

Lynch is certainly right that “in advocating liberalism, [the liberal] is advocating one view among others of the good life.” “Far from eschewing truth, liberalism requires that truth is a value. In particular, . . . one cannot care about equal respect unless one also cares about truth in the minimally objective sense” (*True to Life*: 165). But, if I am right, there is a distinction to be made in considering “comprehensive views (or visions) of the good life” between properly religious and/or philosophical views, on the one hand, and moral and/or political views, on the other. (Of course, my usual way of saying this is to distinguish between religious and/or philosophical *faiths* and moral and/or political *faiths*.)

Lynch, in his way, recognizes this distinction (or one very like it) when he distinguishes, as he does in the passage quoted, between truth in the “minimally objective” sense and truth in the “radically objective” sense (11; cf. also 171, 173). Whereas an account of truth in the radically objective sense is “a matter of high philosophical theory,” which explains just how propositions do their job of telling the truth, an account of truth in the minimally objective sense settles for analyzing the job that propositions have to do without explaining exactly how they get it done. Thus Lynch argues, for example, “[a] belief in fundamental rights does not require that one believe in Natural, God-given Rights or other bizarre metaphysical entities. It requires only an objective notion of truth in the minimal sense of ‘objective.’ . . . In this sense, a belief is true just when the world is as that belief portrays it as being” (171). I have been particularly struck by this example, obviously, because I had already argued in much the same way before reading Lynch’s book. “[T]alk of ‘natural law,’” I said, “is a way of explaining why one does not accept ‘the deeper kind of relativity’ typically insisted on by moral relativists.” “The important philosophical question raised by this theory [*sc.* of natural law] is not whether ‘natural law’ is a defensible concept, but whether moral claims can be rationally defended or justified. To talk of ‘the laws of nature and of nature’s God’ is one way to understand how moral claims can be rationally defended, as distinct from being ‘simply presumed or chosen.’ But to understand how moral claims are rationally defensible hardly requires one to talk only, or even primarily, in terms of ‘natural law’” [Notebooks: 19 July 2004].)

Of course, it's clear from context that what Lynch particularly has in mind in referring to truth in a "*radically* objective" sense is the kind of account offered by a reductive naturalism for which "beliefs can't be true unless they correspond to mind-independent, physical objects" (11; and this is further confirmed when he distinguishes on 44 between "a strongly objective theory of truth" and "a 'moderately objective' view of the law."). But what he says about "Natural, God-given Rights and other bizarre metaphysical entities" clearly indicates that his basic point is more general, applying to *any* "high philosophical theory" of truth, "metaphysical" as well as "reductive."

Anyhow, a liberal's properly *political* vision or faith is to be distinguished, even if not separated, from any properly *religious and/or philosophical* vision or faith. And what she or he has to advocate in order to advocate liberalism, in the sense of the equal freedom of all persons and the equal respect they all deserve, is only the first kind of vision or faith, not the second.

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