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INFLATIONARY TRUTH-THEORETIC SEMANTICS

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DISSERTATION
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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

INFLATIONARY TRUTH-THEORETIC SEMANTICS

I argue that satisfaction and reference—and therefore, truth—are multiply realizable properties. I advocate a novel approach motivated by a commitment to the robustness and fruitfulness of truth-theoretic approaches to natural language semantics.

DEFLATIONISM: Philosophers keen on deflating the metaphysical pretensions of truth theories claim that we need not appeal to a substantive truth-property. Recently, however, some philosophers have sought to combine deflationism about truth with the view that our concept of truth or the truth-predicate can play an important role in natural language semantics.

TRUTH-THEORETIC SEMANTICS: The goal of a formal semantic theory of a natural language is to provide both the semantic values of that language's lexically primitive items as well as the semantically significant modes of combining those basic elements into meaningful and more complex expressions. Most approaches have in common a commitment to finite stateability and compositionality as well as a commitment to something like Davidson's "Convention T."

PLURALISM: Pluralists about truth argue that different areas of discourse have different truth-properties. Can pluralism successfully be combined with a commitment to truth-theoretic semantics?

OPEN SEMANTIC FUNCTIONALISM: The pluralist approaches to truth are unsatisfactory for a variety of reasons. The only option, I argue, is to regard truth as multiply-realizable. Specifically, we should view the set of truth's realizers as possessing non-actual members—as being "open." Truth is defined in the usual way in terms of reference and satisfaction, but these latter two relations are to be understood as multiply realizable but open. The property of truth can be specified using the Ramsey/Lewis method. My final view—Open Semantic Functionalism—respects compositionality and finite stateability, avoids triviality, handles plurality, and fits with robust, explanatorily significant natural language semantic theories.

KEYWORDS: Truth, Semantics, Deflationism, Pluralism, Multiple-Realizability

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December 15, 2011

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"Introduction"

Chapter 1.1: Introduction

Davidson's "Truth and Meaning" accomplished two things: first, he initiated and gave confidence to the research program investigating natural language semantics by, secondly, arguing that the form of a theory of meaning for a natural language should take the form of a Tarski-style theory of truth for that language.[1] From the time of its publication the view has generated much debate regarding, among other things, the role of truth in explaining the meaning of sentences of a language L, the nature of the property or properties appealed to in giving a theory of meaning for a language, the nature of the predicate 'x is T' employed in giving a theory of meaning for a language L, as well as the nature of the logical machinery capable of generating the diverse plethora of sentences occurring in natural languages.[2]

Some sides of these debates, Michael Dummett's for example, take their objections to spell doom for Davidson's project.[3] Dummett does not object strictly speaking to the form that the theory of meaning should take, but rather he argues that the realist presuppositions often accompanying the theory of meaning be rejected. Instead one should adopt an account of truth that is not evidence-transcendent, but is instead constrained by the actual evidential conditions in which humans find themselves. Other theorists such as Hartry Field take their objections to highlight ways in which such a

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[1] Davidson (1967).
[2] When confusion cannot result or the context does not require I will drop with reletivization to a language L.
[3] See Dummett (1978).

project can be better understood or carried-out.[4] By this I mean that Field thinks, contra Davidson, that 'truth' ought not be treated as a primitive term. He argues that Tarski succeeded in reducing truth to reference and satisfaction, but that Tarski's reductions cannot be considered finished until 'reference' and 'satisfaction' are successfully reduced to physically respectable properties/relations. Lastly, others such as Hilary Putnam, argue that the truth-theoretic semantic project, if carried out, is trivial at best and unintelligible at worst.[5] It is trivial in that if truth is defined in accordance with the techniques of Tarski, he argues, then the T-sentences it implies are trivial--they follow from the base clauses and logical operations. They are thus theorems, and nothing more.

Beginning in medias res, as we must, I plan to take for granted the plausibility of Davidson's project as outlined in [1967]. For the most serious challenges to the program are not, as I see them, those challenging the connection between truth and meaning, but are rather those seeing the connection between truth and meaning as evident but trivial in some sense. Although the sense in which our understanding of 'truth' is trivial is not singular, the primary thought is that our grasp of truth-locutions can be explained without the metaphysical baggage attending to classical theories of truth. If so, the alleged explanatory weight of truth-conditional semantics is severely compromised.

When I say that I will take for granted the plausibility of the Davidsonian project, I am not taking for granted as much as it might seem. The research of Montague, Lewis, Kaplan, Lepore, Ludwig, and, more recently, Jason Stanley, among many others, shows

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[4] See Field, "On Tarski's Theory of Truth" (1972). Field is an interesting case. In his later writings he eschewed any attempt to give a substantive account of truth, instead embracing deflationism. Nevertheless, he still thinks natural language semantics retains a proper place to truth-conditions. We will return to this below (Chapter 4).
[5] Putnam, "A Comparison of Something with Something Else" (1985).

that the research program has not stalled under the weight of the criticisms. I will to the best of my ability remain neutral about which particular approach to truth-theoretic semantics is the right one. I will, however, not remain neutral on the explanatory ambitions of the theories. The theories purport to capture or model a particular human compency and ought, if understood, be sufficient for interpreting the literal content of what is said on an occasion of utterance by a speaker of a natural language. I need not assume the construction of such a theory is complete. I will assume that the successes of truth-theoretic semanticists in determining the semantic structure of fragments of natural languages means that the theories they construct are substantive. Substantive theories, moreover, must at some point appeal to substantive properties. Chief among these properties is truth.

What must truth be? This question as it stands admits of two interpretations. On the first, we are asking a question about the property of truth. On the second, we are asking a question about the truth predicate (or about the expression 'is true'). According to the former, we are asking about the property predicated of sentences (or propositions or beliefs or utterances at a time), the property figuring into statements to the effect that a sentence has thus-and-such truth conditions.[6] According to the latter, we are asking about the formal properties of a predicate the employment of which makes possible certain sayings and generalizations found in actual discourse. In due course, I will look at both interpretations of the question. Deflationists typically address both concerns. For if truth talk can be explained with a bare minimum of logico-linguistic resources, then we

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[6] I will speak of sentences as the bearers of truth. Most of what follows does not hinge on what one takes as the bearers of truth. The text will make clear when an argument applies to specific truth bearers.

have reason to doubt the existence of any explanatorily significant property sole possession of which by sentence tokens in the language under investigation renders them different in any significant sense than any other sentences of the language. In other words, if truth-talk is merely short-hand of some kind, then any assertorial or implicational differences among sentences is not attributed to its possessing the property of truth, but must be accredited to its possessing some other property or properties, justification, say, or inferential capacity.

As mentioned, however, I will be assuming the correctness of the claim that truth is a principal concept in the theory of meaning. Such an approach has two benefits: it makes my task manageable, by pushing aside related but separate debates about use-theories of meaning, for example, versus truth-conditional theories of meaning; but, more important, it makes possible clearer answers to questions about the nature of truth than have previously been possible. The contemporary debate about the nature of truth among alethic monists and alethic pluralists, for example, has to a large degree been carried on outside the confines of truth-conditional theories of content. Many of the same concerns motivating deflationists also motivate pluralists. What follows can be thought of as at attempt to make good on my initial restriction to working within a broadly truth-conditional approach in that the restraints on adequate truth-conditional accounts of semantic content will also serve as constraints on theories of the terms and properties appealed to in those theories. To the extent to which these constraints are substantial, theories of truth and reference may or may not prove adequate. We can expect to disentangle complicated disagreements and to emphasize commonality while pushing the debate in a direction unavailable to those not adhering to the truth-conditional paradigm.

Conclusions reached from this perspective will not appeal to everyone. Nor will everyone find them convincing. They will not appeal to those independently committed to inferentialism, for example. The considerations covered will appeal, however, to the ever increasing chorus of philosophers who think that one can be both a deflationist about truth and an honest-to-goodness semanticist. Traditional wisdom has it that one cannot do both--that adopting a truth-theoretic understanding of literal content is, ipso facto, to reject deflationism about truth. Lately, the traditional wisdom has been challenged. Addressing that chorus, it will turn out, requires silencing the choir.

What is a formal, truth-theoretic theory of semantic content? A formal theory of meaning for a natural language has two components. One is a formal component, specifying the semantic contributions made to a sentence's truth-conditions (or semantic value) by a sentence's syntactically significant parts. The contributions made to a sentence's truth-conditions is a function of the semantic values of the significant parts of a sentence in addition to a specification of their modes of combination. The second component is a theoretical component, which provides interpretations of the key theoretical terms figuring in the theory: terms such as 'truth', 'reference', 'satisfaction', and so on. It is entirely possible to separate these two components. Many theorists only investigate how an expression contributes systematically to the truth-conditions of sentence of a natural language while taking for granded or treating as primitive the fundamental notions of the theory. Other theorists may only seek to theorize about the natures of the properties appealed to by those other, more formally inclined theorists. My project principally concerns the latter. I will argue both that minimalist and deflationary approaches to truth do not satisfy key restrictions and requirements placed upon formal

semantic theories of natural languages and that they fail to satisfy key restraints of alethic theories. These problems are in addition to problems the theories face independent of their role in accounting for meaning. It is only by attending to both sets of restraints, some of which will be adumbrated below, that we can get clearer on what properties a successful theory of meaning given as a formal theory of truth for a natural language requires.

In my first chapter I will specify the aims of formal semantic theories of natural languages, specifically truth-theoretic, as opposed to, say, model-theoretic, semantic theories. The key properties of formal truth-theoretic semantic theories are the following:

(1) A formal semantic theory of a natural language sheds light on the semantic structure of a language, specifying both the semantic values of the language's syntactically basic constituents and the semantically significant modes of combination of those basic elements.

(2) Some relativized notions of truth, such as 'true-in-a-model' or 'true-in-L', are insufficient on the grounds that a formal semantic theory employing such notions fails to be empirical in an important sense, namely, it fails to allow a theory to be confirmed in the appropriate way.[7]

(3) Reference and satisfaction are important theoretical terms within semantic theories for a language and, as such, require analysis.

It will not be my aim to settle the dispute about which semantic machinery provides the best structure in which to provide the semantics of a natural language. In

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[7] That way turns out not to be from the standpoint of the radical interpreter. A more precise exposition must wait.

general, the constraints on formal semantic theories are constraints on any formal semantic theory. At times, however, the shortcoming particular to one approach, for example, Lewis's indexed approach involving intensions or functions from indexes to truth-values, will be discussed.[8] I will make clear when a shift from the general to the particulars of a formal approach is called for.

The following chapter, chapter 2, specifies the task of a truth-theoretic semantic theory and responds to several common objections and misunderstandings. This is done in an attempt to put my cards on the table and make clear exactly what presuppositions the present position has.

In my third chapter I consider the primary deflationary theories of truth, both from the perspective of a truth theorist and from the perspective of a semantic theorist. A deflationary theory, as opposed to an inflationary theory, maintains one or both of the following two claims: (1) while our truth predicate is extremely useful from a logical point of view, there is no reason to think that there is any property more robust than merely logical properties to be found upon further inspection; and (2) the theory of truth does not say anything, or anything interesting, about the seemingly related areas of meaning theory, epistemology, logical validity, etc.[9]

The key deflationary theories concerning truth (or the truth predicate)[10] are the following: deflationism, minimalism, prosententialism, and the redundancy theory. I will

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[8] See Lewis, "General Semantics" (1972).
[9] The second deflationary claim is sometimes rephrased as the following: (2b) the concept of truth does not have any interesting connections to concepts in other areas, such as meaning theory, knowledge, logical validity, etc.
[10] The difference is important and bears emphasis. Even those theorists arguing that there is no truth property owe an account of why it is we have a truth predicate or, minimally,

outline each of them but will find that each suffers from certain defects, ranging from providing too strong an equivalence relation holding between mentioned sentences of which truth is predicated and their used counterparts, in other words deflationists get the equivalence between the left and right hand sides of T-sentences wrong, on the one hand, to failing to illuminate semantic structure, on the other. The defects will be divided into those arising from without my semantic perspective, that is, those arising from the perspective of giving an adequate theory of truth and those arising from within my semantic perspective.

In chapter four I turn to what I argue are the most promising starts for a formally adequate and substantive theory of truth. These include Horgan et al.'s "contextual semantics," Cory Wright's "minimalism," Michael Lynch's "alethic functionalism," and, finally, Gila Sher's "family" theory of truth.[11] My reasons for choosing these inflationist views, or at least these "non-deflationary" views, and not others is not unprincipled and depends on their *prima facie* satisfaction of several key constraints placed on truth-theoretic semantic theories. Some of these constraints, for example the constraint that truth not be wildly heterogeneous, will have been mentioned before. Other constraints, for example the constraint that inflationary truth theories explain why concepts such as truth, fact, and proposition seem to be "package deal" concepts, concepts which appear to be specifiable only all at once and not one at a time, will be formulated following

what linguistic function a truth predicate serves if it does not express a property (or denote a class, etc.).

[11] Most of these theory names are unsatisfactory. Horgan et al.'s view has gone under different titles. The present one was chosen because it emphasizes the contextual element of truth. However, it is not a semantic theory in the sense of a formal theory. Wright's minimalism, while akin to Horwich's in several respects, clearly diverges enough to warrant a separate name. And in the case of Sher's view, "family" is my moniker. Sher does not provide explicitly a name for her view.

discussion of particular theories. At bottom, what unifies these approaches to truth is the conviction that common sense gets something right about truth and that by attending to this we may get clearer on exactly what truth is. Another advantage of my approach is that "common sense" can get supplemented by theory.

The theories considered in chapter four are "promising starts" only for several reasons, reasons which I make clear as the chapter develops. Suffice it to say now that the general pattern of criticism is that while each theory solves some important problems, no theory solves the same ones and for each theory there is at least one significant problem left unresolved. However, the results of this chapter are not all negative. For it is instructive to see exactly where these theories go wrong. I conclude that chapter with a proposal indicating key constraints *any* satisfactory alethic theory must satisfy. Some will seem familiar from my discussion of Lynch and Wright. Others will be recalled from my introductory discussion of the aims of formal semantic theories. But some are original and highlight the special difficulties faced by platitude-based truth theories.   To prevent the criticism that the suggested constraints are ad hoc, or that I am merely picking and choosing the constraints the various theories get right, I will attempt to motivate each constraint independently of the others and independently, to the extent that it is possible, of any allegiance to a particular theory of truth, to a commitment to realism or anti-realism and to the objectivity of certain discourses.

In my final chapter I put forward my own, admittedly tentative, proposal, constructing a theory satisfying the theoretical constraints just articulated in chapter three, while at the same time rendering formal semantic theories substantive and robust. The upshot of my approach will be that only by considering the role of truth within truth-

theoretic semantic theories can we see that what must be functionally specified is not truth itself but reference (and satisfaction). Lastly I will identify weak points of my view. Chief among them will be the claim that on my view formal semantics is perhaps scientific but not a unified science.[12] According to this criticism, a theory of meaning for a natural language L, having been interpreted as I suggest, breaks down into several discourse dependent theories of meaning for that language, where perhaps the only connections between discourses are the presence of discourse-independent lexical items such as the logical constants. I show that this criticism deserves consideration but also that it strictly does not detract from my version of alethic functionalism. In other words, the objection does not rule out the possibility of a unified semantic theory of a natural language. The trick will be unifying it in a way that does not depend on the nature of truth. The resources of functionalism will prove invaluable here. Second, even if the objection stands, many if not all of the aforementioned aims of a semantic theory for a natural language can still be met. Nothing in the criticism will rule out the utility and informativeness of an approach to meaning appealing to functionally specified semantic properties.

In summary, this dissertation aims to rule out the possibility of being both a deflationist and a good card-carrying truth-theoretic semanticist. Its uniqueness comes from the fact that it places at center stage the recent arguments—used both by deflationists and alethic pluralists—challenging traditional monistic theories of truth. Responding to those arguments from within the confines of a commitment to truth-theoretic semantics provides novel and clear solutions to deflationary worries as well as

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[12] This criticism draws inspiration from Kim (1992).

to the problems raised by the prospect of pluralism with respect to semantic properties. Working within the logical space of a commitment to truth-theoretic semantics will also make possible the positive proposal of Chapter 5, a proposal much more difficult to motivate absent that commitment. The results, then, are conditional on acceptance of truth-theoretic semantics. Nevertheless, I will take pains to indicate avenues of independent motivation for the final view. Exploring those avenues is beyond the scope of the present dissertation but will naturally outline future work to be done in the area.

"Truth-Theoretic Semantic Theories and the Deflationary Challenge"

Chapter 2.1: Introduction

The received wisdom among deflationists is that one cannot consistently both be a deflationist about truth and a proponent of truth-theoretic semantics. Horwich, for example, claimed "that 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."[1] In other words, since deflationism is committed to minimal claims about what it takes to understand the truth of sentences we cannot look to truth, or truth conditions, to help explicate our knowledge of a sentence's of meaning. To do so either requires us to go beyond the minimal essence of truth or to render truth-theoretic semantic theories trivial.[2] Most deflationists have turned to other accounts of sentence meaning. Horwich's position is a use-theory of meaning.[3] Brandom (1994) endorses a conceptual-role or inferential-role account of meaning.[4] But whatever the preferred brand of meaning theory, the point is that deflationists have thought that endorsing deflationism about truth ruled out truth-theoretic semantics as the key to understanding sentence meaning. That is, until recently. In this chapter I articulate the challenge to the claim that one can do both. In section two I will spell out Davidson's conception of a

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[1] Horwich (1998), p. 68.

[2] Rather, it requires us to posit an essence of truth when there is no such essence. Truth is simply a logical device. This will be clarified later.

[3] Horwich writes: "[understanding a sentence] consists…in appreciating the sentence's syntactic structure and understanding its constituent words, which, in turn, consists in knowing the basic regularities of their use" (1998), p. 69.

[4] *Making it Explicit*

theory of meaning in both the broad and narrow senses. Next I will articulate the general

aims of formal semantic theories. In section 4 I will articulate the challenge to the

received view focusing on Michael William's (1999) argument. In section four I will

strengthen his argument so that it applies not only to Davidson's own version of truth-

theoretic semantics with its attendant notion of radical translation but so that it applies to

truth-theoretic semantics more generally conceived.

2.2: Theories of Meaning à la Davidson

Consider the following:

(1) All true sentences and false sentences (or sentences expressing true

propositions and sentences expressing false propositions) are meaningful.

We have reasons for accepting (1). We know that not just any string of symbols counts

as a declarative sentence of English.[5] Not only must we use only symbols currently

employed by English speakers, if we want to speak English as opposed to, say, Greek,

but we must also ensure that we arrange our symbols in intelligible ways, ways

understandable by English speakers. Failure to follow (at least) these two constraints

when attempting to communicate will result in a failure to communicate, a failure to *say*

anything. Therefore, if one has not said anything then one has not said anything true or

false (or one has not expressed any proposition).[6] Prima facie then there is some relation

between meaningfulness and truth.[7] Can more be made of it?

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[5] For the purposes of this argument I will let 'symbol' cover both sequences of sound and
sequences of inscriptions.

[6] For the remainder of this essay I will drop the additional locution 'or expressed a
proposition' when speaking of the truth, falsity, and the bearers of truth and falsity. Only

Before I outline Davidson's program and lay out the specific deflationary challenges to truth-theoretic semantics, let us look at two views, one a very challenge to the project of doing natural language semantics in terms of truth and the other a way not to construct a semantic theory for a natural language. The first view is Quine's. The second view need not be attributed to anyone in particular, although Seuren (1969) defends a version of it. The point of discussing a version of the second view is simply to learn what not to say in the current context.

Quine (1961) notes for a "cleavage" between meaning and reference. The problems of semantics fall into "two provinces so fundamentally distinct as not to deserve a joint appellation at all".[8] As Quine divides the two domains, falling beneath theory of reference are the work of Tarski, specifically, and work on *truth* in general, as well as work on concepts like *naming*, *denotation*, and *extension*. The main topics of theory of meaning, on the other hand, include *synonymy* ("or sameness of meaning"), *significance* ("or possession of meaning"), *analyticity* ("or truth by virtue of meaning"), and *entailment* ("or analyticity of the conditional").[9] Given Quine's misgivings about analyticity and the other related, intensional concepts, we can see why he is skeptical of a theory relating the two in an illumating way.[10] We have, however, already seen at least

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when an argument or position requires propositions as opposed to declarative sentences will I include it. Similar comments apply to the type-token distinction.

[7] Horisk, in "Deflationism, Meaning, and Truth-Conditions" (1999), considers a similar but stronger argument to the effect that since meaning combined with how the world is yields truth (or falsity), truth is inseparable from meaning. Particulars of that argument will be considered below.

[8] Quine (1961: 160).

[9] Ibid.

[10] See Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism."

one relation between significance and truth.[11] Can we make more of the connections than

we can of the cleavage?

Even though Quine conceded that "boundaries between fields are not barriers," if

a concept is *analyzed* using concepts from both fields, says Quine, in the case of the

theory of meaning and the theory of reference, "we should probably reckon the hybrid

concept to the theory of meaning…because the theory of meaning is in a worse state than

the theory of reference, and is consequently the more serious of the two

presuppositions".[12] But consider another possibility. What if a concept from one field

were *explained* using concepts from the other? Or, what if a concept from one domain

were explained using no concepts from the other but only concepts from, say, physics?

Indeed these would be achievements. Would these kinds of explanations be in a better

state than the theory of meaning purportedly is?

One theoretical attempt to bridge the gap by means of focusing on translation

takes its cue from a simple argument. The language in which we give a semantic theory

must have restrictions placed on it. If no restrictions are placed on it, then the task of

giving a semantic theory would be too easy, and trivial. More worrisome, however, is

that this approach fails even when strengthened with plausible restrictions.[13] Let's

assume along with this approach that the task of semantics is to provide a theory that

translates sentences of the object language on the grounds that a translation guide is all

that can be expected a semantic theory to deliver.

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[11] Note also the use of 'truth' in the characterization of analyticity. Though here the truth
of "analytic" sentences is characterized in terms of meaning and not the other way
around.
[12] Ibid.
[13] This is discussed in the introduction to Evans and McDowell, eds., *Truth & Meaning*
(1976).

Without restrictions placed on the translating language, semantic theory would be too easy. The translation relation could be understood as the identity function:

(E) 'Snow is white' gives the meaning of 'snow is white' because 'snow is white' = 'snow is white'.

In addition, then, to requiring that the metalanguage L not be identical to the object language, further constraints might be the following, quoting directly from Evans and McDowell (1976):

(a) "If [an object language sentence] S is meaningful and unambiguous, there is exactly one sentence of L on to which S is mapped."

(b) "If S is n-ways ambiguous, there are n distinct sentence of L on to which S is mapped."

(c) "If S lacks a meaning, there is no sentence of L on to which S is mapped."

(d) "If S entails S', there is an effectively decidable relation which holds between the sentence of L on to which S and S' are respectively mapped."[14]

Aside from the problematic nature of requiring our metalanguage to be free from ambiguity, which (a) – (c) require, and from the conceptual analysis seemingly required by (d), as Evans and McDowell argue, the "whole conception is objectionable…because what we are doing if we engage in this enterprise…serves only to enable us to conceal from our selves our utter incapacity to do what we ought to be doing…[namely] stating what the sentences of the language mean, stating something such that, if someone knew it, he would be able to speak and understand the language."[15] According to Evans and

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[14] Evans and McDowell (1976: viii).
[15] Evans and Mcdowell (1976: ix).

McDowell, however, "translational semantics" fails this to enable us to do "what we ought to be doing." For it is perfectly possible on the translational approach that one could have a competence of the mapping relation that correctly obtains between two sentences but not know what either sentence means. For example, consider the following:

(X) 'La niege est blanche' translates 'Der Schnee ist weiß'.

Unless one already knew either French or German, (X) would be of no help in coming to understand what a competent speaker of either knows.[16]

The translational approach will not do, either in its simplest form or in the strengthened form. What must a semantic theory of a natural language attempt to accomplish? What constraints must be put on a semantic theory of a natural language L so that understanding the semantic theory puts one in a position to understand utterances in L?

Davidson's project is a characteristic attempt to explain meaning in terms of truth or, rather, to trace out the connections between truth and other related notions. At this point it will be useful to introduce a distinction from Davies (1981) because "theory of meaning" is ambiguous. Davies says we need to distinguish:

(1) A (perhaps formalized) theory which, for some particular

language L, yields a meaning specification for each well-

formed sentence of L; that is, a theory which yields a theorem

of the form

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[16] Foster, "Meaning and Truth Theory" (1976) in Evans and McDowell, eds., articulates a similar line about what is required of a semantic theory in terms of requiring that the semantic theory state something knowledge of which puts one in a position to understand the language.

S means (in L) that p

for each sentence s of L;

and

(2) A (discursive) theory which illuminates the concept of

meaning; that is, a philosophical account which analyses

meaning in terms of other concepts, or at least reveals the

location of the concept of meaning with respect to other

concepts.[17]

Let us call, following Davies, a theory of meaning as in (1) a theory of meaning in the

narrow sense and let us call a theory of meaning as in (2) a theory of meaning of the

broad sense.[18] Failure to keep clear on this distinction may give the impression that to

endorse a formal truth-theoretic model of natural language understanding is to endorse an

illumination of meaning in terms of truth. This is exactly the impression some are now

challenging.

Donald Davidson begins "Truth and Meaning" by describing the problem of

giving a satisfactory theory of meaning (narrow sense) as the problem of giving "an

account of how the meanings of sentences depend upon the meanings of words."[19]

"Unless such an account could be supplied for a particular language," Davidson

continues, "…there would be no explaining the fact that, on mastering a finite vocabulary

and finitely stated set of rules, we are prepared to produce and to understand any of a

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[17] Davies (1981: 3).
[18] This terminology is taken from Williams (1999). Where confusion cannot result I will simply us "theory of meaning."
[19] Davidson "Truth and Meaning," (2001: 17).

potential infinitude of sentences."[20] Construing a theory of meaning in this way, that is,

as a theory the understanding of which would account for linguistic competence, places

constraints upon the form an adequate theory of meaning for a particular language can

take. One constraint is that the number of axioms of the theory be finite so that it is

learnable.[21] Another is that the theory have as consequences "all sentences of the form 's

means m' where 's' is replaced by a structural description of a sentence and 'm' is

replaced by a singular term that refers to the meaning of that sentence."[22] Additionally,

we need an effective procedure for arriving at the meaning of any arbitrary sentence

structurally described. Skipping ahead for a moment, we may view the meaning of

sentences as depending on their structure, says Davidson, and we may view the meaning

of each item in the structure as an abstraction from the "totality of sentences" in which it

features.[23] Another way of putting this is to say that the semantic content of an

expression is the systematic contribution it makes to the truth-value of sentences in which

it figures. Continuing the thought, we can give the meaning of a particular sentence only

by giving the meaning of every sentence in the language. To do otherwise would

sacrifice systematicity. How might this be accomplished?

     Consider the following schema, where 's' is to be replaced by a sentence and '*m*'

is a singular term that is supposed to refer to meanings: '*s* means *m*'. Because referring

to meanings is taken to be problematic (for Davidson), we may rid ourselves of this

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Davidson, "Theories of Meaning and Learnable Languages," (2001).

[22] Davidson (2001: 23).

[23] I do not think this is skipping ahead too far. Suffice it to say that Davidson disagrees
with "Building-block" theories. See "Reality Without Reference" (1977) and especially
"Truth and Meaning," (2001: 17-20). I will touch on his argument when considering
objections to his position later.

singular term by writing '*s* means that *p*' and imagine '*p*' replaced by a sentence.[24]

Replacing the "apparently non-extensional" 'means that' improves clarity as well.

Focusing on what is to the left of 'means that' and what is to its right, Davidson notices

that our theory will do its work "if it provides, for every sentence s in the language under

study, a matching sentence (to replace '*p*') that, in some way yet to be made clear, 'gives

the meaning' of *s*."[25] Let us treat the position to the right of 'means that' extensionally.

To do this, says Davidson, will "sweep away the obscure 'means that', provide the

sentence that replaces '*p*' with a proper sentential connective, and supply the description

that replaces '*s*' with its own predicate."[26] '*s* means that *p*' now becomes

(T) *s* is *T* if and only if *p*.

Because we want to place similar restrictions on schema T as we did on '*s* means

p' above, Davidson requires that a theory of meaning for a language L, without appeal to

any other semantical notions, restrict 'is T' to entail all sentences got from the schema

when 's' is replaced by a structural description of a sentence of L and 'p' by that

sentence, when the object language is included in the metalanguage, or by a suitable

translation of 's', when the object language is not included in the metalanguage.[27] The

condition placed on schema T is "in essence Tarski's Convention T that tests the

adequacy of a formal semantical definition of truth."[28] And a theory that meets this

condition will show how the meanings of sentences of a language depend upon the words

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[24] They are problematic for several reasons, according to Davidson. See Davidson's
"Truth and Meaning" (2001).
[25] Davidson (2001: 23).
[26] Ibid.
[27] The possibility that "the object language is included in the metalanguage" will be
critically discussed below.
[28] Davidson (2001: 23).

of the language in terms of the semantic contribution they make to the meaning of the sentence.

The semantic definition of truth for a language L gives necessary and sufficient conditions for the truth of every sentence and thereby makes plain the saying that to give the meaning (broad sense) of a sentence is to give its truth conditions. On this view, words do not have meaning except insofar as they figure in sentences. A charitable way to put this is that words only have meaning insofar as they are capable of systematically contributing to the semantic value of sentences. The more charitable way of putting the matter avoids the simple objection that single words can be meaningful absent their inclusion in sentences and absent their expressing a proposition. For Davidson, we abstract their meaning from the multitude of sentences in which they figure. But to know the ways in which words figure into sentences of a language and to know a semantic concept of truth for that language is to understand the language, says Davidson. So while this position does not exactly destroy the barrier between what Quine called theory of reference and theory of meaning, because the theory of meaning does not make use of 'meaning' or other intensional concepts, the position is plausible enough to encourage a redrawing of the boundaries between meaning and reference and to encourage the thought that the theory of meaning (broad sense) is not in as bad of shape as Quine makes it out to be. It also encourages the idea that by giving a Tarski-style theory of truth as a theory of meaning (narrow sense) helps illuminate theory of meaning (broad sense).

2.3: T-Sentences and the E-Language/I-Language Distinction

Judging from the above picture it appears as if truth must play a central role in accounting for meaning. And as made clear in the introduction, that is an assumption that will not be challenged here. We can still ask, however, whether truth is basic or whether it is analyzable into more basic concepts. One answer, the answer according to Davidson, it that is a primitive term. Tarski, Davidson claims, takes the notion of 'translation' for granted in accounting for truth. Since his procedure begins with stipulative definitions of the primitive terms and their translations into the metalanguage, the resulting T-sentences are guaranteed to be true. The project of natural language semantics, as opposed to the project of constructing a theory of truth for the formal languages that interested Tarski, requires that T-sentences be contingent. Putnam (1985) asks, "Can it really be the case that I learn my native language by learning a bunch of tautologies?" The brief answer is 'no.'[29] Consider the classic T-sentence:

(S) 'snow is white' is true if and only if snow is white

We have three options when interpreting the expression " 'snow is white' ." It can be a quotation of a sentence, a name of a sentence, or a structural description of a sentence. Tarski preferred not to use "quotation-functions" in his definitions of truth-in-L for a particular artificial language L because they allow us to derive the antinomy of the liar—without even using the expression 'true sentence', no less.[30] Our concern is with the semantics of *natural* languages. Hence if natural languages, being semantically closed, are inconsistent then we cannot rule out the possibility that T-sentences are best

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[29] Putnam offers this line of thought as a criticism of basing a program for understanding natural languages in a Tarskian way, as if no changes would be made to Tarski's assumption when bringing his logical machinery to bear on the semantics of natural language. See his "A Comparison of Something with Something Else," (1985). More will be said on this mistake when I discuss deflationism.

[30] Tarski (1956: 161-2).

understood as employing quotation-forming devices, even if the language is inconsistent.[31] When I discuss deflationary theories in the next chapter we will see that the options for interpreting T-sentences is not limited to the choices listed above. This is not to say that they must only express extensional equivalence. It may even be that they are nomically necessary or even intensionally equivalent. The important point not to note is that T-sentences be contingent for the semanticist taking them as testable implications of her theory.

Is there an argument that they should be contingent? In the case of (S), it is evident that there exist possible worlds where snow is white but where 'snow is white' is false, namely, those worlds where 'snow is white' does not mean that snow is white. Even if the meanings of some terms, presumably the natural kind terms, is tied to the environment such that a different environment would automatically entail a divergence in meaning, there is nothing necessary about our decision to use 'snow', for example, to pick out that stuff. Putnam's own example of 'water' is enough—same string of symbols, but different extensions in different possible worlds. On the assumption that a difference in extension entails a difference in meaning, 'water' means something else on twin earth as it does on earth.[32]

But what if we relativize truth to particular languages so that instead of (S) we get the following:

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[31] Tarski was also concerned because quotation-functions are not extensional. The issue of whether one can give a satisfactory, extensional account of quotation I will not settle here. Davidson thought his view required an extensional account of quotation-formation and attempted to give one. See Davidson's "Quotation" and "On Saying That", reprinted in Davidson (2001).

[32] See Putnam's "The Meaning of 'Meaning'" (1975: 172), reprinted in M. Davidson, ed. (2007), where he keeps this traditional assumption. References are to the reprint.

(S*) 'snow is white' is true-in-English if and only if snow is white.

Could it be the case that snow does not fall within the extension of 'x is snow' but yet 'snow' be still an English word? This is not a point about ambiguous words or homonyms. Although it is doubtful whether languages are static, unchanging entities, it is not doubtful that we English speakers could decide to begin using 'snow' to mean something other than it does now and that, if everything else remained unchanged, we would not thereby be correctly described as deciding to adopt a new language. We've simply modified our language. No doubt a sufficient number of such changes would amount to the adoption of a new language and while the line here is vague, a paradigmatic case of language change this is not.

Maybe what I did in the above was to overlook a difference in time. Taking note of this we could relativize truth to times so that we get the following:

(S**) 'snow is white' is true-in-English-at-a-time-t if and only if snow is white.

Note quickly that there is a difference between taking an utterance to be true as uttered by a speaker at a time t and relativizing the truth-predicate to languages at a time. The former option is intended to prevent the same sentence from being both true and false at the same time. 'Clinton is the President' was true in 1994 but not in 2002. But if we treat sentences as being uttered at a time then we can avoid this problem because a true and a false utterance of 'Clinton is the President' will have to occur at different times. But the latter option puts us into difficult terrain. Is the language we take to be English now the same language called 'English' 30 years ago? 100 years? Perhaps languages will be demarcated along a temporal dimension. Doing so may only exacerbate the demarcation problem with respect to languages. Although I will not be offering an

account of the conditions under which a language is the same as or different from any other, the issue is not a special problem for my view. Theorists who conceive of languages as abstract entities, such as Davies, a view according to which T-sentences come out as necessary truths, are going to have a similar problem when they begin to give criteria for when a speaker is speaking one language as opposed to another. And vagaries associated with demarcating languages at times is also going threaten when specifying what language at what time a speaker is employing. Hence, from the perspective of natural language semantics we will do well to start by respecting the requirement that T-sentences be contingent. As the demarcation problem for linguistic boundaries affects both approaches, it is not a special problem for the approach taken for granted here.

To drive this point home consider two sample languages, L1 and L2. The languages will both be first-order languages without devices of quotation. Both have exactly the same Grammar (Lexicon and Syntax) but we will assume that we do not have theories of their semantic content (truth theories).

Grammar for both L1 and L2

Lexicon

  N → Julie, Sam, Bob

  V → is a tree, is a human, is green, is snow

  Conj → and

Rules

  S → N V

  S → S conj S

Both L1 and L2 are infinite languages because they both possess the iterative conjunction 'and' with a recursive rule for constructing items of type S from other items of type S. Let us now suppose that for each language we have a semantic theory which has as consequences all sentences of the form:

's' is true if and only if s

Now let us take an example of a consequence of one of the semantic theories for L1 or L2:

(X) 'Sam is a tree' is true if and only if Sam is a tree.

Is (X) true? Answer: we don't have enough information. We do not have enough information even to tell whether (X) is derivable from L1 and not L2 or vice versa. Until we are supplied with a semantics for both L1 and L2, then for all we know (X) could be true or false for each of L1 or L2. It *seems* true because the meta-language is (a fragment of) English and 'Sam is a tree' is also a sentence formulable by English speakers.[33] But we cannot know until we have an interpretation of the language.

Matters are worse still. Even with an interpretation we cannot be sure, just from the T-sentence alone, whether it is true or not. We have to know whether the expression " 'Sam is a tree'," which is formulable in both languages, as it occurs in a T-sentence, is in fact a sentence of L1 or of L2. The form of the sentence by itself will not tell us. Thus, even if we know that in L1 'Sam' refers to Sam, that an object satisfies 'x is a tree' if and only if it is a tree, and that Sam in fact is a tree, we still do not have enough information to know whether (X) is true. For it might be possible that in L2 'Sam' refers

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[33] We also have no way of knowing whether truth in either L1 or L2 is disquotational.

to Sam, that an object satisfies 'x is a tree' if and only if it is a human, and Sam in fact is a tree. Therefore, we can know the grammar and semantics of a language and still not be in a position to evaluate a T-sentence containing a sentence of that language on its left-hand side because sentence types can belong to more than one language.

But what if we relativize truth to a language, as Tarski does? If we relativize truth to a language, then the two above T-sentences would not be T-sentence of either the semantics for L1 or for L2. The proper form of a T-sentence would involve 'true-in-L1' for L1 and 'true-in-L2' for L2. Davidson has a reason for rejecting this: in order for the theory to be empirical, we have to drop Tarski's relativization to a specific language. Davidson, however, had a more narrow notion of empirical than many writing today. We will not here place restrictions on what counts as empirical or non-empirical, preferring not to wade into that thick debate. For present purposes it will suffice to say that whatever notion is employed by the successful practitioners of theoretical semantics will count as an available option to be explored.

Up till now I have been taking for granted the notion of a language and treating it as uncontroversial. The object of study for semanticists is natural language. But what exactly is a natural language and do different ways of understanding what language is affect the structure of formal truth-theoretic semantic theories? Or, could different understandings of language affect the very viability of a formal approach to semantics? In this section I present a common, philosophical account of language and how it relates to formal semantics. I then present objections to this account from Chomsky. I conclude by borrowing a reply from Ludlow to the effect that referential semantics can still go on under the guise of an understanding of natural languages as I-languages. The point that

emerges is not to endorse Ludlow's approach, but rather to signal the fact that pejorative 'E-language' monikers and the charge of abstractness do not spell doom for semantics in general or for my project in particular. I see them rather as an attempt to keep philosophers of language honest.

Martin Davies offered a highly influential specification of the object of natural language semantic analysis. According to Davies (1982), languages are abstract objects. A theory of meaning in a narrow sense is a theory of meaning for such abstract languages couched in the metalanguage in which we are giving the theory. The connection made to actual languages is carried out via a "propositional attitude constraint (PAC)." The rough constraint is as follows: "If members of a population G share a language L in which [a sentence] s means that p then those members can use utterances of s to express their belief that p."[34] Although it employs a concept of a propositional attitude, namely, belief, the constraint produces an account of "what it is for L to be the actual language of G." Without a PAC of this kind, Davies argues, a theory of meaning in the narrow sense will not allow an interpretation of foreign utterances to which it applies because we as interpreters will not be licensed to describe those foreign utterances as utterances of the language for which we have our meaning theory. Davies goes on to describe what is needed specifically as a "theory of force," which "licenses redescription of utterances, performed by members of [linguistic community] G, as linguistic acts of various kinds" and "specifies for each utterance type a sentence in [the target language] L."[35] The

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[34] Davies (1981: 7).
[35] Davies (1981: 8). Davies says he borrows the phrase 'theory of force' from McDowell (1976).

details of the theory of force are not important for the present investigation. We turn now to a criticism of philosophical semantics of the above variety.

Chomsky's criticisms of truth-theoretic or referential semantics takes off from the observation that while there is an "intuitive common-sense" concept of language, that ordinary concept breaks down when we begin inquiring into the nature of language.[36] Some of the reasons it breaks down have already been mentioned above. Nevertheless, the general practice has been, thinks Chomsky, to replace the ordinary concept of language with a definition of 'language' as what Chomsky calls "E-language," where an E-language is "a set of object of some kind, and it is "externalized" in the sense that language, so defined, is external to the mind/brain."[37] Such a conception matches the conception of Davies, just outlined. But there are problems with such a conception, argues Chomsky. First, such a language is "ill-defined." Many utterances, such as "the child seems sleeping," neither clearly fall within the language nor without the language. "The fact is that a speaker of English, Japanese, or whatever, has developed a system of knowledge that assigns a certain status to a vast range of physical events, and no concept of E-language," bets Chomsky, "nor any construct developed from it, is likely to be able to do justice to this essential fact."[38]

Second, worries Chomsky, there are several "grammars" that in principle can yield the target sentences of an E-language. The facts that distinguish what grammar what individual possess is a fact about the mind/brain, about the natural cognitive endowment of an individual human being. "But sets," Chomsky continues, "are not in

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[36] Chomsky (1990), reprinted in Martinich, ed. (2001). References are to the reprint. See also Chomsky (1995).
[37] Chomsky (2001: 582).
[38] Chomsky (2001: 583).

the mind/brain, and grammars can be chosen freely as long as they enumerate the E-language, so the study of E-language, however constructed, does not seem to bear on the truth about speakers of English and Japanese; it is not, even in principle, part of the natural sciences, and one might argue that it is a pointless pursuit, a kind of chasing after shadows."[39]

The final worry is that since E-languages are abstract, formal objects, and as such have their properties formally. Questions about their formal properties, questions such as whether they are "context-free, or recursive, or denumerable," are asked, but Chomsky thinks it is far from clear that these questions are even meaningful. Natural languages are not abstract, formal objects. Is it meaningful to ask of them whether they are denumerably infinite? Can an item in the mind/brain of an individual be said to be context-free?

Given these worries, or problems, Chomsky thinks it better to replace the concept of language as E-language with that of I-language. The I-language is

"…a system represented in the mind/brain, ultimately in physical mechanisms that are now largely unknown, and is in this sense *internalized*; a system that is *intensional* in that it may be regarded as a specific function considered in intension—that is, a specific characterization of a function—which assigns a status to a vast range of physical events…" Chomsky (2001: 585, emphasis in original).

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[39] Ibid.

Must the truth-theoretic semanticist yield to these considerations the hope of articulating a theory of meaning for a language *L* knowledge of which suffices an interpreter to understand the utterances of L? At this point we will turn to Ludlow's "Referential Semantics and I-Languages."[40] Ludlow begins by delineating the different types of semantic projects in which one can engage. Likewise, there are three types of "reference" to characterize. Going over this will be key to seeing later exactly what kind of truth-theoretic semantic theory emerges once the deflationary challenges are addressed. Three possible reference relations are characterized below. The list is not intended to be exhaustive of the space of logical possibilities.

(i) R^0: Reference obtains between linguistic items and "internal representations." "Providing a semantics for a natural language expression (syntactic form)," writes Ludlow of referential semantics in this sense, "requires that one provide a mapping of that expression (form) onto some representation which in some sense encodes the meaning of the expression."[41]

(ii) R^1: The reference of a terms consists in a "direct (perhaps causal" relation between that term and the world."[42]

(iii) R^2: The reference of a term is "…a four-place relation that involves the speaker, the expression used, context, and aspects of the world."[43]

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[40] Ludlow (2003).
[41] Ludlow (2003: 141).
[42] Ludlow (2003: 142).
[43] Ibid.

Theorists employing the R^0 notion of reference would include those adhering to "translational semantics," already discussed above, and, according to Ludlow, even model-theoretic semanticists such as Montague.[44] The R^1 and R^2 senses of 'reference' do issue in language/world connections and will be the focus here as it is in Ludlow's paper. One way to see the difference between R^1 and R^2 is that on an R^1 account it is words that refer while on the R^2 account it is speakers who use words in a context to refer.

Ludlow takes R^2 to the central notion employed within semantics, even though he thinks that Chomsky's target is R^1 theories. I-languages must be understood individualistically, and can be considered "independently of the environment that the agent is embedded in," observes Ludlow.[45] Hence, as we have already noticed, I-languages seem to be the only sort of language that is suitable to be the object of linguistic inquiry. But the question is whether we can have an R^2-referential semantics for an I-language? Ludlow thinks in general that a semantic theory will be pre-theoretically reasonable provided that it avoids the R^1 notion of reference and adheres to the R^2 notion. To see why, we need say a bit more about the two kinds of potential investigations, individualistic and relational (non-internalist) investigations, which broadly corresponds to I-language and E-language, respectively.

Ludlow echoes Chomsky in pointing out that individualistic and relational investigations can inform one another and that the latter often presupposes the former.[46] If this is true, then our knowledge of the environment can inform our knowledge of I-language just as sciences carefully can inform other sciences in other areas. But

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[44] Ludlow rightly notes that the claim that model-theoretic semantics doesn't issue in language/world relations is controversial. See Ludlow (2003: 141).
[45] Ludlow (2003: 143).
[46] Ludlow (2003: 144-5).

Chomsky already admits this, and Ludlow quotes Chomsky himself in backing this minor point up, what's the big deal? It all hinges, thinks Ludlow, on how we interpret the fourth part of the R2-relation, namely, "aspects of the world" and to what extent we accept a language/world isomorphism (LWI).[47] LWI is basically the idea that "there is an isomorphism holding between logical form and the world."[48] The logical form is revealed through analysis and is not to be confused with the surface structure of sentences. Chomsky's various arguments against E-languages are not really arguments against an R2-semantics, but are arguments against semantic theories that employ language/world isomorphism.[49] To see why, let's take a quick glance at one of the kind of arguments that Ludlow reviews of Chomsky, namely, the "Implausible Commitments Argument," which is aimed to show that the kind of ontology we would predict on the basis of a referential semantics does not appear to track our intuitions about the kinds of things we are really talking about. According to Chomsky, a referential semantics would be ontologically committed to items of which we should be suspicious. Chomsky's own example is the following:

(C) "The flaw in the argument is obvious…"[50]

Are we to take the superficial similarity of 'The flaw' in (C) the same way we take a definite description as in "The coat in the closed?" If so, we look committed to the existence of flaws. The examples can be multiplied. The problem, Ludlow is right to point out, that Chomsky sees with admitting this to our ontology does not fall out from a

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[47] Ludlow (2003: 145).
[48] Ludlow (2003: 145).
[49] Ludlow (2003: 146).
[50] Chomsky (1981: 324). Mentioned in Ludlow (2003: 147).

commitment to referential semantics per se, but rather to a referential semantics that is committed to LWI.

Ludlow lists three possible positions one can take in reply to Chomsky's arguments, one of which he endorses. First, one could retain the notion of I-language as the only serious candidate for study along with R^2-reference to genuine physical substances but give up the idea of language/world isomorphism. The second option is to retain the language/world isomorphism and genuine physical substances but give up the central notion of I-language. And, finally, and most controversially, give up the idea that the only substances that are genuinely existing items in the fabric of our universe must be physicalistic, retain the language/world isomorphism and the R^2-semantics. To give up the idea that all substances of physical is to "set aside the exclusive claim of the physical sciences on our ontology…"[51]

We need not here assess the extent to which Ludlow's own accepted third option is the correct one. We need only point out that there are options for retaining I-languages, escaping Chomsky's criticisms, while still engaging in the project of natural language semantics. At points later in this dissertation we will have opportunity to look at a few of these points in greater detail.

2.4: Tarski: Deflationist?

Can we hold that all there is to understanding truth is understanding the triviality of T-sentences or the logical device by means of which we can construct T-sentences? Deflationists endorse the idea that there is nothing substantive to explain when explaining

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[51] Ludlow (2003: 153).

truth (or the use made of the truth predicate). But does deflationism require that there be a single, simple concept of truth? Let us turn this thought around. Can truth be as fundamental and non-substantive as deflationists make it out to be?

In, "The Folly of Trying to Define Truth," Davidson characterizes part of the history of philosophy as the attempt to take certain concepts for granted as we explain other phenonema or concepts in terms of those taken for granted. Plato, Davidson says, worries about warrant but does not worry about the involvement of knowledge with truth and belief. Hume forgets for the moment his skepticism about the external world when working out his doubts about other minds. The lesson to be learned from this, says Davidson, is that "however feeble or faulty our attempts to relate these various basic concepts to each other, these attempts fare better, and teach us more, than our efforts to produce correct and revealing definitions of basic concepts in terms of clearer or even more fundamental concepts."[52] Note the contrast, on the one hand, between taking a particular concept, not necessarily a simple or straightforward concept, for granted and, on the other hand, trying to reduce, to analyze or to explain a concept in terms even clearer and fundamental. Why should we expect such an analysis or reduction?

These thoughts lead directly to an important result of Tarski's about truth, namely, that it is an indefinable concept. Truth is not defined. Rather, truth-in-L for a particular language *L* is defined. Tarski showed that there can be no definition of 'For all languages *L*, and all sentences *s* in *L*, *s* is true in *L* if and only if…*s*…*L*…'.[53] A failure to appreciate this point leads purported definitions of truth into paradox. Deflationism then,

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[52] Davidson (2001: 624).
[53] Davidson (2001: 629).

construed as the view that the truth predicate cannot be substantively and consistently characterized, is not supported by Tarski's work because there is no one truth predicate.

Two options seem available here to objectors. The first is to maintain, in the face of Tarski's own insistence to the contrary, that Tarski was not doing semantics. Yet this does not support deflationism for "it simply denies the relevance of Tarski's results to the ordinary concept of truth."[54] So, "if…one takes Tarski's truth definitions to say something about the relations of specific languages to the world, one cannot at the same time claim that he has told us all there is to know about the concept of truth, since he has not told us what the concept is that his truth definitions for particular language shave in common."[55]

But the indefinability of truth "does not mean we can say nothing revealing about it: we can," Davidson continues, "by relating it to other concepts like belief, desire, cause, and action. Nor does the indefinibility of truth imply that the concept is mysterious, ambiguous, or untrustworthy."[56] That we can say no more about truth is supported by its disquotational feature and the idea that there may be no more to truth than this feature. We can say more, argues Davidson. Questions of meaning and of truth are not separate. The disquotational feature of truth may suggest that truth is trivial and thus that the theory of meaning, for example, is separate—separate, that is, if questions of meaning are not also trivial. While I will not offer arguments here for Davidson's thesis regarding truth definitions and theories of meaning, I will point out that if that project proves successful then truth will have been shown not to be as trivial a concept as

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[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Davidson (2001: 625).

deflationists intend. Perhaps then the debate will shift to the deflationary character of meaning. In any case, if there is no single, simple concept of truth to define, and meaning is best characterized in terms of truth-conditions a la Davidson, then many of the same reasons for rejecting a simple deflationary account of truth will, ipso facto, be reasons for rejecting a simple deflationary account of meaning.

This section was not meant as an argument for the claim that one cannot be a deflationist. It is intended to suggest that Tarski's work does not by itself support deflationism construed as the claim that all there is to truth is captured by a single, consistent, characterization of the truth-predicate. So, if Tarski's work does not support deflationism, can the two be combined? Can one take Tarski as one's starting point for semantics and endorse deflationism about truth? To this I now turn.

2.5: A Challenge to the Received View

With our characterization of truth-theoretic semantics in hand and several challenges address and discussed, let us now turn to Michael Williams' (1999) argument for the consistency of deflationism about truth and Davidson-style natural language semantics. Deflationists make two claims about truth-talk: first, it "is wholly expressive, thus never explanatory;" and, second, truth-talk achieves its expressive aims by means of "logico-linguistic means."[57] Instead of appealing to a property *truth*, deflationists restrict their attention to talk about the (or a) truth predicate. Williams aims to show that this, a predicate with certain expressive powers, is all that's needed to accept Davidson's theory

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[57] Williams (1999: 547).

of meaning (broad and narrow senses). The first part of his argument is negative. To it I turn first.

Davidson, according to Williams, thinks it common among deflationists not only to place t-sentences at the forefront of truth theories but also to maintain that Tarski has told us all there is to know about truth. However, Davidson (2001), as we have already seen, claimed that Tarski could not have told us everything there is to know about truth because Tarski in fact didn't define 'truth', instead he defined 'true-in-L' for a particular language L. Furthermore, granting we have a general procedure the employment of which guarantees that we can formulate a truth-predicate for another particular language, we still have not been told what the various truth-predicates defined in this way have in common.

Williams responds to this "misleading" claim and provides what he thinks can unify the various truth-predicates, namely, the fact that all satisfy Tarski's material adequacy condition. The material adequacy condition, according to Tarski, connects his truth-predicates with our intuitive conception of truth (1944?). Williams also take it to specify a necessary and sufficient condition on a predicate's counting as a truth predicate. Read this way we must take the schema in the following way:

(T) s is _____ if and only if p

where 's' stands for a structural description of an object language sentence and 'p' is a translation of that sentence into the metalanguage. Any predicate qualifies as a truth

predicate when and only when it is such that its substitution into the blank in (T) renders all the resulting substitution instances true.[58]

While Davidson thinks that convention-T (the material adequacy condition) doesn't by itself explain what truth-definitions have in common, and is thus a ground for rejection deflationism, Williams thinks that they do show, all by themselves, the utility of having a device such as the truth-predicate adding to the expressive resources of our language.[59] If Williams is to be right about this then each and every use of the truth-predicate must be explicable by appeal to the logical resources of our language plus the truth-predicate. This has yet to be demonstrated. But his argument at this point is just that Tarski's truth-definitions or convention-T show more than Davidson is willing to allow but not more than is required of deflationism, i.e., more than the delineation of functional, logical device. Convention-T, Davidson's requirement that a meaning theory entail all instances of the T-schema, while not explaining what all truth definitions have in common, do show us the utility of having a device adding to the expressive resources of our language, claims Williams.[60] Davidson's first reason for rejecting deflationism, namely, that deflationists don't get support from Tarski, thinks Williams, is not entirely right.

Davidson, in addition to rejecting deflationism for its alleged misguided reliance on Tarski, has another reason. Consider two kinds of truth theories: homophonic truth theories and heterophonic truth theories. In a 'homophonic' truth theory, where the object language is contained in the metalanguage, Davidson thinks that Convention T

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[58] Horwich (1990) takes this to show that an understanding of truth is already implicit in our understanding of the T-schema.
[59] Williams (1999: 550).
[60] A claim which will be made more precise in the next chapter.

tells us something about the truth predicate, but not much about the concept expressed by it. In other words, we can see the utility of having the predicational device but do not thereby come to learn anything about the concept of truth. A heterophonic truth theory, on the other hand, is a truth theory where the object language is not contained in the metalanguage. In this case, in order correctly to apply the truth-predicate to a sentence of the object language we must depend on the concept of translation. For Davidson, the concept of translation is conceptually prior to our concept of truth in the sense that one must first have a concept of translation in order to apply our concept of truth to a foreign object language sentence (again, in the heterophonic case).[61] What does this mean? It means that if one takes all there is about truth from Tarski and then wants to go on to give a theory of truth, deflationary or otherwise, that applies to foreign utterances as well as to native utterances (in the heterophonic as well as homophonic cases) then we will face a vicious dilemma: either we restrict ourselves to homophonic cases and not know much about the concept or we can expand our reach to the heterophonic cases at the cost of facing a vicious explanatory circularity. A deflationist may decide only to restrict attention to the homophonic cases. To the extent that he or she does, his or her theory will be incomplete. Hence, claims Davidson, deflationism is inconsistent with a general theory of the concept of truth provided it relies only on what Tarski tells us about truth.

Williams has a response. First he notes that Field has a version of deflationism called "pure disquotationalism" according to which truth is characterized syntactically and hence does not presuppose a concept of translation.[62] If that theory works, then one

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[61] Williams (1999: 550). He refers to Davidson (1990: 296n33).
[62] Field (1994). It should be noted however that Field does admit that his version of disquotationalism must rely on a concept/notion of "cognitive equivalence." This notion

horn of Davidson's dilemma is avoided. The other horn is avoided if pure

disquotationalism can be extended to cover the heterophonic cases and according to

which truth can be explained in wholly disquotational terms. Williams does not

necessarily think that this can be accomplished. His point is that Davidson's argument by

itself gives no reason to think so. And even though Field himself admits that his version

of disquotationalism does not work in the heterophonic case, we should not conclude that

no version of disquotationalism can work.[63] In sum, Davidson's arguments and approach

to meaning give us no reason to think that any extended notion of truth applying in both

the homophonic and heterophonic cases can be explained without appeal to "some richer-

than-disquotational truth concept."[64]

Let's turn now to his positive argument. Williams, following Davies (1981)

distinguishes two senses of theory of meaning: a broad sense and a narrow sense.

Williams argues that the theory of interpretation (theory of meaning broad sense) does

not require a richer-than-disquotational notion of truth and that the theory of meaning

(narrow sense) does not either. If this can be shown, then there is no inconsistency in

being both a deflationist about truth and a good card-carrying truth-theoretic semanticist.

Williams think Davidson exhibited a confusion in "Truth and Meaning" when

there he claimed that we cannot both treat a Tarski-style truth definition as an empirical

theory of meaning for a natural language and as telling us about truth because we cannot

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will be discussed and contrasted with the concept of translation (as it figures in Davidson)
in the next chapter when I discuss deflationism. Suffice it now to say that Field thinks
the two notions distinct and that the former does not have the worrisome issues with
circularity.

[63] One such version with the alleged virtue of applying in the heterphonic case, a version
of extended disquotationalism, is the more recent Ebbs (2009).

[64] Williams (1999: 552).

assume an ability to recognize what T-sentences to count as correct.[65] This is because the

radical interpreter must determine what alien utterances are true or, rather, held-true. For

this reason, Davidson cannot view T-sentences as partial definitions of truth in the way

Tarski talks. But, questions Williams, are we really forced to choose between taking

truth for granted to explain meaning or taking translation (which involves a concept of

meaning or synonymy for granted? No, he thinks, because having a prior grasp of truth

does not imply that the function of truth is to be *explanatory* of meaning. Hence such

theories could still tell us about meaning and truth, although they could not tell us

everything about truth. Something, it seems, is better than everything.

So far the arguments from Williams concern how to take Tarski's formal theory

of truth as well as Davidson's Convention T. Yet Davidson also believed that one

justifies a particular truth theory for a particular language L from the standpoint of the

radical interpreter. If Davidson's program is genuinely consistent with deflationism, then

so too must be the procedure and methodology of the radical interpreter. Again, we find

Williams claiming that the "canons of interpretation" and the "constraints laid down by

those canons" do not make use of a richer-than-disquotational notion of truth.[66]

According to Williams, Davidson's views on interpretation, i.e., meaning in the broad

sense, are consequences of his holism. Holism, specifically semantic holism, is the view

that the semantic content of an expression is a function of its semantic contribution to the

totality of sentences of the language in question in which it figures. Regarding his

"principle of charity," he says that "We can…take it as given that *most* beliefs are

correct. The reason for this is that a belief is identified by its location in a pattern of

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[65] Williams cites Davidson's own admission in (1990: 286).
[66] Williams (1999: 559).

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beliefs; it is this patter that determines the subject matter of the belief, what the belief is about."[67] The point just made about the identification of the propositional content of beliefs goes to for the semantically significant components making them up. This holism gives rise to certain constraints on interpretation. The first mentioned by Williams is that, according to Davidson, "we must find semantic structure—logical form—in the sentences of our target language."[68] If words only have meaning in the context of a sentence, then sentences, and hence T-sentences, become the focus of theories of interpretation.[69] Tarski showed us how to do this—find structure in the sentences of our target language—with the help of reference and satisfaction, which we need to give a first-order logical account. Choosing to work within the strictures of first-order logic, says Williams, does not require a richer-than-disquotational notion of truth.

The second constraint is "charity:" "We must take the beliefs of anyone we are trying to interpret to be, on the whole, true."[70] On the interpretation of Williams, charity has three dimensions: the first is that it requires consistency, the second dimension is the view that our own beliefs are the guide or basis for interpreting the beliefs of others, and the third is that we are "attributing true beliefs in certain methodologically basic cases."[71] The first dimension requires that we have an account of logical form. Logical form, Williams has already maintained, can be captured by a disquotational notion of truth. Hence that first dimension poses no problem for him. The second dimension, he

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[67] Davidson (2001: 168).
[68] Williams (1999: 560).
[69] One is reminded of Frege's so-called "context principle:" "The meaning of a word must be asked for in the context of a proposition, not in isolation" (Frege 1997: 90). I here ignore issues of the extent to which Davidson's holism is similar to or derives from either Frege's or a Fregean inspired views.
[70] Williams (1999: 560).
[71] Williams (1999: 562).

maintains, only requires agreement, and presumably an account of agreement does not require a richer-than-disquotational notion of truth. The third dimension can be seen only to require the generalizing feature of the truth-predicate. In order to base our account on methodologically basic cases, we must be able to generalize from them. The generalizing feature of the truth-predicate is the chief expressive aim achieved by it. Hence, this dimension of charity is the most easily captured by non-inflationary notion of truth.

Charity is not without controversy. Lepore and Ludwig, in *Donald Davidson: Meaning, Truth, Language, and Reality*, argue that Davidson really doesn't need charity so much as he needs a stronger principle, namely, a principle of grace.[72] Grace is the following:

(Grace) *Ceteris paribus*, when we replace '*p*' in (S)

(S) *S* believes at [a time] *t* that *p*

with a sentence that expresses the content of an environmentally prompted

belief of *S*'s, the sentence expresses also a condition in *S*'s environment

that prompts that belief.

If they are correct, then this principle assumes something pretty anti-deflationist, namely theoretically significant talk of environmental prompting. If talk of environmental prompting is required for a revised principle of charity and a principle of charity is a necessary condition on carrying out the program of confirming Tarski-style theories of truth for a natural language (from the standpoint of the radical interpreter), then something stronger than mere disquotational truth is required. Owing to the facts that radical interpretation is not typically a central feature of truth-theoretic semantics

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[72] Lepore and Ludwig (2005: 194).

anymore, if it ever was, and that Davidson himself never considered the revised principle of charity, we may set this minor response aside.

If Williams is right, then one can engage in Davidsonian semantics, both the broad and narrow senses of doing theory of meaning, without employing a richer-than-disquotational notion of truth. In face, Williams concludes, "Davidsonian theories of meaning offer a way of moving from pure to extended disquotational truth."[73] Whether that is the case remains to be seen. But the upshot is clear. If the Davidson's project is viable, then the inflationary truth theorist loses one more tool in her arsenal. If, on the other hand, tradition had it right all along, then the success of truth-theoretic semantics is a mark in favor of inflationism. The extent to which this undermines one's inflationary ambitions will be the extent to which one thinks the primary motivation for an inflationary view of truth arises from the success of truth-theoretic semantics. The stakes, therefore, may vary. If one is already committed to a use-theory of meaning of Brandom's sort, then one may think the stakes are not that high. One may, on the other hand, think along with Devitt that "The attempt to motivate truth should not be located in psychology, and its focus should not be on behavior. The attempt should be in semantics, which is not part of psychology, and is focus should be linguistic symbols."[74] If so, the stakes are high. This dissertation will have most significance for the latter. It should be noted, however, that we will learn lessons applicable to anyone either engaging in a version of truth-theoretic semantics or engaging in the construction of a theory of truth. These are not unimportant consequences.

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[73] Williams (1999: 564).
[74] Devitt (1991: 101).

One last thing to notice about Williams' argument as I have presented it is that he focuses entirely on disquotationalism and not other versions of deflationism. If Williams is right, however, about Davidson's program not requiring a richer-than-disquotational notion of truth, then one may wonder the extent to which other versions of deflationism fare as theories of the predicate figuring into the formal apparatus of that program. To that issue I turn in the next chapter, in which I also then evaluate Williams' argument as well as the prospects that other versions of deflationism hinder the inflationary pretensions of truth-theoretic semantics. I will first summarize the primary deflationary condenders and then turn to Williams anti-inflationary argument.

A second and final thing to keep in mind is that challenges to the Davidsonian project can come in four general varieties: (1) challenges to the view that Davidson's project as it stands is inconsistent with deflationism; (2) challenges to the quantificational apparatus of standard versions of truth-theoretic semantics (substitutional versus objectual); (3) (quantification having been settled) challenges to the robustness of the required referential or satisfaction relation; and (4) challenges to the viability of the project (whether consistent with deflationism or not). As the task of this dissertation assumes that the project is a viable one, I here ignore the fourth challenge. That still leaves, however, three challenges of which only two have been mentioned. We have yet to mention the second, namely, a challenge to the objectual quantification involved in the construction of formal theories of truth for a language L. That challenge will be addressed when I come to discuss and evaluate the particular versions of deflationism requiring substitutional quantification. Not all do require it, and as the things I have to say there do not provide general constraints that any theory of meaning in the broad or

narrow sense must satisfy, a separate section will not be devoted to it. To the principal

versions of deflationism I now turn.

"The Deflationary Challenge"

3.1: Introduction

'Deflationism' is a label applied to a group of theories, many of which have little in common besides their denial of the claim that truth is a substantive or explanatorily significant property. Deflationists deny the explanatory fruitfulness of appeals to truth on the grounds that positing such a property is not required either to elucidate or explain some phenomenon like meaning or semantic content, the success of science, or, more often, to explain truth-talk, our ordinary practice of (allegedly) predicating truth of truth-bearers. The focus on truth-talk is important because it hints at two ways the question, "What is truth?" can be read. In the first instance, the question can be read as a request for an analysis of truth, the result of which it is hoped would be a claim of the form:

x is true if and only if x is F

where the substituends for 'x' are specified by a theory of truth-bearers and the predicate 'is F' specifies the *essence* or *nature* of truth. Deflationists are typically not interested in interpreting the question in this way and regard attempts to provide such an analysis as either misguided or hopeless.[75] Their answer to the second way of taking the question yields a negative view about the first way of answering the what-is-truth question. They interpret the question "what is truth?" as a question about that concept employed in our

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[75] Some deflationists might object that their theories are not theories of truth at all, since there is no such property, and that strictly speaking their theories are theories of truth-predicates or truth-talk. I will still refer to their theories as theories of truth when no confusion can result.

everyday (and perhaps even theoretical) talk and thought.[76] Following this interpretation,

deflationists are interested in explaining in a minimal way both the purposes of our truth-

talk, illocutionary or otherwise, and the logico-linguistic means by which we achieve

those purposes. For the most part, deflationists analyze the locutionary act of performing

an utterance employing the truth-predicate or one of its cognates and, hence, focus on the

logico-linguistic machinery by means of which that act is accomplished. Even where

deflationists disagree over the precise nature of the logico-linguistic means by which

truth-talk achieves its locutionary aims, deflationists agree that the illocutionary act

performed by sincere truth-talk is assertion or endorsement of a proposition or class of

propositions. We need not here accept a particular analysis of the various kinds of

linguistic acts. It is enough to distinguish generally between what Austin calls "rhetic

acts" and illocutionary acts.[77] Rhetic acts can be thought of as actions by a speaker

employing words or sounds with a determinate content with the intention of using those

words to express or convey that content. Illocutionary acts are the forces that accompany

these rhetic acts. A speaker *s* of English can utter 'snow is white' with the intention that

the words and their modes of combination conform to the standards and conventions

employed by fellow speakers of English and that fellow speakers recognize this intention

in *s*, and in so doing has performed a rhetic act with a certain content, namely, the content

that snow is white. The illocutionary act performed by *s* can vary while the content

remains the same in that *s* could have asserted that snow is white, questioned whether

snow is white, and so on. Deflationists agree that the point, or illocutionary force, of

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[76] The above way of demarcating inflationary from deflationary theories is neither
uncommon nor universally accepted, but it is nicely expressed in Armour-Bard and
Beall's, eds., (2005: 1-3) and it is the way I will adopt hereafter.
[77] See Austin (1962).

truth-talk is to assert. Their accounts of the means by which speakers achieve this illocutionary aim illustrate the primary differences between them.

Another prominent ingredient in most deflationary theories is closely related to Tarski's material adequacy condition. Recall that Tarski required that a theory of truth for a particular language L entails all instances of the following schema:

s is true if and only if *p*

where 's' is a structural description of a sentence of our target language L and 'p' is its translation into the metalanguage.[78] Tarski treated sentences as bearers of truth. In order to avoid question begging with regards to examining deflationary theories, we can specify an alternative formulation, often called the Equivalence Schema (ES):

(ES) <P> is true if and only if P.

Deflationists and contemporary inflationists alike take some such schema to be central to their views of truth. Which schema they take as central in some cases will have varying consequences for their views usually with respect to which truth-bearers are more fundamental in their analysis of truth-talk. I am not interested in which bearer is more fundamental in the order of analysis. In those cases where a deflationists takes as central a schema that involves elements foreign to or incompatible with truth-theoretic semantics, I will attempt to determine the extent to which that schema could be translated or modified.

At the outset I stated that I will take for granted that truth is a central concept in the theory of meaning.[79] Hence, I will not explore deflationists' claims that we do not

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[78] Below I turn to the issue of whether the metalanguage "contains" the target language and what such an assumption means for theories of semantic content.
[79] See Chapter 1.

need truth to explain meaning. In this chapter, however, I will investigate the chief reasons offered by deflationists for thinking that truth-talk can be explained without positing a substantive property and I will determine the extent to which the theories offered by deflationists are or could be suitable theories of truth as it figures in truth-theoretic semantics. The second part is necessary for the reason that some of the deflationary theories to be discussed below might in fact succeed in capturing enough of our ordinary truth-talk as to make them serious candidates for consideration independent of a commitment to truth-theoretic semantics. Only while taking seriously the possibility of a robust, explanatorily significant truth-theoretic semantic theory of natural language competence do we have the resources by means of which to see clearly those deflationary theories' shortcomings.

This chapter is divided into two sections: the first details the most significant deflationary challenges to robust truth theories and the principle criticisms of them considered from outside my semantic perspective, so to speak; the second part details criticisms of these theories considered from within my semantic perspective. I conclude it by articulating lessons for someone interested in truth-theoretic semantics, lessons the satisfaction of which will prohibit most if not all deflationary theories from being serious contenders for someone interested in using truth to shed light on the nature of semantic content. In no case will I delve into a theorists chosen theory of semantic content. For one, my task is to determine whether one can be both a deflationist about truth and a truth-theoretic semanticist, and a deflationist's preferred theory of semantic content will only bear on that question if their theory of truth requires it. Even if their theory falls out of their preferred theory of semantic content, it is still open to me to examine it on its

own terms and as a theory of the term 'true' as it appears in formal semantic theories. In such cases my conclusion will not be that the author's views are mistaken; rather, I will point out that the author in question holds a different view of semantic content and that they are correct to do so, given that their view of truth is incompatible with my preferred view.

In some cases it may seem obvious that a particular theory of truth is incompatible with a truth-theoretic understanding of semantic content. This is to be expected. The received wisdom for too long has been that the two *are* incompatible. The incompatibility has recently been challenged, however, and it is my task to show that the traditional wisdom has been correct all along even in cases where it is not at all obvious.

3.2: The Redundancy Theory

Perhaps the earliest attempt to "deflate" truth was that of Frank Ramsey who articulated what is known as the "Redundancy Theory."[80] In essence, it claims that truth-talk is redundant. We can see that truth-talk is redundant by looking at examples. Saying what truth is, on the other hand, is difficult "because it is something which ordinary language is rather ill-adapted to express."[81] Ramsey's view holds that applying 'is true' to a sentence says no more nor less than the original sentence. Take our classic t-sentence:

(S) 'snow is white' is true if and only if snow is white

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[80] See Ramsey (1990). Reprinted in Lynch, ed. (2001). References are to the reprint.
[81] Ramsey (1990: 437).

According to the redundancy theory, ''snow is white' is true' is synonymous with 'snow is white'.[82] But the superficial syntactic structure of sentences of English obscures this fact. On analysis, constructions involving 'It is true that…' or '…is true' do not involve the idea of truth at all. We can replace sentences involving 'it is true that' or '…is true' with other, equivalent sentences not involving the idea of truth.

In the case of straightforward instances of 'is true' like " 'snow is white' is true" it is easy to see how to proceed. We can simply drop the locution 'is true' without loss. Similarly with "It is true that snow is white." We can drop 'it is true that' without loss. Things appear more difficult with cases such as "what he believed is true."[83] Here if we dropped 'is true' what we would be left with what on the surface be ungrammatical: 'what he believed'. Ordinary language seems to fail. Ramsey thinks that we can express without an idea of truth what the English sentence 'what he believed is true' expresses if we use logical symbolism: "if p was what he believed, p."[84] Superficially, this does not seem grammatical at all. Variables are replaced with names on standard, objectual accounts of first-order quantification. If 'a' is the name of a sentence believed by the "he" in our sentence, then we can form the following substitution instance:

"If a was what he believed, a."

The antecedent of this conditional is fine. The consequent is not. It contains only a name. It is a name of a sentence, to be sure, but a name nonetheless. The rules of sentence formation within standard objectual accounts of first-order logic will require an

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[82] Brandom (1994) thinks that although the sides are semantically equivalent, in the sense of licensing the same inferences within our discursive practices, the two sides may nevertheless differ in illocutionary force. That claim does not bear on the present discussion.
[83] Ramsey (1990: 438).
[84] Ibid.

n-place predicate symbol to be concatenated to a number *n* of terms (where terms can be names, functors, etc.) in order to form simple atomic sentences.[85] Ramsey addresses this by restricting his account to sentential variables, the instances of which "should be regarded as containing a verb." If 'p' is "the earth is round" then 'p' contains the verb 'is'. Ramsey thus has shifted to adopting a substitutional definition of quantification. Hence his analysis of truth amounts to the following:

(R) (p) (the proposition that *p* is true $=_{syn}$ *p*)

Understanding the quantification here substitutionally, we are to read this as 'For each sentence in the language, if we substitute for the "*p*" in "the proposition that *p* is true $=syn$ *p*", then we produce a true sentence."[86] Notice now that we have not in fact eliminated any reference to truth in adopting Ramsey's analysis. We have merely shifted that analysis back to an analysis of substitutional quantification which employs the very concept Ramsey was attempting to eliminate. It is true that we have eliminated it from the surface structure of our target sentence. But we have failed completely to eliminate it.

The redundancy theory treats sentences as the primary truth-bearers. If one is comfortable with propositions (or statements), however, there is no reason not to extend the theory to include the propositional schema:

(PS) <p> is true if and only if <p>

Here one can simply identify the propositional content of the two sides of the 'if and only if'. Thus the proposition that <p> is true is identical to the proposition that p.

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[85] I here do not introduce the complexity of distinguishing between open sentences and closed sentences of predicate logic and restrict my attention to closed sentences without quantifiers. Nothing hinges on this point.
[86] This formulation is from Kirkham (1992: 335).

On the assumption that there are a countable infinity of them and that a theory of truth should entail all instances of the T-schema, then this theory can only be presented in schematic or axiomatic form. Axioms or schemata would be avoidable if the theory were paired with a theory about how the totality of sentences of the relevant language could be build up out of subsentential components via standard rules involving satisfaction and reference. No such theory has been offered with the redundancy theory. The theory should not be faulted for this, however, because it is a theory of a specific predicate and no mention is made of whether the requirement that a theory entail all instances of the T-schema is accepted or not by Ramsey. Ramsey's theory is already insufficient. As we will see later a theory's being finitely stateable will have important implications for other theories of truth. For those other theories focus on a wider class of truth-ascriptions than the redundancy view which focuses primarily on sentence-forms where the sentence includes both the truth-predicate and a very sentence-like construction to which the truth-predicate is being applied--a small class of truth-ascriptions.

Second, notice that the small class of truth-ascriptions on which the redundancy view focuses is treated as primary in some sense. Other truth ascriptions, such as "Golbach's conjecture is true" or "Everything Suzie said is true," are said to derive from or are otherwise related to the primary truth-ascriptions. Soames names uses of truth in the former sense "Environment 1" uses and the derivative uses of truth "Environment 2" uses.[87] The exact sense in which these truth-ascriptions are primary is never quite fully spelled out and, in any case, in order to be a complete theory of the truth-predicate a truth theory must be able to explain or derive all uses of the truth predicate.

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[87] Soames (1998: Ch. 1). Portions of this appear in Villanueva, ed. (1997).

Notice finally that the suggestion of redundancy implies that the truth-predicate is dispensable. We might employ it to add a different illocutionary force to an assertion, but strictly speaking it is not needed. For instance, if someone utters "Snow is white" I might, to signal that I agree, utter, "yes." But I might also utter "What you said is true." My utterance of the latter might have the same "content" in the redundancy theorists's preferred sense of content, but it signals that I'm asserting that content as the content of something someone else said and agreeing with that content. An exact analysis is not called for. Prima facie, however, the possibility of a divergence in illocutionary force between "snow is white" and " 'snow is white' is true" does not signal the necessity of having a truth-predicate in a language.

I turn now to a propositional extension of a redundancy view, namely, Horwich's minimalism. This view, as we will see, avoids the redundancy implication, but at a cost.

3.3: Horwich's Minimalism

Horwich develops a deflationary view according to which, perhaps surprisingly, propositions are still the primary truth-bearers, but according to which all that can be said about truth is captured by the propositional t-schema:

<p> is true if and only if p.[88]

Perhaps more surprisingly, truth is still a genuine property of propositions. As inflationary as this may sound, it is tempered by his claim that every interesting thing that can be said about truth or by means of the logico-linguistic device of the truth-predicate can be explained by the propositional t-schema (hereafter, PT). More precisely, "The

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[88] Horwich (1990).

deflationist's contention (which is founded on a survey of linguistic usage) is that whenever we deploy the concept of truth non-trivially—whether in logic, ordinary language, science, or philosophy—it is playing this role: a device of generalization."[89] It is clear what Horwich would mean by genuine property, it is a property picked out by non-trivial deployments of the concept in question. In the case of our concept of truth, there are both trivial and non-trivial uses. A trivial use concerns those of what Soames calls "Environment 1:"

> (E1) The proposition that snow is white is true.

A non-trivial use concerns those uses falling under what Soames calls "Environment 2:"

> (E2) Everything Joan says is true.[90]

In the first environment, we can notice exactly what Ramsey noticed, namely, that 'is true' can be dropped without loss of content. Although the formulation in terms of propositions makes it ungrammatical if we drop 'is true' simply from E1, we can still note, along with Horwich, that these are cases where the concept of truth is inessential. Any sentence of the first environment can be reformulated without loss of content as a sentence not involving our concept of truth, a sentence expressing the same proposition expressed as before. In other words, adding 'is true' to the end of a sentence does not change the proposition expressed. Such uses are the so-called trivial uses.

The situation with the second environment is not like that. For one reason, we would be hard pressed to come up with a sentence expressing everything Joan said if she has said a large number of things. The situation, however, may be much worse. Consider another instance of the second environment:

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[89] Horwich (2005: 176).
[90] Soames (1999: 22f)

(E2*) Every instance of the form $<< p > \vee \sim < p >>$ is true.

In this case we have an infinite number of instances, whether the substitution class includes sentences or propositions. In this case there is no other way to express what E2* expresses without the concept of truth. The constitute the non-trivial uses of the concept of truth and attention to which forms the foundation for Horwich's argument for deflationism: we need the concept of truth to add to the expressive resources of our language. The logical machinery the concept of truth gives us is completely characterizable, says Horwich, by means of the propositional schema and not by any principle of the form "For every x: x is true $=_{df}$ x is such-and such," where 'is such-and-such' expresses some specification of the nature of truth.

Horwich should not be taken to be arguing that we simply cannot come up with something to take the place of 'is such-and-such'; rather, his claim is that we need not even try to come up with something to take the place of 'is such-and-such' because we can completely explain truth-talk by means of the propositional t-schema.

Ought Horwich, then, have some explanation for why the propositional t-schema holds necessarily? No, he answers, the propositional t-schema is "conceptually fundamental."[91] We are disposed to accept and actually accept instances of it "in the absence of supporting argument" and "without deriving them from any reductive premise of the form "For every x: x is true $=_{df}$ x is such-and such.""[92] Inflationists are looking for a reductive premise. If all truth-talk can be captured without one, then why go looking? Why even expect to find anything more? Once we have hit conceptual rock-bottom, the search is over.

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[91] Horwich (2005: 174).
[92] Ibid.

3.4: Critique of Horwich

Among the possible criticisms of Horwich's theory, three bear directly on its relation to truth-theoretic semantics. must first reiterate that Horwish is not a truth-conditional semanticist. His own view is in the spirit of Wittgenstein and may be called a meaning-as-use theory.[93] Hence, the three criticisms I level are such that they would have effect on his view as a theory of truth as such. In fact, he would grant the first one and brush off the second and third as beside the point. That being said, this is an investigation about truth—both the concept and the property—as it figures, or rather, can figure, in truth-theoretic semantic theories. I, therefore, present these criticisms not directly at Horwich then, but at a view understanding our concept of truth in his minimalistic way when that concept figures in truth-theoretic semantics. The criticisms are straightforward.

First, his theory is not a finite theory, if it is a theory at all. His theory is not finite because his propositional t-schema is an axiom schema. If the cardinality of the set of all propositions is greater than finite, which it is, then his axiom schema gives rise to a set of axioms whose cardinality is greater than finite. A non-finite set of axioms cannot be stated finitely. To the extent that our understanding of the concept of truth is grounded in our disposition to accept instances of that axiom schema, then our understanding does not consist in a grasp of finite principles the successive application of which yields an application of the concept of truth to any particular proposition. This may seem a quibble. But it is one of the conditions on the possibility of a semantic theory that it be

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[93] See Horwich (1998).

finitely stated.[94] Some may question this condition. As we have taken it for granted

here, Horwich's theory violates it.

Is Horwich's theory of truth a theory at all? In the sense in which his theory does

not provide an analysis of our concept of truth in the form of

x is true $=_{def}$ x has property F

then Horwich has not provided us with a theory of truth. True, he tells us what fills the

'x' spot, namely, propositions. Yet he has failed to provide anything in the way of a

specification of property F. This comment, if it is an objection, would easily be parried

by Horwich. On his view, truth is a property of propositions but there is no analysis of

the above form to be had. Accepting the burden of providing such an analysis clearly

then begs the question when taken on his own terms.

Second, Horwich's theory of truth gets the modal status of t-sentences wrong.

We must again remind ourselves that outside the scope of a theory of meaning in the

broad or narrow sense, Horwich's theory may well get the modal status of t-sentences

correct. For a semantic theorist, however, t-sentences are contingently true if true at all.

" 'snow is white' is true is and only if snow is white" depends for its truth on two factors:

the meaning of 'snow is white' and how it is in the world with respect to snow and

whiteness. Although this example uses the truth of a sentence and not of a proposition, it

is not question begging. For even a propositionalist who takes propositional-truth to be

fundamental, must still be in a position to provide an analysis of sentential-truth as

grounded in propositional truth, as specifying the conditions under which a sentence such

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[94] Davidson argued for the condition on the grounds that any theory that violated it would be "unlearnable." See Davidson, "Theories of Meaning and Learnable Languages" and "Truth and Meaning," both reprinted in Davidson (2001).

as 'snow is white' expresses the proposition that snow is white. For Horwich, instances of his axiomatic t-schema are conceptually true. All conceptual truths are necessarily true. They might even be fairly described as trivially true, since their truth follows from a basic and obvious fact of human conceptual competence. Hence instances of the t-schema are on his view necessarily true. At the outset we admitted the possibility that in some world a t-sentence true in the actual world could be false there, we must reject any view with the implication that all t-sentences or their propositional equivalents are necessarily true, that is, true in all possible worlds. 'Snow is white' could have meant what 'snow is black' means. Hence, " 'snow is white' is true if and only if snow is white" could have been false. QED.

Third, and related to the non-finiteness requirement, Horwich's theory is not compositional. A statement of the truth-conditoins of a sentence in the guise of an instance of his axiomatic truth-schema is not derived—canonically or otherwise—from anything. It is conceptually fundamental. Anyone with the concept of truth is disposed to accept any instance of that axiom. There are no other more fundamental axioms involving reference, say, or satisfaction, which when combined with syntactic rules of combination allow for the derivation of propositional t-sentences.

This objection is different from the finiteness objection because it is possible to have a non-finite but yet compositional theory. One may let the base clauses in the theory all be axiom-schema, but have rules for building either larger axiom-schema out of the more primitive or for using the basic axiom-schema to build basic axioms which may then be used to build larger axioms. Either way, such a theory is not Horwich's.

The only conclusion to reach is that whatever the merits of Horwich's view as a theory of our understanding of the concept of truth and of the property of truth, it cannot be a theory of the concept *truth* as it figures in truth-theoretic semantic theories.

3.5: Disquotationalism

Perhaps the most famous deflationists is Quine. Yet Field (1994) also is rightly called a disquotationalist. In his [1970] he writes what is one of the most famous paragraphs concerning the utility of the truth predicate:

> We can generalize on 'Tom is moral', 'Dick is mortal', and so on, without talking of truth or of sentences; we can say 'All men are mortal'. We can generalize similarly on 'Tom is tom', 'Dick is Dick', '0 is 0', and so on, saying 'Everything is itself'. When on the other hand we want to generalize on 'Tom is mortal or Tom is not mortal', 'Snow is white or snow is not white', and so on, we ascend to talk of truth and of sentences, saying 'Every sentence of the form 'p or not p' is true', or 'Every alternation of a sentence with its negation is true'. What prompts this semantic ascent is not that 'Tom is mortal or Tom is not mortal' is somehow about sentences while 'Tom is mortal' and 'Tom is Tom' are about Tom. All three are about Tom. We ascend only because of the oblique way in which the instances over which we are generalizing are related to one another."[95]

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[95] Quine (1986: 11).

Semantic ascent is, on this view, not to talk about sentences, except indirectly. "Truth hinges on reality," Quine writes.[96] But utility of the truth predicate "is in just those places where, though still concerned with reality, we are impelled by certain technical complications to mention sentences."[97]

As it now typical with deflationary views, and in accordance with how I characterized them generally before, Quine's view consists of a key assumption shared by many, namely, that if we can explain truth-talk without appeal to a truth property, then the burden of proof is on the inflationist to argue that a truth property is called for.

A few things are worth noting about Quine's position. First, the truth predicate applies to sentences.[98] Quine's distaste for "propositions" is well known. Elsewhere in *Philosophy of Logic*, Quine makes this clear: "…propositions have been projected as shadows of sentences…At best they will give us nothing the sentences will not give."[99] We need not pause to go over his arguments for this claim. But for those who either regard propositional truth as basic or who think that solely focusing on sentence truth leaves out an account of the truth of beliefs, the account will seem misguided or incomplete at best. Second, Quine is not a redundancy theorist. Richard Kirkham notes, rightly, that passages like these in Quine do not commit him to the view—implied by Ramsey's redundancy theory—that "anything we can say with 'is true' we can say without it."[100] For all Quine says above, Kirkham argues, someone could still maintain that 'is true' picks out a property. Quine does not accept this, instead preferring to view

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[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Eternal sentences, that is, which is just a declarative sentence free from context sensitive elements such as demonstratives and indexicals.

[99] Quine (1970: 10).

[100] Kirkham (1992: 319).

the truth predicate as a predicate which gets its use when "want to affirm some infinite lot of sentences…[W]e need it to restore the effect of objective reference…" That it satisfies those needs does not mean it can't also serve other purposes or be used to make other claims. Still, without an argument that it does those things, we may take it as Quine's position that *believing* it does those other things is premature. Third and last, Quine's view does imply that "snow is white" and " 'snow is white' is true" (a) are extensionally equivalent and (b) share the same ontological commitments. The former, (a), ensures that a theory of truth satisfies Tarski's convention-T. The latter follows from the fact that when the truth predicate is used the quotation marks are cancelled out, so to speak. The truth predicate restores "objective reference," and each sentence of the aforementioned pair says the same thing of snow.

3.6: Field's Disquotationalism

Hartry Field is also a deflationist about truth, although he differs in significant ways from Quine.[101] Beall, in agreement with Field, characterizes the heart of the position nicely:

> "[D]isquotationalism as a methodological stance. The basic argument for
> methodological disquotationalism invokes Ockham: if, as it (so far)
> appears, our relevant truth-talk can be explained (or, in some sense,
> explained away) in terms of *ttruth*, then we ought to recognize only *ttruth*
> and its derivatives; positing more than *ttruth* would be postulation without

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[101] Later Hartry Field, I should probably say. His (1972) is well known as embracing a Tarskian approach to truth and arguing that it must go further if we are to preserve our physicalistic bona fides. His thought on matters of truth took a markedly deflationary turn.

profit. Moreover, it is a sound methodological strategy, as Field notes, to

pursue disquotationalism as far and earnestly as we can; for in so doing—

and, plausibly, only in so doing—we will either see where it breaks down

(where, e.g., more than mere *ttruth* is required) or we will see its

vindication. Either way, we will learn the *ttruth* about truth."[102]

For Field, an utterance *u* is "cognitively equivalent" to the claim that *u* is true.[103] By

'cognitive equivalence', Field defines it thus:

> "…to call two sentences that a person understands 'cognitively
>
> equivalent' for that person is to say that the person's inferencial
>
> procedures license a fairly direct inference from any sentence containing
>
> an occurrence of one to the corresponding sentence with an occurrence of
>
> the other substituted for it; with the stipulation…that the occurrence to be
>
> substituted for is not within the context of quotation marks or an
>
> intentional attitude construction."[104]

One key thing to notice is that cognitive equivalence obtains between sentences, first, but

more importantly, between sentences "a person understands." For Field, the

disquotational truth predicate is "purely" disquotational. Since the effect is to cancel

quotation marks, the truth predicate can only be applied by a speaker to sentences that the

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[102] Beall (2009: 2-3), emphasis in original. *Ttruth* (note the two t's) is intended to express
a purely disquotational and fully transparent notion of truth. The alternate spelling is
supposed to convey the idea that Beall makes no claim about whether the ordinary
concept of truth is either disquotational or transparent (fully characterizable a priori).
[103] Field (2001: 106).
[104] Field (2001: 106n2). Field also qualifies the claim to say that the cognitive
equivalence between an utterance u and the claim that u is true obtains relative to the
existence of the utterance u. This is to account for the obvious fact that an utterance u
and the claim that u is true involve different existential commitments (2001: 105).

speaker understands. If an utterance u is cognitively equivalent to the claim that u is true, then if I didn't understand u then I wouldn't be in a position to understand the claim that u is true, and vice versa.

Field does not claim that English has such a disquotational truth predicate. He is rather more concerned with providing a notion of truth that can serve the expressive purposes thought achievable by such a predicate. Even a verificationist, Field argues, could accept this pure disquotational notion of truth because it does not commit one to what he calls the "Frege-Russell" understanding of meaning as involving truth-conditions, i.e., propositional content.[105] The purposes that this predicate serves are the standard expressive purposes of formulating infinite conjunctions or disjunctions, which in any actual case are over sentences we understand. When we deny an infinite conjunction, for instance, we do not want our denial to say that the conjuncts could have meant something different. Rather, Field claims, we want to deny the infinite conjunction of sentences as we understand them. Having a purely disquotational truth predicate serves these logical, expressive needs. Field introduces it to show that we need not adopt a realist or stronger-than-disquotational notion of truth to carry out the work or to say the things we want to say. We can remain neutral on the realism/anti-realism debate.

Additionally, the cognitive equivalence of an utterance u and the claim that u is true leads to the typical acceptance of all instances of the t-biconditional, an instance of which is the classic ' "snow is white" is true if and only if snow is white'.

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[105] Field (2001: 106f).

3.7: Critique of Disquotationalism

We can note immediately that neither Quine's nor Field's disquotationalism can serve as a theory of truth as it figures in truth-theoretic semantics. Both are purely logical in the sense that they serve expressive needs and expressive needs only. Neither view holds that the expression 'is true' predicates a property of an utterance. Both views maintain that the effect of predicating truth of an utterance or sentence is to undo quotation marks: "to call 'Snow is white' disquotationally true is simply to call snow white."[106]

For my purposes, two lines of criticism is worth mention: Quine's disquotational theory carries the same costs as do other versions, where (see discussion of Gupta below) the "content" of a truth-predication and of a use of the sentence of which truth is predicated are identical (cognitively equivalent in the case of Field). This is far too strong an equivalence and it immediately undermines an attempt to isolate the property or properties figuring into a truth-theoretic semantic theory. On views such as Quine's or Field's, there is no such property. Additionally, since Field's pure disquotational truth applies only to sentences-as-I-understand-them, it will not do the work required of 'true' as it figures in semantic theories since the point is to explain the truth-conditions of sentences I do not understand (or to provide a theory knowledge of which would suffice for interpretation of utterances I do not understand). Field's point was not to give a theory of truth as it figures in truth-theoretic semantic theories of natural languages nor was it to endorse even the possibility of giving such theories. Hence Field's view is not faulted on this score. To the extent, however, that empirical semantics is carried out in

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[106] Field (2001: 122).

the Davidsonian tradition, Field's pure disquotational truth is not a theory of 'is true' as it figures in those semantic theories.

Second, consider an argument that is putatively valid:

(a) 'snow is white' is true'

(b) 'snow is white' has eleven letters.

(c) Therefore, (∃x) (x is true and x has eleven letters)

This inference is unavailable to the disquotationalist, specifically Quinean disquotationalists. Truth-predications have the effect of undoing quotation marks, according to disquotationalists. Hence, (a) does not attribute a property of a sentence; (a) says that snow is white. The truth predicate cancels semantic ascent and returns us to talking about the world. If an inference is fairly obviously valid, then a theory that implies its invalidity owes us an explanation. Field's view preserves the existential commitment of (a) to the sentence 'snow is white', and so preserves the inference. But a slightly different worry arises at this point.

We do face a choice when we are deciding how to individuate sentences. Sentences (either tokens or types) can be individuated purely on the basis of their structure or on the basis of their structure and their content. Field individuates sentences on the basis of both structure and content when he defines his pure disquotational truth-predicate because that predicate only applies to sentences-as-I-understand-them. As noted before, we have to options corresponding to two different t-sentence forms (here ignoring the propositional t-schema):

Form 1: s is true if and only if p (where s is a structural description of a sentence)

Form 2: "s" is true if and only if s

If instances of the t-sentence Form 2 are conceptually necessary or cognitively equivalent, then we must be individuating sentences based partly on their content. But, as we've already noted, implying these trivial t-sentences is not the goal of a semantic theory. Convention T requires that a semantic theory imply instances of Form 1. Hence, Convention T implies that we individuate sentences structurally only. A t-sentence employing Quine's or Field's truth-predicate violates Convention-T.

3.8: The Prosentential Theory

Robert Brandom, in addition to being a prosententialist,[107] is a clear case where an antecedently accepted theory of semantic content influences directly the type of truth theory he offers.[108] His "inferential" theory of content places three adequacy conditions or requirements on any acceptable answer to the second way of taking the "what is truth?" question:

(1) Specify the "practical proprieties" associated with an expression meaning what 'true' means in English

(2) Determine "what one would need to do to add the expressive power provided by 'true' to the game of giving and asking for reasons so specified."

(3) Show why an expression's assertibility entails/implies that that expression can have a propositional content in the sense of having truth conditions.[109]

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[107] Grover, Camp, and Belnap (1975) was the earliest version. Later was Grover (1992) and Brandom (1994).
[108] See Brandom (1994).
[109] Brandom (1994: 278).

The "practical proprieties" of an expression include the contributions made by that expression to the specifically human discursive practice of asking for and giving reasons. In other words, to specify the practical proprieties of an expression just is to specify how that expression is used by speakers of the language in question.[110] Once it is determined how an expression is used and the kinds of inferences licensed by felicitous uses of that expression, one must next determine what is needed to do to add the expressive powers of 'true' to the game of giving and asking for reasons (as Brandom specifies it). Lastly, Brandom will explain the long-standing intuition according to which an expression's propositional contentfulness is a matter of its having "truth-conditions" by showing that this indeed does follow from his view, but that a proper understanding of "truth-conditions" and the expressive role of 'true' tempers the more ambitious interpretations of this fact.

3.9: Brandom's Theory of Truth

Brandom's theory of truth is a theory of the truth predicate. By attempting to explain all English uses of the truth predicate by purely logico-linguistic means, the deflationary character of truth will emerge. In what follows I will talk about both the anaphoric theory of truth and the anaphoric theory of reference. Both should be understood to be theories of our use of the expressions "…is true" and "refers," respectively. The thesis is that if truth-talk can be purely captured by appeal to a device

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[110] In this sense Brandom's theory of content is a "use" theory of meaning, although he calls it "inferential semantics," or "inferentialism." He writes, "For it is in terms of the constellation of inferentially articulated commitments and entitlements characteristic of the making (staking) of claims that the notion of specifically propositional contentfulness is to be understood" (1994: xxi).

the complete function of which is to add to the expressive resources of English, then the motivation for substantive theories of truth will be undercut. Brandom has independent reasons for thinking that a truth-conditional account of literal sentence content cannot succeed and, in its place, he endorses an inferential-role semantics. According to inferential role-semantics, the semantic content of expressions is just the totality of inferential moves those expressions allow within our communicative and discursive practices, specifically, the discursive practice of giving and receiving reasons for our assertions. The extent to which such an account is "semantic" is initially unclear. Semantics, traditionally conceived, seeks to explain how the truth-value of complex expressions results from structural features of those expressions together with those expressions' relations to extra-linguistic entities. In this sense, Brandom's view is not semantics at all. Brandom's thought, however, is that the inferential role account will capture what are perhaps the central explananda of a truth-theoretic account: validity and entailment. A contemporary advocate of truth-conditional semantics, such as Predelli, calls validity one of the semantically interesting "outcomes" of a truth-theoretic analysis.[111] One of the things to be explained, or analyzed, in other words, is the set of inferences licensed by both the structure and content of what is said. Predelli is not alone in thinking this. For Brandom, on the other hand, if validity, and perhaps even truth-conditions, can be explained with a less than inflationary notion of truth such as the anaphoric theory, then we preserve the outcome at a bare minimum of metaphysical resources. Hence, his "semantics" at least trades in the tasks of traditional truth-theoretic semantics in an untraditional approach.

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[111] Predelli (2005: 11).

Brandom's version of the anaphoric theory is rooted in the earlier version of it by Grover, Camp and Belnap (1975). Differences between it and Brandom's will be noted as we proceed.

Generally, anaphora is the phenomenon of one expression's inheriting its content from another expression used within the same context.[112]

A pro-form in general is an expression that inherits its content from another while the antecedent is the expression whose content is inherited.[113] Although this is a semantic characterization in terms of the contributions made to the truth-conditions of sentences in which such pro-forms appear, a purely syntactic characterization can be given. Moreover, it is very important that it can be given. If it cannot, then the position of Brandom will require resources unavailable to a project such as his. In contemporary linguistics, …

Now, take our oft-seen T-sentence:

(S) 'Snow is white' is true if and only if snow is white.

Intuitively, the left side of the 'if and only if' is related to the right side. Most theories treat '…is true' as a predicate applying in the case of (S) to sentences. Brandom's view has us treat '…is true' as a pro-form, a kind of expression a legitimate use of which

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[112] This characterization precludes the possibility of a proform's inheriting its content from an unarticulated constituent. Nothing in the foregoing discussion hinges on this.

[113] Some discussion will characterize an anaphor as referring to its antecedent. This would be a mischaracterization. An antecedent is a bit of language. So if anaphors refer to their antecedents, then the proper interpretation of "Mary left her jacket at home" would be "Mary left 'mary''s jacket at home." Words do not possess jackets. Hence the interpretation is false even if the original might be true. Here I will stick with the characterization of anahpor as inheriting its content—referent, extension, etc.—from its antecedent. The key idea is that whatever content the antecedent has, the anaphor has the same content.

inherits its content from a previously occurring expression. There are, however, different

kinds of proforms.

Let's start with standard pronouns, like 'he', 'she', 'it', etc. Pronouns can be used

in English in two ways, the "lazy" way and the "quantificational" way. A typical

example of a lazy use is the following:

(M) If Mary wants to arrive on time, she should leave now.[114]

What makes the use "lazy" is that the pro-form, 'she', is replaceable by its antecedent

without loss[115]:

(M') If Mary wants to arrive on time, Mary should leave now.

Quantificational uses of pronouns, on the other hand, are not replaceable without

altering the content of what was said.

(Q) Any positive integer is such that if it is even, adding it to one yields

an odd number.

Replacing 'it' with 'positive integer' in (Q) yields a falsehood:

(Q') Any positive integer is such that if it is even, adding a positive

integer to one yields an odd number.

Quantificational uses of pronouns are not replaceable salve veritate. The distinction

between lazy and quantificational uses is principled. We distinguish the two types of

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[114] The example is Brandom's own (1994: 302).

[115] Interesting about Brandom's example is that the pro-form of this sentence might not
refer to Mary. Let's say Mary is hitching a ride with Pat, who hasn't left yet to pick her
up. In a situation like that it is perfectly fine to say of Pat that, "If Mary wants to arrive
on time, she$_{Pat}$ should leave now." We can take Brandom's example at face value,
however, in that all this new example shows is that the correct antecedent of a proform
need not occur in the same sentence or clause in which the proform occurs.

pronouns by looking at the admissible substitutions, which is fixed by their grammatical antecedent (1994: 301). We will say more on this below.

Brandom's proposal is to treat '…is true' as a sentential proform. It is, in Brandom's words, "a syncategorematic fragment of presentences," where prosentences are to be understood "by semantic analogy to other proforms, in particular to pronouns functioning as described" (1994: 302). The sentence " 'snow is white' is true" is a prosentence. The syncategorematic fragment of it is '…is true'. Just like with pronouns, presentences come in two varieties: presentences of laziness and quantificational (non-lazy) presentences.

(L) 'Snow is white' is true.

This is a prosentence of laziness. The antecedent, 'Snow is white', provides the proform with its content. The entire proform—" 'Snow is white' is true"—is replaceable by its antecedent, "Snow is white." In the case of (L), the sentence contains the antecedent. This need not be the case, as in, "Tim's last words are true." This prosentence is replaceable without loss of content by Tim's last words.

Quantificational presentences, as in the case with quantificational pronouns, are not so replaceable. They are, however, related in principled ways to the lazy uses.

3.10: Brandom and Meaning

Brandom's theory has several virtues, the most notable of which is that it respects compositionality and brings in nicely the several different uses of the truth-predicate. The redundancy theory fails when it comes to blind ascriptions or the quantification cases. Brandom's theory shines on all of these. By 'shines' I mean his theory gets the

logic right. Anything we can say with a correspondence truth-predicate we can say with his anaphoric truth predicate. The analysis can be—and Brandom has—extended it to cover reference, still understood on analogy with pronouns.

For all of its independent plausibility, the theory cannot do service as a theory of truth insofar as truth-figures into a semantic theory. First, a truth-ascription and its anaphoric antecedent will necessarily have the same content. Hence, t-sentences come out as necessarily true. Yet, t-sentences must be contingent, as we've noted. For this reason, and this reason alone, are we going to move beyond Brandom's theory. Should the substantiveness of truth-conditional semantics be successfully challenged in the future, then the theory of Brandom's would need to be taken very seriously.

3.11: General Criticism of Deflationary Theories

In this section I consider Anil Gupta's criticism of deflationary theories, specifically disquotationalism, and take general lessons from it regarding the concept of truth as it figures into truth-theoretic semantics. Gupta, in "A Critique of Deflationism," begins by looking at the job deflationists think the truth-predicate does, namely, allow for the assertion of sentences otherwise not assertible without it.[116]

Suppose we wish to affirm all sentences of the form

(A) _____ & snow is white

We want to affirm the infinite conjunction of all sentences resulting from filling the blank in A with English declarative sentences. We want to affirm something like the following:

(2) [Sky is blue & snow is white] & [Chicago is blue & snow is white] & …

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[116] Gupta (2001).

Because we lack the "explicit" means to formulate such a conjunction, we need the truth predicate to allow us to "indirectly" formulate the infinite conjunction. However, we cannot just generalize over the '_____' position in A using standard first-order variables because the variables occupy name positions. '$(\forall x)(x$ & snow is white)' is a meaningless formulation, as we have noted before. This is where the truth predicate is useful. The disquotational feature of truth makes (2) equivalent to the following reformulation:

> (3) ['Sky is blue' is true & snow is white] & ['Chicago is blue' is true & snow is white] & …

Since the position in

> _____ is true & snow is white

is nominal we may quantify using standard first-order variables. We may say

> (4) For all sentences x: [x is true & snow is white].

"But," goes the argument according to Gupta, "(4) is equivalent to (3) and, consequently, in virtue of disquotation, to (2)."[117] Truth, on this account an essentially logical device, allows us to express infinite conjunctions (and disjunctions), which we would otherwise be incapable of formulating. Or so goes a deflationary account of the utility of the truth-predicate. Four distinct theses, however, are involved in the disquotational theory in general and in supporting the claim that the truth-predicate allows for (4) to be equivalent to (2), above. I list the four theses below:

> (DT) The truth predicate is a device of disquotation.

> (ICT) The truth predicate enables us to express certain infinite conjunctions and disjunctions.

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[117] Gupta (2001: 531).

(GT) The truth predicate provides a means for generalizing over sentence

positions even when the variables are pronominal.

(CT) The truth predicate serves its expressive function in virtue of its

disquotation feature.[118]

The first thing Gupta notices is that in (ICT) 'express' is ambiguous. What we

need to determine is if (ICT) is to be read so that (4) and (2) are materially equivalent, or

necessarily equivalent, or that they have the same sense. This is another way of asking

for an account of the modal status of T-sentences. For if (2) and (4) are equivalent in

some sense, then '_____ and snow is white' must be equivalent in that same sense to

'_____ is true and snow is white'. Gupta will argue, as we will see, that deflationism

requires a strong equivalence between (4) and (2), namely, that they must have the same

sense and, therefore, that (ICT) is false on the grounds that (4) and (2) do not in fact have

the same sense.

(CT) is the general conclusion of disquotationalism about the logico-linguistic

function of the truth-predicate. Its function is to enable the assertion of sentences

otherwise not assertible and it achieves this with its disquotational feature. The argument

for (CT), however, requires too strong a reading of (ICT), claims Gupta. (ICT) says that

the truth predicate enables us to express certain infinite conjunctions and disjunctions. If

we are to be able to do this then (2) and (3) must be equivalent. Why? The function of

(4) in the example above is to express (2). But (4) expresses (2) only if (2) and (3) are

equivalent. Disquotation ensures us that they are. And disquotationalism fails if they are

not. It is the strict purpose of the truth-predicate to be able to express what (2) would

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[118] Ibid.

express were we able to complete it. But this needed equivalence of (2) and (3) can motivate disquotationalism only if the equivalence of (2) and (3) is "something like sameness of sense." "Anything weaker," says Gupta, "will yield the need, not for disquotational truth, but for something weaker. If, for example, the role of truth in (4) requires only that (2) and (3) be necessarily equivalent, then the argument will yield only that the T-biconditionals must be necessarily true if 'true' is to serve its role. It will not yield the Disquotation Thesis."[119]

Yet (ICT) interpreted in this strong sense is false. A universal statement does not have the same sense as the conjunction of its instances. (4) does not have the same sense as (3) because (4) and (3) do not imply the same things. Disquotation does imply that (2) and (3) have the same sense, but in order for (2) and (4) to have the same sense we require the synonymy of (3) and (4). However (3) and (4) are not synonymous. Thus the Connection Thesis "rests on a confusion."[120] Furthermore, the meaning of 'true' and the function of 'true' are not joined in the way required by deflationists endorsing the four above theses.

3.12: Hershfield: A Response to Williams

It may seem at this point that there is no work left to be done. To the extent that deflationary theories of truth are like those discussed above we can expect that they will also fail to provide illuminating and satisfactory accounts of truth as it figures in truth-

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[119] Gupta (2001: 533). I worry that Gupta builds into his argument the conclusion that (2) and (3) must have the same sense when characterizing deflationism. However, the idea of deflationism, seen through disquotation, is that 'is true' can be removed with loss of semantic content. The claim sounds strong when put this way.
[120] Gupta (2001).

theoretic semantics. That may well be. We have not, however, responded to the claims of Williams to the contrary. In this last section I discuss a paper by Jeffrey Hershfield. It will become clear that Williams fails to appreciate exactly what a truth-theoretic semantic theory requires as well as the difference between a theory of meaning and a meaning theory, or, using the terminology of Davies, a theory of meaning broad sense and a theory of meaning narrow sense—properly understood.

Hershfield is recognizing the trend of combining deflationism with truth-theoretic semantics and he is combating it. He begins by summarizing what he takes to be an exemplary instance of the trend, namely, that of Schiffer and Johnston (independently).[121] Three central features of their approach include the following:

(1) Semantic and intentional notions will prove to be irreducible, but this is compatible with what Schiffer calls "ontological physicalism."[122]

(2) "Theories of meaning and intentionality, properly so-called, will consist of a series of platitudes detailing analytical connections between semantic and intentional concepts and other related notions, as well as further platitudes describing the use of content-ascribing sentences."

(3) There are meaningful sentences and thoughts with content and such semantic and intentional features can play non-instrumental roles in correct explanations even though there are "no nonpleonastic semantic or intentional properties."[123]

Hershfield's primary challenge will be to (2), above. A quick word is called for about the other two. The first feature is simply a commitment to primitivism. Primitivism by itself

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[121] Schiffer (1987) and (1990). Referenced in Hershfield (2001).
[122] Hershfield (2001: 192).
[123] Ibid.

need not be all that deflationary. For primitivism entails only that a particular term cannot be reduced to or analyzed into terms in a less problematic idiom. This is compatible with maintaining that the problematic terms nevertheless pick out entities or substantive properties.

Johnston's minimalist theory of meaning has several implications: (1) "The notion of meaning turns out to be 'reified use';" (2) "a theory of meaning could only be a statement of propositions knowledge of which would enable a speaker to perform the kinds of propositional speech acts detailed in the platitudes. And this means, Johnston claims, that 'there cannot be a very interesting difference between a theory of meaning for L and a manual of translation into L—a 'means the same as' theory' (40)."[124]

We need not investigate the support Johnston or Schiffer offer for their positions—at least not directly. Hershfield's aim is to show that their view is consistent with an Intention-based semantics (IBS) (p.195). If it can be shown that the two are consistent, then, Johnston thinks, their view is not all that deflationary and not all that destructive of semantics as traditionally understood. We should note, however, that consistency does not require an endorsement. For all consistency entails, the two theories could be equally deflationary or equally robust. At the end of this section I will show how to strengthen the arguments of Hershfield and apply then more generally to deflationary positions, including that of Johnston or Schiffer, by showing that in addition to being consistent with an IBS, they are also consistent with a stronger truth-conditional theory of meaning.

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[124] Hershfield (2001: 194).

Hershfield claims that Johnston's "meaning is reified use" claim is embraceable by intention-based semanticists (IBS).[125] But, consistency, of course, does not require an endorsement. The idea is that a Gricean will want to explain maning in terms of certain kinds of propositional attitudes and then give naturalistic reductions of the propositional attitudes—anything but deflationay. On p. 196, Hershfield says that Johnston needs to show that there is no hope for a nondeflationary theory of speech acts. The IBS theorists need the stronger claim in order to show that the stronger views—the nondeflationary ones—are mistaken.

Hershfield claims that Johnston thinks 'translation' (the notion) is unproblematic. This is significant because translation is often a key notion in a truth-conditional theory of semantic content. For one, Davidson (1967) argued that this is one of the notions that a truth-conditional theory of semantic content would illucidate. We cannot, he wrote, take such a notion for granted, as he thinks Tarski did. Our project must explain this notion; it must explain what it is for two utterances or sentences to have the same content. Assuming it is in fact question begging. Johnston is talking about translation manuals. A translation manual is a list of instructions, probably recursively specified, for translating foreign utterances into a more another idiom. For Quine, translation manuals are the goals of the field linguist. We know, however, that knowing that a sentence S translates a sentence R provides no knowledge about the content of either S or R unless one already knows the content of R or S. If, however, the notion of translation is not problematic, then we could bring it to bear in our task of constructing a theory of meaning for a natural language. So, if we can say what makes one translation manual better than another, we

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[125] Ibid, p. 195.

will in essence have said when a sentence translations another sentence. Hershfield, in reply, tries to show that the link between translation and meaning constitutes a platitude about meaning. If it is platitudinous, then no substantive conclusion can be drawn concerning a choice between translation manuals. This turns the deflationary argument on its head for it has as a consequence that translation is not an innocent notion. It is not a notion to which we can innocently help ourselves in constructing theories of semantic content.

What does Hershfield have to say about Schiffer's No-Theory Theory of meaning? Well, it will turn out that it founders on the notion of translation.[126] The onus on Schiffer is to show that the conceptual roles of meaning ascribing sentences (sentences in the metalanguage, in which our theory of content is couched), will reveal meaning and be irreducible, and that this irreducibility has deflationary consequences.[127] The main issues will be what must be included in the conceptual roles of meaning-ascribing sentences.

Here is a platitude about translation:

Platitude #1: the goal of translation is a matching of sentences of a foreign language with sentences of the home language.[128]

We should add that we want to match sentences of a foreign language with the correct sentences of the foreign language.

Platitude #2: "[8] A sentence of one language correctly translates that of another just in case they are equivalent in meaning."

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[126] Hershfield (2001: 196).
[127] Hershfield (2001: 198).
[128] Ibid.

This holds independently of any theory about the notion of meaning. Whatever meaning is, a sentence S translates a sentence R just in case S is equivalent in meaning to R. Now, given the platitudinous nature of [8], any discoveries made about the nature of translation will tell us something about the nature of meaning.[129] Likewise, any discoveries about the nature of meaning will tell us something about the nature of translation. We should notice, however, that nothing about the platitude says that one must be or is explatorily prior to the other. For all this says, it might still be illicit to explain translation in terms of meaning or meaning in terms of translation. All we know is that the two notions are related by an equivalence relation.

Do we know anything about translation? Quine made two famous claims that relate to translation, according to Hershfield: inscrutability of reference and indeterminacy of translation. The thesis of the indeterminacy of translation maintains that there is no fact of the matter about meaning to be right or wrong about (because there is no fact of the matter about when one sentence correctly translates another sentence). Quine clearly put the priority of explanation on the side of translation. Any indeterminacy there filters down to everything explained in terms of it.

Key for Hershfield, though, is the fact that this is not a deflationary claim. It is revisionist.[130] What makes it a revisionist claim is that it causes us to revise what it is we understand about translation.

So, the deflationist, in order to avoid the revisionism, must find some fault with Quine's arguments. They have several options:

Option 1: The theses are artifacts of Quine's behaviorism.

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[129] Hershfield (2001: 199).
[130] Hershfield (2001: 201).

According to this response, the deflationist would find fault with behaviorism and then offer a reductive and nonbehaviorist account of meaning. This option is closed to the deflationist because deflationary meaning theorists deny any such thing.[131]

It may be pointed out here that Hershfield fails to appreciate the difference between rejecting Quine's arguments and having something reductive to put in its place. Is this a false dichotomy? Wouldn't the deflationist rest content with showing how resting one's view of translation on behaviorist assumptions is faulty as part and parcel of a larger anti-reductive strategy? For every so-called reduction they rule out, they delimit the scope of admissible reductions. If that number is reduced to zero, then reduction is thereby ruled out. Nonetheless, they might try other sorts of reductions.

Even if deflationists cannot have option 1, they have another:

Option #2: Turn to brain states, the states which causally underlie behavior (instead of dispositions).

This won't work. We still get indeterminacy in a causal theory, argues Hershfield. There is no fact of the matter obtaining between a speaker's use of a term and the use of that term made by other members of the speaker's linguistic community because we face the same problems in trying to say what the community-wide content of the relevant term is.[132]

But how about the "functional organization of the relevant aspects of the brain" (understood as "the counterfactual causal relations obtaining between the brain states responsible for linguistic behavior?"[133] This, argues Hershfield, won't work because a

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[131] Hershfield (2001: 202).
[132] Hershfield (2001: 202f).
[133] Hershfield (2001: 203).

language's inferential structure is subject to indeterminacy as well, hence the functional structure will be too. If indeterminacy rules out some, it rules out all.

Here is the deflationists final option:

Option #3: Give Quine's thesis a "under determination" gloss. This, again argues Hershfield, won't wort because this is compatible with their being a fact of the matter about correct translation, which, presumably a pleonastic view of semantic properties excludes.[134] If the evidence underdetermine any hypothesis about acceptable or correct translations, we cannot conclude that there is not fact of the matter unless, of course, we are irrealists. But if we were irrealists, we probably wouldn't need underdetermination arguments to convince us that there is no extralinguistic or extra-conceptual fact of the matter.

Given the fact that the deflationists options have been exhausted, Hershfield concludes: "Either we press on with the task of reducing content notions, or we dismiss the apparent explanatory utility of content as an enticing illusion…"[135]

I must make one final point. Davidson's position cannot be taken completely as it stands. Yes, his views underwent significant changes over the years, most notable with respect to responding to Foser's objections.[136] Nevertheless, even the finished produce—to the extent there is such a thing—suffers from a problem that will figure centrally in the position to be endorsed here. In "The Structure and Content of Truth," Davidson summarizes his anti-deflationary position and the evolution of his thought on matters

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[134] Hershfield (2001: 204).
[135] Ibid.
[136] Foster (1976). See also Davidson's "Reply to Foster" (1976).

semantic.[137] Following his analysis of the primary issues, he writes: "I explained in the

last chapter why I believe we do not need to worry separately about reference and

satisfaction. Put briefly, the reason is that T-sentences do not contain a referential

concept. Since the testable implications of the theory are T-sentences as applied to cases,

any way of characterizing satisfaction that yields confirmable T-sentences is as good as

another."[138] Davidson, for all of his anti-deflationary ambitions, makes the same mistake

many deflationists make. He believes that the sole goal of a theory of meaning for a

natural language (in the narrow sense) is to generate accurate T-sentences. As we have

seen, if this were the only goal, then achieving a Tarski-style truth theory for a natural

language would boil down to a trivial addition to a compositional grammar for a natural

language. All we would need is a decidable procedure for generating grammatical

sentences, a way of separating out the declarative sentences among them, and an axiom

schema, such as that below:

(A) _____ is true if and only if _____

We can generate all of the T-sentences we want. Unfortunately, the "theory" developed

would not illuminate anything about the semantic structure of a language, nor would it

satisfy the requirement that knowledge of the theory suffices for interpretation of the

alien utterances. If we do not have an interpretation of the grammatical sentences

generated by the syntactic theory, plugging them into (A) is of no assistance. Davidson's

position might make sense within the context of his inscrutability of reference thesis,

according to which there are many possible truth-theories for a natural language that are

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[137] Davidson (1990), reprinted in Davidson (2005). References are to the reprint.
[138] Davidson (2005: 55n8).

compatible with all possible evidence available to a radical interpreter. That being said, without revealing the corresponding semantic structure of the natural language under investigation, the theory is nothing more than a purely syntactic theory with a single rule of inference. Additionally, if the axiom schema approach yields the same T-sentences required by Davidson's (1990) remarks, then the fact that the T-sentences of the axiomatic approach are necessarily true is not ruled out by Davidson's own approach. T-sentences, as we've already seen, must be contingent (or at the most, nomically necessary). Such an approach fails along this dimension.

My project assumes the explanatory utility of semantic notions. Hence, to the extent that deflationists cannot accept that claim without at the same time providing illuminating reductions that are consistent with their fundamental tenets, we can dismiss versions of deflationism, such as Schiffer's and Johnston's. Furthermore, we now have reason to say that all of them are incompatible with the explanatory utility of semantic notions.

"Inflationary Approaches to Truth"

4.1: Introduction

Chapter 3 saw a position articulated and defended according to which one can be both a deflationist about truth in addition to a truth-theoretic semanticist. We have yet, however, to set out the primary inflationary approaches to truth. An overview of each of them would require a herculean effort. Fortunately reviewing each of them is not required. What is required is to specify those deflationary theories motivated by the problems of scope, generality, mixed-inferences, etc., to which alethic pluralists attempt to respond. We must also determine what deflationary theories are potential candidates for explaining truth as it figures in semantic theories of the appropriate sort. Determining the appropriate sort is not an arbitrary undertaking. First, some of the key constraints on semantic theories noted above will delineate our options. Second, a key motivating factor both for deflationism and for alethic pluralism will finish the paring down. We will be left with a manageable but important selection of truth theories, namely, Crispin Wright's minimalism, Gila Sher's "family theory," Michael Lynch's alethic functionalism, and Terence Horgan et al.'s contextual semantics. In this chapter I will put forward and defend a principled way of identifying serious contenders for theories of truth as it figures in truth-theoretic semantics as well as the theories satisfying that criteria. Next, I will examine each of the theories satisfying those criteria in turn. Satisfaction of the criteria does not qualify a theory of truth simpliciter as a satisfactory theory of truth as it figures in truth-theoretic semantics, as we will see. The defects

possessed by these theories, however, will provide fruitful necessary conditions

satisfaction of which should jointly guarantee that a theory of truth will serve as a

satisfactory theory of truth as it figures in truth-theoretic semantics. I will conclude by

summarizing the lessons learned before turning to my positive proposal in the next

chapter.

4.2: The Contenders

We have seen that deflationary theories of truth misfire along several dimensions.

They often begin their positive proposals with the recognition that something like

Tarski's material adequacy condition should be satisfied by any truth theory. Every

deflationary truth theory makes this attempt, whether the material adequacy condition is

phrased in terms of proposition, sentences, or beliefs. Furthermore, every deflationary

truth theory places too much emphasis on the material adequacy condition in that these

theories are incapable of going beyond syntactic structure in any enlightening way.

Discovering this required the presupposition that something like Davidson's program can

succeed. Hence, their overemphasis of the material adequacy condition is not a fatal

objection to truth theorists who endorse some other account of the content of natural

language sentences. A use-theorist, such as Brandom or Horwich, is not going to be

moved upon being told that their emphasis on T-sentences renders their theories as all but

useless in revealing the semantic structure of natural language sentences. Be that as it

may, I want a theory of truth that is sensitive to the issues motivating deflationism, but is

at the same time sensitive to the demands of truth-theoretic semanticists and their

explanatory ambitions.

4.3: Horgan et al.'s Contextual Semantics

Terence Horgan, et al., articulates a view of truth called "contextual semantics."[1] According to contextual semantics, all statements/judgments are governed by contextually variable semantic standards for semantic correctness. Truth, on this view, is semantically correct assertibility, where semantically correct assertibility is a joint product of the operative semantic standards and how THE WORLD is.[2] A distinctive feature of contextual semantics is its claim that semantic relations, understood simply as the relation between thought or discourse and the world, need not always be direct correspondence relations.

Direct correspondence relations are often a component of referential semantics, but they need not be. According to Horgan, direct correspondence relations are those relations holding between thought and THE WORLD when that discourse is governed by semantic standards that are "maximally strict."[3] Standards are maximally strict when "under these standards a sentence counts as correctly assertible (i.e., as true) only if there are OBJECTS and PROPERTIES in THE WORLD answering to each of the sentence's constituent singular terms, constituent assertoric existential quantifications, and constituent predicates."[4] But, according to contextual semantics, the semantic standards

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[1] The view has gone under different monikers. See Horgan (2001) and (2006), and Horgan and Potrč (2008).

[2] Horgan adopts Putnam's device of writing in small capital letters terms and phrases like 'object', 'property', and 'the world' in order to stress that in that context he intends to be talking about "denizens of the *mind-independent*, *discourse-independent*, world—the world whose existence is denied by metaphysical antirealists" (2001: 70). Devitt (2001) points to a confusion in discussions of word/world relations resulting from a failure to indicate the standards used to judge talk about word/world relations. This could help avoid this. I discuss this issue below.

[3] Horgan (2001: 71f).

[4] Ibid.

governing discourse are contextually variable, allowing those standards to shift from discourse to discourse. In fact, Horgan claims, our discourse often employs semantic standards that are not maximally strict. In this latter case, the correspondence relation holding between thought and the world is indirect, rather than direct.

Indirect correspondence can be understood in four relevant ways. We can understand referential commitments in a roughly Tarskian way, as that involved in referential semantics, and be committed to all of the entities answering to a discourse's sentences' constituent singular terms, assertoric existential quantifications, and predicates. Or, two, we can understand the referential commitments of a discourse in roughly a Tarskian way, but regard the entities answering to the referential apparatus of a discourse as enjoying some kind of quasi-existence. Or, three, we can understand referential commitments in general in roughly a Tarskian way, but regard problematic discourses, discourses about universities and concertos, for example, as being regimentable into sentences from less problematic discourses. And, lastly, we can understand referential commitments for some discourses in roughly a Tarskian way but understand the referential commitments for other discourses in other ways while denying the reductionism in the third way. Horgan endorses the final way. He will say that some discourses do posit mind-independent objects with properties to which our language tokens can refer while other discourses—the ordinary ones—require not so mind-independent objects to which our language tokens *indirectly* refer. Spelling out the difference between direct and indirect reference will be a primary aim of Horgan et al.'s.

Two virtues of the final way are that sentences in ordinary discourse still come out true, i.e., as semantically correct, even though there are not entities in THE WORLD

answering to the positing apparatus employed by that discourse, and we will avoid the daunting task of providing reductions of problematic discourse to non-problematic discourse (reducing, say, talk about The University of Memphis to talk about some mereological sum of other entities). Although we need not here take a stand on the merits or possibility of reductionism, we do need to know more about contextual standards, on the one hand, and indirect correspondence, on the other.

We must also be careful in describing Horgan's endorsement as an endorsement of traditional Tarskian semantics. Earlier, Horgan thought that "although the providing of truth conditions may still be a useful and important part of semantics for natural language, it is not likely to be an ontologically perspicuous enterprise."[5] Most recently he has endorsed a rule-less semantic "particularism."[6] Although the details of the view have changed, since we are ultimately discussing the extent to which a view of truth can play the explanatory and expressive role required of a truth-theoretic semantic theory, we need only focus on what the views have to say about word/world relations, since these will be the building blocks, so to speak, of a semantic theory and provide details about the modal status of t-sentences. Additionally, his principle arguments against standard takes on the ontological perspicuity of truth-theoretic semantics are independent of his own theory of truth. Thus we can avoid discussing the extent to which a Tarski-style semantic theory for a language L makes clear the ontological commitments of L without begging any questions.

Pointing out the differences should not mislead us into thinking that Horgan et al. are not doing semantics. In his (2001) "Contextual Semantics and Metaphysical

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[5] Horgan (1986)
[6] Horgan and Potrč (2006).

Realism," he does describe his view as "semantics" in the sense that it includes claims about the connection between words/thoughts and reality. However, these relations for Horgan are not meaning constituting relations. Language is still representational, but its representational features are not captured by formulating a formal theory of truth-conditions for language.

Semantic standards, furthermore, cannot be the axioms typically appearing in truth-theoretic theories of natural languages. The former are "monolithic," but the semantic standards of contextual semantics are not. The latter "vary somewhat from one context to another, depending upon the specific purposes our discourse is serving at the time."[7] Monolithic standards are presumably context insensitive. Take everyone's favorite T-sentence, for example:

'snow is white' is true if and only if snow is white.

Even if we allow for context sensitivity, relativizing truth to a particular language L, accounting for indexicals by including a reference to speakers and times, et cetera, the T-sentence stills says that the sentence 'snow is white' is true always just in case snow is white. For the contextual semanticist, this just is not so. There very well might be discourses in which the semantic standards sanction as semantically correct, i.e., as true, an utterance of 'snow is white' even if there is no such thing as snow or whiteness and there might be discourses in which the semantic standards sanction as semantically incorrect, i.e., as false, an utterance of 'snow is white' even if in our ordinary thought and talk the sentence is true. Within standard Tarskian-style semantics, this is impossible.

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[7] Horgan (2001: 71).

To accomplish this kind of sensitivity Horgan must maintain either that the meaning of our expressions changes from context to context, or that their meanings stay the same but the standards of evaluation (for assertibility) vary from context to context. The contextual semanticist takes the latter option for the reason that the first option brings with it several problems, not the least of which is a threat of global ambiguity and failure to explain the ease of communication.[8] Communication is easy. Without much effort at all you, the reader, and anyone else, is able to understand the very sentence you're reading. Many sentences are ambiguous. Lexical ambiguity is an ambiguity at the word-level. The sentence, "I'm going to the bank" is ambiguous in this way. 'Bank' is typographically one word-form but is paired with two different lexical entries, one with the meaning of "financial institution" and the other with the meaning of "edge of a river." More serious ambiguity is structural ambiguity. The sentence "Tom killed the attacker with the knife" is ambiguous in this way. Linguists might point to different tree structures (or bracketed diagrams) to show how the single sentence at the surface level corresponds to distinct syntactic representations. The details are not important here. The sentence could mean "Of several attackers, Tom killed the one with the knife" or perhaps "Tom, using a knife, killed the attacker." If Horgan et al. were to take the first option, the option whereby the meaning of our expressions changed from context to context, the threat he claims would be global ambiguity, presumably of the lexical variety, although nothing he says rules out structural ambiguity as well. Nevertheless, his central claim is

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[8] I postpone discussion of these objections now because, as I will later show, the contextual semanticists view is not immune from them even under the interpretation that the standards, but not meaning, changes from context to context.

that in order to avoid this kind of ambiguity we should hold that the semantic standards themselves "often vary within a given mode of discourse." [9]

The contextually operative semantic standards concern how words/thoughts relate to the world. Within a discourse, such as that about medium-sized dry goods, the standards can change, as when what we count as a 'flat surface' can change within a given discourse. At this point, Horgan needs to be careful to avoid positing radical ambiguity across contexts. For this view, the semantic standards governing the correct assertibility of a given thought or expression are not to be conceived as constituting or as giving the meaning of the thought or expression in question. Horgan's account is solely of correct assertibility; his account of meaning or content is separate. Hence, even though the standards can vary across contexts, an expression's meaning does not change. 'Flat surface' means the same thing across contexts, but the conditions under which a predication of it counts as correctly satisfiable can change. We will revisit this below.

A natural question now arises: what are the identity conditions for contexts? Domains of discourse are individuated by their posits. The "positing apparatus" of thought and language, that is, "features like names, quantifiers, and predicates in natural language, and thought-constituents that are the analogues in thought of such natural-language constituents," tell us what the "posits" are of natural language discourse. An object can be posited, it is important to note, even when discourse about it is not ontologically committed to the existence of that posit. A discourse's posits are what the discourse is about, so to speak. However, the contextual semanticist will claim that sentences or propositions can still be true even when there are no OBJECTS or

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[9] Little is said about variation across contexts or modes of discourse. This will be discussed below in conjunction with Gila Sher's views.

PROPERTIES answering to a discourse's posits. The key theses of contextual semantics (or "austere realism" as Horgan's package view has come to be labeled) can be enumerated briefly:[10]

(1) There is a mind-independent, discourse-independent world.

(2) The right ontology excludes most of the posits of everyday belief and discourse, and also many of the posits of mature scientific theories.

(3) Truth is correspondence between language and thought on one hand, and the world on the other.

(4) Numerous statements and thought-contents involving posits of common sense and science are true, even though the correct ontology does not include these posits.

(5) Truth, for such statements and thought contents, is indirect correspondence.[11]

How can statements or thought-contents be true when no OBJECTS or PROPERTIES answer to those statements' or thought-contents' posits? It can be correctly assertible because of the standards sanction such talk as semantically correct.

Horgan et al. part from both traditional ways of accounting for reference failure. The Russellian will treat reference failure (and denotation failure) as just one more of the ways in which statements/propositions turn out to be false. Strawsonians, on the other hand, will treat instances of reference failure (and denotation failure) as one of the ways statements/propositions fail to be true or false. Horgan and company disagree with both.

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[10] These are directly quoted from Horgan and Potrč (2008: 3). See also (2008: 39-45) and Horgan (2001: 70-77) for further articulations of the core theses of contextual semantics.
[11] I hold off discussion of "blobjectivism," the view according to which there is just one concrete particular (the universe).

Failure of direct correspondence does not automatically result in falsehood and neither does it result necessarily in lack of truth value. It is now time to say more about direct and indirect correspondence and the related standards of semantically correct assertibility..

Horgan and Potrč (2006: 142) distinguish between "tight" and "non-tight" contextual semantic standards, which is related to but distinct from the "direct" and "indirect" distinction.[12] They write, "a judgment/statement is governed by tight semantic standards if those standards conspire with how the world is to render the statement/judgment semantically correct or semantically incorrect; otherwise the semantic standards are non-tight."[13] In other words, judgments/statements governed by tight semantic standards are bivalent: they are either true or false but not both. Conspiring with the world is only a sufficient condition for bivalence, it is not a necessary condition. For instance, the limit case of indirect correspondence, namely, mathematical discourse, does not conspire with the world at all, according to Horgan and Potrč, yet mathematical claims are either determinately true or determinately false. Judgments/statements governed by non-tight semantic standards need not be bivalent. Consider humor judgments: "If, for example, humor judgments are partially expressive of the judge's own sense of humour and thus can vary among several people without anyone's being mistaken, then the semantic standards governing thought and talk about

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[12] In Horgan (1986: 12) he distinguishes between robust and nominal reference. The terminology, but not the distinction, is the only difference.
[13] It is clear from the context that by 'the world' here they mean THE WORLD.

what's funny are non-tight."[14] In other words, when *p* is a humor judgment (or the

proposition expressed by one), *<p or ~p>* may be true because both *<p>* and *<~p>* are

correctly assertible, i.e. true, under the contextually operative semantic standards.

In later writings, the distinction is held to be between "strict" and "non-strict"

semantic standards. Semantic standards are "maximally strict" in a given context if

"…under these standards a sentence counts as correctly assertible (i.e., as true) only if

there are OBJECTS and PROPERTIES in THE WORLD answering to each of the

sentence's constituent singular terms, constituent assertoric existential quantifications,

and constituent predicates."[15] The contextually operative semantic standards will be

maximally strict if and only if the statements/judgments governed by those standards are

tight; while the contextually operative semantic standards will be non-strict if and only if

the statements/judgments governed by those standards are non-tight.

4.4: Semantic Standards and the Truth-Predicate

Deflationists, as we have already seen, attempt to account for all of our uses of the

truth-predicate with a minimum of logical resources, all the while maintaining that no

monistic theory of truth can account for the variety of thoughts to which we ascribe truth.

According to contextual semantics, truth is semantically correct assertibility. Due to the

fact that semantic standards are not monolithic and that semantic standards also govern

use of the truth-predicate, the truth predicate with shift in its correct applicability. A

"correspondence" usage of the truth predicate is correctly applicable only to statements

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[14] Horgan (2006: 142). It is interesting to note that the criterion for tightness mentioned,
namely, whether disagreement necessitates someone's being mistaken, is very similar to
Crispin Wright's criterion of objectivity. See the latter's (1992: 142ff).
[15] Horgan (2006: 71f).

governed by strict/tight semantic standards, while a "schema T" usage, a pure deflationist usage, is applicable to all discourses.[16] If this is correct, then the following all hold:

(1) A claim about some constituent of our ultimate ontology is a claim governed by maximally strict/tight semantic standards and can be either correspondence-true or correspondence-false (in which case they would be either semantically correct or semantically incorrect).

(2) A claim about something that is not a constituent of our ultimate ontology, the University of Kentucky, say, is a claim governed by non-strict/non-tight semantic standards, so it cannot be correspondence-true or correspondence-false, but it can still be semantically correct or semantically incorrect.

(3) An ethical claim is a claim that is false if it is governed by strict/tight standards; but because such claims are governed by non-tight semantic standards, these claims do not conspire with THE WORLD in the way required to yield correspondence-truth. But such claims can still be true or false because the contextually operative semantic standards governing such claims will be non-tight/non-strict.

Why is this not a version of pluralism? Admittedly there is a tension. On the one hand we have many predicates, 'x is correspondence-true', 'x is true', 'x is indirect correspondence-true', all of which satisfy the truth-schema. However, according to contextual semantics, none of these expresses the property of truth. Truth is semantically correct assertibility. While each of the above predicates have occasions in which their

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[16] I use the term "pure deflationist" to indicate accounts that count a predicate as a truth predicate when it satisfies (the second order) " p is _____ if and only if p." According to Horgan et al., all uses of the truth-predicate satisfy this schema.

uses are semantically correct, none of them have uses that are semantically correct across

all contexts. The predicate, 'is true', is the only one that does that.[17]

4.5: Crispin Wright's Minimalism

In *Truth and Objectivity*, Wright aims to articulate a version of anti-realism that is

independent of claims about truth and objectivity. Versions of anti-realism like

Putnam's, for instance, centrally involve a view of truth, such as that bivalence be

rejected or that truth be viewed as some kind of epistemic property like justification

under ideal circumstances. Wright also mentions Dummett's anti-realism and the error

theory of Mackie. The specifics of the anti-realist positions Wright glosses are not

important. What is important is that Wright thinks these theories all fail to respect the

fact that discourses, whether moral, mathematical, etc., can all exhibit the "overt syntactic

trappings of assertion—negation, the conditional, embedding within propositional

attitudes, hypothesis and inference and so on…"[18] It is a feature of the surface structure

of sentences like 'The ceiling of the Sistine Chapel is beautiful' that it can be negated the

usual way: 'It is not the case that the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel is beautiful'. That

sentence can also serve as either the antecedent or consequent of a conditional: 'if the

ceiling of the Sistine Chapel is beautiful then Michelangelo was a gifted artist'. That

sentence can also be embedded within propositional attitude constructions, constructions

involving 'thinks that', 'believes that', etc.: 'Jon wonders whether the ceiling of the

Sistine Chapel is beautiful'. Lastly, sentences like that can be the basis of hypothesis and

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[17] Hence Horgan et al. should deny Wright's dictum that any predicate with certain
general features, satisfaction of the T-schema being one of them, qualifies on that account
as a truth-predicate. See (1991:x)
[18] Wright (1992: 11).

inferences, such as a standard modus ponens involving the already mentioned conditional construction. Anti-realist theories of aesthetic matters, for all of their perhaps intuitive plausibility, must contend with the fact that syntactically the sentences involving aesthetic terminology behave the same as sentences involving otherwise objective matters. And if they behave the same as sentences involving otherwise objective matters, sentences to which it is straightforwardly appropriate to apply the truth-predicate, then there is a prima facie case that application of the truth-predicate to these sentences at issue is not a problem. If that is so, then truth is not the problem. What follows from this recognition? Wright asks:

> First, how does the concession that a discourse is truth-apt, and indeed that
> many of what we take to be true assertions expressed in it are indeed
> true—how can this conession avoid giving the game to the realist straight
> away, at least when it is combined with an acknowledgement that the
> contents expressed are sui generis and permit of no reduction to more
> explicitly anthropocentric terms?[19]

There are a few things to notice about this question. First, and Wright makes this clear in his opening chapter, we have to assume irreducibility. He does not assume it to beg any questions. Rather, the debate either can get out of hand if the problematic discourses are related to unproblematic discourses or the debate can be rendered moot. The debates are genuine. Yet at the same time the sentences are truth-apt as we see when we take care to inspect their syntactic form. But, second, he asks, what is left of the debate once realists and anti-realists admit the truth-aptness and irreducibility of the heretofore problematic

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[19] Wright (1992: 12).

domains? Ought we go deflationist? Ought we say, yes, these sentences are truth-apt but truth does not add anything to what is being said or it is trivial or so on and so forth? At this point Wright presents an argument that "…deflationism shows a tendency to inflate under pressure…"[20]

Deflationism, according to Wright, contends that the content of the truth-predicate is "wholly fixed" by the t-schema:

"P" is true if and only if P.[21]

This is the standard disquotational version of the t-schema. Deflationists want this schema to explain completely the truth-predicate—its function and its meaning. This claim, argues Wright, is "inconsistent with the distinctively deflationist corollary, that "true" expresses no real property but is merely a device of disquotation."[22] To see this, Wright asks what follows about a predicate whose content is completely given by the disquotation schema. First, "deflationism is committed to the thesis that the T-predicate is positively normative, both descriptively and prescriptively, of any assertoric practice."[23] The T-predicate is descriptively normative in that speakers can be accurately described as adhering to the disquotation schema while making certain moves within assertoric practice: we are prepared to assert '"P" is true' when we are prepared to assert 'P' and vice versa. Furthermore, the T-predicate is prescriptively normative in the sense that reflection on the norm embodied in the t-schema "provides a (defeasible) reason for making, or endorsing, or permitting [following] it, even if such reasons tend, for the most

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[20] Wright (1992: 13).
[21] Wright (1992: 14).
[22] Wright (1992: 15).
[23] Wright (1992: 16).

part, to go unacknowledged by actual participants."[24] The argument for these claims requires reflecting on actual linguistic practice. What is required for the sincere and literal use of sentences to which the T-predicate apply? To assert any content is to recognize a distinction between proper and improper assertions.[25] Thus it follows that there is a distinction between assertions that are justified and those that are not. The T-schema is a norm—descriptive and prescriptive—for sanctioning certain assertions. It licenses us to more across the biconditional, so to speak, asserting one side upon a sincere and literal assertion of the other side. Because this is so, deflationism cannot maintain that there is nothing to truth. Appealing to truth and the T-schema is explanatorily significant when it comes to explaining actual assertoric practice. The predicate 'is true' cannot wholly be a device of disquotation.

Deflationism then cannot be true. Considering just the T-schema causes the view to inflate. In essence, Wright will accept the inflation and toss out the deflationists' claim that truth is not a substantive property. His view will capture several of the traditionally obvious things to say about truth without going further than required. To capture the "correspondence" of truth, Wright proposes the platitude (CP):

"P" is true if and only if things are as "P" says they are.

To make sense of (CP) we do need an account of the conditions under which a sentence P says something. We do not need an account of correspondence, which has typically been problematic for classical correspondence theorists.

Wright's position—minimalism—endorses only what has been said above. Truth, characterized by the truth schema, functions as both a prescriptive and descriptive norm

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[24] Wright (1992: 15).
[25] Wright (1992: 17).

governing assertoric discourse. Any predicate which has these features and that can be extensionally divergent from warranted assertibility while coinciding with it in normative force is a truth predicate. What properties does this predicate pick out? That isn't a question Wright asks. He is concerned to characterize the predicate in a way that allows debates between realists and anti-realists to continue while avoiding the debate about truth. Wright's position, he admits, allows for a pluralism of sorts. It is entirely possible that several non-synonymous predicates count as truth-predicates: "there is a prospect of *pluralism*—that the more that there is to say [about the truth predicate] may well vary from discourse to discourse—and that whatever may remain to be said, it will not concern any *essential* features of truth."

4.6: Minimalism and Meaning

The first question to ask with respect to Wright's view and truth-theoretic semantic theories is this: if there are possibly many different truth predicates unified only in their satisfaction of general platitudes, then which truth predicate or truth predicates figure into the truth-theoretic theory of content for a language? First, it must be one and only one. If two truth predicates figured in the theory, one each for two different discourses, then the theory would need first to be able to distinguish sentences belonging to one discourse from those belonging to another without making reference to the content of those sentences (on pain of circularity). Worse still, even if that issue would be resolved, the theory would yield two syntactically similar T-sentences with different truth predicates. Such a theory would fail to satisfy Convention-T. Or, rather, would fail to satisfy a version of Convention-T that said there was one and only one T-schema. We

have already seen (Chapter 2) that truth-theoretic semantics requires one and only one T-schema as a material adequacy condition. Hence, even if the properties, if any, that Wright's various truth-predicates picked out were "substantive" and non-deflationary, they could not be the properties figuring into a truth-theoretic semantic. Any one property would be limited to its specific discourse and, so incomplete, and two or more are ruled out.

4.7: Gila Sher's "Family Theory"

Gila Sher is a pluralist, but a pluralist within the confines of correspondence:

> "My own analysis suggests a different kind of pluralism: pluralism within
> the bounds of correspondence. The idea is that truth both in physics and
> in mathematics is based on correspondence, but since physics and
> mathematics involve different aspects of language and the world, their
> correspondence principles differ."[26]

Sher's view begins with the requirement that a "substantive theory of truth be higly explanatory, satisfy stringent criteria of informativeness, [and] provide non-trivial answers to "deep" philosophical questions, etc."[27] She questions, however, that it is the qoal of a substantive theory of truth "to delineate the one (or at least one) substantive common denominator of all truth."[28] Her view, the "family" view, will instead offer multiple "theories." These theories will not be demarcated along the lines of kinds of truth or along lines of discourses. Instead they will each investigate "*some* substantive

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[26] Sher (2004: 7).
[27] Sher (1999: 133).
[28] Sher (1999: 133).

(and relatively general) principle, "factor," or aspect of truth."[29] One such aspect is correspondence. Sher takes Tarski at his word—which is more than many deflationists do—and treats his view as genuine semantics understood as placing great importance on the relationship between linguistic entities and the world. Beyond such word/world relations such as reference and satisfaction, Sher places great weight on the T-schema, from Tarski's *Convention T*. Sher interprets these not as merely pairing materially equivalent sentences, she sees them as more: "The central feature of the T-Schema, from the point of view of correspondence, is the contrast between the left and right sides of its instances… The left side of a T-biconditional consists of a *linguistic predication*, its right side of an *objectual* or "*worldly*" *predication*."[30] "The task of a correspondence theory of truth," Sher continues, "is to reduce *truth* predications, which are linguistic, to *objectual* predications specifying the conditions which have to hold in the world in order for a given sentence for be true."

The foregoing makes clear that Sher does not take the central task of a correspondence theory to be in specifying the nature of *correspondence*. Compare Bertrand Russell on this point. Russell, after rejecting the coherence theory of truth for beliefs in his essay "Truth and Falsehood," returns to the correspondence theory as the other viable option. He says immediately, "It remains to define precisely what we mean by 'fact', and what is the nature of the correspondence which must subsist between belief and fact, in order that belief may be true."[31] For Sher, Tarski has given us the technique of characterizing the nature of correspondence in so far as Tarski's approach is an

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[29] Sher (1999: 134), emphasis in original.
[30] Sher (1999: 135).
[31] Bertrand Russell (1912: 20). Partially reprinted in Lynch, ed. (2001). Refrences are to the reprint.

approach that arguably makes sense of how "true" can mean "agrees with reality." The T-sentences make the connection.[32] Providing a definition of truth along Tarskian lines—provided it satisfies his material adequacy condition—tells us all there is to tell about the nature of correspondence. That it doesn't posit "facts" is a virtue.

That task of constructing a correspondence account is not trivial, either. Viewed purely as a device of disquotation, T-sentences are trivial. A truth theory, to deserve the name, should be "substantive." What does Sher mean by 'substantive'? A theory of truth is substantive when it "offers a *systematic* account of the truth conditions of sentences of *L* based on some *explanatory* principle."[33] Field's (1972) view is systematic in exactly this sense. There Field held that in order to carry out the reduction of truth to more basic and physically respectable properties, we must reduce reference and satisfaction to basic and physically respectable properties. Field takes Tarski to have carried out the reduction of truth to reference and satisfaction. All that is left—no small task—is to finish the reduction. The explanatory principle at play in Field calls for reduction of theoretically significant terms to terms picking out physically respectable entities within the confines of Tarski's systematic account of the truth conditions for a target language *L*. In this sense he qualifies as an inflationary truth theorist.

How does one develop a substantive theory of truth? The answer involves first the rejection of what Sher calls the "myth of the common denominator," which is the idea that a substantive theory of truth has "the task of identifying the/a common denominator

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[32] See Tarski (1944). Reprinted in Lynch, ed. (2001) where he almost uses these same words (pp. 354-5).
[33] Sher (1999: 138), my emphasis.

all truths."[34] The common denominator she calls the "substantive determinant," a notion

which is used to express an identity principle for truths:

> *(ID) ($\forall t_1$)($\forall t_2$)[Truth(t_1) & Truth(t_2) → ($t_1 = t_2$ iff $\forall d$(d is a substantive*
>
> *determinant of t_1 ↔ d is a substantive determinant of t_2)][35].*

'Substantive determinant' is a primitive term for Sher and means roughly that which

"makes it true" that such-and-such. In the case of 'John loves Mary', the substantive

determinant is that the "referent of 'John' stands I nthe relation referred to by 'loves' to

the referent of 'Mary'." The "myth" is that in order to be a substantive theory there must

be a or one substantive determinant common to all truths. Using standard issues of scope

and generality, Sher argues against the possibility of that kind of "substantive" truth

theory. She reformulates the task:

> *(G2 ½) The task of a theory of truth is to identify <u>a single principle</u>, or <u>a unified</u>*
>
> *<u>array of principles</u>, which (together) account for <u>some</u> relatively general and*
>
> *intuitively substantive <u>factor</u> or factors of <u>truth</u>.[36]*

Given Sher's notion of substantiveness, presented above, carrying out (G2 ½) will

involve constructing a variant of Tarski's theory. But it will not *just* involve constructing

a Tarski-style theory of truth. She contrasts two different Tarskian approaches to

defining truth, one that uses "lists of denotations" in the base clauses. Because no

analysis—semantic or otherwise—is provided for the base clauses, specifically the

notions of reference and satisfaction figuring into the base clauses, the account fails to be

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[34] Sher (1999: 145).
[35] Sher (1999: 143), emphasis in original.
[36] Sher (1999: 147), emphasis in original.

substantive.[37] The account, on these grounds, fails to do justice to our intuitions that different atomic sentences are true in different ways. Abstract mathematic sentences and moral sentences may be true in different ways. If the theory stops the recursive definition of truth at base clauses involving satisfaction and reference, then the theory fails to be substantive.[38] It is a theory of logical structure—"a theory of *truth as a function of logical structure*."[39]

An additional way to put the matter would reference the above mentioned distinction between theories of meaning in the broad sense and theories of meaning in the narrow sense. A Tarski-style theory of truth for a (fragment of a) language stops short of being a theory of meaning in the broad sense. Providing the theoretical resources to interpret it as a *substantive* theory of truth is akin to providing the resources to interpret the theory as a theory of meaning in the broad sense. This way of putting the matter, however amenable to Sher's framework, is not how she would put it. The goal isn't now to provide a "family" theory of reference and satisfaction. The substantive theory for her will be a variety of correspondence based on a "family of connections" between *atomic* sentences (language) and the world. "*Truth* is a multi-faceted phenomenon," Sher writes. "Accordingly," she continues, "the *theory* of truth is a *family* of theories: a collection or system of theories, each investigating some substantive factor or aspect of truth, and together (in the ideal limit) providing an exhaustive account of this phenomenon."[40]

One might immediately worry that such an approach will be piecemeal, with nothing tying a theory of truth for one domain to a theory of truth for another domain.

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[37] This is a point similar to Field (1972).
[38] Sher (1999: 154).
[39] Ibid, emphasis in original.
[40] Sher (1999: 162), emphasis in original.

The worry is unfounded, argues Sher. The general structure of a theory of truth will what was mentioned above. The strategy will be to offer—within the above constraints—a theory of truth for the different factors affecting the truth of sentences of a language. This is not a matter of going pluralist about reference and satisfaction. It is a more general focus on word/world connections at the level of sentences. The right hand side of T-sentences is "objectual." If truth predications are reducible to objectual predications (sentences used), then "to understand under what conditions a sentence is true is to understand under what conditions the objects referred to by this sentence possess the properties (stand in the relations) attributed to them by it."[41] Sher describes her pluralism as a "pluralism within the bounds of correspondence."[42]

Can more unify the theories than just the formal structure of a theory of truth? In other words, what makes each member of the family a theory of *truth*? Sher offers two theses meant to unify the family members: an "Immanence Thesis" and a "Logicality Thesis." Let us take these in turn.

Immanence involves three principles: immanence, transcendence, and normativity. Human thought is immanent because it "attributes some property to some object(s) or says (assertively or unassertively) that things are one way or another."[43] Truth is a property of immanent thoughts and for all immanent thoughts the question of truth arises. Additionally, truth-talk is immanent.[44]

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[41] Sher (1999: 163-4).
[42] Sher (2004).
[43] Sher (2004: 24).
[44] Ibid.

Human thought is transcendent because we can talk and reflect about our thoughts. Truth-talk is transcendent because it attributes a property of our thoughts (it is about our thoughts, in other words).

Last, human thought has a normative aspect in the sense that we can ask of an thought whether things are as the thought says they are. There is an aspect of correctness. "[*T*]*ruth* is a standard for a positive answer to this question," writes Sher.[45] The Immanence Thesis maintains that human thought satisfies all three of the above principles. Furthermore, Immanence implies that there is a correspondence dimension to truth: thought is immanent and there is a standard of correctness that depends on how things are. Thus Immanence countenances correspondence only to the extent that it countenances immanence, transcendence, and normativity. Anything beyond that— classical correspondence, for example—is beyond the Immanence Thesis. It is not to say it is incompatible with Immanence. It is to say that the failure of classical correspondence theories of truth is not strike against the Immanence Thesis. There are many ways to elaborate on correspondence and challenges to unity from the perspective of the diversity of our thought imply that there has to be if truth is to be a substantive notion. A monistic theory of truth might be out of bounds. Nevertheless, Immanence captures the correspondence intuition not in a monolithic way. As Sher puts it, "Correspondence…is a *research program* rather than a *dogma*."[46]

The "Logicality Thesis" says "that one central factor of truth is *the logical factor*, a factor having to do with the role played by *logical structure* in rendering sentences true (false). We noted above that a Tarskian theory of truth can, it is hoped, provide an

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[45] Sher (2004: 25).
[46] Sher (2004: 27), emphasis in original.

account of logical structure. The account of logical structure places constraints on theories of truth—and of the correspondence aspect of truth—constraints that serve to unify the "family" of theories of truth. A theory of one aspect of correspondence will not be a formal theory, one that only appeals to the structures of the objects to which it applies. The logical factor of truth, on the other hand, is a formal theory. The semantics of the logical constants, Sher mentions as an example, is an example of kind of formality. One can completely and systematically specify the truth-conditions of conjunctions and the contributions made by each conjunct to the truth-value of the conjunction. All conjunctions share in virtue of their structure and nothing else. The specification of truth-conditions for conjunction is formal. One factor of a theory of truth is that it possess this logical aspect in the sense that the theory must relate the truth of a sentence to its structure.

A corollary of the Logicality Thesis is that truth applies to all domains because all claims from all domains of discourse have a logical structure. Inferences can transmit truth from one domain to another, so to speak, because inferences are sanctioned by the logical structure of the claims involved.[47] We do not need $truth_1$ and $truth_2$ and so on. We only need *truth* because truth is everywhere governed by Immanence and Logicality. More important for present purposes is that the two theses—Immanence and Logicality— tell us what all truths have in common, according to Sher.

There is still much more in the way of constructing a theory of truth and Sher's own goal was not to construct one, but was only to specify general constraints on the construction of a theory of truth. We are now in a position to ask if these general

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[47] Sher (2004: 32).

constraints on a theory of truth can be compatible with the explanatory significant of truth as it figures in truth-theoretic semantic theories.

4.8: "Familial" Truth and Meaning

There are several virtues of Sher's position that make it compatible with the aims of a truth-theoretic semanticist. First, the view respects compositionality. Sher argues that the structure of a theory of truth should mirror Tarski's theory. Although his is not the only compositional theory of truth that's been proposed, it respects compositionality because it seeks to define truth for formal languages with an infinity of sentences. The only way to do this while respecting the requirement that the cardinality of the set of axioms be finite is to provide a compositional theory. If that were not a requirement, then one would be free to adopt an approach that had axiom schema for the base clauses, which gives an infinity of axioms. A virtue of the approach with requires finitely statable base clauses is that it satisfies Davidson's learnability requirement. Hence, in virtue of respecting compositionality, Sher's approach respects learnability.

Second, Sher's position satisfies Convention-T. For a theorist interested purely in truth, this means that it satisfies Tarski's material adequacy condition. For a semanticist, this means that the theory is guaranteed to yield T-sentences--the testable implications of a theory of truth qua meaning. Owing to the fact that both deflationists and inflationists accept T-sentences (subject to interpretation), this is a virtue of the theory.

Third, the view requires a meta-language/object-language distinction, which is required by the current semantic project. Truth conditions have to be stated in a language,

but on pain of circularity we arwe prevented from stating those truth conditions in the very same language under study. This was a shortcoming of some deflationary positions.

On this score, Sher's theory, or outline of one rather, could be put to service as an outline of a theory of meaning. The theory, however, does not go far enough to guarantee substantiveness. One further problem is that it requires domains of discourse. The issues with those will be discussed below. For all of their intuitiveness and necessity in getting some of the problems going for which pluralism is proposed as a solution, domains will prove to be a drawback.

Why does the theory not go far enough? Two main issues arise. Sher's view leaves out reference and satisfaction as the target of her analysis. This is partly understandable because she is offering explicitly a theory of truth and not a theory of either of the other two notions or properties. That being said, a theory of truth that adopts the Tarskian paradigm is well suited to say more about the two fundamental relations figuring into a Tarskian truth definition.

This is especially surprising given the fact that Sher considers her view a version or outline of a correspondence view. Correspondence is putatively a relation between propositions or bits of language and facts where facts are obtaining states of affairs or, more crudely, the world The notions of reference and satisfaction are well positioned to provide some such connection. Sher's focus on T-sentences is understandable. And her claim that it helps make sense of correspondence is understandable as well. Given the fact, however, that some challenge the claim that T-sentences can be read in a way

supportive of correspondence, she could have strengthened her position by making the further step.[48]

Second, Sher has never argued that truth is a substantive property. For all she says, her family theory fails to be specific enough to pick out an actual property. Nor does it offer much guidance about which properties may in which discourses be truth. The outline may be satisfied by many properties or by none, for all she has said. This is not a big criticism for the purposes here. I am assuming that truth is an explanatorily significant property within empirical semantics and, as such, the consistency of Sher's approach with that of the semanticist does allow for the fact that her approach may say something of interest about truth as it figures in semantic theories of meaning for a natural language. Since it says nothing about reference or satisfaction, the theory is incomplete.

4.9: Michael Lynch's Alethic Functionalism

Consider the following three claims:

(1) $2 + 2 = 4$

(2) Irma Thomas was born in 1941.

(3) Slavery is unconstitutional.

These are all true claims; of each sentence we may correctly apply the predicate 'is true'. However, a problem lurks. In virtue of having what single property are all of the above claims true? The causal/referential theory of truth apparently can handle (2) well: it is true if and only if the referent of 'Irma Thomas' satisfies the predicate 'was born in

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[48] See especially Patterson (2003).

1941'.[49] It is less clear with respect to (1) and (3). Does '2' refer in the same way as

'Irma Thomas' refers? Numbers lack the causal efficacy required by the

causal/referential theory. On the other hand, laws and constitutions seem to lack the

requisite mind-independence usually thought to accompany robust theories of truth.

While the causal/referential theory works for some, so too does a coherence theory seem

to work well for some others but not all of the above claims. Coherence with centuries of

juridical decisions and current laws does seem to be what makes claims like (3) true; yet

coherence with well tested and accepted beliefs has little to do with the truth of (2). It

may cohere perfectly well with all of what we take ourselves to know and yet we could

discover tomorrow that Irma Thomas was born in 1940.[50]

The problem pointed to by the quick discussion above, the "scope problem," as

we have already seen, is a primary motivator against alethic monism, the view that all

true sentences have one and only one property in common and that nothing without that

property is true.[51] It is also a primary motivator for deflationism.

Notice that while the scope problem is enough of a problem for theories of truth,

it is also a problem for truth-theoretic semantics for each of the sentences (1) – (3) can be

systematically converted into a T-sentence:

(1t) '2 + 2 = 4' is true if and only if 2 + 2 = 4.

(2t) 'Irma Thomas was born in 1941' is true if and only if Irma Thomas was born in

1941.

(3t) 'Slavery is unconstitutional' is true if and only if slavery is unconstitutional.

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[49] I here ignore issues of tense.
[50] This paragraph borrows heavily from Lynch (2001).
[51] This problem is also called the problem of the common denominator by Sher (2004).

A correct truth theory for English would entail each of (1t) – (3t). The truth predicate figuring into T-sentences is in each case the same, metalinguistic predicate, and in each case it applies to a sentence which, if used instead of mentioned, belongs to a different domain of discourse than the others. The scope question again looms: does each token of the type 'is true' in (1t) – (3t) pick out the same property? If you were persuaded by the above considerations regarding the scope problem for theories of truth, consideration of formalized truth theories ought to make the issue more pronounced. A solution to the problem for truth theories might also be a solution to the problem for truth-theoretic semantic theories.

Lynch's proposed solution begins by thinking about truth in a new way, a way related to functionalism.[52] He asks: what is the role of true propositions, their job description? If we can specify and constrain the job of truth enough we will get clearer on not just truth's job but also on whether there is a property performing this job. The virtue of approaching truth from this functionalist perspective is that functional properties are multiply realizable, more than one underlying property can realize the functional role.[53] Yet the explanatory burden does not stop at a specification of the role played by the object under study, in our case true propositions, it stops only once the underlying nature of the role-player is characterized, for it explains how and why the underlying property performs its requisite function. Thus if both tasks could be accomplished we

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[52] Lynch (2004: 391 n. 5) attributes the first appearance of the idea that truth could be explicated in functionalists' terms to Pettit (1996).

[53] Wright (1992) might have said that a consequence of this proposal is that there is a "prospect of pluralism." Similarities end here and the differences in their views should be clear.

would solve the scope problem and have a robust theory of truth capable of explaining the functional role of true propositions.

What are the jobs of true propositions, what is truth's job description? Lynch holds that our folk theory of truth has the answers insofar as it consists in a (implicit) network of common-sense principles, or "platitudes," demarcating the role of truth. Among the members of this "alethic network" are the following:

(a) The proposition that p is true if and only if p.

(b) The proposition that p is false if and only if it is not the case that p.

(c) Propositions are what are true and false.

(d) Every proposition has a negation.

(e) A proposition can be justified but not true, and true but not justified.

(f) One knows that p only if it is true that p.

(g) Facts are what make propositions true.[54]

The network is not intended to be simply a list of platitudes concerning truth. It is conceived as a network precisely for the reason that the platitudes are interconnected, linking truth to other concepts like justification, warrant, and fact. Important for the present essay is the utility of one such supposed connection, that between truth and meaning, which will be addressed below.

A specification of the role of truth proceeds by identifying the platitudes in the alethic network, and conjoining them. Next one uses the Ramsey/Lewis method[55] for defining theoretical terms, replacing instances of 'true' in the list of platitudes with a

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[54] All of (a) – (g) are from Lynch (2001: 730-1).
[55] See Lewis (1972).

variable, prefixing an existential quantifier, and then using the resulting sentence to define 'true' in the following way:

(FT) x is true $\Leftrightarrow_{df} \exists_{t1} [A(t_1,\ldots,t_n,O_1,\ldots,O_n) \ \& \ x$ has $t_1]$

where T terms are the names for properties with unspecified natures, in our case truth, and O terms are the terms, conceptually clearer and less problematic, used to introduce the new T terms. We then say, writes Lynch (2001: 733), "that a property *realizes the truth role for a discourse* just when it is the unique realizer (or near perfect realizer…) of that role for the propositions that compose the discourse," realizing that one's metaphysical view will provide further constraints on what can perform such a job.[56]

Last in the present characterization of alethic functionalism is the requirement that we view truth as the 'role' property, as a higher-order property of truth-bearers, the property of having a property that plays the truth role. On the assumption that the above uses of 'true' are not equivocal, this is the natural move.

Examining this theory in the light of our scope problem, we can easily see its attractiveness. There is one concept of truth that picks out one property, the property of having a property that plays the truth role, although this role can be played by various first-order properties. So while each of (1) – (3) above are true, the realizing properties for each of them may very well vary.[57] But this will not mean we are equivocating when we employ our notion of truth, as Lynch argues we would be if we adopted simply a pluralistic view of truth properties or concepts.[58]

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[56] Emphasis in original.

[57] I will not here take a stand on whether the realizer properties necessarily vary from discourse to discourse; see Lynch (2001) and (2004).

[58] Lynch (2001) and (2004).

In sum, we obtain one virtue of pluralism about truth, namely, a solution to the scope problem, while at the same time avoiding its biggest problem, namely, the implication of the equivocality of our truth concept.[59]

4.10: Alethic Functionalism and Truth-Theoretic Semantics

In what way does alethic functionalism assist truth-theoretic semantics? Already covered is the fact that the scope problem transfers to the target sentences of a truth theory, and alethic functionalism solves this problem. More important than this, however, is the fact that it directly confronts challenges to the viability of inflated truth-theoretic semantics, a semantics employing commitments to substantive truth.

Recall that for Horwich (1990: ch.3), minimalism leads us to expect nothing more out of theories of truth than that provided by instances of the T-schema. Not only will no robust theory of truth be forthcoming, but we should not expect other areas to depend for their illumination on the concept of truth, even areas like theory of meaning. Yet we have seen that philosophers like Max Kölbel (2001) and Michael Williams (1999) argue that one can engage in truth-theoretic semantics of the Davidsonian sort without employing a robust conception of truth. Williams, for example, argued that there are two senses of theory of meaning. According to the first sense, a theory of meaning for a language L is an axiomatic rendering of 'is true in L' for a particular L; and this, he says, can be done employing the disquotational resources of Brandom (1994) or Quine (1970).

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[59] For a more complete account of the problems faced by alethic pluralism and alethic monism, though not always under those monikers, see Lynch (2004) and Wright (2001).

The second sense of theory of meaning is theory of interpretation, which, Williams contends, also does not require substantive truth.

The specifics of Williams's arguments we have already discussed. Countering this position, Lynch claims that many deflationists are operating beneath a false dichotomy (2004: 391): they hold that "either instances of [schema-T] are true in virtue of a single underlying structural property that all and only true propositions share, or there is no such property and we are deflationists." Deflationists often use problems like the scope problem to show why monist views must be mistaken, but draw the inference that no substantive view is correct. Yet if alethic functionalism is a coherent view, then this inference is illicit. And until a decisive objection to alethic functionalism is produced, it must be included as an alternative to traditional correspondence views, causal/referential views, coherence views, and the remainder.

Alethic functionalism also assists truth-theoretic semantics by supporting its empirical adequacy. If deflationists regard instances of schema-T as constitutive of truth and these are trivially true, and if truth-theoretic semantics does not require a commitment to substantive truth, then it appears as if truth-theoretic semantics is trivial for it uses trivial facts about truth to explicate meaning.[60] Alethic functionalism renders truth-theoretic semantics anything but trivial.

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[60] Deflationary semantics is also arguably trivial along another dimension, namely that T-sentences turn out to be trivially true on their view. Yet these are not trivial. If 'snow is white' had meant something else then the T-sentence " 'snow is white' is true if and only if snow is white" would be false. We learn something when we learn the previous T-sentence. Such objections were discussed by Horisk (2005); additional arguments can be found in Bar-On, Horisk, and Lycan (2000). On the status of Tarski see Field (1972).

Foster, following Davidson, put the project of theory of meaning for a language L as that of giving a theory knowledge of which suffices for understanding L.[61] If a theory of truth for a language L employs a substantive, functional conception of truth, then attempts to confirm such a theory by testing individual T-sentences will be assisted by the knowledge of the domain of a mentioned sentence in the left-hand side of T-sentences. Knowledge of the domain in question arguably provides a weighted set of platitudes about what can realize the truth property for that domain. Or, if such knowledge is not had by the interpreter, then confirmation of a T-sentence by means of isolating the realizer property, the presence of which always accompanies assent to certain sentential promptings, will shed light on the prompted sentence's domain. The resources to which the interpreter can appeal are much broader with a robust theory of truth providing the theoretical underpinnings, combating the second claim of Williams, above.

Lynch himself admits the consistency of alethic functionalism with the view that meaning or content consists in truth conditions.[62] Though not the focus of the work cited here, that work contains within it the resources to motivate the connection a final way, via the platitudes.

Presumably, some of the platitudes we discover in our folk theory of truth, or perhaps our folk theory of meaning, will be similar to the following:

(h) If 'snow is white' means that snow is white then 'snow is white' is true

if and only if snow is white.

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[61] Foster also rightly includes knowledge that the theory is a correct truth theory for L; see his (1976).

[62] Lynch (2004: 396).

(i) If an agent *a* knows the meaning of a sentence *s* then *a* knows the truth conditions of *s*.

(j) If an agent *a* knows that 'snow is white' is true if and only if snow is white, then *a* grasps the literal meaning of 'snow is white'.

Including these platitudes in our alethic network and following the Ramsey/Lewis procedure outlined above gives us a specification of a higher-order property related not only to belief, propositions, negations, and the like, but also to meaning, promising a substantive explanation of the relation between them. This picture so far is a first approximation. More recently, Lynch has modified his view to account for certain early objections and, more important for my purposes, said more about the connection between semantics and alethic functionalism.

4.11: Worries for the Alethic Functionalist

Lynch's view, as attractive as it is, cannot be the final word. It encounters criticisms along two fronts: (1) it founders when it comes both to capturing the explanatory adequacy of explanations involving truth and to capturing the robustness of truth-theoretic semantics as employing truth and not some other property; (2) one of its principal motivations falls pray to a straightforward attach. I present these objections in turn.

Horton and Poston argue that Lynch's position—both his original formulation and his newer formulation (discussed below) fall prey to an objection originally brought by Kim against multiple realizability positions in the philosophy of mind.[63] Roughly, Kim

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[63] Horton and Poston (forthcoming).

argues that higher-order MR properties are equivalent to explanatorily idle disjunctions of their realizers. If the disjunctions of realizers are explanatorily idle and the higher-order property is equivalent to them, then the higher-order property is also explanatorily idle. Hence, MR properties are not fit for inclusion in genuinely explanatory theories.

In outline, Kim's argument is that higher-order MR properties are like the property jade. Jade, it turns out, just is either nephrite or jadeite. If we form a predicate 'N v J' to stand for being either nephrite or jadeite then this predicate will behave in all relevant respects like 'jade' behaves now. Since there is no possible world where jade is neither jadeite or nephrite, then there is no possible world where (holding meaning fixed) the term 'jade' would be used in an explanation where 'N v J' could not. Kim, however, on the grounds that 'jade' fails to pick out a kind—and that all disjunctive predicates fail to pick out a kind—argues that 'jade' is not fit for inclusion in scientific laws or hypotheses.

Similarly, Kim argues that the higher-order properties figuring into MR theses in the philosophy of mind suffer the same fate. By assuming causal closure of the physical, Kim argues that any predicate expressing a higher-order property will be equivalent in its causal-cum-explanatory power to a disjunction of predicates, each predicate of which picks out one of the higher-order property's realizers. If this is so, then no predicate picking out a higher-order property will be fit for inclusion in psychological laws or any other scientific laws or hypotheses. For this reason and if the terms cannot figure in any scientific explanations, we have good reason to be skeptical of the properties they purport to pick out.[64]

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[64] Kim (1992).

Horton and Poston, similarly, apply this argument to Lynch's functionalist theory of truth. If that argument is right, then the explanatory power of Lynch's alethic functionalism is seriously undermined. And if the explanatory power of alethic functionalism is undermined, then the question of whether alethic functionalism is a theory of a property figuring in empirical truth-theoretic semantics is undermined. I discuss a way of avoiding the Kim-style argument below (in Chapter 5).

4.12: Alethic Functionalism and Logic

Lynch presses a key move motivating alethic functionalism over its previous incarnations in Chapter 3 and is mentioned again in Chapter 4.[65] Lynch is considering the view of Crispin Wright, who holds that a priori principles or platitudes specify one concept of truth but that the property realizing it can vary from discourse to discourse. Might this view survive the challenges besetting SAP? Might it specify something that all true propositions have in common, that can be preserved in valid inference, etc.? There is admittedly no single property of truth, on this view. Lynch nevertheless considers a response on behalf of Wright. Might all true propositions share the admittedly thin property of "falling under the concept of truth" (pp. 64-5)? This amounts to saying that "…all true propositions have *the property of having some property that is distinct from warrant, possessed by asserted propositions*, etc." (p. 64, emphasis in original). To get this step, Lynch reasons thus:

> "[I]f every true proposition has some property that has certain features,
>
> then there is something that every true proposition has in common. And if

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[65] Lynch (2009: 64-5 and 73).

they all have something in common, then they share a property. What

property? The property of having some property that has the relevant

features" (p. 64)

Lynch points out, correctly, that "…the property of having a property that falls under the

descriptive concept of truth, doesn't itself fall under that description" (p. 64). Hence, it

isn't truth. So if on the amended account it is what valid inference preserves and what all

true propositions have in common, etc., then the amended account fails because what

valid inferences preserve is not truth.

The charge here is that the pluralist has changed the subject. To an extent, this is

correct. If truth satisfies the descriptive content of truth but this new property, "truth*,"

does not, then truth $\neq$ truth*. As Lynch showed, however, from the fact that a proposition

is true we can conclude that it is true*, because all true propositions have the property of

having some property that plays the truth role. But does the inference work in reverse?

Yes.

(a) Suppose a proposition, <A>, has the property of having some property that
satisfies the descriptive content of truth.

(b) If <A> has the property of having some property that satisfies the descriptive
content of truth, then it has a property that satisfies the descriptive content of
truth.

(c) <A> has a property that satisfies the descriptive content of truth.

(d) Truth satisfies the descriptive content of truth.

(e) <A> is true.

If this is right, then the fact that valid inferences preserve Truth* still tells us something very valuable. Let an argument be valid* just in case it is impossible for its premises to be true* and its conclusion false*. Let a proposition be false* just in case it isn't true*. Now

(i)   Suppose argument A is valid* and has all true* premises.

(ii)   Argument A has a true* conclusion. (from (i) and definition of validity*)

(iii)   Argument A has a true conclusion (from (ii) and (a) – (e))

The pluralist who has accepted Lynch's possible suggestion on Wright's behalf can still countenance all the inferences of classical first-order logic. Mixed-compounds could be handled the same way. To this end, it satisfies the "weak grounding principle" of Chapter 5's discussion of compound propositions. There it was granted that what's right about recursive accounts of truth for compound propositions is that "there can be no change in the truth-value of a compound proposition without change in the truth-value of *some* atomic propositions."[66],[67]

4.13: Concluding Remarks

We have seen that the closes we can get at the same to both to satisfying the demands of truth-theoretic semantics and the demands of respecting plurality is Lynch's view. Yet we have also seen that its shortcomings prevent it from being the final story. In the next chapter I propose a revision of Lynch's theory focusing primarily on the multiple realization relation. To that I now turn.

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[66] Lynch (2009: 90).
[67] Portions of the present section to appear in Horton (2011).

"Open Semantic Functionalism"

5.1: Introduction

Up to this point we have seen that deflationism is incompatible with a robust truth-theoretic semantics and we have also seen that the pluralistic alethic theories—as they stand—are not fully suitable as theories of either truth or the theoretical term 'truth' as it figures in truth-theoretic semantic theories. The shortcomings of these views, however, have proven instructive for what a theory of truth should look like that satisfies our demands. All shortcomings, that is, but one. There is a response to Horton and Poston's challenge we have yet to consider. To do this, I propose a modification to alethic functionalism according to which truth remains a functional property, as well as does reference and satisfaction, but according to which the realization base is "metaphysically open," that is it consists of realizers both actual and non-actual but possible. Realizers of this modality allow the functionalist to keep her explanatory ambitions while at the same time avoiding Horton and Poston's challenge. Adopting a view of the metaphysics of multiple realization according to which the disjunction of realizers is metaphysically open will also have a surprising virtue in relation to the empirical search for semantic universals, a virtue bringing this work full circle. We began by assuming the robustness of truth-theoretic semantics. Finally, the contributions of the present view to that robustness will come to fruition. We will end where we began—with the work of Donald Davidson. It will turn out that his view on radical interpretation and indeterminacy will be not so radical—and quite welcome.

5.2: Multiple-Realization Revised

Alethic functionalism relies heavily on the metaphysics of multiple realization. We have already seen the challenge Jaegwon Kim put forward to proponents of the multiple realization thesis in the philosophy. Recall that he argued by analogy that the mental property 'pain' is like 'jade'. 'Jade' is non-projectible on the grounds that the property expressed just is the disjunction of the heterogeneous "realizers" jadeite and nephrite. In the case of 'pain', a typical candidate for multiple realizability, pain just is the disjunction of its heterogeneous realizers.[68] Since disjunctions of heterogeneous properties are unfit for inclusion in laws, 'pain' is unfit for inclusion in laws. Generalizing, Kim concludes that multiply realizable properties are not fit for inclusion in laws.[69] If multiply realizable properties are unfit for inclusion in laws, then one will be hard pressed to find a motivation for the multiply realizability thesis.

Several commentators have sought to avoid Kim's conclusion in different ways, but I will focus on Fodor's "Special Sciences: Still Autonomous after All These Years."[70] In it Fodor argues that the disjunction of a higher-order property's realizers must be "metaphysically open," as opposed to "metaphysically closed," in order to avoid the identification of the higher-order property with the disjunction of its realizers.[71] Identifying the two has, Kim argues, the consequence that multiply realizable properties are unfit for inclusion in laws. It is just this consequence that Fodor wants to avoid.

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[68] Kim's view requires two important assumptions: causal closure of the physical and causal inheritance. See Kim (1992).

[69] Horton and Poston (forthcoming) argue that Lynch's functionalist theory of truth succumbs to exactly this challenge. What follows here is independent of that material.

[70] See Antony (2003) and Antony and Levine (1997). Fodor (1997).

[71] Lynch himself responds to the challenge in a different way, presented in his (2008) and (2009).

In our present case, this view—call it Open Alethic Functionalism—will avoid the troubles besetting the other versions of pluralism, as I will show below. The view is not without its challenges. Most significant for our purposes will be a consequence for the project of truth-theoretic semantics, namely, that it seriously undermines the plausibility that what it is to understand any natural language is to understand a recursive truth theory of that language. Responding to this final point will provide the impetus to consider the final version of alethic functionalism, the one to be endorsed here.

Lynch is not committed to the view I consider nor does what follows hinge on the role of the platitudes, which are used to demarcate the role of truth, nor does it hinge on any specifics involving the Ramsey/Lewis method employed by Lynch to define 'true'.[72] Strictly speaking, then, the view under discussion here is not alethic functionalism. To the extent, however, that one's view of truth relies on the metaphysics of multiple realization, then one should be aware of all that that might entail. Doing so will allow us to learn very specific lessons both for truth theorists as well as those committed to a unified, robust truth-theoretic semantics.

Below are my key assumptions:

(1) Genuine multiply realizable (MR) properties are autonomous (non-reducible).

(2) Truth is a genuine MR property.

From this it follows that

(3) Truth is non-reducible.

Assumption (1) is in accordance with Fodor and is one way of satisfying the desire that truth not be identified with a closed disjunction of its realizers, which is one way of

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[72] See Lewis (1972) for this method.

avoiding Kim's argument. I leave arguments in favor of (2) up to adherents of the requisite alethic theories.

(4) A disjunction of realizers for a property P is metaphysically open when there exist metaphysically possible but non-actual realizers for P.[73]

Jade is not a genuine MR property on the current understanding of 'genuine property' because it just is either jadeite or nephrite and nothing else in any possible world. Pain, on the other hand, is a genuine MR property because there exist metaphysically possible but non-actual realizers for pain (a state of a computer, say).

Pluralistic truth theories require discourses, which are to be demarcated according to their related realizing property. For Lynch, these are not contexts in the semanticist's sense. That is, they are not "scores in a language-game" (similar to Lewis's approach) or sets composed of a speaker, a place, a time, and a possible world (similar to Kaplan's approach). Discourses can be thought of as sets of sentences (or of propositions, if you like) such that all members of a set have the same "near perfect" realizer. A discourse's near perfect realizer will be the property playing the "truth role" for that discourse. It does not matter how realizers for a discourse are determined (whether a priori, etc.). What is important is that truth itself, on the current view, is not relativized to a discourse—truth is the higher-order property—but, sentences (or propositions or utterances, etc.) are true in virtue of possessing the near perfect realizer of truth for their respective domain. A few more assumptions are in order.

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[73] Fodor (1997: 153).

(5) If a sentence S of a language L_1 translates a sentence R of a distinct language L_2 then S and R have the same realizer property, that is, S and R belong to the same discourse.[74]

This assumption does not make the stronger claim that two sentences standing in the translation relation are synonymous. At a minimum they must be extensionally equivalent and share the same ontological commitments.[75] In order to maintain that the realizers of truth are distinct we must maintain that a sentence belonging to a discourse D cannot be extensionally equivalent to another sentence belonging to a different discourse D'.[76] Not to maintain this would be tantamount to allowing for reductionism among truth's realizers, which mitigates the very motivation for adopting a pluralism of sorts about truth in the first place.

Consider this from the point of view of translation. Many anti-reductionists base an argument for non-reducibility on a failure to regiment recalcitrant sentences into a less problematic idiom. For instance, it might be hoped that university-talk might be reduced to talk of people and buildings.[77] If, however, we cannot find an acceptable paraphrase of university-talk, then we have justification for viewing the former as irreducible to the latter or, in other words, for viewing the ontological commitments of the two ways of talking as distinct. If translation ensures reduction then sentences standing in the

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[74] I begin by focusing on translation. I connect translation to interpretation below.

[75] One might worry about vagueness here. My argument still goes through, mutatis mutandis, if instead of (5) we have (5b): If a sentence *s* translates a sentence *r* then any admissible valuation *v* that makes *s* true will also make *r* true. Thanks to Cory Wright for raising this possibility.

[76] I restrict this claim to apply only to atomic sentences to avoid the complications introduced by considering the equivalence of two tautologies, for example, the immediate subcomponents of which might be sentences belonging to different discourses. In such a case we would have equivalence but not identical domains. Nothing here hinges on this.

[77] The example is from Horgan and Potrč (2008).

translation relation to one another must have the same ontological commitments and hence must belong to the same discourse. Now,

(6) If x is a genuine MR property then x has a metaphysically open disjunction of realizers. [Fodor's claim]

Therefore,

(7) Truth has a metaphysically open disjunction of realizers. [from (1), (2), (6)][78]

But then

(8) There exist metaphysically possible but non-actual realizers for truth (or non-actual discourses). [from (7) and (4)]

Let's call one such non-actual discourse 'NA'.

(9) NA contains a sentence S belonging to a non-actual discourse with a non-actual realizer for truth. [from (8) and definition of discourse]

(10) If S were translatable into a sentence of an actual language then it would belong to an actual discourse. [from (5)]

(11) S doesn't belong to an actual discourse. [from (9)]

Hence,

(12) There exists a discourse with a sentence untranslatable by any sentence belonging to a language in the actual world. [from (10), (11), (9)].

Long story short, if one thinks that truth is a genuine MR property and that such properties have metaphysically open disjunctions of realizers, then one is committed to

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[78] Bracketed material does not indicate a strict entailment relation. The referenced claims, plus other claims in the text, together suffice to make the relevant inferences.

the existence of in-principle untranslatable but metaphysically possible languages (or language fragments).

To make the connection to theories of interpretation consider the "outputs" of such theories, namely, T-sentences. Take as our example the following:

(S) 'La neige est blanche' is true if and only if snow is white.

The sentence used on the right-hand side of the biconditional—a sentence belonging not to the target language but to the metalanguage in which our theory is formulated—tells us the truth conditions of 'La neige est blanche.' The sentence on the left is true if and only if the sentence used on the right is true. We have extensional equivalence.[79] Therefore, " 'la neige est blanche' is true" belongs to the same discourse or domain as "snow is white." The fact that interpretative T-sentences express material equivalence lets us reformulate (5) so that instead of being about translation it is about interpretation: if there exist in principle untranslatable languages then there exist in principle uninterpretable languages. Therefore, there are possible languages for which it is impossible to construct an interpretative semantic theory, provided the metalanguage only contains sentences belonging to actual discourses.

This may seem to fly in the face of Davidson's claim that "…nothing, it may be said, could count as evidence that some form of activity could not be interpreted in our language that was not at the same time evidence that that form of activity was not speech behavior."[80] But it does not. Davidson's thesis is best regarded as epistemological since

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[79] My argument does not depend on reading T-sentences as being necessarily true or as being nomically necessary. All that is required is that material equivalence holds. For considerations about the modal status of T-sentences with respect to Davidson's program, see Lepore and Ludwig (2005).
[80] See Davidson (2001: 185f).

it is about the evidence available to a radical interpreter.[81] My thesis is metaphysical.

Furthermore, nothing about the present view prohibits us from regarding the

uninterpretable language, were we to encounter speakers of it, as a language. We may,

for all that has been said, even be able to construct a syntax for the alien tongue.

Additionally, the concept expressed by our truth-predicate, according to the position

under discussion, is the concept of a higher-order property of having a property playing

the truth role.[82] Nothing prohibits us from applying it to the utterances of the foreign

tongue. We might even be able to discover from the standpoint of the radical interpreter

that aliens have hold-true attitudes to some of their sentences. But we *are* prohibited on

the current proposal from generating true T-sentences involving foreign sentences

belonging to a metaphysically possible but non-actual discourse. To reinforce this

conclusion let us call such an alien sentence 'A'. How would we fill in the blank in the

following schema?

    (U) A is true if and only if _____.

We cannot include 'A', a metalinguistic name for or structural description of a sentence,

for then the result of instantiating (U) would be unintelligible (because ungrammatical).

Non-sentential expressions, including descriptions, cannot occupy the blank. What if we

actually had the sentence A names? In that case we could use it on the right-hand side.

But then it would not be an interpretative T-sentence. We want and require that our T-

sentences use on the right of the 'iff' a sentence of the metalanguage, the language in

which (U) is formulated and not the language under investigation, a sentence that is at

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[81] Moreover, Davidson's claim is independent of my claim. One could be granted
without making a commitment to the other.
[82] It is if we accept Lynch's (2001) and (2004) formulations.

least extensionally equivalent with the sentence mentioned on the left-hand side. In our present case we have failed in this requirement for the alien sentence A does not belong to our metalanguage.

The issue here is not just that we lack the words to formulate a sentence extensionally equivalent to A. Our problem is deeper in that our world lacks the realizer of truth for the foreign discourse. We could not in principle even learn their language by adding the requisite vocabulary to our language. Hence the issue is not the mundane one of finding the right words to translate a foreign utterance. It is the more radical claim that we could have every possible actual word and combination of such words yet still not be in a position to interpret certain alien utterances.

5.3: Semantic Disunity?

How do the above considerations bear on semantic unity? First, they do not challenge the thesis that the form of a theory of meaning for a natural language should be a Tarski-style theory of truth for that language. But they do bear directly on empirical hypotheses concerning semantic universals, namely the possibility of discovering that the "Translatability Thesis" or the "Strong Effability Hypothesis" holds in the actual world. The former is the thesis that "For any pair of natural languages and for any sentence S in one and any sense σ of S, there is at least one sentence S' in the other language such that σ is a sense of S'." The latter is the stronger hypothesis that "Every proposition is the sense of some sentence in each natural language."[83] The former thesis is false if a natural language has sentences (or expresses propositions) belonging to discourses not available

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[83] Both proposed by Katz (1976). For an overview of translatability and effability, and the search for semantic universals, see von Fintel and Matthewson (2008).

in other languages, something it is not implausible to maintain that only empirical

investigation should settle. The latter thesis, however, is simply false on the above

account of truth taken together with the auxiliary assumptions even if empirical inquiry

discovers that all natural languages currently spoken share all and only the same semantic

rules and categories.

Is there a positive reason for taking this position? In order to avoid the charge that

the view just mentioned is ad hoc, I will consider briefly an initial motivation for multiple

realizability in the philosophy of mind and hint at a connection to present considerations.

Following the initial motivation, I will put forward a second motivation that returns to the

general principles any theory of truth must satisfy in order to count as a prima facie

acceptable theory of truth and those principles any semantic theory must satisfy in order

to be considered a robust, unified semantic theory. The positive argument gets its force

by claiming that the view I endorse is the only one to satisfy all of those. My aim is to

provide a view of truth that does justice to the theoretical pretensions of truth-theoretic

semantics. Satisfying those constraints is the biggest step on can take in that regard.

5.4: Why be an "open functionalist" about Truth?

Many reject the identity theory in the philosophy of mind because it makes the

connection between the mental and physical too strict, so to speak.[84] By this many mean

that if the mind is (type) identical to the physical then anything not having every single

physical attribute of our brains does not have a mind. If pain is (type) identical to the

firing of C-fibers and an entity *e* lacks c-fibers then it is incapable of pain. Putnam, for

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[84] I oversimplify here for ease of exposition. My intent is only to provide an initial
motivation.

one, argues that the identity theory is empirically false.[85] Similar considerations might

make us hesitant to think that there is only one way for a sentence (or proposition or

utterance) to be true. The literature on pluralism and alethic functionalism provides us

with many arguments to the effect that traditional monistic theories have the inevitable

consequence that sentences we putatively take to be true turn out to be false or non-true.

So we would do well to find a way of unifying the diverse ways that sentences (or

propositions or utterances) can be true. Holding that truth is multiply realizable has this

virtue. If achieving semantic unity comes at the cost of making possible linguistic

discourses with non-actual but possible realizers not had by any discourses in the actual

world, then so much the worse for theories of interpretation requiring the opposite.[86]

Many have come to accept the possibility of possible but non-actual realizers of pain in

the philosophy of mind. In this light the present considerations challenge adherents to

non-monistic truth theories to accept that the same thing goes for truth or to present an

argument limiting possible realizers of truth to those to be found in some actual subclass

of metaphysically possible realizers.

5.5: A Necessary Revision

Let's review where we are. The best way to avoid the objections to alethic

functionalism is by adopting a version of alethic functionalism according to which the

realization relation is understood to be Fodorian. In other words, to avoid the

identification of the "higher-order" property we must view the realization base as

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[85] See Putnam (1967).

[86] I do not mean to imply that Davidson, or anyone else for that matter, thinks that a
Theory of Interpretation should or does rule this out.

including possible, but non-actual realizers for the property in question. This, however, entails with other reasonable assumptions that the viability of the truth-theoretic enterprise may not yield insight into all natural languages because some possible languages are untranslatable. The last section advocated accepting this conclusion and it may not be unpalatable. Surely it is an empirical matter whether every natural language has a Tarski-style truth theory for it that reveals semantic structure of the sort that engenders competence in the target language. No doubt even Davidson himself argued that truth-theoretic semantics, from the standpoint of the radical interpreter, implied that the evidence available to a radical interpreter underdetermines truth-theory construction so that more than one truth-theory yielding conflicting t-sentences might both be equally justified. This takes that a step further. But what if we can articulate a position that satisfies the demands both of truth theories and of truth-theoretic semantic theories that does not have this conclusion? Would it merely be an ad hoc change? It turns out it can be motivated.

There is one glaring issue we have yet to address, namely, Sher's objection that subsentential expressions may belong to more than one discourse. If subsentential expressions may belong to more than one discourse and subsentential items from different discourses may appear in the same sentence, then a problem arises about what to do with such sentences. A putative example might be "Causing pain is bad." The predicate 'is bad' putatively belongs to the discourse of value statements, specifically, ethics.[87] The word 'pain' putatively picks out a complex neurological state of affairs (in

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[87] I here ignore emotivism, according to which 'is bad' does not express a property or have actions in its extension. Taking it as a live option in the present discussion cuts against the very motivation for being a pluralist about truth in the first place.

the actual world). Steering clear of the concept of causality, we still have enough to push the example: does the sentence 'Causing pain is bad' belong to a physic-chemical discourse or to moral discourse? Are discourses combinatorial? Should be allow that for any set of discourses there are also discourses consisting of mereological combinations of discourses? A failure to place this sentence or others of its ilk firmly within the bounds of a single discourse threatens the viability of alethic functionalism—either Lynch's version or my own. This pushes the alethic functionalist—and all pluralists for that matter—in the direction of shifting from demarcating discourses at the propositional/sentential level to adopting a more fine-grained way of distinguishing discourses.

The final proposal to be endorsed here is to regard the key alethic properties of reference and satisfaction as multiply realizable along Fodorian lines. Reference and satisfaction are those fundamental semantic properties figuring into the base axioms of a Tarski-style theory of semantic content for a natural language. I should point out that in his *Truth as One and Many*, Lynch himself endorsed the idea that *meaning* and related semantic concepts/properties can be understood along his functionalist lines.[88] The proposal there was more akin to a content-pluralism, whereby the content of propositions and sentences from various domains could be understood along different lines according to which truth-property realized or manifested truth for those domains: "*Content is always at least partly determined by truth-conditions, but what manifests those conditions varies.*"[89] In the proposal to be endorsed here, there is only one kind of truth-condition. The view's chief claims are the following:

(1) Reference and satisfaction are multiply realizable properties.

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[88] Lynch (2009: 135).
[89] Lynch (2009: 141), emphasis in original.

(2) Which properties realize or manifest reference or satisfaction is not relativized to a domain of discourse. There are no such domains.

(3) The realization relation is to be understood along Fodorian lines.

(4) Propositions/sentences are true in the same way, namely, by having their truth-conditions satisfied.

(5) The semantically significant, subsentential constituents of sentences will have the semantic value they have in different ways. In other words, that a given word refers to a given entity or that a given predicate is satisfied by a sequence of objects will depend on which property realizes reference or satisfaction, respectively, for those given words or predicates. I prefer to call this view Open Alethic Functionalism.

Claim (5) does the work done by the claim that propositions/sentences are true in different ways

Although reached independently, a similar position is offered to Lynch as a "friendly amendment" by Stewart Shapiro in his review of Lynch's *Truth as One and Many*. [90] Briefly I will summarize Shapiro's motivations for offering the amendment and indicate my own independent motivations. First, Shapiro points out, Lynch takes propositions to be the primary bearers of truth. Second, Lynch takes propositions to be structured. Shapiro writes, "Lynch assumes…there are atomic propositions, conjunctions, disjunctions, negations, etc. So each proposition is made up of atomic components, in much the same way that sentences are." Rightly, Shapiro asks of certain examples, such as "In Euclidean space, there is a straight line between any two points,"

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[90] Shapiro (2009).

how exactly we are to understand the claim that these are composed of atomic propositions. He presumes that "we would want the account of propositions to be compositional." Hence, his friendly amendment "follows the lead of Tarski" and suggests that "the overall theory be re-written as a functionalist account of *satisfaction*."

If this suggestion is taken, and one wants to preserve the remainder of Lynch's functionalist story, then one will also need to produce a list of core truisms governing satisfaction. It is hard to say what our "folk concept" of satisfaction is, if we have one, and what such a set of truisms would look like. Tarski himself introduced the notion so that we could recursively define truth for sentences the immediate subcomponents of which are not themselves sentences (open sentences). "Nevertheless," Shapiro concludes, "it should be possible to articulate [satisfaction's] functional role and to speculate on the range of relations that play this role in various stretches of discourse."

My own motivations for adopting a functionalist understanding of reference derives not from a specific worry about a view of propositions. It derives, rather, from taking seriously Sher's problem. If truth is multiply realizable, the realizer properties vary from discourse to discourse, and discourses are demarcated at the level of propositions, then either alethic functionalism cannot solve Sher's problem or the sentences that give rise to Sher's problem are impossible. If someone argues that they are not possible sentences, then the burden of proof is on them to argue why. Without such an argument, we are left without any thing to say about such mixed-sentences such as, "Causing pain is bad." A functionalist approach that begins with the base clauses in a recursively-defined theory of truth will not need discourses. Showing how it can solve

the problems Lynch's solves as well as Sher's problem, will constitute the remainder of this chapter.

How does the position handle problems of scope? Recall that the scope problem says theories of truth with good accounts for truth in some domains will completely fail to explain truth in other domains. We need no more than an intuitive idea of a domain to see the gist of this problem. The solution, think pluralists and alethic functionalists, is to say that propositions from different domains are true in different ways. On the present approach, strictly speaking, they cannot say that. Each sentence/proposition is true in exactly the same way. However, the intuition that true sentences/propositions are true in different ways can be explained and cashed out in terms of the various ways semantically significant, subsentential items refer or are satisfied by the objects to which they refer or the sequences that satisfy them. If the intuition that truths can be true in different ways results from a similar intuition that truths are true because of what they are about, then it is very natural to say that we can understand "aboutness" more precisely as reference and satisfaction. These properties, and not entire sentences or propositions, can obtain in different ways. Thus the idea that truths are true in different ways is reworkable as the idea that subsentential items get their semantic values in various ways.

Open Semantic Functionalism has no need for discourses. They do no work within the theory and are explanatorily idle. The problem of mixed-compounds simply does not arise on this view. A mixed-compound, recall, is a non-atomic sentence with atomic constituents belonging to non-identical discourses. If there are no discourses, then there is no problem of mixed compounds. The truth-value of a non-atomic sentence is nothing but a truth function of its atomic subcomponents.

Also, the open alethic functionalist would not treat Sher's problem as a problem. It is exactly what would be expected. If lexical entries have their semantic values in different ways and together with the usual syntactic modes of combination, then one would predict exactly what Sher points out. We will refrain from describing it as a sentence with subsentential items belonging to different discourses and instead describe it as a sentence with subsentential items that get their semantic values in different ways. The difference is not merely semantic. One commits us to different kinds/realizers of truth and to the existence of discourses; the other commits us to different kinds/realizers of reference and satisfaction and nothing more.

What of the argument that we should regard the realization relation as Fodorian? Or of the consequence that there are metaphysically possible but non-actual languages? Let us run through that argument with the premises of the current view, making changes where necessary.

(1) Genuine MR properties are autonomous (non-reducible).

Premise (1) stays. If it turns out that anything explainable by appeal to truth were explainable by appeal to another property or to other properties, then we would not need to be inflationists about truth, but rather inflationists about those other properties. The second premise requires revision:

(2') Reference and satisfaction are genuine MR properties.

Reference and satisfaction are the key theoretical notions making possible a compositional semantics for natural language and in terms of which Tarski-style definitions of truth are given. But what is truth? Is truth MR or not MR? Yes and no. In any specific case the truth of a sentence of a natural language will depend on the mod of

composition and on the semantic values of that sentence's subsentential components (restricting out attention to atomic sentences). Since some sentences will have terms that get their semantic values in a causal way and because other sentences will have terms that get their semantic values in a non-causal way, then we can say that sentences are true in different ways. But truth is not independently characterized. Truth is just the property that a sentence has when its truth-condition is satisfied and a truth-condition is given by a Tarski-style theory of truth for that sentence's language. There is no theory of truth independently of these two notions.

(3') Reference and satisfaction are autonomous (non-reducible).

(4) A disjunction of realizers for a property *P* is metaphysically open when there exist metaphysically possible but non-actual realizers for *P*. (Definition).

The third claim follows straightforwardly. The fourth claim is a simple restatement of the original. What do we do with (5)? If we no longer have discourse-relative realizers of truth, then the fifth claim is trivially satisfied. If there is only one discourse, then every sentence belongs to it. If there are no discourses, then the issue doesn't arise. So we have two options: either keep (5) and hold that it is trivially satisfied or reject (5) on the grounds there are no discourses? On either option the original argument fails to go through. To see why, let us keep five:

(5) If a sentence *S* of a language L$_1$ translates a sentence *R* of a distinct language L$_2$ then *S* and *R* have the same realizer property, that is, *S* and *R* belong to the same discourse.

Fodor's claim remains the same:

(6) If x is a genuine MR property then x has a metaphysically open disjunction of

    realizers.

The remainder of the original argument required all of the original (1) – (6) as premises.

Instead of the original (7), however, we only get

(7') Reference and satisfaction have metaphysically open disjunctions of realizers.

    (from (1), (2'), (6).]

From which it follows

(8') There exist metaphysically possible but non-actual realizers for reference and

    satisfaction. [from (7') and (4)]

We had a choice when it came to (5), and we have a similar choice when it comes to (9).

Originally, we assumed the existence of a non-actual discourse, which had non-actual

realizers for truth, and we named it 'NA'. The realizers for reference and satisfaction are

not relativized to a discourse for the reason that the two possibilities are that there is no

such thing as a discourse of, if there is such a thing, then there is only one. Is there

necessarily one? If 'discourse' does not do an explanatory work (or if appeal to

discourses does not do any explanatory work), then we may say that it is at least

nomically necessary—necessary given the laws of nature—that there are no discourses

different from the actual discourse (if it exists). Lynch argues that "belonging to a

particular domain is a feature an atomic proposition, at least, has in virtue of being the

sort of proposition it is."[91] On our compositional approach, where the fundamental

semantic and multiply realizable properties are reference and satisfaction, we respect the

intuition that sentences or propositions may be about different things, but this intuition

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[91] Lynch (2009: 80).

will be explain by reference to the variable manifestation of the reference and satisfaction relations. To whatever extent we can make hay of discourses, a proposition or sentence will belong to a discourse purely in virtue of the realizer for those proposition's or sentence's contituent's semantic values. If a sentence intuitively belongs to a non-actual discourse, this will have to be in virtue of the fact that one of its semantically significant constituents gets its semantic value by realizing reference or satisfaction in a non-actual way. This means that we must modify (9) accordingly:

(9') NA contains a sentence S and at least one of S's semantically significant subsentential components has its semantic value realized in a non-actual way. [from (8') and new account of alethic functionalism]

From these it does not follow that if S is not translatable into a sentence of a natural language of the actual world. Nor, moreoever, does it follow that the constituent of S whose semantic value is realized in a non-actual way is not translatable into an expression that is a constituent of an actual language sentences. Why? Translation must only ensure sameness of semantic value. Translation need not preserve realizers for that expression's having that semantic value. So long as whatever two expressions stand in the translation relation, then it is necessary that they share the same semantic value. The two sentences will be extensionally equivalent, which was a necessary condition on translation.

More colloquially, we can say that so long as two intertranslatable sentences are about the same thing, how they are about that thing does not make a difference. In the philosophy of mind, a functionalist is happy saying that pain is pain no matter the

realizer. Similarly here we say that how two expressions are about the same thing does not matter to saying that they are about the same thing.

In summary, then, the original issue had to do with the fact that sentences or propositions have to belong to a discourse, and if a discourse is lacking then translation will be incomplete. The present view implies no such incompleteness.

5.6: Open Semantic Functionalism

In order to turn the view into a theory, more work must be done. I have also not provided any independent motivation for the view. In this section I will do both.

Open Semantic Functionalism maintains that reference and satisfaction are multiply realizable properties and that it is in terms of those properties that a theory of truth—a Tarski-style theory of truth—are given. The theory additionally maintains, like other functionalist theories, that the properties are specified by means of common sense platitudes or truisms about those properties. These platitudes are not—or need not be— discoverable a priori. The list of platitudes is subject to revision in the same way that any other theory is subject to revision. Since these platitudes figure into the "folk theory" of reference and satisfaction, discovering them is not a matter of pure conceptual analysis but empirical enquiry into the nature of these concepts. It is an understandable worry that the "folk" may have no conception of satisfaction or, no less worrisome, an inconsistent conception. My project has been first to take for granted the viability of truth-theoretic semantics and then say what truth must be to make sense of that viability. Therefore, I need not maintain—implausibly—that the "folk" have a concept of reference or satisfaction, consistent or otherwise. I only maintain that theorists working within the

domain of semantic theory have a concept of reference and satisfaction and that that

concept can be specified using platitudes about it and that the property can be picked out

using those platitudes and the Ramsey/Lewis method of defining theoretical terms. As

the method will be familiar from Chapter 4, let us turn to the platitudes. An admittedly

tentative list is below:

> (R1) Reference and satisfaction are relations between words/concepts and
> the world.
>
> (R2) When in a context C, I utter a referring expression x as part of a
> sentence S of a language L, then usually I have referred to whatever it is
> that is the semantic value of x.
>
> (R3) When uttering an atomic and affirmative declarative sentence S in a
> context C, if an expression I use fails to refer then I have said something
> false.

A few things must be said about each. The first, (R1), makes no particular

ontological commitments about what belongs in "the world." The expression 'the world'

is not used in the sense of Horgan (following Putnam), whose use picks out only those

entities belonging to a mind-independent world of physical/material objects. The least

committal way to understand 'the world' in (R1), is Quinean: an entity belongs to the

world if it is an entity over which we quantify. Whether those entities are mind-

independent or constructed or are abstract is irrelevant. Reference and satisfaction only

concern how certain expressions get their semantic values. It does not concern the

natures of those objects or sets/sequences of objects that are their semantic values. Some

terms might have their semantic values because of a causal relation we stand in to mind-

independent, natural objects. Natural kind terms seem particularly appropriate to be the kind of terms that get their semantic values in this way. Other terms might get their semantic values because those terms are defined by means of rigidifying descriptions, when such a description is used to fix a reference.[92] The natures of those objects— whether they are mind-independent or are so-called 'constructed' objects matters not. Here I do not take a stand on the particulars of what properties realize reference or satisfaction. This is fair. In the philosophy of mind, what properties realize mindfulness is a matter for empirical inquiry. Empirical inquiry is also the method by which we will in all likelihood discover the properties that realize reference or satisfaction.

Open Semantic Functionalism gives us the resources to respond to the deflationist challenge in two ways. First, we agree with the functionalist that conceptual illumination is gained when connections are traced between problematic concepts and less problematic concepts. In this case, truth is defined in the usual way in terms of reference and satisfaction. This helps with specifying a theory of meaning in the narrow sense. In the broad sense, on the other hand, the functionalist approach lets us define terms as a package-deal, specifically reference and satisfaction, and further holding that such a theory illuminates meaning in a broad sense, as giving us a theory knowledge of which would suffice for the interpretation of alien utterances. Some of the constraints on our theory will be outside of the alethic network, such as the constraint that the theory be finitely axiomatizable. Yet the most important for our final theory will be platitudes (R1) – (R3) above. Accordingly, future work should first focus on identifying platitudes and investigating their interconnections.

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[92] See Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (1980).

Future work will not be the work of linguists, per se, but rather will be the work of philosophers of language and metaphysicians interested in truth, objectivity, reference, and the properties that are posited by contemporary semantic theory.

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University of Kentucky Teaching Assistantship, Fall 2001 – Fall 2006
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PUBLICATIONS

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