

# Recent work on alethic pluralism\*

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## 1. Alethic pluralism: basic idea and motivations

We entertain propositions about all sorts of subject matters—ordinary physical objects, mathematics, moral or legal matters, culinary matters, and humour, just to mention a few. Consider:

- (ORD) Trees are extended in space.
- (MATH) There are infinitely many primes.
- (ETH) Genocide is wrong.
- (LEG) Speeding is illegal.
- (CUL) Chocolate ice cream is delicious.
- (HUM) The Colbert Report is funny.

These propositions pertain to subject matters of radically different natures. While (ORD) and (MATH) pertain to mind-independent states of affairs, (ETH), (LEG), (CUL), and (HUM) concern states of affairs that depend on mind in some way. Further distinctions apply within each group. For instance, while (ORD) concerns concrete entities, (MATH) says something about numbers, certain abstract entities.

The alethic pluralist contends that differences in subject matter go hand in hand with differences in truth. Thus, considering the above propositions, the alethic pluralist might say that (ORD) is true in virtue of corresponding with reality whereas (MATH) and (LEG) owe their truth to cohering with respectively the axioms of arithmetic and the law. She might continue the story by saying that (ETH), (CUL), and (HUM) are true in virtue of eliciting certain responses in subjects (although the particular type of response relevant to each case might be different).

We can capture these ideas by characterizing the alethic pluralist as someone who endorses the following thesis:

- (PLU) There are several properties  $F_1, \dots, F_n$  ( $n \geq 2$ ) in virtue of which propositions are true,

where, for a given proposition  $p$ , which of  $F_1, \dots, F_n$  is capable of making  $p$  true depends on its subject matter. An alethic monist is someone who rejects (PLU), and instead thinks that there is precisely one property in virtue of which propositions are true.

Alethic pluralism is often associated with Crispin Wright who expresses sympathy towards the view in a number of writings (1992, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2001) and develops a version of it more fully in (forthcoming). Michael Lynch written extensively on the topic,

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developing two versions of so-called alethic functionalism (2000, 2001, 2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2008, 2009, forthcoming).

What might lead one to accept (PLU)? Here are three considerations in its favour:

According to Wright (1992, Chap. 1; 1996, pp. 923-924; 1999, p. 225), the pluralist thesis enables us to engage with the long-running debate between realists and antirealists in a particularly fruitful way—*viz.* by explaining the appeal of realist and antirealist intuitions in relation to different subject matters. According to Wright, truth can exhibit various realism-relevant features and is more or less realist in character depending on which of these features are exhibited. Superassertibility-transcendence is one of the features discussed by Wright. Roughly, a proposition  $p$  is superassertible just in case it is warrantably assertible in some state of information and would remain so under arbitrary improvements of the information (1992, p. 48). Truth in a domain is superassertibility-transcendent just in case it harbours truths that are not superassertible—truths beyond our epistemic reach. Part of the explanation of the appeal of realism with respect to the physical world might be that truth for this domain is given by correspondence, and that correspondence is superassertibility-transcendent (perhaps, at certain times, "Right now no star is dying anywhere in the universe" expresses a superassertibility-transcendent proposition). On the other hand, part of the explanation of the appeal of ethical antirealism might be that truth in ethics is epistemically constrained in the manner encoded by superassertibility. By endorsing the thesis that different properties are potent within different domains the pluralist can accommodate realist and antirealist intuitions with respect to these domains.

A second pro-pluralism consideration is the so-called scope problem (Lynch 2004, p. 385) or problem of the common denominator (Sher 199, pp. 134-34): propositions concerning a wide variety of subject matters are apt for truth. According to any monist theory of truth, there is precisely one property  $T$  in virtue of which truth-apt propositions are true. The pluralist contention is that whichever property we consider it is highly implausible to suppose that it applies across all truth-apt discourse. The correspondence theory might be plausible for discourse about ordinary physical objects, but much less plausible for discourse about legal matters or what is cool or funny. The same point applies to other candidate properties. In short, take any monist theory you like: its scope is not sufficiently wide to encompass all truth-apt discourse. Pluralism does better. By granting the existence of a multitude of alethically potent properties the view reaps the benefits of its monist competitors. Yet, by restricting their potency to specific domains, pluralism steers clear of implausibly extending the applicability of any one property to all truth-apt discourse.<sup>1</sup>

Third, one might think that pluralism can be supported empirically. On the basis of data collected through surveys, Max Kölbel (2008, forthcoming) takes ordinary speakers to acknowledge at least two uses of the word "true". One answers to a deflationary truth concept, the other to an inflationary one. The deflationary concept is characterized just by the disquotational schema (" $p$ " is true if and only if  $p$ ), while the inflationary concept is characterized by the disquotational schema in conjunction with a

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<sup>1</sup> Other authors who mention the scope problem include Barnard and Horgan (2006, forthcoming), Edwards (2011, 2012), Pedersen (2006, 2010), Sher (1998, 2004, 2005, forthcoming), Wright (2005, forthcoming). Edwards (forthcoming b) discusses the problem in connection with representationalist theories of truth.

requirement of objectivity (involving, as a bare minimum, the idea that, if it is correct for anyone to apply the truth concept to  $p$ , then it is a mistake for everyone to deny the concept of  $p$ ). In light of this "true" is ambiguous between two concepts. If, in addition, there is a property corresponding to each of the two concepts, we have pluralism at the level of properties: there is a thin, deflationary truth property as well as a thick, inflationary one.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. *Varieties of pluralism (I): strong pluralism*

The fundamental pluralist thesis, (PLU), does not specify the exact nature of the relationship between truth and the domain-specific properties  $F_1, \dots, F_n$ . Various options are open to the pluralist. We can get to grips with these by asking the following question:

- (Q) Is there a single property—truth-as-such—that is possessed by all truths regardless of their subject matter, and that enjoys an ontological status as a property in its own right, over and above the domain-specific properties  $F_1, \dots, F_n$ ?

Strong pluralists answer in the negative, presumably due to a reductionist stance towards the relationship between truth and the domain-specific properties. Letting  $F_i$  be alethically potent property within domain  $D_i$ , this kind of stance is exemplified by the following two theses:

- (R1) In a given domain  $D_i$ , the property of being true is identical to  $F_i$ , or  
 (R2) in a given domain  $D_i$ , the property of being true is constituted by  $F_i$ .

Identity is stronger than constitution, but (R1) and (R2) nonetheless share their reductionist spirit: there is nothing to being true in a given domain  $D_i$  over and above being  $F_i$ . As a result, truth is many rather than one. There is no unity to truth—no property that all truths have in common. Pedersen (2006) and Cotnoir (forthcoming) are examples of this kind of view, and several authors have taken Wright (1992) to be so too (Blackburn 1998; Jackson 1994; Lynch 2006, 2009; Pettit 1996; Sainsbury 1996; Tappolet 1997).<sup>3</sup>

## 3. *Mixed discourse and instability: problems for strong pluralists*

Strong pluralism is not a widely held view, and maybe for good reason. It has been argued that the view cannot deal adequately with mixed discourse, i.e. discourse involving

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<sup>2</sup> Kölbel himself stops short of endorsing alethic pluralism at the level of properties. He is open to the possibility, but also thinks that it would require pluralism about propositions (forthcoming, Sect. 3). Some commentators (e.g. Sainsbury 1996; Williamson 1994) took Wright (1992) to be committed to the thesis that "true" is ambiguous, but Wright (1994a, 1994b, 1996, 2001) rejects it. For a short discussion of ambiguity in connection with alethic pluralism, see Pedersen and Wright (2012), Sect. 4.1.

<sup>3</sup> In my view, the fairly limited discussions of pluralism in Wright 1992 (and also in 1994a, 1994b, 1996, 1998a, 2001) are consistent with both strong pluralism and a more moderate form of pluralism (for example of the kind endorsed by Wright in his (forthcoming)).

domains for which truth is constituted by different properties. Even more fundamentally it has been argued that strong pluralism is inherently unstable.

Let us turn first to mixed discourse. Consider:

- (MIX1)        Causing pain is bad.  
 (MIX2)        There are trees, and drunk driving is illegal.  
 (MIX3)        (1) If drunk driving is illegal, there are trees.  
                   (2) Drunk driving is illegal.  
                   (3) There are trees.

(MIX1) brings to the fore the problem of mixed atomic propositions (Sher 2005, pp. 321-322). (MIX1) features concepts from different domains—specifically, the mental (pain), the physical (causation), and morals (badness). However, this raises the question what domain the proposition belongs to. The answer is not clear, and yet, the pluralist would appear to be in need of an answer. After all, it is a core commitment of the view that propositions are true in virtue of having whatever property is alethically potent within its domain. So, in the absence of a story about the domain of (MIX1) the pluralist will also have no story to tell about its truth.

Reflection on propositions like (MIX2) points us to the problem of mixed compounds (Tappolet 2000; Williamson 1994). (MIX2) is true since both of its conjuncts are true. Unfortunately for the pluralist, there seems to be no straightforward way to account for this since the conjuncts of (MIX2) belong to domains for which different properties constitute truth, or so we may assume. For the sake of illustration, suppose that physical world discourse is a correspondence domain, and legal discourse is a coherence domain. Saying that the truth of (MIX2) consists in correspondence rightly credits one conjunct for its contribution to the truth of the compound, but ignores the contribution made by the other. The same point applies to the suggestion that the truth of (MIX2) consists in coherence. However, this means that the truth of the compound must consist in some third property. But it is unclear what property that would be.

Now turn to (MIX3). The inference from (1) and (2) to (3) is a mixed inference, an inference that involves propositions concerning domains within which truth is given by different properties. Validity is standardly understood in terms of necessary truth preservation: necessarily, if the premises are true, so is the conclusion. The inference—an instance of modus ponens—is clearly valid in this sense, but the pluralist seems to be unable to account for this. For what property is preserved in the inference? The truth of (2) is given by coherence, but for (3) truth is given by correspondence. So, neither coherence nor correspondence will do. But what property, then, is it? This is the problem of mixed inferences (Tappolet 1997).

*The instability challenge:*

The strong pluralist claims that there is a plurality of alethically potent properties without any overarching unity to them. Critics have argued that this claim is inherently unstable. Given the strong pluralist's thesis, straightforward reasoning can be deployed to undermine it (Tappolet 2000; Pedersen 2006, 2010):

Let  $D_1, \dots, D_n$  be the domains that the strong pluralist recognizes as truth-apt, and let  $F_1, \dots, F_n$  be the properties that are alethically potent within them. Now we can say of any proposition  $p$  concerning any domain whatsoever that it is *generically true* just in case it

is  $F_l$  and belongs to  $D_l$  or ... or it is  $F_n$  and it belongs to  $D_n$ . This generic property applies to all and only those propositions that possess one of the domain-specific properties. This is bad news for the strong pluralist. For the generic property is a truth property that applies across all truth-apt discourses, and so, truth is one and uniform after all, contra strong pluralism.

#### 4. Varieties of pluralism (II): moderate pluralism

Return to (Q), the question whether there is a truth property—truth-as-such—that applies across all truth-apt domains of discourse and enjoys an ontological status as a property in its own right. According to *moderate pluralism*, there is indeed such a property. To borrow a slogan (and the title) from Lynch (2009): truth is one and many. It is one because all truths are true-as-such, and it is many because there is a multitude of properties that make them so. As we will see below, accommodating the unity of truth helps the moderate pluralist respond to the challenges raised against strong pluralism.

Several varieties of moderate pluralism can be found in the literature. There is a substantial methodological point of agreement between them: they offer a network analysis of the concept of truth. Certain core principles characterize the concept by capturing the connections that it bears to other concepts in the network.<sup>4</sup> Wright (1992, 2001) lists various candidate core principles, while Lynch (2009, forthcoming) adopts the following three:

*Objectivity*: for every proposition  $p$ ,  $p$  is true if and only if, were  $p$  to be believed, things would be believed to be as they are.

*Norm of Belief*: for every proposition  $p$ , it is prima facie correct to believe  $p$  if and only if  $p$  is true.

*End of Inquiry*: for every proposition  $p$ , other things being equal, if  $p$  is true, then believing  $p$  is a worthy goal of inquiry.<sup>5</sup>

Moderate pluralists converge on the idea that there is a single, unified concept of truth, characterized by the core principles. The unity present at the conceptual level filters through to the level of properties: there is a single truth property, truth-as-such, that applies across all truth-apt discourse.

Four versions of moderate pluralism are introduced below. For each view we consider two issues to bring out some of its tenets: (i) what is the property of being true-as-such, and (ii) what is the relationship between truth-as-such and the domain-specific properties? There are very substantial similarities—indeed, quite a bit of overlap—with

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<sup>4</sup> Wright speaks of "platitudes" and Lynch of "truisms". Neither Wright nor Lynch thinks that their favoured principles are in any way obvious or immediate. Their preferred labels may nonetheless be thought to carry this suggestion. For this reason I speak of *core principles* instead.

<sup>5</sup> The formulation used here is the regimented version suggested by David (forthcoming). Edwards (2011, 2012, forthcoming a), Pedersen (2012), Pedersen and Edwards (2011), and Pedersen and Wright (forthcoming b) likewise rely on a network analysis. Network analyses are well-known from a wide range of cases other than truth—see, e.g., Jackson (1998) and Lewis (1979).

respect to (i). Bigger differences emerge in relation to answers to (ii), and their application to various issues confronted by the pluralist.

*Second-order functionalism:*

(i) *Truth-as-such:*

Truth-as-such is a certain functional property: a proposition  $p$  is true-as-such just in case it has the property that plays the truth-role for the domain to which it belongs (Lynch 2000, 2001, 2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b, 2006; see also Devlin 2003; Pettit 1996, p. 886). The truth-role is determined by the core principles. Supposing that Objectivity, Norm of Belief, and End of Inquiry are the core principles and that proposition  $p$  belongs to domain  $D_i$ ,  $p$  is true-as-such just in case it has the property that plays the truth-role in  $D_i$  (i.e. satisfies Objectivity, Norm of Belief, and End of Inquiry for propositions belonging to  $D_i$ ).

(ii) *Truth-as-such and domain-specific properties:*

The relationship between truth-as-such and the domain-specific properties is one of multiple realization. Different properties (correspondence, coherence, etc.) play the truth-role for different domains, meaning that different properties realize truth-as-such for these domains.<sup>6</sup>

*Manifestation functionalism:*

(i) *Truth-as-such:*

Truth-as-such is still characterized in terms of the truth-role, but in the following way: “the property of being true [true-as-such] is the property that has the truth features essentially or which plays the truth-role *as such*” (2009, p. 74). A property has the truth features or plays the truth-role as such just in case, necessarily, it satisfies Objectivity, Norm of Belief, and End of Inquiry for every (truth-apt) proposition. The features marked by the core principles are the essential features of truth.

(ii) *Truth-as-such and domain-specific properties:*

The relationship between truth-as-such and the domain-specific properties is one of manifestation (Lynch 2009, p. 74). In general, a property  $F$  *manifests* a property  $F^*$  just in case the essential features of  $F^*$  is a subset of  $F$ 's features. Put intuitively, part of being  $F$  is to be  $F^*$ . Applying this idea to the case of truth, the manifestation functionalist takes truth-as-such to be multiply manifestable. Correspondence, superwarrant, and possibly certain other properties play the truth-role or satisfy the core principles relative to specific domains. This means that the essential features of truth-as-such (i.e. the features marked by the core principles) are among the features of these other properties which, in turn, means that these other properties manifest truth-as-such. (Note: truth-as-such likewise manifests itself since manifestation is a

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<sup>6</sup> Wright sometimes speaks of “variable realization” (1996, p. 924; 1998a; 2001, p. 761). Lynch (2006, 2009) distances himself from Wright (1992, 1994a, 1994b, 1996, 1998a, 2001) by attributing a reductive, strong version of pluralism to him. See my comment in fn. 3. Note also that Lynch uses ramsification to state second-order functionalism. I have left out this aspect of the view for present purposes. But see Wright (2005, 2010) for criticisms. Nulty (2010) and Horton and Poston (forthcoming) object to second-order functionalism on metaphysical and explanatory grounds.

reflexive relation.) Put intuitively, to be true-as-such is part of what it is to correspond with reality, be super-warranted and so on.<sup>7</sup>

*Determination Pluralism:*

(i) *Truth-as-such:*

Truth-as-such is the property that necessarily satisfies the core principles for every (truth-apt) proposition (Edwards 2011, forthcoming).

(ii) *Truth-as-such and domain-specific properties:*

The relationship between truth-as-such and the domain-specific properties is one of determination: the domain-specific properties determine truth-as-such within their respective domains (Edwards 2011, forthcoming; Wright forthcoming). For example, let  $D_i$  be a domain for which correspondence is the alethically potent property. Then the determination pluralist endorses the following conditional: for any proposition  $p$ , if  $p$  belongs to  $D_i$ , then  $p$  is true-as-such if and only if  $p$  corresponds with reality. The embedded bi-conditional is read with an order of determination:  $p$ 's corresponding with reality is what makes it true-as-such, or  $p$  is true because it corresponds with reality.<sup>8</sup>

*Alethic Disjunctivism:*

(i) *Truth-as-such:*

Let  $F_1, \dots, F_n$  be the properties that satisfy the core principles for propositions belonging to domains  $D_1, \dots, D_n$  respectively. Truth-as-such is a certain disjunctive property: any proposition  $p$  is true-as-such just in case it is  $F_1$  and belongs to  $D_1$  or ... or  $p$  is  $F_n$  and belongs to  $D_n$  (Pedersen 2010, 2012; Pedersen and Edwards 2011; Pedersen and Wright forthcoming b; Edwards 2012).

(ii) *Truth-as-such and domain-specific properties:*

The relationship between truth-as-such and the domain-specific properties is one of grounding. Supposing that  $p$  belongs to domain  $D_i$  and is true-as-such,  $p$ 's being  $F_i$  is what grounds  $p$ 's being true-as-such, i.e.  $p$  is true-as-such because it is  $F_i$  or in virtue of being  $F_i$  (Pedersen 2010, 2012; Pedersen and Wright forthcoming).

Let me make two comments. First, on all views, truth-as-such is regarded as a property in its own right, over and above the domain-specific properties. Otherwise we would be dealing with versions of strong pluralism. Second, each of the favoured dependence relations is (strongly) asymmetric.<sup>9</sup> Hence, it is never the case that a proposition's being

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<sup>7</sup> Superwarrant is a property discussed by Lynch (2009, Chap. 2) that is similar to Wrightian superassertibility. The characterization of manifestation given here is simpler than Lynch's own (which involves talk of the a priori and features being *conceptually* essential). For present purposes this does not matter. Lynch is keen to present manifestation as a new metaphysical relation, one different from the relation that obtains between a genus and its species (2009, p. 67) and between a determinable and its determinants (2009, p. 75). See Tappolet 2010 for critical discussion.

<sup>8</sup> Determination pluralists regard the relationship between truth-as-such and the domain-specific properties as being analogous to the relationship between winning and "win-making" properties for specific games (Edwards 2011, forthcoming; Wright forthcoming). The analogy between truth and winning is well-known from Dummett 1978.

<sup>9</sup> A relation  $R$  is said to be strongly asymmetric just in case, for all  $x, y$ , if  $Rxy$ , then  $\sim Ryx$ .

true-as-such realizes, manifests, determines, or grounds its having the property that is alethically potent within its domain. The order of dependence always runs in the opposite direction. The many grounds the one, not the other way around.

### 5. *Moderate pluralism, mixed discourse and instability*

In responding to the problem of mixed compounds and the problem of mixed inferences moderate pluralists take advantage of the unity provided by truth-as-such. Truth-as-such is the property possessed by mixed compounds and also the property preserved in mixed inferences. Both cases can be covered by considering mixed compounds. For, if all premises and the conclusion of a mixed inference are true-as-such, it seems plausible enough that truth-as-such is the property preserved in the inference. For those of the premises and conclusion that pertain only to a single domain (which, in (MIX3), would be (2) and (3)), truth-as-such is conferred in the way described in the previous section. What remains to be shown is that mixed propositions are true-as-such. The task for the moderate pluralist is to connect truth-as-such for mixed compounds with their favoured account of the relationship between the one and the many. Alternatively, if they think that there is not tight connection between the two, some alternative path must be mapped out.<sup>10</sup>

#### *Second-order functionalism and mixed compounds:*

A conjunction—whether pure or mixed—is true-as-such in virtue of being a conjunction whose conjuncts both have the property that plays the truth-role for their respective domains. Consider again (MIX2) from above: There are trees, and drunk driving is illegal. This mixed conjunction is true-as-such, because the first conjunct corresponds with reality, and the second conjunct coheres with the law—i.e. the conjuncts have the property that plays the truth-role for the domain to which they belong. The same kind of story is told for other types of truth-functional compound, with appropriate changes made according to what kind of compound we are dealing with (Lynch 2004, p. 397).

#### *Manifestation functionalism and mixed compounds:*

A proposition  $p$  is *plainly true* just in case  $p$  is true-as-such solely in virtue of truth's self-manifesting. That is, truth-as-such self-manifests for  $p$ , but  $p$  possesses no further property that manifests truth-as-such. A proposition  $q$  is *unplainly true* just in case it is true-as-such in virtue of possessing some further distinct property that manifests truth-as-such. Compound propositions—whether pure or mixed—are plainly true on the manifestation functionalist's view (Lynch 2009, pp. 90-91; forthcoming, Sect. 6). The conjuncts of (MIX2) are unplainly true, whereas the conjunction itself is plainly true. Correspondence manifests truth-as-such for the first conjunct, coherence for the second. The unplain truth

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<sup>10</sup> Pedersen (2006) and Cotnoir (forthcoming b) offer strongly pluralist solutions to the problem of mixed inferences. Lynch (2009, p. 63) and Cotnoir (forthcoming b) criticize Pedersen. Beall (2000) gives an account of mixed inferences in terms of designated values. Tappolet (2000) offers a rejoinder. Crispin Wright (forthcoming, Sect. 4) elaborates on Beall's response. I leave strongly pluralist responses aside here in order to dedicate more space to the discussion of moderate forms of pluralism. I also leave out a fourth problem—the problem of mixed generalizations. See Lynch (2004b, p. 389; 2009, p. 57), Shapiro (2009), and Wright (forthcoming) for discussion.



of each conjunct is directly grounded in one of the domain-specific properties. However, there is no direct grounding for (MIX2) itself: it possesses no property distinct from truth-as-such, but is true-as-such solely in virtue of truth-as-such's self-manifesting. This may suggest that truth-as-such floats freely for compounds. It does so to some extent. Put slightly differently, the plain truth of compounds is *weakly grounded* (Lynch 2009, p. 90; forthcoming, Sect. 6): it supervenes on the unplain truth of their atomic parts.<sup>11</sup>

*Determination pluralism and mixed compounds:*

While the determination pluralist takes mixed compounds to be true-as-such (Edwards forthcoming, Sect. 3), no detailed account of how they get this status has been provided yet. Recall that truth-as-such is determined by domain-specific properties like correspondence and coherence, according to the determination pluralist. This is captured by the "determination conditionals". However, each conditional operates only within a specific domain. In light of this, the options available to the determination pluralist appear to be these: take mixed compounds to fall under some specific domain and specify a conditional for that domain, or grant that mixed compounds fall outside the scope of all domain-specific determination conditionals and tell some alternative story about how these propositions can be made true-as-such. Whichever option the determination pluralist chooses there is work to be done.<sup>12</sup>

*Alethic disjunctivism and mixed compounds:*

Lynch (2009, pp. 66-67) argues that alethic disjunctivists cannot account for the truth of mixed compounds. Maybe so, given the initial characterization of truth-as-such. For, in order for this characterization to apply, compounds must belong to some specific domain. However, mixed mixed compounds precisely seem to defy classification into any given domain. In my view, the lesson to be learned from this is that the initial characterization of truth-as-such must be restricted to atomic propositions and supplemented by an account that deals with compounds. Such an account can be provided by relying on features of the grounding relation. I sketch one now. The account has the advantage that it grounds truth-as-such for compounds entirely in the domain-specific properties that apply to atomics. No additional properties are needed. Supposing that  $p$  belongs to  $D_i$  and  $q$  to  $D_j$ , the account runs as follows:  $p \wedge q$  is true-as-such if and only if  $p$  is  $F_i$  and  $q$  is  $F_j$ . The rationale behind this proposal is that the truth of the conjuncts is individually necessary and jointly sufficient for the truth of the conjunction. The bi-conditional should be read with priority from right to left:  $p \wedge q$  is true-as-such in virtue (or because) of  $p$ 's being  $F_i$  and  $q$ 's being  $F_j$ . For disjunctions say the following:  $p \vee q$  is true-as-such if and only if  $p$  is  $F_i$  or  $q$  is  $F_j$ . The rationale behind this proposal is that the truth of one of the disjuncts is necessary and sufficient for the truth of the disjunction. Again, there is right to left priority:  $p \vee q$  is true-as-such in virtue (or because) of  $p$ 's being  $F_i$  or  $q$ 's being  $F_j$ . (Note: if  $p$  is  $F_i$  and  $q$  is  $F_j$ , then  $p \vee q$  is true-as-such in virtue of  $p$ 's being  $F_i$ , but also in virtue of

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<sup>11</sup> The idea of Lynch (2009) is that the atomic/compound distinction and the unplain/plain truth distinction match up. However, Shapiro (2011) argues that there are plain, atomic truths (e.g. truth-attributions), and that the plain truth of certain compounds (e.g. logical truths) is not weakly grounded.

<sup>12</sup> Edwards (2008) offers a solution to the problem of mixed compounds. However, the solution is not formulated in terms of the determination conditionals, and so, cannot be adopted by the determination pluralist without further work. Cotnoir (2009) critically discusses Edwards (2008), and Edwards (2009) responds. See also Cook (2011) on mixed compounds.

$q$ 's being  $F_j$ —each fact is sufficient on its own.) In cases of compounds with constituents that are compounds, the transitivity of grounding kicks in. For example, let  $p$ ,  $q$ ,  $r$ , and  $s$  be atomic propositions from domains within which respectively  $F_i$ ,  $F_j$ ,  $F_k$ , and  $F_l$  are alethically potent. Then  $(p \wedge q) \wedge (r \wedge s)$  is true-as-such in virtue of  $(p \wedge q)$ 's being true-as-such and  $(r \wedge s)$ 's being true-as-such. In turn,  $(p \wedge q)$  is true-as-such in virtue of  $p$ 's being  $F_i$  and  $q$ 's being  $F_j$ , and  $(r \wedge s)$  is true-as-such in virtue of  $r$ 's being  $F_k$  and  $s$ 's being  $F_l$ . By transitivity,  $(p \wedge q) \wedge (r \wedge s)$  is true-as-such in virtue of  $p$ 's being  $F_i$ ,  $q$ 's being  $F_j$ ,  $r$ 's being  $F_k$ , and  $s$ 's being  $F_l$ .<sup>13</sup>

*Moderate pluralism and mixed atomic propositions:*

Not much work has been done by pluralists to address the problem of mixed atomic propositions. I outline two proposals here. Lynch (2005b, pp. 340-341) hints at what might be called the “modal co-variance strategy”: the truth of a given mixed atomic proposition co-varies across all possible worlds with the truth of a proposition that clearly belong to a specific domain. For example,  $\langle$ causing pain is bad $\rangle$  is true in exactly the same worlds as  $\langle$ you ought not cause pain $\rangle$ , and the latter is clearly a moral proposition. Pedersen and Wright (2012, Sect. 4.5.1) suggest that there is no need to look for a different proposition with which the truth of a mixed atomic proposition can co-vary. Any mixed atomic proposition can be classified as belonging to a specific domain by considering what property it involves. For example,  $\langle$ causing pain is bad $\rangle$  is a moral proposition and  $\langle$ 7 is a beautiful number $\rangle$  an aesthetic proposition, because badness and beauty are respectively moral and aesthetic properties. If the first proposition is true-as-such, it is so in virtue of possessing whatever property is alethically potent for moral discourse. If the second proposition is true-as-such, it is so in virtue of possessing whatever property is alethically potent for aesthetic discourse.<sup>14</sup>

*Pluralism stabilized:*

Let us now turn to the instability challenge. The alethic unity supplied by the generic truth property dealt a seemingly devastating blow to strong pluralism. However, for moderate pluralists alethic unity is no problem—indeed, it is an integral part of their view. For this reason the instability challenge has no bite against versions of moderate pluralism.<sup>15</sup> Still, someone might think that the moderate pluralist has a high price to pay for granting the unity of truth, *viz.* that her view is more monist than pluralist, or at the very least as monist as it is pluralist. This does not seem right. Given the nature of the relationship between the one and the many, moderate pluralism is more pluralist than

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<sup>13</sup> I follow Rosen (2010) in taking grounding to be transitive. The account just sketched derives from Pedersen (2009). For a significantly similar account (developed within an algebraic framework), see Cotnoir (forthcoming b).

<sup>14</sup> Since truth-as-such plays no role in either of the two proposals, they are available to moderate and strong pluralists alike.

<sup>15</sup> C. D. Wright (forthcoming, Sect. 4) argues that it is not clear that the instability challenge arises in the first place because it must be shown that there is independent reason to think that the pluralist is committed to an abundant conception of properties. This point—or one very similar—was made in considerable detail in Pedersen (2006). Cotnoir (forthcoming a) argues that there is a reason not to accept a generic, disjunctively defined truth *predicate*, on pain of paradox. The issue also merits discussion at the level of properties. The paradoxes have largely escaped attention in the pluralism literature. However, as Cotnoir and Shapiro (2011) point out, the pluralist—like anyone else—ought to pay attention. See also Beall (forthcoming).

monist. Consider alethic disjunctivism: a proposition  $p$  is true-as-such in virtue of its possessing the property that is alethically potent within its domain, not the other way around. The many grounds the one, and for this reason, the pluralist aspect of alethic disjunctivism is more fundamental than its monist counterpart (Pedersen 2010; Pedersen and Wright forthcoming b; Cotnoir 2009). Given the (strong) asymmetry of their favoured dependence relations, the same kind of story is available to adherents of other versions of moderate pluralism.<sup>16</sup>

## 6. *Simplicity arguments and replies*

Moderate pluralists have made considerable progress in relation to the objections leveled against strong pluralism in Sect. 3. However, further issues call for attention—among them a cluster of arguments from simplicity.

### *Simplicity argument 1—the double-counting objection:*

There are different kinds of truths. Some truths concern arithmetic, some concern the physical world, and yet others morals, legal or aesthetic matters. The pluralist thinks that the best way to account for these differences is by taking domain-variation to work in tandem with alethic variation, at the level of the properties that make propositions true. However, in order to account for the differences we need only take on board variation in subject matter, i.e. differences between the things themselves (numbers, trees, wrongs and rights, laws, etc.). The pluralist counts two differences where only one is needed (Blackburn 1998, forthcoming; Dodd 2002, forthcoming, Sect. 3; Jackson 1994; Pettit 1996, p. 886; Quine 1960, p. 131; Sainsbury 1996, p. 900).<sup>17</sup>

This objection should be understood against the background of monism: differences in subject matter plus one alethically potent property is all that is needed to account for differences between truths. Since monism is simpler than pluralism, simplicity considerations rule against the latter.

### *Simplicity argument 2—multitudinous correspondence monism:*

Some authors endorse what we might call "multitudinous correspondence monism" (Sher 2005; forthcoming; Barnard and Horgan 2006, forthcoming). Truth is correspondence across the board, but correspondence is a genus that subsumes different species. Truth is both many and one. It is many because there are *different* forms of correspondence, and it is one because they are all forms of *correspondence*. Now, one of the main attractions of pluralism is its ability to accommodate the wide scope of truth-apt discourse. Multitudinous correspondence monism is a view apt to do the same job, through the different forms of correspondence that it accommodates. However, since multitudinous correspondence monism only speaks of correspondence, simplicity considerations favour

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<sup>16</sup> Tappolet (ms) offers a criticism of the priority considerations given here.

<sup>17</sup> Quine and Sainsbury specifically target ambiguity views. Pluralists have tended to distance themselves from this kind of commitment (Lynch 2001, 2004b, 2006, 2009; Wright 1994a, 1994b, 1996, 2001). As Dodd (forthcoming, Sect. 3) notes, though, something like the double-counting objection can be seen as what is really driving Quine and Sainsbury. The label "double-counting objection" is inspired by the formulation in Blackburn (forthcoming). Note that Blackburn moves at the level of propositions (or content) rather than at the level of the things that constitute their subject matters. Wright (1998b, Sect. 4) replies.

that view over moderate pluralism—a view that theoretically commits to having two alethically potent properties, if not more.<sup>18</sup>

*Simplicity argument 3—deflationary monism:*

According to deflationary monists the disquotational schema (or some such schema) fully characterizes truth across all truth-apt domains of discourse. Deflationary monism is a simpler view than any form of pluralism. It involves just one core principle and only one (deflationary) truth property, while pluralist views commit to a cluster of core principles and a range of alethically potent properties (plus truth-as-such for moderate views). Now pair the double-counting objection with deflationary monism. Simplicity considerations support deflationary monism over any type of pluralism (Dodd forthcoming).<sup>19</sup>

*Pluralist replies:*

Let me briefly sketch two lines of reply in response to the simplicity arguments just presented.

The first reply is to maintain that the appearance of greater simplicity is illusory. This reply may hold some promise when it comes to blocking the second simplicity argument. For it is not all that clear that multitudinous correspondence monism is any simpler than pluralist views. The theoretical framework of pluralism incorporates the idea that different properties are alethically potent within different domains and supplements it with an account of the relationship between the one and the many. But the theoretical framework of multitudinous correspondence monism incorporates the idea that there are different forms of correspondence for different domains and supplements it with an account of the nature and workings of these various forms of correspondence. At a fairly general level of description it would thus seem that the two views incur theoretical commitments of the same magnitude. The greater simplicity of multitudinous correspondence monism is illusory. (Needless to say, though, something must be said about how to measure simplicity/complexity in order for a rigorous comparison to take place.)

The second response takes its cue from work linking pluralism and paradox. Beall (forthcoming) argues that one reason to be a pluralist about truth predicates is that this enables one to deal with the semantic paradoxes. Now, conclusions reached about predicates do not always transfer to the case of properties. However, it is worth exploring whether a commitment to pluralism at the level of properties might be advantageous *vis-à-vis* the paradoxes. If so, there would be reason to adopt the view. But there are a few qualifications: first, the outlined response is only any good provided that the pluralist way of dealing with the paradoxes is better than monist alternatives (otherwise the monist will claim that, once again, monism outperforms pluralism). Second, the kind of pluralism envisioned by Beall is quite different from the versions of pluralism discussed so far. Beall-style pluralism is motivated by the need to solve the semantic paradoxes while the various versions of pluralism considered above are rooted in differences in subject matter.

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<sup>18</sup> Neither Sher nor Barnard and Horgan explicitly give the kind of argument just presented. However, since multitudinous correspondence monists and pluralists set themselves the same explanatory goals (in particular, accounting for the diversity of truth), it might seem natural to raise the issue of simplicity.

<sup>19</sup> Independent arguments against deflationary monism can outweigh simplicity considerations in its favour. Lynch argues that deflationism offers no satisfactory account of the normativity of truth (2004a, 2004c, 2009). See McGrath (2002, 2005), Dodd (forthcoming), and Pedersen and Edwards (2011) for replies.

### 7. *Prospects and potential connections to other areas*

What are the prospects and significance of pluralism? In order to answer this question we must factor in at least the following two things: first, can the pluralist deal adequately with pressing issues and challenges, and second, to what extent has the pluralist developed the positive aspects of her view and explored its connections, if any, to other areas?

Opponents may not be convinced by the replies offered by pluralists in response to the challenges we have reviewed. However, convincing the unconvinced would seem like an unreasonably tall order. Pluralists have developed the positive aspects of their view and responded to challenges in ways that at least seem to preserve internal coherence. This should be good enough for the view to merit continued interest and discussion. That being said, much work can still be done to develop pluralism further. Second-order functionalism is the view that has been developed in most detail. Manifestation functionalism shares many of its integral parts with second-order functionalism, but several commentators find that more should be said about several key components, including the notions of manifestation and plain truth. Determination pluralism and alethic disjunctivism are interesting new developments waiting to be explored further.

One reason to be interested in pluralism is the potential bearing it has on other areas or issues. Truth is a fundamental concept, one that is connected in significant ways with other fundamental concepts like meaning, reference, belief, knowledge, and validity. It is worth exploring whether a commitment to alethic pluralism might spill over into other areas. Some pluralists have made suggestions of this sort. Kölbel (forthcoming) suggests that alethic pluralism might sit most naturally with a pluralist view on propositions. Lynch (2009, Chap. 7) goes one step further and explores how alethic functionalism might be extended into full-fledged semantic functionalism. He likewise argues that logical pluralism is a natural companion of his favoured incarnation of pluralism (2008, 2009, Chap. 5). Pedersen (forthcoming) also connects alethic pluralism and logical pluralism. However, it is further proposed that both kinds of pluralism flow from a yet a third kind—ontological pluralism, or the view that there are different kinds of being. In short, the proposal is that we have pluralism  $\times$  3—pluralism in truth, logic, and ontology.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> For more on logical pluralism, see Beall and Restall (2006), Cook (2011), Field (2009), Hjortland (forthcoming), Lynch (2008, 2009), Pedersen (forthcoming), Read (2006), and Russell (2008). For more on ontological pluralism, see McDaniel (2009, 2010) and Turner (2010).

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