosophically unsustainable accounts of truth.

2.2 Contemporary Alethic Crisis

On a general level, the contemporary alethic crisis can be divided into extra- and intra-philosophical aspects. Extra philosophically, it is common to encounter relativizing arguments about the nature of truth in the public domain, where

truth might be equated with opinion or what is beneficial for some party to believe. The threat of losing ideals of thought, such as truth, are real, for as far as people's conception of the value of truth diminishes, so are those of politicians, experts, and others who benefit from lies and deception that are more incentivized to fabricating the truth or relativizing it to aid their means. Similarly, were people to operate with unsustainable accounts of truth where it is defined as that which some authority claims it to be, this renders people susceptible to exploitation and makes it difficult to hold those accountable who fail to step up to the standard of truth as that which is objectively determined by factual states of affairs independent of what any authority claims to be true. On more pragmatic grounds, it is not clear what happens to democratically healthy practices such as voting if it is not based on true information, what happens to trust toward epistemic authorities if it is not governed by a stable standard of truth, and whether people can legitimately disagree with those in power if their disagreements are not governed by the prospect of resolving them in relation to the truth.

Intraphilosophically, one can find critical, skeptical, and cynical remarks on truth from both the continental and analytic traditions. Based on the focus of this dissertation on analytic concerns, I will bypass the continental side of the debate, which should be addressed elsewhere in full detail.⁹ However, we can start our analysis from a connection point between these traditions, where we can find remarks on the relativity of truth from both sides. Relativization of truth is not something that only postmodernists are concerned with, but it is relevant for epistemic theories of truth on a more general level, as provocatively noted by

⁹ On the continental side we have those who see truth as a redundant notion at least in some domains, prominent example being that of politics, as noted by Arendt: "No one has ever doubted that truth and politics are on rather bad terms with each other, and no one, as far as I know, has ever counted truthfulness among the political virtues". (1967, 49) This contention rests in the Hobbesian thesis of how truth ultimately depends on the human will, and on the notion that the political domain is dictated with interests distinct from those concerning truth and falsity. Evidently, the problems which such concerns were noted earlier by Arendt herself, according to whom: "The ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the convinced Communist, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction (i.e., the reality of experience) and the distinction between true and false (i.e., the standards of thought) no longer exist" (1951, 474). Without a proper objective notion of truth, people become susceptible to the oppression of those who benefit from fabricating it to aid their means. For others, an objective notion of truth is harmful because it enables the oppressing citizens by authorities and authoritarian regimes. Based on this, Vattimo has criticized correspondence views based on them being apt instruments of oppression: "Truth as absolute objective correspondence is more a danger than a blessing [...] Whenever truth becomes a factor in politics, the danger of authoritarianism rears its head" (2011, 9-15). Evidently, even with an appropriate account of truth at hand, unconcealed truth can compromise social stability and hinder political progress and societal development. But this much was implicitly already in the first section, where it was emphasized how truth is not necessarily correct to believe or inherently valuable in all contexts. For others, an objective notion of truth is oppressive in relation to competing understandings of this notion, and where one's understanding of truth or of the things that are held as true are relativized the background framework. Allegedly, postmodernists have been accused of watering down truths significance by such relativizing arguments: "Philosophers should look into the mirror, for the ingredients of the now appalling post-truth era are found in the late 20th century 'postmodernist' thinking" (Niiniluoto 2019, 12). Continental analysis of the so-called crisis of truth deserves its independent study.

Davidson: "Relativism about truth is perhaps always a symptom of infection by the epistemological virus." (2005, 33) The biting force of relativism follows from the inevitability that when making assertions about the world, one necessarily does so from the perspective of *some* background theory or conceptual framework. Based on this, there are well-grounded reasons for arguing that both our conception of what truth means and the contents we uphold as true are contained in the deployed background theory or framework through which we define and understand the meaning of truth, and which further justifies the class of sentences we, at any time, take as true. However, the problems with relativism are well known. One major issue with such relativism is that it lays foundation for the emergence of the phenomenon of irresolvable disagreements, which can have detrimental effects on our ability to sustain certain scientifically and societally relevant practices. The root of this problem is the realization that truth is both intuitively and theoretically treated as a standard for the correctness of epistemically relevant discourse. In this sense, it is at least *prima facie* correct to believe and assert the truth, and thus, true beliefs are what the disagreeing parties disagree on and perhaps aim to discover in the midst of their disagreement. However, were the nature of truth relativized between different perspectives, it would become unclear in relation to what the parties disagree on, and in relation to what they would aim to resolve their disagreements. In other words, without a common standard for deciding which party is ultimately right or wrong or what should be believed, the result can be a sort of stalemate or limbo, where the disagreement remains potentially resolved based on an inherent conflict regarding what counts as a satisfactory resolution. Because of this, especially in the so-called "realist" tradition, objectivity of truth is treated as a core truism and a necessary constituent for a proper understanding of truth. Based on this, one might argue that what can be relative is our *understanding* or *knowledge* about the truth, which is an independent concern of what truth itself amounts to. However, at least initially, this requires that truth be treated as a theory-transcendent notion or an ideal of reason, which is something some naturalists and philosophers of science find unappealing. Quine is one thinker who struggled with the simultaneous immanence and transcendence of truth:

We go on testing our scientific theory by prediction and experiment, and modifying it as needed, in quest of the truth. Truth thus looms as a haven that we keep steering for and correcting to. It is an ideal of pure reason, in Kant's phrase. Very well: immanent in those other respects, transcendent in this. (1995c, 353)¹⁰

Nonetheless, the skeptics also benefit from truth providing a stable goal of inquiry and a standard of thought that epistemic agents can democratically pursue and freely disagree upon.

Past relativism, an intratheoretical alethic crisis manifests in the analytic tradition in the form of criticism of the traditional views about the nature of truth, one reason being their metaphysical and explanatory complexities: "Neurath believed that the [Tarskian] semantical concept of truth could not be reconciled

¹⁰ This raises suspicions on whether Quine can be interpreted as a deflationist about truth, since deflationists typically hold that truth is wholly language- or theory-immanent.

with a strictly empiricist and anti-metaphysical point of view. Similar objections were raised in later publications by Felix Kaufmann and Reichenbach.” (Carnap 1963, 61) Even Tarski’s clarification of the concept of truth was not enough to convince some positivists of the philosophical or scientific tenability of this notion. Indeed, the sometimes-extreme preference that at least some positivists placed on clarity, unambiguity, and metaphysical simplicity of our conceptual frameworks, and their general interest in ontological parsimony are probable reasons for their preference to dispense with a substantive notion of truth that has, at least historically, been entangled in definitional problems and metaphysical baggage. Unsurprisingly, similar skepticism can be seen in prominent philosophers of science, such as Popper: “[T]he task of elucidating [the correspondence notion of truth] seems hopeless; and as a consequence, we may become suspicious of the concept of truth, and prefer not to use it.” (1959, 274) Interestingly enough, and contrasting with this view, Quine, a prominent naturalist and philosopher of science that was greatly influenced by positivists, held on the concept of truth as a naturalistically legitimate notion: “The concept of truth belongs to the conceptual apparatus of science on a par with the concepts of existence, matter, body, gravitation, number, neutrino, and chipmunk” (1999, 165). This was helpful in drawing a distinction between those naturalists who treat truth as a metaphysically loaded and even esoteric or mystical notion, and those who heed the Tarskian lesson on approaching truth as a theoretical, technical, and metaphysically neutral or parsimonious notion.¹¹ We will continue with this prospect of treating the Tarskian apparatus as a foundation for postdeflationary substantive theorizing in later sections.

In previous text, I have provided an initial distinction between contemporary epistemic and alethic crises, where the latter was identified with the widespread skepticism, critique, and even cynicism that truth faces in what can be outlined as extra- and intraphilosophical debates, or in formal and mundane contexts. Note here that my aim is not to provide a comprehensive or novel analysis of this complex, multifaceted, and historically grounded criticism. Nonetheless, this range of critical remarks about truth is a central motivation behind this study. In my view, philosophy, as an academic discipline, has an obligation to explore and contribute to resolving the conceptual problems that each societal context produces. The aforementioned epistemic and alethic crises are prime examples of such instances because they directly concern distinctive philosophical phenomena that bear widespread relevance that reaches outside the boundaries of academic philosophy. The need for philosophers to touch on such crises is only amplified by the relevance that the concept of truth and the aligning property have in sustaining healthy theoretical and societal practices.

¹¹ For example, Wrenn notes that: “According to deflationists, truth is not a ‘natural’ property with an essence to be understood in causal terms. [...] Truth, they say, does not have causal-explanatory power.” (2011, 451)¹¹ This aligns with Brogaard’s view: “those who find strong naturalism irresistible may find a deflationary approach to truth attractive” (2016, 271).¹¹ While the deflationary and naturalist critique is unified by their concern regarding metaphysical complexities involved with truth, one crucial difference is that the naturalist can constrain their criticism to the scientific domain, whereas deflationists usually argue for the global insignificance or redundancy of truth.

Hence, by focusing on central aspects of this criticism that manifest under philosophical debates in the western analytic tradition, I aim to contribute to solving the present and forthcoming crises involved with this notion.

3 DEFLATIONARY CRITIQUE OF SUBSTANTIVE THEORIES OF TRUTH

Today, skepticism toward substantive theorizing in philosophy often takes the form of deflationism. – Sher 2016b, 819

In the same decade, as many great philosophical discoveries were made, such as Tarski's explication of the classical Aristotelian intuitions about truth, Gettier's refutation of the traditional analysis of knowledge, and Quine's naturalistic approach to philosophy, an orientation toward truth started to grow popularity of the view that promises to dissolve the age-old problem of defining this concept. In the late positivist spirit, who generally supported an anti-metaphysical stance toward philosophizing and aligning with the metaphysically reductive orientation of some naturalists and philosophers of science, the so-called deflationary approach to truth became popular in the latter part of the twentieth century.

Initially, the deflationary program can be treated as a primarily negative reaction to traditional views about truth that aim to uncover its underlying metaphysical essence. Deflationary theories oppose traditional views in their assumption of how truth has the type of complex essence that one might form substantive theories about: "So-called 'deflationary' positions emerged which held that the three traditional [correspondence, coherence, pragmatist] theories had it all wrong: they were looking for a nature of truth that was not there at all." (Edwards 2018a, xiv)¹² According to deflationists, the alleged failure of traditional accounts in offering a philosophically sustainable explanation for the nature of truth follows from their misconception that truth has the type of nature that is susceptible to substantive analysis in the first place.

Traditional theories of truth [...] often make suggestions like the following: truth consists in correspondence to the facts; truth consists in coherence with a set of beliefs or propositions; truth is what is acceptable in the ideal limit of inquiry. According to

¹² Influential proto-deflationists or deflationists are Ayer (1935), Strawson (1950), Grover (1992), Field (1994), and Horwich (1998). Some might see appeal in introducing Quine and Brandom to this list.

deflationists, such suggestions are mistaken, and, moreover, they all share a common mistake. The common mistake is to assume that truth *has* a nature of the kind that philosophers might find out about and develop theories of. (Armour-Garb, Stoljar & Woodridge 2023, 1)¹³

Truth has, at least historically, been treated as a philosophically significant term, in which realists who typically support some form of correspondence theory and anti-realists, who typically support coherence or verificationist theory, have engaged in debates about the nature of truth based on their background metaphysics: “Many ideas about realism and anti-realism are closely related to ideas about truth. Indeed, many approaches to questions about realism and anti-realism simply make them questions about truth.” (Glanzberg 2021, 4.)¹⁴ For example, take sentential variants of the neo-classical correspondence view, according to which sentential truth consists of its correspondence with worldly affairs such as facts, states of affairs, or objects. Such accounts typically come baked in with a commitment to metaphysical realism, or a commitment to there being an extra-linguistic or -theoretical reality that our sentences indeed *can* correspond with, and some explanation for how this correspondence relation plays out in the case of individual sentences.¹⁵ Providing such an explanation has proven a challenging task, and at least some deflationists use these difficulties as leverage to motivate their alternative approach:

[I]n inquiring into the nature of truth we have run up against the limits of analysis; and, indeed, it will be widely agreed that hardly any progress has been made towards achieving the insight we seem to need. The common-sense notion that truth is a kind of 'correspondence with the facts' has never been worked out to anyone's satisfaction. Even its advocates would concede that it remains little more than a vague, guiding intuition. (Horwich 1998, 1)

However, for deflationism to stand as an actual theory and not just a bundle of critical remarks, it must encompass positive claims about the nature of truth. One way to frame the deflationary approach in positive terms is to argue for its aim to capture classical Aristotelian intuitions in a metaphysically neutral or noncommitting manner. Based on well-known issues that follow from the metaphysical complexities of traditional accounts, the deflationary contention is that by stripping their theories from metaphysical implications, many of the issues with defining this truth simply dissolve or can be left for metaphysicians to resolve.

One way to achieve a disconnection between one's account for truth and metaphysical implications is to claim that the nature of truth is fully captured by

¹³ Note here that my aim is not to provide extensive or novel critique of deflationary accounts and their weaknesses. One can find further discussion on these topics from Sher (2016a; 2016b; 2023a; 2023b), Edwards (2013; 2018a), Wyatt (2016; 2021a), Eklund (2021), Armour-Garb (2012), Armour-Garb, Stoljar & Woodridge (2023).

¹⁴ For example, truth maker theories, primitivists, and pluralists can be seen as distinct postdeflationary analyses.

¹⁵ The antirealist accounts like coherence and verificationist theories involve similar projects where one has to explain how truth arises from a system of true beliefs, how such beliefs connect with the things that such beliefs are about, and whether there are unknowable or in principle unknowable truths.

some metaphysically neutral or noncommitting schema, such as the sentential disquotation schema or the propositional equivalence schema:

Equivalence schema: the proposition that p is true if and only if p

Disquotation schema: "S" is true if and only if S

This is another sense in which deflationists make positive claims about the nature of truth. For many deflationists, the nature of truth is wholly explained by such schemas. What such schemas explain is that each sentence is true, if, and only if, things are just as the sentence says in a metaphysically neutral or noncommitting manner: "to say that 'snow is white' is true [...] is in some sense strongly equivalent to saying simply that snow is white, and this, according to the deflationary approach, is all that can be said significantly about the truth of 'snow is white'" (Armour-Garb et al., 2023, 1). For instance, Paul Horwich, arguably the most prominent deflationist to date, claims that the instances of the equivalence schema are "conceptually basic" and "explanatorily fundamental" in relation to our understanding of the concept of truth and the property for which it stands (1998, 21 & 50 & 37). In this sense, we can distinguish two targets that the deflationary claims can direct toward: the *concept* of truth (conceptual deflationism) or the *property* of being true (metaphysical deflationism).¹⁶

According to Horwich, the equivalence schema demonstrates that the concept of truth has a trivial nature, and it lacks a complex structure based on its nature of being exhausted by the collection of trivial equivalence schema instances. More specifically, Horwich thinks that one's possession of the ordinary concept of truth consists of his or her acceptance of this generalized schema and each of its instances. Aligning with this, as the property of being true inherits its nature from the concept, this renders said property as metaphysically insubstantive and highly abundant, for the schema requires nothing more from true sentences than their ability to provide their own conditions for being true, and for the world to be as the sentence claims in some metaphysically neutral or noncommitting manner, which does not posit any significant similarities between individual sentences that are true. In this sense, for "snow is white" and "murder is wrong," to be true is for snow to be white and murder to be wrong, with no further explanation for why such sentences are true or in what their truth consists of. No commonalities are drawn between true contents, and their truth is not subjected to descriptive analyses where, for example, all true sentences would be based on their adequate description of the relevant aspects of the world, such as facts or objects, or where they would be collectively true by forming a maximally coherent set of beliefs. Based on this, a disconnection is achieved between one's account for truth and substantive metaphysical implications: "I see Horwich as a 'purist' about truth, aiming to characterize what belongs to the concept of truth as independently as possible of other concepts." (Parsons 2020, 226)

¹⁶ Further articulation of these aspects and their connections to one another in the Section 4.1.

One relevant implication of the deflationary approach is that, based on its tendency of depleting the truth of metaphysical weight, the notion of a true sentence cannot be used as an explanatory instrument beyond logicoexpressive instances. Because of the lack of substantive grounding for true sentences, it is widely agreed that under the deflationist rule, truth bears, at most, logicoexpressive explanatory utility, so that the truth predicate is rendered as “an expressive device, of use for mimicking infinite disjunctions and conjunctions, [...] but without any deeper explanatory use.” (Eklund 2021, 633; see Edwards 2013, 281; Wyatt 2016, 372; 2021b, 462) In other words, based on truth being, at most, a merely logical property that tracks the ability of sentences to provide their own conditions for being true, it subsequently lacks metaphysical substance based on which it can be used in a descriptive or causal-explanatory manner, for example, in defining what we aim at in our inquiries, or that true sentences provide an intermediary between language and the world: “deflationism removes truth from our explanatory toolkit. If the deflationist is right, truth has no nature. [...] Consequently, we cannot appeal to it to help explain other items of philosophical interest.” (Lynch 2009, 4–5; see Edwards 2018a, 2; Sher 2020, 351; Wyatt 2016, 374; 2021a, 464; 2021b, 319; Eklund 2021, 641; Ferrari 2021, 207–208) In comparison, take the so-called causal correspondence views, according to which a sentence is true *because* the relevant aspects of the world, such as facts or objects, make them so, and that true sentences are an epistemically valuable resources *because* they adequately connect with worldly states of affairs that one might want to know about. Deflationists cannot commit to such explanatory uses, for under their accounts, sentences are not true *because* some metaphysically substantive entity makes them so. This would tie their accounts to significant metaphysical commitments, in addition to providing an explanatory account of how the alleged truth-maker-like relation plays out in the case of distinct types of sentences that make reference to ontologically different kinds of entities. Were the deflationists to accommodate such features under their definitions, one might justifiably wonder whether they would be truly deflationary, since they would encompass significant metaphysical implications, thus conflicting with the goal of reaching a deflationary account of truth.

Contrast the aforementioned explanation with Horwich’s claim about the core thesis of the deflationary program, namely, that all that can be positively said about the nature of truth must be directly derivable from the preferred deflationary schema, according to which each truth-apt sentence provides its own conditions for being true if, and only if, things are just as the sentence mentions them to be in a metaphysically neutral or noncommitting manner.

[E]very statement trivially specifies its own condition for being true -" There's life on other planets" is true if, and only if there's life on other planets; "Torture is wrong" is true if, and only if, torture is wrong; and so on. But whereas traditional theorists, whilst acknowledging these obvious equivalences, have always insisted on some further, deeper account of what truth is (along one of the lines just scrutinized) the new approach has it that no such further account is needed or should be expected. (Horwich 2009, 3–4)

In this sense, the deflationist cannot hold that sentences are true *because* the relevant aspects of the world, such as facts or objects, make them so, and their truth does not *consist* in the world being as any sentence says. Rather, “snow is white” is true if, and only if, snow is white, and “speeding is illegal” is true if, and only if, speeding is illegal, with no further explanation for why such sentences are true, what makes such sentences true, or what does their truth consist of.

From this, we can conclude on the general features of the deflationary approach in providing a negative reaction to the traditional substantive accounts, and where deflationists look to undermine metaphysical inquiries into the nature of truth by arguing that the content of this concept or the nature of the aligning property is exhausted by the preferred deflationary schema or its direct implications. However, some variability exists among deflationists in how they interpret the implications of such a claim, subsequently giving rise to *strong* and *moderate* variants of the general deflationary thesis.

3.1 Variants of Deflationary Theories

Defining the deflationary position in general has proven difficult, one major reason being the excessive number of presently available theories that can be labeled as deflationary. As initially noted by Wright (1998, 38–39), deflationism describes an orientation toward truth and its definition rather than a particular theory. Aligning with this, Armour-Garb (2012, 267) argued that deflationism *per se* describes a *genus* of accounts under which one finds *species* such as the minimalist, disquotationalist, and prosententialist theories. This makes grasping the concept of deflationism about truth even more challenging, since such theories display broad variance in the commitments they make, and where some such theories involved quite a bit of footwork in their attempts to define truth in a metaphysically neutral, noncommitting, or otherwise parsimonious manner. However, the aforementioned variance has not prevented theorists from offering general descriptions of the deflationary thesis. According to Sher (2016b), deflationism about truth is characterized by specific claims of being frustrated with past attempts to define truth, identification of a theory of truth with a simple schematic definition, satisfaction with a trivial theory or definition, narrow conception of the significance of truth for our cognitive lives, and a bold adequacy claim, according to which relatively simple deflationary accounts, can capture the entire conceptual and theoretical role of truth. Eklund (2021) approached deflationism through three core principles: truth being exhausted by a deflationary schema, truth predicate being just an expressive device, and the property of being true being nongenuine. While such descriptions are useful, at least in getting the ball rolling in one’s analysis of the deflationary position, such general descriptions are blind to the distinctions between variants of deflationary theories. By relying on recent literature in articulating such variants, the following sections introduce a distinction between strong and moderate variants

of the deflationary thesis, under which one finds the various theories one might characterize as either strongly or moderately deflationary.

3.1.1 Strong Deflationism

According to strong deflationism, the property of being a true sentence simply does not exist.¹⁷ Examples of strongly deflationary theories are redundancy theory, performative theory, and prosentential theories. According to redundancy theories, predications of truth and falsity amount to nothing more than simple assertions; saying that “snow is white” is true is equal to saying that snow is white. Full stop. According to performative theory, the truth predicate serves only certain expressive functions, where asserting that “it is true that snow is white” might express agreement of snow being white, in opposition to attributing any descriptively relevant property to the sentence. According to prosentential theories, “is true” is a prosentential operator rather than a genuine predicate that could attribute substantive or insubstantive properties. In this sense, the truth predicate would rather be something similar to a pronoun, where to attribute the prosentential operator “is true” is to simply reassert the sentence at hand. In all of the aforementioned cases, the traditional sense in which truth is treated as a property of thoughts, propositions, or sentences evaporates.

However, both practical and theoretical reasons exist for rejecting strong deflationism. As far as deflationists accept that truth is a well-formed predicate that has consistent rules for application, little is gained by denying the existence of the aligning property. It is commonly held that predicates attribute properties or denote classes of entities where such entities have at least the property of being in the range or extension of the relevant predicate, based on the latter’s application rules. Of course, this does not mean that such properties need to be substantive, but they are nonetheless properties. Another problem with the strong approach is that it can prevent the truth predicate from being used as a logicoexpressive instrument for constructing indirect endorsements and generalizations that deflationists also benefit from admitting.¹⁸ For example, according to Ebbs’s indispensability thesis, “to generalize on all sentences of a given form, a truth predicate is indispensable” (2009, 47). Simply put, if there is not at least an insubstantive property of being a true sentence that is attributed by a logicoexpressive truth predicate, then it is not clear whether the truth predicate can be used to construct certain types of generalizations. Similarly, strong deflationism forms a potential conflict with the classical Tarskian definition of validity, according to which valid inferences preserve truth from the premises to the conclusion. If there is no property of being true, then the question arises: What exactly is it that preserves such inferences?¹⁹ Finally, the strong

¹⁷ Proving such negative existence claims is notoriously difficult. Further, it is not completely clear how nihilism about truth differs from strong deflationism. Such concerns should be addressed by those who support strong deflationism.

¹⁸ Edwards (2018a, 9–15) discusses other problems as well.

¹⁹ Because of this, the deflationist might resort to alternative definitions of validity, such as proof-theoretic models.

deflationist faces difficulties in accounting for the axiological and normative implications of truth, where they need to provide alternative explanations for what types of sentences or beliefs are correct to possess when orienting toward the world and answering questions about its nature, what the preferred contents of our theories are, and in relation to what we change our minds and resolve disagreements in epistemically relevant discourse. For such reasons, historically more prevalent, strong variants of the deflationary thesis are less supported in current debates when contrasted with moderate forms that have less trouble dealing with some of the aforementioned problems.

3.1.2 Moderate Deflationism

Variants of moderately deflationary theories are supported by the championing deflationists Hartry Field (1994) and Paul Horwich (1998). According to moderate deflationism, the property of being true exists but is *insubstantive*: Deflationism is the somewhat vague idea that truth is not a “substantive” property, that no reductive theory of it should be anticipated, and that our grasp of the truth predicate comes from our appreciation of the trivial way in which each statement specifies its own condition for being true. (Horwich 2001, 161)

Under Horwich’s account, a distinction between a minimalist *theory* of truth and a minimalist *conception* of truth exists. According to this theory, the content of truth is fully exhausted by the infinite conjunction of the nonparadoxical instances of the equivalence schema. The minimalist conception of truth contextualizes the theory and encompasses some additional commitments, such as the idea that the status of the schema is conceptually basic and explanatorily fundamental in relation to our understanding of the ordinary concept of truth and the property for which it stands. Together, the theory and the conception render the concept of truth trivial and the property of being a true sentence insubstantial. This insubstantiality claim is clarified by Wyatt’s formulation of the so-called insubstantiality thesis, according to which the property of being true lacks an opaque constitution and explanatory power: “These two theses – that truth is metaphysically simple and explanatorily inert – are at the heart of the deflationary programme.” (Wyatt 2021b, 319; cf. Wyatt 2016, 368; Ferrari 2021, 207–208)²⁰ Hence, insofar as the property of being true exists at all, it is merely a

²⁰ This aligns with Horwich’s statements, according to whom a substantive property would be such that it is insusceptible to a constitution theory: “Perhaps, then, Wright has in mind what I have called a ‘substantive’ property: namely, the sort of property for which there might well be a constitution theory of the form x is true = x is F ” (Horwich 1998, 143). Note that truth need not have significant metaphysical structure like a substantive constitution to ground its explanatory utility, for this would rule out primitivists from the range of accounts that can use the notion in an explanatory manner: “Primitivists are more interested in metaphysical debates than deflationists, but do not see the need to engage in the project of investigating the nature of truth. In particular, whilst there has been an explosion of interest in the notion of truth-making, this has not correlated with an increase of interest in the nature of truth; rather, interest has shifted from theories of truth to theories of truthmaking. This has led to the idea that, whilst truth may have more roles to play than the deflationist allows, there is little of substantive interest to say about it, expressed by the primitivist claim that truth is not open to definition.” (Edwards 2018a, 2; see Davidson 1996)

logical property that exists for making certain types of indirect endorsements, generalizations, or disquotations, and hence lacks a metaphysically substantive or explanatorily significant nature – the predicate and the property are at most useful for explaining certain logicoexpressive phenomena.

However, accepting that “is true” is a legitimate predicate that attributes a logicoexpressive property bears certain benefits over its full denial. Starting with indirect endorsements, we need the truth predicate to say things like “what Tom said is true,” even though we might not know each of Tom’s claims specifically. The same goes for constructing finite generalizations, like claiming that “all that Pope said about God is true” and infinite generalizations like “all sentences of the form ‘p or not-p’ are true’,” thus ending up with a formula for tautology. Regarding disquotations, the truth predicate enables one to infer direct claims about the world from claims about sentences, and semantically ascend and descend between discourse about language and the world. Further, based on the moderately deflationary acceptance of the existence of the property of being true, such approaches have better resources to deal with the Tarskian definition of validity and to explain certain normative phenomena, such as why truth can be useful to believe and assert (see Horwich 2018). Whether moderate deflationists are able to account for all the axiological and normative implications involved with the concept of truth or the property of being true is left for future studies to explore.

However, an important realization is that such logicoexpressive utility can also be acknowledged by inflationary accounts. In this sense, inflationary approaches can be understood as deflationism, plus some additional, sufficiently inflationary claims about the nature of truth.²¹ A relatively straightforward method of transforming a deflationary definition into an inflationary one is to supplement the relevant deflationary schema such as the disquotation schema (“‘S’ is true, if, and only if, S”) with an appropriately inflationary commitment, such as direct reference to a correspondence relation:

Correspondence schema: “S” is true if, and only if, S corresponds with worldly states of affairs

One benefit of such an account is that it allows truth properties to have causal explanatory power, where, for example, one might want to know about the truth of a sentence because they correspond with the world, or because they provide an intermediary between language, theories, and the extralinguistic and -theoretic reality that our discourse is oftentimes about.

Another way of making a deflationary schema inflationary would be to give the initially deflationary schema an inflationary reading, for example, by

²¹ Edwards (2018a, 27) has noted potential issues with this line of reasoning, where inflationists need not acknowledge similar explanations in accounting for the logico-expressive role of the truth predicate to deflationists. Further, simply adding commitments or connections to other concepts to one’s account of truth does not amount to inflationism, for one can add such that are compatible with deflationism.

subjecting it to reductive analysis that would utilize metaphysically substantive concepts and hence tie the schema to significant metaphysical implications, subsequently conflicting with the deflationary aim of trying to deflate something, namely the metaphysical nature of truth. Such an approach will be discussed further in the following section, where it is argued that while some of Tarski's and Quine's framings start with seemingly deflationary schemas, at least in certain specified instances, the respective parties tie their accounts to significant metaphysical implications or subject their preferred schemas to reductive analyses to the extent that metaphysical inflation is introduced. Before this, an overview of the prospects and limits of deflationary theories helps clarify the discussion and articulate what can be labeled as a postdeflationary substantive approach to defining truth.

3.2 Limits and Prospects of Deflationary Theories

It would be intellectually dishonest to deny the virtues of the deflationary program. One virtue of the deflationary approach is that it greatly demystifies the concept of truth by stripping it from esoteric and mystical implications and restricts one's focus to the technical aspects of this notion: "Deflationists about truth claim that truth is not a mysterious property. All we need to know about truth is encapsulated in the way the truth-predicate solves a simple syntactic problem." (Kölbel 2001, 634) Another virtue is the deflationary emphasis on the clarity and simplicity of one's account of truth, where precise boundaries are drawn between the concept of truth, the property of being true, and the truth predicate, which allow for a more nuanced analysis of their nature and functions, relations to one another, and to other concepts. In addition, there is value in the deflationary persistence on the purity of one's account of truth, where the notion is defined as independently as possible from other concepts and commitments. Another virtue is achieved through the deflationary lesson on the cheapness of truth aptness, where all syntactically proper sentences become susceptible to claims about truth and falsity. This is the lesson that contemporary pluralists heed when contrasting their accounts with traditional monist views: "Truth pluralists take the demands for truth-aptness to be very minimal and focus their attention on what kind of truth a sentence is apt for." (Edwards 2018b, 95) By being maximally permissive with truth aptness, one can acknowledge the truth and falsity of the full range of truth-apt discourse and aim to develop theories that are able to account for the arguable variability that truth displays in our cognitive lives. Deflationists can be even more permissive with truth aptness than pluralists, the former of which can accept even the truth aptness of vague expressions, although this difference must be explored further elsewhere.

However, initial suspicion toward the deflationary program is generated by their promise of dissolving the age-old problem of defining truth that is pursued, for example, by the neo-classical accounts toward which the deflationary views can be appropriately seen as a negative reaction. The prospects of final analyses

are rare in philosophical discourse, especially in the case of complex notions such as truth:

It is common to think of a theory of truth as consisting of a single and simple definition or necessary-and-sufficient condition of truth. The subject-matter of truth, I noted, is too rich, too complex, and too multi-dimensional to be theorized in this manner. (Sher 2023, 2-3)²²

While deflationists are right that the traditional views about the nature of truth involve problems of various sorts, some more pressing than others, the conclusion that such views are inherently flawed is simply too strong. In this sense, the problems with defining truth cannot be taken as a brute indication about the futility of trying to define this notion, for similar definitional problems concern most, if not all, philosophically relevant concepts such as knowledge and existence. This is something that even Horwich, the arch deflationist, acknowledged: “And if we philosophers have learned anything at all since Plato, it’s that explicitly definable concepts are few and far between.” (2018, 1130) As researchers of philosophy, we should be well aware of how everything in philosophy is an exercise in argumentation. We describe, explain, and define concepts and phenomena and defend the proposed positive views from critical remarks, counterexamples, and demonstrations of problematic presuppositions. Based on this, our understanding of the philosophically relevant and oftentimes exceedingly complex aspects of the world develops. In this sense, instead of treating the difficulties with defining truth as an indication of the inherently flawed nature of this concept, such difficulties can be seen as an inseparable part of forming explanatory theories about its nature, which can be further relied upon in defining and understanding other important concepts and phenomena. Hence, there seems to be a motivational gap in the way in which some deflationists motivate their views based on the problems with approaching truth on substantive grounds, yet where they simultaneously must admit that philosophical theories in general are bound to face challenges of various sorts. If this is the case, then the deflationist needs to convince us of why the problems with defining truth are of distinctive sort in that they lead to the futility of the inflationary or nondeflationary approaches, and why we should not adopt the deflationary attitude toward all substantive notions that face definitional issues of similar sort.

Past the failing of the deflationary motivations to connect with the need for their revisionary approach to defining truth, things are made worse by the implications of this approach, when the nonexistence or insubstantiality claims bring with them the radical reduction of the explanatory potential that the concept of truth or the property of being true have in philosophical theories of various sorts, some examples being theories of knowledge, content, meaning, and validity. Such a conclusion has significant implications not only for the range

²² Elsewhere, Sher notes that: “the concept or subject-matter of truth is extraordinarily broad complex and diversified, interwoven in different ways in different areas of our cognitive life, and applicable to sentences of different kinds (physical, psychological, mathematical, ethical,..., concrete, abstract,...) in different ways and for different reasons. As such it resists any attempt at a simple, sweeping characterization.” (Sher 1998, 142)

of philosophical theories that rely on the explanatory potential of truth in explaining other concepts but also for those societal and theoretical practices that rely on truth as an explanatory notion of truth. In philosophical discourse, rejecting the explanatory potency of truth leads to an extensive revisionary project to alter our conception of those concepts that rely on truth as an explanatory notion. Further, without the explanatory potency of truth, one has to offer alternative explanations for what the preferred contents of our theories are, which types of sentences increase our understanding of the world, and so on. Further, one might argue that were the deflationists to dispense with a distinction between knowledge of the truth and truth, or the distinction between warranted assertability and truth, as argued by Wright (1992, 15–23), it would reduce or dispense with the normative role of truth as a standard in relation to which we can meaningfully disagree and can refute the claims of trolls, propagandists, and mis-, dis-, and malinformers of various sorts. Further, without the normative implications of truth, it becomes difficult to explain what unifies the various and vastly different scientific disciplines, or perhaps formal and nonformal paths of inquiry such as the sciences and journalism, and what is a general goal and a standard for correctness of belief and assertion in epistemically relevant discourse in relation to which we disagree and change our minds when orienting toward the world and answering questions about its nature, and which we can further oblige in our class- and courtrooms.²³ Simply put, such concerns raise an evident question whether a substantive notion of truth can be dispensed without a detrimental effect on the tradition of substantive philosophical theorizing and on our general ability to sustain important societal and theoretical practices. Based on this, some have appropriately interpreted the deflationary program as hindering philosophical theorizing in general.²⁴

However, respecting some of the central deflationary tenets does not force one to accept arguably radical conclusions regarding the triviality of the concept of truth or the insubstantiality of the property of being true. Indeed, this recognition forms the grounds of the so-called postdeflationary substantive approach to truth, where one heeds the general lessons of the deflationary approach in aiming for simple and clear accounts of truth that demonstrate clear boundaries between truth and closely related notions, while aiming to define the notion in a manner that preserves its ability to ground healthy societal and theoretical practices. In this sense, the postdeflationary substantive theories rise as reactions to the negative implications of the deflationary approach, and the former sees deflationists as sparring partners rather than opponents in the project of constructing a philosophically sustainable and substantive theory of truth.

²³ This is a strength over deflationary and some naturalist views, who bear the burden of providing alternative explanations for instances where concepts and phenomena are defined via reference to a substantive truth-concept or -property.

²⁴ Sher holds that deflationists deny “any non-trivial role for truth in the explanation of any other philosophically significant subject-matter” (2020, 351). A similar note is presented by Edwards, according to whom “Deflationists 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” (2018a, 2).

4 POSTDEFLATIONARY SUBSTANTIVE THEORIZING ABOUT TRUTH

The layman [...] expects philosophers to answer deep questions of great import for an understanding of the world. [...] And the layman is quite right: if philosophy does not aim at answering such questions, it is worth nothing. – Dummett 1991, 1

My understanding of the purpose of philosophy aligns with the previous quote from Dummett, with the distinction of how much of the value of *academic* philosophy lies in its ability to solve pressing conceptual problems in each societal context. My contention is that professional philosophers are *responsible* for providing explanatory theories about those concepts that are within the scope of their theorizing, the prime examples being truth and knowledge, and on which we further rely in grounding healthy societal and theoretical practices.²⁵ Were philosophers to uphold and actively develop such concepts, they would subsequently be ready to answer the skeptical, critical, and cynical remarks about their nature that might arise in each societal context, where, for example, people might equate truth with what experts of various sorts agree to be true, with what political authorities claim to be true, or where truth is seen as relative between competing frameworks of thought.

Past the responsibility of professional philosophers to sustain and develop explanatory accounts of important concepts, one might wonder why they speak about postdeflationary substantive theorizing and not just substantive theorizing about truth in general. Others might wonder whether speaking about postdeflationary theorizing is premature, for deflationary theories are widely advocated, and their virtues and flaws remain to be tested. First, speaking about postdeflationary substantive theorizing helps constrain the discussion, and in my view, this also marks a significant development in the history of the study of truth since deflationary theories map an important step in truth-theoretic debates.

²⁵ There are multiple sources for this responsibility, one reason being the fact that the majority of philosophical research is publicly funded. Another reason is that philosophers in general are capable of resolving conceptual problems of various sorts, one reason being their extensive training, which helps them provide value by solving such problems.

Second, my contention is that the virtues of the deflationary approach and their prospects for further development do not overrule the tenability of postdeflationary substantive theorizing. As previously argued, deflationary theories involve various shortcomings, perhaps the most relevant being their hindering nature toward substantive philosophical theorizing in general, and centrally for current purposes, their inability to ground the explanatory utility of truth in providing a stable standard for correctness of belief and assertion in relation to which scientists and laymen alike disagree and change their minds. In this sense, postdeflationary substantive theorizing arises from the contrast of how deflationary theories encompass justifiable appeal, yet where they cannot ground the widespread explanatory utility that we arguably require from truth. In this sense, postdeflationary substantive theorizing heeds the central lessons of the deflationary approach but rejects some of the central negative conclusions and implications articulated in the previous section.

Framed in such a manner, postdeflationary substantive theorizing is best understood as a response to deflationary theorizing. Whereas deflationary theories are commonly seen as reactions to traditional substantive accounts, such as neo-classical correspondence and coherence theories, postdeflationary substantive theories are seen as reactions to the deflationary program. However, the aim is not to provide a purely negative response. Framed in such a manner, the postdeflationary substantive theorist sees the debate between deflationists and inflationists in a manner similar to how the traditional debate between skeptics and positive epistemologists is often presented, where they are described as sparring partners rather than opponents.

Nonetheless, evident variability can exist between postdeflationary substantive theorists regarding their positioning toward the deflationary approach. For example, Sher (2016a, 823) is one theorist who rejects most of the deflationary conclusions, and Edwards (2018a, 52) supports a very similar approach. However, nothing blocks one from respecting deflationary ideals while simultaneously aiming for an explanatory account of truth. In relation to this, a postdeflationary substantive theorist is aware of the potential independence of one's account of truth from metaphysical concerns, and respects the deflationary interest of clarity, simplicity, and the independence of one's account of truth from metaphysical commitments. Where the postdeflationary substantive theorist disagrees with the deflationists is in their overly strong conclusions regarding triviality, insubstantiality, and relative insignificance of the concept of truth or the aligning property.

However, defining postdeflationary substantive theorizing about truth as a reaction to deflationism is not enough to sustain it as a healthy and self-standing philosophical doctrine, for such a doctrine must also encompass positive claims about what a concept and the aligning property *are* and preferably even about what they can *do*. Based on the rejection of the deflationary premise that a theory or definition of truth must take an exceedingly simple form, the postdeflationary substantive theory can come in the form of a cluster or family of theories that

vary in their complexity and connect with distinct aspects of Truth unqualified.²⁶ Together, such theories would provide a comprehensive yet not necessarily complete account of truth that would respond to the complex role the concept of truth and the property of being true have in our cognitive lives and in sustaining healthy theoretical and societal practices.

In the aforementioned sense, this dissertation is centrally concerned with analyzing the prospects and limits of postdeflationary substantive theorizing. Because of this, it is helpful to outline at least what a caricature of a postdeflationary substantive account would look like. It is worth emphasizing that the following view is not meant as any type of final analysis, but simply as a demonstration of what I take as important aspects of a postdeflationary theory. In short, my contention is that while philosophers starting at least from Aristotle have been on the right track to capturing the content of truth, they should be more cognizant about the complexity of this notion by acknowledging its potential *plurality* across kinds of thought and discourse. This can be done by accommodating both unifying and disunifying factors under one's account of truth, where, for example, it is acknowledged that the nature of truth might vary between sentences of a distinct *kind*.

4.1 Concepts, Properties, and Predicates

As noted, this dissertation and its constitutive articles are largely but not exhaustively concerned with the *concept* of truth, the *property* of being true, and the truth *predicate*. In other words, the discussion revolves around conceptual, metaphysical, and linguistic concerns regarding Truth unqualified. Before saying more about these aspects and their relations to one another, it is helpful to clarify that the proposed view treats the concept of TRUTH as that which we have access through via our cognitive capabilities such as intuitions or rational reflection, and

²⁶ In my usage, there is a distinction between *accounts*, *theories*, and *definitions* of truth. An account of truth encompasses both theories and definitions. For example, an account of truth can include theories about the concept, property, and predicate. Theory is always about some aspect of truth, and they encompass formal or informal definitions. For example, a monist account of truth explains how both the concept and property of being true relate language and the world, and by utilizing a correspondence theory, the account explains how elements of thought or language connect with mind or language-independent aspects of the world. In the heart of such a theory can lie a correspondence-schematic definition, according to which, for example, a sentence "'S' is true, if and only if, S" corresponds with facts or objects. The difference between theory and definition is that a schematic definition such as T-schema can be at the core of *distinct* correspondence-theories, and where a theory exceeds what is given by any definition, for example, by contextualizing it. Optimally, a definition for a concept S makes claims just about S, whereas a theory can involve additional claims not directly about S. In other words, theory sets the broader framework of reference for interpreting a definition. Account, on the other hand, exceeds what the theory explains, for example, by contextualizing the theory and explaining whether any particular theory is complete or incomplete, or what its theoretical desiderata are. In this sense, account is sort of a meta-theory that explains the features and aims of the particular theories and their groups, and theories can have definitions like the schemas as their central components.

from which we derive the meaning of the predicate “is true,” the application rules of which are meant to connect with the property of *being* true. In this sense, the concept helps us identify particular contents that *are* true by them instantiating the property of being true that is denoted by the truth predicate based on its application rules, which should, at least to a reasonable extent, be compatible with how we understand the nature of truth from an intuitive and pretheoretical perspective.²⁷

Regarding the metaphysical nature of concepts, my intention is to stay as neutral as possible. One reason for this is that saying much about concepts would require me to have a general account of their nature, which I do not have and which I do not intend to pursue. Furthermore, it is hardly relevant to consider whether concepts are treated as idealized objects, abstractions, or brain states. What is important is that they are entities that we have access to via intuition or rational reflection. Further, it hardly matters whether concepts are treated as fundamental constituents of thoughts, compositional entities, or both, or whether their status is seen as primitive, or either partly or wholly analyzable. In line with this, I want to remain neutral on whether the concept of truth is best accessed through a platitude- or principle-based strategy, both of which are supported in current debates.²⁸ According to the former, the concept of truth is defined via folk beliefs, truisms, intuitions, or platitudes that at least partly characterize the notion of truth. According to the latter, one looks at true contents and derives general principles from them to account for their commonalities, that is general principles for what it means to be true. An alternative strategy would be to define the concept of truth via one’s competence in the usage of the truth predicate. Note here that such approaches might not be mutually incompatible, and choosing between them does not make a substantive difference here, for the main point is that we have some access to the concept of truth based on which we can identify true contents, and that this access provides us with an apt starting point for inquiry into the nature of truth where, for example, we can look at particular contents that are true, and thus learn more about the concept of truth and its role in our cognitive lives and in sustaining relevant practices.

Regarding properties, the key recognition is that they differ from concepts in that they are not mental entities but features of objects. However, they differ from predicates in that they are not linguistic entities. Of course, as indicated previously, intimate connections exist between concepts, properties, and predicates. For example, we come to know about properties via our conceptions of them, and for each concept, there is the property of being that concept. Predicates differ from both concepts and properties by not being mental entities or features of objects but by being linguistic entities the function of which is to attribute properties or denote classes of entities. For example, by possessing a proper conception of truth, one knows how to apply the truth predicate to sentences that are true, where the application rules of this predicate must align

²⁷ One might oppose such view by deploying a radical conceptual engineering approach. Such concerns will not be discussed here.

²⁸ Edwards provides a thorough list of such platitudes (2018a, 18–19).

with the features of entities possessing the property, as we best understand it in light of the aligning concept. This renders truth a so-called second-order property of sentences such as “snow is white,” instead of being a first-order property of objects such as snow *being white*. In my view, and contrary to some ontological naturalists, being a second-order property does not conflict with the requirement of substantivity, for many second-order properties, such as the coherence of a theory or the material accuracy of a sentence, can be substantive, as indicated by Edwards:

Truth might not be a fundamental feature of reality, but that this does not mean that there should be any less interest in the metaphysics of truth. Many of the things that are important to us are not fundamental features of reality, but this does not mean that metaphysical inquiry into them is any less substantial. (2018a, 5)

It is worth emphasizing that, based on treating truth as a substantive property, the relationship between the concept of truth, the property of being true, and the truth predicate need not be linear. Rather, the relation can be synergetic, where, for instance, looking at the things that possess the property of being true and to which the truth-predicate applies can tell us interesting things about the concept and the application rules of the predicate. Such a view aligns with how we develop the so-called natural kind concepts, where, for example, one learns new things about the concept of water by analyzing its worldly correspondents, and hence comes to the realization that there might compositionally diverse ways of being water. Similarly, in my view, analyzing different sentences that we intuitively take as true and to which the truth predicate applies, we come to learn that different ways of being true may exist, where some sentences possess this property by either corresponding in different ways, or where, instead of corresponding, some sentences get to be true by cohering or perhaps by being superassertible.²⁹ In other words, sometimes the truth of a sentence is grounded on extensional states of affairs (observational sentences [“earth is an uneven ellipsoid”]), and at other times, it might be grounded on the inferential relations between true contents of some language or framework of thought (theoretical sentences [“each sentence is identical with itself”]).

Regarding substantivism, the concept of truth, and especially the property of being true, are the most central components, for they are where the metaphysical implications lie. Based on this, one can form at least three strengths of substantive accounts, where one is committed to the substantivity of the concept of truth (conceptual substantivism), the property of being true (metaphysical substantivism), or both (strong substantivism). My treatment aligns with what can be labeled as strong substantivism, where both the concept of truth and the property of being true bear substantive metaphysical structures and are explanatorily potent.

Regarding the substantivity of concepts, the difference between substantive and insubstantive concepts can be drawn at the level of the properties for which

²⁹ This aligns with substantivism regarding truth, for if the nature of truth is not in some sense substantive, then supposedly one couldn’t learn much about its nature by looking at the things that possess it.

they stand. In this sense, the concept of truth would be either substantive or insubstantive, based on the substantivity or insubstantivity of the property of being true. This aligns with how logical concepts such as self-identity are insubstantive based on the properties for which they stand, not bearing much in terms of metaphysical substance, and how natural concepts such as water are highly substantive, based on their ability of tracking significant similarities between entities at the level of material composition. Another strategy would be to argue that, as mental entities, concepts can be substantive based on their ability of mapping to robust brain states that guarantee one's access to understanding how the world is, in contrast to how it is not. For the sake of simplicity, we can commit to the relatively simple view where at least some concepts, such as truth, are such that their substantivity is based on the substantivity properties for which they stand. However, it is worth emphasizing that the substantivity of the relevant property does not necessitate the substantivity of the aligning concept. In this sense, a conceptual primitivist can hold that the concept of truth is primitive and potentially insubstantive, yet one of the traditional views regarding the property may still be right: "For example, one possibility is that the concept truth is unanalyzable but one of the classical theories of truth is correct regarding the property of being true." (Eklund 2021, 635) Subsequently, this would align with a more moderate understanding of substantivism, in which one rejects the idea that the concept of truth encompasses much in terms of metaphysical substance while accepting the substantivity of the property of being true.

As to the substantivity of properties, we can acknowledge two types of properties based on whether they are substantive or insubstantive. Insubstantive properties would be such that their existence is not grounded in any substantive features of the entities possessing them, and hence they do not track significant similarities between such entities. In other words, highly unnatural, thin, or projected properties may exist that simply do not correspond with any substantive features of the entities possessing them. Prime examples of insubstantive properties are the logical properties of being identical to oneself or being susceptible to negation. Simply put, as all conceivable entities are identical with themselves, next to nothing in terms of substance is required from them to satisfy the predicate "is identical with oneself." Substantive properties are such that their existence is firmly grounded in the features of the entities that possess them, and they subsequently track the significant similarities between such entities. One example of such a property would be that of being water or "H₂O," where the possession of such a property would be grounded in entities possessing the same material composition. All entities falling under the predicate "is H₂O" would possess the same chemical composition, and the possession of such a common feature can be used as an explanatory resource to describe, for example, what one essential feature is to sustain life on earth. Another substantive property is the second-order property of being a true sentence, the possession of which is grounded in the ability of any given sentence to describe the relevant aspect of the world in a materially adequate manner. In this sense,

all true sentences would be such because the relevant aspects of the world, such as facts or objects, make them so, and whereas this would render each true sentence a partial description of the relevant aspects of the world. Hence, this would be a collective property that all and only true sentences would possess, whereas they would together provide the intermediary between languages, theories, and the extralinguistic and -theoretic reality that our languages and theories are oftentimes about or directed toward. Further, such property would ground the explanatory utility of truth as that which we aim at in various types of inquiries, and as the standard based on which we resolve epistemic disagreements.

4.2 Accounting for the Complexity of Truth

Following Tarski's example and much of the current literature on truth, we can take the so-called Aristotelian intuitions about truth as an adequate description of our pretheoretical understanding of truth and hence the starting point of our analysis into this notion: "To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true." (Aristotle 1908, 1011b25) In this sense, a true expression describes things as they are independent of that expression itself. In Tarski's view, Aristotelian intuitions can be accommodated in one's account of truth by respecting the so-called material adequacy condition, according to which a sentence is true, if, and only if, things are as the sentence says them to be on an object-language level. Tarski captures this condition under his semantic conception of truth with the so-called T-schema:

T-schema: "S" is true, if, and only if, S

T-instance: "snow is white" is true, if, and only if, snow is white

By implying an infinite conjunction of nonparadoxical instances of such schema, one's definition explains the truth of each sentence in a manner that does not deviate from the world being as each sentence says. In this sense, these instances provide a criterion for truth that any materially adequate definition must imply. When this achievement is enriched with the presuppositions of bivalence and warrant independence, we succeed in a powerful step of constructing an account of truth that achieves a clear identity for the class of true sentences where each truth-apt sentence gives its own conditions for being true independent of knowledge or justification, and where it is left for reality to decide which from our gallery of truth-apt sentences are true by their adequate connection with the relevant aspects of reality such as facts, states of affairs, or objects. This satisfies the Aristotelian intuitions that many interpret as promoting a relatively muted proto variant of a correspondence theory: "As such, the [Aristotelian] definition offers a muted, relatively minimal version of a correspondence theory" (David

2022, 1). However, it is worth emphasizing that because of the vagueness of the Aristotelian definition and its lack of explicit reference to a correspondence relation, it allows for itself to be treated as a more general condition that *any* sustainable account of truth must abide:

It is [a] mistake to regard the principle that, if a statement is true, there must be something in virtue of which it is true, as peculiar to realism. On the contrary, it is a regulative principle which all must accept. (Dummett 1991, 331)³⁰

and

It is indeed undeniable that whenever a proposition or an utterance is true, it is true because something in the world is a certain way – something typically external to the proposition or utterance. (Horwich 1998, 104)

The range of theories that can be derived from Aristotelian intuitions is vast, even when constrained only to correspondence-based views. In the context of this study, the focus is constrained to the Tarskian and Quinean interpretations of these intuitions. Aligning with these intuitions, Tarski and Quine hold that no sentence is true without the relevant aspect of reality being as the sentence says:

No sentence is true but reality makes it so. The sentence ‘snow is white’ is true, as Tarski taught us, if and only if real snow really is white. The same can be said of the sentence ‘Der Schnee ist weiss’; language is not the point. (Quine, 1986, 10–11)

In this sense, sentential truth depends not only on the world in a vague or inaccurate sense, but in a sense where the relevant aspect of reality is *responsible* for the truth of each sentence. Evidently, this does not mean that the world *determines* whether any sentence is true or false. However, insofar as a sentence *is* true, the relevant aspects of the world cannot deviate from what such a sentence claims to be the case.

Thus, a question arises: How exactly does the connection between true sentences and the world play out under the Tarskian and Quinean schemes? There was a slight variance between these explanations. According to Tarski, object-language sentences, meaning sentences mentioned on the left-hand side of the T-biconditional, are true based on the object (snow) designated by the singular term (“snow”) *satisfying* the predicate (“is white”). For Quine, object-language sentences are true by the predicate *denoting* objects falling into the range of the singular term. However, such explanations amount to the same conclusion: “Where I treat denotation of sequences by predicates, Tarski treated satisfaction of open sentences by sequences of values of their free variables. But it comes to the same thing.” (1995a, 63) Past this slight variance, the alignment of Tarski’s and Quine’s views regarding truth and its proper definition is amplified by Quine’s explicit commitment to Tarski’s sentential apparatus, in the formal and cognitive equivalence of the Tarskian T-schema and Quinean disquotation schema, and the aforementioned similarity between the ways in which both

³⁰ Here, the idea is that Dummett commits to an anti-realist conception of truth as argued by Walker (2018, 219).

explain the nature and grounding of truth on the object-language level where actual content to world relations are required between predicates and objects.

While the Tarskian apparatus provides much-needed clarification of Aristotelian intuitions and can be treated even as a satisfactory definition of the concept of truth and the aligning property, one arguable shortcoming of this apparatus follows from its assumed monism regarding truth. However, nothing in principle prevents the Tarskian apparatus from being treated as a foundation for developing pluralizing accounts, where, for example, one acknowledges multiple ways of being true, such as correspondence and coherence, or, perhaps, distinct ways for sentences to correspond. Evidently, such an account is not what the Tarskian apparatuses explicitly argue for, since it can be treated as at least a weak correspondence theory and hence a monist account. However, this does not prevent the prospect of how the T-schematic definition *allows* for supplementation with distinct criteria for being true, which helps in accounting for the arguable variability that truth displays across the full range of truth-apt discourse and helps in accounting for the truth of very distinct *types* of sentences, such as those addressing extensional states of affairs or ethical or aesthetical properties of entities. While this does not mean that Tarski or Quine, following him, suggested pluralizing views, and that some of Tarski's and Quine's statements might even be incompatible with certain variants of the pluralist thesis, their apparatuses can be used as a starting point in developing pluralizing accounts. There is some indication of pluralism in the works of both of them. Tarski, for one, thinks that truth is multifaceted and inherently ambiguous, perhaps even between types of truths:

The word 'true', like other words from our everyday language, is certainly not unambiguous. [...] We should reconcile ourselves with the fact that we are confronted, not with one concept, but with several different concepts which are denoted by one word; we should try to make these concepts as clear as possible (by means of definition, or of an axiomatic procedure, or in some other way); to avoid further confusion we should agree to use different terms for different concepts [...]. (1944, 342 & 355)

Quine is more explicit in his views regarding the potential variance of truth: "Science, thanks to its links with observation, retains some title to a correspondence theory of truth; but a coherence theory is evidently the lot of ethics" (1981, 63). Elsewhere, Quine indicates the possibility of there being multiple criteria for truth:

The significant contrast between the correspondence theory and the coherence theory, when we set the untenable details aside, is that correspondence looks to the relation of the true sentence to what it is about, such as the white snow, while coherence looks to the relations of the true sentence to other sentences. (1987, 213-214)

And

Coherence and correspondence, properly considered, are not rival theories of truth, but complementary aspects. The coherence aspect has to do with how to arrive at truth, by the best of our lights. The correspondence aspect has to do with the relation of truths to what they are about. (1987, 213-214)

Note that my goal here is not to provide any thorough analysis of whether and in what way it is possible to proceed with offering a pluralist account of truth under the Tarskian and Quinean frameworks. Rather, my claim is that the question of the plurality of truth is something that arises rather effortlessly from their respective definitional apparatuses. For example, nothing in principle prevents one from supplementing the T- and disquotation -schemas with distinct criteria for truth:

Pluralizing schema: 'S' is true, if, and only, S corresponds or coheres

While such a schema is initially ambiguous between two distinct criteria, nothing prevents the development of such models in a less ambiguous form. One way of doing this would be to first argue that the range of sentence S includes various kinds and aligning domains, where such kinds are susceptible to being true in different ways. For example, by arguing that kinds of sentences S1 and S2 are susceptible to being true in distinct ways, then by knowing the truth-fundamental kind of any particular sentence, one can account for their truth and falsity in a kind-reliant manner. Before discussing such prospects further, one may wonder why the introduction of such disunity or pluralism would be useful in the first place, especially when a more conservative explanation is available. In this sense, one can simply argue that "'S' is true, if, and only, S," full stop, as indicated by Quine:

There are philosophers who stoutly maintain that "true" said of logical or mathematical laws and "true" said of weather predictions or suspect confessions are two usages of an ambiguous term "true" [...] Why not [instead] view "true" as unambiguous but very general, and recognize the difference between true logical laws and true confessions as a difference merely between logical laws and confessions? (Quine 1960, 118 & 131)³¹

Interestingly enough, this statement is a reason why some have interpreted Quine as an early critic of pluralist accounts (Pedersen & Wright 2023 4.2; see Lynch 2018, 67). However, in Quine's time, it was still unclear that under pluralist models, truth need not be ambiguous, even though its nature might vary between content kinds. Because of this, the conclusion that pluralism introduces inherent ambiguity is not necessarily true. In addition, pluralism brings with it central benefits over monist accounts. On a general level, one benefit is that such models allow for the introduction of both unifying and disunifying aspects of truth, which can be treated as a theoretical virtue: "every [theory] needs for its healthy growth a creative balance between unifiers and diversifiers" (Dyson 1988, 47). Insofar as the role that truth has in our cognitive lives is inherently complex, this indicates the possibility that perhaps we should not aim to define it on overly unifying grounds. Another benefit of pluralist models is that they help avoid the

³¹ Sainsbury makes a similar argument: "[E]ven if it is one thing for 'this tree is an oak' to be true, another thing for 'burning live cats is cruel' to be true, and yet another for 'Buster Keaton is funnier than Charlie Chaplin' to be true, this should not lead us to suppose that 'true' is ambiguous; for we get a better explanation of the differences by alluding to the differences between trees, cruelty, and humor." (Sainsbury 1996, 900)

so-called scope problem, according to which a single criterion of truth simply does not scale over all discourse that we ordinarily take as truth-apt.

A principal reason for adopting truth pluralism is that the view provides a framework for understanding the intuitive appeal of, respectively, realism and anti-realism with regard to different domains. The intuitive appeal stems in part from the observation that both traditional realist accounts of truth, such as the correspondence theory, and traditional anti-realist accounts, such as the coherence theory, face a similar pattern of failure. Theories that seem plausible in some domains [like physics, mathematics, or ethics] fail to seem as plausible in others. (Pedersen and Lynch 2018, 544; Ferrari, Moruzzi, Pedersen 2021, 631; Pedersen, Wyatt & Kellen 2018, 5)

Note that, here, as far as most pluralists refer to the traditional monist accounts such as the neo-classical correspondence and coherence theories in explaining the truth of *some* sentences, this weds the pluralists to the potential problems that concern the independent monist accounts, which renders pluralists rather as allies of the monist accounts than their enemies. Similarly, nothing in principle prevents pluralists from deploying a deflationary truth property under some domains, so that even such accounts are not left outside of the scope of pluralism. Indeed, as noted previously, another lesson that the pluralists take from deflationists is that concerning permissiveness regarding truth-aptness, where a definition of truth is scaled over the full range of discourse we ordinarily take as truth-apt, yet where the pluralists aim for a substantive definition of truth that allows for the concept of truth and the property of being true to be used as an explanatory resource to sustain our practices. In these senses, pluralism offers a valuable prospect for postdeflationary substantive theorizing.

4.3 Truth Pluralism

'Pluralism about truth' names the thesis that there is more than one way of being true.
- Pedersen & Wright 2018, 1.

In general, pluralism about truth claims that there are many ways for truth bearers to be true. According to the standard domain-reliant explanation, different *kinds* of sentences get to be true in distinct ways by possessing the operant truth-rendering property for their (primary) domain: "Domains are a crucial component of the theoretical framework of pluralism, as reflected by the fact that the core pluralist thesis is that the nature of truth varies *across domains*." (Pedersen, Wyatt, Kellen 2018, 6) Prominently, sentence kinds or their domains are individuated based on subject matters: "Domains are sets of propositions individuated by their subject matter," and "Sentences in mathematics, morals, comedy, chemistry, politics, and gastronomy may be true in different ways, if, and when they are ever true." (Kim & Pedersen 2018, 112 & Pedersen & Wright 2013, 1) By tying distinct truth-grounding, -manifesting, -instantiating, -determining, or otherwise -rendering properties, such as correspondence and coherence to truth-fundamental domains of sentences, the pluralists aim to account for the truth and falsity of the full range of truth-apt discourse in a

domain-reliant manner. By knowing the (primary) truth-fundamental domain membership of each truth-apt sentence, pluralist models can account for the truth and falsity of such sentences based on them possessing or failing to possess the operant truth-rendering property of their domain. For example, sentences from the truth-fundamental domain of physics or realist discourse would be true based on their correspondence, and those from the domain of mathematics based on their coherence. Aligning with this, both kinds of sentences would count as false by lacking the operant property of their domain.

However, claiming that the nature of truth varies across discourse domains permits at least two interpretations that vary in strength. According to strong pluralism, many ways exist of being true with no necessary commonalities in between—truth can straightforwardly be many. According to moderate pluralism, many ways exist for truth bearers to be true; however, all of them are ultimately true in the same way—truth can be both many and one. In this sense, whereas strong pluralism introduces radical disunity to one's account of truth, in contrast to the radical unity of traditional monist accounts, moderate pluralism encompasses both unifying and disunifying factors. One way to illustrate this difference is to argue that, according to some strong pluralists, multiple truth-concepts and -properties exist, and whereas for some moderate pluralists, there is a single concept of truth that is used to define a general truth property that all true sentences have and all false sentences lack, yet distinct types of sentences get to possess this general property in different ways by possessing the operant truth-rendering property for their domain. In what follows, brief descriptions of these theses are provided so that the focus of this dissertation can be constrained to domain-reliant moderately pluralist models that show arguable benefits, especially over strong variants of pluralism.

4.3.1 Strong Pluralism

According to strong pluralism, truth can straightforwardly be many. One way to frame this thesis is to claim that there are multiple truth properties, none of which are possessed by all true sentences. Another way to cash this explanation out is to argue that multiple concepts of truth exist. For example, the strong pluralist might claim that there are two truth concepts T1 and T2 and aligning truth properties t1 and t2, the first one of which is correspondence-based and the second one coherence-based, and which are optimally attributes by their respective predicates "is true1" and "is true2" to avoid ambiguity. From this, one may argue that while the domains of physics and chemistry are susceptible to T1, based on their primarily extensional states of affairs and hence being susceptible to some variant of a correspondence criterion for truth, they need not concern themselves with T2, since it is arguably not relevant for their domain, but rather the distinct domain of ethics or mathematics under which truth is governed by the coherence that any statement has with a broader body of ethical or mathematical sentences:

Perhaps the correspondence theory can be plausibly applied to empirical discourse, accounting for the truth of propositions such as "Mt. Everest is extended in space."

However, it cannot plausibly cover the truth of legal propositions such as “Breaking and entering is illegal.” Now, perhaps coherence with the body of law can plausibly be applied to legal discourse. However, coherence does not seem easily extendable to the empirical domain. (Pedersen et al., 2018, 6)

One issue with the strong models is that based on their radical disunity claim and the inherent lack of unifying features; they have difficulties with standard ways of defining validity, normativity of truth, and generalizations via the truth predicate:

Think about the normative aspect of truth as that which is *prima facie* correct to believe. This is a unifying feature of all truths. Further, validity, or logical consequence is standardly defined as the preservation of truth over inference. The problem is that inference can be mixed, meaning that the premises can be true in different ways, assuming the basic pluralist premise that there are many ways of being true. The question, therefore, is what type of truth (T1, ..., Tn) is preserved over mixed inference? Lastly, concerning generalizations via the truth predicate, statements such as “everything that the Pope said is (or was) true” present themselves as ambiguous in strongly pluralist frameworks. In which of the possible ways (T1, ..., Tn) is everything that the Pope said true? (Tauriainen 2021, 185–186)

Further, such accounts are susceptible to the unintuitive conclusion that one type of truth can be argued to be less normative, objective, explanatory, or valuable when compared to other types. Further, strong models can become victim to ambiguities, where the natural language word “truth” or the predicate “is true” becomes ambiguous between different concepts and properties. For example, if there are multiple truth concepts T1 and T2 and aligning properties t1 and t2 with no necessary connection in between, then it remains unclear which of these concepts is denoted by the natural language word “truth” or the predicate “is true.” While such problems can potentially be surpassed by deploying appropriate regimentation and disambiguating programs, the strong models face another arguable issue of being unintuitive, since we ordinarily take “truth” and “is true” as denoting a single concept and property. Finally, from a definitional perspective, the strong pluralist needs to offer a scaling account for how the distinct concepts of truth connect to the aligning properties, and how the variability claims regarding the nature of truth scales over individual contents.

4.3.2 Moderate Pluralism

According to moderate pluralism, truth is both one *and* many. One way to cash this claim out is to argue that there is one concept of truth that we have access to via platitudes or general principles, and based on which we define the general truth property that all true sentences have and that false sentences lack. In this sense, there is only one general truth property possessed by all true sentences that provides convenient unity to the moderately pluralist models. According to the standard domain-reliant explanation, sentences get to possess the second-order general truth property by possessing the first-order operant truth-rendering property such as correspondence or coherence that is relevant for their domain. In this sense, it is crucially important for a motivationally and technically sound explanation to exist for what the truth-fundamental domains

are, why the nature of truth would vary between such domains, why they are governed by some truth-rendering properties and not others, and how to account for the sole or primary truth-fundamental domain membership of all truth-apt sentences in an unambiguous and determinate manner.

From this, we can conclude some of the central differences between the strong and moderate forms of truth pluralism. For strong pluralists, there are multiple truth properties that map onto distinct ways of being true, with no necessary unity between these ways. For moderate pluralists, there are many ways of being true, but all sentences are ultimately true in the same way. In this sense, the strong models simply argue for different ways of truth without the need to postulate second-order general truth properties, whereas the moderate pluralists at least typically acknowledge both domain-specific and general truth properties. However, the acknowledgment of a unifying general truth property brings with it a certain virtue that helps the moderate models avoid the sort of problems with disunity that concern the strong models that were noted in the previous section. Because there is ultimately only one way of being true, the issues with defining validity, normativity, and generalizations that the strongly pluralist models face potentially dissolve under the moderate pluralist's rule and hence turn out to be a nonissue. What preserves mixed and valid inference, what renders assertions *prima facie* correct to believe and assert in epistemically relevant discourse, and what generalizes over finite and infinite truth-predications is the general property of being true that all true sentences have, and all false sentences lack. A similar benefit concerns the intuitive appeal of the moderately pluralist models, for their persistence on there being only one general way of being true accommodates the pretheoretical conception about the unity that truth displays in our cognitive lives and practices.

Interestingly enough, based on the moderately pluralist models encompassing both unifying and disunifying features in the previously described way, they are compatible with moderate monism regarding truth:

Moderate monism: there is one truth property that is had by all true sentences

Moderate pluralism: there is more than one truth property, some of which are had by all true sentences

This conclusion justifies the argument of how Tarski's and especially Quine's monist accounts of truth are not as far from the more recent pluralist framings as some have proposed (Pedersen & Wright 2023, 4.2; Lynch 2018, 67). Such a conclusion also justifies much of the appeal with moderately pluralist models, both in relation to strong monism and strong pluralism based on the moderate models conveniently encompassing virtues from both the monist and pluralist camps. In short, the disunity of these models helps surpass the scope problem, where monists need to offer scaling accounts for how a single criterion of truth works for the diverse types of speech that we ordinarily take as susceptible to claims about truth and falsity. Further, the unity of the moderate models helps surpass the types of issues with the strong pluralism noted above. Finally, a

potential benefit of moderate pluralism over deflationary views is that the former view can accommodate a deflationary truth-predicate under some appropriate domains, such as logical, mathematical, or fictional discourse, whereas elsewhere, truth can be explained via reference to substantive and explanatory properties, such as the ability of a sentence to correspond with worldly objects or cohere with a body of other true contents. Because of this, my contention is that some form of a moderately pluralist or moderately monist account of truth shows great prospects for a philosophically sustainable postdeflationary substantive theory of truth, and this is the type of view that acts as an implicit reference point in constitutive articles.

4.4 Limits and Prospects of Pluralist Theories

While pluralism about truth is becoming increasingly popular in current debates, such models fail to attract widespread support. Of course, keeping in mind the importance of the topic of truth and the exceedingly long tradition of pursuing its proper definition, one should be cautious about any allegedly novel solution to define it. Because of this, it is only reasonable to be cautious about adopting the relatively recent pluralist explanations for the nature of truth. Another reason for the relative unpopularity of pluralist models is their relatively recent articulation, and the subsequent lack of understanding that scholars have about pluralism and its challenges. Another potential reason is the reasonable contention of how the topic of truth is by itself exceedingly complex, and where one may worry that introducing pluralism to their account only serves to further complexify matters, for example, by fragmenting the normative implications of truth. Finally, one reason that stands in the way of widespread adoption of pluralism is the relative underdevelopment of some such models and the existence of similar definitional issues that concern the well-known traditional monist accounts.

One general and underdeveloped aspect of contemporary pluralist accounts, especially their moderate variants, follows from the prominent commitment to domain reliance, which calls for the pluralists to articulate a philosophically sustainable account of discourse domains. Despite the centrality of domains in stabilizing current pluralist models, relatively little has been said about the nature of domains in current debates: “Despite the central role that domains play within the standard pluralist framework, not much systematic work has been done on their nature” (Pedersen, Wyatt, Kellen 2018, 6). Prominent issues with defining domains that are addressed in the constitutive articles concern the clarification of the pluralist understanding of domains, discussion on whether pluralists can avoid various issues with defining domains, and what the preferred method of defining domains is for them to provide the motivational and technical utility that pluralists are asking for in relation to demarcating content kinds.

5 SCOPE AND LIMITS OF THIS DISSERTATION

This dissertation divides into two connected aspects: exploring the tenability of deflationary critique of substantive accounts of truth and exploring the prospects of postdeflationary substantive theorizing by exploring the limits and participating in the development of the increasingly popular, moderately pluralist accounts of truth. Aligning with this, the central themes of this dissertation are deflationary theories, especially their moderate variants, and pluralist theories and their moderate variants. The discussion of these topics constitutes both negative and positive considerations in relation to exploring the prospects of postdeflationary substantive theorizing about truth.

The first part of this dissertation focuses on arguing against widespread deflationary readings of Quine's truth. Quine is widely interpreted as a prominent and influential deflationist in both the secondary literature of his philosophy and contemporary truth-theoretic debates more broadly conceived as: "Quine, as is well known, defends a deflationary theory of truth." (Verhaegh 2018, 64; see Eklund 2021, 635) Others promote nondeflationary readings:

But he [Quine] does not make the negative statements characteristic of deflationists, that the concept of truth does not have the importance traditionally attributed to it or that it is an uncontentious concept. And he does not say that the meaning of 'true' is given by some version or other of the schema expressing the equivalence of a statement with the attribution of truth of the statement itself. (Parsons 2020, 222; see Davidson 1994; Bergström 1994 & 2000; Raatikainen 2006; Janssen-Lauret 2016; Schwartz 2014 & 2016; Chen 2020; Parsons 2020, 222; Tauriainen 2022)

Based on this, the first two articles focus on clarifying this matter by demonstrating conflicts between Quine's views, various general framings of the deflationary position, specific deflationary theories such as Horwichian minimalism and Fieldian disquotationalism, and what has in recent literature been argued as the strong and moderate variants of the deflationary thesis. Based on this, Quine's views on truth prove incompatible with the deflationary thesis on multiple levels of analysis. This constitutes a significant discovery for both Quine scholars and contemporary more broadly conceived truth-theoretic debates.

In these articles, my aim is to remain relatively neutral in describing Quine's philosophical commitments in general. Although a sizable portion of this dissertation concerns Quine's philosophical views, it is not about his philosophy *per se*. Rather, the focus is constrained by his view on truth and closely related topics. Because of this, scholars familiar with Quine will notice that many aspects of his philosophy are discussed only in passing, and those that play a more significant role. The articles stick to the standard readings one can find in the abundance of available literature on Quine. In short, past Quine's views on truth, my goal is not to provide any novel interpretations or promote nonstandard readings of his ideas; one major reason is the respect that I have for the immense amount of literature on various aspects of Quine's philosophy. However, it is worth emphasizing that I take Quine's empiricism and especially his naturalism as core aspects of his philosophical system through which his views about philosophical questions in general should be interpreted.

The second part of this dissertation focuses on analyzing the limits and prospects of the now popular domain-reliant moderately pluralist accounts of truth. As noted in the previous section, pluralists of various sorts argue for the variability of truth across discourse domains that are individuated based on subject matter. Despite the centrality of subject matter and domains in stabilizing current pluralist frameworks, pluralists have not developed accounts of their nature to the extent that one would expect. Based on this, the constitutive articles on pluralism are largely concerned with developing the current pluralist understanding of subject matters and domains to make their case both motivationally and technically stronger. Central topics of discussion are the theoretical desiderata that pluralists ask from sentential subject matters and discourse domains or domains of sentences, the preferred methods of individuating domains, and different ways of accounting for their membership. In addition, the two papers on pluralism discuss the motivations for arguing for the variability of truth across domains, what the truth-fundamental domains are, how they must be distinguished from non-fundamental domains, what the truth-rendering properties of the truth-fundamental domains are, and *why* and *how* the nature of truth would vary across the proposed truth-fundamental domains such as physics or realist discourse and ethics or antirealist discourse. Overall, my contention is that there are clear prospects for developing the current pluralist understanding of domains and that such a step constitutes a significant development in making the pluralist models philosophically more sustainable and subsequently more appealing for the broader audience.

Based on these constitutive themes, one might wonder why the scope of this dissertation is restricted to the distinct topics of Quine and pluralism, which seemingly bear no connection to one another. Here, as with the articles in general, the motivation for pursuing these topics was *guided by the relevant literature*. Indeed, it is through studying Quine's views on truth that I first became interested in pluralism about truth. After studying some of the less-explored aspects of Quine's truth, I soon noticed pluralizing tendencies. For example, in one instance, Quine notes that "Coherence and correspondence, properly

considered, are not rival theories of truth, but complementary aspects.” (1987, 213) This can be surprising, since others have interpreted Quine as an early critic of pluralist models of truth (Pedersen & Wright 2023, 4.2; Lynch 2018, 67). After exploring pluralist accounts of truth, I found the moderate models more appealing, the major reason being those problems with the strong models that the moderate forms avoid or have ready answers to. However, after analyzing current moderately pluralist models, it became evident that the nature of subject matters and domains on which such models rely are underdeveloped or confused. For example, there is initial variability in how pluralists understand the theoretical desiderata of domains, how the identities of domains are understood, and how they account for the domain membership of truth-apt contents.

Before introducing the constitutive articles of this dissertation, it would be valuable to outline those closely related topics to the themes of this dissertation that are *not* discussed in the composing articles. Initially, this dissertation focuses on concerns about the *concept* of truth, the *property* of being true, and the truth *predicate*. In this sense, this dissertation is mostly concerned with conceptual, metaphysical, and linguistic aspects of Truth unqualified. As noted, these aspects are discussed mainly in relation to moderately deflationary and moderately pluralist theories of truth. While the normativity of truth is discussed to some extent, especially in relation to Quine’s philosophy and scientific practices, the recently sparked veritism and antiveritism debate is bypassed (Pritchard, 2021; Sosa, 2021). Similarly, a more nuanced analysis on the normative variance of truth is bypassed, where, for example, one might discuss how the normative implications of truth may vary between subject matters or ways of being true (Ferrari 2021). Further, the topic of nihilism regarding truth is largely bypassed, even though this can be interpreted as a strong critical response to substantive theorizing about truth in general (Gamester, 2023). Furthermore, only minor notes are made on primitivism about truth, according to whom truth is a fundamental yet *sui generis* unanalyzable property (Asay 2013). In addition, various logical questions about truth, such as the paradoxes and inconsistencies that are involved with the concept of truth or that are generated by the truth predicate, are largely bypassed (Eklund, 2019). Similarly, considerations of conceptual engineering truth are bypassed past brief references (Scharp, 2021). Other minor topics that are not addressed are the truth aptness of vague expressions and temporal expressions.³² Relating to these, one might ask whether vague sentences have the ability to be true or false, or whether there can be (contingent) sentences about the future that are true here and now. None of these restrictions are meant as statements regarding the importance of addressing these topics in full detail elsewhere.

³² Regarding the former point, such expressions can either be banned from the range of truth-aptness or one can aim to paraphrase or translate them into a non-vague form. Regarding the latter point, interesting questions concern whether there are truths about the future, a prospect also discussed by Quine (1992, 90), and whether we can know or determinately make predictions about such truths, and in what is their truth grounded in, but the further analysis of such concerns will be left to another occasion.

5.1 Part One: Nondeflationary Reading of Quine's Truth

Quine was a prominent deflationist, and many more recent deflationists are clearly inspired by Quine. – Eklund 2021, 635

The first two articles of this dissertation are devoted to exploring whether and to what extent Quine's views amount to either a deflationary or nondeflationary understanding of the concept of truth and the property of being true. Initially, Quine's views on truth are arguably one of the less-explored topics of his philosophy, as indicated by Schwartz: "Naturally, there is more to say about Quine's view of the problem of truth (let alone Quine's view of truth)." (2016, 19) By comparing Quine's voluminous but relatively scattered remarks on truth to what has in recent literature been argued as the core commitments of the deflationary thesis, valuable information is gained about his distinctive understanding of truth overall, but more centrally for the purposes of this study, about his alleged commitment to the deflationary program. In short, the concluding argument of these articles is that Quine's views conflict with various general framings of the deflationary position, core commitments of specific deflationary theories such as Horwichian minimalism and Fieldian disquotationalism, and with the relatively recent articulation of the strong and moderate variants of the deflationary thesis. In this sense, despite the abundance of available deflationary readings, Quine's views not only allow for nondeflationary interpretations but also encompass commitments that are incompatible with known framings of the deflationary thesis on both general and theory-specific levels.³³

The first article, "Quine's Conflicts with Truth Deflationism" demonstrates conflicts between Quine's views on truth, various general framings of the deflationary position, and Horwichian minimalism. In short, the main claim is that Quine commits to a substantive constitution claim regarding the grounding of sentential truth. In relation to this, Quine notes, "As already hinted by the correspondence theory, the truth predicate is an intermediary between words and the world. What is true is the sentence, but its truth consists in the world's being as the sentence says," and "truth should hinge on reality, and it does. No sentence is true but reality makes it so." (1992, 81 & 1986, 10) This is in stark contrast to what some deflationists allow: "[According to the deflationist,] there can be no account of what truth consists in: there is no prospect of discovering a property F shared by all and only the truths, such that the truths are true because they are F" (Dodd, 2008, 133–134). Furthermore, Quine's views on the grounding

³³ Regarding Quine scholarship, these essays aim to make a dual contribution by first exploring a relatively neglected aspect of his philosophy and by correcting misinterpretations about his alleged deflationism. In scope, this research is equally relevant for both Quine scholarship and contemporary truth-theoretic debates, and especially those concerning the relationship between deflationary and inflationary theorists. In addition to this, minor contributions are made to the history of analytic philosophy and contemporary truth theoretic debates more broadly conceived.

of sentential truth are consistent with his realism about truth: "I am a realist about truth in whatever sense I am a realist about light rays or straightness." (1994, 497) Based on the class of true sentences having a clear identity and stable extension under the Quinean scheme, and based on the ability of true sentences to provide the intermediary between our theories and the largely extra-theoretic world that our theories are oftentimes about, Quine accepts truth to the range of naturalistically legitimate concepts: "The concept of truth belongs to the conceptual apparatus of science" (1999, 165). This is evident in Quine's usage of the notion of true sentence in defining certain naturalistically legitimate phenomena, such as what the preferred contents of our theories are: "To call a sentence true is just to include it in our own theory of the world." "Theory consists of [immanently true] sentences, or is couched in them; and logic connects sentences to sentences." (1995c, 353 & 1992, 3) Furthermore, Quine treats true sentences as a valuable resources for achieving success in scientifically relevant practices, especially in enabling valid inferences, prediction-making, and the subsequent ability to control our environments (1990, 128). Thus, in Quine's view, true sentences have a substantive grounding in worldly states of affairs, and they further have both axiological and normative implications in relation to naturalistically legitimate practices, where they are used to explain, for example, what we aim at in our inquiries and in relation to what scientists disagree with and change their minds:

We naturalists say that science is the highest path to truth, but still we do not say that everything on which scientists agree is true. Nor do we say that something that was true became false when scientists changed their minds. What we say is that they and we thought it was true, but it wasn't. We have scientists pursuing truth, not decreeing it. (1995b, 261)

In general, it is such constitution claims, extralogical explanatory uses, and axiological and normative implications that separate Quine from the deflationists, though other conflicts are noted as well, perhaps the most notable discovery being the articulation of a nondeflationary reading of the Tarskian T-schema and Quine's disquotation schema.

The second article, "Quine's Truth Revised," builds on and further develops the core arguments of the first paper. In this paper, instead of comparing Quine's views to general framings of the deflationary thesis and specific theories, the focus is on demonstrating specific conflicts between Quine's views and what has in recent literature been argued as the constitutive or core commitments of both strong and moderate variants of the deflationary thesis. Regarding strong deflationism, while Quine rejects the overall existence of properties on strictly ontological grounds to increase the ontological economy of our science, his account of replacing speech about properties proves compatible with truth being even a substantive property of sentences. This is evident in Quine's acceptance of truth to the range of naturalistically legitimate notions, and his utilization of the notion of a true sentence in an extralogical explanatory manner:

Along with this seriocomic blend of triviality and paradox, truth is felt to harbor something of the sublime. Its pursuit is a noble pursuit, and unending. In viewing truth thus, we are viewing it as a single elusive goal or grail. In sober fact the pursuit resolves

into concern with particular sentences, ones important to us in one or another way. Some truths are elusive, some not; some worth pursuing, some not. Thanks to the negation sign, there are as many truths as falsehoods; we just can't always be sure which are which. (1995a, 67; 1995b, 261; 1995c, 353; 1994, 500; 1992, 31)

In addition, Quine's views on the nature of truth conflict with the core commitments of moderate deflationism in their denial of how the property of being a true sentence has no substantive or extraschematic constitution and that they bear no extralogical explanatory utility: "These two theses—that truth is metaphysically simple and explanatorily inert—are at the heart of the deflationary programme." (Wyatt 2021b, 319; see Wyatt 2016, 368; Ferrari 2021, 207–208) As indicated in the previous article, Quine defines sentential truth in a manner that requires correspondence-like connections between linguistic elements (predicates) and worldly objects (referents of singular terms). This amounts to an extraschematic constitution claim, for nothing along these lines is implied by a deflationary reading of the disquotation schema. Simply put, for Quine, sentences are true *because* the relevant aspects of the world (physical objects) make them so, and where the truth of sentences depends on the denotation-based or correspondence-like connections that our predicates have with objects at the object-language level. It is such a substantive constitution that grounds the axiological, normative, and otherwise explanatory uses of true sentences under the Quinean scheme. Moderate deflationists reject these types of substantive and extraschematic constitution claims and the notion that the property of being true bears extralogical or descriptive explanatory utility.

In addition to demonstrating conflicts between Quine's views and the core commitments of both strong and moderate variants of the deflationary thesis, this paper articulates a positive interpretation of Quine's truth as a nondeflationary and minimally committing object-based denotational correspondence theory that shows pluralizing tendencies based on its ability to define the truth of observational and theoretical sentences via the direct or indirect connections they have with worldly states of affairs, namely physical objects.

5.2 Part Two: Limits of Domain-reliant Moderately Pluralist Theories of Truth

The most prominent incarnation of pluralism is *domain-based*: there are several ways of being true because different properties are truth-relevant for different domains. – Pedersen, Ferrari, Moruzzi 2020, 629

Pluralist theories of truth gather a significant amount of interest in contemporary truth-theoretic debates. After being guided toward pluralism by Quine, my interest was initially targeted toward accounting for the variability of truth across observational and theoretical sentences. In my view, Quine indicates such variability in several sections of his work:

Some sentences, to begin with, we accept as true directly on the strength of observation; the essential mechanism here is a conditioning of strings of words to sensory stimulations. Further sentences are rated as true on the strength of systematic connections with the observation sentences. [...] Here is the reasonable place to appeal to coherence, in a vaguer but richer sense than logical consistency. (1987, 213–214; see 1981, 63)

However, based on the focus of the current pluralist literature, the last two articles of this dissertation focus more on the more prominent framings of the generic truth pluralist thesis, namely, the so-called domain-reliant moderately pluralist frameworks that individuated domains based on subject matters instead observational and theoretical sentences.³⁴ In general, the constitutive essays on pluralism aim to illuminate certain weaknesses, shortcomings, and underdevelopments in current pluralist models, and they aim to make the pluralist case motivationally and technically stronger by developing their accounts of subject matters and domains by first introducing them with regimenting and disambiguating strategies, and then improving their views on the individuating factor of domains and the preferred methods of accounting for the domain membership of truth-apt sentences.

While subject matters and domains remain a relatively unexplored topic in current pluralist literature, some critics have directly touched on the topic of how they prove a troublesome commitment for the pluralist program overall: “The notion of a domain of discourse may well be a serious liability for pluralism about truth” (David 2013, 50; see 2022, 8.2). Ferrari presented similar skepticism toward a philosophically sustainable account of subject matter and discourse domains:

However, despite its pervasiveness and significance within and without philosophy, the notion of a domain of discourse is rather difficult to tame. Chief among the more challenging issues is that of providing a clear and systematic set of criteria for sharply demarcating domains – in fact, one may even be skeptical about the possibility of executing such a task. (2021, 31–32)

Regarding the definition of subject matters and domains, the constitutive articles focus mostly on the motivational and technical aspects of arguing for the variability of truth across domains. In this sense, central questions concern the identification of truth-fundamental domains, how they are distinguished from the potentially non-truth-fundamental domains, what are the relevant criteria for truth that govern the truth-fundamental domains, and *why* and *how* would the nature of truth vary between such truth-fundamental domains in the first place. From a technical perspective, central questions concern whether domains need to be unambiguously individuated classes of sentences with determinate rules for membership, or if they can be treated as less rigorous classes that encompass overlapping, ambiguity, or mixing of extensions, as indicated by Lynch:

It is obvious that propositions do come in at least rough kinds – kinds that are individuated by differences in the sorts of properties and objects that the various sorts of propositions are about. [...] If this is right, there is no need for the pluralist to sort

³⁴ However, I still think that the tenability of this type of pluralism should be explored elsewhere in full detail.

propositions into strict domains. She takes each proposition as it comes, finding that, in fact, they come in groups, in bunches, in mobs. (2013, 34)

Further, there is some variability in the current literature on whether truth-apt sentences must belong to only one truth-fundamental domain, or perhaps many, and whether this compromises the ability of pluralists to account for the truth and falsity of the full range of truth-apt discourse in a determinate manner (Wyatt, 2013, 13; Edwards 2018b, 95–96; Yu 2017, 281 & Yu 2018, 413–414).

The third article, “No Safe Haven for Truth Pluralists,” is best understood as an investigation of the problems involved with what can be labeled as domain-free variants of truth pluralism that do not make reference to kinds of sentences when arguing for the variability of truth, and it implicitly explores various issues that emerge under domain-reliant pluralist models if sentences are freely allowed to instantiate multiple subject matters in an indeterminate manner. In addition, the paper focuses on analyzing various ways in which ambiguity poses problems for prominent accounts of pluralism. This investigation was sparked by the discovery of how ambiguity in general is not well explored in current pluralist debates: “Generally, however, the issue of ambiguity for pluralism has not been well-analyzed.” (Pedersen & Wright 2023, 4.1) Here, the idea is that pluralists aim to offer a definition of truth that scales across the full range of truth-apt natural discourse, yet relatively little has been said about the inherent ambiguities involved with natural discourse. In retrospect, this study is more about what *would* happen if ambiguity were allowed in pluralist models. Indeed, many of the problems noted in this article are bypassed in the second one by adopting a relatively straightforward regimentation method of dissolving with semantic ambiguity, where, instead of natural discourse sentences, *interpretations* of sentences are treated as the primary truth bearers and members of truth-fundamental domains. Based on this, many of the issues noted in this first paper simply dissolve. However, were truth aptness to scale over ambiguous discourse, this would compromise the ability of domain-reliant pluralists to account for the truth and falsity of ambiguous sentences in a domain-reliant manner, since ambiguous terms can compromise one’s ability to assign truth-apt contents to domains in a determinate manner. In addition, this essay is important for illuminating the distinction that the problem of ambiguity poses in contrast to that concerning the distinct phenomena of *vague* and *mixed* concepts and sentences, which will be discussed further in the second publication.

The fourth and final paper, “Truth Pluralism and Discourse Domains,” articulates certain motivational and technical problems that concern prominent topic-based understanding of subject matter as the individuating factor of truth-fundamental domains. After this, this paper defends the so-called ontology-based approach to individuating truth-fundamental subject matters and domains, which shows both motivational and technical benefits over topic-based approaches. In addition, this paper articulates neglected issues that *mixed content* and *complex properties* pose for current pluralist models, and especially their accounts for domains and membership, and demonstrates solutions to such issues when utilizing the ontology-based approach to individuating truth-

fundamental subject matters and domains. In conclusion, the main argument is that pluralists should dispense with speech about subject matters as topically individuated categories of discursive contents across which the nature of truth varies, and they should adopt an ontology-based approach to make their case both motivationally and technically stronger. In this sense, the ontology-based approach marks a significant development in the current pluralist understanding of domains.

6 PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Finally, this study raises several prospects for future research that are worth pointing out. One can find a list of some of the more interesting and valuable prospects as follows, divided into a section on Quine and deflationism, a section on pluralism, and more general concerns that relate to the role that truth has in sustaining societal and theoretical practices.

6.1 Prospects on Quine and Deflationism

The first prospect for further research concerns Quine's lessons on the naturalistic legitimacy of truth. The relationship between truth and naturalism has been studied in only a couple of papers (Brogaard 2016; Ferrari, Lynch, & Edwards 2015). Quine is generally held as a prominent and influential naturalist: "Naturalism is probably the dominant philosophical perspective in analytic philosophy today, and the naturalist par excellence is surely Willard Van Orman Quine." (Weir 2014, 114) In addition, Quine accepts truth as a naturalistically legitimate notion, which is not something naturalists in general might not prefer. Further, insofar as naturalists were to commit to the naturalistic legitimacy of the property of being true, there are reasons to think that, for example, both strong and moderate ontological naturalists would do so on deflationary grounds. However, from the discoveries of this dissertation, it follows that at least Quine accepts a nondeflationary account of truth as an explanatory notion under his naturalism. This makes room for exploring substantive naturalistic accounts of truth that could be treated as a viable alternative to the other major strands of postclassical theorizing, namely, primitivist, pluralist, and truthmaker theories. For example, nothing prevents the development of an account of truth where it is treated as a theoretical concept and as a substantive second-order property of sentences. In relation to this, naturalists are happy to admit the legitimacy of various similar normative concepts that govern proper theory construction, such as the theoretical virtues of material accuracy, simplicity, fruitfulness, etc.

Nothing prevents truth from having a similar normative role in theory construction, where we aim to build theories that consist of *true* sentences and their inferential relations: "Theory consists of [immanently true] sentences, or is couched in them; and logic connects sentences to sentences." (1992, 3)

The second prospect for further research concerns the exploration of Quine's indication of the simultaneous immanence and transcendence of truth:

We go on testing our scientific theory by prediction and experiment, and modifying it as needed, in quest of the truth. Truth thus looms as a haven that we keep steering for and correcting to. It is an ideal of pure reason, in Kant's phrase. Very well: immanent in those other respects, transcendent in this. (1995c, 353)

For example, Verhaegh supported a thoroughly immanent reading of Quine's truth: "Quine's theory of truth illustrates that his picture of inquiry has strong metaphysical implications. If we take the view that we are 'working from within' seriously, even our realism and our ideas about truth will be immanent." (2016, 66) Verhaegh derived Quine's dismissal of "extra scientific notions" from the following types of quotes: "Within our own total evolving doctrine, we can judge truth as earnestly and absolutely as can be; subject to correction, but that goes without saying." (Quine 1960, 25) But in my view, nothing blocks one from thinking that we can judge or conclude which of our sentences are true only immanently, yet where the truth of our sentences is either directly (observational sentence) or indirectly (theoretical sentence) determined by extratheoretical or theory-transcendent aspects of reality. Of course, I agree that trying to speak about such theory-transcendent reality without being independent of *any* background theory is impossible. However, this does not mean that theory-transcendent states of affairs do not affect which sentences are treated as true or false. Furthermore, the transcendental argument is supported by Quine's explicit commitment to realism regarding truth, and the commitments to bivalence and warrant independence, where each truth-apt sentence is rendered as necessarily true or false independent of our knowledge or justification. In this sense, arguably, true and false sentences exist about the world that we do not *yet* have the ability to formulate and that we might not even have an *in principle* way of confirming, for example, based on them being causally isolated. Past this, one relevant discovery is that were Quine's truth to encompass transcendental implications, then this would be problematic for scholars such as Verhaegh, who interpret Quine as a deflationist about truth: "We have seen that Quine's picture supports his deflationary, immanent conception of truth; in working from within, we also commit ourselves to an immanent notion of 'truth.'" (2016, 68) Deflationists typically hold that truth predications are language- or theory-immanent, and that true sentences are not such *because* language- or theory-transcendental states of affairs make them so. However, one might wonder whether truth can be simultaneously wholly immanent yet normative in the sense of it being *a* goal of inquiry and *a* standard for correctness of assertion for naturalistically legitimate discourse, as acknowledged by Quine: "Science is seen as pursuing and discovering truth rather than as decreeing it" and "We have scientists pursuing truth, not decreeing it." (1995a, 67; 1995b, 261) Were Quine to

uphold that truth is something that we can fabricate, dictate, or conclude on immanently, then perhaps his magnum opus *Pursuit of Truth* (1992) should be translated to something like *Invention of Truth*, etc. Nonetheless, the simultaneous immanence and transcendence of Quine's truth prove to be a valuable prospect for further research.

The third prospect for further research concerns Quine's relation to truth pluralism. Quine acknowledges that both coherence and correspondence are legitimate aspects of truth, and he further indicates that the truth of theoretical and observational sentences might be grounded on different things, namely direct or indirect contact with worldly states of affairs (1987, 213–214; 1981, 63). Exploration of this question is especially interesting in light of how some take Quine as an early critic of pluralism (Pedersen & Wright 2023, 4.2; Lynch 2018, 67). This question also relates to the study of Quine's lessons on the naturalistic legitimacy of truth, for there must be a philosophically sustainable explanation for how different kinds of sentences be true under the Quinean framework for truth to be a naturalistically sustainable notion.

Fourth, another prospect for further research concerns the thorough explication between Quinean and Fieldian variants of disquotationalism. In my view, it is not completely clear what Quinean disquotationalism amounts to, even after the constitutive articles of this dissertation and Schwartz's (2014, 2016) thorough work clarifying this theory or definition. In this sense, it is not completely clear how one must interpret the Quinean disquotation schema, for it might be the case that Quine himself indicates the possibility of multiple distinct readings. In one instance, Quine simply claimed, "Truth is disquotation." (1992, 80) Elsewhere, Quine makes the aforementioned types of explanations: "As already hinted by the correspondence theory, the truth predicate is an intermediary between words and the world." (1992, 81) However, it is not clear whether a deflationary reading of the disquotation schema permits true sentences to provide an intermediary between language and the world. At other times, Quine offers reductive analysis for parts of the disquotation schema, namely for the truth of the object-language sentences that instantiate on the right-hand side of the biconditional:

Predication joins a general term ["F"] and a singular term ["a"] to form a sentence ["a is F"] that is true or false according as the general term is true or false of the object, if any, to which the singular term refers. (1960, 96)

First, it should be clarified what the relation between these views is to Fieldian pure disquotationalism, in addition to the normative implications that Quine predicates on the concept of truth and true sentences. There are some notable differences. Field's disquotationalism relies on the idea of conceptual necessity between the operands of the disquotation schema. Quine is suspicious of the concept of necessity in general, and following Tarski, relies on the relation of material equivalence between the operands of the schema. This turns out to be a problem for deflationary interpreters, for according to Armour-Garb, Stoljar, and Woodridge (2023, 1.1), no known deflationary schema deploys the relation of

material equivalence, but rather relies on either analytic or necessary equivalence relations.

Connecting to this, the fifth prospect for further research concerns the exploration of what exactly it means for a truth schema to be truly deflationary. Based on the literature, the constitutive articles treat deflationary schemas as metaphysically neutral or noncommitting. However, a deflationary schema cannot be metaphysically noncommitting, for this is in itself a metaphysically committing claim. Further, were a deflationary schema metaphysically neutral, then for one, this would commit the deflationists to the already described extensive revisionary program where one has to make sure that their account of truth indeed is fully disconnected from explanatory connections with other substantive notions, and where one has to offer a truth-disconnected definition for all those concepts that rely on nondeflationary understanding of truth as an explanatory resource. Future research on deflationism should articulate what exactly one means by a deflationary schema, and how such schema differs from a minimally committing yet substantive truth-definitional schema. Overall, one might even argue that a valuable prospect for further research is simply to articulate exactly what it is that distinguishes between deflationary, nondeflationary, and inflationary theories.

6.2 Prospects on Pluralism

Regarding pluralism, the first prospect for further study concerns the exploration of pluralist-relevant ways of demarcating content kinds. For example, it should be clarified what the motivations of arguing for the variability of truth across content kinds are, and similarly, pluralists should be clearer on the theoretical desiderata that they look from the deployed ways of demarcating between such kinds. In addition, pluralists should answer whether truth-apt sentences are individuated into kinds based on primitive topical distinctions, functional roles, ontological distinctions, or based on sentences being about distinct aspects of the world such as facts, objects, or truth- or falsity-makers. In my view, by deploying the notion of discourse domains as individuated categories of content kinds, pluralists have stumbled on a topic that bears widespread relevance for philosophical theories of various sorts. For example, think about an ethical expressivist who argues that such discourse is non-truth-apt, in contrast to, say, the discourse of physics. This explanation relies on clear boundaries between ethical and physical sentences. However, there is no general account of subject matters available in contemporary philosophical literature that pluralists could directly deploy in their accounts. In relation to this, another prospect would be to evaluate how the so-called Lewisian literature on subject matter relates to pluralist debates on this topic. For example, Yablo (2014) and Fine (2020) provide extensive discussions on subject matters that remain completely disconnected from pluralist debates. In relation to this, one important question is how the notions of whole, partial, and indirect subject matters have to the current pluralist

understanding of subject matters, domains, and their membership where, for example, Edwards argues that only predicate kinds are relevant for the subject matters of atomics:

I will suggest that it is the predicate that determines the domain. We can distinguish between two things: what a sentence is about, and what is said about the thing the sentence is about. A sentence is about its object: 'snow is white' is about snow, 'torture is wrong' is about torture, 'the sunset is beautiful' is about the sunset, so atomic sentences are always about their objects. But what makes these things *sentences* is that there is more: there is something that is said about the things that the sentences are about. In the examples above it is said of snow that it is white, it is said of torture that it is wrong, and it is said of the sunset that it is beautiful. This 'saying of' occurs due to the attribution of a property to the object. It is this aspect – the attribution of a property to an object – that makes these kinds of sentences in that they are bearers of content. So, it is not what a sentence is about that we should be considering, it is rather what is said about the thing the sentence is about. (2018a, 78–79; Pedersen & Wright 2023, 4.5)³⁵

In my view, such a claim is highly controversial when contrasted with the aforementioned nonpluralist literature on aboutness and subject matters that one can find in the pre- and post-Lewisian literature (see Hawke 2018).

Another prospect for further research concerns the exploration of the phenomenon of complex and mixed concepts and the relationship that these have to the pluralist ability to assign sentences into domains. Here, the initial framework separates simple concepts such as "water" from complex ones such as "H₂O" that are composed of multiple constitutive concepts. From the phenomenon of complex concepts emerges a worry where such concepts can encompass content that is relevant to multiple subject matters at once. This can cause problems, for instance, for the aforementioned predicate-emphasizing approach to domain membership, where the subject matter of the predicate concept of atomics determines the domain of such sentences. Insofar as a predicate concept can be mixed, they can subsequently assign one and the same sentence into multiple truth-fundamental domains, where the sentence can possess only one of the relevant truth-rendering properties while lacking another. Since many pluralists argue that sentences get to be true by possessing the general truth property based on them having the first-order truth-rendering property for their domain, and where such sentences count as false by lacking the first-order property and subsequently the general truth property, then this would cause some truth-apt sentences with mixed predicates to be potentially true and false at the same time. This idea is clarified further in the second constitutive article on pluralism.

The third prospect for further research concerns the exploration of what can be labeled indeterminacy pluralism, which simply accepts some indeterminacy regarding the domain membership of truth-apt sentences. For example, one could argue that while domain-reliant moderately pluralist models are successful in accounting for the variability of truth in general, mixed content generates fringe cases where the models simply do not offer unambiguous explanations for

³⁵ Elsewhere, Edwards simply claims that "the singular term is not relevant to domain individuation." (2018a, 79). This is in stark contrast with how many in the Lewisian literature understand subject matters (see Hawke 2018).

the truth of each sentence, and where the truth of confused sentences has to be dealt with individually. This model is appealing, not least because the pressure regarding universal scalability is already lessened by the pluralist interest in aiming to account for the truth and falsity of all sentences we ordinarily take as susceptible to truth-aptness, which is something that the substantive monists accounts have even greater difficulties in acknowledging. Thus, arguably, even if pluralist models are allowed to encompass some indeterminacy, this could still make them more appealing, in contrast to substantive monist accounts that are in general highly restrictive on their acknowledgment of what types of sentences are susceptible to claims about truth and falsity. Further indications toward such an indeterminacy view can be found in Eklund (2021, 643).

6.3 Prospects on Truth in General

The prospect of substantive theorizing about truth opens the gate for analyzing the explanatory role that truth plays in sustaining healthy theoretical and societal practices. Regarding this, one might focus not so much on analyzing the metaphysical details of the concept of truth or the property of being true, but the *role* that truth has in our cognitive lives broadly conceived. Relevant questions concern the exploration of the role of truth in sustaining epistemic authority, recognition, and expertise. More specifically, one could analyze the role that truth has in sustaining the phenomena of epistemic testimonies, and whether and what sense speaking or believing the truth can be mandated in places such as class and courtrooms, and what role truth has in organizing epistemic labor and dividing epistemic responsibility. In general, we think that some standard for correctness of belief and assertion is indispensably important for resolving epistemic disagreements, which as a phenomenon is fundamentally important for sustaining healthy democratic practices, such as the ability to meaningfully disagree with one another and those in power. Further, without a substantive standard of truth, it becomes difficult to hold liars, deceivers, trolls, propagandists, and mis- and mal-informers accountable for their actions.³⁶ Finally, it is not clear what would happen to democratically healthy practices such as voting if it wasn't based on the notion of true information, or what happens to trust toward authorities and experts were there no robust standard

³⁶ Promoting a proper understanding of truth is also educationally relevant, for as noted in the first section of this introduction, the ability for people to distinguish between what is true and false requires that they operate with sustainable accounts of truth and falsity, which are ever more important based on there being an abundance of seemingly viable information available online for people to justify mutually incompatible beliefs of various sorts.

of truth to govern what is in general correct for such parties to assert and base their decisions on.³⁷

³⁷ The democratic value of truth is also scientifically relevant, for healthy democracies enable the emergence of healthy scientific practices, and because science at its best is democratic activity, where people aim to discover the truth collectively while respecting principles of epistemic and justificatory equality.

7 RESPONSES TO CRITICISM

Before moving into the constitutive essays of this dissertation, it is helpful to outline some of the major criticism these essays have faced, especially from the preliminary reviewers. This will serve to elucidate the fundamental findings of this dissertation, clarify their connections with each other and the existing body of literature, and contextualize the essays in relation to the theoretical background, motivations, and objectives outlined in this introduction.

In general, one might wonder whether the scope of these essays matches with the broad theoretical background and scope of this dissertation. As the title of this dissertation indicates, this work aims to explore the limits and prospects of postdeflationary substantive theorizing about truth, which constitutes a significant and relatively broad topic. However, the contributing essays are limited in scope and concern a relatively narrow range of topics, namely Quine's views on truth, and deflationism and pluralism about truth. However, my contention is that the range of topics addressed in these articles far exceeds the major themes, and as the reader will notice, the range of ideas that are discussed in relation to the concept of truth, the property of being true, and the truth predicate matches the breadth of the theoretical background and scope outlined in this introduction. In this sense, the range of topics concerning truth that are either directly or indirectly addressed in the constitutive articles is relatively extensive, especially when considering the technical nature and complexity of these topics, even though the major conclusions of these articles have a somewhat limited scope.

One might wonder why there is so much overlap between the articles on Quine. In my view, such overlap is justified based on the articles addressing the same topic of Quine's truth. Further, both of these articles argue in favor of the same conclusion, namely that Quine's views on truth conflict with the deflationary thesis. However, the angles from which this question is approached are different between the articles, for whereas the first article analyzes Quine's views in relation to various general framings of the deflationary thesis and specific theories such as Horwichian minimalism, the second article compares Quine's views to what has in recent literature been argued as the constitutive or core

commitments of strong and moderate variants of the deflationary thesis. Because of this similarity, the articles utilized much of the same material, especially when describing Quine's views on truth. Nonetheless, there is also a healthy amount of variability, especially regarding the secondary or commentary literature on Quine, and the material on deflationary theories that significantly extends past the first article. Further, my contention is that occasional repetition and overlap serves to clarify the exposition of the second article, and some repetition is simply necessary for introducing the more developed arguments in the second paper when compared to the first essay. In addition, because of the complexity and technicality of the discussion, some of the repetitions are justified based on the arguments requiring similar setups. More specifically, the second paper extends beyond the first one in the following parts:

- a. Articulation of conflicts between Quine's views and the core commitments of strong and moderate variants of the deflationary thesis
- b. Articulation of the so-called double-alethic standard
- c. Articulation of how rejecting the existence of properties does not straightforwardly lead to deflationism (class nominalism)
- d. More nuanced articulation of deflationism (genus/species/variants)
- e. More nuanced articulation of the difference between conceptual and metaphysical deflationism
- f. More thorough description of Quine's commitment to a truthmaker-relation
- g. More thorough articulations of Quine's commitments to realism, empiricism, and realism about truth
- h. More thorough analysis of how truth relates to other aspects of Quine's philosophy
- i. More detailed articulation of Quine's denotational object-based correspondence view
- j. More developed argumentation regarding the explanatory uses of truth in Quine
- k. More developed articulation of the value and normativity of truth in Quine

One might wonder whether the first article on truth pluralism is valuable for advancing the literature on this topic. Here, an illuminating recognition is that the first paper is by far the oldest and the least developed when compared to the other contributions. Because of this, the first paper does not match the others in terms of the quality of argumentation. However, this paper nonetheless marks a significant step in pursuing this study, since it was the first peer-reviewed publication through which I learned much about academic work in general, and which helped me familiarize with the literature on pluralism and diagnose certain weaknesses and gaps in research regarding current pluralist models. In addition, while the main argument of this paper is hardly significant because the noted issue with semantic ambiguity is not unique to pluralism and pluralists have apt methods of resolving it, as will be argued in the second article, the first article nonetheless encompasses certain minor arguments that are interesting and

valuable for current debates. One such example is the articulation of the neglected question of what are the theoretical desiderata that pluralists ask from domains, namely, that they are preferably unambiguous classes of sentences with determinate rules for membership. Another example concerns the demonstration of different problems that emerge if the aforementioned desiderata regarding domains are not met, namely, the emergence of conflicts with the standard laws of non-contradiction and identity under prominent domain-reliant pluralist models. Finally, the discoveries of the first article provide a crucial steppingstone in the process of pursuing the second constitutive article on pluralism, which makes a more significant and substantive contribution to current pluralist debates.

One might wonder to what extent the first and second articles on pluralism overlap. There indeed is some overlap between the materials of these papers, but this is largely because of the similarities between the setups and because the discussed problems (semantic ambiguity & mixed content) are similar to one another. However, my contention is that in the case of these contributions, the problems with overlap and repetition are a non-issue, for while the second paper utilizes much of the same material as the first one, the argumentative structures and substance are clearly distinct, as are the main conclusions of these papers. Indeed, the reader will notice that while both papers are concerned with the pluralist understanding of subject matters and discourse domains, they discuss quite different questions regarding them, namely how the independent phenomena of semantic ambiguity, and mixed content and complex properties, pose trouble for the current pluralist understanding of subject matters and discourse domains.

SUMMARY IN FINNISH

Tässä väitöskirjassa tarkastellaan totuutta koskevan merkityksellisen teoretisoinnin mahdollisuutta postdeflationistisessa viitekehyksessä. Postdeflationistiset teoriat ottavat huomioon vaikutusvaltaisten deflationististen teorioiden pyrkimyksen muodostaa selkeä, itsenäinen ja metafyyysisesti yksinkertainen määritelmä totuuden käsitteelle tai siihen liittyvälle totuusominaisuudelle. Merkitykselliset postdeflationistiset teoriat pyrkivät välttämään sitoumusta deflationismin negatiivisiin väitteisiin, erityisesti totuuden yksinkertaisuuden, vähämerkityksellisyyden ja selitysvoimattomuuden osalta.

Väitöskirjan yleinen motivaattori on niin sanottu nykyaikainen totuuden kriisi, jossa perinteistä ja merkityksellistä totuuskäsitettä kyseenalaistetaan filosofia tieteenalan sisä- ja ulkopuolella sekä muodollisessa että vähemmän muodollisessa keskustelussa. Tutkimus erottelee tiedon ja totuuden kriisit, jonka jälkeen se keskittyy länsimaisen analyttisen filosofian kontekstissa esiintyvään deflationistiseen kritiikkiin, joka on nykyaikaisen totuuden kriisin keskeinen osa-alue. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on tarkastella deflationististen teorioiden ja niiden esittämän kritiikin rajoja ja filosofista kestävyyttä erityisesti totuuden käsitteen ja totuusominaisuuden väitetyt vähämerkityksellisyyden ja selitysvoimattomuuden osalta.

Väitöskirjassa ensimmäiset kaksi artikkelia keskittyvät W.V.O. Quinen laajalle levinneiden deflationististen luentojen kumoamiseen. Quine tulkitaan vaikutusvaltaiseksi deflationistiksi sekä hänen ajatteluaan käsittelevässä kirjallisuudessa että totuusteoreettisessa kirjallisuudessa laajemmin ymmärrettynä. Artikkelien pääväite on, että Quinen ajattelu on ristiriidassa deflationistisen lähestymistavan kanssa yleisellä ja tyyppi- sekä teoriaspesifeillä tasoilla. Tämä poistaa vaikutusvaltaisen ajattelijan deflationistien tukijoukoista, samalla aiheuttaen epäilystä kyseisen ajattelusuuntauksen filosofista kestävyyttä kohtaan.

Totuusdeflationismin tarkastelun jälkeen käsittely siirtyy niin sanotun merkityksellisen totuutta koskevan postdeflationistisen teoretisoinnin mahdollisuuden analyysiin. Postdeflationistiset teoriat tunnustavat vaikutusvaltaisten deflationististen teorioiden vaikutuksen nykyaikaiseen totuusteoreettiseen keskusteluun ilman välttämätöntä sitoumusta niiden negatiivisiin väitteisiin koskien totuuden käsitteen tai totuusominaisuuden luonnetta. Merkityksellinen postdeflationistinen teoria kunnioittaa deflationistien laajalti hyväksymiä määritelmällisiä hyveitä kuten selkeyttä, itsenäisyyttä ja metafyyysistä yksinkertaisuutta samalla tunnustaen kyseisen käsitteen tai ominaisuuden kompleksisuuden ja selitysvoiman muiden käsitteiden ja ilmiöiden määrittelyssä sekä ymmärtämisessä.

Väitöskirjan kaksi viimeistä artikkelia keskittyvät suosituksi muodostuneiden totuuspluralististen teorioiden rajojen ja kehitysmahdollisuuksien tutkimukseen. Artikkelit selvittävät ongelmia, joita semanttinen monimerkityksellisyys aiheuttaa pluralististen mallien kontekstissa ja tutkivat kuinka kyseiset mallit kykenevät selittämään aikaisemmassa kirjallisuudessa sivuutettujen kompleksisten lauseiden totuuden filosofisesti kestäväällä tavalla. Artikkelit osoittavat, että semanttinen monimerkityksellisyys ei merkittävästi uhkaa pluralistisia malleja ja

että mikään ei estä kyseisiä malleja kykenemästä selittämään aikaisempaa kompleksisempien lauseiden totuutta filosofisesti kestäväällä tavalla. Näin pluralistiset teoriat tarjoavat arvokkaan vaihtoehdon merkitykselliselle postdeflationistiselle totuutta koskevalle teoretisoinnille.

Lopuksi väitöskirjassa esitetään näkökulmia jatkotutkimukselle Quinen totuuskäsitteen ja deflationismin, totuuspluralismin ja totuutta koskevien yleisempien näkökohtien osalta sekä vastataan väitöskirjatutkimusta kohtaan esitettyyn alustavaan kritiikkiin.

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ORIGINAL PAPERS

I

QUINE'S CONFLICTS WITH TRUTH DEFLATIONISM

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Quine's conflicts with truth deflationism

Teemu Tauriainen¹

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Abstract

Compared to the extensive amount of literature on various themes of W.V.O. Quine's philosophy, his immanent concept of truth remains a relatively unexplored topic. This relative lack of research contributes to a persistent confusion on the deflationary and inflationary details of Quine's truth. According to a popular reading, Quine's disquotational definition of the truth predicate exhausts the topic of truth, thus amounting to a deflationary view. Others promote opposing interpretations. I argue that by relying on Tarski's semantic conception of truth, Quine's disquotational account inherits a commitment to classical correspondence intuitions. Based on this, Quine posits a firm constitution for truth as an intermediary between language and the world. From this constitution claim follows that the disquotational account proves incompatible with both the general deflationary thesis and, more specifically, the minimalist account, which deny any constitution for truth past what is given by the preferred deflationary schema. This reading is significant for refuting the widespread misrepresentations of Quine as a prominent deflationist.

Keywords W.V.O. Quine · Truth · Disquotation · Correspondence · Deflationism · Inflationism

1 Introduction

W.V.O. Quine's philosophy has been subject to extensive research especially in recent decades.¹ Despite this, there are even major themes under Quine's corpus that have received relatively minor attention from scholars when compared to other thoroughly

¹ Some examples of the more extensive studies on Quine's philosophical system can be found in Gibson (2004), Hylton (2007), Harman & Lepore (2014), Kemp & Janssen-Lauret (2016), Verhaegh (2018), and Janssen-Lauret (2020).

✉ Teemu Tauriainen
tejutaur@student.jyu.fi

¹ University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland

examined aspects of his philosophy.² One relatively unexplored topic is Quine's *immanent conception of truth* that he frequently discussed in the latter part of his career (1975, 327–328; 1981, 38–39 & 21–23; 1986, 10–12 & 35–46; 1987, 212–216; 1992, 77–101; 1995a 59–67; 1995b, 261; 1995c, 353; 1995d, 224).³

The relative lack of research on Quine's truth contributes to a persistent confusion on the deflationary and inflationary details of this notion.⁴ Quine is widely interpreted as a prominent deflationist in both the literature on his philosophy and contemporary truth theoretic debates more broadly conceived. For example, Verhaegh notes in his book-length study of Quine's naturalism that "Quine, as is well known, defends a deflationary theory of truth." (2018, 64; see Horwich, 1998, 5 & 2009, 31–33; Hylton, 2007, 274–279; Ebbs, 2009, 1–3; Price, 2009, 325; Horsten & Leigh, 2017, 200; Kemp, 2012, 52–53; Misak, 2018, 299). Eklund makes a similar claim that further emphasizes Quine's significance in influencing contemporary deflationists: "Quine was a prominent deflationist, and many more recent deflationists are clearly inspired by Quine." (2021, 635). Others promote non-deflationary readings: "Those who have taken the emphasis on the disquotational aspect of the truth predicate as a sign that Quine is a deflationist must, I conclude, be wrong." (Davidson, 2005, 85; see Bergström, 1994, 421 & 2000, 63; Raatikainen, 2006, 184; Schwartz, 2014, 9–11 & 2016, 1; Janssen-Lauret, 2015, 153; Gregory, 2019, 152–154, Chen 2020, 110–113).⁵ More recently, Parsons argues that:

But he [Quine] does not make the negative statements characteristic of deflationists, that the concept of truth does not have the importance traditionally attributed

² Some such aspects are Quine's naturalism, his views on the language and structure of scientific theories, and the well-known indeterminacy theses. In relation to the relative lack of research on Quine's truth, Joshua Schwartz (2016, 19) has noted that "Naturally, there is more to say about Quine's view of the problem of truth (let alone Quine's view of truth).".

³ Previous studies on Quine's truth can be found in Bergström's two articles "Quine's Truth" (1994) and "Quine, Empiricism and Truth" (2000), Davidson's paper "What is Quine's View of Truth?" (2005), scattered but extensive discussion in Ebbs's "Truth and Words" (2009), more recently Schwartz's "Quine, Disquotation, and Truth" (2014) and "Quine and the Problem of Truth" (2016), and Chen's "Quine's Disquotationalism: A Variant of Correspondence Theory" (2020). Less extensive sections on Quine's truth can be found in Hylton (2007, 269–279), and Kemp (2012, 113–118).

⁴ Some other confusions that will be largely bypassed are Quine's views on the simultaneous immanence and transcendence of truth: "Quine's position here may seem confusing, even contradictory, even apart from the contrast between the immanent and the transcendent [...] If calling a sentence true is simply saying that it is included in our science, how can we conclude that a sentence which we once called true is in fact false?" (Hylton 2007, 277). This confusion is addressed by Bergström, who aimed to reconcile the simultaneous realism and anti-realism of Quine's truth (Bergström 1994, 421; see Bergström 2000, 63). In *Responses*, Quine explicitly refused to change his views towards Bergström's suggestions (1994, 496–500). Recently, this topic has been addressed by Verhaegh, who argues for a thoroughly immanent reading of Quine's truth (2018, 71–74). Another confusion concerns the significance that Quine's views on disquotation have for his understanding of truth overall, which stems partly from the confusion regarding what Quine's view of disquotation amounts to (Schwartz 2014 & 2016). Interestingly enough, Quine was aware of some of these confusions surrounding his truth, yet he did not think that solving at least some of them is a worthwhile project (1992, 82; 1994, 500; 1995c, 353).

⁵ I agree with Raatikainen's initial interpretation, according to whom, "Although, it is certainly true that Quine's remarks on truth considerably inspired contemporary deflationism, I think it is problematic to count Quine himself unqualifiedly as a deflationist." (2006, 184).

to it or that it is an uncontentious concept. And he does not say that the meaning of 'true' is given by some version or other of the schema expressing the equivalence of a statement with the attribution of truth of the statement itself. (2020, 222)

What is one to make of Quine's truth when it seems to allow for *both* deflationary and inflationary readings? I clarify matters by focusing on what Quine's (1992, 79–82) *disquotational account* commits to regarding the nature of truth in relation to the inflationism/deflationism distinction. My core argument is that Quine's account encompasses extra-schematic and non-deflationary commitments. For the deflationists, the preferred deflationary schema exhausts the content of truth: "The notion of truth, and everything we do with it, is captured entirely by attending to the truth schema." (Asay, 2021, 111; see Armour-Garb et al., 2022, 1.1; Eklund, 2021, 632). However, nowhere does Quine state that the disquotation schema encompasses all there is to truth. Rather, just as Tarski before him, Quine holds that the instances of the disquotation schema (or the T-schema) are what any materially adequate definition of truth must imply and that a satisfactory account of truth can involve more. In relation to this, Quine (1995c, 353) explicitly states that disquotation is only one of the *three* constitutive commitments of his immanent conception of truth, others being sententiality and naturalism. Furthermore, when describing disquotation as one of these commitments, Quine states, "I base the immanence of truth on disquotation: To call a sentence true is just to include it in our own theory of the world." (1995c, 353). However, claiming that truth in the disquotational sense has a role in the selection of contents to our theories exceeds what is evident in the plain disquotation schema, thus indicating extra-schematic commitments. The threat with such commitments from the deflationary perspective is that they risk tying one's account of truth to other concepts with varying degrees of metaphysical weight, subsequently risking metaphysical inflation. Overall, my contention is that by focusing on the extra-schematic and non-deflationary aspects of Quine's disquotational account, clarity is achieved regarding his understanding of truth and, more specifically, on the aforementioned confusion between its deflationary and inflationary readings.

In the second section, I set the stage by discussing Quine's views on the nature of truth and note some initial conflicts between it and deflationary views. In the third section, I clarify core differences between deflationary and inflationary theories to allow for a more detailed comparison between Quine's views and these -isms. In the fourth section, I demonstrate conflicts between Quine's views and the deflationary claims of truth being exhausted by the preferred deflationary schema and truth lacking extra-logical explanatory utility. In the fifth section, I argue that Quine commits to an extra-schematic constitution claim where sentential truth consists in a substantive connection that they have with the relevant aspect of the world, namely objects, as perceived from the deployed theoretical perspective. Because of this constitution claim, Quine's truth proves incompatible with both the general deflationary thesis and, more specifically, the minimalist account, which deny any constitution for truth past what is given by the preferred deflationary schema.

2 Quine's immanent conception of truth

Quine's mission with truth is to achieve a naturalistically legitimate account of this concept: "The concept of truth belongs to the conceptual apparatus of science" (1999, 165). One reason for this is that Quine sees truth as having a role in

explaining scientifically relevant phenomena and it is through this role that the nature of truth ought to be studied. Initially, Quine holds that truth predications are always made from the perspective of *some* background theory. Because of this, truth in the Quinean sense is always *immanent* to the theory through which it is claimed: “Truth is immanent, and there is no higher. We must speak from within a theory, albeit any of various.” (1981, 22).⁶ The core thesis of truths immanence is that just like all concepts, truth is embedded in our conceptual frameworks (theories) and that there is no framework-transcendent (extra-theoretic) perspective through which truth could be claimed, studied, or evaluated. It is worth emphasizing that, for Quine, the claim of immanence concerns both the *concept of truth* and its instances i.e., *true sentences*. Our understanding of what it means to be true or the concept of truth and the contents that we hold *as* true, the class of true sentences, are both embedded in our theoretical understanding of the world: “Where it makes sense to apply ‘true’ is to a sentence couched in the terms of a given theory and seen from within the theory, complete with its posited reality.” (1960, 24). I find both claims, that truth ought to be studied through its role for our theorizing and that it is embedded in our theories in the aforementioned sense, very reasonable.

One motivation behind the immanent conception is Quine’s naturalistic anti-transcendentalism. As there is no way to step beyond the limits of our understanding to evaluate the “full” objectivity of our claims, questions about the theory-independent or transcendent aspects of truth become not only of secondary interest, but meaningless.⁷ All aspects of truth, even the ones that predicate objectivity or seeming transcendence to it, are concluded on from *some* theoretical perspective—better or worse. As Quine notes in a late interview by Bergström and Føllesdal: “I think of the basic tenet [of naturalism] as a negative one, namely that we can’t hope for any evidence, any avenue to truth higher than or more fundamental than ordinary scientific method itself.” (1994, 196). Another motivation for upholding the immanent conception is Quine’s naturalistic fallibilism, where science embodies “an inquiry into reality, fallible and corrigible but not answerable to any supra-scientific tribunal” (1981, 72). Science, broadly conceived, manifests the highest form of inquiry and pursuer of truth, and if scientific progress proves that the claims we now uphold as true potentially turn out false in the long run, then this is a conclusion that must be accepted based on there being no extra-theoretic perspective through which concluding remarks can be drawn. Since anti-transcendentalism and fallibilism are fundamental components of Quine’s naturalistic thought, and as he approaches truth from a strictly naturalistic perspective, then accordingly both theses carry over to his immanent conception. There is no higher truth than the truth that is immanent to our theories, however fallible and correctible it turns out to be.

⁶ In line with this, Quine notes elsewhere that “Within our own total evolving doctrine, we can judge truth as earnestly and absolutely as can be; subject to correction, but that goes without saying.” (1975, 327 & 1960, 25; see 1999, 165). Regarding the theory that truth is supposedly immanent to, Quine sometimes speaks about “the fundamental conceptual scheme of common sense and science,” “total science,” and “our overall theory of the world” (1960, 276 & 1953, 43 & 1995a, 74–75).

⁷ More on Quine’s anti-transcendentalism regarding truth in Verhaegh (2018, 71–74).

The constitutive commitments of the immanent conception could be clearer, and in his late *Responses*, Quine argued them to be *sententiality*, *disquotation*, and *naturalism*:

I base [the immanent conception of truth] on three counts: sententiality, disquotation and naturalism. By sententiality, what are true are sentences rather than propositions [...] A string of marks is true only as a sentence of some specific language L; true in L. [...] Further, I base the immanence of truth on disquotation: To call a sentence true is just to include it in our own theory of the world. [...] Finally, I base the immanence of truth on naturalism, in disavowing any higher tribunal [of truth] than our best scientific theory of the time. (1995c, 353)⁸

Regarding sententiality, Quine (1966, 11) initially played with treating *utterances* as truth-bearers, but ultimately settled for eternal sentence tokens: “Declarative sentences thus refined – eternal sentences – are what I shall regard as truth vehicles” (1992, 78–79).⁹ One reason being Quine’s well-known skepticism towards propositions (1986, 2–3). Another reason is Quine’s respect towards the Tarskian apparatus that relies on a sentential truth schema. Based on this, for Quine, what is true are eternal sentence tokens that are formed in a disambiguated language L and are justified by a well-regimented theory T that that gives rise to them and includes them as its contents: “Theory consists of [immanently true] sentences, or is couched in them; and logic connects sentences to sentences.” (1992, 2–3). However, because of the already mentioned fallibility of our science, the truth of any sentence and, subsequently, the overall truth of our theories are subject to near endless re-evaluation. Is this in conflict with the basic truism that truth is objective and independent of what our theories say about it? No, for with the appropriate restrictions regarding truth-aptness at hand, Quine’s disquotational account defines truth in a manner that leads to each truth-apt sentence being necessarily true or false (bivalence) independent of our knowledge about it (warrant independence). To illustrate this further, take Quine’s preferred disquotation schema:

D-schema: “s” is true iff s

or

D-schema instance: “snow is white” is true iff snow is white

There are two key implications of this schema: the first one concerns its ability to define the the logico-expressive utility of the truth *predicate* and the second one

⁸ Whether or not Quine thought of these commitments as equally important for sustaining the immanent conception is debatable.

⁹ One reason being that while utterance-based approaches avoid certain issues with indexicals, the disquotation schema does not operate with them as truth-bearers. However, Quine comments on the prospect of treating utterances as truth-bearers in his later writings: “For eternal sentences the disquotational account of truth is neat, we see, and simple. It is readily extended, moreover, to the workaday world of individual utterances; thus an utterance of ‘I have a headache’ is true if and only if the utterer has a headache while uttering it.” (1992, 82),

concerns its ability to provide a scaling criterion for sentential truth. Regarding the former point, the disquotation schema demonstrates that when “is true” is added to a sentence (s) of a language *L*, and the sentence at hand is quoted (“s” is true), we semantically ascend to speech on meta-*L*.¹⁰ When the predicate is removed and the sentence is disquoted, we semantically descend to speech on object-*L* (Quine, 1987, 213; 1992, 80). On the left-hand side of the biconditional, we are speaking about linguistic entities (sentences) on the meta-language level and, on the right-hand side, we are speaking about the world on an object-language level. In other words, quoted sentences are *names* (*suppositio formalis*) that designate object-language sentences, and unquoted sentences refer to *worldly* affairs (*suppositio materialis*) that the sentences are about:

Quotation marks make all the difference between talking about words and talking about [real] snow. The quotation is a name of a sentence that contains a name, namely of “snow”, of snow. By calling the sentence true, we call snow white. The truth predicate is a device of disquotation. (Quine, 1986, 10–11)

In the spirit of Ockham, Quine concludes that, for all interpreted sentences, we do better by simply speaking on the object-language level: “The attribution of truth to a [given] statement is equated to the statement itself.” (1987, 214). Attributions of truth to given sentences bears no descriptive utility, so the predicate “is true” is rendered as a largely redundant linguistic instrument. Why not dispense with it altogether? There are well-known technical advantages that semantic ascent via truth predication enables for generalizing over sets of sentences.

In short, the indispensable logico-expressive utility that semantic ascent via truth predication provides is two-fold, both sides relating to generalizing over sets of sentences. First, regarding open sentences with *finite* values on their variables, the truth predicate enables the construction of generalizations like “everything that Einstein said in relation to the theory of general relativity is true” without the need to utter each of Einstein’s claims (*s*₁, ..., *s*_{*n*}) individually. Second, regarding open sentences with *infinite* values on their variables, the truth predicate enables the construction of generalizations like “every sentence of the form ‘p or not p’ is true,” thus ending up with a formula for tautology. This is what Gary Ebbs calls the *indispensability argument*, according to which, “to generalize on all sentences of a given form, a truth predicate is indispensable.” (2009, 47). It is also here that Quine and at least some deflationists agree on the utility of the truth predicate. Without said predicate, it would be impossible to construct such generalizations: “the truth predicate exists solely for the sake of a certain logical need” (Horwich, 1998, 2). As will be argued throughout the remaining sections, a central difference between Quine and the deflationists is that for the former truth has other explanatory uses as well.

In addition to providing a logico-expressive definition of the truth predicate, Quine treats the disquotation schema as a scaling definition for the criteria of truth on sentential level. What this schema demonstrates is that each truth-apt sentence

¹⁰ It is not clear whether deflationists can make sense of the notion of semantic ascent in the Quinean sense.

gives its own *conditions* for being true, and that the truth of each sentence is decided on the object-language level. On the left-hand side of the biconditional, we have a linguistic predication (“snow is white” is true) that is defined via reference to a worldly predication (snow is white). The linguistic predication is true if and only if the worldly predication is true. From the scalability of this criterial definition follows that the linguistic predication can be almost completely eliminated when applied to sentences with clear or interpreted meanings, but keeping in mind the paradoxes and infinite semantic ascent, the schematic definition cannot eliminate “is true” from every instance (1992, 84).¹¹ It would be a mistake to read this as taking away from the virtue of the disquotational account in offering a *satisfactory* definition of truth-criteria:

Yet there is surely no impugning the disquotation account; no disputing that ‘Snow is white’ is true if and only if snow is white. Moreover, it is a full account: it explicates clearly [what is required from] the truth or falsity of every clear sentence. (1992, 93).

However, for one to have a definition of truth and not only of the criteria of truth, a satisfactory account ought to include more than is given by the brute schema. One reason being that the schema-based definition of truth-criteria is, by itself, silent on *why* any of its instances are true and others false, or in what is the truth of sentences grounded in. One cannot explain such grounding via reference to true instances of the disquotation schema, for this would amount to a circular definition. Additional premises like an extra-schematic constitution claim are required to offer a satisfactory definition of sentential truth, unless one makes the negative claim that no such grounding exists. Deflationists prefer the latter path, for, according to them, there is nothing more to truth than the triviality of each truth-apt sentence specifying its own conditions for being true, which is enough to justify the logico-expressive utility of the truth predicate in enabling the construction of the aforementioned types of generalizations. Quine, however, is clear on his views regarding the grounding of truth: “As already hinted by the correspondence theory, the truth predicate is an intermediary between words and the world. What is true is the sentence, but its truth consists in the world’s being as the sentence says” and “truth should hinge on reality, and it does. No sentence is true but reality makes it so.” (1992, 81 & 1986, 10). This, in turn, sounds much like a classical correspondence theory, where it is left for reality to decide which sentence is true by them connecting with its relevant aspects in a materially adequate and extensionally correct manner. For the sentence “snow is white” to be true is for worldly snow to be white (as we best understand it), so that no sentence is true without reality being as the sentence says as perceived from the given theoretical standpoint. Deflationists, on the other hand, explicitly oppose such an explanatory route:

¹¹ For Quine, definition means full elimination: “definition, we saw, is elimination; we define a term by showing how to dispense with it.” (1987, 33). In this sense, Quine holds that truth cannot be fully or exhaustively defined, for it cannot be fully eliminated. But of course, this is an independent matter of whether it can be defined in a satisfactory manner.

Philosophers [...] often make suggestions like the following: truth consists in correspondence to the facts; [...] According to deflationists, such suggestions are mistaken, and, moreover, they all share a common mistake. The common mistake is to assume that truth *has* a nature of the kind that philosophers might find out about and develop theories of. (Armour-Garb et al., 2022, 1)

But it is Quine's constitution claim that justifies the argument that the disquotational account provides an instrument for introducing contents, immanently true sentences, to our theories: "To call a sentence true is just to include it in our own theory of the world." (1995c, 353). One goal of theories is to increase our understanding of the world, and, insofar as true sentences are the "intermediary between words and the world," we are accordingly interested in constructing theories that consist of *true* sentences (1992, 81). An important discovery is that no such explanation is derivable from the brute disquotation schema, which, by itself, is completely silent on what the grounds of truth are or why the true instances of the schema are true, subsequently taking no stand on whether they provide an intermediary between language and the world or why one would be interested in introducing them to their theory. This is evident when realizing that both coherence and correspondence theories can utilize the schematic apparatuses by supplementing them with their chosen explanations for the grounds of truth; I see no reason for why this could not be the case for the brute disquotation schema. One is free to argue that "S" is true iff S because S corresponds with the relevant aspects of the world or because S is consistent with a body of true sentences. Quine, himself, indicates the prospect of accommodating both correspondence and coherence criteria under his truth:

Coherence and correspondence, properly considered, are not rival theories of truth, but complementary aspects. The coherence aspect has to do with how to arrive at truth, by the best of our lights. The correspondence aspect has to do with the relation of truths to what they are about. (1987, 213–214)¹²

In addition to grounding the explanation for why true sentences are the preferred contents of our theories, the extra-schematic constitution claim shields Quine's truth from reducing to theory-bound relativism. The worry is that if truth is immanent to a theory in a manner described in the first paragraph of this section, then this would render it relative, inter-theoretically. However, because sentential truth depends on worldly affairs, it is these affairs that pick from the gallery of any theory's truth-apt sentences those that are true by their connecting with the world. Based on this, the truth of any sentence is a matter of discovery rather than intra-theoretical invention. While theories can only estimate the truth and are, as such, fallible and correctible, truth in sentential form remains objective to the highest degree possible within the constraints of Quine's throughout immanentism. Such explanation is sustained by enriching the schema-based criterial definition with the realist argument for the grounds of truth, where each truth-apt sentence provides its own conditions

¹² This raises further suspicion towards deflationary interpretations of Quine's truth, for both of the aforementioned theories are opposed by deflationists.

for being true, ultimately leaving it for reality to decide whether these conditions are met. This, in turn, renders each truth-apt sentence necessarily true or false independent of knowledge or justification: “The truth values [of particular sentences] need not be known, but they must be stable.” (Quine, 1992, 78). This perfectly aligns with Quine’s commitments to bivalence (1992, 91–93) and warrant independence (1992, 78–79). Based on such commitments, the domain of true eternal sentence tokens achieves a robust extension, subsequently achieving clear identity for the class of true sentences and permitting the inclusion of truth to the class of naturalistically legitimate notions.

It is worth emphasizing that the key discovery from the perspective of this study is that the aforementioned constitution claim is not derivable from the brute disquotation schema. This proves to be a major issue for the deflationary interpreters. As noted, deflationists commit to exhaustion, where the preferred deflationary schema exhausts the content of truth, so that no extra-schematic constitution claim is called for:

[W]e can formulate the central theme of deflationism under consideration as the view, roughly, that the instances of (some version of) this schema do capture everything significant that can be said about applications of the notion of truth; in a slogan, the instances of the schema *exhaust* the notion of truth. (Armour-Garb et al., 2022, 1.1; see Wyatt, 2021a, 459; Eklund, 2021, 632)

Above, we find indication about Quine’s commitment to an extra-schematic constitution claim. The details of this claim are put under close scrutiny in the fifth and final section. Before this, clarification on what the deflationary and inflationary positions amount to helps compare Quine’s views to these opposing -isms.

3 Deflationism and inflationism

Rather than being a definition per se, deflationism describes an *attitude or orientation* towards truth and its definition:

Deflationism is the somewhat vague idea that truth is not a “substantive” property, that no reductive theory of it should be anticipated, and that our grasp of the truth predicate comes from our appreciation of the trivial way that each statement specifies its own condition for being true. (Horwich, 2001, 161; see Wright, 1998, 38–39).

Deflationary theories show significant variety and, because of this, there is ambiguity involved with labeling someone as a proponent of the -ism. For example, Kemp notes in relation to the deflationary interpretations of Quine that “Quine is often held up as a deflationist with respect to truth (or a minimalist, or a disquotationalist)” (2012, 52). Price, for one, reads Quine as a minimalist (2009, 325). However, while minimalism and at least the Fieldian pure disquotational theories count as deflationary views, they also vary on multiple accounts, such as on what they take

as preferred truth-bearers, which schema they deploy in their definitions, and what they interpret the schema as explaining.

Because of the variety between deflationary views and the general overuse of the term, offering a precise definition for this -ism that would satisfy all deflationists is difficult. When comparing Quine's views to this thesis, I commit to a general definition, many of which can be found in the literature (Raatikainen, 2006, 175–176; Wyatt, 2016, 362–364; Sher, 2016, 819–820; Wyatt & Lynch, 2016, 324; Edwards, 2018, 22 & 41; Eklund, 2021, 632–634). The general deflationary thesis is that truth is a far simpler and less significant notion than traditionally assumed. For the deflationists, truth's nature is exhausted by some simplifying schema that is typically derived from either the Tarskian (1936, 154–162; 1944, 342–345; 1969, 63–66) (sentential) *T-schema* or Ramsey's (1927, 158) (propositional) *equivalence thesis*. What these schemas explain is that each sentence gives its own conditions for being true and, for the deflationists, this is all that can be significantly said about the nature of truth. Simply put, asserting "snow is white" is true is equivalent to saying that snow is white, full stop. No further reference to correspondence, facts, worldly objects, or, arguably, even reference or satisfaction is required. Furthermore, no reductive analysis regarding the grounds of truth is required, for the existence of an extra-schematic constitution is explicitly denied: "[According to the deflationist,] there can be no account of what truth consists in: there is no prospect of discovering a property F shared by all and only the truths, such that the truths are true because they are F" (Dodd, 2008, 133–134). Two negative theses can be derived: First, the metaphysical study of truth is brought under suspicion, for there is nothing substantive to uncover past the preferred schema. Second, and partially because of this, truth is denied its traditional explanatory role where it helps illuminate the nature of other substantive concepts like knowledge, meaning, and validity (Lynch, 2009, 4–5; Wyatt, 2016, 365; Edwards, 2018, 22–25; Eklund, 2021, 632–634).¹³ In short, for the deflationists, truth has no constitution past the schemas and, at least partly because of this, it lacks substantiality that could be relied upon in defining other items of philosophical interest (Wyatt, 2021b, 319).

Perhaps the most developed deflationary framework is the so-called minimalist position promoted most notably by Paul Horwich. Coincidentally, Horwich (1998, 5 & 2009, 31–33) is one of the scholars who persists on reading Quine as a deflationist. Focusing on Horwich's account helps restrict the exposition and avoid ambiguity regarding different variants of deflationism. The minimalist position subsists of two components, the first one being a minimal *definition* of truth that consists of the non-paradoxical instances of the equivalence schema:

Equivalence schema: "p" is true iff p

or

¹³ As Lynch (2009, 4–5) adequately summarizes: "deflationism removes truth from our explanatory toolkit. If the deflationist is right, truth has no nature. [...] Consequently, we cannot appeal to it to help explain other items of philosophical interest such as content."

Equivalence schema: the proposition that p is true iff p

The second component is a minimal *conception* of truth, according to which the minimal definition exhaustively explains truth. There is nothing more to truth than one's acceptance of each schema instance so that these instances are rendered explanatorily fundamental in relation to one's understanding of truth. In the words of Horwich, these instances are "conceptually basic" and "explanatorily fundamental" (1998, 50 & 37). Note that, for the minimalists, the infinite conjunction of the schema *instances* is constitutive of one's conception of truth. As there is full cognitive equivalence between the left- and right-hand sides of the biconditionals, there is nothing more to truth than what the predicate "is true" implies. Since each instance specifies its own conditions for being true, trivality follows:

[E]very statement trivially specifies its own condition for being true – 'There's life on other planets' is true if, and only if there's life on other planets; 'Torture is wrong' is true if, and only if, torture is wrong; and so on. But whereas traditional theorists, whilst acknowledging these obvious equivalences, have always insisted on some further, deeper account of what truth is [...] the new approach has it that no such further account is needed or should be expected. (Horwich, 2009, 3–4; see 1998, 9).

Evidently, Horwich's treatment is in line with the aforementioned general description of the deflationary thesis, according to which the content of truth is exhausted by the preferred deflationary schema that leads to an insubstantiality claim regarding the nature of this concept, further compromising its usage as an extra-logical explanatory instrument. Past the negative claims, the positive deflationary claim is nonetheless that the truth predicate bears logico-expressive utility for generalizing over sets of sentences in a similar fashion to what was discussed in the previous section: "the singular point of having a truth predicate is merely that it enables us to state generalizations whose articulation would otherwise be difficult, perhaps impossible." (Horwich, 2009, 4). In this sense, the generalization-enabling functions of the truth predicate are what Quine and Horwich agree on. But as noted, Quine does not make the aforementioned negative claims that nothing else is involved with truth than what is given by the disquotation schema or that it is a merely deflationary concept, thus allowing for his account to be enriched with extra-schematic and potentially non-deflationary commitments.

What about inflationary theories? As with deflationism, these theories show notorious variety (Field, 1994, 256). The unifying feature of inflationary theories is that, in them, truth encompasses more than is explained by a schematic or logico-expressive definition of the truth predicate, and that this extra-linguistic feature, in one way or another, inflates the metaphysical nature or explanatory potential of truth. For example, inflationary theories allow for the concept of truth to be used as an explanatory instrument in defining other items of philosophical interest; knowledge is defined as justified *true* belief, meaning is identified with statements' conditions for being *true*, and validity is defined as the preservation of *truth* over inference. This is possible because truth has a substantive enough nature

to ground its explanatory utility.¹⁴ Prime examples of inflationary accounts are the neo-classical correspondence theories, where truth consists in either a strict or a loose correspondence relation between the preferred truth-bearer and the relevant aspects of the world, such as facts, states of affairs, or objects. For such theories, sentences are true *because* they correspond with the relevant aspects of the world, and where the respective correspondence relation is *reductively* defined by reference to concepts like beliefs, reference, satisfaction, facts, and worldly objects. Such reductive analyses have two consequences that depart from the deflationary approach. First, they extend beyond what is evident in the preferred deflationary schemas, thus conflicting with the deflationary thesis of exhaustion. Second, such analyses risk tying one's account of truth to other concepts with varying degrees of metaphysical weight, subsequently risking metaphysical inflation.

Note that inflationists *can* acknowledge and utilize the schema-based logico-expressive definitions of the truth predicate that are crucial components of deflationary theories. The key point of disagreement lies in the additional premise that there is something *more* to uncover. For the inflationist, any deflationary schema or their instances are either not primitive or fundamental in explaining the nature of truth or they do not exhaust all there is to this notion. Based on this, a core explanatory difference can be diagnosed between deflationary and inflationary views. Even if a deflationary theory would result in at least a partial compatibility with correspondence intuitions, this would not render them substantive correspondence theories. The reason is that, that for such theories, the chosen correspondence relation *grounds* the truth of each true sentence and is hence explanatorily fundamental in relation to the deployment of the schemas. For example, substantive correspondence theorists can argue that the preferred truth-definitional schema is put to place *because* it guarantees the satisfaction of the criterion of material adequacy that is crucial for capturing one's correspondence intuitions. In other words, to claim that a sentence is true if, and only if, it corresponds with the world, is to accept that such a principle is explanatorily fundamental in relation to our use of the truth predicate and the deployment of the preferred schema in defining this concept. This requires the substantive correspondence theorist to say something non-list-like about why some instances of the preferred truth theoretic schema are true and others are false, which leads to the project of explicating how the alleged correspondence plays out between preferred truth-bearers and their worldly correspondents. Deflationists like Horwich disconnect from such project, for they persist in the idea that no substantive answer is forthcoming to the question of in what is the truth of some sentences grounded, or why some instances of the preferred schema are true and others false. Simply put, under deflationary accounts, sentences are not true *because* they correspond with worldly affairs and their truth is not reductively explained by making reference correspondence-like relations between the preferred truth-bearers and worldly affairs:

¹⁴ My claim is that not all concepts with explanatory potential need a substantive constitution. For example, some fundamental or primitive physical entities can have explanatory utility.

[A]ccording to deflationary accounts, to say that ‘snow is white’ is true, or that it is true that snow is white, is in some sense strongly equivalent to saying simply that snow is white, and this, according to the deflationary approach, is all that can be said significantly about the truth of ‘snow is white’. (Armour-Garb et al., 2022, 1).

What the deflationists can, at most, argue is that their schematic definitions are compatible with correspondence intuitions, but that introducing them to one’s account brings with it only the trouble of explicating how the alleged correspondence relation plays out. Subsequently threatening the tying of one’s account of truth to other concepts with varying degrees of metaphysical weight and the subsequent prospect of metaphysical inflation. Quine, on the other hand, is clear on his commitment to correspondence intuitions when claiming that “no sentence is true but reality makes it so” and that the truth of sentences “consists in the world’s being as the sentence says” (1986, 10 & 1992, 81). Before clarifying these intuitions and explicating their manifestation under Quine’s account, I proceed to dissect specific instances where Quine’s views conflict with the aforementioned deflationary claims of truth being exhausted by the preferred deflationary schema and that it lacks extra-logical explanatory utility.

4 Non-deflationary aspects of Quine’s truth

How does Quine’s immanent conception of truth and perhaps its most central aspect of disquotation account fare when compared to the deflationary and inflationary claims? As noted, Quine’s statements are sometimes compatible with *both* -isms. In one instance, Quine expounds on the redundancy of truth-predications: “So long as we are speaking only of the truth of singly given sentences, the perfect theory of truth is what Wilfrid Sellars called the disappearance theory of truth” (1986, 11). Elsewhere, Quine professes the value of true sentences for our scientific enterprise:

True sentences, observational and theoretical, are the alpha and the omega of the scientific enterprise. They are related by structure, and objects figure as mere nodes of the structure. What particular objects there may be is indifferent to the truth of observation sentences, indifferent to the support they lend to theoretical sentences, indifferent to the success of the theory in its predictions. (1992, 31)

This, in turn, suggests that there is more to Quine’s truth than the deflationists allow, for no such significance or explanatory utility is predicated on truth in their frameworks. Furthermore, as Quine does not profess commitment to deflationism and as he does not make the negative claims associated with it, there are initial reasons for being suspicious about his alleged commitment to this thesis. Of course, Quine and the deflationists agree on the logico-expressive functions of the truth predicate, but, as was noted in the previous section, this much is allowed even by inflationary theories. Yet, there are more or less tempting reasons that push towards the deflationary readings.

One potential reason for the widespread deflationary readings of Quine's truth follows from his ontological naturalism. Quine rejects properties as a legitimate ontological category and thus he also rejects truth-properties that are standardly committed to in contemporary truth theoretic literature: "'Property' makes no sense to me except as 'class', and anything you can ascribe to anything, even truth to a sentence, ascribes a class" (1994, 498).¹⁵ However, there is no reason to presume that Quine's rejection of properties has anything to do with truth, *per se*. Regarding ontological commitments, Quine's primary motive is in cleaning up scientific discourse and excluding suspicious entities from it based on their having insufficient identity criteria or their being reducible to more fundamental entities. Since properties overall are banned in virtue of increasing the ontological simplicity of our science, truth-properties fall out accordingly.¹⁶ However, this is not to be confused with a claim about the insignificance or redundancy of truth on sentential level. Quine's point is strictly that instead of speaking about sentences that have the property of being true, for ontological reasons, we ought to speak about true sentences and their domain, and this, by itself, does not push towards either -ism.

Another reason for the deflationary readings of Quine's truth is the hasty conclusion that the brute disquotation schema exhausts the content of truth. Such commitment would align with the general deflationary thesis of exhaustion. Quine, himself, is partially to blame for pushing towards this direction, for, as his well-known statement reads: "Truth is disquotation" (1992, 80).¹⁷ However, it is not difficult to find conflicting statements:

There is a remarkable feature of our use of the truth predicate that lends truth a dignity beyond disquotation. When a scientific tenet is dislodged by further research, we do not say that it had been true but became false. We say that it was false, unbeknownst, all along. Such is the idiom of realism, integral to the semantics of 'true'. Such is scientific method: interrogation of nature in a cosmic true-false test. Man proposes, nature disposes. (Quine, 1994, 500; see 1992, 87–88)

While, on one occasion, Quine suggests in a deflationary manner that the nature of truth is exhausted by the disquotational function of the truth predicate, in the quote above, Quine indicates that truth is what we aim at in our inquiries and that truth governs correctness of belief and assertion in scientifically legitimate discourse. Elsewhere, Quine puts the latter point differently, further emphasizing the naturalistic legitimacy of truth as *a* goal and *a* standard of scientific discovery:

¹⁵ Quine's way of understanding truth through the class of true sentences is compatible with certain accounts of properties, namely, class nominalism, according to which property possession is nothing more than class membership.

¹⁶ In other words, speaking about sentences that possess the property of being true and true sentences makes no substantive difference.

¹⁷ In an earlier text, Quine restricts this claim to concern the truth predicate: "The truth predicate is a device of disquotation" (1986, 12).

We naturalists say that science is the highest path to truth, but still we do not say that everything on which scientists agree is true. Nor do we say that something that was true became false when scientists changed their minds. What we say is that they and we thought it was true, but it wasn't. We have scientists pursuing truth, not decreeing it. (1995b, 261)

As was demonstrated in the second section, when truth-aptness is restricted to eternal sentence tokens, Quine's schema-based criterial definition, in combination with the extra-schematic constitution claim, posits each truth-apt sentence a stable truth value, known or unknown, allowing for true sentences to be legitimate targets for our scientists to discover: "Science is seen as pursuing and discovering truth rather than as decreeing it." (1995a, 67). This renders a robust extension and clear identity for the class of true sentences, allowing for truth to be admitted naturalistic legitimacy as a goal of inquiry and a standard for correctness of belief and assertion, assuming that such a role provides utility for advancing our scientific enterprise.

For Quine, truth has evident explanatory utility in relation to scientific practices. One goal of theories is to increase our understanding about the world: "Not that prediction is the main purpose of science. One major purpose is understanding. Another is control and modification of the environment" (1990, 128). It is because true sentences connect with the world and, thus, provide an intermediary between our language and reality that we aim to discover them in our inquiries, for such sentences are instrumental for increasing our understanding about the world. Additionally, without true sentences, theories would lack the type of content that guarantees the success of our science in certain core practices, like truth-preserving inferences and the subsequent enabling of prediction making and the ability to control our environments. But to emphasize, the brute disquotation schema is completely silent on whether truth provides such an intermediary because it fails to articulate an extra-schematic constitution claim. No substantive connections between true sentences and the world are required in the deflationary frameworks—"S" is true if and only if S and no further explanation for the truth of S is required. Because of this, with the plain disquotation schema at hand, one cannot argue for the aforementioned utilities of true sentences for advancing scientifically relevant practices. Further, Quine is clear that truth is something we aim to assert and, indeed, aspire for in the midst of our theorizing: "there is no higher truth than the truth we are claiming or aspiring to as we continue to tinker with our system of the world from within" and "[w]e choose to pursue truths conducive to our well-being and that of other deserving people, and truths that gratify our curiosity about the world" (1975, 327 & 1994, 498).¹⁸ As originally noted by Dummett (1958), there is an inherent conflict between deflationary theories and the idea that truth is something we *want* to believe and assert. In other words, deflationary theories are unable to account for the motivational pull and normativity that truth displays. It is customary to think that, when forming beliefs, we aim at truth and avoid falsity, and when making assertions, we sometimes evaluate their correctness via reference to truth. It is,

¹⁸ I leave further analysis of Quine's views on the value and normativity of truth to another occasion.

thus, no surprise that Quine, who never professed commitment to deflationism, also indicates this in his works.

Based on this, it is difficult to give the benefit of the doubt to deflationary interpreters, for whom Quine only commits to the thesis that “snow is white” is true if, and only if, snow is white, and where no further reference to extra-schematic commitments like an underlying constitution or substantive connection with the world is required. Were Quine to commit to such a deflationary claim, then the aforementioned explanatory uses of truth would be left unaccounted for. However, it is important to note that, for Quine, many of these explanatory uses follow from the claim that truth does provide an interface between language and the world. Thus, the explanatory uses are at least partly grounded in Quine’s claim of how sentential truth consists in the substantive connections that sentences have with extra-theoretic worldly affairs. Because of this, it is important to closely scrutinize how this connection plays out under the Quinean scheme.

In the final section, we turn to clarify Quine’s views on the aforementioned constitution claim regarding the grounds of sentential truth. In short, the core argument is that, by closely adhering the Tarskian truth-theoretic apparatus, the gate is open for Quine to introduce extra-schematic commitments into his account. Based on this, Quine subscribes to a substantive constitution claim where the truth of sentences consists in a correspondence-like relation that a sentence has with the relevant aspects of the world, namely, objects. Evidently, such a claim is incompatible with both the general deflationary thesis and, more specifically, the minimalist account.

5 Language to world connections

What about the nature of those object-language sentences that *fall under* the truth predicate? After all, Quine holds truth to be a naturalistically legitimate notion and argues for various utilities that true sentences provide for advancing our epistemic pursuits. As argued in the previous sections, the brute disquotation schema falls short in sustaining such explanatory uses. What the schema demonstrates is that each truth-apt sentence gives its own conditions for being true and that the truth predicate can be dispensed with when applied to interpreted sentences. However, whether or not the truth predicate can be trivially removed from situations where it is attributed to sentences with clear and unambiguous meanings is a wholly different matter from what it means to *be* a true object-language sentence. The sentence “snow is white” is true and “snow is black” is false, predicated with truth or falsity or not. A less trivial example is: “there is an even number of planets in the universe” and “there is an uneven number of planets in the universe”—one of these sentences is necessarily true, even if we can never *know* which one it is.¹⁹ But the question that any satisfactory account of truth must answer is *why* is one of these sentences true,

¹⁹ It is unclear to what extent Quine can commit the existence of in principle unknowable truths based on his commitment to the immanence of truth.

or in what does the truth of some object-language sentences *consist*?²⁰ Dissecting Quine's answer to this question occupies the remaining discussion.

Quine (1992, 79–82) is transparent about how his disquotational account is founded on Alfred Tarski's *semantic conception* of truth (1936, 154–162; 1944, 342–345; 1969, 63–66).²¹ Tarski's original goal was to construct a *materially adequate* and *formally correct* truth predicate for a formalized language L on the level of a meta-L relying on the *T-biconditional schema*:

T-schema: X is true iff p²²

or.

T-schema instance: “snow is white” is true iff snow is white²³

As with the disquotation schema, one has to be careful not to confuse a definition of truth with the criteria of such a definition. The T-schema provides general and scaling *criteria* that each materially adequate definition of truth for a language L must satisfy. When applied to natural discourse such as English, the schema demonstrates that each truth-apt sentence provides its own *conditions* for being true and that whether or not a sentence actually is true is evaluated on the object-language level. More specifically, the schema explains the correctness of linguistic truth predications (“S” is true) on meta-language-level via worldly predications, where the truth of a sentence “S” (X) depends on whether S (p) connects with worldly affairs: “[a] true sentence is one which says that the state of affairs is so and so, and the state of affairs indeed is so and so” (Tarski, 1936, 155).²⁴ Satisfying the criterion of material adequacy is important for capturing the classical correspondence intuitions that originate in Aristotle's definition of truth in *Metaphysics* (1908, IV 7, 1011b27). In Aristotle's account, to speak truly is to do so in accordance with how things stand; his account can be treated as an inexplicit and minimal correspondence view: “the [Aristotelian] definition offers a muted, relatively minimal version of a correspondence theory.” (David, 2022, 1). It is partly because of the Aristotelian foundation that some interpret Tarski's account as an explicate of the classical correspondence theory: “[Tarski's] original definition of truth, together with its later elaboration in model theory, is an explicate of the classical correspondence theory of truth” (Niiniluoto, 1999, 91; see Sher, 1999,

²⁰ Alternatively, one could explain why an answer to this question cannot be given. This is the strategy that deflationists commit to, but, to emphasize, nowhere can one find such an argument from Quine.

²¹ Quine is clear on the significance that Tarski's theory had for his understanding of truth: “In relation to the concept of truth, I follow Tarski, and not the pragmatists.” (1996, 7; see Hylton 2007, 278–279; Glock, 2014, 534).

²² Tarski's (1944, 344) summary of the T-schema reads: “We shall call any such equivalence (with ‘p’ replaced by any sentence of the language to which the word ‘true’ refers, and ‘X’ replaced by a name of this sentence) an equivalence of the form (T).”

²³ Note that this biconditional is formally and cognitively identical with the bound instance of the disquotation schema.

²⁴ While material adequacy is arguably distinct from factual or extensional correctness, in the case of natural discourse like in English, these two amount to the same thing.

154–156).²⁵ Indeed, even though the Tarskian apparatus has greatly influenced the work of contemporary deflationists, the semantic conception is widely interpreted as a non-deflationary view: “It is widely believed that [...] Tarskian theories convey substantial concepts of truth or are otherwise unacceptable for the deflationist.” (Piccolo & Schindler, 2021, 41). One reason for this is the deflationary claim of exhaustion, where the preferred schema captures everything significant about truth. Tarski, on the other hand, holds that the T-schema provides a criterion that any materially adequate definition of truth must satisfy, thus allowing for an account to cover more. In other words, Tarski holds that the T-sentences *express* the concept of truth, hence counting as only partial analyses of this concept. Furthermore, for the deflationists, the preferred schema is fundamental and basic for defining the concept of truth. Tarski, on the other hand, defines object-language truth via the concepts of reference and satisfaction. Because of this, the concept of truth and the schema that captures at least a part of its nature are reductively defined with other concepts, thus conflicting with the fundamental and basic status of the preferred schema. In addition to this, for Tarski, the instances of T-schema are contingent, allowing for some of them to be false, whereas for deflationists like Horwich (1998, 21), they are necessary. In line with this, and adding further suspicion towards deflationary readings, no deflationary schema deploys the Tarskian material equivalence relation between the operands, but they, rather, either analytic or necessary equivalence relations (Armour-Garb et al., 2022, 1.1). Finally, according to Patterson, perhaps the best argument for reading Tarski as a correspondence-theorist is that “he accepts the semantical definition and holds that the semantical definition defines a correspondence notion.” (2012, 141).²⁶

However, whether or what type of correspondence theory Tarski’s account ultimately amounts to is an extensive topic that ought to be addressed elsewhere in full detail. Evidently, Tarski’s views allow for multiple interpretations, and not everyone agrees that they result in a non-deflationary account: “Interpreters are split on whether Tarski was a correspondence theorist or a deflationist.” (Patterson, 2012, 140–143; see Woleński, 2021, 275 & 281). For the purposes of this study, it is important to recognize that the Tarskian criterial definition allows for truth to encompass more than is given by the collection of T-instances and that at least in some of the sense in which Tarski speaks about truth, there is aligning with classical correspondence intuitions: “We should like our definition [of truth] to do justice to the intuitions which adhere to the classical Aristotelian conception of truth” (1944, 342). Abiding by the explanatory direction of correspondence theories explicated in the end of the third section, according to such theories, it is because of our correspondence intuitions that we require material adequacy from our account and it is because of material

²⁵ More recently, Ray notes on the mistake of reading Tarski as a deflationist that: “it is part and parcel of Tarski’s underlying view that, for a peculiar logical reason, when it comes to the truth predicate, meaning and extension must come apart [...] For this reason, it would seem a mistake to classify Tarski as a deflationist, as many have done.” (2018, 701).

²⁶ Evidently, this alone does not suffice for the Tarskian definition(s) to count as correspondence view(s), for it ought to be clarified how, exactly, the alleged correspondence relation plays out under his account.

adequacy that the T-schema is deployed to guarantee its fulfillment. In short, the criterion of material adequacy requires from one's account of truth that it does justice to the intuition that no sentence is true without the world being as the sentence says:

It seems clear that if we base ourselves on the classical [Aristotelian] conception of truth, we shall say that the sentence is true if snow is white, and that it is false if snow is not white. Thus, if the definition of truth is to conform to our conception, it must imply the following equivalence: The sentence "snow is white" is true if, and only if, snow is white. (Tarski, 1944, 334).

Here, the explanatory direction is clear, for the T-schema is put in place to guarantee the satisfaction of the criterion of material adequacy, which itself is in place to guarantee the satisfaction of the classical correspondence intuitions. Clearly, the Tarskian claim is not that we require from our account of truth that it is compatible with the T-instances because they tell us every relevant fact about truth. Rather, the roots of the Tarskian apparatus are on the Aristotelian account, where truth consist in the ability of sentences to describe the world as it is, even if some of Tarski's other elaborations disconnect from this thesis.

It is worth emphasizing that even if Tarski's semantic conception is motivated by the capturing of classical correspondence intuitions, this alone does not necessitate its ability to count as a correspondence view. Even deflationists can argue that their interest is in forming a definition of truth that is compatible with such intuitions, yet where distance is drawn between the initially troublesome project of explicating how the alleged correspondence plays out: "The common-sense notion that truth is a kind of 'correspondence with the facts' has never been worked out to anyone's satisfaction." (Horwich, 1998, 1). However, at least for natural discourses such as English, Tarski not only motivates the semantic conception of truth with the capturing of said intuitions, but also explains object-language truth in a manner that is fully compatible with object-based correspondence views where the truth of sentences relies on there being substantive connections between linguistic elements and worldly objects. For both, Tarski and Quine, correspondence intuitions are initially captured by the claim that no object-language sentence is true without the world being as the sentence says:

But he is right that truth should hinge on reality, and it does. No sentence is true but reality makes it so. The sentence 'snow is white' is true, as Tarski taught us, if and only if real snow really is white. The same can be said of the sentence 'Der Schnee ist weiss'; language is not the point. (Quine, 1986, 10–11)

Interestingly enough, the Aristotelian, Tarskian, and Quinean definitions do not make *direct* reference to a correspondence relation.²⁷ However, this is not required for an account to count as a correspondence view. The reason for this is that a view counts as a variant of a correspondence theory if it explains the nature of truth via

²⁷ Again, my argument is not that Tarski's construct ultimately results in a correspondence view.

reference to a correspondence-like relation between truth-bearers and extra-linguistic or factual affairs, that is, that the truth of sentences consists in their correspondence with the relevant aspect of the world, as summarized by Field: “the central feature of a correspondence theory is that it explains truth in terms of some correspondence relations between words and the extralinguistic world” (1974, 200). More specifically, an *object-based* correspondence theory states that a subject-predicate structured sentence such as an atomic sentence of the form “a is F” (“snow is white”) is true if, and only if, its predicate (“is F”) corresponds with the object referred to by the subject term (“a”). Indeed, Tarski requires that an object-language sentence is true if, and only if, it connects with worldly objects in a *satisfactory* manner. Here, the deployment of the notions of *reference* and *satisfaction* is fundamental. For Tarski, an open object-language sentence (“x is white”) is made true by the values of its variables, where the variable stands for a subject term that refers to a range of objects: “Tarski’s satisfaction relation has to do with the objective reference, relating open sentences as it does to sequences of objects that are values of the variables” (Quine, 1976, 318). For example, an atomic object-language sentence with a free variable in the place of the subject term “x is white” is satisfied by the term “snow” that refers to a range of worldly snow-objects. It is in this sense that Quine’s views align with Tarski’s, for also under Quine’s account, truth on the object-language level consists in a correspondence-like relation between predicates and objects, that is, that there is a substantive connection between sub sentential elements and worldly objects that is similar to Tarski’s satisfaction relation. The difference is that, whereas for Tarski, open sentences are made true by the values of their variables, for Quine, predicates are true of objects: “Where I treat of denotation of sequences by predicates, Tarski treated of satisfaction of open sentences by sequences of values of their free variables. But it comes to the same thing.” (1995a, 63). For Quine, denotation is reference by name terms or predicates, the latter of which denote each particular object of which they are true. In other words, predicates denote *n*-tuples of objects, and predicative sentences are true if, and only if, the predicate (general term) is true of the range of objects for which the subject term (singular term) stands:

Predication joins a general term (“F”) and a singular term (“a”) to form a sentence (“a is F”) that is true or false according as the general term is true or false of the object, if any, to which the singular term refers. (1960, 96)

Simply put, for an object-language sentence to count as true, there must be correspondence between what is said about objects with predicates and the actual objects themselves. Insofar as this “saying of” happens in the form of predication, the appropriate correspondence relation lies between linguistic predicates and extra-linguistic objects. The key discovery, for the purposes of this study, is that, based on this, actual language to world connections are required for object-language sentences to count as true, and this was already indicated by Quine’s statement of how no sentence (linguistic element) is true without reality (extra-linguistic element) making it true by being the way that the sentence claims (1986, 10).²⁸ Based on

²⁸ While I am tempted to argue that the same applies to Tarski, because of the current limitations with space, this matter ought to be addressed elsewhere in full detail.

this, it is no surprise, that in *Pursuit of Truth*, Quine makes an explicit *constitution claim* about truths nature as what can essentially be labeled a broad correspondence view: “What is true is the sentence, but its truth consists in the world’s being as the sentence says.” (1992, 81; see 1953, 34; 1987, 213–214). This aligns with Quine’s earlier statements on this topic:

For truth ordinarily attaches to statements by virtue of the nature of the world. It is commonplace, inaccurate but not unfounded, that a statement is true when it corresponds to reality, when it mirrors the world. A fundamental way of deciding whether a statement is true is by comparing it, in some sense or other, with the world—or, which is the nearest we can come, by comparing it with our experience of the world. (1966, 11)

It is worth clarifying some details of Quine’s account. For Quine, all objects are theoretical, so the argued for correspondence relation is not directly between language and worldly objects in a theory-independent or transcendent sense. Rather, whatever objects there are depends on what our most sophisticated scientific theory is committed to existing. Thus, the correspondence relation lies between predicates and objects in a theory-laden sense. Nevertheless, while theoretical, our conception of these objects is required to be compatible with extra-theoretic reality through observation about it. In this sense, observations or, more specifically, observation sentences, are the most direct interface between our language and theories, and the extra-theoretic reality that they are oftentimes about. True observation sentences are the most direct link between our theories and the world. However, to emphasize, it is because of Quine’s throughout anti-transcendentalism and his firm commitment to the theoretical nature of objects that our observations do not *determine* the truth of our sentences. Rather, it is only required from sentential truth that it is *compatible* with reality as given by our experiences about it:

He [Bergström] rightly quotes me as saying that if a theory conforms to every possible observation, ‘then the world cannot be said to deviate from what the theory claims’, but this only requires truth to be compatible with observation, not determined by it. (Quine, 1994, 497)

It is also in this sense that Quine’s views align with Tarski’s, for whom the T-instances are contingent. This is evident in Quine, for whom the whole notion of necessity is indirectly dependent on our experiences about the world and ultimately contingent.²⁹ However, a key point for the purposes of this study is that it is this requirement of compatibility between our theories and *the world* (as given by our perceptions about it) for sentences to count as true that renders deflationary interpretations of Quine problematic. As argued throughout this paper, a major motivation of deflationary theories is to disconnect one’s account of truth from other concepts that introduce metaphysical weight, like the claim that truth consists in a substantive connection that a sentence has with the world. Quine, on the other hand, willingly commits to his

²⁹ This provides additional reasons for suspicion towards deflationary interpretations of Quine, for, as noted above, deflationists typically hold that the instances of the T-schema are necessary.

immanent realism, where we can know about reality only through some theoretical framework, yet where theories consist of immanently true sentences that either directly (observation sentences) or indirectly (theoretical sentences) connect with the world that is independent of our theories about it: “I am a realist about truth in whatever sense I am a realist about light rays or straightness.” (1994, 497). As is widely recognized, correspondence theories stand as the prime example of realist theories, and, as such, they starkly contrast with deflationary views based on the formers’ commitment to there being substantive connections between true sentences and the worldly affairs.

We have thus arrived at conflicts between Quine’s views and the general deflationary thesis of exhaustion. When Quine states that truth consists in the world being as a sentence says, and when he argues that the truth of object-language sentences depends on substantive connections that linguistic elements (predicates) have with worldly entities (objects), he positions in evident conflict with the deflationary thesis of truth’s nature being exhausted by the preferred deflationary schema. The reason for this is that these schemas are silent on one’s commitment to realism or there being such connections between language and reality. Furthermore, it is Quine’s substantive constitution claim that grounds the various explanatory uses of truth in relation to scientific practices that were articulated in the previous section, such as why we prefer *true* sentences as the contents of our theories or why *truth* is a standard for correctness of belief and assertion when orienting towards the world and answering questions about its nature. Such explanatory uses demand a substantive constitution for truth to justify such role, subsequently tying truth to other concepts with varying degrees of metaphysical weight and introducing metaphysical inflation.

Finally, regarding Quine’s relation to the minimalist account, in addition to the already noted incompatibilities with Quine’s truth and the general deflationary theses, conflict emerges on five central points. First, Quine does not believe in the existence of properties. For the minimalist, truth is a property, albeit a non-orthodox one. Second, the equivalence schema utilizes propositions and Quine rejects them, rather treating disambiguated eternal sentence tokens as truth-bearers. Fourth, for the minimalist, the equivalence schema instances exhaust the content of truth and are explanatorily fundamental in defining said notion. Quine, on the other hand, holds that the generalized disquotational schema poses a condition that each materially adequate definition of truth must conform to—a satisfactory definition of truth involves more. Finally, and importantly for the purposes of this study, Quine’s disquotational account includes a substantive constitution claim where the truth of object-language sentences is argued to consist in their connecting with the relevant aspects of the world, namely objects, as given by our immanent perspective. Based on this, Quine is justified to utilize truth in an explanatory manner in naturalistically legitimate discourse. No such substantivity or extra-logical explanatory utility is predicated on truth in the minimalist framework. Thus, I conclude that Quine is not a deflationist, and he should not be misrepresented as one, even though his work has significantly inspired the work of contemporary deflationists.³⁰

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Data availability I do not analyze or generate any datasets, because my work proceeds within a theoretical approach.

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II

QUINE'S TRUTH REVISED

by

Teemu Tauriainen

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III

NO SAFE HAVEN FOR TRUTH PLURALISTS

by

Teemu Tauriainen 2021

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Abstract

Truth pluralism offers the latest extension in the tradition of substantive theorizing about truth. While various forms of this thesis are available, most frameworks commit to domain reliance. According to domain reliance, various ways of being true, such as coherence and correspondence, are tied to discourse domains rather than individual sentences. From this follows that the truth of different types of sentences is accounted for by their domain membership. For example, sentences addressing ethical matters are true if they cohere and those addressing extensional states of affairs if they correspond. By tying distinct truth-grounding properties to domains rather than individual sentences, truth pluralists avoid certain issues with definitional ambiguity and indeterminacy. I argue that contrary to the ideal situation, domains fail to provide the sought-after benefits of achieving definitional unambiguity and determinacy in the standard domain reliant pluralist frameworks. The reason is that, when combined with the inherently ambiguous nature of certain truth-relevant terms of sentences, fringe cases emerge, causing some of them to count as members of multiple domains. Consequently, some sentences end up being both true and false in the standard domain reliant pluralist frameworks, thus conflicting with both of the standard laws of non-contradiction and identity. Finally, I argue that truth pluralists should pay closer attention to the hitherto neglected question of inherent natural language ambiguity.

Keywords: truth, truth pluralism, discourse domains, ambiguity, indeterminacy, inflationism

1. Introduction

Truth pluralism has become a much-discussed position in contemporary truth-theoretic debates (Pedersen & Wright 2013; Wyatt 2013; Wyatt & Lynch 2016; Wyatt, Pedersen & Kellen 2018; Kim & Pedersen 2018; Edwards 2018a, 2018b).⁴¹ The general thesis of truth pluralism is that there are many ways for truthbearers to be true.⁴² According to the standard explanation, sentences get to be true in different ways based on their domain membership. For example, sentences addressing ethical matters, or composed of ethical concepts, belong to the domain of ethics, which is governed by an adequate truth-grounding property such as *coherence*. Other sentences are about extensional states of affairs, thus belonging to the domain of physics, which is governed by an appropriate truth-grounding property such as *correspondence*. By accommodating both, coherence and correspondence criteria, truth pluralists aim to offer a definition of truth that scales over the full range of natural truth-apt discourses, thus

⁴¹ The term “truth pluralism” was introduced by Crispin Wright (1992) in *Truth and Objectivity*. One of its original goals was to arrive at a definition of truth that would allow both realist and anti-realist intuitions to be satisfied.

⁴² For practical reasons, I commit to treating sentence tokens as truthbearers.

offering a viable alternative to traditional monist and deflationary theories (Pedersen, Wyatt & Kellen 2018, 4).⁴³

Discourse domains have a crucial explanatory role in current pluralist frameworks.⁴⁴ As noted, pluralists of all persuasions tie truth-grounding properties, such as coherence and correspondence, to domains rather than to individual sentences. Consequently, the truth of different *types* of sentences is accounted for by their domain membership. In an optimal scenario, each truth-apt sentence belongs to a single unambiguously individuated domain governed by exactly one truth-grounding property. From this follows that, by knowing the domain membership of a sentence, one is able to account for its truth by inferring the property that grounds truth for the relevant domain. Without domains, explaining why a particular sentence is true in one way rather than another becomes difficult if not impossible (Wyatt 2013, 321). Even worse, without domains, some sentences end up being both true and false in pluralist frameworks, thus conflicting with the standard law of non-contradiction (Edwards 2018b, 85–86). As a result of such issues, domains are held as a safe haven that supposedly guard pluralists of all sorts from various issues with definitional ambiguity and indeterminacy.

In this paper, I argue that, like domain-free models, current domain reliant pluralist frameworks generate similar issues with ambiguity and indeterminacy. This follows from the current pluralist neglect of addressing the issues that inherent natural language ambiguity generates in their frameworks. As I demonstrate later, because some truth-relevant components of sentences allow for different yet equally valid readings, these components end up assigning sentences to multiple domains with different truth-grounding properties, with the consequence of having one of these properties and lacking another. As a result, domain reliant pluralist frameworks end up conflicting with both the standard laws of non-contradiction and identity. Against this backdrop, I argue that pluralists should re-consider their current aim of offering a complete, unambiguous, and determinate definition of truth for natural discourse. Finally, based on the findings, I explore some solutions to the issues noted and discuss the prospects of pluralist theories.

⁴³ Note that one can be a pluralist in the context of a single truth property such as correspondence (see Sher 2005). Further, one can form a definition that commits to multiple deflated truth properties (Beall 2013). Finally, one can form a hybrid definition that allows for both inflated and deflated truth properties. In general, pluralists can utilize different monist theories, various inflated and deflated truth properties, and the logico-expressive definitions of the truth predicate, which are crucial components of deflationary theories.

⁴⁴ As Wyatt (2013) notes, discourse is a more permissive category than a discussion. One can have a discussion about both equality of income and preservation of natural resources and still be under the same domain of ethical discourse.

2. Truth Pluralism

Various forms of the general truth pluralist thesis have been endorsed in the literature (Edwards 2018a, 129; Kim & Pedersen 2018, 124). In general, these forms divide into strong (SP) and moderate (MP) categories:

SP: there are many ways of being true, none of which is had by all true sentences

MP: there are many ways of being true, some of which are had by all true sentences

The central difference between strong and moderate forms is that the former commit to radical *disunity* regarding truth, while the latter include both unifying *and* disunifying features. According to strong pluralism, truth is many but *not* one. There are independent ways of being true (T1, ..., Tn), with no connection in between. According to moderate pluralism, truth is both one *and* many. Different sentences get to be true in different ways, but they are all true in some unifying sense. According to the truth pluralist literature, strong forms are not widely supported (Kim & Pedersen 2018, 108; Pedersen & Lynch 2018, 561) because moderate forms have ready answers to some of the objections faced by the strong forms. For example, strong pluralism has difficulty accounting for the *normativity* of truth, defining *validity*, and explaining *generalizations* via the truth predicate. Think about the normative aspect of truth as that which is *prima facie* correct to believe.⁴⁵ This is a unifying feature of *all* truths. Further, validity or logical consequence is standardly defined as the preservation of truth over inference. The problem is that inference can be mixed, meaning that the premises can be true in different ways, assuming the basic pluralist premise that there are many ways of being true. The question, therefore, is what type of truth (T1, ..., Tn) is preserved over mixed inference? Lastly, concerning generalizations via the truth predicate, statements such as “everything that the Pope said is (or was) true” present themselves as ambiguous in strongly pluralist frameworks. In which of the possible ways (T1, ..., Tn) is everything that the Pope said true? Because of such issues, I restrict the discussion in this paper to moderately pluralist theories, though much of what will be said here also concerns strongly pluralist frameworks, especially insofar as they commit to using discourse domains as an explanatory resource.

As noted, the general thesis of moderate pluralism is that truth is both one and many. According to the standard explanation, truth displays unity on global, general, or language levels and disunity on local, domain, or sentence levels. According to the standard explanation, there is a general or elite way of being true. This is achieved through the possession of a *general truth property* F, which is denoted by the predicate “is true.”⁴⁶ However, abiding by the general pluralist thesis of truth variability, discursively distinct types of sentences assume this

⁴⁵ A further note concerns the value of truth. If strong pluralists hold that truth is valuable, they ought to explain whether different ways of being true entail variance in the value of truth.

⁴⁶ Abiding by the law of symmetry, falsity is defined as the lack of said property.

property in different ways by possessing the relevant truth-grounding property of their domain. In other words, all true sentences are true in a general or unifying way, but the grounds of truth are many; depending on the domain, sentences possess the general truth property in different ways. This explanatory framework rests on two central commitments: a *platitude-based strategy* for defining the general truth property F and *domain reliance*, which accounts for the variability of the grounds of truth.

Starting with the first commitment, the general truth property F is commonly defined through a platitude-based strategy. According to this strategy, the general truth property inherits its nature from the concept of truth, which can be accessed through certain platitudes, intuitions, or folk beliefs about a notion. For example, Lynch (2009, 8–13, 2013, 31) commits to the following widely cited platitudes, translated in a way that makes reference to sentences:

Objectivity: a sentence is true iff things are as the sentence says.

Norm of Belief: it is *prima facie* correct to believe a sentence iff the sentence is true.

End of Inquiry: other things being equal, true sentences are a worthy goal of inquiry.

A chosen set of platitudes are then used as a collective definition for the general truth property.⁴⁷ For example, Edwards notes that “[t]ruth is given as the property that is exhaustively described by the truth platitudes” (2018a, 126, 153), and Lynch (2009, 74) claims that, through conceptual necessity, these platitudes are features of different truth-grounding properties. Simply put, moderate pluralists hold that the general truth property F is best characterized through specific platitudes about the concept of truth. How exactly one accounts for the metaphysical connection among the concept of truth, the platitudes about truth, the general truth property, and the truth-grounding properties will be largely

⁴⁷ Note that the chosen set of platitudes need not be treated as an exhaustive definition of the concept of truth.

overlooked in this article.⁴⁸ I will simply assume that some satisfactory explanation to this is available. The point of focus for the remainder of this paper is the second key commitment of pluralist frameworks to domain reliance, which plays a crucial explanatory role in accounting for the variability that truth displays across different regions of discourse.

3. Discourse Domains

According to domain reliance, truth-grounding properties such as coherence and correspondence vary by regions of discourse or discourse domains:

Despite their different views on how to best articulate truth pluralism, strong and moderate pluralists share significant commitments. One such commitment is the commitment to *domains*. Domains are a crucial component of the theoretical framework of pluralism, as reflected by the fact that the core pluralist thesis is that the nature of truth varies *across domains*. (Pedersen, Wyatt & Kellen 2018, 6–8)

Further, Edwards (2018b, 85–86) makes an even stronger claim, arguing that domains ought to be treated as an inseparable feature of pluralist frameworks: “As a result, I think that [all] pluralists should take the notion of a domain seriously as a central aspect of the view” (see also Edwards 2011, 28, 41). Thus, there is no doubt that domains play a crucial explanatory role in current pluralist frameworks.

In general, discourse domains are taken as classes of sentences that are individuated by some semantic or ontological factor. As Kim and Pedersen (2018, 112) note, sentences belong to different domains because “they concern different subject matters or are about different kinds of states of affairs.” According to a semantics-based strategy, sentences count as members of domains based on their *subject matter* or *aboutness*. For example, sentences that address ethical matters, or are composed of ethical concepts, belong to the domain of ethics and those addressing religious matters to the domain of religion. Ontology-based strategies distinguish between different types of *entities* referred to by the truth-relevant components of sentences (Edwards 2018b, 86, 96, 2018a, 78–79). For example,

⁴⁸ When claiming that different types of sentences get to be true in different ways *because* they belong to distinct domains, the “because” relation between the concept of truth and the truth-grounding properties can be accounted for in many ways, some candidates being *grounding, manifestation, instantiation, entailment, determination, and conceptual necessity* (see Edwards 2018a, 122–141). For practical reasons, I commit to using grounding as the appropriate relation between the general truth-property F and truth-rendering properties. If one wants to remain neutral regarding a specific relation, then the term “truth-rendering” property is available. Thus, in my view, the truth of sentences belonging to different domains is *grounded* in a plurality of truth-grounding properties. However, most of what will be said here is independent of this question. Further, as the general truth property is a second-order property, the possession of which is determined by the ability of a sentence to possess the first-order truth-grounding property that is relevant to the domain it belongs to, truth-grounding properties can be called quasi-truth properties. As Pedersen notes, truth-grounding properties are “that in virtue of which propositions are true within specific domains, and so, locally behave very much like truth. They are quasi-truth properties because they only exhibit this behavior locally and, so, are distinct from truth” (2020, 356).

sentences instantiating terms that designate extensional objects, or predicates that attribute representational properties, belong to a domain of realist speech, and those designating abstract objects or attributing non-representational properties belong to an anti-realist domain. In both cases, the goal is to individuate domains in a way that leads to them being unambiguous classes of sentences. Based on the desire to achieve this result, pluralists aim to account for the truth of different types of sentences based on their domain membership. As Edwards (2011, 31) writes: “According to the alethic pluralist, there will be a robust property in virtue of which the propositions expressed by sentences in a particular domain of discourse will be true, but this property will change depending on the domain we are considering.” Similarly, Lynch (2009, 77) notes that: “Propositions about different subjects can be made true by distinct properties each of which plays the truth-role [for the relevant domain].”⁴⁹ Finally, based on this somewhat heavy metaphysical framework consisting of both the platitude-based strategy of defining the general truth property and the domain reliance that accounts for truth-variability, domain reliant moderate pluralists argue that they can offer an unambiguous and determinate definition of truth, including for the grounds of truth, which scales from the concept of truth to the full range of truth-apt discourse in the context of natural languages.

However, according to the literature, domain reliance introduces its own array of definitional issues: “The notion of a domain has been both a key and controversial aspect of pluralist theories” (Edwards 2018b, 103; see Edwards 2018a, 147; Wyatt 2013, 225–236). Some of these issues deal with the metaphysically challenging task of individuating domains. For others, ambiguity is generated by discourse bearing mixed content from various domains. Based on these challenges, some have expressed skeptical remarks about the very possibility of achieving a satisfactory pluralist account (David 2013, 49).⁵⁰ In what follows, I explore certain issues with current domain reliant pluralist models caused by inherent natural language ambiguity.

4. Issues with Defining Domains

Surprisingly, not much work has been done in exploring the nature of discourse domains in the standard pluralist frameworks: “Despite the central role that domains play within the standard pluralist framework not much systematic work has been done on their nature” (Kim & Pedersen 2018, 111). Direct studies can be found from Edwards (2018a, 77–82; 2018b, 86–100) and Wyatt (2013, 225–236). In general, the now prominent *domain reliant pluralists* bear the burden of defining discourse domains in addition to offering a definition of truth that utilizes the notion. However, as noted in the literature, defining domains is a cumbersome and complex task (Lynch 2018, 66–67; see

⁴⁹ It is worth emphasizing that domains rather than individual sentences play the adequate truth-bearing role in domain reliant pluralist frameworks. What is relevant for sentence-level truth-grounding is their domain membership.

⁵⁰ Despite this, and perhaps surprisingly, the literature exploring alternative approaches such as domain-free models is sparse.

Blackburn 2013, 265; Quine 1960, 131). More specifically, domain reliant pluralists are pressured to offer an answer to at least the following questions, some more truth-theoretically relevant than others: What are the necessary and sufficient characteristics of each domain, and how are they distinguished from one another unambiguously? How is the domain membership of sentences accounted for? How is the domain membership of sentences bearing content – potentially counting as members of multiple domains – accounted for? How are truth-grounding properties tied to the relevant domains?⁵¹ Can a single domain have more than one truth-grounding property?⁵² How can truth-apt sentences be separated from non-truth-apt sentences in the context of domains?⁵³ Can some sentences, such as necessary truths, be members of multiple domains, or does each domain include its own subset of necessary truths?⁵⁴ While the resolution of some of these issues is underway, no simple answers are forthcoming.⁵⁵

Perhaps the most researched issue concerning domains is a set of problems labeled *mixed discourse* (Edwards 2018a, 95). The general idea of mixed discourse is simple. Take two sentences, “snow is white” and “snow is beautiful,” from the distinct domains of speech regarding extensional and aesthetical properties, individuated by the extensional predicate “is white” and the aesthetical predicate “is beautiful.” Assuming that both sentences are true and that the truth of speech about extensional entities is grounded in correspondence, and that of aesthetics in coherence, one can form simple mixes of sentences, compounds, and inferences where both extensional and aesthetical speech are present. The predicate-emphasizing approach to domain membership allegedly solves the problem of mixed atomics, but the issues with mixed compounds and inferences remain persistent.⁵⁶ For example, it is not clear whether the truth-grounding

⁵¹ Why is P1 and not P2 the truth-grounding property of D1? Further, it can be argued that the truth of some sentences, such as “water is H₂O,” is based on multiple properties because it includes terms that refer to both mind-dependent and -independent entities. Thus, whether or not it is indeed true is dependent on both correspondence with actual states of affairs and coherence with the system of true beliefs that gives meaning to its terms.

⁵² Wyatt (2013, 13) argues for an alternative approach where sentences belong to multiple domains: “truth pluralists should not presuppose that every atomic proposition belongs to one and only one domain.” Lynch (2013, 16) presents a similar case where “there is no need for the pluralist to sort propositions into strict domains.” Does this generate ambiguity? According to Wyatt (2013), no, for we can still hold that sentences that belong to multiple domains have only one truth-grounding property. One can find a reply to Wyatt’s argument in Edwards (2018b, 95), who disagrees with both Wyatt’s and Lynch’s approaches.

⁵³ For example, take two sentences from the domain of ethics: “killing innocent people is wrong” and “eating meat is wrong.” While the former is obviously true, things are not so simple for the latter, since, for example, we now have artificial meat.

⁵⁴ Pluralists have largely overlooked the question of how one can account for the domain membership of necessary truths. This subject ought to be explored independently.

⁵⁵ Solutions to some of these issues are actively sought in the literature (see Wyatt 2013, 230; Edwards 2018a, 77, 2018b, 85; Lynch 2018, 66).

⁵⁶ Lynch (2009, 80–81) notes that the idea of mixed atomics is self-refuting: “belonging to a particular domain is a feature an atomic proposition at least, has in virtue of being the sort of proposition it is. Propositions are the kind of propositions they are essentially; therefore, belonging to a particular domain is an essential fact about an atomic proposition.”

property of “snow is white and snow is beautiful” is either correspondence coherence or both.⁵⁷

Mixed discourse provides a suitable case study for illustrating the threat that natural language ambiguity poses for domain reliant pluralist frameworks. As pluralists seek to offer a definition of truth for natural discourse, and this discourse manifests content mixing in various ways, solutions for clarifying matters will be required if one relies on the notions of domains and domain membership to help achieve an unambiguous and determinate definition of truth. While domain reliant pluralists have proposed various solutions to the problems involved with content mixing in the context of truth-apt sentences, they have generally neglected a separate yet related issue that follows from the inherently ambiguous nature of certain truth-relevant terms, namely natural language predicates. More specifically, because some of these predicates encompass inherent ambiguity, as is the case, for example, of homonyms, this ambiguity risks carrying over to the pluralist frameworks. To emphasize, insofar as pluralists seek to offer an unambiguous and determinate definition of truth for natural discourse, the inherent ambiguity of some natural language terms should be adequately addressed. Thus far, pluralists have failed to satisfy this requirement, for they have largely circumvented this issue.

In what follows, I use Edwards’ (2018a, 78–79) predicate-emphasizing approach to domain membership as a case study to illustrate a strategy that goes beyond the issue of mixed atomics.⁵⁸ Thereafter, I show how this approach leads to the above-noted problems with ambiguity and indeterminacy, ultimately conflicting with the standard laws of non-contradiction and identity. According to Edwards, one solution to the problem of mixed atomics is to account for the domain membership of sentences by *predicate kinds*. When dealing with atomic sentences of the form “a is F” (snow is white), where “a” (snow) is a singular term that designates a range of objects, and “is F” (is white) is a predicate that attributes a property onto the objects that the sentences are about, it is always the predicate that determines the domain of sentences:

I will suggest that it is the predicate that determines the domain [of atomic sentences]. We can distinguish between two things: what a sentence is about, and what is said about the thing the sentence is about. A sentence is about its object [...] But what makes these things sentences is that there is more: there is something that is said about the things that the sentences are about. [...] It is this aspect – the attribution of a property to an object – that makes these kinds of sentences sentences in that they are bearers of content. So, it is not what a sentence is about that we should be considering [when assigning them into domains,] it is rather what is said about the thing the sentence is about. (Edwards 2018a, 78–79; see 2018b, 97)⁵⁹

⁵⁷ One proposed solution to this issue can be found in Edwards (2018b, 100).

⁵⁸ A more general problem emerging from the discussion of this paper, and from the discussions had by various pluralists, is that if one aims for a theory of *truth*, and not only a theory of truth for *atomic sentences*, then the different ways in which *all* types of truth-apt sentences can be assigned to domains should be accounted for. Thus far, the literature focuses heavily on atomic sentences specifically.

⁵⁹ Edwards (2018a, 79) continues, claiming that “the singular term is not relevant to domain individuation.”

Thus, according to Edwards, while atomic sentences are always about their objects, the question of truth emerges only after something is said about these objects or a property is attributed to them. In this sense, it is the attribution of a property to an object that renders these sentences truth-apt, and because of this, the predicate ought to be treated as the domain-determining factor. From this, one can argue for the ideal situation where each predicate kind is tied to a specific domain of sentences. Thus, by instantiating a predicate kind, truth-apt sentences belong to distinct domains to which the adequate truth-grounding properties are tied. In general, the method of choosing either the singular term or the predicate kind as the domain-determining factor of sentences offers an answer to the following questions:

- i. How are sentences and domains individuated?
- ii. What are the necessary and sufficient criteria for accepting and rejecting sentences into domains?

However, choosing either the singular term or predicate kind as the domain-determining factor leaves the following question unanswered:

- I. How can the domain membership of sentences that instantiate ambiguous singular terms or predicates be accounted for?

In what follows, I argue that, because of the inherently ambiguous nature of some natural language predicates, the domain membership of some sentences ends up being ambiguous and indeterminate in the standard domain reliant pluralist frameworks.⁶⁰ The core of my argument is that, because of the inherently ambiguous nature of some predicates, some sentences end up counting as members of multiple domains with different truth-grounding properties, thus generating confusion regarding the grounds of their truth. More specifically, if there is no clarity on whether a sentence S1 belongs to the domain of D1 or D2 or both, with distinct truth-grounding properties P1 (D1) and P2 (D2), then there can be no determinate answer as to the property in which the truth of S1 is grounded. As I later demonstrate, subsequent problems emerge.

5. Issues with Ambiguity and Indeterminacy in Domain reliant Frameworks

Domain reliant truth pluralist frameworks rely on strategies of domain-individuation and account for the domain membership of sentences. As demonstrated earlier, a prominent strategy relies on predicate kinds. Each predicate kind assigns sentences to a specific domain governed by a distinct truth-grounding property. Here, the term “predicate kind” can be understood in two ways. First, predicate kinds can be individuated on semantic grounds, such

⁶⁰ For practical reasons, I restrict the discussion to those approaches that commit to the predicate-emphasizing approach to domain membership, but the arguments provided should carry over to other approaches, such as those that commit to the relevance of singular terms for domain membership.

as subject matter or aboutness. The predicate “is right” denotes a distinctively normative property, rendering sentences about things that are right or wrong, etc., thus assigning them to a specific domain, a viable candidate being that of ethics. Other predicates denote extensional properties, rendering sentences that instantiate them about things that have representational or objective properties, hence assigning them to an appropriate domain, such as physics. Second, predicate kinds can be individuated on ontological grounds, relying on the ontological status of their referents. As the ontological status of the property denoted by “is right” is abstract, the non-extensional, non-representational, projected, non-natural, abundant, etc., sentences instantiating it belong to a domain that covers this type of anti-realist speech. Other sentences have predicates such as “is liquid” that denote extensional, representational, objective, natural, or sparse properties, etc., thus assigning them to a domain that covers this type of realist speech.

As expected, both of these strategies have their strengths and weaknesses. The first strategy is intuitive, but it involves the cumbersome task of individuating predicate kinds on thematic grounds. There is no shortage of natural language predicates, and assigning each of them to some of the numerous thematically individuated domains without ambiguity is a complicated task, especially bearing in mind that, in the optimal scenario, each domain is governed by a single truth-grounding property. For example, distinguishing between moral and religious discourse can be difficult; the same applies to speech about objective properties and aesthetics. In what way does the predicate “is bad” differ from “is sinful,” and does the predicate “is a mosaic” assign sentences to the domain of aesthetics, even though it attributes a representational and objective property? The ontology-based strategy suffers less from this issue because it requires only two domains: one for the realist discourse and the other for the anti-realist discourse. For example, predicates that attribute sparse, concrete, representational, extensional, natural, or causally effective properties assign sentences to a realist domain governed by an appropriate truth-grounding property, such as correspondence, while those attributing abundant, abstract, non-representational, non-extensional, or non-causal properties assign them to an anti-realist domain governed by another truth-grounding property, such as coherence or super warrant. Regardless of the strategy, the preferred outcome remains the same. To avoid ambiguity, each sentence must belong to a distinct domain with a single truth-grounding property.

One issue with the predicate-emphasizing approach to domain individuation and membership that plagues both semantic and ontology-based strategies follows from the inherently ambiguous nature of some natural language predicates. This ambiguity comes in two kinds. First, some predicates are thick, meaning that they play both evaluative and descriptive roles. For example, courageousness (“is courageous”) can be interpreted as a virtuous property with clear moral or prescriptive implications. Conversely, courageousness implies a tendency to act in the world, which is a causally relevant property. Thus, it is not obvious whether sentences such as “Charlie is

courageous” are subject to a realist (correspondence) or anti-realist (coherence) criterion for truth (see Edwards 2018a, 79–80). Second, and more central to the discussion at hand, some predicates allow for multiple readings. Even a simple predicate such as “is white” is open to different readings because it encompasses a degree of ambiguity. It can be read as denoting the extensional property of having a certain *color* (“snow is white”) or perhaps the social property of belonging to a specific *social class* (“Charlie is White”). From this homonym-based ambiguity follows that one and the same predicate potentially assigns sentences into the distinct domains of physical and social speech or speech about extensional and non-extensional properties. Take the following atomic sentence as instantiating said predicate:

Ambiguous: “Donald Trump is white”

Assuming this to be a truth-apt sentence, there seems to be no initial way of telling whether it is about Trump’s physical color or the social class to which he belongs. Another way to illustrate this ambiguity is to use the notions of literal and implicit readings. Let us assume that the literal reading of *Ambiguous* is the physical reading and that the social reading is implicit. According to this strategy, *Ambiguous* claims that Trump is physically white, and it is implied that he belongs to the appropriate social class of White people. However, these are radically different understandings of one and the same sentence, with the only similarity being that they are both about Trump. What about a person of native African descent who suffers from albinism, rendering their skin color white? Here, a literal claim of them being white cannot imply that they belong to the analogous social class. While the literal reading would be true, the implied reading would be false. Further, in the case of *Ambiguous*, the readings can just as well be the reverse. Nothing in the sentence itself indicates what the possible readings are and which of them ought to be treated as correct or primary from the perspective of domain membership. Of course, the utterer knows what they mean by a given sentence, but this is not necessarily evident to anyone beyond them, not to mention the independent issues that plague approaches that commit to treating utterances as truthbearers.

One problem that the *Ambiguous* example generates in the standard domain reliant pluralist frameworks is that the truth-grounding property for the domain of physical or realist speech is *different* from that of social or anti-realist speech. It is widely held that speech about physical or extensional states of affairs is governed by a correspondence criterion. “Snow is white” is true iff the object designated by “snow” has the property predicated by “is white.” Here, truth depends on the connection that linguistic entities have with the relevant objective states of affairs. Speech about social properties is not governed by the same criterion. For example, correspondence does not exhaust why a person belongs to a specific social class. As illustrated in the example of the native African with albinism, one’s skin color does not determine their membership to a particular social class. Rather, it is a matter of coherence with other true beliefs regarding

one's identity, culture, heritage, and opinions that contributes to their inclusion in or exclusion from these types of classes. This indicates that speech about social properties is governed by something other than a correspondence criterion, the viable alternative being coherence.

However, from this two-way ambiguity of physical and social readings follows a more serious problem for domain reliant pluralists. If *Ambiguous* belongs to the domain of physical or realist speech that is governed by the truth-grounding property of correspondence, then it fails to be true. This is because Trump is physically *orange*; therefore, the sentence fails to correspond. Nevertheless, if this sentence belongs to the domain of speech about social properties that is governed by an anti-realist criterion of coherence, then it turns out to be true, for Trump, indeed, belongs to the appropriate social class. Is this ambiguity harmless? There are a couple of reasons for thinking that the answer is negative. Take the standard law of non-contradiction that many see as a necessary condition for *any* truth definition:

Law of non-contradiction: No sentence is both true and false.

The *Ambiguous* sentence turned out to be both true and false in the standard domain reliant pluralist frameworks. The reason is that the predicate "is white" allows for multiple readings, assigning the same sentence to distinct domains of speech about physical and social properties, whereas by possessing one of the relevant truth-grounding properties and failing to have the other, simultaneous truth and falsity emerge. Note that correspondence and coherence are both distinct truth-grounding properties, and they ground truth separately for the relevant domains. Because lacking the relevant truth-grounding property for the domain that a sentence belongs to constitutes falsity, *Ambiguous* emerges as both true and false. It is worth emphasizing that the truth and falsity of sentences is dependent on their ability to possess the relevant truth-grounding properties because the possession of the general truth property F is determined by the ability of the sentence to possess the relevant truth-grounding property. According to pluralists, the grounds of truth are many, a claim that ought to be taken seriously. The unfortunate result seems to be that, for some sentences, ambiguity emerges regarding the grounds of their truth. Finally, it is important to realize that the noted issue with simultaneous truth and falsity concerns both semantic and ontology-based individuation strategies. The ambiguous predicate "is white" (white in color) can attribute an extensional or representational property, thus assigning a sentence to a realist domain of speech about extensional states of affairs. However, the same predicate "is white" (member of social class) can predicate a non-extensional or non-representational property, assigning a sentence to an anti-realist domain. Assuming that these domains are governed by distinct truth-grounding properties, the *Ambiguous* sentence once more emerges as both true and false, even according to the ontology-based strategies.

Interestingly enough, the troubles for domain reliant pluralists do not end here. It also follows that the fundamental law of identity becomes contradicted in the standard domain reliant pluralist frameworks when supplemented with ambiguous predicates. Take the standard law of identity:

Identity: S is identical to S

From which we can trivially infer that:

Identity schema: If "S" (sentence) is true, then "S" (sentence) is true.

or

Identity schema instance: If "Donald Trump is white" is true, then "Donald Trump is white" is true.

Furthermore, the latter inference emerged as false in the domain reliant scheme, for the left- and right-hand sentences allowed for different readings, assigning one and the same sentence to distinct domains with different truth-grounding properties and, at the same time, having one of these properties and lacking the other. Thus, in addition to conflicting with the standard law of non-contradiction, even the fundamental law of identity becomes compromised in the standard domain reliant pluralist frameworks when supplemented with the inherently ambiguous natural language predicates. In what follows, I discuss these results.

6. Discussion

What options are there to resolve the above-mentioned issues? The initial option is to simply accept that ambiguous predicates assign sentences to multiple domains. However, this leads directly to the issue of mixed atomics, compromising the goal of an unambiguous and determinate definition of truth. If some sentences belong to multiple domains with different truth-grounding properties, or there is no clarity as to which of the possible domains they ought to be read as belonging to, then no determinate answer can be given to the question regarding the grounds of their truth. Simply put, if a predicate assigns a sentence to the distinct domains D1 and D2 with different truth-grounding properties, then the question emerges as to which of these domains ought to be treated as primary from the perspective of truth-grounding. No simple answer is forthcoming.

Another option is to treat sentences with ambiguous predicates not as single sentences but as compounds. These types of ambiguous sentences can be treated as conjunctions or disjunctions of sentences rather than individual sentences. The sentence "Donald Trump is physically white and Donald Trump is socially white" would be false, while the sentence "Donald Trump is physically white or Donald Trump is socially white" would be true. Here, a crucial step has been taken

regarding the disambiguation of the original *Ambiguous* sentence. There is no guarantee that, in the case of natural discourse, this step is taken, and if this is assumed, then there are good grounds to argue that we are no longer operating in the domain of natural discourse. Rather, we are speaking about some regimented or disambiguated subsection of natural discourse, and thus, the goal of offering a complete definition of truth for natural discourse is not met. In any case, it seems that solving the issue of ambiguous predicates with the help of conjunction- or disjunction-based strategies rests on the assumption that the ambiguous predicates can be, or are, disambiguated.

Indeed, if the pluralists were to adopt a regimentation or disambiguation strategy, then they would have to re-frame their program as offering a definition of truth for a regimented subsection of natural language. However, this conflicts with one of the major commitments of current pluralist frameworks. Recall the platitude-based strategy for defining the general truth property *F* that all true sentences have and all false sentences lack, which is denoted by the predicate “is true.” According to this strategy, the general truth property inherits its nature from our *common-sense beliefs* and *intuitions* about the concept of truth. Thus, the platitudes are aimed at capturing our pre-theoretical and “naturally” emerging concept of truth. According to pluralists, our pre-theoretical conception of truth is accessible through certain platitudes about the notion that we use as a collective definition for the general truth property. In this sense, pluralists are not talking about a regimented conception of truth or a restricted understanding of what it means to be a true sentence. If one wants a definition of truth for natural discourse, then it ought to be consistent with the natural or pre-theoretical ways in which truth appears in our cognitive lives. Thus, regimenting the scope of truth-apt sentences generates conflict with one of the major commitments of the pluralist program in seeking a definition of truth that is consistent with its pre-theoretical nature, that is, given by common-sense platitudes.

Of course, one could argue that the issues regarding natural language ambiguity are not only a problem for pluralist or domain reliant pluralist frameworks but for the entire range of definitions of truth for natural language discourse. One issue with this counterargument is that, while it is indeed the case that natural language ambiguity generates problems for various types of truth definitions, many of them seek to resolve these issues by regimenting the target language and ruling out ambiguous terms. For example, one might adopt a position of truth-apt minimalism, according to which the units of truth are restricted in a way that suspicious sentences, such as those with ambiguous predicates, are cast out of the question regarding truth or falsity. This type of project can be found in Quine (1992, 78–79), according to whom only eternal sentence tokens are to be treated as truthbearers. These types of sentences are not permitted to include troublesome terms, such as ambiguous predicates. Again, however, from the perspective of the pluralist program, the problem with accommodating the Quinean approach is that we do not commonly see *only* eternal sentence tokens as truthbearers. The sentence “Donald Trump is white” is surely not an eternal sentence, and both of the senses in which it can be

interpreted are truth-apt in common discourse. Entities can possess distinct colors and can belong to distinct social classes. The problem is that we do not always know the ways in which all truth-apt sentences should be interpreted, and this ambiguity is very much in line with the richness of meaning that is an inherent feature of natural discourse. Semantic richness is one of the reasons why natural languages are such useful communication systems in the first place, enabling a wide range of expressive and descriptive functions. Insofar as a definition of truth is directed at natural discourse, as the pluralist program surely seems to be, then the potential issues with ambiguity should be a top priority for examination. However, pluralists have hitherto said very little about the inherent ambiguity of natural discourse and the problems it generates for their definitions, even while setting the goal of achieving an unambiguous and determinate definition of truth for said discourse.

Finally, I want to make a brief note about an approach to defining truth that shows promise in avoiding the already noted issues generated by natural language ambiguity, albeit still retaining the virtue of enabling the accommodation of both realist and anti-realist intuitions. One could aim to construct a Tarski-style truth definition for a regimented subsection of natural discourse that would obviously be incomplete because of the paradoxes and infinite semantic ascent. Beyond this, however, as given by the Tarskian paradigm, one would end up with a definition that gives general and scaling criteria for the truth of all truth-apt sentences. Take the Tarskian T-schema where each sentence provides its own conditions for being true:

*T-schema: X is true iff p*⁶¹

or

T-schema instance: "Donald Trump is white" is true iff Donald Trump is white.

Indeed, the Tarskian paradigm allows for both coherence and correspondence readings. As such, there is no in-principle reason for why it could not be used to construct a definition that allows for both realist and anti-realist ways of being true. In this sense, supplementing it with a distinctively pluralist thesis is a worthy path of inquiry.

Of course, there are central differences between the Tarski-based approach and current domain reliant pluralist frameworks. One important difference is that Tarski's account does not commit to using domains as an explanatory resource for defining truth. Because it treats individual sentences as truthbearers, no commitment to discourse domains is required. From this follows that the Tarskian approach does not fall victim to the noted ambiguity issues emerging

⁶¹ Tarski's (1944, 344) explication of the T-schema reads: "We shall call any such equivalence (with 'p' replaced by any sentence of the language to which the word 'true' refers, and 'X' replaced by a name of this sentence) an equivalence of the form (T)."

in the domain reliant frameworks. Independent of this, the project of defining domains is strictly non-truth-theoretical in the first place, and thus, there is no in-principle reason why a definition of truth should commit to it. Of course, as domains can be understood as simple classes of sentences, avoiding them altogether seems unnecessary. Indeed, even acknowledging different ways of being true would constitute domains. One key difference between the domain reliant pluralist models and the Tarski-inspired approach is that one can either accept that a definition results in the existence of domains or that a definition can utilize the notion of domains in accounting for the truth of sentences. As demonstrated throughout this paper, there are reasons for being suspicious about the latter path. Because of space limitations, I shall delay further discussion on the prospects of forming a domain-free pluralist definition in the spirit of Tarski's semantic conception of truth.

Finally, one note from the perspective of an unambiguous and determinate pluralist definition of truth arising from the comparison of current pluralist models and the Tarskian approach is that many of the issues with natural language ambiguity that pluralists face follow from their confidence in committing to a strict grounding claim. Pluralists are not only satisfied with offering general criteria for the truth of sentences; they seek to offer a scaling, unambiguous, and determinate definition of the grounds of truth on the level of natural discourse. The Tarskian approach simply provides general criteria for the truth of each sentence. There is no direct answer to the question of in what is the truth of each true sentence grounded in. Thus, the Tarskian approach is satisfied with a less specific definition, and for good reason. Tarski was well aware of the problems involved with offering a complete definition of truth for natural discourse, one reason being the inherent ambiguity and vagueness of natural language terms. Indeed, in this sense, Tarski can be interpreted as giving a reason why a determinate and scaling definition on the grounds of truth for natural language sentences *cannot* be given. Indeed, in light of our discussion, the issues generated by natural language ambiguity for definitions of truth in general seem to intensify the more a definition of truth commits itself to explaining. A criterial definition that makes strict grounding claims is faced with the issue of natural language ambiguity if it subjects itself to offering an unambiguous and determinate definition of truth. Other less ambitious definitional paths seem to face this issue to a lesser degree, but exploring the full scope of this idea deserves an independent study. I hope that at least some of the current findings will aid future examinations.

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IV

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by

Teemu Tauriainen

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