**Deflationism (about theories of truth)**

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“In philosophy, the question “What do we actually use this word or

proposition for?” repeatedly leads to valuable insights.” (TLP 6.2II)

Although in the last century much work has been done on truth, there was, at least initially, an assumption—that there is some *thing* about which we should be theorizing. What I shall call a deflationary viewof truth (henceforth, ‘T-deflationism) essentially denies this assumption. That is, it denies that there is something there to theorize about, which is *not* to say that there is no room for theorizing. One who adopts a deflationary view of truth makes a transition from what truth *is* to what ‘true’ *does*. But she does not attempt to replace an earlier theory of truth with a new one; rather, part of the view involves convincing us that no such theory is needed at all.[[1]](#endnote-1)

While some speak of *the* “deflationary theory of truth” (e.g., Stoljar and Damnjanovic, 2010), there is no unique deflationary theory of truth; rather, there are various theories of truth that are, for various reasons (to be discussed below), properly characterized as *deflationary*. It is therefore best to see deflationism about truth as a *genus* of which various accounts or theories of truth are *species*. We can then ask after the genus—what exactly is it for a proposed theory, or account, to be properly characterized as a *deflationary* account of truth?[[2]](#endnote-2) Standard replies tend to focus on particular features of theories of truth. That is fine, but there are some general features of so-called “deflationary” accounts. In this paper, I provide a general account of T-deflationism and dispel some misimpressions about what that view involves.

1. **Understanding Deflationism**

Deflationary approaches (or views, etc.) to anything are usually characterized negatively, by specifying features that something lacks. More generally, a deflationaryapproach accepts some discourse or concept without granting the metaphysical or epistemological presuppositions that are commonly associated with it. Such an approach accepts and explains the relevant discourse, while obviating the need for postulating a theory, which would require special epistemic access or a putatively dubious metaphysics. To be a deflationist is to be an anti-realist of a particular sort, while still granting that there is a role or function for the relevant fragment of discourse. And central to the view is that some object of analysis is “really just” to be identified with something else, something less troubling or, at least, methodologically unencumbered by certain epistemological or metaphysical assumptions.

 In order to see this, let us consider a deflationary approach that is not directed at truth at all, for example, Field’s (1984) approach to the issue of mathematical knowledge—of what it consists in, of how, or whether, we have any of it.

 Field’s approach to mathematical knowledge may be characterized as *deflationary* because, while it grants that there is mathematical knowledge, it requires neither a special, non-naturalistic epistemic access (or: path) to mathematical knowledge nor a special realm of mathematical objects.

 According to Field, some of mathematical knowledge is empirical knowledge (e.g. knowledge of what is commonly accepted by mathematicians and what they regard as the proper starting point for an inquiry). The bulk, however, is knowledge “of a purely logical sort—even on the Kantian criterion of logic according to which logic can make no existential commitments.” (Field, 1984, p. 512).

 Field (Ibid.) considers a “crude” attempt at setting out a position of this sort about mathematical knowledge. According to this view (Ibid.), “all mathematical knowledge is really just knowledge that certain mathematical claims follow from certain other mathematical claims and bodies of claims.” He rejects this account, arguing, in effect, that, for the most part, mathematical knowledge amounts to knowledge that certain sentences do (or do not) *follow from a given set of axioms*.

 In general, such knowledge would either be understood in a semantical way (as knowledge about a class of models) or in a syntactical way (as knowledge about a class of formal proofs or derivations). Neither of these, however, qualifies as logical knowledge in the sense Field wants. The reason: Since models are just a particular kind of mathematical object, knowledge of them must just be a particular kind of mathematical knowledge. And the same goes for syntactical derivations: Whether they are conceived of abstractly or concretely, they cannot be known to exist on purely logical grounds, since (so the reasoning goes) pure logic cannot assert the existence of things. Field is therefore obliged to offer an account of logical knowledge that frees it of the need to be knowledge of semantical or syntactical entities.

 In his positive, deflationary account, he provides a *modal* analysis according to which knowledge that a claim S follows from a given conjunction of claims A amounts to

1. knowledge that (A→S),

where ‘φ’ is to be read as ‘it is logically necessary that φ’; and knowledge that claim S does not follow from a given conjunction of claims A amounts to

1. knowledge that ◊(A&¬S),

where ‘◊φ’ is to be read as ‘it is logically possible that φ’. The key feature of this analysis is that ‘’ and ‘◊’ are operators (as operators of logic), meaning that sentences A and S are *used* rather than *mentioned*. This eliminates the need for any entities like models, possible worlds and/or derivations to which predicates otherwise would have applied. By avoiding ontological commitment in this way, Field’s account of mathematical knowledge turns out to be properly characterizable as “deflationary”. We will see something similar, when we consider deflationary accounts of truth.[[3]](#endnote-3)

1. **T-deflationism**

At least since Tarski, truth theorists have taken the following *truth schema* to be central to our concept of truth in the sense that the burden effectively rests on those who would reject it,

(TS) <A> is true iff A.[[4]](#endnote-4)

Now, while both T-deflationists and T-inflationists about truth (alternatively, ‘T-inflationists)’ will grant the centrality of (TS), what distinguishes T-deflationists from T-inflationists is that only the former take instances of (TS) to be *fundamental*, both conceptually and explanatorily.[[5]](#endnote-5) That is, according to T-deflationists, there is nothing—conceptually or explanatorily—that underwrites the instances of (TS) for, on their view, such instances are brute.

 The instances of (TS) are conceptually fundamental in that they do not follow from definitional relations holding amongst the concept of truth and more basic concepts in terms of which ‘true’ can be defined. The upshot of such conceptual fundamentality is that the instances of (TS) are *analytic*, in addition to being necessary and *a priori*.

The instances are explanatorily fundamental in two senses. First, no non-definitional analysis of *truth* is possible, so that no unified account as to why the biconditionals hold will be forthcoming. Second, the instances of (TS) are *fundamental explainers* of truth-talk in that everything that we do with the truth predicate can be explained, ultimately, in terms of the instances of (TS).

* 1. **Varieties of T-deflationism**

In order further to clarify T-deflationism, I briefly describe three such theories, after which I identify what I see as the heart of T-deflationism.

* + 1. **Disquotationalism**

*Disquotationalists* take as theoretically basicthe instances of the *T-schema*

(T) ‘p’ is true iff p

(where, for present purposes, an instance results from substituting a sentence of a given language, L, for both quoted and unquoted occurrences of ‘p’). On their view, ‘is true’ designates an inverse to the quotation operation, so that appending the phrase to the quote name of sentence yields an equivalent sentence. Accordingly, ‘‘p’ is true’ and ‘p’ are always interdeducible, save for opaque contexts. Although there are numerous formulations of Disquotationalism, in all of its guises it aims to explain the function of truth-talk given minimal theoretical and ontological commitments.

 Perhaps the most worked-out version of Disquotationalism is that provided by Hartry Field (1994, 2001, 2008). According to Field’s “pure disquotational theory of truth”, a speaker can only apply ‘true’ to sentences, or utterances, that she understands.[[6]](#endnote-6) Although Field (2001) argues that we can *extend* the truth schema to sentences that we do not yet understand, the claim that we can do so is, of necessity, constrained. Sentences that cannot be understood are not aletheically evaluable, even if ones that we do not yet understand, but could, would be aletheically evaluable.

Disquotationalists take the instances of (T) to serve as conceptual and fundamental axioms, which should be *a priori* and should hold of conceptual necessity. But this raises some immediate problems.

Insofar as the relevant truth bearers are taken to be orthologically typed sentence tokens (as opposed to propositions, as Minimalists maintain), it is at least difficult to see how those instances could have the right epistemological and modal status. This is especially so because such tokens could have been used very differently than how they were actually used and, if they were, they would have had different truth conditions than they in fact possess. Accordingly, such sentence tokens appear to have their truth conditions merely contingently and, as there is no guarantee that the token mentioned on the left-hand side of an instance of (T) gets the same interpretation as that used on the right-hand side, the instances appear to be empirically defeasible and, so, *a posteriori*. How are such problems to be solved?

There are 2 main responses to this problem, one offered by Field (1994) and the other offered by Vann McGee (1991, 1993). Field’s solution to the problem is to maintain that the sentence tokens to which truth may be ascribed are computationally, but not orthographically, typed, where computational types would be classes of (potential) sentence tokens treated by a given speaker as computationally equivalent. This gambit has the effect of restricting the interpretations applicable to a sentence mentioned on the left-hand side of an instance of (T) to those that are actually involved in a speaker’s use of the sentence in the right-hand side. (Thus, Field (2004) notes that, “for a person to call an utterance true on this pure disquotational sense is to say that it is true-as-he-understands-it.”) The gain of appealing to computationally-typed sentences, when combined with the claim that the left- and right-hand sides of the instances of (T) are “cognitively equivalent” ensures that the instances are both *a priori* and necessary.

McGee (1993) agrees with Field (Ibid.) that the truth predicate is directly applicable only to sentences that a given speaker understands. But he takes schema (T) to make tacit reference to an idiolect and a context. Leaving aside context, McGee’s version of Disquotationalism provides a neat solution to the afore-noted problems. First, on this view, the instances of (T) end up as analytic, being true in virtue of the fact that we have decided to use the truth predicate in such a way that it satisfies (T). Indeed, on this view, the instances of (T) therefore count as axiomatic meaning postulates the collection of which implicitly defines ‘true’.

Second, when properly expanded, (T) is of the form,

(T\*) ‘p’ is true in *L* iff p,

where ‘*L*’ rigidly designates the language that a given speaker actually speaks. Now, McGee maintains that there is, in (T\*), a “hidden indexical”, since *L* is taken to rigidly designate the language truth-ascribers actually speak. One consequence of this is that even in possible worlds in which the sentences of the language, orthographically typed, are used differently, this is immaterial to the modal status of the instances of (T\*). Hence, in light of the tacit restriction to a truth-ascriber’s actual language, the instances of (T\*) manage to retain their modal status, even given certain contingencies of language use.

* + 1. **Minimalism**

Minimalists about truth endorse T-deflationism, taking each (non-pathological) instance of the *Equivalence Schema*,

(ES) <*p>* is true iff *p*,

to be conceptually, explanatorily, and logically fundamental, where, in (ES), surrounding an expression, *p*, by angled brackets produces an expression that refers to the propositional constituent expressed by what *p* says.[[7]](#endnote-7),[[8]](#endnote-8)

In addition to taking the instances of (ES) to be conceptually and explanatorily fundamental, Minimalists also take them to be epistemologically fundamental in that we do not arrive at them, or seek to justify them, on the basis of anything more obvious or immediately known. Instead, it’s claimed that, as linguistically competent language users, we are disposed to accept pretty much any instance of the schema.

The instances of (ES) are taken to be explanatorily fundamental in that our acceptance of them is the source of everything else we do with the truth predicate. Thus, the Minimalist is committed to explaining our acceptance of sentences containing ‘true’ by reference to our inclination to accept the instances of (ES), together, perhaps, with our acceptance of propositions not involving the concept of truth.

This claim of explanatory fundamentality, when combined with a particular view of meaning, yields the *Minimalist thesis about truth*—that the meaning of ‘true’ is fixed by our disposition, as linguistically competent language users, to accept instances of (ES).[[9]](#endnote-9) So, the Minimalist thesis about truth fixes the meaning of truth: It is fixed by our inclination to accept instances of (ES). And the Minimalist conception of truth tells us that the instances of (ES) tell us everything there is to say about the meaning of the word ‘true’ and the role and function of the truth predicate in a language like English.

 On the Minimalist view, the meaning of the truth predicate is given by specifying a fundamental regularity of use, what Horwich (Ibid.) dubs a “basic acceptance property”, in terms of which our overall use of the predicate is best explained. According to Horwich (1990[1998]), the sum of everything we do with the truth predicate is best explained by taking the fundamental fact about its use to be our disposition to accept instances of (ES), where

1. Each *p* is replaced with an occurrence of an English sentence;
2. These occurrences are given the same interpretation as one another;
3. Under the interpretation, they express a proposition; and
4. The terms ‘that’ and ‘proposition’ are given their (standard) English meaning.

It bears noting that Minimalism comprises both a theory of the concept of truth and a theory of the property of truth. A theory of the concept, φ, aims to provide an account that best explains our overall use of Cφ (where ‘Cφ’ expresses the concept, φ). By contrast, a theory of the property φ aims to provide an account that best explains all of the facts about φ itself. Now, while there can be a significant difference between these two sorts of accounts, Minimalists hold that, in the case of truth, the two more or less converge on (ES), for the axioms of the Minimalist’s theory of truth are instances of (ES) meeting conditions (a) – (d) and, as noted, our tendency to accept such instances constitutes our meaning what we do by ‘true’.[[10]](#endnote-10)

Do Minimalists face the same worries that we found in the case of Disquotationalism? Well, while (ES) is a schema for English, current English is most likely not “expressively complete”. It does not follow from this, however, that the Minimalist’s theory is expressively incomplete, however, for that theory is said to comprise all of the (non-pathological) instances of (ES) in all possible extensions of English. As a consequence, while not all instances of (ES) are currently expressible, they are all possibly expressible, which is sufficient to allow that the “axioms” of the Minimalist theory consists of all of the instances of (ES).

* + 1. **Prosententialism**

Before discussing Prosententialism, it would be useful to consider a proto-deflationary account of truth, which was put forward by Ramsey (1927). Ramsey was a *redundancy* theorist, holding that (e.g.)

1. It is truth that Frege smelled the scent of violets, and
2. Frege smelled the scent of violets

are equivalent in that they both express the same proposition, thereby making the truth predicate in (1) redundant. Such a redundancy view may seem plausible, when we consider (1) and (2). But if the truth predicate really is redundant, it should be possible to eliminate it from all ‘true’-involving sentences.

 The problem with Ramsey’s redundancy theory—one that Ramsey was quite aware of—is that the truth predicate is not always eliminable. To see this, consider

(3) If Moore said it, then it is true.

Ramsey would represent (3) as something like

(3’) (∃p)(Moore said p & p is true),

which, assuming redundancy, would be equivalent to something like

 (3’’) (∃p)(Moore said p & p).

The problem is that when we translate (3’’) into a natural language like English, we get the nonsensical

(3!) Moore said something and it.

Ramsey took this to show that this indicated a defect of natural language. But one might conclude, instead, that the problem is more with his account of truth than it is with a natural language like English.

 In many ways, Prosententialism is close to Ramsey’s view, though it is designed not to suffer from the afore-noted defect that plagued redundancy theorists. According to Prosententialists, ‘is true’ is best understood as an operator, which, when applied to an expression that picks out a set of (what Brandom (1994) calls) “sentence tokenings”, results in a sentence the content of which is inherited anaphorically from the designated tokenings. Prosententialists call such a sentence a *prosentence*. According to them, truth-talk is essentially a means for generating prosentences, where prosentences function like pronouns, though at the sentential, rather than the subsentential, level.

Perhaps the best version of Prosententialism is that presented by Brandom (1994), which is similar to that proposed by Grover, Camp and Belnap (1975), save for the fact that the earlier view had some problems with “blind truth ascriptions”.[[11]](#endnote-11) According to Brandom’s (1994, pp. 299 - 305) version of Prosententialism, ‘is true’ is a *sui generis* prosentence-forming operator. On this *deflationary* view, appending ‘is true’ to a sentence nominalization yields a prosentence that inherits its content anaphorically from whichever sentence token the sentence nominalization picks out.

The claim that ‘is true’ is a presentence-forming operator distinguishes prosententialism from the other T-deflationary views, which hold that the truth predicate is a genuine predicate. According to a Prosententialist, in a sentence like

(4) What Tarski said is true,

‘What Tarski said’ serves to supply a sentence-tokening—the sentence uttered by Tarski—from which (4) inherits its content.

 Unlike Minimalists, Prosententialists do not take the instances of (TS) to be brute, though they do take them to be both conceptually and explanatorily fundamental. Here is how. On Brandom’s view, the left-hand side of an instance of (TS) is a prosentence that results from applying the truth predicate to a ‘that’-clause. (‘That’-clauses are important because they contain the sentence-tokenings they pick out. Accordingly, their use in a prosentence brings an explicit statement of the content that is inherited by the prosentence into the prosentence itself.) Now, given how ‘that’-clauses function in prosentences, it follows that the content inherited by the prosentence is the content that would have been expressed had the sentence-tokening contained in the ‘that’-clause itself had been asserted. As a result, the instances of (TS) can be seen as the direct result of applying the truth predicate to the left-hand side of (classically) logical truths of the form

 (5) p iff p.

But what about the explanatory and conceptual fundamentality of the instances of (TS)? Well, as the instances do not admit of an explanation beyond that provided by an account of the logico-grammatical functioning of the truth predicate, and as this functioning that results in the triviality of the instances of (TS), in turn, explains all of the uses of ‘true’, the instances are taken to be explanatorily fundamental. Moreover, given how the truth predicate functions with ‘that’-clauses, it is both necessary and *a priori* that a given prosentence will have the same content as would the sentence contained in the ‘that’-clause, were it used in the same context, from which it follows that the instances are also conceptually fundamental.

* 1. **The Heart of T-deflationism**

Since the relationship between a deflationary view *about* truth and a given deflationary theory *of* truth is that between *genus* and *species*, we can see Disquotationalism, Minimalism, Prosententialism, etc. as different, and possibly competing, species that, at least *prima facie*, are of the same genus. But, while a T-deflationist will adopt a particular theory of truth, her doing so is different from her endorsement of T-deflationism. As such, objections peculiar to such a theory, while potentially serious, are not, *ipso facto,* objections to T-deflationism in general. Be that as it may, our focus, for what follow, will be on T-deflationism, understood as a *genus*, rather than on any *species* of the variety of T-deflationary theories.

* + 1. **The Role of ‘True’**

As a number of philosophers have pointed out, there are certain cases under which the truth- (and falsity-) predicate seems to be expressivelyindispensable. For example, consider a ‘true’-free theory, τ, understood as a body of sentences, that is not finitely axiomatizable and say that we are committed to τ. Question: How can we express our commitment to it?

We certainly cannot express our commitment to τ by asserting singly each of its members. What we want is a device that will enable us to express, in a finite manner, the same commitment that we would express by singly asserting, *per impossible*, all of τ’s members. And, with the truth-predicate, we can do that—by asserting that all members of τ are true. Similarly, we can deny such a theory, even if we cannot pinpoint which of its particular claims we reject—by asserting that not all members of τ are true. Finally, we can acknowledge the contingency of τ, while expressing commitment to it—by asserting that any member of τ could have failed to be true (Cf. Field, 1994, p. 265).[[12]](#endnote-12)

T-deflationists and non-T-deflationists alike recognize the truth-predicate’s role in these expressive tasks. But many T-deflationists have gone further. While they claim, as they should, that, in the case of expressing our commitment to (or against) τ, the truth-predicate is facilitating, or is aiding in, the expression of opaque endorsement (or denial), they go further and claim that the truth- (falsity-) predicate *is* *a device of* opaque endorsement (denial), or, sometimes, that it *is a device of* generalization. A related claim sometimes made is that the truth-predicate *is a device of* infinite conjunction and disjunction (Ibid., p. 264, Field (2008), p. 210). But the truth-predicate is not a device *of* opaque endorsement, nor is it a device *of* generalization or *of* infinite conjunction and disjunctions. Rather, together with other machinery (notably, quantifiers and variables), the truth- (falsity-) predicate can serve as a device *for* expressing opaque endorsement and it, together with a quantifier, can serve as a device *for* expressing generalizations or infinite conjunctions and disjunctions.[[13]](#endnote-13)

In addition to claiming that the truth predicate *is* a device of opaque endorsement, many philosophers (e.g., Azzouni (2006), Blackburn (2010a, 2010b), Field (1994) and a host of others) have also claimed that it is exclusively a device *for* opaque endorsement. This further claim is false, however, for sometimes the truth-predicate, while it aids in the expression of a generalization or of an infinite conjunction, does not serve as a device for facilitating the expression of opaque endorsement. In particular, when a truth-predicate appears in the antecedent of a conditional, it is not serving as a device for any sort of endorsement at all, though it does enable the language-user to express certain generalizations.

To see this, consider

(6) If everything the meteorologist said is true, then you should bring an umbrella.

In (6), the truth-predicate is *not* serving as a device for facilitating opaque endorsement (at least, it is not doing that directly). Rather, it is playing the role of a device for expressing infinite conjunctions and disjunctions.[[14]](#endnote-14) Moreover, letting L1, L2, … Ln be the sentences (or propositions) that the meteorologist said, we want (6) to be equivalent to

(7) If L1and L2 and …, and Ln,then you should bring an umbrella.[[15]](#endnote-15)

Hence, not only is it a mistake to claim that the truth-predicate is a device *of* opaque endorsement, it is also a mistake to assume that it always serves as a device *for* expressing opaque endorsement, as examples like (6) make clear.

But if T-deflationists should not identify the truth predicate with these particular roles, how should they think about the truth predicate?

We can say something about what kind of device ‘true’ is if we consider what the truth-predicate must be like, in order for it to perform the aforementioned roles. Here I endorse a slightly generalized version of the account offered by Quine (1986). In setting out his *disquotational* account, Quine discusses the role of the truth predicate in canceling out the *semantic ascent* achieved by forming the quotation name of a sentence. More generally, what the truth-predicate does is *undo* some nominalization of a content-vehicle, where this nominalization can occur in a number of ways.

In addition to forming the quotation name of a sentence, some of the more familiar ways include: forming some structural description of a sentence uttered, forming a ‘that’-clause of a sentence that is (or: could be) uttered or that expresses the content of a mental state, offering a definite description of an utterance or mental state, etc. These operations all result in ascent from the use of a content-vehicle to express that content, to a kind of mention of the vehicle. The truth predicate undoes this ascent to provide something equivalent to the direct presentation of the content that attaches to the content-vehicle.

I will use the expression ‘semantic descent’ to capture this operation of the truth-predicate in general. Now, being a device *of* semantic descent is part of what allows the truth-predicate so to serve the useful functions that it does. It is a device of semantic descentwhich, when coupled with other resources (e.g., quantifiers, descriptions, etc.), can be employed to express opaque endorsement, enabling its users to express agreement, or disagreement, with a certain body of claims, as might appear, for example, in a theory like τ. In addition, the truth-predicate’s function, as a device of semantic descent, also allows it to serve in the expression of infinite conjunctions and disjunctions, in the performance of a kind of “generalizing role”.

In keeping with the distinction between a deflationary view about theories of truth and one of the myriad available deflationary theories of truth, as one of *genus* to *species*, we should see the former holding that the truth-predicate functions as a device *of* semantic descent (in this broader sense), with each member of the latter set further clarifying just *how* the truth-predicate manages so to function.[[16]](#endnote-16) Saying that it is just such a device implies that it is not also an important, directly informative predicate. Thus, it is not a predicate that attributes a property to sentences-under-an-interpretation (or to propositions, or what have you) to which it is applied; this is in line with the deflationaryview of truth. Accordingly, while all truth theorists can accept that the truth-predicate functions as a device of semantic descent, advocates of T-deflationism go one step further, maintaining that this is the only—that is, the *sole*—function of the truth-predicate.[[17]](#endnote-17)

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1. Stephen Leeds (1995, p. 4) takes deflationism about truth to be “the simple denial that we need a theory about the relations between language and world.” Understood in this way, the chief question that gets raised regarding the notion of truth is whether the philosophy of language is essentially complete, as a T-deflationist about truth will contend, or whether it is still in its infancy. Leeds’s account of what T-deflationism amounts to makes it seem that T-deflationism is a purely negative thesis. Leeds’s account does render deflationism a negative thesis but this is just because he is contrasting T-deflationism with the correspondence theory of truth. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. We should distinguish *theories* of truth from *accounts* of truth. The former are sets of axioms and rules for truth. So, for example, the instances of the truth schema might collectively constitute a particular theory of truth. By contrast, accounts of truth go beyond a theory of truth by, in effect, being *about* those axioms and rules, saying, for example, that the axioms of truth are complete and sufficient with respect to the role truth plays in logical and philosophical truth-talk. This distinction is important, since the former is meant to be about truth, whereas the latter is meant to be a particular view *about* the truth-predicate. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Peter Pagin (personal communication) raised the very interesting question of whether we might see Hilbert’s Program as in some sense deflationary, given, presumably, his instrumentalism together with his Program. I am not sure if the view should be characterized as *deflationary*, though I do see the connection to which Pagin is pointing. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Since different truth theories take different things—utterances, sentence tokens, propositions, etc.—to be the primary bearers of truth, and since I intend the claim that follows to cover all deflationary theories of truth, I leave open the interpretation of the name-forming device that I employ in (TS). T-deflationists also offer different readings of the biconditional (‘iff’). For what follows, please read it as a material biconditional. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. It is usually said that T-inflationists claim that truth is a substantive notion. Since I am just setting out the view, I will not have anything to say about what it is for an expression to express a property that is *substantive* (nor shall I have anything to say about the expression-relation). That said, it is standard to hold that for an expression to be substantive is for it to possess an *underlying nature*. (For a discussion, see Horwich (1998a, Ch. 3, 1998b, Ch. 4).) Of course, if we are happy to allow that some meaningful predicates fail to express any properties at all then the need to characterize properties as either “substantive” or not may well become otiose. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. This facet of the view raises difficult issues, as noted by Field (2001), Gupta (2003) and Shapiro (2003)—difficulties that I shall not discuss in this paper. For a discussion of the issues, see the papers collected in Armour-Garb and Beall (2005). [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Horwich (1998) pp. 121, 126-128, 138. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. It bears noting that the same is true of advocates of inference-rule T-deflationists, whose theory of truth comprises the inference-rules, *‘True’-In* and *‘True’-Out*, viz.,

‘True’-In From p *⇒* T<p>

‘True’-Out From T<p> *⇒* p,

where ‘*⇒*’ can be understood as representing an inference rule, or as capturing a substitution rule, to the effect that, in all extensional (or “transparent”) contexts, one can intersubstitute ‘<p> is true’ (‘p’) for ‘p’ (‘<p> is true’), where ‘p’ serves as a sentential variable, which can be replaced by any declarative sentence, and where the angle quotes, ‘<’ and ‘>’, serve as a device for nominalizing any sentence that goes in for ‘p’. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Horwich (1998, pp. 44-5) maintains (i) that the meaning of a word is determined by its use and (ii) that the overall use of a word stems from its possession of a *basic acceptance property*, which property, in conjunction with other factors (e.g., perception), explains total linguistic behavior with respect to that word. So, for example, Horwich holds that the acceptance property governing our total use of the word ‘true’ is the inclination to accept instances of (ES). [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. I say “more or less” because of Horwich’s (1998) response to the Liar Paradox. He takes the axioms of the Minimalist’s theory to consist of all *non-pathological* instances of (ES) (although how this is to be worked out is a bit of a mystery). But it is compatible with this that the meaning of ‘true’ is fixed by our disposition to accept *all* instances of (ES). I mention this for the sake of completeness. Horwich does not discuss these issues and, for what follows, I shall do the same. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. For a brief discussion of the problem, see Burgess and Burgess (2010). I should note that my discussion of the relationship between Ramsey and Prosententialism has benefitted from their discussion. For a detailed discussion of the relationship between Ramsey’s Redundancy theory and Prosententialism, see Grover (1992). [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. We reject a given theory when we reject at least one of its claims. But we sometimes wish to express our denial of a theory without knowing which of its claims ought to be denied. When the theory is not finitely axiomatizable, the falsity-predicate (or the truth-predicate, coupled with negation) ends up being *expressively* indispensable, if we are to express our commitment against the theory. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. As Quine (1986) notes, all we need is the truth-predicate and suitable quantifiers, which will allow us to generalize over a body of claims. Thanks to Jody Azzouni for discussion on this point. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. As is familiar from the Frege-Geach problem, where an expression functions as the antecedent of a conditional, it is not asserted (though the conditional may be) and, hence, it does not have the *force* that it may have if, say, it were baldly asserted (or straight out uttered). [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Field (2008) makes a similar point but does not go on to argue against the claim that the truth-predicate is always performing its expressive role, as a device for facilitating opaque endorsement. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Thus, we can see Minimalists, disquotationalists, prosententialists, etc. all as holding that the truth predicate functions as a device of semantic descent, with each deflationary theory clarifying *how* the truth predicate so functions. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Thanks to Jody Azzouni, Peter Pagin and an anonymous referee, for very helpful comments. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)