Deflationism

Dorit Bar-On and Keith Simmons, UNC-Chapel Hill

There is a core metaphysical claim shared by all deflationists: truth is not a genuine, substantive property. But anyone who denies that truth is a genuine property must still make sense of our pervasive truth *talk*. In addressing questions about the meaning and function of 'true', deflationists engage in a *linguistic* or *semantic* project, a project that typically goes hand-in-hand with a deflationary account of the *concept* of truth. A thoroughgoing deflationary account of truth will go beyond the negative metaphysical claim about truth and the positive linguistic account of the word 'true': it will also maintain that the concept of truth is a 'thin' concept that bears no substantive conceptual connections to other concepts to which it is traditionally tied.

These deflationary claims can seem startling. Consider the fundamental role that truth plays in the tradition. As a dyadic relation that obtains, or fails to obtain, between our thoughts and utterances on the one hand and the world on the other, it is a basic component of the familiar triangle of mind, language and world. It is a crucial measure of the success of our mental and verbal acts, something to aim for in our transactions with the world. It exhibits deep connections to a host of basic notions in our conceptual scheme: meaning, belief, assertion, validity, verification, explanation, practical success, and more besides. It is central to the very characterization of central philosophical debates about, for example, scientific realism, non-cognitivism in ethics, paradox, and vagueness. Once truth is deflated, the philosophical landscape is transformed.

I. Varieties of deflationism

<u>Disquotationalism</u>   According to disquotationalism, a view championed by Quine (1970: esp. 10-13) and more recently by Field (1994), there is no more to the truth of, say, the sentence 'aardvarks amble' than is given by the disquotation of its quote name. One can think of the so-called *T-sentence*

>   'aardvarks amble' is true if and only if aardvarks amble

as a partial definition of 'true': the biconditional defines 'true' with respect to the sentence 'aardvarks amble'. And all such T-sentences together constitute an exhaustive and complete definition of 'true'.[1]

The idea behind the disquotational view is sometimes put this way: to say that a sentence is true is really just an indirect way of saying the sentence itself. To say that the sentence 'snow is white' is true is just an indirect way of saying that snow is white. This prompts the question: why not dispense with the truth predicate in favor of direct talk about the world? The disquotationalist will respond by pointing to generalizations like "Every sentence of the form 'p or not p' is true", and truth ascriptions such as "What Joe said is true". In the former case, we could dispense with the truth predicate here if we could produce an infinite conjunction of sentences of the form 'p or not p':   "Aardvarks amble or aardvarks do not amble, and bison bathe or bison don't bathe, and ...".   But we cannot produce such an infinite conjunction, and instead we achieve the desired effect by generalizing over sentences, and then bringing those sentences back down to earth by means of the truth predicate.[2] In cases like "What Joe said is true", the target utterance is picked out by means other than a quote-name. Indeed, the ascription may be *blind*: the

2

speaker may not know what Joe said, but have every confidence in Joe's truthfulness.   In

these cases, 'true' serves to express an infinite disjunction:

What Joe said = 's_1' and s_1, or

What Joe said = 's_2' and s_2,   or

…. ,

where 's_1', 's_2', … are quote-names of the sentences of Joe's language.   So the

disquotationalist takes the truth predicate to be a logical device: a device for disquotation,

and for expressing infinite conjunctions and disjunctions.

It is clear that according to the disquotationalist, there is no robust *property* of truth.

The term 'true' is not a typical property-ascribing predicate like 'triangular' or 'ripe'.

Consider a natural disquotational definition of 'true' for a given language:

(DisquT)   x is true iff (x='s_1' & s_1) or (x='s_2' & s_2) or ... ,

where 's_1', 's_2', ... abbreviate sentences of the language.[3] Tarski's T-sentences ('s_1' is true iff

s_1, 's_2' is true iff s_2, ….) are easy logical consequences of DisquT. (So the definition

satisfies Tarski's condition of material adequacy on a definition of truth.) If we substitute

for 'x' the sentence abbreviated by 's_1', we will find that 's_1' is true iff s_1. Similarly, 's_2' is

true iff s_2.   The truth of s_1 and the truth of s_2 have no more in common than the sentences

s_1 and s_2. There is no property of truth that they share.

And there is no more to our understanding of the *concept* of truth than an

understanding of the disquotational role of the truth-predicate. Since the concept of truth is

a 'thin' concept in this sense, then it can make no substantive contribution to our

understanding of assertion, meaning, belief, or any other concept in this cluster.

Explanations of these notions that make use of the truth-predicate can avail themselves only of its role as a logical device of disquotation.

In this vein, Field observes that it may *seem* as though we need to appeal to truth to characterize the realist doctrine that "there might be (…) sentences of our languages that are true that we will never have reason to believe" (where the realist is contrasted with the anti-realist, who identifies truth with some notion of justifiability). However, Field claims that the role of truth in such a characterization is "purely logical" (1994:). But for our finite limitations, the realist doctrine *could* be expressed without the use of a truth-predicate via an infinite disjunction, where each disjunct is of the form "*p* and we will never have reason to believe *p*." And Field thinks that the appeal to truth in general claims, for example that there is "a 'norm' of asserting and believing the truth", is merely disquotational (*ibid.*). The idea is that such general claims are in effect abbreviations for infinite conjunctions.

<u>Minimalism</u>   In contrast to disquotationalism, Horwich's *minimal theory of truth* takes propositions, rather than sentences or utterances, to be the primary truth-bearers.[4] The axioms of Horwich's minimal theory are all the infinitely many instances of the equivalence schema

The proposition that p is true if and only if p,

such as

The proposition that snow is white is true if and only if snow is white.

According to Horwich, these axioms together constitute a complete theory of truth; no more needs to be added. The denominalizing function of 'true' embodied in the axioms

exhausts what there is to be said by way of explaining truth.   Like the disquotationalist,
Horwich claims that "the truth predicate exists solely for the sake of a certain logical need",
that is, to express what otherwise could only be expressed by infinite conjunctions and
disjunctions (1990: 2-6).

The minimal theory, says Horwich, has the virtue of simplicity, providing an
account of truth in isolation from affiliated phenomena such as verification, practical
success, reference, meaning, validity and assertion; it is "*a theory of truth that is a theory of
nothing else*" (1990: 26).   By the same token, if we do resort to truth-talk in our explication
of other concepts, we cannot expect the notion of truth to contribute to our understanding of
these concepts beyond what is afforded by the minimal theory, since

> all of the facts whose expression involves the truth predicate may be explained …
> by assuming no more about truth than instances of the equivalence schema. (1990:
> 24)

For example, consider the following "fact about truth":

(1) True beliefs engender successful action.[5]

On its face, (1) seems to forge substantial links between truth, belief and action. But
according to Horwich, this appearance is misleading. We need only a minimal account of
truth to explain the role of truth in this thesis. Horwich considers the following instance:

> If all Bill wants is to have a beer, and he thinks that merely by nodding he will get
> one, then, if his belief is true, he will get what he wants.

At one point in his explanation, Horwich makes "the familiar psychological assumption"
that if one has a desire, and believes that a certain action will satisfy that desire, one will
perform the action.[6]   That is, conceptual connections are assumed between belief, desire
and action. But *all* that is assumed about truth in Horwich's explanation is its
denominalizing role. In the course of the explanation, we move from "The proposition that

if Bill nods then Bill has a beer is true" to "If Bill nods then Bill has a beer"; and a little later we move from "Bill has a beer" to "The proposition that Bill has a beer is true". These are the only steps where truth has a role to play, and it is the role given to it by the equivalence schema. (A disquotational analysis will run parallel, in terms of truth's disquotational role.)

This style of explanation, says Horwich, may be universalized to show how in general true beliefs lead to successful action. And beyond that, it extends to all other facts involving 'true'. We can, presumably, learn more about the concepts of belief, desire and action by an improved understanding of their inter-relations. But no such improvement is possible in the case of truth: the equivalence schema exhausts all that the notion of truth can contribute to our understanding of any other concept. In this sense, truth is isolated from other concepts. This is so as much for the disquotationalist as it is for Horwich.

The redundancy theory   According to the disquotationalist and Horwich, 'true' is a genuine predicate which has a distinctive use. But according to a more radical version of deflationism, the redundancy theory of truth, the term 'true' is entirely dispensable. Ramsey writes:

> [I]t is evident that 'It is true that Caesar was murdered' means no more than that Caesar was murdered. (Ramsey 1927: 106)

Truth is less easily eliminated from generalizations like 'Everything the Pope says is true', but, unlike Horwich[7] and the disquotationalists, Ramsey maintains that it can be done:

> [S]uppose we put it thus 'For all p, if he asserts p, p is true', then we see that the propositional function p is true is simply the same as p, as e.g. its value 'Caesar was murdered is true' is the same as 'Caesar was murdered'. (*ibid.*)

Ramsey dismisses any problem about what it is for a proposition or judgment to be true –

just make the judgment. For Ramsey, the real question is what is involved in making a

judgment in the first place. Ramsey's essentially behavioristic approach to belief and

judgment makes connections to various concepts, including *use* and *commitment*; but as far

as truth is concerned, there is no place in this account for anything but the thinnest concept

of truth.

<u>The prosentential theory of truth</u>   For Ramsey, 'true' is an eliminable predicate. For the

prosententialist, 'true' is not even a predicate.[8]   Consider the discourse:

 Mary: Chicago is large

 John: If that is true, it probably has a large airport.

In John's utterance, the expression 'that is true' is a *prosentence,* which shares its content

with its antecedent, namely 'Chicago is large'. Prosentences are analogous to pronouns:

just as 'She stopped' differs from 'Jane stopped' in its explicit dependence on a token of

'Jane' as its anaphoric antecedent, so the prosentence 'That is true' differs from 'Chicago is

large' because the former is dependent on the latter as its anaphoric antecedent. But there

is no difference of semantic content between the prosentence and its anaphoric antecedent.

The occurrence of 'that is true' in John's utterance exemplifies a *prosentence of laziness*:

John avoids the repetition of 'Chicago is large' by way of a prosentence with the same

content. There are also *quantificational prosentences*. For example, the generalization

'Everything the Pope says is true' is analyzed along the following lines: 'For anything one

can say, if the Pope says it, it is true'.   Here 'it is true' is a quantificational prosentence,

anaphorically tied to each of the Pope's utterances.   Every instance of the generalization

7

(say, 'Given "2+2=4", if the Pope says it then it is true') – is taken to contain a lazy prosentence, and treated accordingly.   Most occurrences of 'true' are quantificational, despite surface appearances. For example, 'The first sentence Bismarck uttered in 1865 is true' is construed as a quantified conditional of the form 'For any sentence, if it is the first sentence Bismarck uttered in 1865, then it is true', where 'it is true' is a prosentence of quantification. Whether lazy or quantificational, the prosentence itself has no internal semantic structure, and so 'true' is a syncategorematic fragment of prosentences. On the prosentential view, 'true' does not survive as a discrete term that could denote a property of truth or express a concept of truth.[9]

Illocutionary deflationism   Agreeing with Ramsey that the forms 'p' and 'the proposition that p is true' are equivalent in content, Ayer goes on to isolate a distinctive *illocutionary* role for 'true':

> [T]o say that a proposition is true is just to assert it, and to say that it is false is just to assert its contradictory. And this indicates that the terms 'true' and 'false' connote nothing, but function in the sentence simply as marks of assertion and denial. (1946: 88-9)

Strawson's variant of the redundancy theory identifies a performative role for 'true': we use 'true' not to describe sentences or propositions, but rather to perform speech acts such as endorsing, agreeing, and conceding.[10] Given an illocutionary account of truth, there is no property or concept of truth to be investigated; as Ayer puts it, "there can be no sense in asking us to analyze the concept of 'truth'" (*ibid.*).

II. Is deflationism self-defeating?

It is sometimes argued that deflationism is self-defeating. One version of the argument is alluded to by Horwich: if we grant that 'true' is a "perfectly good English

predicate" and further that "one might well take this to be a conclusive criterion of standing

for a property of *some* sort" (1990: 38), then it might seem that the deflationist's distinctive

metaphysical claim, that truth is not a property, is undermined. This argument seems to

have little force. It has none against the prosentential theory, according to which 'true' is

not a predicate. Though for the redundancy theorist and the illocutionary deflationist 'true'

is a predicate, its application to a sentence (or proposition) says nothing *about* the sentence,

but either says just what the original sentence says or adds illocutionary force. As for the

disquotationalist's treatment of 'true', we saw above that it does not yield a property shared

by all truths. For his part, Horwich takes 'true' to attribute not a "*complex* or *naturalistic*

property" but a "*logical* property" – tied, presumably, to the denominalizing role of 'true'.[11]

Boghossian has argued that the deflationist's very claim about truth is self-

defeating.[12] Consider the deflationist thesis, couched in terms of reference:

(1) The predicate 'true' does not refer to a property.

Boghossian distinguishes between deflationary and robust conceptions of reference. On a

deflationary understanding of 'refers', a term refers to a property provided it has the syntax

of a predicate and has a role in the language; on a robust understanding, 'refers' expresses

some sort of objective relation between predicates and language-independent properties.

With respect to (1), Boghossian argues that the notion of predicate-reference must be

robust, since the deflationist is denying that there is any substantive objective relation

between 'true' and some language-independent property.   Boghossian puts it this way:

> The denial that a given predicate refers to, or expresses, a property, only makes
> sense on a *robust* construal of *predicate reference*; on a deflationary construal, there
> is, simply, no space for denying, of a significant, predicative expression, that it
> expresses a property. (1990: 181)

So in particular (1) presupposes a robust notion of reference. Boghossian goes on to say

that there's a platitude connecting reference and truth, namely, that

> 'x is P' is true if and only if the object denoted by 'x' has the property expressed by
> 'P'. (p.181)

So since truth is tied in this way to a robust concept of reference, truth itself is robust; that

is, the deflationary conception of truth expressed by (1) presupposes a robust notion of

truth. Boghossian concludes: "So the denial that truth is robust attempted in (1) can

succeed only if it fails." (1990: 181)

However, observe that (1) formulates deflationism about truth in *semantic* terms -

in terms of reference. But a deflationist about semantic notions need not be forced to

accept such a formulation. The deflationist may make her negative metaphysical claim -

that truth is not a substantial property – without employing a robust notion of reference.

And the leading deflationary accounts of 'true', as we have seen, make no use at all of the

notion of reference. The deflationist's metaphysical and linguistic (and conceptual) theses

may be expressed independently of any robust notion of reference.[13]

III. Problems of Stateability

Whether or not deflationism is self-defeating, there are difficulties in the very

formulation of certain deflationary theories. Consider disquotationalism. We can present

disquotationalism either via the infinitary definition DisquT, or as an axiomatic theory,

where the infinitely many axioms are the T-sentences (which do not form a recursively

enumerable set).

The infinitary nature of these accounts may give us pause. We might well be

suspicious of a theory that cannot be finitely or recursively stated. Further, if a proper

understanding of 'true' consists in an understanding of DisquT or the T-sentences, then this

10

understanding would require "massive conceptual resources", to use a phrase of Gupta's (19XX:) – we would have to understand *every* sentence of English (or whatever the target language may be).

Can a finite formulation be found? We might turn to this finitely stated schematic definition:

$$\text{x is a true sentence iff } \exists p(x='p' \And p).$$

Obvious problems arise if we interpret the quantifier objectually. (There is the problem of quantification into quotes. And the string 'x="p" & p' is grammatically ill-formed, since the variable 'p', taken as an objectual variable, cannot serve as a conjunct.) But the move to a substitutional reading has is threatened by circularity: substitutional quantification is typically characterized in terms of truth (more specifically, in terms of true substitution instances).[14]

A disquotationalist might abandon a direct definition of truth in favour of a recursive account, according to which 'true' is defined Tarski-style in terms of the more basic notions of reference and satisfaction. Given a language with a finite stock of names and predicates, reference may be disquotationally defined by a finite list of sentences of the form '"a" refers to a', and satisfaction by a finite list of sentences of the form 'x satisfies "F" iff x is F'. In this way, reference and satisfaction are finitely defined - and so truth is finitely defined. But such a recursive disquotationalist is restricted to languages whose sentences have the appropriate kind of logical form. And there is an array of truths that are notoriously hard to fit into the Tarskian mold: belief attributions, counterfactuals, modal asssertions, statements of probability, and so on.[15]

In short, there is a question about the very *statement* of the disquotational theory. The same question can be raised about Horwich's minimal theory of truth, since it too is infinitary in nature. Horwich *accepts* that the theory cannot be explicitly formulated, for two reasons: first, the axioms that we could formulate are infinite in number and so cannot be written down; and second, there are some propositions we cannot express, and so their corresponding axioms are also inexpressible.[16] Moreover, Horwich rejects the idea of a formulation of the minimal theory in terms of a single principle

For any x, x is true if and only if Σp (x=the proposition that p & p)

where the existential quantifier is understood substitutionally, again because substitutional quantification is standardly defined in terms of truth.[17]

But if neither disquotationalism nor minimalism can be finitely stated, if all we can formulate is a finite subset of the infinitely many individual axioms, then it seems that any formulation of these theories will be irremediably partial. Moreover, the theories describe only the conditions under which a finite subset of *particular* sentences or propositions are true – the theories are piecemeal, and do not include any universal generalizations about truth. Consequently, Gupta has argued, minimalism is unable to explain our acceptance of such generalizations as 'Only propositions are true'? (And since the theory doesn't tell us what isn't true, it doesn't rule out, for example, the absurdity that the Moon is true.) An adequate explanation of a generalization about truth would require its derivation from the minimal theory – but it is a logical fact that there can be no derivation of a universal generalization from the set of the *particular* propositions that comprise the minimal theory.[18]

Hill has taken Gupta's objection to heart and proposed a finitely axiomatized version of minimalism.[19] Hill's *simple substitutional theory of truth* is composed of just one axiom, a universal generalization:

(S)   For any object x, x is true if and only if $\Sigma p(x = $ the proposition that p, and p).[20]

The substitutional quantifier here cannot of course be characterized in terms of truth. Hill's characterization proceeds in terms of rules of inference, modeled on the elimination and introduction rules for the standard objectual quantifiers.[21] Thus the substitutional quantifiers are defined by describing their logical behavior. Despite being composed of just one axiom, Hill's theory yields as logical consequences all instances of 'The proposition that p is true if and only if p', and generalizations about truth such as (2).[22]

IV. Problems of Scope

Suppose that on the authority of others I believe that Dmitri is always right, though I speak no Russian. I say, with apparent understanding, 'What Dmitri says is true'. But according to disquotationalism, understanding what I have said is just a matter of understanding what Dmitri said; and since I cannot understand what Dmitri said, I cannot understand what I have said.

Disquotationalists typically restrict the scope of their theory to the sentences of a given natural language such as English.[23] And since an English speaker will not understand every sentence of English, some disquotationalists recognize the need to go further and restrict the theory to the sentences of a given speaker's idiolect (those sentences that the speaker understands). According to Field, for example, a person can meaningfully apply 'true' only to utterances she understands; Field suggests, as a heuristic, that when I say a sentence is true, I am saying that it is true-as-I-understand-it. Field characterizes *pure*

disquotational truth in terms of a strong equivalence: my claim that utterance u is true (that is, true-as-I-understand-it) is *cognitively equivalent* to u (as I understand it). So the T-sentence

(S) 'Aardvarks amble' is true iff aardvarks amble

expresses a cognitive equivalence - according to Field, a T-sentence holds "of conceptual necessity", and enjoys an "axiomatic status". (1994: 258, 267)

Relativized to a speaker's idiolect, DisquT and the T-sentences will not outrun the speaker's conceptual resources. But the restriction to idiolect is very strong. One may feel that we are a long way from our commonsensical notion of truth. After all, I do apply 'true' to sentences beyond those of my actual idiolect. I do it when I say "Most of what Socrates said was true", even though I have little or no understanding of ancient Greek. I do it when I allow that there are true sentences of my language (English) that I do not understand. And I do it when I express my modal intuition that 'snow is white' might have meant that grass is red – indeed, this intuition might well suggest that the T-sentence (S) is only contingently true, and not a cognitive equivalence or conceptual necessity.

According to Field, we should be methodological deflationists, taking pure disquotational truth to be the fundamental truth concept as long as this adequately serves our practical and theoretical purposes. The present concern is that pure disquotational truth is too restricted to serve these purposes. The challenge, then, is to find a way of supplementing the basic notion of pure disquotational truth by other notions of truth that remain suitably deflationary and allay the concern.[24]

In sharp contrast to disquotationalism, Horwich's minimalism does not restrict the scope of 'true' to a particular language or idiolect: 'true' applies to *all* propositions,

expressed in *any* language.   To accommodate propositions that are not yet expressible,

Horwich supposes that every proposition is expressed by a sentence in some *possible*

language. Horwich also assumes that whatever can be expressed in some possible

language can be said in some possible extension of English. So in order to encompass all

propositions we need only consider possible extensions of English.[25] Acceptable

substituends for the occurrences of 'p' in the schema 'The proposition that p is true iff p' are

sentences of English, actual *and possible*.   So Horwich's minimal theory is composed of

infinitely many axioms, infinitely many of which we cannot formulate or understand. We

could hardly be further removed from the restriction to speakers' idiolects.   Clearly,

understanding 'true' cannot be a matter of understanding all the axioms of the minimal

theory. According to Horwich, our understanding of 'true' consists in the disposition to

accept apriori any instantiation of the schema 'The proposition that p is true if and only if

p'.[26] This disposition provides the best explanation of our overall use of the term 'true'. So,

by appeal to the use theory of meaning, Horwich maintains that the meaning of 'true' is

constituted by this disposition. This provides the truth predicate with a fixed meaning, even

when it is applied to propositions that we cannot formulate or understand. And an

understanding of 'true' does not require massive conceptual resources.[27]

 We can now see how Horwich addresses the issues that confronted the

disquotationalist. Sentences beyond a speaker's idiolect present no special problem,

because 'true' applies to all propositions, and in particular to all those expressed in foreign

languages. And there seems less room for controversy about the modal status of

 (P) The proposition that aardvarks amble is true iff aardvarks amble.

It seems plausible that (P) is necessary, since propositions wear their meanings on their sleeves, or perhaps *are* meanings.

<h2 style="text-align:center"><u>V. Presuppositionless truth?</u></h2>

Horwich says, as we saw, that minimalism is a theory of truth and nothing else.

Hill writes:

> If minimalism is correct, then there is no particular set of concepts that one must acquire prior to acquiring the concept of truth … … minimalism represents the concept of truth as autonomous and presuppositionless. (Hill 2002, p.4)

According to 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: 424)

So it may seem that deflationism provides a "presuppositionless" account of truth. As Hill puts it: "[a] theory that explains truth and other semantic concepts in terms of a logical device is paradigmatically deflationary" (2002: 23). No weighty semantic, linguistic or psychological notions figure in the deflationary story, or so it may seem.

But consider again the axioms of Horwich's minimal theory. They comprise all the instances of the schema

> The proposition that p is true if and only if p.

Instances of this schematic generalization are obtained by replacing the two occurrences of 'p' by tokens of an actual or possible English sentence. We may feel some discomfort here: the tokens are placed in two quite different contexts. The first token forms part of a referring term, the term 'the proposition that p'. The second constitutes the right hand side of the biconditional. With Davidson, we may wonder how these two appearances are

connected.[28] At any rate, it is clear that certain conditions must be placed on such an

instantiation. We can list four:

(i) each 'p' is replaced with tokens of an (actual or possible) English sentence,

(ii) these tokens are given the same meaning or interpretation,

(iii) under that interpretation they express a proposition,

and

(iv) the terms 'that' and 'proposition' are given their English meanings.

Since a fully explicit formulation of the minimal theory must include these

conditions, the very statement of Horwich's minimal theory is shot through with semantical

concepts and talk of sentence-tokens. This may raise two concerns. First, since talk of

sentence-tokens is unavoidable anyway, might it not be advisable to work with sentence

tokens (or token utterances) all along? Why not be more economical and adopt the schema

'p' is true iff p,

constrained by conditions (i) and (ii)? This avoids the appeal to propositions, which will

come as a relief to anyone who finds them suspect or mysterious.[29]

The second concern is prompted by the observation that when we specify the

axioms of the minimal theory we must employ a number of semantical concepts: the notion

of a *language* (specifically, English), the notion of an *interpretation*, the relation of

expressing, and, of course, the notion of a *proposition*. Since the formulation of the

minimal theory of truth itself requires these notions, it is no longer at all clear that the

minimal theory of truth is as innocent of involvement with semantic and linguistic notions

– as "presuppositionless" - as its proponents claim.[30] The difficulty here is not unique to

minimalists. Though disquotationalists do not trade in propositions and the expressing

relation, they too cannot dispense with semantic notions in a fully explicit statement of their account.   Given the disquotational schema

'p' is true if and only if p,

conditions (i) and (ii) must be specified in order to obtain appropriate instances.

VI.   Truth and other concepts

If the notion of *meaning* and its cognates are needed for the formulation of minimalism and disquotationalism, then truth appears not be the autonomous, presuppositionless notion the deflationist says it is.   And deflationists face a further challenge here: to explain the notion of meaning independently of the notion of truth, on pain of circularity.   This is a stiff challenge, for it is a widespread view that the meaning of a sentence is given, at least in part, by its *truth*-conditions.   The challenge generalizes to other notions, since truth is standardly tied to other central concepts and philosophical claims – consider, for example, the claim that *to assert is to present as true*, or the claim that *evaluative statements are not truth-apt*.

Now deflationists typically focus their attention on sentences like 'Fermat's last theorem is true', 'What John said yesterday is true', and 'Everything Gandhi said is true' (or the propositions expressed by these sentences). These sentences do not directly present the evaluated sentences, unlike '"Penguins waddle" is true'; instead, the evaluated sentences are indirectly referred to, or belong to a domain that is quantified over. In all these cases, truth applies to sentences (or the propositions they express), whether they are directly presented, referred to indirectly, or quantified over. Call such applications of the concept of truth *first-order*.

Deflationists tend to be concerned almost exclusively with first-order uses of truth. But there are other uses of the concept of truth that are not first-order – uses that are more reflective or theoretical or *second-order*. When we say "Meaning is given by truth-conditions" or "To assert is to present as true" or "Evaluative statements are not truth-apt", we are not calling any specific sentence true, nor are we making oblique reference to some set of sentences and saying of its members that they are true. Rather, we are identifying conceptual connections between truth and other notions. Truth appears to have a substantive explanatory role in these cases, an important role in the explanation of assertion, meaning, evaluative statements. But according to deflationists, this appearance is illusory. For the minimalist and the disquotationalist, the role of 'true' is strictly limited to its disquotational or denominalizing function – recall Horwich's treatment of *True beliefs engender successful action*, or Field's characterization of the realist doctrine. And if 'true' is redundant, or a syncategorematic ingredient of prosentences, or merely adds illocutionary force, it will be quite unsuited to articulate substantial conceptual connections. Can the deflationist maintain the thesis that, despite appearances, truth is explanatorily inert? We consider three cases: meaning, assertion, and truth-aptness.

(a) Meaning   Since Davidson (1967), it has been widely accepted that at least part of what constitutes the meaning of a sentence is its *truth condition*. The condition under which 'Worms wriggle' is true – the worldly condition of wriggling worms – is at least in part constitutive of the meaning of the sentence. Davidson proposed that a theory of meaning for a language L could be given by a Tarskian truth theory for L, which yields as theorems biconditionals of the form

s is true iff p,

where 's' is a mentioned sentence of L and 'p' is a used sentence of the theorist's language that specifies s's truth-condition. In the special case of a theory of meaning for, say, English that is given *in* English, the theorems will be the T-sentences of English. Thus, for the sentence 'Worms wriggle' the meaning-giving theorem will be its T-sentence:

'Worms wriggle' is true iff worms wriggle.

Deflationism is often taken to be incompatible with a Davidsonian truth-condition theory of meaning. Following Dummett (1959), several authors identify a vicious circularity in the attempt to use Tarskian T-sentences as meaning-giving while at the same time holding that the T-sentences exhaust all there is to say about the concept of truth.[31] If, as deflationists claim, the truth predicate is just a logical device, and speaking of the truth of a sentence S is just a way of saying what S says, then the meaning of 'S is true' is parasitic on the meaning of S. But then it would seem circular to specify the meaning of 'S' in terms of the condition under which S is true. Or, as Horwich puts it, "knowledge of the truth condition of a sentence cannot simultaneously constitute *both* our knowledge of its meaning *and* our grasp of *truth* for the sentence" (1990: 71). Field goes as far as to characterize the main idea behind deflationism as the idea that "what plays a central role in meaning and content not include truth conditions" (Field 1994: 253).

Both deflationists and truth condition theorists make theoretical use of the Tarskian truth schema. But the status they assign to its instances is very different. For the Davidsonian, the T-sentence itself is *informative*, because it reveals a key meaning property of the sentence, namely its truth condition. And it is *contingent*, since

the quoted sentence might have had a different truth-condition (and thus a different meaning). For the deflationist, T-sentences are neither informative nor contingent, but are necessary and apriori; together they constitute a *definition* of 'true'.

However, the deflationist must recognize at least this much contingency in the use of the T-schema. Appending 'is true' to the sentence 'Worms wriggle' may be just another way of speaking of the wriggling of worms, but only *given what that sentence means*. In a world where crickets chirp and worms wriggle, and where 'Worms wriggle' means what our English sentence 'Crickets croak' now means, the T-sentence '"Worms wriggle" is true iff worms wriggle' (as understood by *us*) is false, since the mentioned sentence on the left hand side is false at that world, while the used sentence on the right hand side is still true.[32] To ensure that the truth schema only has instances that are necessarily true, one must find a way to guarantee that the quoted sentence on the left hand side has a fixed meaning across possible worlds. Thus, we should think of the right-to-left direction of the T-biconditional as follows:

> Given that 'Worms wriggle' means that worms wriggle, if worms wriggle, then 'Worms wriggle' is true.

But this means that we must recognize meaning as an 'independent variable' that factors into the T-schema. 'Worms wriggle' is true, given how the world is, *and given what the sentence means*.

This raises familiar questions. If the notion of meaning is an ingredient of the deflationary account, then how can truth be presuppositionless? And further, how is meaning to be explained independently of truth? A deflationist could try to replacing the notion of a truth condition with that of a verification condition or assertibility condition, or with the notion of convention-governed use, or communicative intentions; and she

could adopt a conceptual role semantics or an inferential role semantics.[33]

However, it can be argued that meaning and truth cannot be separated in the way the deflationist envisages. The deflationist must agree that whether a sentence can be properly called 'true' depends on the meaning it has, as well as on the way the world is. But then meaning is (at least) whatever determines truth-value, given how the world is. On a broad, not specifically Davidsonian, understanding of 'truth condition', this is just what a truth condition is. So, if we follow Lewis (1972), and take it that "meaning is what meaning does", then the meaning of a sentence must at least include the condition of its truth, whatever else it may include.[34] Put in epistemological terms, meaning is at least whatever the speaker needs to know in order to determine the truth value of a sentence, given complete knowledge of nonlinguistic worldly facts. This simple argument presents a persistent challenge to the deflationist: show how meaning does what it does, without appeal to the broad notion of a truth condition.

Suppose, for example, that the meaning of a sentence is taken to be its conceptual role, and that our grasp of that role does not in any way involves a grasp of the condition in which the sentence would be true. Then it becomes mysterious how a speaker's understanding of a sentence allows her to assign a truth-value to the sentence, once she knows all the nonlinguistic facts. Moreover, well-known 'twin-earth' arguments seem to suggest that knowledge of non-truth-related features of a sentence (e.g. its conceptual role) are never sufficient for knowing whether the sentence is true or false, even when one knows all the relevant nonlinguistic facts.[35] The intuitive truth-conditionalist idea is that, since meaning at least involves truth conditions, and understanding a sentence involves knowing its truth condition, there will be no mystery. For knowing the truth-condition of

22

'Worms wriggle' is knowing precisely *which* condition is relevant to deciding the sentence's truth-value.   Here, then is the objection to the deflationist: a deflationary theory of truth cannot explain meaning in terms of the notion of a truth condition – but meaning cannot be explained in any other way.

(b) <u>Assertion</u>   According to Frege and others, assertion and assertoric force is to be understood in terms of truth: to assert that *p* is to *present p as true*.[36] Frege's view of assertion is a natural one.   There are many speech-acts I can perform that involve a given proposition: I can suppose it, propose it, float it, question it.   Frege plausibly claims that the distinguishing mark of assertion – what sets it apart from other speech-acts – is the fact that when I assert something, I present a certain proposition *as true*.

So here is the challenge to the deflationist: to explain how to achieve a proper theoretical understanding of what it is to assert that *p* without help from the concept of truth.   How might the deflationist respond?   Consider disquotationalism or minimalism. According to these deflationary views, the function of 'true' is exhausted by its disquotational or denominalizing role.   Now consider the thesis that to assert is to present as true.   The thesis involves the use of the truth-predicate; in Horwich's terms, it is a fact about truth that needs to be explained.   With the denominalizing role of 'true' in mind, a deflationist might claim that the thesis that *to assert that p is to present p as true* is equivalent to the thesis that *to assert that p is to present p.*   This commits us to the claim that to present *p* as true is just to present *p*; for example, to present as true the proposition that aardvarks amble is just to present the proposition that aardvarks amble.   But this claim is false, for there are many ways to present a proposition.   I can present a proposition as

23

worthy of your consideration, or as a conjecture, or as a remote possibility, or as outrageous – and I can also present it as true. Presenting as true is just one way of presenting. So it seems that we cannot disquote away truth from the locution "present as true".

Illocutionary deflationists such as Ayer will take a different tack.   They will agree that there is an undeniable connection between assertion and truth, but that it is misleading to present the connection in terms of the slogan *to assert is to present as true.* Better to reverse the order: *to present as true is to assert.* Assertion is not to be characterized in terms of truth; rather, our use of the predicate 'true' is to be characterized in terms of assertion.   To predicate 'true' of a sentence (or a thought, or a proposition) *is just to assert the sentence (thought, proposition).* The illocutionary deflationist will take on board the equivalence thesis, and agree that the *content* of '"Aardvarks amble" is true' is no different from that of 'Aardvarks amble'. But though 'true' does not add content, it does introduce assertoric force.

But there is a difficulty with this illocutionary account, a difficulty articulated by Frege. At first glance, it may seem surprising that Frege should oppose illocutionary deflationism. Frege does emphasize the illocutionary aspect or role of truth, and he regards truth as belonging to the same family of concepts as assertion and judgment. Moreover, Frege famously endorses the equivalence thesis, that 'p' and '"p" is true' are equivalent in content - predicating 'true' makes no difference to content.[37] But according to Frege, 'true' also makes no difference to the force with which the thought is expressed. Frege says:

> If I assert "it is true that sea-water is salt", I assert the same thing as if I assert "sea-water is salt". This enables us to recognize that the assertion is not to be found in the word 'true' …" (1979: 251)

If one's deflationary view of 'true' is based on the equivalence thesis, then, according to Frege, 'true' cannot be the mark of assertion. Indeed, Frege says that "there is no word or sign in language whose function is simply to assert something" (1979: 185).

Frege is explicitly opposed to illocutionary deflationism, and for good reason.   If one accepts the equivalence thesis, there seems to be no difference between asserting that *p* and asserting that *p* is true. Further, the locution '*p* is true' can occur as the antecedent of a conditional, where it cannot be produced with assertoric force. Further still, I can say 'It is true that aardvarks amble' with a variety of different illocutionary forces – I can be supposing, conjecturing, pretending, or acting.[38] As Frege puts it:

> In order to put something forward as true, we do not need a special predicate: we need only the assertoric force with which the sentence is uttered. (Frege 1979: 233)

So Frege explicitly rejects illocutionary deflationism.   It is also noteworthy that Frege's remarks about truth seem inhospitable to conceptual deflationism: truth is "primitive and simple" (*ibid.*) and "the goal of scientific endeavour" (1979: 2).   Clearly we must distinguish what Frege says about the word 'true', and what he says about truth. Science aims at the truth, and "logic is the science of the most general laws of truth" (1979: 128) – but it does not follow that science or logic is concerned with the word 'true':

> [W]hat logic is really concerned with is not contained in the word 'true' at all but in the assertoric force with which a sentence is uttered. (1979: 252)

We can learn a lesson from Frege: deflationism about the word 'true' is one thing, deflationism about the concept of truth quite another. According to Frege, 'true' adds neither content nor illocutionary force. But for all that Frege is not a conceptual deflationist.   One can be deflationary about first-order uses of 'true' without being deflationary about second-order uses.   A deflationary treatment of first-order uses of 'true'

need not bring conceptual deflationism in its train. If Frege is right, truth is implicated in the assertoric force with which a sentence is uttered. The Fregean point is precisely that presenting *as true* (that is, asserting) is not a matter of ascribing a property to a sentence or thought, but rather is a special kind of doing or act, different from conjecturing, or surmising, or assuming, etc. So when we explain assertion, we ourselves use a truth-locution and employ the concept of truth. Thus, even if we grant, as does Frege, that first-order uses of 'true' submit to the equivalence thesis, we may need to employ the concept of truth for explanatory purposes. As we have seen, Frege is not at all shy about using truth-locutions in an explanatory way in connection with assertion, logic and science. He does *not* accept a deflationary view of the *concept* of truth.

It is not clear where Frege stands on the metaphysical issue regarding truth.[39] But it is possible to endorse metaphysical deflationism together with a deflationary view about first-order uses of 'true', while still rejecting conceptual deflationism. Brandom is a prosententialist about 'true' (see note 9 above), and he denies that there is a property of truth (1994: 325-327). But Brandom equates asserting with *taking-true* or *putting forward as true*. A theory of asserting is a theory of taking-true. In Brandom's phrase, truth here is "what one is taking, treating, or putting forward a claim *as*" when one asserts (1994: 202). At this point, then, a deflationist would need a suitably deflationary account of *taking as true* and the associated concept of truth. But Brandom's account is not deflationary. Rather, Brandom seeks an account of truth that proceeds from the attitude of taking-true: "once one understands what it is to take or treat something as true, one will have understood as well the concept of truth" (1994: 291). What are we doing when we assert or put forward a sentence as true? Brandom's general answer is that we are undertaking a

certain kind of commitment.[40] Brandom's pragmatic account of asserting or taking as true goes forward in terms of commitments, inferences, entitlements, and justificatory responsibilities – and this account is clearly not deflationary.[41]

(c) <u>Truth-aptness</u>   Recall that disquotationalism can be presented either via DisquT or axiomatically via the T-sentences. Which sentences should be admitted into DisquT or the T-sentences? Clearly not imperatives such as 'Shut the door!' or interrogatives such as 'Is the door closed?' These sentences are not *truth-apt*; for example, the T-sentence '"Shut the door!" is true if and only if shut the door!' makes no sense. So it seems that the notion of truth-aptness must appear in the very statement of disquotationalism: either DisquT or the list of T-sentences must be accompanied by the restriction '*where 's₁', 's₂', … abbreviate truth-apt sentences of English'*.   This raises two concerns for the disquotationalist. First, is truth aptness a rich concept that does not belong in a deflationary, presuppositionless account of truth? Second, is the notion of truth aptness itself dependent on the concept of truth? After all, it might seem natural to characterize a truth apt sentence as one that is either true or false.[42] If so, then disquotationalism appears to be circular. These are not concerns for the minimalist, since propositions are truth apt by their very nature.

As a first step, the disquotationalist might embrace *syntacticism*, according to which a sentence is truth apt if it displays the appropriate syntax. If a sentence is declarative in form – if it can be embedded in conditionals, negation, propositional attitude constructions, and so on – then it is truth apt.[43] This would certainly exclude imperatives and interrogatives and other inappropriate grammatical forms. But it is clear that declarative syntax is not sufficient for truth aptness. Suppose that in a logic class I write the sentence

'Fred has flat feet' on the board (perhaps in order to introduce the symbolization 'Fa').[44]

The sentence is declarative, but, lacking any context to render it true or false, it is not truth apt. Or consider a tongue-twister, say 'She sells sea-shells by the sea-shore'[45] – again, this is declarative but not truth-apt. So more than declarative form is needed.[46]

Wright and Boghossian have proposed the strengthening of syntacticism to *disciplined syntacticism*. For a sentence to be truth-apt, it must not only be declarative, but it must also be part of a discourse that is *disciplined*, a discourse where "there are firmly acknowledged standards of proper and improper use of its ingredient sentences" (Wright 1992, p.29).[47] This is a *minimal* account of truth aptness, according to Wright, because the truth-aptness of a sentence depends only on surface features: the syntactical form of the sentence (its having "all the overt trappings of assertoric content" (Wright 1992, p.29)), and the disciplined character of the discourse. If these surface features of the sentence and the discourse are present, then the sentence is truth apt: "if things are in all these surface respects as if assertions are being made, then so they are" (Wright 1992, p.29). So, for example, evaluative statements – such as 'Pre-emptive wars are wrong' – are truth apt, because the requisite surface features are present. The statement is declarative in form, and evaluative discourse is disciplined – if I change my mind about the statement 'Pre-emptive wars are wrong', I will do so within a framework of standards governing the proper use of the sentence. Ethical expressivists will protest that such evaluative statements are not truth-apt, that they are neither true nor false. Appearances are deceptive, they will say: evaluative sentences do have declarative form, they do have the "trappings of assertoric content", and there are norms governing the proper use of such sentences – yet they are not really truth apt. But according to disciplined syntacticism, only the

appearances matter where truth aptness is concerned – and it is in this way that disciplined syntacticism is minimal.

Does disciplined syntacticism help the disquotationalist about truth? Clearly, requiring the sentences 's$_1$', 's$_2$', ... to be declarative in form does not introduce the kind of rich concept that might compromise the disquotational account. But the requirement of discipline might seem more troublesome: if the very statement of disquotationalism incorporates the requirement that 's$_1$', 's$_2$', … be governed by norms of correct use, by "acknowledged standards of proper and improper use", then that might seem to put into question the supposedly presuppositionless character of disquotational truth. Moreover, there are standards of proper use for tongue-twisters and logic examples and other kinds of sentences that are not truth apt – what is special about the norms or standards governing the use of *truth apt* sentences? In the same breath in which he speaks of discipline and norms, Wright speaks of assertoric content and the making of assertions. Now, it may be natural enough to treat truth aptness in terms of assertion, along the lines of "A sentence is truth apt if it can be used to make an assertion". But this treatment seems unavailable to the disquotationalist. Surely disquotationalists will not want to articulate their deflationary theory in terms that include such a rich notion as assertion, especially one which is, as we saw in the previous section, so intimately tied to truth.

There is reason anyway to doubt that disciplined syntacticism provides an adequate account of truth aptness. It can be argued that declarative syntax is not *necessary* for truth-aptness (we have already seen that it is not sufficient).[48] Asked under oath whether he murdered Jones, Smith may reply: "No". If he didn't murder Jones, then what Smith says is true. If he did murder Jones, then what Smith says is false, and he has committed

29

perjury. Asked what I bought at the store, I may say: "Two red apples". If I did buy two red apples, then what I said is true. Our utterances, Smith's and mine, appear to be truth-apt, but they are not declarative in form.[49] We may distinguish between three senses of 'sentence': sentence$_{syntactic}$ (an expression with a certain structure), sentence$_{semantic}$ (an expression which expresses a proposition), and sentence$_{pragmatic}$ (an expression which can by itself be used to perform a certain speech act).[50] Arguably what I said counts as a sentence$_{semantic}$ (I have expressed the proposition that I bought two red apples) and a sentence$_{pragmatic}$ (I have asserted that I bought two red apples). Similarly with Smith's sentence. But neither of our utterances counts as a sentence$_{syntactic}$. Declarative syntax is unnecessary for truth aptness.[51]

Sentences like Smith's 'No' and my 'Two red apples' pose a problem not only for disciplined syntacticism, but for the disquotationalist too. Though apparently truth apt, these sentences cannot figure in DisquT or the T-sentences – obviously, '"No" is true if and only if no' is not well-formed. And the problem is compounded by perfectly ordinary truth ascriptions referring to these sentences - for example: "What Smith said in court today was true". Here the disquotationalist faces a dilemma. If 'No' is admitted as truth apt, then the definiens of DisquT will contain 'What Smith said in court = "No" and no', which is ill-formed. If 'No' is excluded on the grounds that it is not declarative, then we have a run-of-the-mill truth-ascription that the disquotational theory cannot handle.

Perhaps the disquotationalist will point out that Smith's utterance is associated with a declarative sentence, namely 'I did not murder Jones' (and mine with 'I bought two red apples'.) What is the nature of this association? One might say: *both express the same proposition*, or *both are used to make the same assertion*. This suggests the following

30

strategy. Accept that there are truth apt sentences that are not declarative. Do not,

however, admit them into DisquT or the T-sentences – admit instead their associated

declarative sentences. This removes the threat of ill-formed instantiations.   But now the

disquotationalist's restriction is either "*where 's$_1$', 's$_2$', … is a declarative sentence that*

expresses a proposition" or "*where 's$_1$', 's$_2$', … is a declarative sentence that makes an*

assertion".   And the familiar problem is back: disquotational truth is supposed to be a

mere logical device, not a concept whose explication requires substantive semantic

concepts such as *assertion* or *expressing a proposition*.

Finally, there is a family of sentences that fail to be truth apt in a specially dramatic

way. Liar sentences, such as 'This sentence is false', cannot be admitted into the truth-

schema, *on pain of contradiction*. It is often presumed that the Liar is as much a problem

for the substantivist about truth – the correspondence theorist, for example - as it is for the

deflationist.[52] But it can be argued that the correspondence theorist has resources to deal

with the Liar that the deflationist does not.[53] For example, the correspondence theorist can

accommodate truth value gaps, along the following lines: a sentence is true iff it

corresponds to a state of affairs that obtains, false iff it corresponds to a state of affairs that

does not obtain, and neither true nor false if it fails to correspond to any state of affairs.

But if truth is given by DisquT, and falsity by

DisquF   x is false iff $(x=$'s$_1$' $\& \sim$s$_1)$ or $(x=$'s$_2$' $\& \sim$s$_2)$ or … ,

then it follows easily that a sentence s$_k$ is neither true nor false only if it is outside the scope

of these definitions (since otherwise we can derive $\sim$s$_k$ and $\sim\sim$s$_k$). So it seems there is no

room for a sentence to be neither true nor false, except in the attenuated sense that Julius

Caesar is neither true nor false. As regards minimalism, Horwich himself notes that the

move to propositions seems to close off any appeal to gaps.[54]

But suppose that the disquotationalist can somehow accommodate truth value gaps.

Then it might seem that Liar sentences need not compromise DisqT. For where 'L' is a liar

sentence, its associated T-sentence

'L' is true iff L

can be counted as true, given that both sides are gappy. Even the truth of Liar sentences, it

may seem, is a matter of disquotation.   However, the disquotationalist cannot take this

tack. We are taking L to be gappy – so the right hand side of the biconditional is gappy.

But the left hand side is false: it is false that 'L' is true.[55] This is an instance of a more

general problem: given a gappy sentence (whether a Liar sentence, or a vague sentence,

perhaps, or some other), the corresponding T-sentence is untrue. In order to maintain the

truth of such a T-sentence, we might introduce a *weak* notion of truth, where '"P" is true'

always has the same semantic status as 'P'.[56] (In particular, if 'P' is gappy, so is '"P" is

true'.) The revision theory of truth is a theory of this weak notion.[57] But the

disquotationalist cannot ignore the *strong* notion of truth, where if we say of a gappy

sentence that it's true, we have said something false.[58] A successful deflationism must

deflate all truth, weak and strong.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bar-On, Dorit, Horisk, Claire, and Lycan, William, 1999. 'Deflationism, Meaning and Truth Conditions', *Philosophical Studies* 101, 1-28.

Bar-On, Dorit, and Simmons, Keith, *forthcoming*. 'The Use of Force Against Deflationism: Assertion and Truth'. *The Illocutionary Role of the Concept of Truth*, D. Greimann and G. Siegwart, eds., de Gruyter.

Blackburn, Simon, and Simmons, Keith, eds.1999. *Truth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Boghossian, Paul, 1990. 'The Status of Content'. *Philosophical Review* 99, 157-184.

Brandom, Robert, 1994. *Making It Explicit*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

David, Marian, 1994. *Correspondence and Disquotation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Davidson, Donald, 1996/1999. 'The Folly of Trying to Define Truth'. *Journal of Philosophy* 93, 263-279; repr. in Blackburn and Simmons, eds., 308-322.

Davidson, Donald, 1990. 'The Structure and Content of Truth'. *Journal of Philosophy* 87, 279-328.

Dummett, Michael, 1959/1978. "Truth". *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* LIX, 141-162. Repr. with a postscript in *Truth and Other Enigmas*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1-24; page references are to this reprint.

Etchemendy, Jon, 1988. 'Tarski on Truth and Logical Consequence'. *Journal of Symbolic Logic* 53, 51-79.

Field, Hartry, 1986. 'The Deflationary Conception of Truth' in G. MacDonald and C. Wright, eds. *Fact, Science and Morality*: *Essays on A. J. Ayer's* Language, Truth and Logic. Oxford: Blackwell, 55-117.

Field, Hartry, 1999. 'Deflationist Views of Meaning and Content', reprinted in Blackburn and Simmons 1999, 351-391.

Frege, G. 1892/1960. 'On Sense and Reference'. Translated in in Geach, P., and Black, M., eds., 56-78.

Frege, G. 1956/1999. 'The Thought: A Logical Inquiry'. *Mind* 65, 289-311 Repr. in Blackburn and Simmons 1999, 85-105; page references are to this reprint.

Frege, G. 1979. *Posthumous Writings*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Grover, D., Camp, J., and Belnap, N., 1975. 'A Prosentential Theory of Truth'. *Philosophical Studies* 27, 73-125.

Gupta, Anil, 1993. 'Minimalism'. In James E.Tomberlin (ed.), *Philosophical Perspectives* vii, *Language and Logic*. Atascadero: Ridgeview Press, 359-369.

Gupta, Anil, 1993/1999. 'A Critique of Deflationism'. *Philosophical Topics* 21/2, 57-81. Repr. in Blackburn and Simmons (eds.) 282-307; page references are to this reprint.

Gupta, Anil and Belnap, Nuel, 1993. *The Revision Theory of Truth*. Cambridge, Mass.:MIT Press.

Hill, Christopher, 2002. *Thought and World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Horisk, Claire, *forthcoming*. 'What Should Deflationism Be When it Grows Up?', *Philosophical Studies*.

Horwich, Paul, 1990. *Truth*. Blackwell, Oxford.

Horwich, Paul, 1998a. *Truth*. 2nd edition. Blackwell, Oxford.

Horwich, Paul, 1998b. *Meaning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jackson, Frank, Oppy, Graham, and Smith, Michael, 1994. 'Minimalism and Truth Aptness'. *Mind* 103(411), 287-302.

Leeds, Stephen, 1978. 'Theories of Reference and Truth,' *Erkenntnis*13, 11-129.

Lewis, David, 1972. 'General Semantics'. In Davidson, D. and Harman, G., eds., *Semantics of Natural Language*. Dordrecht: D. Reidel.

Lycan, William, 1984. *Logical Form in Natural Language*. Cambridge, MA: Bradford Books/MIT Press.

Porubcansky, David, 2004.: 'Deflationism and Truth Aaptness', MA thesis, UNC Chapel Hill.

Quine, W. V., 1970. *Philosophy of Logic*. Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs.

Resnik, Michael, 1990. 'Immanent Truth'. *Mind* 99(395), 405-424.

Rumfitt, Ian, 1995. 'Truth Conditions and Communication'. *Mind* 4, 827-859.

Simmons, Keith, 1999.: 'Deflationary Truth and the Liar'. *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 28, 455-488.

Simmons, Keith, *forthcoming (a)*. 'Tarski's Logic'. *The Handbook of the History and Philosophy of Logic*, vol.3, J. Woods and D. Gabbay, eds. North-Holland.

Simmons, Keith, *forthcoming (b)*. 'Deflationism and the Autonomy of Truth', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*.

Smith, Michael, 1994. "Why Expressivists about Value Should Love Minimalism about Truth". *Analysis* 54, 1-12.

Soames, Scott, 1984. 'What is a Theory of Truth?' *Journal of Philosophyhy* 81(8), 411-429.

Soames, Scott, 1999. *Understanding Truth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stainton, Robert, 2000. 'The Meaning of "Sentences"'. *Nous* 34-:3, 441-454.

Strawson, P. F.,1949. 'Truth'. *Analysis* 9, 83-97.

Tarski, Alfred, 1930-1931/1983. 'The Concept of Truth in Formalized Languages', first published in Polish. In *Logic, Semantics, Metamathematics* (2nd edition), trans. J. H. Woodger. Indianapolis: Hackett, 152-278.

Tarski, Alfred, 1944. 'The Semantic Conception of Truth and the Foundations of Semantics', *Philosophical and Phenomenological Research* 4, 342-360. Repr. in Blackburn and Simmons (eds.) 1999, 115-143; page references are to this reprint.

Yablo, Stephen, 1985. 'Truth and Reflection', *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 14, 297-349.

NOTES

[1] The phrase "partial definition" is Tarski's (see Tarski (1930-1931: 155) and (1944: 50)). But it is far from clear that Tarski's semantic conception of truth is deflationary. See Simmons (forthcoming (a)) for more on this.

[2] See Quine (1970: 11).

[3] DisquT is suggested by remarks in Leeds (1978: 121-131, and fn.10), and versions of it are presented explicitly in Field (1986: 58), Resnik (1990: 412), and David (1994), Ch.4 and p.107.

[4] Horwich (1990) and (1998a).

[5] This is considered by Horwich (1990: 23-24).

[6] See (5), Horwich (1990: 24).

[7] See section III below.

[8] "Truth, to coin a phrase, isn't a real predicate." (Grover et. al. (1975: 97)).

[9] Brandom has proposed a disquotational or "unnominalizing" variant of the prosentential theory according to which 'is true' takes a nominalization and yields a prosentence whose anaphoric antecedent is the sentence tokening picked out by the nominalization (1994: 303-305). Still, whether 'true' is a prosentence-forming operator or a syncategorematic part of a prosentence, it is clearly not a property-denoting or a concept-expressing predicate.

[10] Strawson (1949).

[11] See (1990: 38-9). Horwich credits Field with the suggestion that truth is a logical property, and does not say more about it.

[12] Boghossian (1990: esp. 178ff.).

[13] Parallel remarks apply to Boghossian's formulation of deflationism about reference:

> The expression 'refers to a property' does not itself refer to a property.

A sensible deflationist about reference will not use the notion of reference to articulate her position. She might give the familiar disquotational, list-like account, and say that there's no more to 'refers' than that.

[14] One suggestion (made for example in Field 1986, pp.56ff) is to understand substitutional quantification as an abbreviation for infinite disjunctions and conjunctions, but this it seems just sends us back to the infinitary account above.

[15] See David (1994: esp. 107-124) for an extended discussion of disquotationalism and finite stateability.

[16] Horwich (1990: 21-22).

[17] See Horwich (1990: 27).   Horwich also resists the move to substitutional quantification because he takes the minimal notion of truth to provide a simple alternative to the "cumbersome" apparatus of substitutional quantification (1990: 31-34).

[18] Gupta 1993.

[19] Hill (2002: 16ff.).

[20] See Hill (2002: 22). 'Σ' stands for the substitutional existential quantifier. In Hill's formulation, "proposition" is replaced by "thought".

[21] For example, one form of the Existential Introduction rule is this:

$$(\dots T \dots)$$

$$(\Sigma p)(\ldots p \ldots)$$

where T is a particular, determinate proposition, and (…T…) is the particular, determinate proposition that comes from replacing all free occurrences of the propositional variable p in the open proposition (…p…) with T (see Hill 2002: 18-22).

[22] See Hill (2002: 22), and Appendices I and II of Chapter 2, pp.33-37. For a critical discussion of Hill (2002), see Simmons (forthcoming (b)).

[23] There is another reason for this restriction. According to the disquotationalist, if penguins waddle then 'Penguins waddle' is true (this is just the right to left direction of the T-sentence).   But the linguistic item 'Penguins waddle' may be a false sentence of some language other than English. For related discussion, see section VI (a) below.

[24] To accommodate our modal intuitions that our sentences could have had different meanings, Field introduces the notion of "quasi-deflationary truth".   And to deal with the application of 'true' to foreign sentences, he introduces as one option the notion of "extended disquotational truth". But these notions still seem too restricted. With respect to "quasi-deflationary truth", the truth conditions that sentences may counterfactually receive are limited to those enjoyed by the sentences of my actual idiolect.   And with respect to "extended disquotational truth", 'true' does not extend to a foreign sentence unless it is synonymous with a sentence of my idiolect.

[25] See Horwich (1990: 20, fn.4).

[26] Horwich (1990: 36).

[27] This might be seen as a response to the objection that Gupta presents (1993/1999, p297ff).

[28] See Davidson (1996/1999: 317-319).   For more critical discussion of minimalism, see Davidson (1990).

[29] The thought is encouraged by Horwich's own claim that the minimal theory of truth for propositions is easily inter-derivable with a minimal theory of truth for utterances. (See Horwich (1990:103-108)).

[30] Similar remarks can be made about Hill's simple substitutionalism. See Simmons, (forthcoming (b)).

[31] For discussions of the incompatibility claim and the circularity objection, see Soames (1984, 1999), Etchemendy (1988), Horwich (1990), Gupta (1993/99), Brandom (1994), Rumfitt (1995), and Horisk (forthcoming).

[32] Depending on how sentences are individuated, "Worms wriggle" may even be false in our world, if there is a language in which it actually means something different from its English meaning.

[33] See e.g. Horwich (1990), (1998a) and (1998b), Brandom (1994), and Field (1994).

[34] The argument is briefly presented in Lewis (1972). For an interpretation and discussion of Lewis's argument, as well as possible deflationist objections, see Bar-On et. al. (1999).

[35] For an argument, see Ch. 10 of Lycan (1984).

[36] Frege distinguishes between judging and the mere entertaining of a thought, and correlatively, between the act of assertion the mere expression or articulation of a thought.   At one place he writes:

> Once we have grasped a thought, we can recognize it as true (make a judgement) and give expression to our recognition of its truth (make an assertion). (1979: 185).

See also (1979: 139) for one of many passages in the same vein,

[37] Frege writes:

[T]he sentence 'I smell the scent of violets' has just the same content as the sentence 'It is true that I smell the scent of violets'. (1956/1999: 88)

In general,

… the sense of the word 'true' is such that it does not make any essential contribution to the thought. (1979: 251)

[38] Frege writes :

[I]n the mouth of an actor upon the stage, even the sentence 'The thought that 5 is a prime number is true' contains only a thought, and indeed the same thought as the simple '5 is a prime number'. (1892/1960: 60).

[39] On the one hand, many of his remarks suggest that he thinks we get nowhere in our understanding of truth by pairing the predicate 'is true' with some property that all and only true items share. On the other hand, Frege's talk of truth as "something primitive and simple" may suggest that he is reifying truth as a special, irreducible property.

[40] The commitment may be explained in terms of Sellars' notion of a "game of giving and asking for reasons". It is a necessary condition of assertional commitments that they play the dual role of justifier and subject of demand for justification; assertions "are fundamentally fodder for inferences" (1994: 168).

[41] Brandom's willingness to place the notion of taking as true and its cognates in so central a position might suggest that he would reject deflationism about the concept of truth; on the other hand he embraces deflationism without any apparent reservation. Interpretation aside, we are urging that Brandom's account of assertion is incompatible with being deflationist about the concept of truth. For more on assertion and deflationism, see Bar-On and Simmons (forthcoming).

[42] This is the way it is characterized by Jackson, et. al. For example: "Non-cognitivism in ethics holds that ethical sentences are not in the business of being either true nor false – for short, they are not truth apt." (1994: 287)

[43] Syntacticism is mentioned, but not endorsed, by Jackson *et. al.* (1994: 291-293).

[44] The example is from *op.cit.*, p.293.

[45] The example is from Porubcansky 2004.

[46] Notice also that if we embrace syntacticism, we settle immediately issues that surely cannot be settled so quickly: non-cognitivism about ethical statements would be false, and performatives – such as 'I name this ship "Queen Mary II"' – would count as true.

[47] As Boghossian puts it, the sentence must be "significant", or, more fully, must "possess a role within the language: its use must be appropriately disciplined by norms of correct utterance" (1990: 163).

[48] Here we are indebted to Porubcansky 2004.

[49] One would be hard-pressed to say that our utterances, despite appearances, are really declarative. The claim is not supported by evidence in linguistics. For example, syntactically elliptical sentences, like 'Alex does too', cannot usually initiate a discourse. But the sentence fragment 'Two red apples' can - for example, to buy apples from a fruit peddler. (See Stainton (2000: 448). See Stainton's article for more on sentences and sentence fragments.

[50] Here we follow Stainton 2000. These three ways of understanding 'sentence' is further refined by Stainton, but the present formulation is sufficient for our purposes.

[51] Jackson, Oppy and Smith argue that disciplined syntacticism does not go far enough (see also Smith 1994). They contend that it ignores a platitudinous connection between truth aptness and belief: a sentence counts as truth apt only if it can be used to given the content of a belief. And since, in their view, any adequate analysis of a concept should comprise all the platitudes about a concept (and nothing more), the connection between truth aptness and belief cannot be omitted. Their preferred account of truth aptness, though richer than disciplined syntacticism, will be minimal in the sense that it makes no controversial

assumptions – it is composed only of platitudes. It seems, however, that this platitude-respecting minimalism cannot be endorsed by the disqotationalist, or by deflationists generally.   As Jackson, Oppy and Smith themselves point out, platitudes can be substantive. On their account of truth-aptness, in order to show that a sentence is truth-apt it needs to be shown

> that the state an agent is in when she is disposed to utter a sentence … bears the relations to information, action and rationality required for the state to count as a belief. This is a substantial matter. (p.296)

[52] See, for example, David [1994: 7, 70, 191], and Horwich [1990: 42].

[53] For an extended treatment of deflationary truth and the Liar, see Simmons (1999).

[54] Horwich (1990: 80).

[55] Compare an argument of Dummett's [1959/1978: 4].

56. Gupta and Belnap present this distinction in 1993, p.22, citing Yablo 1985.

57. See Gupta and Belnap 1993, p22, p29, and fn52 on p29.

58. In Simmons (1999), it is argued that the correspondence theory is better equipped than deflationism to deal with strong truth and related strengthened liar paradoxes.