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Abstract

In contemporary epistemology there is a movement toward deflationary understandings of core philosophical concepts. Prominent among these is the concept of truth. This thesis examines contemporary deflationary theories of truth, such as those of Paul Horwich and Huw Price. I argue that while Horwich's canonical deflationary approach is by itself insufficient as a complete theory of truth, Price's minimal, pragmatic, theory of truth points toward a combination that is *prima facie* satisfactory. Once this new approach has been established, I will use Michael Lynch's recent functionalist theory of truth to examine the questions of what we want from a theory of truth and what it means to have a theory *of* something. Lastly, I shall use the example of vegetarianism as a test case for the theory of truth I propose. I will argue that the proposed theory of truth can both apply to the particular ethical vegetarian claim and that, in doing so, it provides resources for viewing ethical discourse as generally truth-apt.

Keywords: Epistemology, Deflationary, Pragmatism

When you are studying any matter or considering any philosophy, ask yourself only what are the facts and what is the truth that the facts bear out. Never let yourself be diverted either by what you wish to believe or by what you think could have beneficent social effects if it were believed. But look only and solely at what are the facts. – Interview with Bertrand Russell on God CBC Retro Bites, 1959

1. Truth and its Significance: An Introduction

The questions "Why does truth matter?" or "What do we lose if we do not have a concept of truth?" are revealing because they force us to examine what we typically take for granted, that is, the value of having a true belief. To ask "why does truth matter?" is also to ask "why do we need a concept of truth?" A concept of truth is implied in a wide range of inquiries. Whether the investigation is empirical, philosophical, or aesthetic, truth is an underlying concept across many realms of thought.

To begin with, let's examine what intellectual activity would *mean* without a concept of truth. That is, let's examine how contemporary academic inquires would look and behave without this concept of truth. For example, consider how science would be disrupted without a concept of truth. Science is epistemologically significant because it has produced the best empirical methods to assess and discover truths. These methods are the most rigorous, repeatable, and internally consistent, and traditionally science has been seen as discovering the way that things really are: that is, the truth. This is why we value scientific facts over those of witch doctors and pseudo-scientific practitioners; the pseudo-scientist's claims are untrustworthy because they lack the application and rigor of a valid scientific methodology. Another example is graphic design. While graphic design does not have the methodological rigor and tools of analysis that science has, it still has guiding principles that dictate good design, such as not overlaying red text on a gray background.

Truth is that fundamental. Thus it is no surprise that philosophers and theorists – ranging

from Plato and Aristotle, to Descartes, Kant and Nietzsche and more recently, Heidegger, Russell

and Rorty – have throughout time, attempted to examine the concept of truth and provide a

reasonable theoretical discourse on it. The philosophies are wide, varying and colorful. However,

there are several points of contention that all theories must address. For example, truth is such a

fundamental concept, that when we philosophize about it we are looking for a consistent –and true–

conception of truth. This has the feel of a self referential paradox. That is to say, if we *do* attain a

reasonable theory of truth, then that theory of truth must apply to itself. Put a simpler way, the

concern is that, if we claim to have a true theory of truth then that theory of truth is only true in

virtue of itself. For example:

1. P is true iff I say P

2. I say 1

3. Therefore, 1 is true

The argument for an individualistic theory of truth is circular because it assumes the theory of truth

in its own support. Frege raised a similar concern with regard to the correspondence claim that a

statement is true if, and only if, it corresponds to the facts:

> Cannot it be laid down that truth exists when there is correspondence in a certain respect?
> But in which? For what would we then have to do to decide whether something is true? We
> should have to enquire whether it is true that an idea and a reality, perhaps, corresponded in
> the laid-down respect. And we should be confronted by a question of the same kind and the
> game could begin again. So the attempt to explain truth as correspondence collapses. And
> every other attempt to define truth collapses too. For in a definition certain characteristics
> would have to be stated. And in application to any particular case the question would always
> arise whether it were true that the characteristics were present. So one goes round in a
> circle. Consequently, it is probable that the content of the word "true" is unique and
> undefinable. (Frege 1967, 19; quoted in Engel 2002, 17)

Frege concludes that truth is likely "undefinable" because there is no non-circular way of

determining whether a particular definition applies to a particular case. While this may be correct in

a narrow sense of "definition" it does not rule out giving a general account of truth that examines

how we use and understand this fundamental concept. While what results may not be a definition in

Frege's sense, we can nonetheless aim for a theory of a truth that is consistent, illuminating, and free of the problems that have historically tarnished the concept.

Assume for a moment that we did have a theory of truth and that it satisfied every logical and epistemic desideratum. This may lead us to re-evaluate various areas of research, because with a criterion for truth, we would be able to construct particular ways of determining what is true. Ethics especially would benefit from this. If the truth of certain ethical claims could be evaluated in a rigorous way, then the path to know "the good" would be in clear—or at least clearer—sight. We could examine areas of epistemology as well. The traditional questions of "What does it mean to know?" "What does it mean to be justified?" and "How do we come to knowledge?" would gain significant insight. Truth is fundamental to all these questions: for instance, one couldn't be justified if the justification relied upon a falsehood; similarly one cannot have knowledge if that knowledge is not true.

2. Are Our Contemporary Theories Satisfying?

There are a myriad of theories of truth that could be examined and analyzed. However, I will focus on one[1], in particular. Deflationism is one of the most promising theories within the contemporary epistemological scene. Of the theories of truth that can be called "deflationary", Paul Horwich's minimalist account is arguably canonical[2]. Like all deflationary theories, Horwich's begins by making the equivalence schema (exemplified by (ES) below) to be the main statement of his theory of truth.

(ES)   "p" is true $\leftrightarrow$ p

Where p is the standard logical variable, standing for any well formed sentence in the target language and $\leftrightarrow$ is the material biconditional, so that (ES) can be read as "'p' is true if and only if

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[1] For the purposes of this paper I will not be addressing the correspondence theory of truth in detail.

[2] See: Horwich, Paul. Truth 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999
          Horwich, Paul From a Deflationary Point of View. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005

(iff) p'. The equivalence schema is central to any deflationary theory, and arguably any theory of truth. However, this is where deflationary theories depart from other, more traditional, theories of truth. Deflationists will say that the equivalence schema is the *only* part of the theory that is doing the real philosophical work. As Horwich states:

> And, more generally, it can be made plausible that no further fact about the truth predicate –
> nothing beyond our allegiance to the equivalence schema – is needed to explain *any* of our
> ways of using it. It is for this reason that we are entitled to conclude that the meaning of
> "true" is determined by that schema. (Horwich, 37)

Other additions, such as "correspondence," "facts", "external reality", or "things that are the case", do not functionally add to the theory. In other words all that we need to say about truth is encompassed in (ES).

Horwich presses on, not to continue philosophizing about the concept of truth, but to continue examining our epistemic state of affairs and how the term "truth" is used. In order to understand the meaning of a concept, one simply examines how that concept is typically used in our language. For Horwich, this means that truth's real utility and "value" is as a device for generalization. For example, if the Pope is infallible, if follows that:

(P1)   The Pope says 'torture is wrong' → torture is wrong.

If we lacked a concept of truth then the only way we could capture the Pope's infallibility would be via an infinite conjunction of conditionals: one conditional for each statement the Pope has uttered. But *with* the concept of truth we can capture this idea much more simply with this generalization: Everything the Pope says is true. Thus the generalization, more formally is this: For all x, if y said x then x is true.

Horwich follows in Wittgenstein's footsteps by asserting that it is a mistake to suppose that only empirical scientific facts are truth-apt. For Horwich's minimalism this need not be so. Instead, echoing Wittgenstein, he argues that we should avoid over-philosophizing the concept of fact. As a result all we need is the equivalence schema to understand how we use the concept of truth. Thus,

we can reject the notion that there is only one flavor of fact and can, instead, assert that there are

several types of "facts" and that these pose no problem to how we theorize about truth. As

Wittgenstein states quite plainly:

> Consider for example the proceedings that we call "games". I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games, and so on. What is common to them all? Don't say: "There must be something common, or they would not be called 'games' "but look and see whether there is anything common to all. For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to all, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: don't think, but look! (Wittgenstein, PI 66)

In other words, we should not assume that, because these activities are all called games, they must

have some sort of shared essence. Rather, we should instead recognize and appreciate the

similarities and relationships between them. The pertinent point is that when it comes to facts don't

be persuaded by pre-existing prejudices: rather, examine whether facts, like games, display a family

resemblance more than a shared essence.

Horwich's theory of truth is simple and austere. Different types of sentences can be plugged

into the equivalence schema, so all may be "true" and sufficiently generalizable. However, some may

find this increasingly infuriating. Typically, when I look for the "truth" about something, I desire to

know what there is, or what the world is *really* like, or what is *really* real and how it functions. This

is not preserved by Horwich's theory of truth, though he does not see this as a problem. His theory of

truth is self contained and logically sound; the real question facing the opponents of deflationary

theory is whether something is left out.

Certainly, it might *feel* as though something is left out, because if all we can say about truth

is "p" is true if and only if "p", then this may seem incredibly dissatisfying. The reason for the

dissatisfaction likely comes from the history of epistemology. Since the pre-Socratics, philosophers

have yearned for a theory of Truth (with a capital T) that will give us a God's eye view, and a

precise, succinct, exhaustive, definition of what truth is, where it comes from, and how to find it.

Horwich suggests instead that truth is a *primitive* and as such cannot be defined—though this is not

to say that it cannot be clarified or discussed. In Horwich's words:

> For "true" is a primitive term; so the only interesting account that can be given of its meaning is one that identifies which underlying property of the word (i.e. which aspect our use of it) is responsible for its possessing that meaning. In particular, our truth predicate means what it does, according to minimalism, in virtue of our underived commitment to the equivalence schema. (Horwich, 80)

Hence, the right question is not "What is the deflationary theory missing?" but rather, "is it reasonable to assume that truth can be defined precisely, succinctly and exhaustively?" For without the long history of philosophy, and the influence of science in modern thought, we would not have this intuition and deflationism would be much less troubling. It is only when we think about what we have typically wanted from truth that we are bothered. Thus, opponents of deflationism should explain why our prior intuitions about truth are reasonable, and why deflationism must address them.

In sum, Horwich's minimalism is a stripped down theory of truth, one that seeks to avoid the major pitfalls of traditional theories. Deflationism does so by focusing exclusively on the equivalence schema that is implicit in nearly every other theory.

3. Price and a more hospitable place

As we just saw, Horwich argues that the equivalence schema is a necessary part of any theory of truth. I will now turn to the question of sufficiency: Has Horwich provided us with a theory that is sufficient to explain the many ways we use and understand the concept of truth? To say that the only use of a theory of truth is generalization, as Horwich does, risks leaving us with such a barren landscape that there simply isn't enough water in the air to breathe! Even if truth plays this role, it is far from clear that this is its *only* purpose. So what other functions does truth play, and how are we to make sense of them?

When we think about the function of a concept, we typically examine the use of that concept in a particular context. The present analysis will differ from that model, because I will examine not how the concept is used in particular contexts, but how it is a guiding principle of language use itself. Huw Price establishes three such guiding principles, or what he calls "norms":

1. Subjective assertibility (or "Sincerity")

2. Personal warranted assertibility (or Justification)

3. Truth

Subjective assertibility is Price's first norm of language use. By this norm he means that, when someone asserts or claims something, then we take them to actually mean what they are saying. That is, if someone states *x* then they should also believe *x*. Price's second norm of language use is personal warranted assertibility, alluding to this norm a speaker is incorrect to assert that p if she doesn't have *personal grounds* to assert p by her own standard of good reason. So, if one claims something then we expect them to have reasons to claim that thing. If they do not have reasons to claim it, even to themselves, then we have no reason to take them seriously and that person is open to criticism for violating a fundamental norm of language use. For example, if I were to assert that the humidity outside is 70% exactly, and you were to inquire as to why I think that, and I were to reply I have no idea why I think that, then I have violated the norm of personal warranted assertibility; or as Price defines them:

> (Subjective assertibility) A speaker is incorrect to assert that p if she does not believe that p; to assert that p in these circumstances provides prima facie grounds for censure, or disapprobation…. (Personal warranted assertibility) A speaker is incorrect to assert that p if she does not have adequate (personal) grounds for believing that p; to assert that p in these circumstances provides prima facie grounds for censure. (Price, 8-9)

The final norm of truth is the most controversial, the most important and the one that Price is primarily concerned with. A speaker, according to Price, can be in accordance with the first two norms, and yet we might still fault them for not meeting the norm of truth. For even if someone speaks sincerely and with personal warranted assertibility, they can still be faulted if what they say is not true. This is the reason why the third norm, for Price, is so important: the norm of truth points to an objective standard for assessing a speaker's utterances. As Price states:

> The best way to bring the third norm into focus is again to consider its negative or censure form: (Truth) If not-p, then it is incorrect to assert that p; if not-p, there are prima facie grounds for censure of an assertion that p. The important point is that this provides a norm of assertion which we take it that a speaker may fail to meet, even if she does meet the norms of subjective assertibility and (personal) warranted assertibility. We are prepared to

make the judgment that a speaker is incorrect, or mistaken, in this sense, simply on the basis that we are prepared to make a contrary assertion; in advance, in other words, of any judgment that she fails to meet one or other of the two weaker norms. (Price, 11)

For example, if I claim p and you claim -p, then without a norm of truth, without a norm stipulating p and -p cannot be both true, we would simply talk past one another. This is why Price says "truth provides a useful friction". It is because we *act* as though our utterances are true that we engage in debate and discussion even though that does not mean they actually are. According to Price, effective language use requires us to respect this norm, to act as if our utterances are true, regardless of whether they really are true.

Clearly Horwich and Price disagree in their theories of truth, despite both taking a deflationary and pragmatic approach. We have Horwich, on one side, telling us that truth is only useful as a device for *generalization*, and then we have Price claiming that truth is a norm implicit in our use of language and in assertion. Thus, are we able to resolve this disagreement, and graft Price's pragmatism on to Horwich's arid minimalism?

My position is that Horwich and Price are not incommensurable. Horwich has only stated that truth is useful as a device for generalization and I would agree (as everyone should). Price is saying that we already have a norm of truth that is intrinsic within our use of language. These are not mutually exclusive ideas; in fact I find them quite compatible. Horwich has provided us with a characterization of truth in the equivalence schema. Price provides no such characterization and, furthermore, Horwich *and* Price believe truth to be a primitive, meaning that it is not definable in the grand metaphysical way (truth is x). Price doesn't offer a definition of truth; he doesn't have to in order to successfully make the case for his pragmatic approach. Price focuses instead on how truth operates as a norm of language. It is when we confuse the way we act (as *if* there is a truth) with a more elaborate metaphysical claim (that there *is* a truth) that we are then drawn toward traditional theories of truth, such as correspondence. Horwich is making a claim about the function of the concept of truth in our use language. Price is making a claim about the norm of truth in our use of

language. They aren't even talking about the same truth! Thus, these are not incommensurable positions and we may, keeping this distinction in mind, accept both.

But do we actually need Price's addition to Horwich's theory and what does it provide us? Horwich's theory captured a necessary condition for the concept of truth, yet it seems to have trouble describing how debate and argument should take place. Certainly either side can plug their own p or q into the equivalence schema and give it a truth value, but this leaves the disagreement unresolved. With Price the way this disagreement would play out comes into view. He articulates this in a thought experiment:

> We can imagine a community who treat expressions of beliefs in the same way. They express their beliefs-that is, let us say, the kind of behavioral dispositions which we would characterize as beliefs-by means of a speech act we might call the *merely-opinionated assertion* (MOA, for short). These speakers-"Mo'ans," as I called them in another article – criticize each other for insincerity and for lack of coherence, or personal warranted assertibility. But they go no further than this. In particular, they do not treat a disagreement between two speakers as an indication that, necessarily, one speaker or the other mistaken-in violation of some norm. On the contrary, they allow that in such a case it may turn out that both speakers have spoken correctly, by the only two standards the community takes to be operable. Both may be sincere, and both, in their own terms, may have good grounds for their assertion. (Price, 177-178)

Both sides can use the equivalence schema to assign truth values to their particular claims. But by itself, Horwich's minimalism fails to account for our motivation to resolve such disagreement. Thus the norm of truth must be appealed to in order to account for this motivation, exactly as Price states and exactly as the thought experiment concludes. So Horwich's minimalism is necessary but not sufficient for our purposes. It is by taking Horwich and Price together that we move beyond Horwich's minimalism and firmly step into the realm of an ever slightly inflated deflationism. For Horwich, all that is needed in a theory of truth is the equivalence schema and nothing more; I am arguing that this is not sufficient and that the addition of Price is likewise necessary. Note that with Price taken in concert with Horwich, we still have a fairly deflationary theory of truth, one that isn't as minimal as Horwich's but one that is still extremely close to it, in spirit. Significantly, by adding Price to Horwich we are able to address one intuitive source of reservations toward minimalism: that it doesn't fully account for how we use the concept of truth. Horwich's minimalism expands slightly

but substantially with the addition of Price's pragmatic approach. Combining their approaches, as I propose to do here, adds truth's function as a norm of language-use to Horwich's emphasis on the equivalence schema and truth's role as a device for generalization. Without this addition, Horwich's minimalism is too stripped down to show how truth is not just a device but also a norm.

4. A Theory of…or, a Theory about? Reflections on our Motivations

In my first section I discussed our interest in, and the value of, having a theory of truth. There is a large philosophical payoff to having a well defined theory of truth that appeases several fundamental questions. In addition, I noted that as far as our inquiries go, we cannot escape this concept. Finally, I argued that what we want our theory of truth to do is to be able to give an exact definition of true that would allow us to keep using the term true in much the same manner as we already do. That is to say, for example, that if we say the rules that guide *good* scientific analysis are true than we know that those rules, if adhered to, whatever they may be, will produce *good* scientific analysis. Or, in other words, it is *true* that the rules that guide good scientific analysis produce good scientific analysis.

In section two I discussed Horwich's minimalist theory of truth: simple, streamlined and austere. Horwich's minimalism states that the equivalence schema is all we need for a theory of truth. This is because, philosophically speaking, truth's only function is as a device of generalization. In that section I argued that, although Horwich is correct about the necessity of the equivalence schema, his minimalism is unsatisfactory because it cannot address the problems such as Price's MO'Ans. In section three, I introduced Price's pragmatic approach to truth as a norm of language use. I argued that we can combine Price's and Horwich's theories, creating a theory that is still deflationary in spirit, yet avoids some sources of dissatisfaction. The goal of the present section is twofold: First, I will discuss another recently proposed alternative to deflationism. Second, I will use this alternative to shed light on what we expect from a theory of truth.

So far I have focused on deflationary theories of truth at the expense of traditional theories such as the correspondence or coherence theory of truth. I have argued that we can deflate the concept of truth and thereby avoid committing and being distracted by the problems of more elaborate theories. However, just as I have argued that Horwich's minimalism and Price's pragmatic approach can complement each other, so one might suspect a deflationary account can be combined with a more varied theory. This is what Michael Lunch proposes in his book *Truth as One and Many*. Lynch begins by identifying several core "Truisms" about truth. These include:

1. Objectivity: The belief that p is true if, and only if, with respect to the belief that p, things are as they are believed to be.

2. Norm of Belief: It is prima facie correct to believe that p if and only if the proposition that p is true.

3. End of Inquiry: Other things being equal, true beliefs are a worthy goal of inquiry.

(Lynch, pg 8,10,12)

These are Lynch's *core* truisms because he uses them to define a theory of truth. He states:

> A theory counts as a theory of *truth* only if it incorporates the core truisms about truth….To incorporate a truism into a theory is to either list it among the principles of the theory or endorse a principle that entails it….Hence theoretical accounts of truth, in addition to incorporated the core truisms, must *explain them* or, in the case of those that they do not incorporate, *explain them away*. (Lynch, 17)

Thus, according to Lynch, a theory of truth must incorporate the core truisms and either explain them or explain them away.

Lynch claims that truth is both "one" and "many": on the one hand, different propositions, with different content, can be true in the same general sense; on the other hand, different propositions, depending on their specific content, can be true in different specific senses. To illustrate, consider a proposition such as "I have a roommate named Tony." Because the content of this proposition concerns an everyday, medium-sized object—here, Tony—something like the correspondence theory best explains, according to Lynch, the truth of this proposition. This

proposition is true because it corresponds, in some sense, to the facts. But, more generally, the

proposition is true because, in this context, correspondence plays what Lynch calls "the truth-role."

In other words, correspondence is the property, in this context, that makes propositions about

medium-sized objects true. As Lynch puts it:

> A proposition is true just when it has a property that plays the truth-role…A property plays
> the truth-role when it has the truish features specified by the truisms. (Lynch, 73)

Every true proposition must satisfy the core truisms—and perhaps others depending on the context.

Let's try to make sense of this with an example. According to Lynch the proposition "It is

raining outside" may have the property of corresponding to reality: I can look out my window and see

that it is raining outside. The property of corresponding to reality satisfies the core truisms. The

correspondence property treats truth as objective, as a norm of belief, and as a worthy goal of

inquiry. "It is raining outside" is thus a true proposition. However, not all true propositions are true

specifically in virtue of correspondence. Some propositions, depending on their context may be true

in virtue of a different property. Propositions with moral content, Lynch argues, are true specifically

in virtue of being "super-coherent." However, they are true in general for the same reason as the

proposition "it is raining outside": they manifest a specific truth property that satisfies the core

truisms. Hence, truth is *one* because a true proposition must have a property that plays the truth-

role, and yet truth is *many*, because there are many different properties that can fulfill the truth-

role.

So how does Lynch's theory of truth compare with the combination of Horwich and Price that

I am recommending? For Horwich, truth only serves as a device for generalization. According to

Horwich, to assert that a proposition is true is simply to assert that proposition: "p" is true iff p. As a

result, it is quite likely that Lynch and Horwich are simply talking past each another with regard to

what they demand from a theory of truth. Having said that, how can Horwich and Price explain (or

explain away) the core truisms Lynch identifies?

A first attempt would be to explain these core truisms using the theory of truth I am proposing. However, because I am proposing a version of deflationism, this avenue is not open. Given my deflationary perspective, it is simply unnecessary to say that p is true *because* of some other property, that p's truth needs to be explained by a truth-maker, or that an adequate theory of truth must address these questions. For this reason, a more promising deflationary strategy is to explain away—in a sense I'll describe below—Lynch's core truisms.

Adding Price to Horwich allows us to see two ways that Lynch's core truisms could be incorporated into a deflationary theory of truth. First, Lynch's truisms could be viewed as norms of language-use, just as Price argues that truth is such a norm. Second, Lynch's truisms could be absorbed into Price's norm of truth, by suggesting that the norm of truth must actually be *composed* of these truisms. I will suggest a third strategy that, without exactly explaining away these truisms, allows us to minimize their importance for the current discussion. The distinction I wish to draw, then, is between a theory *of* truth and a theory *about* truth. I will concede to Lynch that my proposal is not a theory of truth; it is, however, a perfectly adequate theory about truth. [3]   Let me explain. If one is a deflationist, then a theory of truth, by virtue of being a theory *of truth*, should be rather vacuous. On deflationary grounds, there simply isn't much to say about the property of truth. Hence, I *do not want* a theory of truth. Instead, I want a theory *about* truth, a theory that explains how we use this concept, how it plays a distinctive function in our cognitive lives, and how we came to expect the more elaborate accounts furnished by traditional theories *of* truth. Combining Horwich and Price gives us a compelling theory about truth: Price explains how truth operates as a norm of language-use, while Horwich demonstrates how little really needs to be said to explain truth's function. Together, they undermine the assumption that anything more is necessary. Nowhere in my proposal

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[3] For example, the Theory of Infectious Disease seeks to explain, articulate and describe several processes related to infectious diseases. It explains what causes them, by what mechanisms the causes cause them, why the diseases can be successfully lethal and thing of that nature. A theory of truth would hope to be able to explain in similar sufficient detail, however with the deflationism that I am arguing for truth is a primitive, thus I cannot answer several of the important questions that one would expect a theory *of* to answer. This does not mean that the concept cannot be sufficiently analyzed, inspected, dissected and discussed; hence the theory being argued for here, if it is to be called a theory should rightly be called a theory about truth.

do I require Lynch's core truisms or require that our inquiry produce a theory *of* truth. But my proposal *is* a theory *about* truth, one that views a theory *of* truth as a futile project, and one that still aims to clarify the concept of truth albeit without providing a theory of it.

In drawing this distinction I must return to the motives we have for theorizing about truth. In Section 1 I suggested we aim for a theory that preserves the intuition that truth is a fundamental and essential part of our cognitive lives, whether we're pursuing science, graphic design, or the good life. We can now see that this isn't quite right: by taking a deflationary approach, our goal is not to give a theory *of* truth—according to deflationists, truth is a primitive, after all—but to give a theory *about* truth that allows us, in good conscience, to continue using this concept largely as we have. In other words, there is nothing *in our account of truth* to prevent us from speaking about true scientific result, the true principles of graphic design, or truly the best way to live one's life. It is not that we need a theoretical framework to allow us to continue using truth as we do; it is that we need to realize that our continued use of this concept is quite independent of our theorizing, but our theorizing is not independent of its use. A similar point is implicit in Price's approach. We simply need not—and cannot—justify our use of truth once we realize its fundamental role as a norm of language use.

So far I have argued for a form of deflationism that combines a minimalist theory of truth with a pragmatic account of truth's normative role in language use. To review, I agree with Horwich that the addition of 'is true' to a proposition does no philosophical work for us; doing so merely reasserts the original proposition. However, Horwich's minimalism cannot account for the possibility of Price's Merely Opinionated Assertions. It thus requires recognition that truth also operates as a norm. Hence, I have argued that Horwich minimalism is adequate only until it comes time for proper argument and debate, and then Price's approach must be included to describe and explain how it is we view arguments as more than just a battle of merely opinionated assertions.

This is why the proposed theory of truth is not a theory *of* truth, but rather a theory *about* truth. A theory about truth does elucidate and discuss the external features and function of the

concept of truth. But it differs substantially from a theory of truth because a theory of truth will have to explain the concept's inner workings. This was Lynch's major challenge; if the proposed theory of truth cannot explain or explain away the core truisms then it isn't a theory *of* truth properly speaking. But this is exactly my minimalist point. A theory *of* truth cannot be provided because the concept of truth itself is vacuous, and in the Wittgensteinian tradition we explain the concept by attending to how we use it. Following Wittgenstein, we shouldn't be so concerned when we achieve what our project set out to do in the first place. From the outset we examined our language in order to shed light on the concept of truth and, upon examining the language; we discovered that truth simply does not contain the sort of epistemic or metaphysical weight many have assumed[4]. In a Wittgensteinian spirit, Horwich and Price help us see how to dissolve many of the traditional problems surrounding the concept of truth.

5. Case study: Ethical Vegetarianism

Now that the theory of truth has been generally outlined let's apply the deflationary theory to the realm of ethical discourse and, specifically, to arguments for vegetarianism. By applying it I will show that, first, there are no losses in particular ethical issues if the deflationary theory is adopted and, second, the ethical issue can still be argued for while the epistemology that supports it does not block ethical inquiry at the outset. For example, if one adopts a correspondence theory of truth then it becomes hard to have a discourse on ethical positions: one would be forced to explain how ethical claims correspond. Thus, before ethical inquiry has begun the theory of truth is blocking avenues of ethical inquiry. Horwich's minimalism allows for any type of fact to be validated and applied to the equivalence schema. As such, there is nothing stopping a deflationist, logically speaking, from applying ethical or aesthetic facts as well as facts about what there is. However, the equivalence schema doesn't provide a truth maker; it only serves to assert the atomic in a proposition again. For example:

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[4] Although truth does, as Horwich articulates, allow for generalization in language. For a more detailed discussion of this generalization function see section 2.

P. It is more ethical to refrain from eating sentient beings than to eat sentient beings

EQ.   "p" is true $\leftrightarrow$ p

Thus we see how the deflationary theory of truth can generate true propositions even for normative issues. How might one who disagrees with this respond? One will simply object and say that it is not more ethical to eat non-sentient beings than to eat sentient beings. So Price must be utilized here; both sides satisfy Price's first two norms of language use: they are both sincere, and have personal justification for their claims. Furthermore, both sides accept the norm of truth that Price argues for; hence both sides believe that the issue may be resolved, and for lack of better words, there is a truth to the matter.

Several types of facts can be used in order to justify the vegetarian claim: physiological, ecological or neurological; all sorts of facts could be used to make the vegetarian point, and truth need not enter into the conversation. The philosophical justification will reside solely in the propositions. But without Price the disagreement could not be resolved because both parties would only be able to express merely opinionated assertions. Without deflationism truth would function in a misleading and unproductive way, leading both parties to question the definition and function of vague terms such as "correspondence". Thus the argument would suffer the epistemic pitfalls of the theory of truth that supports it; which could be exceptionally challenging for ethical issues.

The opponent to the vegetarian argument will want to cite several types of facts as well. They may well cite subjective facts to make their argument.[5] They may state that while all of the vegetarian facts are good; meat just simply provides a better aesthetic experience for them. This isn't worrisome, for they may have their subjective facts, as odd as that sounds, and the vegetarian may have their facts as well.. However, the argument isn't an epistemic argument; it is an ethical one. As such, facts must be judged as being more relevant than others. But both will be forced to make a value judgment regarding the relevancy of each. For example, the carnivore may agree with the

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[5] See Horwich, Paul. Truth-Meaning-Reality. New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2010 chapters 1 & 3

vegetarian on the ethical issue but argue that it is impractical. In either case, or whatever the argument, both sides will need a theory of truth, one that preferably does not have any of the substantial failings that have plagued traditional theories of truth. Thus, it would be wise for each party to adopt a deflationary theory of truth because the deflationism does not limit the discourse at the outset and in doing so each side will need to be able to make an argument instead of just asserting their opinions. Thus, Price's theory of norms must enter into the conversation as well so that criteria exist that define when a side is merely asserting an opinion, and the conversation will begin. So the deflationary theory of truth I have argued for provides a stronger basis for argument and locution, while avoiding much of the problems that have plagued other theories.

6. Where we have come:

So far I have argued for a deflationary theory of truth that combines Horwich's minimalist theory and Price's pragmatic theory of language use. With Horwich's minimalism, due its austerity, problems such as those seen with the correspondence theory are averted. With only the equivalence schema, Horwich deflates the concept of truth to only a device for generalization in language; although it was unclear how Horwich's minimalism would function in argument. The attractions of more traditional theories of truth were that they defined a quality as a truth-maker. The truth-maker allows for the theory to state a truth-apt proposition as true if and only if the truth-maker was satisfied. For example, the correspondence theory of truth would be able to state "snow is white" is true if and only if "snow is white" corresponds to the truth-maker: that being "nature", "reality", or "the way things are in and of themselves". However for Horwich, truth is a primitive and provides only a device for generalization in language and nothing more, in essence, its meaning is its use. Thus Horwich's minimalist theory of truth yields a stronger epistemic framework.

Some of the problems that arise from Horwich's theory of truth are resolved with the addition of Price's theory of norms in language. Price identifies three norms in language; the most important for

Horwich is the third, the norm of truth. The norm of truth is a habitual part of language use that behaves as a default guideline for engagement between speakers. Simply put, the norm is that when one person asserts p and another asserts –p, one person must be wrong. The norm of truth allows us to resolve the disagreement by assuming that there must be a truth to the matter that both p and –p cannot be true. But there need not be a truth to be found and yet we will still behave in this matter. Hence, as Price states truth is a "convenient friction" in language because it allows two disagreeing interlocutors to move past mere assertion and enter into argument. Thus, when Horwich's minimalism is taken together with Price's theory of norms a theory of truth that is able to escape the troubles of traditional theories of truth, and yet one that addresses concerns one may have with Horwich's minimalism.

With the theory at hand, I used Lynch's views on a functionalist theory of truth as a razor that would allow a re-evaluation of the theory I presented and the motivations for it. Lynch presents a functionalistic theory of truth where the truth of a proposition is dependent on the domain that proposition resides in. In addition to presenting a functionalistic theory, he also provides a definition for a theory of truth, that is, a theory of truth is only a theory of truth if and only if it encompasses the three core truisms that he describes. The theory of truth that I have argued for does not encompass the three truisms, and does not explain them away either. Instead, the deflationism that is at the core of this theory minimizes the truisms importance. To encompass either of the truisms would be to no longer have a deflationary theory of truth. Hence I argued that the theory I have articulated is not a theory of truth rather it is a theory about truth. Thus truth is a primitive; to define it would be to give a theory of truth instead of a theory about truth.

Lastly I articulated how this theory would operate in argument, specifically one concerning ethics. For an actual argument, both sides may apply facts as they see fit to support their side of the disagreement. Independent of who actually provides the stronger case the theory of truth I have argued for will be at work in the discussion. Each must have an epistemological view that frames their reasoning. If they decide to choose the correspondence theory of truth then their reasoning will

face considerable difficulty discussing ethical claims. Hence, each side should want to utilize the theory of truth I have articulated because it allows them to make effective arguments and does not have the traditional failings of other theories of truth. Horwich's minimalism deflates the concept of truth such that the failings of traditional theories of truth are averted and Price's theory of norms allows for the deflationist to move past assertion and into argument. Thus the theory of truth I have presented does not limit the conversation in any way: like Horwich's minimalism or the correspondence theory of truth do.

7. Where we are able to go:

To conclude, I would like to survey the large expanse of the argument at hand. I have argued that this deflationary theory of truth provides a substantial benefit over Horwich's minimalism. However, even with modifications, how is the vegetarian argument supposed to conclude? In section 5 I showed that if both sides are deflationist, and both are arguing contradictory claims then both would be wise to accept the truth as a norm of language Price has provided because it would at once resolve the deflationist problem of making sense of opinionated assertions and allows for the discourse to begin. But Price is not a cure-all, even if the conversation is able to begin, and the norm of truth can provide a "useful friction", that does not mean that both sides will be able to properly weigh their claims against one another. The point being that the modifications I have presented are useful and appropriate in a small context of argument. One would be forced, if they would like to make use of this theory of truth, to accept a deflationary framework, a legitimation of the philosophy of language use that Price provides, and consequently a lack of a theory of meaning; the latter being the most troubling to me. The lack of a theory of meaning cuts exactly to the heart of the issue at hand: the ethical vegetarian argument that was able to begin, (because of a useful friction at work) but it is not clear how it would resolve. For that matter, it is unclear even how to assess the claims against one another as valid or invalid in the context of the discussion. In order to be able to do so, both parties must make a judgment of what justifies knowledge in the discussion. The deflationist point, by deflating the concept of truth to a primitive, and by reducing its meaning to use, has also,

in effect, deflated the concept of justification. Thus it is unclear how the conversation between the deflationists in section 5 *could* be resolve even if it took place. Hence, Price only provides a description of language and mechanisms in it, that allow for a description of how an argument is able to deal with opinionated assertions.

In addition to this, I am skeptical of the legitimization of language that Price makes and for that matter, the way that he arrives at his philosophy. The philosopher that is most appropriately in opposition to Price is Richard Rorty. In Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* he argues that traditional Cartesian epistemology performs two functions for philosophy in the era of empirical knowledge. The double move that Rorty outlines is that Cartesian epistemology, and for that matter, Cartesian skepticism always allows the philosopher a way to raise doubt against any empirical claim; doubt which by design cannot be relieved through empirical claims. Thus, the skepticism allows a domain for philosophical reflection and serves to legitimate philosophical reflection regardless if the reflection itself is helpful or warranted. In addition to the negative claim, Rorty explains in "Wittgenstein and the Linguistic Turn" that the 20th century linguistic turn is merely a shift in the epistemological domain from Cartesian skepticism to philosophy of language. But that the essential double move that Cartesian skepticism achieves is still preserved. Thus, in Rorty's view, the linguistic turn is merely another way to legitimate philosophical analysis. The linguistic turn, however, is not the only point of contact between Rorty and Price; in their exchange on "Truth as a Convenient Friction" Rorty expresses skepticism about the ideality of the thought experiment that Price employs in order to derive his norm of truth and the concept of Merely Opinionated Assertions. In one sense, Price is playing Rorty's game more effectively than Rorty himself: Price is not attempting to provide analytic argument and justification for his claims. Rather, Price is telling a story that can be taken as true, whatever that is supposed to mean, or one that is adopted for its pragmatic qualities. It is in that sense that Price can be seen as outperforming Rorty at his own game.

Rorty has another avenue of criticism against Price, which is a Rortian point against the whole of philosophy. For Rorty, the thought experiments that Price utilize in order to derive the concepts of a norm of truth and merely opinionated assertions fail to articulate how the norm of truth and MO'Ans will function in an actual act of language. The problem is one of ideality in the thought experiment; it is essentially this: the concepts were derived in a theoretical space where all circumstances are known and accounted for. But in actual language this is not the case, hence the worth of Price's concepts are ultimately unknown in a real act of language. This is a purely meta-philosophical critique. As such, Price describes and responds that the norms of language are merely guidelines or defaults in our language. However, it is this move that leads me to my skepticism for the current enterprise. By forcing the norms to be a default or guideline to knowledge the philosophical worth is weakened. The theory of truth I have articulated has shifted some of the philosophical work that was performed by truth makers to Price's philosophy of language use. As such, the context in which the theory of truth is valid becomes limited. Thus, the theory of truth is still legitimate, it still stands austere and deflationary, but it must be taken in modesty and reservation. Hence, if one is a deflationist then the theory of truth I have presented here will be of use, but the deflationist must be mindful of what it does not address as well as the bounds upon which it is valid. Or in other words one must recognize the worth of their epistemology. As Michael Williams states:

> As a rule, when people's beliefs differ profoundly, there is no guarantee that there will be neutral epistemic principles adequate for determining who is right and who is wrong....The issues that divide them most seriously are those that common knowledge does not easily resolve....Resolving deep differences of opinion depends on ingenuity and luck: epistemology cannot offer guarantees. (Williams, 111)

Epistemology provides no guarantees that our disagreements are able to be settled. However, epistemology is able to provide us with conceptual clarification of what is at stake so we may move past the confusions that prevent resolution; chief among these, are the confusions surrounding fundamental concepts such as truth.

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