

Misunderstandings about truth

Franca d'Agostini

To cite this article: Franca d'Agostini (2019) Misunderstandings about truth, Church, Communication and Culture, 4:3, 266-286, DOI: [10.1080/23753234.2019.1667252](https://doi.org/10.1080/23753234.2019.1667252)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23753234.2019.1667252>



© 2019 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 13 Nov 2019.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 222



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Misunderstandings about truth

Franca d'Agostini

Department of Economics, Management and Quantitative Methods, University of Milan, Milan, Italy

ABSTRACT

The article explores the most common disagreements and misunderstandings concerning truth, in philosophical as well as extra-philosophical debates, then reflects on the notion of “post-truth era”, reverting the diagnosis, and suggesting that in the recent history of the concept of truth we may find some positive opportunities that deserve to be taken into account.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 13 May 2019
Revised 10 September 2019
Accepted 10 September 2019

KEYWORDS

Theories of truth;
epistemicism; realism;
alethic pluralism

1. The post-post-truth era

There is nothing new with the so-called “post-truth era” (see Keyes 2004). If the term is intended to refer to a generalized indifference to fact-checking in favour of emotions or biased beliefs, then the expression is unfortunate, as it postulates a contrast between properties that are not incompatible in principle: emotions and biases can affect fact-checking, people have always preferred to be confirmed rather than disproved by facts, and everyone knows there are many sorts of facts one may ‘check’ to support the most unbelievable and absurd beliefs. If on the other hand the indifference to facts is meant to be the mark of epistemic docility and uncritical acceptance, then, given the impressive increase of hate speech and intellectual conflicts both in new and old media, the post-truth theory seems simply false: mistrust and scepticism are dominant. If instead ‘post-truth’ is intended to mean a specifically new disregard, distrust or disbelief about truth, then one may say the idea was launched by Nietzsche at the end of the nineteenth century with his theory of *nihilism*, and confirmed by many philosophers and theologians engaged in sociological analyses. Not only that, there are good reasons to believe that *democracy* as such is doomed to produce alethic nihilism (or “cynicism” toward truth¹): this was also the intuition of philosophers during the first democratic experiment, in Greece. So the *misadventures of truth* have had a very long history, as they date back at least to the fifth century BC (D’Agostini 2002).²

CONTACT Franca d’Agostini franca.dagostini@unimi.it Department of Economics, Management and Quantitative Methods, University of Milan, Milan, 20122 Italy

© 2019 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

What is new is that the worry about truth has entered the public language, becoming the concern of a lot of intellectuals, journalists and political scientists, so that the literature about the theme has increased impressively. In this respect, we should rather say we live in a *post-post-truth era*, as the problem of truth (truth as a problem) has become generally acknowledged: the notion of truth has gained a new and unexpected importance in our lives.

If we accept this view, the real problem of our times is not the ubiquitous circulation of falsities and misleading truths, and the new ways of taking advantage of human credulity: it is rather the great number of disparate diagnoses and therapies proposed for our ‘alethic diseases’. What is still problematic is the circulation of diverging ideas about the notion of truth, and its importance in human life. These disagreements are not properly and exclusively ‘verbal’, but surely contain *misunderstandings* about this obvious and ancient concept of the philosophical tradition.

What do we talk about when we talk about truth? Why are we so interested in truth? What is its role in our lives? The answer is not so clear. My aim in this paper is to give some directions in this regard, exploring the most common disagreements and misunderstandings concerning truth, in philosophical as well as extra-philosophical debates (§ 2). I will then come back to the post-truth question, suggesting in our current condition there are possibilities that are more encouraging (for our alethic needs) than one would have thought at first (§ 3).

2. (Mis)understanding truth

In *True to Life* (Lynch 2004) Michael Lynch contrasts some “truisms” about truth, such as

- T is objective
- T is good
- T is worthy goal of inquiry
- T is worth caring about for its own sake,

with what he calls “very bad ideas”:

- There is only one T
- Only “pure” reason can access the T
- T is mysterious
- Only some people can know the T
- We should pursue the T at all cost

His basic thesis is that most scepticism about T is grounded “on myths that confuse one or more of these bad ideas with our truisms” (Lynch 2004, 20). In fact, the “bad ideas” can be variously defended, and their incompatibility with the truisms can be discussed too. For instance: when a person says that there is only one T (the first of the ‘bad ideas’), if she intends that by ‘this is true’ people mean ‘this is how things stand’ (i.e. if she appeals to the definition of T) then it is hard to say that she is not right (§ 2.6). As to the statement that “T is objective”, its incompatibility with the ‘bad idea’ of the uniqueness of T is not clear. Otherwise, if by ‘objective’ you mean that it *is* acknowledged by everyone, evidently this is simply false; while if you mean that it

ought to be acknowledged by everyone, then this is true, but now the truism is not well-formed, and one would rather say ‘T *should* be objective’.

I do not mean that Lynch is wrong, or that the strategy he has adopted to defend “the value of truth” is ineffective and unworthy. I only want to stress that our views about T, even in the case of people who are very well acquainted with the theme, are still affected by disagreements and controversies that are fundamentally unjustified: because one of the two views is, simply, the right one; or because they are both right, but make reference to different perspectives with different aims; or finally, because they are both wrong.

2.1. The function T

A typical misunderstanding generally occurs between the *philosophical* and the *extra-philosophical* approach to T. Non-philosophers generally speak of T referring to ‘what is true’, i.e. *true contents*; philosophers instead generally speak of T as referring to the *concept*, the *conceptual function* we call ‘truth’ and that we express by the predicate ‘true’. It is not simply a methodological distinction. Very often, we cannot get to the end of discussions about T just because we refer to true contents. For instance, someone says ‘there are many truths’ meaning there are many different opinions about a certain topic; another accepts that there is only ‘one T’, but speaks of ‘the T’ meaning what is stated as true (say by religious texts). The philosophical perspective consists of stopping these discussions by asking: what are we talking about? What do you mean by ‘T’?

In practice, the conceptual perspective consists of assuming that when we speak of T and discuss it, we seek “the truth about truth”, so we do not speak of the different true contents that we can or cannot get by our means of knowledge, but we speak of the concept we use to relate language (or beliefs) to some autonomous reality, and that we express when we say (or think) ‘this is true’ or we ask: ‘is this true?’. Let’s call it *the function T*.

Pilate’s question “what is T?” makes no sense and does not deserve any answer if one intends it as referred to what we correctly believe true, because there are different truths we may have, say: it is true that today in Turin is a sunny day, that whales are mammals, that the second World War was officially finished in 1945, that $2 + 2$ is 4, etc. It is a bit more justified, but still hardly answerable, if it is intended to what *criterion* we follow when we (correctly) search for T, or what *procedure* we adopt to justify our beliefs (as true). But still, the question is fairly complex: just as there are disparate true contents, there are different sources, different ways of finding them, and some truths are more ‘categorical’ than others, the epistemic force of our acceptance of ‘p’ or claim that p^3 varies depending on both contexts and contents.

We may think that Jesus, who did not answer, was aware of the difficulty, and in this sense, he was a *philosopher*, namely a Greek-style philosopher: someone focused on the *conceptual* perspective, whereby in asking ‘what is T?’ one has rather (and first of all) to reflect on the concept, the function T.

In the conceptual perspective, the question changes, and it is perfectly legitimate to ask:

- What does “T” mean?
- Why is there this concept in our language?
- How and when do we use it?
- Are we legitimate in using it?
- What are the risks and opportunities related to its use?

2.2. Truth and its enemies: the *elenctic* argument

The recent history of truth has been marked by “T as a problem.” This was announced by Nietzsche, in the last decades of the nineteenth century and is confirmed by the fact that the classical notion of T as “correspondence,” which had dominated the philosophical scene in the entire tradition, was submitted to revision and criticism, and new rival theories of T, namely coherentism and pragmatic theory, were proposed, at the beginning of the subsequent century (§ 2.5).

One may say that the twentieth century has been the theatre of a general discussion about T. From the second half of the century onwards, the debate, especially in Europe, has been focused on the problem of *nihilism*, intended as a “social condition,” with opposite interpretations. On one side, the diagnosis is that people have become alethically cynical or indifferent: so nihilism is the mark of an “age of decadence.” On the other side, it is assumed that searching for T or believing that what one believes is true are wrong attitudes, so nihilism is a new and preferable human status: we have finally discovered that we should not appeal to T. Briefly, we have here the idea of the “post-T era,” with opposite evaluations.

In a sense, the conflict between nihilists and anti-nihilists is a conflict between (respectively) ‘enemies’ and ‘friends’ of T: anti-nihilist philosophers and religious people usually believe we do not pay enough attention to T, nihilists believe that it is precisely paying attention to T is our first mistake. But what do we mean by ‘being friends of T’? First, if we keep to the philosophical (conceptual) perspective, we see there is no point in being ‘friends’ or ‘enemies’ of concepts, as concepts are unguilty entities: everything depends on how we use them. Second, if by ‘nihilism’ we mean the idea that there is no T, that is, no proposition or belief is T, it is impossible to be nihilist: because if it is true that there is no truth, then some T must exist, and if it is untrue, then the conclusion is the same. Nihilism is self-contradictory, it “destroys itself” (*eauton anairei*).

In virtue of this very ancient and famous argument, called the *elenctic argument*, we conclude that there are no alethic nihilists, despite what nominal ‘nihilists’ say of themselves: because they do not really believe what they believe to believe.⁴

So apparently, the controversy is irrelevant, as the anti-nihilists win: they have the “victorious argument.” But this is not the ultimate diagnosis. In the way in which I have presented the discussion, nihilists simply point to “the problem of T,” i.e. claim that T is an ambiguous and problematic concept, which generates logical, epistemic and pragmatic difficulties, such as paradoxes, dogmatism, controversies, etc. And this is unquestionably *true*: many logicians, epistemologists and philosophers of language

can confirm it. What is more, anti-nihilist philosophers usually also accept it. Rather, the awareness that our use of T may give origin to many problems is possibly the first and main 'philosophical' awareness concerning T.

In this account, nihilists share with their opponents the idea that T is an important concept, as it exerts some *power* on our lives. The disagreement regards whether this power is benevolent or malignant: it only consists of deciding *in what measure* and why we should be friends or enemies of T. Are nihilists and anti-nihilists right in admitting (with opposite evaluations) "the power of truth" (see § 3)?

Actually, between nihilists and anti-nihilists one may think there are 'moderate' people, who think the two views are 'exaggerated'. They may suggest that T is useful but not such an important concept: say, it is important in science but not in politics, for epistemic needs and not for practical needs. In fact, as I will show there are reasons to believe that alethic moderatism is at least as wrong as nihilism, and it is maybe more misleading.

2.3. Epistemicism and realism

One of the most well-known controversies about T is related to a view that has been called epistemicism to be contrasted with *realism*. In principle, the difference is only verbal: by 'true' epistemicists intend to mean 'what *is held* true' and realists intend the term as *factive*: 'what *is* true'. In fact, the difference has many important consequences, in epistemology, and in logic, as realists are generally focused on a *classical* meaning of T, while epistemicists tend to discuss classical T and classical logic⁵.

In using 'being true' as 'being believed/considered true', epistemicists are charged to superimpose epistemology on ontology, knowledge on being, and in this respect they simply make a mistake. But we cannot properly say it is a 'mistake' in itself: rather much depends on how the pretended "primacy of epistemology" is conceived and justified, and we find here some interesting second-order misunderstandings.

One of the most well-known and authoritative contributions to the distinction between 'true' and 'believed true' is given by Kant's interpretation of the foundational role of scepticism in knowledge: in virtue of Kant's view, we see that our use of T is often wrong, namely as we tend to confound things with what we think about them (so 'true' with 'believed true'), and we do not have a clear idea of the difference. Oddly enough, this same misunderstanding has worked also in misinterpreting Kantianism. Often, especially in the analytical tradition, Kant is not considered one of the leading figures that have settled the dispute, and have given the instruments for a *criticism* of epistemicist tendencies, but as the champion of epistemicism, and more specifically as a metaphysical "anti-realist," someone who believes that what we say and think about facts is what we get from our concepts or *a priori* elements of reason. Surely, Kant says that 'phenomena' (the contents of our true propositions or beliefs) are captured by using concepts and generally the *a priori* elements of reason (space and time pure intuitions, schemas, concepts, categories, ideas), but not *only* by them. Kant's theory of knowledge was well grounded on the idea that *empirical receptivity* (that is, what we receive from reality "in itself"), gives the *contents* of knowledge, and the *a priori* elements are the *forms* by which we organize these contents, and prepare them to enter

into propositions (sentences, assertions, statements, or any other truthbearer), i.e. truth-apt items.

To misinterpret Kant on this point is only possible if one forgets the difference between reality and what we believe and think about it, so one confuses what Kant says about our knowledge of reality with what he believes about reality in itself. People who accuse Kant of making this mistake⁶ do not see they are making exactly the same mistake.

2.4. The intersection of logic and epistemology

The limits of epistemicism are well captured by an argument that has been presented by Crispin Wright (1992). We can assume that the epistemicist is a person who believes in the following equivalence:

TJ: α is true if α is justified.

This seems a plausible principle. It actually rules many of our inferences, especially in condition of ignorance or uncertainty: I should not say that α is true if I do not have strong reasons to say so; and if I have justifying reasons for α , I can say that ' α ' is true. So far so good, but the realm of ignorance, of *non-knowing*, is vast and insidious.

Suppose I do not know my neighbour so well. In this case the principle is of help: I can say that 'my neighbour is a criminal' is *not true*, as I don't have any justifying reason to assert it. But let's consider: β = 'my neighbour is a nice person'. I do not know that β is true, as I do not know my neighbour. I have no reason to say that β is true, and then β is not true. But *in classical logic, if a proposition is not true, then it is false, which means: its negation is true*. So I can say that 'my neighbour is not a nice person' is true, and I am perfectly justified in asserting and believing it.

This move is visibly what gives support to the *ad ignorantiam* inference:

I have no reason to believe that my neighbour is a nice person
Then I conclude I have reasons to believe he is *not* a nice person.

Clearly, the question regards negation in a significant way: negation cannot move from one to the other side of 'I know that ...' or other epistemic operators: if I do not know whether there are extra-terrestrial intelligent people, I cannot say that consequently I know that there are no extra-terrestrial intelligent people; if I do not believe that there are extra-terrestrial intelligent people, this does not necessarily mean I believe that there are not.

There might be cases in which some 'p' is for me *neither true nor false*, which means that the ancient and capital rule of logic, the Excluded Middle (EM), fails. We may have so two different logics, informed by the use of 'not' as applied to the T-predicate. Classical logic is realistic, it is assumed that 'not true' means 'true that not', then 'false'; accordingly, 'not false' means 'not true that not' and thus 'true'. So truth and falsity are jointly *exhaustive*: there is no third, the Bivalence, the alethic EM, is given. Intuitionistic logic and other similar logics are sometimes called *paracomplete*, as they assume that there could be neither true nor false propositions. Logical paracompleteness is generally accepted, nowadays, by many T-theories. This can be justified, because the T predicate we use in logic is always related to what we have proved and we know,

and so what we are able to judge as T. But in the perspective of a realistic theory of truth, EM is still a grounding principle. If T means that things stand in a certain way, then one cannot say that it is untrue that things stand in a certain way and it is untrue things do not stand in that way. If it is not true that the cat is on the sofa, then the cat is not on the sofa, and it is true it is not there, but elsewhere. There is no third.

In practice we have

'p' is not true = I do not know whether 'p'

'p' is not true = things do not stand how 'p' says (see § 2.6)

We thus say that anti-realist logicians and epistemologists are wrong in the perspective of T-realism: but is T-realism the only correct theory of T? What do we mean by 'realism', with reference to T?

2.5. Traditional theories of T

The three traditional T-theories are coherentism, correspondentism and (alethic) pragmatism. Correspondence theory has dominated, almost uncontroversially, the entire history of philosophy. The other two theories officially appeared later, around the end of the XIX century, though various elements of both were already present in the philosophical literature.

In fact, they are not really *rival* theories: rather there are reasons to believe they specify different aspects of the use of T. This is well evident in Russell's discussion of coherentism (CH) and pragmatic theory (PG). Russell defends a version of correspondence (CR), by noting that there is no true rivalry, actually, just because CR dominates. Russell's arguments basically show that the other two theories fail as stipulations concerning the meaning of T. Let's take a preliminary version of the three definitions:

CR: A proposition or a belief 'p' is T if and only if it corresponds to facts

CH: A proposition or a belief 'p' is T if 'p' is coherent with other propositions or beliefs that we have already accepted (or with "the whole" of our knowledge)

PG: A proposition/belief 'p' is T if it is useful to believe that p (or if to believe that p is crowned by success).

The three theories have received many different accounts, so CR, CH and PG should be assumed rather as designating *families* of T-theories. What is interesting about them is that defenders of one or the other often debate without seeing that the three perspectives specify different aspects of our *use* of T. As I will specify (2.7), a similar idea has been defended by *alethic pluralists*, but I find their theory unconvincing, at least in the way in which they tend to present it. For now, let's consider only the reasons we may have to reject one of the three views.

As to CH, we may note first that 'coherence' means at first *non-contradiction*, but what is 'non-contradiction'? Non-contradiction is characterized in logic in terms of truth: 'p' does not contradict 'q', if they both can be true; this means that the definition is circular: you need truth to define coherence, so you cannot use coherence to define truth.⁷ Second, suppose we assume that 'coherence' does not mean logical coherence, but rather *accordance*: 'p' is T if 'p' is in accordance with what we already know. Often we use 'true' in this sense, but this does not express the meaning of T, because there might be some 'true' (fact-corresponding)

belief which contradicts some false but coherent belief we already have. The typical case is the eccentric scientist, who discovers some new truth: if the rule of 'true if coherent' were universally applied, then his discovery would be banned from science, and there would not be any scientific progress. It was (formally) on behalf of coherence that Galileo was condemned.

As to PG, the first objection is that 'true' does not mean 'useful' or 'efficacious', or 'successful' because there are lots of useful (successful) beliefs that are not true, and vice versa. Consider the case of ether, a mysterious element, intermediate between air and fire. The notion has been used for a long time to explain weird phenomena, such as electromagnetism: the hypothesis was useful, crowned by success, elegant and simple, but was not true. A second objection is that 'useful' or 'efficacious' are possibly more complex concepts than 'true': what is useful for me might be useless for you, what is efficacious in a certain situation may be useless or dangerous in another, etc.

In a word, CH and PG do not specify the *meaning* of T, are not good as *definitions* of T. Sure, we can ascribe 'true' to some 'p' because it is consistent with what we already believe/know; or because we like to believe that p (for epistemic or moral reasons). But these are some of the *reasons* why we may accept a belief/proposition. CH and PG capture two of these reasons, but not what we mean when we speak of T. And besides that, if we assume CH and PG as *exclusive*, i.e. as the ultimate truth about 'T', then we ought to forget other reasons of acceptance.

As to CR, surely, in this or in other versions, it captures what we generally mean by 'T', so, as definition of T, CR seems to 'win' the battle. Not only that – and more importantly – the other two theories seem to be submitted to the principle of CR. Actually, we find that CH is a reasonable account of our alethic activities because we see that it *corresponds* to what we often do when we need to accept or reject a statement. We find that PG is acceptable just because we see that in our acceptance or rejection of beliefs we often follow principles of usefulness, or confirmability, or other pragmatic principles. We can see thus that CR, CH, and PG state three different reasons why we may accept a certain thesis or belief:

CH: I accept that p because it is consistent with what I already believe as true

PG: I accept p because I like to believe p or because such a belief has been confirmed by my experience

CR: I accept p because I see that p adequately describes my evidence

However, ultimately, I accept the theses CH and PG because they adequately describe my evidence, correspond to my experience. I would not accept coherentism or pragmatism, if these theories did not correspond to what I have seen and experimented in my use of T.

In this account, CR captures the meaning of 'T' and the underlying (minimal) principle that rules our different ways of accepting or rejecting beliefs. The point at issue is rather if we actually *have the right* to use 'T' in this meaning, it being stated that the terms involved in the definition of CR seem to be controversial:

Do we really access facts 'in themselves'?

If we do, what is a fact like, and what sorts of facts do exist?

Is there really an 'isomorphism' of reality and language, as it is postulated by the notion of 'correspondence'?

The quasi-realism implicit in Kant's theory of knowledge (§ 2.3) may give a partial solution to the first problem: we actually have access to facts, even if what we hold T or F is a combined production of reality and knowledge (what is given by things in themselves + what is given by our cognitive means). As to the second question, there are different kinds of sentences that we consider T, and one may ask, for instance: are there negative facts (to be referred to 'not p' sentences, such as 'there are no cats in this room')? Are there universal facts ('everyone is the child of someone')? Are there conditional facts ('if the window is open with this wind, the door bangs')? Are there modal facts ('physical objects cannot go faster than light')? We have some problems in accepting these kinds of facts, so one may think that either we use different meanings of T for universal, conditional, modal, negative sentences, or we simply cannot speak of 'T' in these cases. Finally, the notion of correspondence postulates a one-to-one relation between language and reality and/or a "descriptivist" conception of language, whereby what we say is a "picture" or "representation" of reality: but this is held arguable, because human language is a more complex phenomenon, or because nothing tells us that reality is linguistically determined, or because we use language to 'create' facts and/or because our language is more expressive than representative.

All this stated, we may be led to say that T is a *queer* predicate, referring to a non-existent property. If we conceive it as ruled by correspondence, we admit it denotes a difficult conformity between definitely heterogeneous realities: the unspecified reality of 'facts' and the vague reality of 'language'. If we conceive it as ruled by coherence or efficaciousness, we do not specify the meaning of T, but rather two ways of justifying beliefs: by appealing to consistency or to efficaciousness/usefulness.

2.6. *Transparent realism*

What we get from the discussion above is first that CR, CH and PG are perfectly compatible (see § 2.7): we can accept that CR is intended to state the usual *meaning* of 'T', while CH and PG express other two *conditions* of our T-ascriptions: that we say that 'p' is T because we think it is consistent with what we already know, and/or because believing that p is useful, or crowned by success. Second, we see that CR has certain dominance, because it states the basic reason why we accept the other two theories. But third, we see that the notion of 'correspondence' postulated by CR seems to be more problematic than 'truth', so that CR definition does not clarify the concept, it rather makes it and its application more complicated.

The important point that needs to be stressed now is that there is a certain primacy of realism, as far as T is concerned, but it does not seem to imply all the features we normally ascribe to the notion of 'correspondence'. Actually, another factor of misunderstanding is that the concept T has been taken as implying a conception of reality informed by the idea of language 'mirroring' reality or facts, whereby 'real' is mainly intended as what is graspable by perceptual means, and/or facts are only static facts and not events, and/or the only world of facts is the natural world, and similar ideas. In fact, our use of the concept of truth does not seem to imply any of these theses.

Let us assume at first the most widely accepted definition of T, the one fixed by Plato and later developed and specified in the whole tradition:

TR:

“true is the discourse that says how things stand”
(*ta onta legei os estin* Cratylus, 385c)

Such form of T-realism has been considered “sufficiently bromidic to be acceptable to common sense,”⁸ but it is implicit in the normal use of the concept, so more than bromidic one would say it is *pervasive*: it pervades the practice of law, the use of public communication in politics, the exercise of science, and usual interactions in everyday life. When the conceptual function T is mentioned or thought, what people normally think and mean is the reference to things (*ta onta*).

Keeping to TR the difficulties of CR can be avoided. Notably, in Plato’s definition the nature of the *onta* is not specified. No substantive commitment is assumed about reality: its being static or moving, its being accessible or inaccessible, made of individuated facts, or objects, of properties or events. What is clearly implied by TR is that when we speak of ‘truth’ as a concept, we speak of the conceptual device created for “ascending” from the world to what we think or say about the world, then coming back to the world itself.

These two ‘movements’, so intended, have been efficaciously called by Scharp (2013), respectively: *ascending* and *descending* truth. They capture the epistemic ‘actions’ or ‘operations’ performed by the function T, and one may relate them to the two directions of Tarski’s bi-conditional (Tarski 1944), which has informed most part of the canonical T-theory in the analytic tradition:

$Tp \leftrightarrow p$,

the famous equivalence called “T-schema,” or “naïve conception of truth.” But so stated, we see important differences between TR and CR. The realism of TR (and of the ancient T-theory) does not involve the main distinctive features of correspondence: it does not imply any *isomorphism* of reality and language, or any *one-one* relation between them either; it does not imply any “*compositional-atomistic*” conception of reality, or any *symmetric* relation language-world.⁹

Nowadays, a similar idea of realism without correspondence is typical of *truthmaker theory* (see Armstrong 1997, 2004) and of the kind of *alethic realism* that has been launched by William Alston (1996).¹⁰ The truthmaker principle says that if ‘p’ is T then there must be something that makes it T. So the theory is simply based on the very general and unspecified idea that “some existent, some portion of reality” makes a proposition true.¹¹ Alston’s view is more definitionally committed, and it is, openly, a “substantive” version of Tarski’s schema (Alston 1996, 26–32). In Alston’s account: “a statement (proposition, belief ...) is true if and only if what the statement says to be the case actually is the case.” The underlying intuition is the same of the Platonic ‘*ta onta*’. Alston openly stresses that alethic realism is not *metaphysical* realism, as it is perfectly neutral as to the kind of ‘things’ involved in our T-evaluations.

Adopting this perspective, we are in the condition of disagreeing both with people who reject realism because they think it postulates exclusive reference to “hard facts,” viz. to empirical, here-and-now, factuality, and with people that endorse realism, for

the same reason. The use of T as postulated by TR implies a commitment to the actual world but does not imply any ontological restriction. The factuality implicit in TR is of the widest sort. The alethic world has the property of truth-making in all its aspects.¹² So TR is to be read in the perspective of the ontological neutrality of our T-ascriptions: they may involve any sort of content, in any sort of context. Suppose I say 'I am glad to see you' while in fact I am not glad at all. My mental condition or attitude, intended as a brain state or a spiritual mood or in other possible ways, is a (sort of) *fact* whose effective occurrence makes my assertion false.¹³ If you suspect that what I am saying is not true, what you suspect is that things do not stand in the way I say. My state of mind (a disposition, or an attitude, or a brain condition) is for you the false-maker of my 'I am glad.'¹⁴ Do you believe that my being glad or not is a 'state of affairs' comparable to this chair being red or blue? Presumably, you do not, and yet, you judge my deceit by comparing language and world just in the way fixed by TR, and exactly in the way in which you reflect on, say, the redness of a certain chair, asking whether 'this chair is red' is T or not. The supporting evidence in case of my mental states is weaker, evidently, but much depends on the context: you might be even more certain about my failed gladness than about this chair's redness (given the vagueness of colour ascriptions).

The alethic indifference as to existence and non-existence of things has been mistakenly interpreted as a feature of "the world" as such, so that reality would be thought as made of propositions, or sentence-like fragments of being (states of affairs made of objects and properties). But what TR ontologically implies is only the independence thesis, so that the 'descending' action of T is the simple process of transcending the proposition one has to evaluate, searching for its groundedness in the real world. Realism, in this respect, is only the commitment to the autonomous transcendence of being.¹⁵ In fact, TR is problematic only in the perspective of a specific ontology, say: the restriction of 'facts' or 'things' to actual facts, captured by our experience. But this means again superimposing epistemology on ontology (§ 2.3), a misguided conception of truth well discussed by Alston, Armstrong and other "neo-descriptivist" (and neo-Aristotelian) philosophers. Evidently, if we limit our alethic activity to empirical or physical givens here and now, it is hard to see how even factual propositions such as 'if the river were to rise another two feet, the underground would be flooded', or 'whales are mammals', can be said realistically T.¹⁶ But no restriction of this sort is implicit in assuming TR. 'Facts' are simply truth-makers (or false-makers), and at first and in principle they have no other property than the property of making propositions true or false.

2.7. *Compatibilism and pluralism*

The idea that 'there are many truths' is a version of a T-theory that has been very influent in recent years, the so-called *alethic pluralism*. In a recent account: "Pluralists about truth think that the nature of truth is different for different sets of sentences" (Gamester 2019, 35). The property we call "T" is not one single property. Sometimes we speak of T as coherence, sometimes as correspondence, sometimes 'true' means 'assertable' or 'super-assertable', 'justified' or 'warranted', etc. Such sort of pluralism

has been launched by Crispin Wright (1992) and later developed by Lynch (2009, see also Wyatt and Lynch 2016). Pluralists reject alethic monism, whereby “if a belief or its content is true, then it must be true in the same way – for example, for corresponding to reality.” In their view “our true beliefs about the concrete physical world needn’t [...] ‘be true in the same way’ as our thoughts about matters where the human stain is deepest, such as morality or the law” (Lynch 2009, 3–4).

Now the most obvious objection to this claim is that there is no need to multiply T, stated that what varies is the “matter” involved. One may peacefully assume that T behaves in the same way, i.e. connecting facts with beliefs (or propositions, or any other truthbearer), but ‘facts’ – alethically intended – are of different kinds. This is what the above described version of TR postulates. Suppose a prosecutor says:

The defendant claims he did not believe that the girl was less than 16, but this cannot be true, because he is one of the girl’s parents’ closest friends.

By ‘not true’ the prosecutor refers to a failure of the connection between what is *said* (the claim) and some facts concerning the defendant’s *beliefs*, so he keeps to the traditional idea that ‘true’ is *ta onta legei os estin*. Evidently, beliefs are not ‘facts’ in the same way in which, say, a stain of coffee on a shirt is, but this difference does not really touch the use and meaning of T. The conceptual function is exactly the same, and works in the same way.

To have this, i.e. to maintain alethic monism, one has simply to adopt Aristotle’s idea: that (as far as T is concerned), *to de on legetai men pollakos* “being is said in many ways” (see Met. 1003a, 34). The reasons for alethic pluralism are thus disproved by ontological pluralism. Pluralists are not properly ‘wrong’ as such. We can see the compatibility of their view with Aristotle’s insight as soon as we see that while Aristotle is speaking of ‘T’, they are speaking of the legitimacy and nature of our truth-ascriptions. And it is true that we use T in very many occurrences, and we have different ways of confirming or justifying T-ascriptions: but this variety depends on the variety of contents and contexts of our use of T.¹⁷

2.8. Scepticism and dogmatism

One of the most shared ideas, fairly common among philosophers and non-philosophers, is that T is a *dogmatic* concept, a concept whose use is equivalent to a “fist on the table”:¹⁸ when someone says ‘this is true’ she is intended to mean that this must be accepted, as such, and beyond any further discussion. The idea is confirmed by the traditional familiarity between T and religion, which corresponds to philosophical and historical givens. By referring to T we make reference to being, so to the objective force of facts, indifferent to what humans may believe or not believe, and indifferent to what humans desire and hope: in speaking of T we assume a “God’s eye point of view.”¹⁹ Besides that, the notion of T has been officially ‘captured’ by religions, especially by the Christian doctrine, which was born by absorbing the Greek theory of the *aletheia* (§ 2.1).

That there is some force in our truth ascriptions is evident. When someone says that ‘p’ is true what is meant is that the same undisputable force of facts witnesses in favour of ‘p’. But this is a dogmatic attitude: we have to concede that the force of facts is not

always at our disposal. Very often, our beliefs are incomplete; dependent on languages and local criteria, so that even very strong evidence may be doubtable, eventually. In epistemology, we normally assume “gradualistic” T, our premises are not always intended to have the categorical values 1 (true) and 0 (false): they are 0.8- or 0.9- or even 0.7-true. And yet, to reason, to take decisions, to act in conformity of our beliefs, we need to assume they are definitely true. A certain dose of dogmatism is inevitable, in the process of knowledge, and it is this dogmatic necessity what is captured by the categorical force of ‘T’.

Now, to discuss the idea that the use of ‘T’ is intrinsically dogmatic, we can note that dogmatism in itself, viz. the assumption of premises without justification, and/or with the canonical “fist on the table,” is a violation of what is required in alethic perspective, as it is a violation of the second-order question: “is it really T what I believe is T?” As said, few beliefs can resist the force of this questioning, which Socrates launched in the Greek debate. And in the occurring of this question is entirely due the birth of ‘philosophy’ as a new way of considering language and thought.

If we stay at the idea that our philosophical consideration of T is neither related to true contents (§ 2.1) nor to what we actually believe T (§ 2.3), but to the concept we call ‘aletheia’ (the conceptual function we use to connect language and words or language and thoughts), then we discover that our use of T is more *sceptical* than dogmatic. One may even consistently claim that T is a sceptical function, a conceptual device we activate in the course of a *skepsis*, a research.

Let us consider first *why* and *when* we use T. Normally, we do not say ‘it is true that the cat is on the sofa’, we rather say ‘the cat is on the sofa’. This is the first given that has been noted by the *redundancy theorists*, who have paved the way to the wide deflationary movement in the T-theories of the late XX century.²⁰ But we are led to activate T, and to think or say ‘this is true’/‘this is untrue’, when we have doubts, that is, when we do not have T and we want to have it: normally, I read newspapers and listen to what people say without thinking about T, but I am almost forced to think of T when I suspect that what people or newspapers say is untrue. I think of T when I listen to some discussion between people presenting opposite views, and I want to know who is right. I need T when I have to reason, i.e. I want to draw conclusions from some premises that I already have. I need T when someone tries to contradict me about something that I know (or I believe to know for sure). So it is natural to say that T is a discussive, inferential, sceptical concept: it appears in our mind when we do not have truth and we need to have.

This *negative* nature of the concept is well captured by the Greek notion of *a-letheia*, which means: *non-concealment*. The double negation is specifically intended to point to the fact that the connection between our thoughts (language, beliefs) and things (ta onta) *may fail*, and we need to activate a procedure of non-concealment. The concept T has been created just because we are not sure of our means of knowledge, of our judgements, and of what people say: it is a *critical* concept. There is no point in thinking and talking about T if we are sure of what we believe, mean and say. In this sense, as Beall (2009) says, “we are unlike God in that respect,” God could avoid speaking of T or thinking about T, instead, we need T as a device that sceptically supports our efforts to describe the world.²¹

Beall, and generally deflationists, believe that T is a device we need because we need to generalize, “we need to overcome finite constraints in our effort to describe the world,” and the sole role [of T] – the reason behind its introduction into the language – is to enable generalizations that, given our finite constraints, we couldn’t otherwise express.”²² But why do we need to overcome our finite constraints? Here is the ancient and still reasonable answer: because our overcoming (transcending-ascending) thought – expressed by the right-to-left direction of the T-schema – is the only way we have to gain knowledge, excluding falsity by deceit or self-deceit (mistake).

2.9. Poisoned truth

The super-misleading idea is that there might be rational confrontation about *opinions*: Jones believes that p, Smith believes that not p, they have plain right to believe what they believe, and to manifest their beliefs in public confrontation. Now such an idea is misleading to the extent that it is based on a misevaluation of the nature of *opinions*, *disagreement*, and *free speech*, and how these notions interact in our alethic activities.

Free speech liberalism is submitted to a well-known “paradox” (in fact, it is a self-contradiction more than a paradox): that to respect liberal pluralism we have to accept anti-pluralistic and illiberal theories and practices. Many strategies have been proposed.²³ One of the most authoritative is possibly the one suggested by Rawls (1971-75), and later developed by many authors (see Sen, 2017), whereby the limit of pluralism is to be naturally due to the *overlapping consensus*: some basic ideas are naturally accepted by everyone, beyond discussion and controversies, and intellectual tolerance has a natural limit in them. The compatibilist idea that I have suggested above is similar, in some respect, but with a further element, which is typically due to the alethic perspective.

Let’s assume this reasonable vocabulary. We mean by ‘opinion’ a subjective belief, which might be true or well-justified, but when it is strongly contrasted by peer disagreement, at the best is to be held *partial truth*. Real disagreements in this respect are conflicts of partial truths, and they have to be ruled by free speech, because the only way we have to get a complete truth about a controversial topic is namely that people are allowed to present their views. So here is the basic aim of the free speech principle: that we should be epistemically liberal because by confronting our opinions we may hope to get a complete truth. Our need of truth is the grounding reason of the free speech rule. This has been generally acknowledged by theories of liberal democracy, but the consequences for the management of ideological conflicts have not been extensively explored. Very often, ‘liberty’ more than ‘T’ plays a primary role in such discussions.

When disagreements and intellectual conflicts have expression in anti-alethic or an-alethic contexts, you have the wars of opinions, and what logicians call *the explosion principle*: everything becomes formally, ritually, true, everything is acceptable. What was called ‘postmodern age’ is namely the spiritual situation in which *anything goes*. But as we know, trivialism, i.e. the idea that everything is true, is unacceptable: if everything is true it is also true that nothing is true, and that something is untrue. As well-known at least since Aristotle, trivialism, just like nihilism, disproves itself

(*Metaphysics*, IV, 8, 1012 b, 15–22). Now what we can see is that the wrong ‘pluralism’ of contemporary culture has potentiated the explosiveness of free speech rules, and thus it has not produced any tolerance or pacification, rather, it has favoured the conflicts of dogmatism, of partial truths that pass off as total, complete truths.

I have suggested that compatibilism more than pluralism is to be favoured in alethic perspective. Let’s consider Jones’ and Smith’s disagreement. Evidently, in a truth-oriented diagnosis, we may have that one is right and the other is wrong, because simply ‘p’ is true, or it is false (so its negation is true). Alternatively, we may have that nobody is wrong, so we would have *faultless disagreement*. In this case, either Jones’ and Smith’s views differ but are not properly incompatible (so are not correctly describable in terms of ‘p’ and its negation); or else, what they are speaking about is a contradictory case or state, so that they are both right, but only *partially* right. In this last case we see an interesting conclusion: that if they (honestly) debate, this is because they do not see the entire situation, they lack plain knowledge of the case concerning ‘p’; or, if they see this, and yet still debate, this means that they are passing off their incomplete view as it were the complete and categorical T. Partial truth is presented with a “totalitarian” ambition. In both cases, they are both wrong. Which means that in alethic perspective, *there cannot be faultless disagreement*.

The compatibilist view is naturally connected to this consideration: true (effective) controversies are between mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive theses, one of which is true, and the other false (its negation is true) and the problem is to discover what the right one is. Untrue controversies can be misunderstandings: the two theses are not really exclusive and/or exhaustive, and the problem is to reveal the misunderstanding (which can be epistemic or verbal). False controversies are those involving contradictory objects about which people defend opposite *opinions*, i.e. partial truths. In all the other cases, if the alethic aim of the discussion is active, there is no reason of controversy.

To focus our attention on partial truths is important, as most intellectual conflicts we are used to observing in the public sphere are conflicts of opinions (i.e. partial truths that want to be considered as if they were complete and unquestionable truths) about complex objects that are typically *contradictory*. Political (ideological) discourses are based on concealing “the other half” of the true state description of a certain complex object, and to inflate the part of the story that satisfies political interests, values and needs. In this process, we have, and cannot avoid having, a triumph of falsity: everyone is wrong. If Jones presents his view as it was the only truth about the case (so excluding Smith’s account), then what he conveys is simply falsity. He violates the rule of quantity (do not say too little or too much), but also, and consequently, the rule of truth (do not say falsity).

As Kant once wrote in a famous letter:

I do not depend on anything, and with the utmost (most complete) indifference towards mine and other people’s opinions, I revise and overturn the entire construction, to see the way in which, eventually, it can be informed by truth. (Kant 1990, 54)

Note the special nature of Kant’s indifference towards opinions: it is clear that we have opinions, but the point is first to be aware that they are opinions and not truths, and second (and more importantly) to make use of this awareness in the right way.

In our culture misleading ideals of pluralism are circulating. It is held that when we debate seriously, and when true needs are involved, we must favour a confrontation of opposed opinions, and all of them must be considered in principle acceptable and/or true. Such opinion-based pluralism, far from saving freedom and openness, favours dogmatism, totalitarianism, epistemic conflicts. It is a subtle and implicit endorsement and promotion of the dogmatic attitudes of people who enter discussions without previously posing the Socratic question: ‘is it really T what I believe is T?’ In fact, alethic compatibilism tells us that free speech is extremely important, as – like J. S. Mill stressed – it is the main resource we have to find the complete truth about the complex objects of the associated life. But when the free speech principle is practised forgetting its alethic aim, then we only have the opinions war. So we must be free of manifesting our beliefs, but the first limit of such liberty is the exclusion of falsity, so the exclusion of partial truths falsely presented as they were complete truths.

It is important to remember that the diffusion of partial truth is the first principle of *social poisoning*. The poison enters our intellectual activities as soon as we have incomplete descriptions of cases of events, and we use them to reason, and by reasoning acting consequently. The poisoning action is due to the fact that using partially true premises we may correctly arrive at false conclusions, but such falsity is justified for me by the incomplete truth of the premises. My inference can easily convince many people that my false conclusion is true, but other people, who are aware of the partiality of the premises, would firmly reject the conclusion and oppose it with their view. This may be destructive for social peace, to the point of stimulating insults, hate speech, and ideological wars.

3. The power of truth

I have tried to summarize some supposedly ‘rival’ T-theories, conceptions, accounts, definitions of T, and I have tried to show that the best ones among them are simply different ways of describing the use of a unique concept, so are perfectly compatible, the others are grounded on misunderstandings, and basically, on the lack of a clear philosophical view about the concept T.

There are some established steps in our correct use of T that are to be considered uncontroversial. I have tried to present them in a very informal way. We can renounce strong ideas of ‘correspondence’, but we cannot avoid the basic (transparent) realism of ‘how things stand’. We can avoid mentioning T or thinking about T, but it will remain the principle ruling all our beliefs and our uses of language. We can be aware of the traps of our alethic activities, but we cannot be definitely ‘enemies’ of T, given that this concept is the main resource we have to save our thought from paradoxes or unfair uses of knowledge. We can ignore T, but we are somehow forced to accept that it has a special power in our lives. We rightly criticize the imposition of institutional “truths” of science or religions, and we rightly criticize people who use the concept dogmatically, but we cannot forget that the use of T is the only tool we have to contrast an unfair exercise of power, or the social hate and poison produced by the conflict of ‘opinions’: partial truths that pretend to be complete and categorical, and so promote the most successful kind of deceit.

With these ideas we can thus come back to the notion of “post-truth.” I have suggested we should rather speak of a “post-post-T era,” as the public attitude towards truth has deeply changed, and there has been a new shared interest around this ancient concept of philosophy. Since the end of the Second World War and later with the end of the so-called worldwide bi-polarism, the T has gained a crucial role, in juridical and political perspective. The birth of supranational organisms has promoted a new world-wide attention to fundamental values; the “right to T” has become generally acknowledged in the framework of “transitional justice,” viz. the passage from totalitarian regimes to democracy; the birth of the notion of human rights has been typically accompanied by a new juridical attention to the revelation of institutional and governmental crimes; the need of regimenting the uncontrolled proliferation of fake news on the Web has deeply informed in alethic sense the practice of justice.²⁴ Briefly, humans’ need of truth has received a new attention, and has been universally acknowledged.

If we now ask: why has this happened? Why are we so interested in T? The first answer is that since the second half of the last century there has been an impressive increase of information in all sectors of human life, thanks to the digitalization of knowledge. But the “digital revolution”²⁵ in my judgement cannot be seen as the true origin of the phenomenon: rather, it should be seen as an ultimate effect of a wider process. Actually, the “explosion” of communicative exchanges of our late civilization is nothing else than the acceleration of a more general movement of *democratization* of social life that has pervaded the entire development of human species. I’m not speaking of the political processes whereby oppressive regimes officially become democracies, but of a phenomenon variously involving any societies, in the entire world: the possibility of participating, sharing, expressing and defending ideas and opinions, conceded to more and more people, ideally to anyone. This process has no effective correlate in political systems. Maybe we do not have any perfect, effective democracy in the world. But we see the process is going on, and in any field we deal with a progressive diffusion of knowledge, art, religion, science, and evidently philosophy. It is not a totally good thing, maybe, as it may imply a diminishing of quality and profundity, in any sector. But it is an evolutionary given, so we need to look at it in a dispassionate way, just like we look at earthquakes, or hail, or rather rain, which is not always an evil, and sometimes could be salutary for the soil.

If we accept this account,²⁶ an elementary analysis tells us that democratization implies a particular fortune of the concept of truth. Not of truth as such (being true of the propositions we say and accept) but namely of the conceptual function T we use to select beliefs, i.e. to believe, to reason, to decide in virtues of our beliefs and reasoning. Such function gains a specific power in our lives, as the beliefs of people become extremely important, and increased communication makes knowledge at the same time easier and more difficult, as it means increasing possibilities of getting the truth, but also of being deceived.

Thus, our apparently anti-alethic era, created by accelerated democratization, is in fact an era in which the power of T is becoming more and more evident. We need T, and we are aware of our need of T, just because we have an uncontrollable quantity of truths, falsities, partial truths and partial falsities everywhere, and everywhere we risk being deceived and deceiving ourselves. As we have seen (§ 2.8), the ubiquitous and

innocent concept T reveals itself to be extremely important in cases of perplexity, when we do not have (or we suspect we lack) T.

I would stress that there are at least three reasons why such new importance of T might be a good process, eventually. First, we can see that increased communication is also increased possibility of finding means for evaluating communication. Digitalized information provides more than 3 quintillions of byte every day, but also new means of selecting them: so it evens out, and we still have (if we want to) the possibility of using good forms of scepticism to avoid deception and self-deception. Second, in the communicative explosion of the web we have an anarchical proliferation of lies, without any order (in principle), but we know that the most dangerous phenomenon of democratized life is “the organized lie,” the typical structure of totalitarian – pseudo-democratic – regimes. The success of social deceit requires calculus, organization, top-down control. Now such operations can hardly be performed, in the multi-directional and “disorganized” circulation of information. Sure, some top-down power may take advantage of the general epistemic confusion, but with only temporary success, as in most cases similar deceiving projects can be unmasked.

Third, and more importantly, the new awareness concerning our need of truth may lead us towards a new anthropological conception. Humans may at last acknowledge they are *alethic* animals, they need T, and need to learn how to use this ancient and fundamental concept. They may so become *philosophers*, in the ancient sense, i.e. people aware of the subtle and pervasive power of the function T: its being a risky and delicate function of thought, but also its being the main source of cooperation, of justice, of social peace and political happiness.

Notes

1. See Lynch 2004, 11–20.
2. See D’Agostini 2002, and D’Agostini 2011, 283–295 for details.
3. I use ‘p’ to mean the proposition or belief (the truthbearer), and p (without inverted commas) to mean the the fact that makes ‘p’ true (the truthmaker).
4. The argument has many different forms and has been variously discussed (I have reconstructed the history of ‘there is no truth’ and the elenctic argument that disproves it in D’Agostini 2002; see also Bellissima and Pagli 1996), but we may assume that – at least in the light of the meaning of T postulated by the ancient realism (see § 2.6, and my discussion of opposite positions in D’Agostini, 2011, 86–110) – it is still convincing.
5. By “classical logic” I mean here binary logic, ruled by mutual exclusion and joint exhaustion of truth and falsity, i.e. by the Laws on Non-Contradiction and Excluded Middle.
6. There are many expressions of this capital misunderstanding; I do not mention them, for charity: some more information in D’Agostini 2013.
7. One may oppose other definitions of non-contradiction, say: that ‘p’ does not contradict ‘q’ if ‘p’ does not imply ‘not q’; so saying in this case there would not be any circularity. In fact, one may furtherly contrast that there is no way of specifying the meaning of ‘implying’ or ‘not implying’ without T. (Thanks to an anonymous referee for proposing such an interesting point.)
8. Was Dewey’s expression (Dewey 1911, 33).
9. Interestingly enough, as Haack (1976, 348) recalls, Tarski (1944) notes that in a research conducted in those years only 15% of people agree with the correspondence theory, while 90% agree with the idea that ‘snow is white’ is T if snow is white.

10. On both as non-correspondentist perspectives see respectively Morris 2005 and Fumerton 2002.
11. Armstrong 2004, 5. Possibly, the most evident difference between the relation of truthmaking and correspondence is that the former is symmetric and the latter is not. There is some similarity with the idea of alethic supervenience, whereby “truth supervenes on being,” which, notably, is also similar to the Aristotelian principle of *veritas supra ens fundatur* as stated by St. Thomas’ *De veritate*. But the intended meaning of ‘supervenience’ may imply symmetry, and “external relation” (this is what Armstrong contends), so is hardly adaptable to TM, while the ‘grounding’ of *fundatur* does not imply any mutual correlation or external action of this sort.
12. This is accepted by recent truthmaker semantics (see Fine 2017 and Jago 2018), which in this aspect is perfectly in accordance with the ancient (Aristotelian) realism, ruled by the capital principle that *to de on legetai men pollakos* “being is said in many ways” (see *Met.* 1003a, 34).
13. Armstrong’s idea of total facts as truthmakers of negative propositions makes sense: totality implies negation, in the sense of ‘there is nothing else’ (see Armstrong 2010, 83).
14. See the note above: the totality of my mental ‘facts’ is the truthmaker of the negation of what I say.
15. As to the transparency of T there is wide literature. See in particular Beall 2009. It should be noted that Quine’s interpretation of Tarski’s schema (see Quine 1970, 13) is perfectly in the line of TR. The consequent decitationism, and other forms of deflationism, are adaptable accordingly. Otherwise, the deflationary perspective in itself does not necessarily prevent or elude realism, as Horwich (2004) puts it “the *right* account of truth (namely, deflationism) [is] absolutely neutral regarding realism.” See the treatment of Sher 2004 for a more detailed discussion.
16. Let alone normative statements, or conjunctive futures (which even Aristotle did not accept as effectively T-apt). I do not treat this point here; suffice now to say that in AAR perspective also in these cases we may speak of truth and falsity in the intended sense, although the *onta* as such are not the only focus of the judgement.
17. A convincing discussion of pluralism, with many other arguments, has been proposed by Jago 2018.
18. It is an expression used by Alf Ross, quoted by Barberis 2013, 63.
19. See Putnam 1981, pp. 49ff.
20. T is not redundant when we say, for instance: ‘all what the Papa says ex cathedra is true’, or ‘what Jones believes is true’, that is, when we *generalize*, or in *indirect* cases, when we do not want to repeat a sentence or a long discourse. This is the basic acquisition of *minimalism* about T. But what is important to remember is that minimalism does not disprove the most “maximalist” idea of any T-theory, the one we have mentioned in § 2.2: that the reference to T (the use of the function T) is *inevitable*, in all our cognitive actions: see also §3.
21. For more, see Beall 2009, 12.
22. *Ibid.*
23. See Williams’ discussion about the theory of “the marketplace of ideas” for a more accurate presentation of the problem (Williams 2002, 2013–19).
24. See on this Brunner and Stahl 2016 and D’Agostini and Ferrera 2019.
25. See the fundamental account of Floridi 2014.
26. The details have been given in D’Agostini and Ferrera 2019.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributor

Franca d'Agostini earned both her licentiate degree and PhD in Philosophy at the University of Turin. She has taught courses of Logic, Theoretics and Philosophy of Science for many years in various Universities, especially at the University of Turin (Politecnico) and later at the University of Milan (where she taught Economics and Social and Political Sciences). Her areas of specialization are Metaphysics, Philosophical Logic, Meta-Philosophy and History of Contemporary Philosophy. She is the author of many books and articles, about Truth, Paradoxes, Nihilism, 20th Century Philosophy, and the Analytic-Continental Divide. Among her most recent books are: *La verità al potere* (Torino 2019, with M. Ferrera); *Realismo. Una questione non controversa* (Torino 2013), *Introduzione alla verità* (Torino 2011), *Paradossi* (Roma, 2009), *The Last Fumes. Nihilism and the Nature of Philosophical Concepts* (Boulder, Colorado 2008).

References

- Alston, William P. 1996. *A Realist Conception of Truth*. New York, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Armstrong, David Malet. 1997. *A World of States of Affairs*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Armstrong, David Malet. 2004. *Truth and Truthmakers*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Barberis, Mauro. 2013. "La Dura Realtà Dell'interpretazione. Realismo, Neorealismo, Surrealismo." *Ars Interpretandi* 1: 63–72.
- Beall, J. 2009. *Spandrels of Truth*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Bellissima, Fabio, and Paolo Pagli. 1996. *Consequentia mirabilis. Una regola logica tra matematica e filosofia*. Firenze, Italy: Olschki.
- Brunner, José, and Daniel Stahl, eds. 2016. *Recht auf Wahrheit zur Genese eines neuen menschenrechts*. Göttingen, Germany: Wallstein.
- D'Agostini, Franca. 2002. *Disavventure della verità*. Torino, Italy: Einaudi.
- D'Agostini, Franca. 2011. *Introduzione alla verità*. Torino, Italy: Bollati Boringhieri.
- D'Agostini, Franca. 2013. *Realismo? Una questione non controversa*. Torino, Italy: Bollati Boringhieri.
- D'Agostini, Franca, and Maurizio Ferrera. 2019. *La verità al potere*. Torino, Italy: Einaudi.
- Dewey, John. 1911. "The Problem of Truth." In *The Middle works*, edited by vol. I: 12–78. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978.
- Fine, Kit. 2017. "Truthmaker Semantics." In *A Companion to the Philosophy of Language*, edited by Bob Hale, Crispin Wright, and Alexander Miller. 2nd ed. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell.
- Floridi, Luciano. 2014. *The Fourth Revolution. How the Infosphere is Reshaping Human Reality*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Fumerton, Richard. 2002. *Realism and the Correspondence Theory of Truth*. Boston, MA: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Gamester, Will. 2019. "Logic, Logical Form and the Disunity of Truth." *Analysis* 79 (1): 34–43. Vol N. January 2019: doi:10.1093/analysis/anx165.
- Haack, Susan. 1976. "Is It True What They Say about Tarski?" *Philosophy* 51 (197): 323–336. doi:10.1017/S0031819100019367.
- Horwich, Paul. 2004. *From a Deflationary Point of View*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Jago, Mark. 2018. *What Truth Is*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1990. *Epistolario Filosofico 1761-1800*. Ed. O. Meo. Genova, Italy: Il Melangolo.
- Keyes, Ralph. 2004. *The Post-Truth Era. Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.
- Lynch, Michael P. 2004. *True to Life*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Lynch, Michael P. 2009. *Truth as One and Many*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Morris, Michael. 2005. "Realism Beyond Correspondence." In *Truthmakers: The Contemporary Debate*, edited by Helen Beebe and Julian Dodd, 49–66. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Putnam, Hilary. 1981. *Reason, Truth and History*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Quine, Willard van Orman. 1970. *Philosophy of Logic*. Englewood Cliff, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Rawls, John. 1971-75. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Sen, Amartya. 2017. "The Idea of Rights." In *Collective Choice and Social Welfare, Expanded Edition*, edited by, 427–446. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Sher, Gila. 2004. "In Search of a Substantive Theory of Truth." *Journal of Philosophy* 101 (1): 5–36. doi:10.5840/jphil200410113.
- Tarski, Alfred. 1944. "The Semantic Conception of Truth." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 4 (3): 341–376. doi:10.2307/2102968.
- Williams, Bernard. 2002. *Truth and Truthfulness. An Essay in Genealogy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Wright, Crispin. 1992. *Truth and Objectivity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wyatt, Jeremy, and Michael P. Lynch. 2016. "From One to Many: Recent Work on Truth." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 53 (4): 323–340.