

The ‘Correspondence’ Intuition: Handout

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1 Horwich

1.1 Introduction and Overview

The correspondence conception of truth involves two claims:

1. that truths correspond to reality;
2. that such correspondence is what truth *essentially* is.

Horwich’s minimalism concedes to the correspondentist (1) but not (2).

Claim 1. There is an explanatory relation between reality and truths.

Claim 2. The minimalistic equivalence biconditionals can easily be supplemented with characterizations of *correspondence* and *fact* to show that, indeed for any true proposition or sentence, there is a corresponding fact.

However,

Claim 3. There are no advantages in supporting the entire construction of claim 2 as *basic theory of truth*. It is an unnecessary complexity.

Claim 4. Reference, satisfaction, correspondence, and fact are just as non-naturalistic, and in need of infinite, deflationary theories, as truth is.

1.2 Truths are made true by elements of reality (1)

Minimalism does not deny that truths *do* correspond - in *some* sense - to the facts. It is undeniable that whenever a proposition is true, it is true *because* something in the world (external to the proposition) is a certain way.

- (1) ⟨Snow is white⟩'s being true *is explained by* snow's being white.
- (2) ⟨Snow is white⟩ is true *because* snow is white.

But, **in which sense?**

Claim 1. There is a relation of *explanatory dependence* between phenomena, we naturally and properly grant ultimate explanatory priority to such things as the *basic laws of nature* and the initial conditions of the universe (my emphasis).

- Therefore, from the minimalistic point of view **Snow is white** is indeed explanatory prior to **⟨Snow is white⟩ is true**.
- In this sense, we can say that from a minimalistic perspective the idea that truths are made true by elements of reality is perfectly fine.
- Also this follows from the minimal theory (given certain further facts) and therefore it need not be explicitly stated in it.

Remark 1. We are going to see McGrath's objection on this claim.

However, it is not obvious that you can infer from (2) the following:

- (3) ⟨Snow is white⟩ is true *because* there exists the fact that snow is white.

Because the two suggested explanations are in principle different. Also, there are positive grounds for resisting (3): there are no correspondence account of truth possessing virtues lacked by the minimal theory **Claim 3**.

Consider some examples.

- **Russellian propositions.** When they are true, are identical to facts. Consequently there can be no explanatory relationship between these things.
- **Fregean proposition.** They also, when true, are identical to facts.

The fact that Phosphorus is Hesperus is *not* identical to the fact that Phosphorus is Phosphorus.

- **Fregean proposition is made true by the existence of the corresponding Russellian fact.** This is a picture theory: a sentence/proposition consists of elements arranged in a certain logical form, and the fact that this is so *depicts* that there is in reality a Russellian fact consisting of the referents of the elements arranged in the same logical form as in the sentence.

- Well formulated this theory is still infinite, because it needs to specify, for each russellian proposition, the circumstances in which it will qualify as a fact. Remember question 5: no finite number of axioms.
- Theory of reference is required (Q5).
- What is for a sentence and a proposition to have a logical form and for a proposition to be composed of a certain sequence of entities?

Conclusion: even if in principle the picture theory of truth may well be correct, it should not be thought to qualify as our *basic* theory of truth.

1.3 Truth, Reference and Satisfaction

- **Objection.** The minimal theory fails to show how the truth of a sentence depends on the referential properties of its parts.
- Tarski's account offers a non schematic, finite theory by deducing the truth condition of each statement from the referents of its parts (explicit definition of truth).

Remark 2. Tarski's project aspired merely to explicate a notion of *truth in L*, for certain highly artificial *L*.

Remark 3. Each of these languages has a fixed stock of primitives, so it is possible to explicate *refers to L* and *satisfies in L* with a finite list of principles.

- Someone (Davidson) wants to generalize the theory of truth by showing that, even for complex, natural language, that *true in L* could be defined in terms of *refers in L* *satisfies in L*.
- Objections to this approach:

- Tarskian strategy applies only to those sentences whose logical forms may be represented in first order logic

Remark 4. What about the Van Benthem theorem in modal logic. Besides, there are many compositional semantics, which can account for those truths (non monotonic conditional logic).

- Question 5: Such a theory of truth will be adequate only if it is supplemented with theories of reference and satisfaction. They require either substitutional quantification or an unformulable collection of axioms. So, no simplification is achieved (**Claim 3**).

- Rejecting this approach doesn't mean to deny that truth, reference and satisfaction are connected. However, such principles should not be treated as explanatory basic. Each should be explained in terms of simple, separate, minimal theories. And, look, we can do it!
- **Claim 1.** The minimal theory does not preclude the possibility of showing the truth value of a sentence is related to the referential properties of its parts.
 - A minimalist does not take as part of her basic theory that we should accept instances of

" p and q " is true iff " p " is true and " q " is true.

However, it is trivially deducible from:

- (i) " p and q " is true iff p and q
- (ii) " p " is true iff p
- (iii) " q " is true iff q

- A minimalist doesn't define truth in terms of reference and satisfaction using such principles as:

(*) " Fa " is true iff $(\exists x)$ (" a " refers to x and " F " is satisfied by x).

But this schema is easily explained:

- (i) $(x)(x$ satisfies " F " iff Fx)
- (ii) $(x)($ " a " refers to x iff $a = x$)
- (iii) So Fa equivalent to right-hand side of (*)
- (iv) Thus " Fa " is true (disquotational principle).

2 Theory of reference and satisfaction

2.1 Causal theory of truth

- **The problem:** the great virtue of defining truth in terms of reference is that the account may be supplemented with a naturalistic (causal) theory of the reference relation to yield, in the end, naturalistic and scientifically respectable theory of truth.
- For example, Kripke's causal theory: there is a certain type of causal chain connecting the use of a name and the thing it stands for.

Objections:

- This theory has nothing specifically to do with names.
His central claim is merely that there need be no reference-fixing characterization in the minds of the users of the name. The meaning of an expression is not intrinsic to the minds, but resides in the practices of the linguistic community.
- Even less plausible when it is combined with the idea that names have no meaning (they just help to express the referent).
 - * Question 31: impossible account of *de dicto* propositional attitude.
 - * Over reaction to Kripke's arguments. They can be seen as *primitive expressions*.

2.2 Minimalist accounts

Reference is not a complex relations: a naturalistic or conceptual reduction is not needed and should not be expected (claim 3).

Two steps:

- (a) Characterization of the non-descriptive role of "satisfies" and "refers".
 - Satisfaction and reference help us to talk about propositions of which certain parts (predicates and singular terms) are unarticulated. Satisfies "*F*" provides *home language* equivalents of any predicate, "*F*", whatever their language, and whether or not their translations are available.
 - They enable us to do without substitutional quantification into predicate and singular term positions.
- (b) Specification of the minimal theory, necessary for the performance of the function.

[S] $(x)(x \text{ satisfies } \langle F \rangle \leftrightarrow Fx)$

[R] $(x)(\langle d \rangle \text{ refers to } x \leftrightarrow d = x)$

3 What the Deflationist May Say about Truthmaking: Matthew McGrath

3.1 Preliminary remarks: which form of deflationism we're talking about

- We're going to focus on *property deflationism* about truth: there is a property of truth, i. e. something we attribute when we call things true, but it is not a *substantial* property.
- Truth resists analysis both conceptual and empirical, and yet admits of a simple explanation. In other words, we cannot reduce truth to more basic notions. However, we can provide a theory on the the basis of which all facts about truth can be explained (eg. minimalism).
- Truth-bearers: propositions.
- Question: can this form of deflationism accomodate truthmaking intuitions?

3.2 Deflationism and truthmaking: the problem

Consider Horwich's claim in 1.2. We might note two problems with his strategy:

1. There seems to be an explanatory asymmetry between $\langle p \rangle$ and $\langle \langle p \rangle$ is true \rangle . In fact, there are cases like $\langle 2 + 2 = 4 \rangle$ or \langle it's necessary that if something is red, it's colored \rangle that do not admit of explanation by appeal to laws of nature. Still, even a brute fact that p can be invoked to explain the truth of $\langle p \rangle$.
2. To accommodate truthmaking intuitions, we need entities to serve as truthmakers and the truth-equivalences fail to single out them. For instance, we might say: what makes the proposition that snow is white true is *that snow is white*($*$). $*$ designates the truthmaker of the proposition at issue, but what kind of "element of the reality" is it? Is it snow? Is it the *fact* that snow is white? Is it maybe something else?

3.3 Proposition as their own truthmakers

- Wordly facts don't seem to be an option for the deflationist, as they are for the correspondentist. Thus, we may argue that propositions make themselves true. More specifically, every proposition *would* make itself true, if it were true. That is, if $\langle p \rangle$ is true, one can explain its truth by saying that " what makes $\langle p \rangle$ true is $\langle p \rangle$ ".

- No detour through the laws of nature. However, *if* a further explanation of $\langle p \rangle$ through those laws or other means is available, then we can form a deeper explanation of the truth of $\langle p \rangle$. Therefore, we may distinguish **direct** from **indirect** truthmaking, and then define a broad notion of truthmaking to include both.
- Truthmaker Deflationism (TD):

Necessarily, for all propositions P, if P is true, then what makes P true is P, and if P is false, then what makes P false is the negation of P.

Thus, we have an *identity* between true propositions and their truthmakers.

- **The "extra element" objection:** can TD really account for our intuition about truthmaking? If some propositions don't make itself true (eg. $\langle \text{snow is red} \rangle$) but only would do so, won't we have to say that something must be added to them in order to make them true?

Reply:

1. In general, what are we asking when we ask question of the form "What makes x F ?" for a predicate F ? One use of the interrogative is to ask about causes. Another one is to issue a challenge (to ask a justification for a given claim). A third use is concerned with cases of *supervenience*: eg. the fact that something is funny is grounded or *accounted for* by some other kind of facts (subvenient basis).
2. The intuitive principle of truthmaking is one of a number of supervenience principle. We might formulate it in terms of accounting for: *If a proposition is true, something accounts for its truth.*
3. The relation of accounting for is (i) between propositions and (ii) asymmetric.
 - (i) Consider the following sentence:
 - (*) You believe *that Mr. X's papers are profound* and that would be enough to make them good papers. However, Mr. X's paper are not profound.

Here, the italicized expression, call it **, functions as a singular term, hence, can be quantified over. Therefore, if * is true, then ** must designate. Suppose * is true. Then, ** designates, despite the fact that the sentence of which it is a nominalization is false. Therefore, ** is an entity which admits of positive and negative polarity. ** would have accounted for something

(the quality of Mr X papers), if it had had a positive polarity. We can treat this kind of entity as a proposition.

- (ii) from the previous example, we see the explanatory asymmetry between (**) and the thing it would account for.

4. When it comes to the case of *making true*, the deflationist can say that whenever $\langle p \rangle$ is true, what accounts for the truth of $\langle p \rangle$ is that p, i.e. $\langle p \rangle$ itself ($\langle p \rangle$ having a positive polarity), and not $\langle p \rangle$ plus something else.

Remark 5. As to step 3 (i), McGrath mentions that philosophers have distinguished several entities which admit of such bipolarities, like propositions, states of affairs and possible facts. He claims that we can treat all of them as propositions, appealing to the fact that Russellian propositions or Fregean propositions may be apt to subsume states of affairs and possible facts. However, we have seen that not all accounts of propositions are an option for the deflationist. May this be a possible weakness of the story McGrath is telling us?

- **The "wordly fact" objection:** truthmaking intuitions require truthmakers to be worldly, to be elements of reality (which lack bipolarity). Yet, propositions are abstract objects. Thus, we must look to facts to find truthmakers. Let us expand this objection as not particularly directed at the deflationist:

1. suppose one's theory is that for all propositions P, P is true just in case it meets condition C.
2. suppose $\langle p \rangle$ is true. What makes it true? By applying her theory, one replies: what makes $\langle p \rangle$ true is that it meets condition C.
3. But now what makes the proposition that $\langle p \rangle$ meets condition C true? You might say: that *it* meets condition C. But this is yet another truth to make true. Thus, we are on the way to an infinite regress.
4. Therefore, the truthmaking chain must stop with a truthmaker that is not the kind of thing to admit truth and falsity, but just *exists*: a wordly fact.

N.B. When the target is the deflationist, the underlying claim is that if you say that *facts are truths* (i.e. truths about the world appear to be worldly just as much as facts about the world are) as the deflationist may say, then you must treat talk of "the fact that p" as a shorthand for "the truth of the proposition that p". Thus, what makes $\langle p \rangle$ true is the fact that p, i.e. the proposition $\langle \langle p \rangle$ is true \rangle . Then, what makes $\langle \langle p \rangle$ is true \rangle true? And so on.

Reply:

1. By holding that facts are truths, the deflationist ought to say that talking of the fact that p is talking of the truth that p , not of the proposition $\langle p \rangle$'s being true. So, for the deflationist, what makes $\langle p \rangle$ true is the truth that p , i.e. the true proposition $\langle p \rangle$ itself, rather than a further proposition that attributes truth to $\langle p \rangle$.
2. Moreover, we do not have to turn to something ineligible for truth in order to provide grounds for truths. We may distinguish *two* notions of truthmakers:
 - **non-existential** notion: this is the kind of truthmakers McGrath has been talking until now, i.e. something that accounts for the truth of a proposition. This kind of truthmakers can be only propositions as the accounting for relation is a relation between propositions. No circularity: we are not saying that a truth explains itself, but rather that a truth about, say, snow - that it is white - accounts for a truth about the proposition that snow is white ($\langle \text{snow is white} \rangle$ accounts for $\langle \langle \text{snow is white} \rangle \text{is true} \rangle$).
 - **existential** notion: entity whose existence accounts for the truth of a proposition. McGrath characterizes this notion in terms of the non-existential one: a worldly fact can be said to make a proposition true just in case the proposition that the worldly fact exists accounts for the truth of the proposition.

By adopting the first notion, we halt the regress without appealing to worldly facts. Moreover, it entails that the circumstance explanatory of the truth of $\langle \text{snow is white} \rangle$ is about worldly stuff. This truthmaking circumstance is a proposition.