

Truth Weakly Inflated

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RESUMEN

Mientras que el deflacionismo dice demasiado poco sobre la verdad, las teorías inflacionistas fuertes dicen demasiado. Por su parte, el inflacionismo débil adopta un punto de vista equidistante entre las dos posiciones anteriores. Basándose en una definición de la verdad que recuerda la conocida formulación de Aristóteles en la *Metafísica*, el inflacionismo débil revela cómo la verdad, la realidad y el significado están relacionados entre sí. De acuerdo con este punto de vista, esto es todo lo que la filosofía puede descubrir sobre la naturaleza de la verdad. La cuantificación sobre oraciones-*ejemplar* se usa rigurosamente dentro de la teoría, que es sensible también a la diferencia entre lenguaje hablado y escrito.

ABSTRACT

While deflationism says too little about truth, strong inflationist theories say too much about it. Weak inflationism takes a middle course. Based on a truth-definition reminiscent of Aristotle's well-known statement in the *Metaphysica*, it reveals how truth, reality and meaning are related to each other. According to weak inflationism this interrelation is all that philosophy can discover about the nature of truth. Quantification over sentence-*tokens* is rigorously used within the theory, which is also sensitive to the difference between spoken and written language.

I. NO DEFLATIONISM

Deflationism has played a key role in the philosophical debate about truth during the past years, yet it is still difficult to determine what a “deflationary” or “deflationist” account of truth exactly is, as these terms have been used in different ways. Sometimes deflationism was defined by reference to Tarski's theory of truth. Thus Paul Horwich claimed that a deflationist “supposes that the meaning of ‘true’ is exhaustively specified by Tarski's characterization” [Horwich (1982), p. 192]. Hartry Field preferred to describe deflationism against the background of the correspondence theory: deflationism tells us that “‘correspondence truth’ serves no useful purpose at all, and hence that theorizing about correspondence truth is pointless at best. Any view that adheres to this position while at the same time [...] preserving

a use for the word ‘true’ will be called a *deflationary* conception of truth” [Field (1986), p. 59]. Michael Williams summarized the discussion in a similar vein: “Some philosophers, correspondence and coherence theorists, think of ‘truth’ as the name of an important property that true sentences share, a property that can therefore be expected to repay theoretical analysis. Others, deflationists, think that when we have pointed to certain formal features of the truth-predicate [...] and explained why it is useful to have a predicate like this [...], we have said just about everything there is to be said about truth” [Williams (1988), p. 424].

These early statements tended to evoke the idea of a simple duality, deflationism *or* non-deflationism (inflationism). But as time went by, finer distinctions were made. In a paper from 1997, O’Leary-Hawthorne and Oppy distinguished six claims which in their view are typical of deflationism, or “minimalism” (they use both terms synonymously):

- (A) The word “true” is not a significant predicate, but rather a vehicle of expressing a pro-attitude towards certain sentences; it is also claimed that the word “true” is redundant.
- (B) The word “true” expresses a sub-standard property, it “picks out a non-explanatory, or at any rate non-systematically-explanatory property” [O’Leary-Hawthorne/Oppy (1997), p. 172].
- (C) The word “true” has no supersense; there is no need of talking of “reality” or “real true”; “to the extent that such expressions as “ ‘P’ corresponds to the facts”, “ ‘P’ fits reality”, “ ‘P’ is made true by the world” are intelligible at all, then they are equivalent to “ ‘P’ is true” in ordinary English” [Ibid. p. 180].
- (D) The word “true” has a thin conceptual role; “*mere possession of the concept truth* contributes little or nothing to our grasp of other central semantic and psychological notions and contributes little or nothing to our understanding of the structure of reality and our relationship to it” [Ibid. p. 174].
- (E) The word “true” expresses a property with no hidden essence.
- (F) The view “that there is nothing worth saying about truth beyond what is already there in folk practice” [Ibid. p. 176]. This claim goes together with the conviction that there is no need for a philosophical theory of truth.

The most popular *positive* characterizations of deflationism are probably those listed under (A) and (E). Most deflationists justify their pessimism about inflationist projects in one of these two ways. Deflationists of type A doubt the possibility of an inflationist theory because they doubt the existence of a property of sentences or judgements called “truth”. In this case “true” would be no significant predicate for lack of a property it could refer

to. Of course, under these circumstances searching for an inflationist theory would be futile. It should be noticed, however, that (A) is compatible with the claim that using the word “true” is practically indispensable, as many deflationists are willing to admit.

Deflationists of type E, on the other hand, concede that there is a property denoted by “true”, denying at the same time that this word should be put in the center of a philosophical theory that is construed to reveal the “essence” of truth. After all, understanding the notion of truth, in the sense of creating a theory, could well be beyond the cognitive capacities of human beings. This position could be combined with an intuitionist account of the nature of truth, similar to intuitionism in ethical theory: even if we were not able to develop a theory of truth in an inflationist style, we might be able to grasp the nature of truth intuitively. This could be justified by the fact that the nature of truth is not *explained* to us when we learn to manage the word “true”, hence there might be a kind of intuition at work.

Notwithstanding that deflationism can be characterized in a least six different ways, there is also a unifying trait. All deflationist positions are opposed to substantive or inflationist theories which are directed at giving an answer to the question what truth is, in most cases employing only one “big” concept like “correspondence” or “coherence”¹. Deflationism excludes correspondence and coherence theories, but also theories in a pragmatist style, e.g. Putnam’s truth as “idealized rational acceptability”, as well as such spectacular theories as Heidegger’s truth as “unconcealment”.

This anti-metaphysical attitude will be conserved in the theory I am going to develop subsequently. “Strong” inflationist theories, like correspondence and coherence theories, are rejected. My theory will express an inflationist position, but a rather weak one. Judged by its metaphysical commitments, weak inflationism takes a middle course between the asceticism of deflationism and the extravagances of strong inflationist positions. Although its modesty is inherited from deflationism, it is non-deflationist in the following sense: it is strictly opposed to the claims (C), (D), (E) and (F) mentioned above, and it is at least compatible with the negations of (A) and (B). This amounts to saying that weak inflationism is compatible with the claim that “true” is a significant predicate (non-A), and also compatible with the claim that “true” does not express a sub-standard property (non-B). In addition, weak inflationism implies that the word “true” *does* possess a supersense (non-C), which is given by its relationship to the concepts of reality and meaning. Moreover, it is *not* assumed that sentences like “‘P’ corresponds to the facts” etc. are equivalent to “‘P’ is true”. Rather it is claimed that the first sentence is false, as there is no such thing as a correspondence relation. It is also claimed that understanding the notion of truth *does* contribute to our grasp of other central notions, especially of the notions “reality” and “meaning”.

Hence “true” has not a “thin” conceptual role (non-D), although I admit that its conceptual role is not *very* “thick”. Moreover weak inflationism implies that truth *does* have an essence which is given by its relationship to reality and meaning (therefore non-E) — details will be given in short. Finally the claim “that there is nothing worth saying about truth beyond what is already there in folk practice” is certainly wrong (non-F). There exists an interesting theory of truth which is *more* informative than a mere description of how the truth predicate is used in folk practice, or a description of some of its formal features.

II. TRUTH, REALITY, AND MEANING

Deflationists often use Tarski’s theory of truth as a point of departure. In order to start from familiar ground, I will refer to Tarski in a similar way as they do. One of Tarski’s aims in creating his “semantic conception of truth” was to capture the Aristotelian notion of truth expressed in the definition in *Metaphysica* 1011b 26f.: “To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true”². Unfortunately Tarski’s attempt was in vain; his theory does not capture the *whole* content of Aristotle’s definition. To be precise: the theory *by itself* does not, yet Tarski used to comment on his theory from an Aristotelian point of view. Although the theory itself is not Aristotelian, Tarski interpreted it in an Aristotelian style, making use of concepts like “reality”, “existing state of affairs”, “designation”, and “correspondence”. But these terms are not contained in the “official” part of his theory. Moreover, Tarski’s theory is open to alternative interpretations too, since it is compatible with a great variety of inflationist theories. The Aristotelian interpretation is only one inflationist interpretation among others, which are all brought to Tarski’s theory from outside.

In promoting his conception Tarski showed a tendency to blur the difference between Aristotle’s definition and the correspondence theory. But Aristotle did not talk of “correspondence” or “adaequatio” (as his medieval followers), nor did he use any other of the key words of strong inflationist theories. Nevertheless he *did* say something substantial about truth, hence his statement should not be counted as a deflationist confession, as some philosophers do [David (1994), p. 4]. Aristotle presents an *inflationist* theory of truth, albeit a rather small one. But despite its modesty the theory contains information which, from a metaphysical point of view, is nothing less than trivial: the conceptual relationship between truth and reality³ is revealed, and truth is connected with semantics, because for Aristotle truth is expressed by sen-

tences and therefore depends on what people say and what their utterances mean.

Let me trace the path that leads to a weak inflationist theory of truth by supplying deflationism with as little metaphysics as necessary to yield an account of truth roughly equivalent to Aristotle's. We start with purely deflationist premises given by Tarski himself. One of the main features of Tarski's theory is the meta-language in which the concept of truth is defined. This language must contain a device for assigning names to sentences of the object-language. In written language this is often done by putting quotation marks around them. Tarski himself used what he called "structural-descriptive names". Among the alternative methods some are quite technical, e.g. the assignment of Gödel numbers. Yet for our purposes it is not important which method we choose. Nevertheless it might be important to note that once we have chosen a certain method, the correctness of our truth-definition depends on that choice. The truth definition I am aiming at will only be correct relative to a certain method of naming (which in fact will be quoting), like e.g. the correctness of a physical definition depends on the meaning of the mathematical symbols employed in it.

Hartry Field [(1972), p. 354] argued that Tarski presupposed the concept of *translation* to define the concept of truth. Following this hint, we place the concept of translation at the beginning of our discussion. Let $t(p)$ be the translation of the sentence p of the object-language into the meta-language, and $n(p)$ a name of the same sentence generated by the chosen name-forming device; then the truth-sentences implied by the theory of truth are instances of the following universal quantification:

- (1) For all p , $n(p)$ is true if and only if $t(p)$.

The variable p is meant to run over all *tokens* of atomic sentences of a given language. We are only concerned with atomic sentences here, because complex ones are treated according to the usual valuation rules ($p \& q$ is true if and only if p is true and q is true, etc.). For modal sentences we might need possible worlds or some equivalent (situations, state-descriptions and so on)⁴. The ranges of $n(p)$ and $t(p)$ also comprise tokens, the first being the set of names, the second the set of translations. To get an instance of (1), we simply substitute a token of a name of p for $n(p)$ and a token of a translation of p for $t(p)$ ⁵. Let Spanish be the object-language and English the meta-language:

- (2) "La nieve es negra" is true if and only if snow is black.

Because Tarski was interested in defining truth for formalized languages, he used a meta-language that differed from the object-language. But we are searching for a theory of truth for natural languages, therefore the next step will be to identify the object-language with the meta-language. If we use English as its own meta-language, we can get rid of translations; n becomes a relation between English sentences and quoted English sentences, and sentence (1) transforms into

(3) For all p , $n(p)$ is true if and only if p ⁶.

An instance of this sentence is

(4) “Snow is black” is true if and only if snow is black⁷.

In spoken language, however, there are no quotation marks. They are often replaced by constructions like “the word x ...” or “the sentence p ...”, e.g. “the word *tiger* has two syllables”. In addition, a device Quine called “homophonic translation” [Quine (1960), pp. 59 and 78] proves to be useful, which is a relation between sentence-tokens phonetically identical (or very similar) to each other. Let us write $h(p)$ for a homophonic translation of p . This yields a scheme for truth-sentences in *spoken* languages:

(5) For all p , the sentence $h(p)$ is true if and only if p .

It is not possible to *write down* an instance of this principle, because all instances are spoken sentences. One of them is produced in reading aloud the following sentence:

(6) The sentence “snow is black” is true if and only if snow is black.

Remember that up to this point we have been moving within the sphere of deflationism. Let us cross the border now. In the debate between realist and antirealist accounts of truth deflationism takes a neutral line: no deflationist position gives an answer to the question whether there is a conceptual relation between truth and reality. For a theory of truth, however, this neutrality is a disadvantage, as we may expect such a theory to settle the question. Thus our first step beyond the limits of deflationism will be the introduction of realism. Reality is the totality of facts, and facts are states of affairs which obtain. Therefore a suitable connection between truths and states of affairs can be established by replacing the right-hand side of definition (3) by a statement about states of affairs:

(7) For all p , $n(p)$ is true if and only if the state of affairs that p obtains⁸.

A similar principle is explicitly rejected by Quine, because he thinks that facts, or obtaining states of affairs, “contribute nothing beyond their specious support of a correspondence theory” [(1990), p. 80]. Quine claims that talking about states of affairs is vacuous. In his opinion the whole idea of a correspondence between language and reality is already contained in truth-sentences like (4) above, which do not mention states of affairs (or facts). But here Quine is wrong⁹. First, Tarskian truth-sentences are compatible with almost any theory of truth you like; they do not show a special affinity to the correspondence theory. Second, a theory that does not mention correspondence, or a similar relation between language and reality, cannot be accused to be a correspondence theory of truth. In the correspondence theory the notion of correspondence is used to explain what truth is. It refers to a single property that all true sentences are assumed to have. But from Tarskian truth-sentences alone we cannot infer that there is a uniform property called “correspondence”. They are compatible with the assumption that there are several different relations that make true sentences true.

Truth-sentences like (4) are neutral statements, voting neither for correspondence nor for realism. As far as correspondence is concerned, the same holds also of principle (7). But contrary to Tarskian truth-sentences, this principle shows a strong affinity to *realism* because of its commitment to the existence of states of affairs by which some atomic sentences are made true. This is a small but significant difference between deflationism in the style of Tarski and the present account.

The adequacy of principle (7) can be examined by considering the example of synonymous expressions. If F and G are synonymous predicates the sentences “ x is F ” and “ x is G ” mean the same. Specializing the universal quantification (7) and making use of

(8) The state of affairs that x is F is *identical* to the state of affairs that x is G ,

we find that

(9) “ x is F ” is true if and only if the state of affairs that x is G obtains.

This is what a good theory of truth should entail. The result does not only show that the theory represented by (7) treats synonymous sentences correctly in linking them to the same state of affairs, it also reveals, and eliminates, a major deficiency in the deflationist account we started with. For as long as we do not quantify over propositions, instead of tokens, there is no

way to come from “ $n(p)$ is true if and only if p ” to “ $n(p)$ is true if and only if q ”, even if p and q are synonymous. In a “weak” account of truth, however, tokens of sentences are certainly to be preferred to propositions. Although propositions are used by some so-called deflationists [cf. Horwich (1990), chap. 6], they are strange entities that do not fit into the parsimonious account of weak inflationism. In particular they should not figure among the values of our variables. Note that in sentence (7) there is no quantification over states of affairs (which in some respects are comparable to propositions). We are only quantifying over linguistic tokens.

The second concept to be correlated with truth is the concept of meaning, being already implicit in the words “to say” at the head of Aristotle’s definition. It was Donald Davidson (1967) who noticed that Tarski’s theory of truth can be turned into a theory of meaning. I do not want to reconstruct Davidson’s account at this place, as there is an easier way than his to connect truth and meaning. Starting with sentence (3)¹⁰, we just write “means that” instead of “is true if and only if”:

(10) For all p , $n(p)$ means that p .

This does not yield a theory of meaning that construes meanings as entities located in the human mind, in a platonic world (as Frege assumed), or wherever philosophers condemned them to exist. In sentence (10) the word “means” refers to a relation between sentence-tokens and their names, which are linguistic tokens as well. This does not tell us what the “nature” of meaning is, in the way strong inflationist theories of truth are supposed to tell us what the nature of truth is. Sentence (10) is also neutral as to the question whether there are *entities* called “meanings”.

Finally the three concepts — “truth”, “reality”, and “meaning” — are cast into one definition, along the lines drawn by Aristotle. For this purpose it is appropriate to generalize Quine’s concept of homophonic translation (which solely applies to spoken sentences). By a *homomorphonic* translation I mean a relation between *phonetically or morphologically* identical tokens of *any* kind. For instance, the two written sentence-tokens “Aristotle was a philosopher” and “Aristotle was a philosopher” are homomorphonic translations of each other.

Let $n(p)$ and $m(p)$ be two name-tokens of the sentence p , and $h(p)$ the homomorphonic translation of p . Then we are able to write down a slightly more complicated quantified equivalence, which is a modern version of the truth-definition in Aristotle’s *Metaphysica*, a weak inflationist view of truth¹¹:

- (11) For all p , $n(p)$ is true if and only if $m(p)$ means that $h(p)$ and the state of affairs that p obtains¹².

Remember that we are using a meta-language which is identical to its object-language. This is a decisive feature of the definition, for otherwise it would be inadequate. Consider the following instance of (11):

- (12) “Snow is black” is true if and only if “snow is black” means that snow is black and the state of affairs that snow is black obtains.

It is a contingent fact that “snow is black” means that snow is black. In another language, e.g. in a counterfactual variant of English, “snow is black” might mean that snow is green, because “black” means “green”. If we take such a variant of English as our object-language, we are led to the conclusion that the right-hand side of sentence (12) is false, since, in that language, “snow is black” does *not* mean that snow is black. From this we infer — assuming the validity of (12) — that the sentence on the left side is false too: it is not the case that “snow is black” is true. But while this is certainly a plausible conclusion, we derived it from (12) only by assuming that “snow is black” does not mean that snow is black. Of course this is far away from being adequate. In another variant of English, call it E(b/w), “snow is black” might mean that snow is *white*. Hence “snow is black” would be true in E(b/w), but our little argument would again prove it to be false.

This argument, however, turns out to be flawed. The mistake lies in the fact that the object-language is changed while the meta-language is still ordinary English. The object-language and the meta-language are no more identical to each other, therefore an important precondition of definition (11) is not fulfilled. We need the identity of object-language and meta-language to guarantee the adequacy of homomorphonic translation. The problem raised by the preceding argument disappears when we replace *both* the object-language and the meta-language by the *same* variant of English. Imagine once again E(b/w), the variant which has “snow is black” meaning that snow is white. Sentence (12) is certainly correct when interpreted as a statement *in* E(b/w) *about* E(b/w).

Readers of Tarski will realize that here a virtue is made out of what Tarski considered to be an unfortunate defect of natural language. While Tarski excluded languages that are “semantically closed” [(1944), p. 59], this closure is an essential property of the language in which our truth-definition has been formulated. Admittedly, this property creates all those antinomies and paradoxes which Tarski wanted to avoid. In a semantically closed language it is possible to construe sentences which are false when true, and vice versa. But contrary to what Tarski thought, semantic closure is not a defect but rather a desirable feature of a philosophical theory of truth. Natural language

make antinomies possible, hence a truth-definition that aims at modelling the semantics of natural language should also allow to construe antinomies. I do not want to “improve” natural language or replace it by a formal language, as many philosophers attempted to do; rather I want to understand it theoretically. It is the notion of truth used by speakers of ordinary language, not an artificial one, which I tried to define.

III. STRONG INFLATIONISM AND THE ROLE OF DEFINITIONS

As it is the case with most other philosophical theories, the central principle of weak inflationism is in need of a commentary. This commentary says that stronger inflationist theories are of no use, that things cannot be made better by theories centered around notions like “correspondence” or “coherence”. Although I cannot justify this negative claim in detail, a few words about the two most important inflationist theories, correspondence and coherence theory, might be in order at this point.

Correspondence theorists must show that “correspondence” is more than just a word, otherwise their theory would hardly be convincing. To provide a significant notion of correspondence they must indicate a certain relation between entities which are true or false (sentences, judgements, thoughts) and constituents of reality. In short, what they need is a *reference* relation. But in spite of all efforts there is still no satisfying naturalistic account of reference, and the chances of developing such a theory are rather small. Of course, a *non*-naturalistic reference relation, a relation *not* described in causal terms, would also do, e.g. intentional relations between the mind and the external world. But relations of this kind, if they do exist at all, are no better understood than their alleged naturalistic counterparts; they are still a complete mystery. Since both naturalistic and non-naturalistic strategies are dead-end streets, the correspondence theory cannot yield a tenable account of correspondence.

Coherence theory, on the other hand, is often rejected simply because of its antirealist character. It is accused of missing the fact that the notions of truth and reality are interrelated. I tend to agree with this objection, but there is a further point to be made: the coherence theory of truth is circular because coherence presupposes truth [cf. Kirkham (1992), p. 107]. “Coherence” is not a purely formal concept, it has also a non-formal content. In order to see that the sentences *p* and *non-p* are incompatible, we only need to examine their form; but in many cases formal considerations alone will not do. For instance, the sentences “*x* is red (all over, at time *t*)” and “*x* is blue (all over, at time *t*)” are incompatible, because they cannot be *true* at the same time. So we need the notion of truth to explain the notion of (in)coherence. Defining coherence by means of probabilities leads to similar problems. The sentences “*x* is a raven” and “*x* is white” are not incompatible

in the same way as the two former sentences are, but the discovery that a particular bird is of white colour certainly decreases the probability that it is a raven (although it might be a new kind of raven, or a raven that has fallen into a pot of white paint). In this probabilistic sense, the two sentences are again incompatible. Yet the probability at stake — be it subjective or objective — is the probability of being *true*. So once again the notion of truth comes first.

In view of difficulties like these (of course many more could be cited), and in view of the long-lasting but futile efforts to solve these difficulties, abandoning correspondence and coherence is probably the best choice. A thorough investigation of other theories of truth would show that they are not better off than correspondence and coherence theories. Theories developed by pragmatists, phenomenologists or idealists encounter notorious problems, not to mention their non-realist character, which many philosophers would regard as unbearable. It seems as if all strong inflationist theories, even if plausible at the surface, turn out to be obscure when scrutinized more deeply. For this reason, if there is a weaker form of inflationism, carrying less metaphysical commitments, we should prefer it to those stronger forms. We have seen that there is some space between full-blown inflationism laden with metaphysics on the one side and austere deflationism on the other. This space is occupied by weak inflationism which claims that the word “true” is interpreted by the notions of reality and meaning, and that there is no more that philosophy could tell about the nature of truth.

I will finish with some words about semantics and the way definitions are used in this paper. In definition (11), meaning is correlated with truth and reality, so this gives a kind of truth-conditional, realistic semantics. But there are no entities called “meanings”, nor is there a description of what the nature of meaning is in the style of strong semantic theories (like e.g. Frege’s). Moreover, talking about semantics, we must not forget that sentence (11) contains two other semantic devices: names (quotations) and translations, which themselves can easily be joined with the concept of meaning in the following way:

- (13) For all p , for all q , $n(p)$ is a translation of $n(q)$ if and only if $m(p)$ means that q ¹³.

As usual, $n(p)$, $n(q)$ and $m(p)$ are tokens of names of the sentences p and q . *Prima facie* assigning tokens of names to tokens of sentences looks quite harmless; all we have to do is write down two sentence-tokens of the same type and put quotation marks around one of them. There is certainly no problem in putting down quotation marks, but there still remains an intricate question: which tokens count as tokens of the same type? Any theory of sen-

tential truth faces this problem, weak inflationism is no exception. At the moment I do not know how a satisfactory solution of the type-token problem would look like; all I do know is that competent speakers usually have no difficulties to decide whether two linguistic tokens are of the same type. Learning to understand and to speak a language partly consists in acquiring this ability. So even if the matter is badly understood theoretically, it seems to be perfectly understood in practice.

Most people would probably be inclined to read (13) as a definition of the concept of translation by the concept of meaning, because they assume that grasping the meaning of a sentence is prior to translating it. But this need not be right, the hierarchical order of the two concepts could well be the other way around. Being an equivalence, sentence (13) is likewise a definition of the second concept, “meaning”, by the first one, “translation” — thus revealing the relational character of meaning (“*x* means that *y*”). Actually, I think there is no question of reducing something to something else; we do not have to decide whether “meaning” or “translation” is the simpler notion. Sentence (13) is best viewed as an *interdefinition* of “meaning” and “translation”; it points to their close conceptual relationship, but it does not imply that only one of them is the basis of semantics — perhaps *both* are.

Let me explain how I understand the term “interdefinition”. From a purely logical or semantic point of view, there is no difference between (explicit) definitions and interdefinitions; both state that the *definiens* and the *definiendum* are synonymous. The distinction between “definiens” and “definiendum” is neither a logical nor a semantic one, it is made for *pragmatic* reasons only. Normally the so-called “definiens” is meant to be more basic and/or better understood than the *definiendum*. The distinction is comparable to that between *axioms* and *theorems*. It is well-known that in constructing an axiomatic formulation of a theory, theorems can serve as axioms, and vice versa. It is up to the theory designer whether he uses a given sentence as an axiom or as a theorem. Usually this choice is guided by pragmatic considerations aiming at intelligibility, formal simplicity, etc. In an “interdefinition”, however, the *definiens* possesses the same philosophical significance as the *definiendum*. From a philosophical point of view, none of them is “basic”, none is “derived”. The discussion above suggests that there exists an equivalence of this sort between “meaning” and “translation”. The same holds for the predicate “true” and the complex notion “obtaining state of affairs”, which are interdefined by sentence (7). The concept of truth and the concept of reality are thus linked together by an interdefinition.

It is certainly in accordance with the spirit of weak inflationism to treat the concept of reality as cautiously as the concepts “truth” and “meaning”, and therefore to refrain from constructing big theories about reality. This attitude is exemplified in the widespread philosophical view that “reality” (or

“being”), as the highest and most general concept, is undefinable. In a famous passage Aristotle wrote that “there are many senses in which a thing may be said to ‘be’, but all that ‘is’ is related to one central point, one definite kind of thing” [*Metaphysica* 1003a 33f.]. These “many senses” are the well-known Aristotelian categories. Porphyry, in his introduction to Aristotle’s *Categories*, argued that due to their generality the categories are undefinable. However, if the categories are undefinable, the most general concept itself, “reality”, is even less so (except as a disjunction of all the categories, which still would not tell us what reality is). Treating the concept of reality in Porphyry’s way can be compared with deflationism about truth. Yet as in the case of deflationism, there is more to say about the issue: reality can be split up into states of affairs, and states of affairs are described by meaningful sentences which are true, as we know from principle (11). This is no “deflationist” account of reality any more, but a weak inflationist one, connecting reality, meaning and truth¹⁴.

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NOTES

¹ Horwich [(1982), p. 192] took deflationism to be compatible with a physicalistic account of truth as correspondence, but later [Horwich (1990), chap. 7] he denied that his minimal theory needs support from naturalism.

² See also Tarski (1944), p. 53f., and Plato’s *Sophist* 263B.

³ I use the word “reality” synonymous with “being” (Greek *on*, Latin *esse*), which is not how the scholastics used the term “realitas”.

⁴ Possible worlds are metaphysically weird, but we know that they can be replaced by objects less dubious [cf. Hintikka (1969), part III; Cocchiarella (1975)].

⁵ Since we are quantifying over tokens, the naming relation n and the translation t are clearly no functions. Therefore, in a precise formulation, we should add quantifiers for $n(p)$ and $t(p)$. But this little simplification will cause no harm.

⁶ Obviously the variable p plays different roles in this definition. On the left side it is used as an argument of the relation n , on the right side it stands by itself. This is just as in many mathematical formulas, for instance: $f(x) + 1 = x$. The analogy indicates that the method is all right.

⁷ (3) and (4) reflect what is often called the “disquotational” feature of Tarski’s theory. They are the home base of “disquotationalism”, a deflationist position associated with Quine [(1970), p. 12; (1990), § 33]. But they can also be read as confirming the older redundancy theory defended by Austin.

⁸ Working with sentence (5), we could easily provide a similar equivalence for spoken languages.

⁹ Compare O’Leary-Hawthorne and Oppy [(1997), p. 176] who count a theory of truth referring to states of affairs as a theory about the hidden essence of truth, an *inflationist* theory that is.

¹⁰ Alternatively we could also start from (1) or (5), the first one being closest to Tarski’s original theory.

¹¹ It has instances both in spoken *and* in written language, in contrast to sentence (5) above.

¹² It is often remarked that indexicals are a source of serious difficulties for principles like those I have appealed to. By principle (3), e.g., we are justified to say that the sentence “I am busy” is true if and only if I am busy. This is only acceptable if both occurrences of the indexical refer to the same person. In view of sentence (11), however, I assume that a necessary condition for $m(p)$ to mean that $h(p)$ is the coreference of all indexical terms contained in both tokens. This seems to be a plausible restriction on the synonymy of indexical sentences [see Fodor (1980), p. 237].

¹³ Here we need not assume that the object-language is identical to the meta-language. For instance: “la nieve es negra” means that snow is black if and only if “la nieve es negra” is a translation of “snow is black”. But of course homomorphic translation is a special case.

¹⁴ I would like to thank Elisabeth Cencig and Philip Herdina for reading earlier versions of this paper.

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