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INTRODUCTION.

*VERITAS IN DICTO, VERITAS IN RE*¹

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*Omnes enim de veritate significationis loquuntur:
veritatem vero, quae est in rerum essentia, pauci considerant.*
Anselm of Canterbury¹

Veritas enim in dicto, non in re consistit.
Thomas Hobbes, 1655/1961; 1656²

**1. The San
Raffaele School of
Philosophy “The
True, the Valid,
the Normative”**

The present special issue of *Phenomenology and Mind* collects fifteen essays originating from the San Raffaele School of Philosophy “The True, the Valid, the Normative”, which took place at Palazzo Arese Borromeo in Cesano Maderno on September 20th to 22nd, 2022. The 2022 edition of the San Raffaele School of Philosophy was organized by the Faculty of Philosophy of the University Vita-Salute San Raffaele in collaboration with the research centres PERSONA (Research Centre in Phenomenology and Sciences of the Person), CeSEP (Centro Studi di Etica e Politica), and CISEPS (Center for Interdisciplinary Studies in Economics, Psychology and Social Sciences). The special issue collects the papers of five scholars – Pedro M. S. Alves, Roberta De Monticelli, Anna Donise, Pascal Richard, and Wojciech Żełaniec – that were invited to take part to the School of Philosophy and ten further papers of contributors, that were selected on the basis of a call for papers and presented at the School. To introduce the reader to some of the topics that inspired the School and this special issue we have included the English translation of the first chapter of Amedeo G. Conte’s book *Adelaster. Il nome del vero* (Conte, 2016), in which he suggests three possible paradigms for the elaboration of a philosophy of truth. The final section of the special issue collects three further papers that were not presented at the San Raffaele School of Philosophy.

1 Sancti Anselmi, *Dialogus de veritate*, c. 9. The English translation in Anselm of Canterbury, 1991, is: “For all speak of the truth of signification, but few consider the truth that is in the essence of things” (p. 163).

2 Thomas Hobbes, *Elementorum philosophiae*, Sectio prima, *De corpore*, Pars prima, *Computatio sive Logica*, c. 3, *De propositione*, I., 7 (Hobbes, 1655/1961, p. 31). In the 1656 English translation, which was revised and integrated by Hobbes himself, the passage is as follows: “For Truth consists in Speech, and not in the Things spoken” (Hobbes, 1656, p. 26).

The inquiry into the concepts of *true* and *false* has generally privileged, in contemporary philosophy, *apophantic* truth, that is, the truth of *dicta* (sentences, propositions, statements, or utterances). However, the predicates ‘true’ and ‘false’ seem to apply not only to *dicta* but also to things, to *res*. The Italian semiologist Gianfranco Bettetini (1985) remarks that, while it is perfectly justified that the investigation into a truth of things has been disregarded in the context of linguistics and philosophy of language, it is on the contrary absurd that it has been “neglected by almost all the other contemporary philosophies” (p. 13).³ Some remarkable exceptions are philosophers like Joseph Pieper (1947), Martin Buber (1953), Josef M. Bocheński, (1959), and Albert Hofstadter (1965).

A new perspective on the analysis of the manifold cases where we speak of the truth and falsity of *res* – of things – has been introduced in the past decades by Amedeo Giovanni Conte (Pavia, 1934–Cava Manara, 2019) in a series of works that he more recently re-collected and re-elaborated in the book *Adelaster. Il nome del vero* (Conte, 2016).⁴ As an introductory paper for the present special issue, we have translated the first chapter of *Adelaster* entitled *Three Paradigms for a Philosophy of the True: Apophantic Truth, Eidological Truth, Idiological Truth*.

In this chapter, Conte illustrates a main distinction between two species of truth – *de dicto* truth and *de re* truth – which has inspired the whole project of the 2022 edition of the San Raffaele School of Philosophy.

De dicto – or *semantic*, or *apophantic* – truth specifically pertains to a *dictum*, notably to a *sentence*: the *de dicto* truth consists in the correspondence of a sentence to a state-of-affairs.

De re – or *ontological* – truth pertains instead to *res*, like in the case, for instance, of a true professor, a true diamond, true gold, a true question, a true norm, a true warrior, a true banknote, and the true Kant.

In his articulated analysis, Conte further distinguishes different kinds of *de re* truth.

Idiological truth consists in an *identity* relation: an entity *X* is the *idiologically-true* *Z* if, and only if, *X* is in an identity relation with *Z* (Conte, 2016, pp. 31–34). More precisely, *idiological* truth consists in the *identity* to an *ídon* [ἴδων], to an individual entity. The *idiologically-true* surname of Alfred Tarski, for instance, is ‘Tajtelbaum’, and the *idiologically-true* cause of Napoleon’s death was a cancer, not poisoning.

Whereas *idiological* truth is an *identity* relation, *eidological* truth consists, instead, in a correspondence relation, namely in the correspondence of an entity to an *eídos* [εἶδος]: an *X* is an *eidologically-true* *Y* if, and only if, *X* corresponds to the *eídos* of *Y* (Conte, 2016, pp. 29–30). For instance, a member of the teaching staff of a university is an *eidologically-true* university professor if, and only if, he or she corresponds to the *eídos* of the university professor.

To the general distinction of *de dicto* truth and *de re* truth, as well as to the different kinds of *de re* truth and their general implications in the investigation of the varieties of truth is devoted the *first section* of this special issue entitled *Truth of Language (De Dicto Truth) vs. Truth of Things (De Re Truth)*. The papers of the first section are:

1. *Ockham’s Razor, or the Murder of Concreteness. A Vindication of the Unitarian Tradition* by Roberta De Monticelli;

³ As Pieper (1947, ch. 4) underlines, the notion of a “truth of things” was elaborated in a systematic way in Medieval philosophy by Thomas Aquinas. This notion was prefigured in Augustinus of Hippo, Avicenna, Averroes, Anselm of Canterbury, Alexander of Hales, Albertus Magnus. On the notion of ontological truth or truth of the being, see also Mondin (1964, pp. 251–256).

⁴ A distinction of a *semantic* and an *ontological* meaning of the adjective ‘true’ is already drawn in Conte 1992/1995a (pp. 473–475).

2. *Monadic Truth and Falsity* by Richard Davies;
3. *One but not the Same* by Stefano Caputo;
4. *True God and True Man: Some Implications* by Paolo Heritier.

3. From *De Actu* Truth to the Investigation of the Normative and Axiological Dimensions of *De Re* Truth

A peculiar kind of *de re* truth is *de actu* truth, which Conte specifically investigates in his research on the pragmatics of the act of testimony (2016, chapter 4. “*Verò de dicto vs. verò de actu*”, pp. 71-78). In the act of testimony, the *de dicto* truth of *what is said* should be distinguished from the *de actu* truth of *the act of saying*. The act of testimony may, indeed, have specific pragmatic and validity conditions within a normative system. According to the biblical tradition, for instance, one cannot bear witness to oneself. Thus, as Jesus recalls in John, 5:31, a testimony to oneself would not be a *de actu true* testimony, because it would not be a *valid* act of testimony: “If I bear witness to myself, my testimony is not true.”⁵ In another connection, the Pharisees expressly object to Jesus: “You are bearing witness to yourself; your testimony is not true” (John, 8:13). In these quotations it is not implied that, if one bears witness to oneself, the content – what is said – of his or her testimony is necessarily false; these quotations rather mean that the *act of saying* a testimony to oneself is not a (*de actu*) *true* act of testimony, it is not a valid act of testimony. Conte highlights that such *de actu* truth of the act of testimony (which has specific *pragmatic* and validity conditions) is independent of the possible *de dicto* truth of *what is said* in the act of testimony, a *de dicto* truth which has instead *semantic* conditions (which are independent of any normative system). In John, 5:32, Jesus, for instance, says: “There is another who bears witness to me, and I know that the testimony which he bears to me is true”; and in John, 8:14, He replies to the Pharisees: “Even if I do bear witness to myself, my testimony is true, for I know whence I have come and whither I am going”. The Bible mentions another specific condition of validity of the act of testimony: the testimony must be borne by at least two persons (see *Deuteronomy*, 19:15: “Only on the evidence of two witnesses, or of three witnesses, shall a charge be sustained”). Jesus expressly mentions this condition of validity: “In your law it is written that the testimony of two men is true; I bear witness to myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness to me” (John, 8:17-18).

The analysis of the *de actu* truth of the act of testimony thus suggests that there can exist specific relations between *truth*, *validity*, and *normativity*. Indeed, the *validity* and the *de actu truth* of the act of testimony both depend upon normative conditions. However, it is possible to distinguish two different kinds of normative conditions of the validity – and the *de actu* truth – of the act of testimony. On the one hand, indeed, the validity condition that the testimony must be borne by at least two persons seems to be an *extrinsic* condition of validity of the act of testimony, a condition which is specifically established by a particular positive normative system (the normative system to which the *Deuteronomy* belongs). For the conditions of validity of an act that are extrinsically established by a positive normative system Conte proposes the name “*praxeonomical* conditions of validity” (Conte, 1988/1995b, pp. 366, 385-386). On the other hand, one could argue that a testimony borne to oneself is *not a de actu true testimony at all*, independently of any positive normative system: this condition of the validity – and the *de actu* truth – of the act of testimony is rather dependent on an *intrinsic* normativity of the act itself. For the conditions of validity of an act that are *not* established by a positive normative system, and are *intrinsic*, or *inherent*, to the inner constitution of the act itself – to the concept, or *eîdos*, of the act – Conte proposes the name “*praxeological* condition of

⁵ For the English translation of the Gospel of John, we make reference to *The Holy Bible. Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition*, 1965.

validity” (1988/1995b, pp. 363-366, 385-386).

The praxeological conditions of validity and of the *de actu* truth of the act of testimony reveal an interesting overlapping between the notion of *de actu* truth and the notion of *eidological* truth: a testimony that is borne to oneself is not a *de actu* true testimony because it is not an *eidologically*-true testimony: it does not correspond to the *eîdos* of the act of testimony. This suggests that some relations between truth, validity, and normativity may obtain also in other cases of *de re* truth.

This is apparent in the case of institutional entities such as a banknote, a certificate, or a holographic will, for which some specific normative conditions of validity may be established by specific norms. If such normative conditions are not met, a given X would not be a true (a valid) banknote, a true (a valid) certificate, a true (a valid) holographic will, respectively. In the domain of institutional phenomena, the *de re* truth (or, conversely, the *de re* falsity) of an entity may thus be directly linked to, and conditioned by, the *constitutive rules* that determine the validity conditions of that entity (see Conte, 1988; 2021).

However, the investigation of the possible relations between *de re* truth, validity, and normativity become even more thought-provoking when normativity – like in the case of the *praxeological* conditions of validity of the act of testimony – seems to stem from the *eîdos* itself of a given entity, independently of any positive normative system. This seems to be the case, for instance, when we speak of a *true* warrior, a *true* question, a *true* theory, a *true* science. Can it be argued, therefore, that some specific oughts or norms can be derived from the *concept*, or *eîdos*, of an entity – for instance, when we say that a *true* warrior *ought* to be brave, as suggested by Edmund Husserl (1900-1901/1970)? In this case an *axiological* deontic normativity seems to be implied in the *eidological* truth of the warrior.⁶

These axiological dimensions of *de re* truth may possibly be connected to some aspects of what has recently been dubbed ‘dual character concepts’ – that is, concepts that imply or encode both a descriptive and a normative and evaluative dimension for categorization, such as the concept of artist or scientist (see Knobe et al., 2013; Leslie, 2015; Reuter, 2019).

However, the various investigations into the *eidological* truth and its relation to an intrinsic normativity should also address an underlying question: What are the foundations, or the sources, of the normativity that is presupposed in assertions like: “A true warrior ought to be brave” or “Smith is not a true scientist”?

To the investigation of the normative and axiological dimensions connected to the notion of *de re* truth is devoted the *second section* of this special issue, entitled *Truth of Things and the Normative and Axiological Dimensions of Reality*.

The papers of the second section are:

1. *A Stratified Theory of Value* by Anna Donise;
2. *On Emotional Truth* by Venanzio Raspa;
3. *No True Persuasive Definition Marginalizes?* by Sergei Talanker;
4. *Subjective Meanings and Normative Values in Alfred Schutz’ Philosophy of Human Action* by Carlos Morujão.

⁶ One could also speak here of an “axiological truth”, which can be obviously intertwined or connected with Conte’s notion of *eidological* truth. According to Alois Roth, the expression ‘axiological truth’ (*axiologische Wahrheit*) already appears in a manuscript by Husserl dated 1911 and entitled *Ideen der “philosophischen Disziplinen”* (Roth, 1960, p. 80; see Conte, 1992/1995a, p. 488).

4. What Is a True Norm? The Connections Between Truth, Validity, and Normativity

The *third section* of this special issue, which is entitled *Truth, Validity, and Normativity*, is also related to the possible connections between truth and normativity; however, while the main questions of the previous section regard the possibility that the *de re* truth of an entity is connected to some extrinsic positive norms or to some intrinsic eidological constraints, in this third section the question is rather: What is a *true norm*?

If norms are conceived of as *dicta* – i.e., as linguistic entities – this question may concern the very possibility of a *de dicto* truth of norms, in parallel with the *de dicto* (apophantic) truth of descriptive sentences.

This question has long been debated in the context of deontic logic.⁷ Against the widespread view that norms cannot be true or false – they are non-apophantic entities – the French-Polish logician and legal philosopher Jerzy (*vel* Georges) Kalinowski has introduced a peculiar notion of the “truth of norms” (“*vérité des normes*”), which he understands as the semantic correspondence of a norm to a *pre-existing* “deontic reality” – a claim that obviously implies strong and controversial metaphysical commitments (Kalinowski, 1964; 1967; see also Azzoni, 1992; Conte, 1988/1995b, pp. 381-383). Conte, on his part, suggests the hypothesis that a different, and less controversial, construal of the *de dicto* truth of norms may be advanced. Rather than as correspondence to a *pre-existing* (metaphysically compromised) deontic reality, the *de dicto* truth of norms – which he also calls “deontic truth” – may be understood as the correspondence of a normative sentence to the deontic state-of-affairs that is produced by the valid utterance of the normative sentence itself (Conte, 1988/1995b, pp. 378-381). In fact, if the normative sentence ‘It is forbidden to smoke in public premises’ is uttered in a normative act of a legislative authority, it produces the deontic state-of-affairs that it is forbidden to smoke in public premises, and thus renders itself (the normative sentence) *de dicto* true. This peculiar self-verification of normative sentences seems to imply not only that norms *can be de dicto* true, but also that they *necessarily are de dicto* true.

However, the question: What is a true norm? can also be construed in terms of a *de re* truth of norms. The question would then become: What is a *de re* true norm?

One could wonder, for instance, whether an *unjust*, or an *invalid*, or an *ineffective* norm is a *de re* true norm. According to Augustine of Hippo, for instance, a law which is not *just* is not a (*de re*) true law (see Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*, 1.5.11.33). In a different perspective – which is implied, for instance, in Hans Kelsen’s well-known definition of validity as the specific existence of a norm – an *invalid*, rather than an unjust, norm is not a (*de re*) true norm (see Kelsen, 1960/2005, p. 10). According to a further perspective, maintained by legal realists such as Karl Llewellyn, who contrasts “real rules” to “paper rules”, those norms that, despite being validly promulgated, prove to be ineffective are not (*de re*) true norms: they are norms merely on paper (Llewellyn, 1930, p. 448).

The papers of the third section, entitled *Truth, Validity, and Normativity*, are:

1. *A Phenomenological Analysis of the Nomothetic Noema. Discussing the De Dicto and De Re Formulations of Normative Sentences* by Pedro M.S. Alves;
2. *Things We Must Never Do (If Any)* by Wojciech Żelaniec;
3. *Can Linguistic Correctness Provide Us with Categorical Semantic Norms?* by Sara Papic;
4. *Custom in Action. Ferdinand Tönnies’ Ontology of the Normative* by Virginia Presi.

⁷ See, for instance, von Wright (1983).

In contrast to the perspectives envisaged by Kalinowski and Conte (see § 3.) according to which a norm is (*de dicto*) true in virtue of its correspondence to a *deontic* reality, the Italian pedagogist and philosopher Aldo Visalberghi (1958/1966) suggests that a norm becomes true if, and only if, it is made true in the *ontic* reality, notably if, and only if, either of its constitutive alternatives is verified: if it is either actually abided to, or the provided sanction is actually applied.⁸ Visalberghi thus seems to identify the (*de dicto*) truth of a norm with its “effectuality” (*effettualità*) – i.e., with the fact that either the prescribed behaviour or the sanction actually occurs. Interestingly enough, in Visalberghi’s view, the *de dicto* and *de re* truth of norms seem to conflate: he claims, indeed, that a norm which is deprived of effectuality – and is therefore *de dicto* false – is not by the same token a *de re* true norm: “A law of which it is known that it can be violated with impunity, is not a true law” (1958/1966, pp. 62-63).

Independently of a full sharing of Visalberghi’s claims, his analysis may arouse further reflections on the possible relations between the truth, the validity, and the effectiveness of norms.

The *fourth section* of this special issue is especially devoted to two provoking aspects of these relations.

The *first* aspect concerns the idea that “the person with common sense acts just as if the commands had truth values:” indeed, “[i]f he considers it probable that no fearful consequence will result from not executing them, he does not actually consider them commands, but vocal or rhetorical exercises” (Visalberghi, 1958/1966, p. 62). This idea proposed by Visalberghi can be confronted with a passage of the *Thoughts* of Blaise Pascal: “[S]ince they believe that truth can be found, and that it resides in law and custom, [the common people] believe these laws, and take their antiquity as a proof of their truth, and not merely of their authority apart from truth” (Pascal, 1670/1901, p. 65, translation modified).⁹

The *second* aspect concerns the very notion of the effectiveness of a norm. In the perspective that norms should prove true within a society in virtue of their effectiveness, how is the effectiveness of a norm to be understood? In fact, while it is traditionally and paradigmatically conceived of as the fulfilment of the norm, or as the correspondence of actual behaviour to the norm, recent research has indeed shown that the effectiveness – or the “operancy” – of a norm cannot be reduced to its mere fulfilment, nor to the correspondence between actual behaviour and the norm.¹⁰ Under the notion of “nomotropic behaviour” (that is, of a behaviour that is oriented towards a norm, or behaviour in-function-of a norm), Conte (2000; 2011) investigates many forms of behaviour that, despite being oriented towards a norm, do not consist in the fulfilment of the norm and do not imply any correspondence of the behaviour to the norm. This is the case, for instance, of the behaviour of the thief notoriously described by Max Weber (1922/1976, p. 16): the thief indeed violates the norms against theft, but he still acts in-function-of those norms in concealing his action. Analogously, a cheater in poker does not conform his behaviour to the rules of poker when he cheats, but he still acts in-function-of those rules when he unfairly and surreptitiously extracts an ace from his sleeve.

5. Truth and Validity in Action: Norm Effectiveness and Nomotropic Behaviour

⁸ According to Visalberghi (1958/1966), norms (commands and prohibitions) can be translated into (apophantic) assertions of the form “Either you do *this*, or you will incur *that*”, which can be true or false depending on the fact that the alternative actually applies – so that, if you do *not* do *this*, you will *actually* incur *that*. Visalberghi specifies that in order to properly and exhaustively make this translation it is necessary to have a full understanding of the whole context (both in terms of the *linguistic context* and the *whole situation*) in which the assertion is made (see pp. 37-42).

⁹ “Le peuple [...], ainsi comme il croit que la vérité se peut trouver et qu’elle est dans les lois et coutumes il les croit et prend leur antiquité comme une preuve de leur vérité (et non de leur seule [...] autorité, sans [...] vérité)” (Pascal, 1670/1962, p. 249; on this passage of the *Pensées*, see also Gazzolo, 2023, p. 68).

¹⁰ See, for example, Conte (2000; 2011), Di Lucia (1996; 2003), Fittipaldi (2002), Passerini Glazel (2012; 2020).

A further argument against the identification of effectiveness with fulfilment is the existence of norms and rules that do not prescribe any behaviour, and consequently are not fulfillable at all. This is the case, for instance, of a norm establishing that one's legal capacity begins with birth, or a norm that establishes as a necessary condition for participation in a competition not to have reached the age of 40. The structural impossibility to be fulfilled does not prevent the possibility that people act in-function-of such norms.

The papers of the fourth section, entitled *Truth and Validity in Action: Norm Effectiveness and Nomotropic Behaviour*, are:

1. *Norms as "Intentional Systems"* by Pascal Richard;
2. *The Semantic Conception of Efficacy and Constitutive Rules: Mapping a Tough Relationship* by Alba Lojo;
3. *Normativity, Truth, Validity and Effectiveness. Remarks Starting from the Horizon of the "Common Sense"* by Giovanni Bombelli.

The final section of this special issue (*Further Contributions*) collects three further papers that were not presented at the San Raffaele School of Philosophy. The first paper, *Matter at a Crossroads: Givenness vs Forceful Quality* is an invited contribution by Caterina Del Sordo and Roberta Lanfredini. The second is a paper by Stefano Colloca partially connected to the topics of the School: *On the Deontic Validity of the General Exclusive Norm*. The third and last one is a paper freely submitted by Alessandro Volpe, entitled *Doing Justice to Solidarity: On the Moral Role of Mutual Support*.

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