

# *Weak Deflationism*

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Is truth a substantial feature of truth-bearers? Correspondence theorists answer in the affirmative, deflationists in the negative. Correspondence theorists cite in their defense the dependence of truth on meaning or representational content. Deflationists in turn cite the conceptual centrality of simple equivalences such as “‘Snow is white’ is true iff snow is white” and “It is true that snow is white iff snow is white”. The apparent facts to which these theorists appeal correspond to some of our firmest and most basic convictions about truth. An account of truth that fails to accommodate either sort of apparent fact is inadequate. The account presented in this essay attempts to avoid this inadequacy by “deflating” truth for propositions but “inflating” truth for entities that express propositions, thus drawing from the insights of both deflationists and correspondence theorists.

## *1. Introduction*

This essay defends an account of truth that draws from both correspondence and deflationist theories. Weak Deflationism, as I will call it, “deflates” truth for propositions, the basic truth-bearers, but “inflates” truth for entities that express propositions. Central throughout the essay will be the views of Horwich (1990). Weak Deflationism attempts to incorporate a basically Horwichian deflationism about truth for propositions within the framework of a correspondence theory of truth for other kinds of truth-bearers.

My plan is as follows. I will first examine deflationism and present it in what seems to me its most plausible form. I will then argue that deflationism, so understood, is an inadequate theory of truth, because it lacks the resources to explain facts deriving from the dependence of truth upon meaning. This will be followed by a sketch of Weak Deflationism. Lastly, I will clarify and defend the latter by responding to a series of questions. The defense provided here will be partial. But I hope it will be sufficient to show that Weak Deflationism has promise.

## 2. *Deflationism and Weak Deflationism*

Truth, say the deflationists, is not deep or substantial, and so no traditional philosophical analysis should be sought for it. How is truth to be explained, then? One common deflationist line runs as follows. The meaning of “true” is fully explained by an account of its function, which is to serve as a device for abbreviating infinite conjunctions and disjunctions. Here is Michael Williams:

[W]hen we have pointed to certain formal features of the truth-predicate (notably its “disquotational” feature) and explained why it is useful to have a predicate like this (*e.g.*, as a device for asserting infinite conjunctions), we have said just about everything there is to be said about truth. (Williams 1988, p. 424)

This view, which we will call “disquotationalism”, seems to be endorsed in these well-known passages from Quine:

By calling the sentence [“Snow is white”] true, we call snow white. The truth predicate is a device of disquotation. We may affirm the single sentence by just uttering it, unaided by quotation or by the truth-predicate; but if we want to affirm some infinite lot of sentences that we can demarcate only by talking about the sentences, then the truth predicate has its use. We need it to restore the effect of objective reference when for the sake of some generalization we have resorted to semantic ascent. (Quine 1986, p. 12)

Ascription of truth just cancels quotation marks. Truth is disquotation. (Quine 1992, p. 80)

Disquotationalists maintain that if truth-predicates were devices for abbreviating infinite conjunctions and disjunctions, the utility of truth-generalizations would be explainable as follows. When we wish to affirm a sentence that we can identify only indirectly, or an infinite lot of sentences, we can use generalizations of the form “The *F* is true” or “Every *F* is true” as abbreviations of the corresponding infinite conjunctions of the forms “If ‘Snow is white’ is the *F*, then snow is white & if ‘Water is wet’ is the *F*, then water is wet & ... ” and “If ‘Snow is white’ is an *F*, then snow is white & if ‘Water is wet’ is an *F*, then water is wet & ... ”. By asserting such infinite conjunctions we make conditional commitments to the sentences we wish to assert; so, *e.g.*, by asserting “The first sentence Fran uttered is true”, I express a commitment; keeping to it requires me to accept the first sentence Fran uttered if I learn its identity.

The deflationist, however, need not accept disquotationalism, for she need not accept one of its corollaries, *viz.* that truth-predicates in vari-

ous languages do not express the same property, and so do not express a property, *truth*.<sup>1</sup> She may instead allow that truth-predicates express the property of truth but insist on deflating this property. Her project will be to explain truth itself by reference to such simple schemata as “*p*” is true iff *p* and *It is true that p* iff *p*.<sup>2</sup> These schemata cannot be transformed into closed sentences expressing candidate analyses or elucidations (where a candidate elucidation of a property *F*-ness, let us say, purports to exhibit constitutive non-analytic connections between properties, i.e., connections expressible by sentences of the form “For all *x*, *x* is *F* ...  $\phi x$ ” where what replaces “...” is either “if”, “only if” or “iff”).<sup>3</sup>

There are advantages to this *property* deflationism. Consider what is involved in taking “true” to be a mere device of abbreviation. Claims of abbreviation entail claims of meaning equivalence, and as Gupta has argued, truth-generalizations such as “Everything Sarah said is true” and their corresponding infinite conjunctions, “If Sarah

<sup>1</sup> If truth-predicates are devices for abbreviating infinite conjunctions and disjunctions, then if “true” and “vrai” express properties, they express different properties, “true” expressing the disjunctive property of *being either identical to “Snow is white” and such that snow is white or identical to “Snow is red” and such that snow is red or ...* and “vrai” expressing the property of *being either identical to “La neige est blanche” and such that snow is white or identical to “La neige est rouge” and such that snow is red or ...*

There is a place, on the disquotationalist view, for talk of a “property of truth”. “Truth” might be stipulated to denote the property that truth-predicates have in common, i.e., the property of having such-and-such abbreviatory function. Note, however, that “truth”, so used, would denote a property of truth-predicates, not a property expressed by truth-predicates.

I use “property” to denote the sorts of entities that are expressed by predicates. I do not presuppose that properties are “universals”, repeatable entities which are fully present where exemplified. Nor do I wish to rule out the view that Michael Devitt and Georges Rey call “selective realism”, according to which we can raise metaphysical questions about whether wrongness, for example, is a property in some metaphysically loaded sense. (See Devitt and Rey 1991, p. 95.) I use “property” inclusively to pick out both “natural” and “unnatural” properties.

<sup>2</sup> I use italics for names of schemata. The schematic letter “*p*” should be understood here and throughout as accepting as fillings declarative sentences of English which are not vague, ambiguous, or context-dependent. We will be investigating deflationary accounts of truth for the most unproblematic truth-apt declarative sentences.

<sup>3</sup> Putnam’s “informal elucidation” of truth in terms of justification under ideal epistemic circumstances is a well-known example of a biconditional version (Putnam 1981, p. 55).

More generally, we might say that to deflate a property is to explain it by reference to simple schemata which cannot be transformed into closed sentences expressing analyses or elucidations. Thus, a deflationist about meaning might attempt to explain meaning by reference to the schema “*p*” expresses the proposition that *p*.

said that snow is white, then snow is white & if...”, are not equivalent in meaning.<sup>4</sup> The property deflationist, by contrast, recognizes that such generalizations express genuinely universal propositions, and explains the utility of truth-generalizations in expressing conditional commitments by appealing to the simple equivalence schemata.<sup>5</sup> Property deflationism has a further advantage: it has no need to justify withholding from truth-predicates the title of *expressing a property*. I will be concerned with this more liberal, more attractive brand of deflationism. In what follows, “deflationism” will refer exclusively to property deflationism.

The guiding thought underlying deflationism is that truth in its various applications is to be explained by reference to the appropriate equivalence schemata, for example:

Truth for Sentences	“p” is true iff p
Truth for Propositions	<p> is true iff p <sup>6</sup>
Truth for Beliefs	A belief that p is true iff p
Truth for Utterances	An utterance of “p” is true iff p.

Let us ask, then, what it would be to so explain truth.

At the very least, the deflationist aims to provide a *recipe* for explaining, for specified truth-bearers, what it would be for them to be true: a sentence (proposition, etc.) is specified, and then the relevant instance of the relevant schema is asserted. The recipe for sentences would be this: for any suitable (English) sentence *S*, specify *S* by its quote name, then assert the instance of the disquotation schema containing that quote name.

A recipe for explaining, however, is not a theory. A theory of truth is a proposition or collection of propositions involving truth that purports to *be* an explanation of truth. It is not too much to require that philosophers attempting to give objective accounts of truth formulate, or at least identify, theories of truth.<sup>7</sup> For, plausibly, to explain truth is to provide a the-

<sup>4</sup> They are not conceptually equivalent: one could understand the truth-generalization and not understand the infinite conjunction (see Gupta 1993). Nor are they even logically equivalent.

<sup>5</sup> The more liberal deflationist emphasizes the following argument schemata in accounting for the utility of truth-generalizations:

Everything <i>X</i> uttered is true	What <i>X</i> uttered is true
<i>X</i> uttered “p”	<i>X</i> uttered “p”
“p” is true	“p” is true
<hr/>	<hr/>
<i>p</i>	<i>p</i>

<sup>6</sup> Horwich uses “<*p*>” as short for “the proposition that *p*”. I follow this convention. I also follow Horwich in treating the schema <*p*> is true iff *p* and *It is true that p* iff *p* as conceptually equivalent. On this matter, see Wilson’s discussion of “extraposition” (Wilson 1990, §II).

ory that is an explanation of truth. But how can the deflationist formulate or identify a theory? The schemata “ $p$ ”,  $\langle p \rangle$ , *the belief that  $p$* , *an utterance of “ $p$ ”* are dummies for *English* expressions, but there are truth-bearers that are not denoted by any English expression. Similarly, the schema  $p$  accepts as instances only English sentences, while there are propositions that are not expressed by English sentences but which serve as truth-conditions for truth-bearers. For these reasons alone, and independently of the problem of circularity, it does no good to try to formulate deflationist theories by the use of substitutional quantification, e.g. as in “For all  $p$ , ‘ $p$ ’ is true iff  $p$ ”, or for propositions, “For all  $p$ ,  $\langle p \rangle$  is true iff  $p$ ”.

If the deflationist is to identify a theory, she must appeal either to possible extensions of English or to propositional forms. The appeal to possible extensions of English is viciously circular. To make clear how these extensions solve the problem of truth-bearers whose truth-conditions cannot be specified in present English, for example, one would have to insist that the extensions of English contain sentences which express these truth-conditions. The deflationist does better to turn to propositional forms.

Following Horwich, I shall say that propositional forms or “structures” are functions from entities to propositions and are expressed by schematic sentences (Horwich, 1990, p. 19). Thus we have:

<u>Schematic sentence</u>	<u>Propositional form</u>
“‘ $p$ ’ is true iff $p$ ”	$\langle$ “ $p$ ” is true iff $p$ $\rangle$
“ $\langle p \rangle$ is true iff $p$ ”	$\langle p \rangle$ is true iff $p$
“A belief that $p$ is true iff $p$ ”	$\langle$ A belief that $p$ is true iff $p$ $\rangle$
“An utterance of ‘ $p$ ’ is true iff $p$ ”	$\langle$ An utterance of “ $p$ ” is true iff $p$ $\rangle$ .

We then state what it is to be a proposition of a certain form in terms of being a value of the form for some argument(s). Thus,  $\langle p \ \& \ q \rangle$  is a function, CONJ, which, given propositions  $P$  and  $Q$ , returns a proposition CONJ( $P$ ,  $Q$ ). A proposition is of this form iff it is the value of CONJ for a pair of arguments. Horwich apparently conceives such forms as basic constituents of propositions, which contain positions that may be filled in either by Fregean senses or by the referents of such senses (concrete objects, properties, propositions, etc.). But whether or not we have reason to conceive of such forms as literal constituents of propositions, we ought to recognize structure among forms. Some forms “decompose” into others. Thus, for example, the form  $\langle (p \ \& \ q) \vee r \rangle$  decomposes into CONJ and DISJ. Accordingly, we may think of the

<sup>7</sup> I add the qualification “objective” to emphasize that we are concerned only with philosophers whose self-described aim is to give an account of the *property* of truth.

form  $\langle\langle p \rangle\text{is true iff } p\rangle$  as the function, E-prop, which is decomposable into the functions IFF and Tr in such a way that for all propositions  $P$ ,  $\text{E-prop}(P) = \text{IFF}(\text{Tr}(P), P)$ . IFF is construed in a manner parallel to CONJ and DISJ, and Tr is to be the propositional function that takes an entity and returns the proposition with respect to it that it is true. The values of Tr are thus propositions attributing truth to an entity directly, not through the mediation of a “sense”.<sup>8</sup> We then take a proposition to be of the form  $\langle\langle p \rangle\text{ is true}\rangle$  just in case it is the value of Tr for some proposition as argument; for example,  $\langle\langle \text{Snow is white} \rangle\text{ is true}\rangle$  is the value of Tr for  $\langle \text{Snow is white} \rangle$ . Consequently,  $\text{E-prop}(\langle \text{Snow is white} \rangle) = \langle\langle \text{Snow is white} \rangle\text{ is true iff snow is white}\rangle$ .

Analogously, the equivalence form for sentences,  $\langle\langle “p” \text{ is true iff } p\rangle$ , E-sent, decomposes into the functions IFF, Tr, and EXP. EXP takes an entity as argument and returns the proposition it expresses.<sup>9</sup> For any suitable sentence  $S$ ,  $\text{E-sent}(S) = \text{IFF}(\text{Tr}(S), \text{EXP}(S))$ .  $\text{E-sent}(\langle \text{“Snow is white”} \rangle) = \langle\langle \text{“Snow is white” is true iff snow is white} \rangle$ . (For indications of how to extend this idea to beliefs and utterances, see Longer Notes 1.)

There is work to be done in clarifying the notion of a propositional form. But we can already put our rough machinery to work on behalf of the deflationist. She may now identify her theory by reference to propositional forms. She may say, following Horwich, that her theory of truth for propositions consists of all and only the propositions of the form  $\langle\langle p \rangle\text{ is true iff } p\rangle$ ,<sup>10</sup> that her theory of truth for sentences consists of all and only the propositions of the form  $\langle\langle “p” \text{ is true iff } p\rangle$ , etc. These theories are infinite and cannot be explicitly formulated.

<sup>8</sup> If one wished to avoid commitment to Russellian (de re) propositions, one might try to recast Tr as a function from entities to propositions that attribute truth to individual concepts that pick out entities in propria persona.

<sup>9</sup> To be precise, we would need to bring in a reference to languages construed as not having their meanings built in. We would say that EXP is a two-place function taking sentences and languages and returning the proposition expressed by the sentence in the language. I will avoid this complication throughout.

<sup>10</sup> A qualification concerning the liar-like paradoxes is needed. Perhaps we should follow Horwich in stipulating that no proposition that generates a liar-like paradox is an axiom of the theory (see Horwich 1990, p. 41–2). However, whether a proposition generates such a paradox or not is in some cases a contingent matter, so there is no a priori method for identifying all and only the problematic propositions. It seems, nonetheless, that one may aim first to identify a theory of truth only for propositions not involving truth, nor involving other truth-like notions such as falsity and exemplification. After such a theory has been identified, one may then attempt to give theories for propositions of the next “level”, which involve truth but are not about propositions that involve truth. And so on. Let us work with the assumption that this division of tasks is justifiable. In this essay, we are concerned only with the first task.

None the less, the deflationist *need* not follow Horwich here. Sosa proposes a finite, minimal theory (FMT) that quantifies over propositions (Sosa 1993, pp. 177–95; for Davidson’s views on this, see Longer Notes 2).

(FMT) For all propositions  $P$ ,  $P$  is necessarily equivalent to the proposition that it is true.

To derive instances of the schema  $\langle p \rangle$  is true iff  $p$ , Sosa invokes a principle of entailment, (PE):

(PE) If  $\langle p \rangle$  entails  $\langle q \rangle$ , then if  $p$ , then  $q$ . (1993, pp. 187–8)<sup>11</sup>

The deflationist cannot use precise analogues of (FMT) for truth for sentences and utterances, however, for several reasons, the most obvious of which is that there is no workable analogue for sentences or utterances of the notion of “the proposition, with respect to  $x$ , that it is true”. We cannot speak intelligibly of “the sentence, with respect to  $x$ , that it is true”. The best that can be done is to speak of a sentence of an extension of English consisting of a name for  $x$  concatenated with “is true”. However, given our function  $\text{Tr}$ , we may employ a relative of Sosa’s theory that avoids such problems. Consider the finite theory (FT):

FT-Sent For all sentences  $S$ ,  $\text{EXP}(S)$  is materially equivalent to  $\text{Tr}(S)$ .

FT-Prop For all propositions  $P$ ,  $P$  is materially equivalent to  $\text{Tr}(P)$ .

FT-Belief For all beliefs  $B$ , if  $B$  is a belief in  $P$ , then  $P$  is materially equivalent to  $\text{Tr}(B)$ .

FT-Utt For all utterances  $u$ , if  $u$  is an utterance of  $S$ , then  $\text{EXP}(S)$  is materially equivalent to  $\text{Tr}(u)$ .<sup>12</sup>

To derive instances of the various equivalence schemata, we may employ a principle of material implication:

(PMI) If  $\langle p \rangle$  materially implies  $\langle q \rangle$ , then, if  $p$ , then  $q$ .

Other unproblematic premises will be needed in these derivations, among which will be sentences such as “ $\langle \text{Snow is white} \rangle = \text{EXP}(\text{‘Snow is white’})$ ” and “ $\text{Tr}(\text{‘Snow is white’}) = \langle \text{‘Snow is white’ is true} \rangle$ ”.

So by invoking propositional forms, deflationists can identify and even formulate theories of truth. These theories will yield purported explana-

<sup>11</sup> Horwich (1990, p. 23) employs a principle analogous to (PE) but for material implication.

<sup>12</sup> In FT-Sent and FT-Utt, and throughout the remainder of the essay, I let the qualification “suitable” go implicit.

Perhaps the theory (FT) could be simplified further, as follows:

For all propositions  $P$ ,  $P$  is materially equivalent to  $\text{Tr}(P)$

For all truth-bearers  $x$ , if  $x$  is not a proposition, then  $\text{EXP}(x)$  is materially equivalent to  $\text{Tr}(x)$

A possible disadvantage of this theory, in contrast to (FT), is that it may hide the structure of truth for non-propositional entities. So, for example, perhaps truth for utterances is explainable in terms of truth for sentences.

tions of truth for particular truth-bearers. Thus, for any proposition  $P$ , a deflationist theory of truth for propositions, whether finite or infinite, will yield the proposition  $E\text{-prop}(P)$ , which cites the proposition  $P$  as *explanans* of  $\text{Tr}(P)$ . But formulatable or not, the deflationist claims that  $E\text{-prop}(P)$  is an explanation of  $\text{Tr}(P)$ : she defends this by saying that what  $E\text{-prop}(P)$  cites as *explanans* of  $\text{Tr}(P)$  is the explanans of  $\text{Tr}(P)$ .

Two comments on this use of “explanation”. First, the term here does not have its usual factive implication with respect to the *explanandum*. In asserting that  $\langle$ “Whales are fish” is true iff whales are fish $\rangle$  is an explanation of  $\langle$ “Whales are fish” is true $\rangle$ , the deflationist is not implying that “Whales are fish” is true. What are purportedly explained are *propositions* attributing truth, which themselves may or may not be true. A similar use of “explanation” is useful in discussion of analyses. It is natural to say that analyses are explanations, so that an analysis  $\langle$ To be  $F$  is to be  $G$  $\rangle$  cites  $G$ -ness as *explanans* of  $F$ -ness. But an analysis does not entail that the *analysandum* is exemplified; an analysis  $\langle$ To be  $F$  is to be  $G$  $\rangle$  does not entail that  $F$ -ness is exemplified. Moreover, an analysis of  $F$ -ness may be said to have as consequences propositions that are explanations of what it is for particular entities to be  $F$ . Thus, if knowledge is analyzed in terms of justified true belief, then  $\langle$ Gary knows that whales are fish iff Gary believes truly and with justification that whales are fish $\rangle$  is an explanation of  $\langle$ Gary knows that whales are fish $\rangle$ . It identifies as *explanans*  $\langle$ Gary believes truly and with justification that whales are fish $\rangle$ .<sup>13</sup> On behalf of the deflationist, we use “explanation” to ascribe an analogous a priori philosophical explanation relation holding between propositions such as  $\langle$ Snow is white $\rangle$  and  $\langle$ “Snow is white” is true $\rangle$ .

Second, and relatedly, we assume that the explanation relation picked out by our use of “explanation” implies material equivalence. Thus, if  $\langle$ Whales are fish $\rangle$  is explained by  $\langle$ “Whales are fish” is true $\rangle$ , the two are materially equivalent. So it is with analyses. If  $F$ -ness is analyzed (and so explained) by  $G$ -ness, then whatever is  $F$  is  $G$  and vice versa.

Lest it be objected that, because the values of  $\langle$ “ $p$ ” is true iff  $p$  $\rangle$  and the other equivalence forms are symmetric with respect to the “right-” and “left-hand” propositions, they fail to cite either proposition as *explanans*

<sup>13</sup> Ernest Sosa has suggested to me that this use of “explains” as relating propositions, regardless of their truth-value, would connect with ordinary usage better if it were regarded as abbreviatory of “would explain”. Thus, for example: Gary’s knowing that whales are fish would be explained by his believing truly and with justification that whales are fish.

There seem to be good reasons to acknowledge non-philosophical, a posteriori relations of explanation between propositions, e.g., the relation between what is expressed by the conjunction of the premises of a Hempelian deductive-nomological explanation and what is expressed by its conclusion. Again, “would explain” may seem to be better English.



Horwich gives us a necessary condition: a theory of truth, deflationist or otherwise, provides explanation enough only if all the facts about truth (that need explaining<sup>16</sup>) can be explained on its basis. The theorist of truth may use other unproblematic theories and facts in this enterprise, e.g., facts and principles of logic, of epistemology, etc. The task is to show that one's theory, in conjunction with unproblematic theories and facts, entails in a sufficiently simple and comprehensive way all the facts in need of explanation.

An *analysis* of a property would automatically meet this necessary condition. For, equipped with an analysis, a theorist may simply substitute *analysans* for *analysandum* in fact-expressing sentences (or at least in all such sentences that do not involve hyperintensional contexts), and the resulting sentence will express an *explanans* of the fact expressed by the original sentence. Thus, suppose knowledge is analyzed by justified true belief. Then facts about knowledge of the form <Knowledge is *F*> that need explanation are explained by corresponding facts of the form <Justified True Belief is *F*>. Facts predicatively involving knowledge of the form <... knows ... > are explained by the corresponding fact of the form <... believes truly and with justification ... >. As we will see in §3, matters are not so simple for the deflationist, especially for the infinitistic deflationist. Deflationist theories no doubt address the particular facts involving truth—the facts that are values of *Tr*—but it is not clear *that* or *how* they address general facts involving truth.

Deflationism is attractive. It is simple and economical. It makes possible swift and obvious derivations of instances of the various equivalence schemata. It seems to hit the mark in characterizing truth as simple, devoid of any deep metaphysical or empirical nature. And if it should prove tenable, we would perhaps better understand why, historically, there has been such disagreement over how to analyze truth.

Deflationism in this generalized form, however, is problematic. Troubles arise with vague, ambiguous, context-sensitive, and non-factual declarative sentences (if there are any), as well as with the liar-like paradoxes. But its most serious problem is its inability to explain facts deriving from the dependence of truth on meaning. The problem is nothing new, but its importance seems not to have been sufficiently appreciated by deflationists.<sup>17</sup> And it can be appreciated simply by examining obvious facts about the English language.

<sup>16</sup> This qualification is necessary for several reasons. First, there are facts involving truth that seem to need no explanation. Suppose knowledge is analyzable as justified true belief. Then the fact that, for all propositions *P*, someone knows *P* iff he has justified true belief in *P* seems not to stand in need of explanation. It is, as I will say, a “fact of analysis”. What does need to be explained, and to be explained by a theory of truth, is how truth contributes to the nature of knowledge, i.e., how the involvement of truth in knowledge underwrites facts such as the fact that if Gary knows that whales are fish, then whales are fish.

English sentences, like all sentences, have the truth-conditions they do *because* they mean what they do, and they mean what they do as a matter of convention. This conventionality, moreover, insures that any sentence might have had a meaning that determined truth-conditions different from (and perhaps even incompatible with) the truth-conditions determined by the sentence's actual meaning. For example, "Snow is white" might have meant that grass is red, and so have been true iff grass were red. Conventionality of meaning thus engenders contingency of *truth-conditions*. Because the propositions expressed by instances of the disquotation schema give the truth-conditions for sentences, they too come out contingent. So if one attempts to account for the facts involving truth for sentences solely by reference to the form  $\langle\langle p \rangle\rangle$  is true iff  $p$  (or for that matter, the form  $\langle\langle p \rangle\rangle$  explains  $\text{Tr}(\langle\langle p \rangle\rangle)$ ) and other unproblematic resources, then certain important facts will go unaccounted for—including all facts expressed by instances of the schema *Possibly, not-(“p” is true iff p)*. Here the deflationist's unproblematic resources might be allowed to include propositions of the form  $\langle\langle p \rangle\rangle$  expresses  $\langle p \rangle$ . The most important limitation on such resources, of course, is that they do not contain an analysis or elucidation of truth for sentences in terms of a substantial notion of meaning, where a substantial notion of meaning is a notion of meaning that is not explainable by reference to a deflationary schema such as “p” expresses  $\langle p \rangle$ . But this is just what is needed. *Contra* Quine, truth is more than disquotation.<sup>18</sup> *Contra* the deflationists, truth for sentences needs to be analyzed or elucidated in terms of substantial meaning.

This inadequacy of deflationism does not spring from an inability to *generalize* explanations of particular facts to yield explanations of general

<sup>17</sup> The problem is in the background of the discussions of T-sentences by Etchemendy (1988, pp. 60–1), and Soames (1995, pp. 252–3).

<sup>18</sup> A similar conclusion can be reached for our grasp of truth. Our grasp of truth is not exhausted by our disposition to readily accept with justification instances of the disquotational schema. We also readily accept with justification instances of the schema *Possibly, not-(“p” is true iff p)*. This acceptance cannot be explained or justified simply by appeal to our justified acceptance of instances of the disquotational schema.

The existence of these modal facts also seems to count against Field's claim (1994a) that sentences of the form “‘p’ is true” are cognitively equivalent to the corresponding sentences of the form “p”. The sentences “‘Snow is white’ is true” and “Snow is white” are not cognitively equivalent in a strong sense, which involves their being interderivable *tout court*, for they are not so interderivable. The derivation of one from the other requires a further assumption about meaning. That assumption may be common knowledge, but it is necessary all the same if the derivation is to be valid. If in speaking of “cognitive equivalence”, Field has in mind a more liberal relation, which permits the use of auxiliary “common knowledge” assumptions in derivations of one from the other, then Field's claim is uncontroversial, but not deflationist.

facts. Deflationism cannot even account for particular facts such as the fact that “Snow is white” might not have been true iff snow is white, let alone the general fact that the values of E-sent are contingent. Contrary to deflationism, the values of E-sent are not explanations of propositions attributing truth to English sentences. <Snow is white> does *not* explain <“Snow is white” is true>, and in general, there is no English sentence *S* such that EXP(*S*) explains Tr(*S*).<sup>19</sup>

It may be helpful here to consider how these considerations tell against some views expressed in a recent essay by Horwich (1995). Horwich makes little mention (if any) of meaning in his accounts of sentential truth, *being true of* (i.e., predicate satisfaction) and reference. About the latter two concepts, Horwich writes:

... virtually no matter what is substituted for “*F*” or “*N*”, it is uncontroversial that

“*F*” is true of something iff it is *F*

and

“*N*” refers to something iff it is identical to *N*.

According to the deflationary point of view there is nothing more to our concepts of *being true of* and *reference* than is conveyed by our acceptance of these schemata. (1995, p. 359)

But let us consider the dependence relations between such concepts and that of meaning. Take the case of *being true of*. A predicate has the extension it does because it has the meaning it does. *That* a predicate means what it does, moreover, is a matter of convention, and so contingent fact: a predicate may in fact mean *F*-ness but have possibly meant *G*-ness, rather than *F*-ness, where these properties are distinct, perhaps incompatible. This appears to make good sense on Horwich’s preferred “use” theory of meaning: any predicate might have been used in relevantly different ways and so have meant something very different from, and perhaps incompatible with, what it in fact means.<sup>20</sup> This feature of meaning insures that the instances of the schema

“*F*” is true of something iff it is *F*

<sup>19</sup> Recall that we are using “explains” to express a kind of *a priori*, philosophical explanation relation that holds between propositions independently of whether they are true, and which bears an analogy with the relation between an *analysans* and an *analysandum*.

Perhaps it is unsurprising that <Snow is white> fails to explain <“Snow is white” is true> in the required *a priori* fashion. The former, after all, does not entail the latter. This shows that (AFT) is false and merely explanatorily inadequate.

<sup>20</sup> Horwich does accept a version of the doctrine that meaning determines extension, namely this: no difference in extension without a difference in meaning.

express contingent facts. So for example, “red” might have been true of something not iff it were red, but, say, iff it were blue; “cat” might have been true of something not iff it were a cat, but, say, iff it were a bird. Although these seem to be just the consequences we want, intuitively, they are not welcome to a deflationist like Horwich. They point to the failure of accounts that attempt to explain *being true of* by reference to the propositional form corresponding to the deflationary schema above (using only unproblematic resources). Important facts involving *being true of*, deriving from its dependence on meaning, are left unaccounted for. Horwich is right to emphasize the “uncontroversial” or obvious nature of the propositions expressed by instances of this schema, and of the propositions expressed by instances of the corresponding schemata for reference and truth,<sup>21</sup> but obviousness does not insure explanatory adequacy.

Two distinct objections might be raised at this point. The first asks why such modal facts need to be explained at all. If a theory of truth needs to explain all the facts *that need explaining*, some reason must be given for thinking that the modal facts in question need explaining, if the criticism of deflationism is to stick. The second objection grants that the modal facts need explaining, but asks why they cannot be explained by means of

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What needs to be added to derive the contingency of the propositions expressed by instances of the schema “*F* is true of something iff it is *F*” is the assumption that any predicate could have meant some property that was not exemplified by all and only the things that exemplify the property the predicate actually means. This assumption can be seen to be acceptable if we focus on the possibility that any predicate could have meant a property that was a contrary to the property it in fact means, e.g., “Red” could have expressed being-green. Horwich does not discuss this assumption. However, it seems a mere artifact of the conventional character of the meaning of linguistic items.

<sup>21</sup> Horwich is not altogether satisfied with the use of the disquotation schema here. In a footnote he writes:

More accurately, one ought to speak of a sentence as *expressing a truth* rather than as *being true*; and it is in this first sense that I intend my use of the truth-predicate to be understood. (1994, p. 358n)

To talk of *expressing a truth* would seem to build in a reference to meaning. But even when the disquotation schema is replaced by a schema framed in terms of this notion, the dependence of truth on meaning is unacknowledged. Horwich’s preferred schema would seem to be (1):

(1) “*p*” expresses a truth iff *p*.

But instances of this schema will express contingent propositions. What is needed to accommodate the dependence of truth on meaning is a schema

(2) “*p*” is true iff “*p*” expresses a truth.

(2) is readily transformed into a traditional analysis of truth for sentences in terms of meaning and truth for propositions.

a simple addition to the deflationist account of all the relevant modal propositions (if the theory is infinite) or of some appropriate modal universal proposition (if the theory is finite).<sup>22</sup>

In reply to the first objection, we may say that the relation between truth and meaning is an obvious, a priori, substantial dependence relation. A theory of truth should have something to say about it. There is something about truth and its relation to meaning by virtue of which the relevant modal propositions come out as a priori and obvious facts. Refusal to explain these modal facts deriving from truth's constitutive link to meaning is analogous to refusal to explain, in one's account of causation, facts deriving from the constitutive link to laws.

The second objection presents an intriguing possibility. The relevant modal propositions are obvious and a priori. What then is to stop one from incorporating them into the deflationist account? The problem is that elements of the resulting theory would be in tension. One element of the theory would assert a material equivalence, and another would assert or imply the contingency of that material equivalence. The tension would consist in the fact that the theory prompts, but offers no answer to, the question "Why is there material but not necessary equivalence?"

Field (1994b) offers a third sort of response to the "contingency" objection. He proposes that the deflationist take counterfactuals such as

- (1) If we had used "Snow is white" in certain very different ways it would have had the truth conditions that grass is red

to have as their "cash value" statements such as

- (1-CV) In considering counterfactual circumstances under which we used "Snow is white" in certain very different ways, it is reasonable to translate it in such a way that its disquotational truth conditions relative to the translation are that grass is red. (1994b, p. 277)

Field's strategy is thus to conceive of the relevant modal intuitions as special cases of intuitions about truth in other languages. We are to treat the

<sup>22</sup> The infinitistic deflationist could not accommodate all of the relevant modal facts merely by adding all of the propositions of the form  $\langle \text{Possibly, not-}(\text{"}p\text{" is true iff } p) \rangle$  to her account. Nor would it be enough for the finitistic deflationist to add the proposition  $\langle \text{For no sentence } S \text{ is } \text{EXP}(S) \text{ necessarily equivalent to } \text{Tr}(S) \rangle$ . These propositions do not entail any facts of the form  $\langle \text{Possibly, "}p\text{" is true and not-}p \rangle$  or of the form  $\langle \text{Possibly, "}p\text{" is not true and } p \rangle$ . Some, but not all, of the latter propositions are facts, e.g.,  $\langle \text{Possibly, "Snow is white" is true and snow is not white} \rangle$  is a fact, but  $\langle \text{Possibly, "7 + 5 = 12" is true and } 7+5 \neq 12 \rangle$  is not. So the deflationist cannot simply make her additions based directly on the forms  $\langle \text{Possibly, "}p\text{" is true and not-}p \rangle$  or  $\langle \text{Possibly, "}p\text{" is not true and } p \rangle$ . The relevant form will be this, it seems:  $\langle (\text{If, possibly, not-}p, \text{ then, possibly, "}p\text{" is true and not-}p) \ \& \ (\text{if, possibly, } p, \text{ then, possibly, "}p\text{" is not true and } p) \rangle$ . Instances of this form, in conjunction with unproblematic modal facts, will entail the relevant modal facts involving truth.

language used by our counterfactual selves—in the relevant world—as another language, truth in which can be explained in the same way as truth in actual other languages.

How does (1-CV) help the deflationist answer the contingency objection? Field claims that (1-CV) captures the content of (1), so that, by affirming (1-CV), the deflationist affirms the contingency intuitions. But the issue is not simply whether the deflationist can affirm the intuitions, but whether she can *explain* the facts these intuitions register. Field says nothing about how the deflationist might account for (1-CV). In substituting (1-CV) for (1), therefore, Field substitutes one *datum* in need of explanation with another no less in need of explanation. We need to be told *why* it is reasonable to translate “Snow is white” as used under such counterfactual circumstances in the way (1-CV) outlines. Field offers no guidance on this crucial matter. The obvious explanation of (1-CV) would be that, in suitable counterfactual situations, “Snow is white” is used by us to *mean* that grass is red. Of course, that explanation is unavailable to Field. How else can (1-CV) be explained? Presumably, we are to look to pragmatic “rules of translation”. This seems to falsify the objective character of intuitions such as the intuition that “Snow is white” might have been true iff grass is red. But no matter, there is a more serious problem in the offing.

We might have been able to conceive properties which we cannot in fact conceive, and so we might have used some of the predicates we actually use to pick out such properties; for example, we might have been capable of experiencing a finer discrimination of colors, in which case we might have used “is white” to ascribe a color property that is not expressed by any of our predicates. If this is possible, then “Snow is white” might have been false and untranslatable by any sentence in our language, even though snow was white. Our rules of translation would be of no help to us. Yet we have an unmistakable conviction on this matter, deriving from our convictions about the relation between truth and meaning.

The Fieldian deflationist cannot avoid the above problem even by appealing to a notion of objective synonymy. Such an appeal would involve proposing the following schema for explaining facts such as that recorded by (1):

- (i) There are counterfactual situations in which “*p*” as used by us (there) has the same meaning as “*q*” as actually used by us.
  - (ii) If “*p*” as used by us in a counterfactual situation has the same meaning as “*q*” as actually used by us, then in that counterfactual situation “*p*” as used by us (there) is true iff *q*.
- 
- (iii) There are counterfactual situations in which “*p*” as used by us (there) is true iff *q*.

The instances of this schema have the virtue of avoiding the seemingly irrelevant issue of “reasonableness of translation”. Still these instances, collectively, are not adequate to explain all the relevant modal facts that need explaining. Some of these facts outrun the facts about objective synonymy relations between sentences as used by us in counterfactual situations and sentences as actually used by us.

Generalized or *strong* deflationism, then, is unable to explain certain important facts deriving from the dependence of truth on meaning. But while this inability beleaguers generalized deflationism, it does not afflict deflationism restricted to truth for propositions. If one is willing to inflate meaning, one can give an account of truth for non-propositional entities which recognizes explicitly a dependence on meaning, but which remains deflationist about truth for propositions. Truth for non-propositional entities will be analyzed in terms of the expression of true propositions. This is Weak Deflationism.

How precisely the deflationist component of Weak Deflationism should be identified is a difficult and somewhat peripheral question. There are several options. One could affirm either Horwich’s infinite theory, Sosa’s finite theory (FMT) (i.e., the theory that for all propositions  $P$ ,  $P$  is necessarily equivalent to  $\text{Tr}(P)$ ), the finite theory (FT), which is similar to Sosa’s except that it employs the notion of material equivalence, or the finite theory that every proposition of the form  $\langle\langle p \rangle\rangle$  is true iff  $p$  is necessary.<sup>23</sup> Alternatively, one could take as the focus for one’s theory the asymmetric form  $\langle\langle p \rangle\rangle$  explains  $\langle\langle p \rangle\rangle$  is true. One might then affirm the theory (AFT) (i.e., the theory that for all propositions  $P$ ,  $P$  explains  $\text{Tr}(P)$ ) or the theory that every proposition of the form  $\langle\langle p \rangle\rangle$  explains  $\langle\langle p \rangle\rangle$  is true is necessary. I leave unanswered the question of which of these theories is best. Weak Deflationism is thus a determinable theory of truth.

Weak Deflationism is deflationist about key *ontological* notions. To deflate propositional truth is to deflate facthood; to deflate *being true of* (as a relation between properties and individuals) is to deflate exemplification.<sup>24</sup> Propositional truth and *being true of* are two of a kind, and Weak Deflationism deflates them both. This is not to rule out the possibility of substantive ontological debate, only substantive debate about facthood or exemplification. Under Weak Deflationism, these cannot serve as cornerstones of ontology.

The account I am proposing is similar to the “primitivist” theory of truth, defended at times by Moore and Russell, which holds that truth is a simple, unanalyzable property. On both views, propositional truth is deflated and

<sup>23</sup> This option is unavailable to the strong deflationist in her theory of truth for sentences, since propositions of the form  $\langle\langle p \rangle\rangle$  is true iff  $p$  are contingent.

<sup>24</sup> Horwich (1994, p. 74) also gives a deflationary schema for exemplification.

non-propositional truth is inflated.<sup>25</sup> The primary point of difference lies in Weak Deflationism's ability to take account of facts of the form  $\langle\langle p \rangle\rangle$  is true iff  $p$ . Accounting for these facts helps to answer questions that bothered Russell: why should we seek to believe propositions which have this simple property of truth? Why is possession of this simple property valuable? Russell complains of his "primitivist" theory that

[it] *seems* to leave our preference for truth a mere unaccountable prejudice, and in no way to answer to the feeling of truth and falsehood.<sup>26</sup>

If truth is what Weak Deflationism says it is, then no wonder we seek to believe propositions that have this simple property. An example will suffice. We wish to believe, especially those of us who live near the coastline, that a hurricane is in the forecast when a hurricane is in the forecast; if we believe that a hurricane is in the forecast when  $\langle A \text{ hurricane is in the forecast} \rangle$  is true, then we will believe, as desired, that a hurricane is in the forecast when a hurricane is in the forecast.

A final word on Horwich's views. Horwich apparently accepts a substantial notion of meaning as use, but does not put it to work in explaining the dependence of non-propositional truth on meaning (1995, p. 356). But if one employs a substantial notion of meaning, then why not hope for analyses or elucidations of non-propositional truth? Is this not part of the very *raison d'être* for employing a substantial notion of meaning? Horwich seems to think that to put a notion of meaning to such a use is to violate one of the fundamental insights of the deflationist approach to truth:

Minimalism involves the contention that truth has a certain purity—that our understanding of it is independent of other ideas. (1990, p. 12)

This purity, as we have seen, is a feature only of propositional truth.

### 3. Questions for Weak Deflationism

Questions (1)–(4) are some of the principal questions that need to be answered by a Weak Deflationist:

- (1) Is Weak Deflationism circular?
- (2) Why should one not seek a correspondence theory of propositional truth?

<sup>25</sup> I rely on the account of the Moore-Russell view given by Cartwright (1987, p. 73). It is defended by Sosa (1993).

<sup>26</sup> This passage is quoted by Cartwright (1987, p. 73).

- (3) Does Weak Deflationism stumble on the explanation of *general* facts involving truth?
- (4) Does Weak Deflationism have the resources to explain the obviousness of the propositions expressed by instances of the schema “*p*” is true iff *p*?

### 3.1. *Is Weak Deflationism circular?*

Weak Deflationism is a version of the traditional correspondence theory, distinguished (perhaps) by its deflationism about propositional truth. Correspondence theories have often taken one of the following forms. (Here, for simplicity, we restrict our attention to sentences, and in particular, to atomic sentences).

- (A) An atomic sentence is true iff it represents (means) a state of affairs that *obtains*.
- (B) An atomic sentence is true iff it attributes to an *n*-tuple of objects  $(x_1, \dots, x_n)$  an *n*-ary relation *R*, and *R* holds of  $(x_1, \dots, x_n)$ .

The charge of circularity is based on the claim that the talk of states of affairs “obtaining” in (A) and of relations “holding of” *n*-tuples in (B) is disguised talk of truth and *being true of*. Now the correspondence theorist, whether she is a Weak Deflationist or not, should accept the grounds just given for the charge of circularity, but reject the charge itself. She should admit that talk of states of affairs “obtaining” and relations “holding of” *n*-tuples is disguised talk of truth and *being true of*, and so accept the objector’s rewriting of her theory. However, she should rebut the charge of circularity by saying that the truth deployed in explaining non-propositional truth—whether it is “obtaining” or “exemplification” or propositional truth—is being understood as the more basic notion in terms of which sentential truth is to be explained.<sup>27</sup> The same goes for Weak Deflationist explanations of non-propositional truth.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> One might think that correspondence theories of the same sort as (B) would not need to invoke any notion of truth in the *analysans* of truth for sentences. Following this line, one might replace (B) with (B\*):

(B\*) A sentence is true iff it attributes an *n*-ary relation *R* to an ordered *n*-tuple of objects  $(x_1, \dots, x_n)$  and  $R(x_1, \dots, x_n)$ .

(B\*), however, is not well-formed, for “*R*” occurs first as a singular term and then as a predicate. To achieve the desired analysis, one would need to replace (B\*) with (B\*\*):

(B\*\*) A sentence is true iff it attributes an *n*-ary relation *R* to an ordered *n*-tuple of objects  $(x_1, \dots, x_n)$  and  $(x_1, \dots, x_n)$  exemplifies *R*.

This is not an improvement. In (B\*\*), the talk of “exemplifies” serves the same function that talk of “holding of” serves in (B).

<sup>28</sup> Clarity, at times, may require us to signal this distinction in writing. We might use “TRUE” to express propositional truth, “*TRUE*” to express non-propositional truth, and “true” to denote the disjunction of these. Thus, we would say:

### 3.2. Why should one not seek a correspondence theory of propositional truth?

Suppose one claimed that propositions, independently of their truth-value, represent states of affairs, and that their truth and falsity consists in the “obtaining” or not of these corresponding states of affairs. How would one then explain what is it for a state of affairs to obtain? If this notion, too, is given a correspondence analysis, we have started down an infinite regress of substantial truth-like notions.

The correspondence theorist might wish to deny that the truth of a proposition depends on a representation relation to an entity which holds whether or not the proposition is true. Thus, one hears talk of “facts”, “events”, “property-instances”, as distinguished from true propositions. Whereas propositions are held to be abstract, and so in some sense not really “in the world”, events are held to be concrete worldly entities that are perceivable and form the causal nexus. A correspondence theorist might insist that truth finds its basis in precisely such worldly entities. He might offer the following analysis of propositional truth:

(C) For any proposition  $P$ ,  $P$  is true iff  $P$  corresponds to an event.

I think this is a dead end for several reasons. First, there are problems with negation. If one allows that <Snow is white> is true in virtue of a relation to an event,  $e$ , then it seems one must also allow that <Snow is not white> must be true in virtue of a relation to a distinct event,  $e'$ , where  $e$  and  $e'$  *exclude* one another. What would explain the exclusion? It seems that the explanation must run along these lines:  $e$  and  $e'$  have a common content, which obtains in the case of  $e$  and does not obtain in the case of  $e'$ ; talk of “ $e$ ” and “ $e'$ ”, that is to say, is indistinguishable in meaning from talk of truth and falsity of one and the same proposition.

Perhaps the correspondence theorist has a response. He may insist that a plausible correspondence theory of propositional truth will have to deny that there are events corresponding to true negative propositions. (C) will give way to a recursive theory that explains truth for atomic propositions in terms of correspondence to events, and truth for molecular propositions in terms of the truth of their constituent propositions, etc.

Second, and more seriously, the (C)-theorist cannot derive from his analysis instances of the schema for propositional truth. Some deflationist

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to be true is to be TRUE or TRUE, and to be TRUE is to express a TRUE proposition. I do not mean to imply that non-propositional truth itself is unitary. Perhaps good arguments can be given to show that truth for utterances, for example, depends on truth for sentences, which in turn depends on truth for beliefs. There may be an interesting structure to non-propositional truth.

theory of propositional truth must be strictly added, prompting the question “Why do we need the analysis if we have the deflationist theory?”. Correspondence relations are vitally important in explaining the dependence of non-propositional truth on meaning. Propositions, however, do not have meanings; they *are* meanings.

Third, it is not clear what such a relation of correspondence would be. The correspondent for a basic proposition <Socrates is white>, it seems, would have to be something like *Socrates’s whiteness*. Thus there would be the following necessary connection: necessarily, if *Socrates’s whiteness* exists, then <Socrates is white> is true. Correspondence between propositions and events would be merely supervenient.

Mystery about such correspondence is avoided if the schematic (C\*) is substituted for (C):

(C\*) An atomic proposition, <*a* is *F*>, is true iff the event of *a*’s being *F* exists.

(I ignore the complications of time.) But, as we have seen, the correspondence theorist must also add a deflationist theory in order to derive instances of the schema:

(E-atom) An atomic proposition, <*a* is *F*>, is true iff *a* is *F*.

From the correspondence theory based on (C\*) and the added deflationist theory, one may derive any instance of

(E-event) The event of *a*’s being *F* exists iff *a* is *F*.

This seems to get things backwards. The instances of (E-event) are not mere consequences of a theory of truth; they purport to give explanations of atomic facts in terms of facts about the existence of events. Consequently, it seems that (E-event), together with (E-atom), purports to explain (C\*).

The thought emerging here is that events do not enter into the explanation of propositional truth by virtue of being correspondents of true propositions, but enter, if at all, into the ontological explanation of atomic truths themselves. When an ontologist asks what makes a proposition true, he is not concerned with any correspondence relation, nor it seems even with truth; he sees that an object is red, round, etc., and wants to know what entities there are such that their existence *explains* the object’s redness, roundness, etc.<sup>29</sup> More exactly, he wants to know something highly schematic. Supposing his schema may be filled in by sentences

<sup>29</sup> This view of the “truthmaker” ontologist is similar to that expressed by Fox, who proposes the following “truthmaker” principle:

If *p*, some *x* exists such that *x*’s existing necessitates that *p* (1987, p. 189).

I would add only that the ontologist seeks entities whose existing *explains*, and not only necessitates, the relevant truth.

expressing true atomic propositions, he supposes that  $a$  is  $F$ , and asks “Why is  $a$   $F$ ?”, and seeks an answer that identifies, schematically, the entities whose existence explains the fact that  $a$  is  $F$ . Yes,  $a$  must exist, and so must  $F$ -ness; these must be combined in some way; there must be an event of  $a$ 's being  $F$ . Here truth serves only to *identify* what needs explaining. The ontologist is not concerned, at least in the first and most basic instance, to explain truths about what is true, but rather to explain truths themselves.

We have found no good reason for an ontologist or anyone else to accept a correspondence theory of propositional truth.

### 3.3. Does Weak Deflationism stumble on the explanation of general facts involving truth?

Let us begin by considering the various types of general facts involving truth that might be considered in need of explanation.

- (G1) General facts relating truth to its modalities, e.g., the fact that if a proposition is true, then it is possibly true.
- (G2) General facts relating truth to falsity, e.g., the fact that if a proposition is true it is not false.
- (G3) General facts concerning what can and cannot bear truth, e.g., the fact that only propositions can be true.<sup>30</sup>
- (G4) General facts relating truth to the semantic and the psychological, e.g., the fact that all true beliefs are beliefs in true propositions, the fact that what is known is true, the fact that the propositions expressed by instances of the disquotation schema are obvious.
- (G5) General facts concerning truth and logic, e.g., the closure of truth under entailment, the fact that for any propositions  $P$ ,  $Q$ ,  $\text{CONJ}(P, Q)$ , is true iff  $P$  and  $Q$  are true, the fact that every proposition of the form  $\langle \text{Everything is } F \text{ or not-}F \rangle$  is true.

Weak Deflationism yields explanations of (G1) facts, when conjoined with theories of the modalities *simpliciter* and definitions of the modalities of truth in terms of amodal truth. Thus, e.g., the general fact that every true proposition is possibly true may be explained by taking possible truth to be defined in terms of amodal truth as follows:

Proposition  $P$  is possibly true  $=_{\text{df}}$  Possibly,  $P$  is true.

Using the biconditional obtainable from this definition, in conjunction with the modal fact that

For all  $P$ , if  $P$  is true, then, possibly,  $P$  is true

<sup>30</sup> The need to explain facts involving ineligibility for truth is stressed by Gupta (1993a, p. 364).

the Weak Deflationist may infer that

For all  $P$ , if  $P$  is true, then  $P$  is possibly true.

The modal fact invoked in this explanation does not itself require explanation by reference to the theory of propositional truth. It derives from the general modal fact that actuality implies possibility.<sup>31</sup>

(G2) facts can perhaps be explained by appeal to an analysis of falsity according to which to be false is to be a proposition that is not true. (See Horwich 1990, p. 74.)<sup>32</sup>

(G3) general facts do pose a problem for Weak Deflationism as it stands, but a minor one. The finitistic Weak Deflationist may add a condition ruling out non-propositional entities from being candidates for propositional truth. For the sake of clarity, let us use “TRUE” in this paragraph to express propositional truth and “TR” to denote the function that takes an entity and returns the proposition that it is true. Thus, “For all  $P$ ,  $P$  explains TR( $P$ )” may be replaced with “For all  $x$ , if  $x$  is a proposition, then  $x$  explains TR( $x$ ), and if  $x$  is not a proposition, then  $x$  cannot be TRUE”. The infinitistic Weak Deflationist may add to her theory the proposition that only propositions can be TRUE. Modified appropriately, Weak Deflationism yields explanations of (G3) facts and their instances, e.g., the fact that no horse is TRUE, as well the fact that the moon is not TRUE. Given analyses of non-propositional truth in terms of TRUTH, explanations are available for facts such as the fact that no horse is true.<sup>33</sup>

(G4) facts, for the most part, can be explained by reference to the Weak Deflationist’s theory of non-propositional truth, and/or her independent theories of the human mind and language, possibly together with general logical facts involving truth. Thus, for example, the fact that all true beliefs are beliefs in true propositions can be explained by reference to the fact of analysis that a belief is true iff its content is a true proposition. The

<sup>31</sup> The theory of propositional truth *will* need to be invoked to explain the fact that if  $\langle$ Snow is white $\rangle$  is true, then, possibly, snow is white, and other such facts. But these explanations are forthcoming: because  $\langle\langle$ Snow is white $\rangle$  is true $\rangle$  is necessarily equivalent to  $\langle$ Snow is white $\rangle$ ,  $\langle$ Possibly,  $\langle$ Snow is white $\rangle$  is true $\rangle$  entails  $\langle$ Possibly, snow is white $\rangle$ ; and so  $\langle$ If  $\langle$ Snow is white $\rangle$  is true, then possibly,  $\langle$ Snow is white $\rangle$  is true $\rangle$  entails  $\langle$ If  $\langle$ Snow is white $\rangle$  is true, then possibly, snow is white $\rangle$ .

<sup>32</sup> This definition may turn out to be inadequate. In addressing the problems of vagueness, for example, the Weak Deflationist may wish to admit propositions which are neither true nor false. She might then have to simply admit the primacy of the general facts  $\langle$ For all  $P$ , if  $P$  is true, then  $P$  is not false $\rangle$  and  $\langle$ For all  $P$ , if  $P$  is false, then  $P$  is not true $\rangle$ . To avoid contradiction, classical logic would have to be abandoned. This would be a heavy price to pay. Field (1994a) discusses some alternative deflationist treatments of vagueness that are consistent with classical logic.

<sup>33</sup> This answers a query by Gupta (1993a, p. 363–4).

fact that what is known is true is explained by reference to a theory of knowledge which includes truth in the nature of knowledge.

Many other philosophically important (G4) facts can be explained in a similar fashion, e.g., the fact that there are propositions whose truth does not depend on me, the fact that justified beliefs are likely to be true, and, as we will see in §3.4, the fact that the propositions expressed by instances of the disquotation schema are obvious. Some cannot, however. Consider Horwich's deflationary explanation of the general fact

(Success) True beliefs about how to attain our goals tend to facilitate success in achieving them.

Horwich considers a particular example involving a person, Bill. Horwich asks us to suppose that Bill nods because he wants a beer and believes he will get one if he nods. If Bill's belief is true, Bill will get a beer if he nods. So since he nods, he gets what he wants, a beer. Horwich then adds

And this sort of explanation may be universalized to show in general how true beliefs engender successful action. (1990, p. 24)

Gupta (1993b, p. 66) protests that Horwich offers only "an explanation of the instances of [(Success)], not of [(Success)] itself". The best Horwich's theory can offer are explanations for each of the instances of (Success). Generalizations are not logically equivalent to conjunctions of their instances, and so to explain a conjunction of all of the instances of (Success) is not to explain (Success) (Gupta 1993b, p. 63). Similar concerns can be raised concerning any general fact that needs explanation but cannot be explained simply by appealing to unproblematic principles and/or facts of analysis and elucidation. These, let us say, are the *problematic general facts*. Among them are (G5) facts as well as some (G4) facts, e.g.:

(Closure) For all propositions,  $P$ ,  $Q$ ,  $P$  entails  $Q$  and  $P$  is true, only if  $Q$  is true.

Gupta's reasoning would lead to the conclusion that Horwich can only supply explanations for instances of (Closure), not (Closure) itself.

If Gupta is right, it would seem to follow that infinitistic Weak Deflationism would stumble over the explanation of any and every problematic general fact. Such facts, however, would in principle present no essential difficulty for finitistic Weak Deflationism. Let me explain.

The best the *infinitistic* Weak Deflationist can offer by way of an explanation of a problematic general fact is an explanation form, expressed by an explanation schema. Consider (Closure). Using the following unproblematic principles

(PMI) If  $\langle p \rangle$  materially implies  $\langle q \rangle$ , then if  $p$ , then  $q$

(P1) For all propositions,  $P$ ,  $Q$ , if  $P$  entails  $Q$ , then  $P$  materially implies  $Q$

the infinitistic Weak Deflationist can provide the explanation schema (ES):

(ES) 1. If $\langle p \rangle$ entails $\langle q \rangle$ & $\langle p \rangle$ is true, then	Assm., (P1)
$\langle p \rangle$ materially implies $\langle q \rangle$ & $\langle p \rangle$ is true)	
2. Necessarily, $\langle p \rangle$ is true iff $p$	Assm., Weak Defl.
3. If $\langle p \rangle$ entails $\langle q \rangle$ & $\langle p \rangle$ is true, then	1, 2
$\langle p \rangle$ materially implies $\langle q \rangle$ & $p$ )	
4. If $\langle p \rangle$ entails $\langle q \rangle$ & $\langle p \rangle$ is true, then $q$	3, (PMI)
5. Necessarily, $\langle q \rangle$ is true iff $q$	Assm., Weak Defl.
6. If $\langle p \rangle$ entails $\langle q \rangle$ & $\langle p \rangle$ is true, then	4, 5
$\langle q \rangle$ is true	

Because of the infinitary character of (2) and (5) under infinitistic Weak Deflationism, (ES) cannot be transformed into an argument whose conclusion is a universally quantified sentence expressing (Closure).

Finitistic Weak Deflationism, on the other hand, allows for such a transformation. I illustrate with (ES). In addition to (P1), we need two further unproblematic principles concerning entailment and material implication.<sup>34</sup>

(P2) For all propositions,  $P$ ,  $Q$ ,  $\text{CONJ}(\langle P \text{ materially implies } Q \rangle, P)$  entails  $Q$ .

(P3) If  $\text{CONJ}(\langle p \rangle, \langle q \rangle)$  entails  $\langle r \rangle$ , then, if  $p$  and  $q$ , then  $r$ .<sup>35</sup>

The explanation of (Closure) is then formulated as follows:

1. For all $P$ , $Q$ , $\text{CONJ}(\langle P \text{ entails } Q \rangle, \langle P \text{ is true} \rangle)$ entails	Assm., (P1)
$\text{CONJ}(\langle P \text{ materially implies } Q \rangle, \langle P \text{ is true} \rangle)$	
2. For all $P$ , $\text{Tr}(P)$ is necessarily equivalent to $P$	Assm., Weak Defl.
3. For all $P$ , $Q$ , $\text{CONJ}(\langle P \text{ entails } Q \rangle, \langle P \text{ is true} \rangle)$ entails	1, 2
$\text{CONJ}(\langle P \text{ materially implies } Q \rangle, P)$	
4. For all $P$ , $Q$ , $\text{CONJ}(\langle P \text{ entails } Q \rangle, \langle P \text{ is true} \rangle)$ entails $Q$	3, (P2)
5. For all $P$ , $Q$ , $\text{CONJ}(\langle P \text{ entails } Q \rangle, \langle P \text{ is true} \rangle)$ entails $\langle Q \text{ is true} \rangle$	2, 4
6. For all $P$ , $Q$ , if $P$ entails $Q$ and $P$ is true, then $Q$ is true.	5, (P3)

A similar explanation can be formulated for (Success)(see Longer Notes 3). Finitistic Weak Deflationism thus seems not to be subject to Gupta's critique (see Longer Notes 4).

<sup>34</sup> In what follows, for ease of reference, we allow ourselves to use " $\langle P \text{ is } F \rangle$ ", where " $P$ " is a variable, as short for "the Russellian proposition with respect to  $P$  that it is  $F$ ". Thus, where " $P$ " and " $Q$ " are variables, we will use " $\langle P \text{ is true} \rangle$ " in place of " $\text{Tr}(P)$ " and " $\langle P \text{ materially implies } Q \rangle$ " in place of "the Russellian proposition with respect to  $P$ ,  $Q$ , that  $P$  materially implies  $Q$ ".

<sup>35</sup> (P3) is a consequence of Sosa's principle of entailment, (PE).

How should the *infinistic* Weak Deflationist reply to Gupta? The instances of (ES) express explanations that focus on the property of truth and the relation of entailment, and not on whatever particular propositions are special to the conclusion. But is that not what is distinctive of explanations of general facts?<sup>36</sup> I submit that such explanation forms provide acceptable surrogates for explanations of the corresponding general facts. Horwich's explanation of Bill's success in getting a beer clues us to an acceptable surrogate for an explanation of (Success).

Weak Deflationism, then, whether finitistic or infinitistic, need not stumble over the explanation of general facts. I do not claim to have shown that Weak Deflationism is adequate to explain all the general facts that need explaining, but only that the *generality* of such facts presents no problem for Weak Deflationism.

#### 3.4. Does Weak Deflationism have the resources to explain the obviousness of propositions expressed by instances of the schema "*p*" is true iff *p*?

The obviousness of the propositions in question is a *datum* that any theory of truth must account for. Disquotationalists such as Quine take its obviousness to flow from the fact that "truth is disquotation". For the Weak Deflationist, though, truth for sentences is analyzed in such a way that instances of the disquotation schema do not directly follow.

Before trying to give an explanation, we need enlightenment on the *datum* we are being asked to explain. We are to explain the obviousness of propositions such as <"Snow is white" is true iff snow is white>. Obviousness for whom? Such propositions are not obvious to everyone. Knowledge of the *meaning* of "Snow is white" should make it obvious that "Snow is white" is true iff snow is white to anyone who has the concept of truth for sentences. So the task at hand for Weak Deflationism is to explain why it is that, for English sentence *S*, the proposition expressed by the *S*-instance of the disquotation schema will be obvious to those who know *S*'s meaning and who have the concept of truth for sentences.

The Weak Deflationist discharges this task by offering the following schema:

- (i) "*p*" is true iff what "*p*" expresses is true<sup>37</sup> Assm., Weak Deflationism
- (ii) "*p*" expresses <*p*> Assm.

<sup>36</sup> Here we are working with an intuitive notion of "general fact", which does not count facts expressed by sentences of the form "Everyone who is identical to either *a* or *b* is *F*" as general.

<sup>37</sup> (i) is equivalent to

(i) "*p*" is true iff "*p*" expresses a true proposition

on the assumption (which I am making) that acceptable fillings for "*p*" express exactly one proposition.

(iii) “ <i>p</i> ” is true iff $\langle p \rangle$ is true	(i), (ii)
(iv) $\langle p \rangle$ is true iff <i>p</i>	Assm., Weak Deflationism
<hr/>	
(v) “ <i>p</i> ” is true iff <i>p</i>	(iii), (iv)

The Weak Deflationist claims that the propositions expressed by instances of (i) and (iv) will be obvious to anyone who has the concepts needed to entertain them. (i) is the schematic correlate of her *analysis* of truth for sentences, and (iv) expresses a form any instance of which follows from her account of propositional truth. The propositions expressed by instances of (ii) *give* the meaning of English sentences, and so are obvious to those who understand those sentences.

The explanation of the obviousness of propositions expressed by the disquotation schema, then, is essentially this: to know the meaning of a sentence of English is to know the proposition expressed by the corresponding instance of (ii); those who know such a proposition for an English sentence, and have a grasp of truth for sentences as explained by Weak Deflationism, can proceed through an obvious series of deductive steps to arrive at knowledge of the proposition expressed by the instance of the disquotation schema corresponding to the sentence. The claim is not that we English speakers *do* proceed through such steps, but only that we could so proceed should we have need. Thus, the knowledge that “Snow is white” is true iff snow is white is readily available to those who know the meaning of “Snow is white” and who have the concept of truth for sentences.

I note, finally, that the finitistic Weak Deflationist may transform the schemata (i)–(v) into a formulation of an explanation of the general fact that every proposition expressed by an instance of the disquotation schema is obvious to whomever understands the corresponding English sentence and has a grasp of truth for sentences.

#### 4. Conclusion

Some important issues concerning truth have not been discussed here, e.g., the causal relevance or irrelevance of the property of truth, the phenomena of vagueness, the liar-like paradoxes, and non-factualist treatments of ethical and other discourses. Nor have I presented a theory of meaning in terms of which to analyze truth for sentences, utterances, and beliefs. I claim only to have given good reasons for thinking that Weak Deflationism captures what seems right in both correspondence and deflationist theories, and is worthy of further examination.<sup>38</sup>

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*Longer Notes*

1. The equivalence forms for beliefs and utterances are not as easily characterized. But the following might point in the right direction. We work with functions UG, IF\*, BEL, and IFF\*, where these are partly characterizable as follows.

UG is a function taking properties into propositions: UG(being round if red) = <Whatever is red is round>. IF\* is a function that takes pairs of properties into properties: IF\*(being red, being round) is the property of being round if red. BEL is a function taking propositions into properties: BEL(<Snow is white>) = the property of being a belief that snow is white. IFF\* is a function from pairs of properties and propositions into properties: IFF\*(being red, <Snow is white>) = the property of being red iff snow is white. Given all this, we may say:

$E\text{-belief}(P) = \text{UG}(\text{IF}^*(\text{BEL}(P)), \text{IFF}^*(\text{Truth for beliefs}, P))$

(An example: the value of E-belief for <Snow is white> is the proposition that everything is such that if it is a belief that snow is white then it is true iff snow is white.)

$E\text{-utt}(S) = \text{UG}(\text{IF}^*(\text{Utt}(S)), \text{IFF}^*(\text{Truth for utterances}, \text{EXP}(S)))$ .

(An example: the value of E-utt for “Snow is white” is the proposition that everything is such that if it is an utterance of “Snow is white” then it is true iff snow is white.)

2. In a recent paper, Davidson (1996, p. 273) writes:

Why, though, does Horwich not try generalizing his schema by quantifying over propositions? The answer should be: because then we would have to view ordinary sentences as singular terms *referring* to propositions, not as *expressing* propositions.

But why should this be? In general, one who accepts propositions as values of objectual variables of quantification need not regard them as the referents of sentences. Perhaps Davidson’s claim is that there is no way to generalize Horwich’s schema without using sentential variables, so that the only eligible generalization would be “For all  $p$ , < $p$ > is true iff  $p$ ”. If this is his claim, it is falsified by (FMT).

Davidson then turns to what he calls the “crux”:

How are we to understand phrases like “the proposition that Socrates is wise”? In giving a standard account of the semantics of the sentence “Socrates is wise”, we make use of what the name “Socrates” names, and of the entities of which the predicate “is wise” is true. But how can we use these semantic features of the sentence “Socrates is wise” to yield the reference of “the proposition that Socrates is wise”? (1996, pp. 273–4)

These are difficult questions, and to answer them adequately one would need to provide a semantic theory grounded in a theory of propositions. For our purposes, though, it may be enough to say this: for any unproblematic declarative sentence of English,  $S$ , the singular term resulting from the application of the operator “the

<sup>38</sup> I thank Ernest Sosa for valuable discussion and encouragement.

proposition that... ” to *S* refers to the entity which is expressed by *S*. Thus, there are features of the semantics of “Socrates is wise” that can be used to yield the reference of “the proposition that Socrates is wise”.

3. First, (Success) must be formulated more precisely. Horwich and Gupta seem to think of it as follows:

(Success) For all propositions  $P, Q$ , and individuals  $x$ ,  $\text{CONJ}(\langle x \text{ believes IF}(P, Q) \rangle, \langle \text{IF}(P, Q) \text{ is true} \rangle, \langle x \text{ wants } Q \rangle, \langle x \text{ brings about } P \text{ because } x \text{ has this belief/desire pair} \rangle)$  entails  $Q$ .

A principle (P4) is employed.

(P4) For all  $P, Q$ ,  $\text{CONJ}(\text{IF}(P, Q), P)$  entails  $Q$ .

(P4) is equivalent to (P3), given the unproblematic assumption that for all  $P, Q$ ,  $\text{IF}(P, Q)$  is necessarily equivalent to  $\langle P \text{ materially implies } Q \rangle$ . The explanation can then be formulated as follows. (For convenience, we treat CONJ as if it took  $n$ -tuples of propositions and returned “their conjunction”.)

- |   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| 1. For all $P, Q, x$ , $\text{CONJ}(\langle x \text{ believes IF}(P, Q) \rangle,$   | Assm.,            |
| $\langle \text{IF}(P, Q) \text{ is true} \rangle, \langle x \text{ wants } Q \rangle,$  | fact of logic     |
| $\langle x \text{ brings about } P \text{ because... } \rangle)$ entails  |                   |
| $\text{CONJ}(\langle \text{IF}(P, Q) \text{ is true} \rangle, \langle x \text{ brings about } P \text{ because... } \rangle)$ |                   |
| 2. For all $P, Q, x,$   | Assm., unprob-    |
| $\langle x \text{ brings about } P \text{ because... } \rangle$ entails $P$   | matic resource    |
| 3. For all $P, Q, x$ , $\text{CONJ}(\text{IF}(P, Q),$   | 2, P4             |
| $\langle x \text{ brings about } P \text{ because... } \rangle)$ entails $Q$  |                   |
| 4. For all $P$ , $\text{Tr}(P)$ is necessarily equivalent to $P$  | Assm., Weak Defl. |
| 5. For all $P, Q, x$ , $\text{CONJ}(\langle \text{IF}(P, Q) \text{ is true} \rangle,$   | 3, 4              |
| $\langle x \text{ brings about } P \text{ because... } \rangle)$ entails $Q$  |                   |
| <hr/>   |                   |
| 6. For all $P, Q, x$ , $\text{CONJ}(\langle x \text{ believes IF}(P, Q) \rangle,$   | 1, 5              |
| $\langle \text{IF}(P, Q) \text{ is true} \rangle, \langle x \text{ wants } Q \rangle,$  |                   |
| $\langle x \text{ brings about } P \text{ because... } \rangle)$ entails $Q$ .  |                   |

4. In fact, it seems there is a more general procedure that can be employed by finitistic Weak Deflationists for formulating explanations for general facts. This procedure is to be used when the general fact in need of explanation cannot be explained on the basis of the fact that some property is analyzable partly in terms of truth, but can be formulated by a sentence in prenex normal form in which the primary connective of the embedded open sentence is either the material conditional or material biconditional. The procedure is as follows.

Begin with a prenex sentence that expresses the general fact. Call this sentence EM (for “*explanandum*”). From EM, form its “propositional” equivalent, PEQ. This is done by first substituting, as is appropriate, the predicates “materially implies” or “is materially equivalent to” for the primary connective of the embedded open sentence, and then substituting appropriate singular terms referring to propositions for the (open) sentences flanking the main connective of the embedded sentence. Next, in PEQ, for every expression “ $\text{Tr}(\dots)$ ”, substitute “...”. This leaves one with a sentence ES (for “*explanans*”). Finally, formulate the explanation of the general fact by constructing a derivation of EM from the premises ES and PEQ, together with a premise expressing an immediate consequence of Weak Deflationism and whatever unproblematic premises are needed. Here is simple illustration. The fact to be explained is the fact that for all  $P, Q$ , if  $\text{CONJ}(P, Q)$  is true, then  $P$  is true.

1. For all  $P, Q$ ,  $\text{CONJ}(P, Q)$  materially implies  $P$  (This is ES)

- |  |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|
|  | Assm., fact of logic        |
| 2. For all $P$ , $\text{Tr}(P)$ is necessarily equivalent to $P$                     | Assm., Weak<br>Deflationism |
| 3. For all $P, Q$ , $\text{Tr}(\text{CONJ}(P, Q))$ materially implies $\text{Tr}(P)$ | (This is PEQ) 1, 2          |
| 4. For all $P, Q$ , if $\text{CONJ}(P, Q)$ is true, then $P$ is true.                | (This is EM) 3, (PMI)       |
- If necessary, the Weak Deflationist will need to provide additional premises to support ES.

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