

1 A Guide to the Issues

The main business of this essay is to explore the correspondence theory of truth, some of the charges brought against it, and a prominent alternative. If all goes as planned, the upshot will be to reinforce and reconfirm the theory's plausibility. Roughly, the correspondence theory is the view that, when something (say, a proposition) is true, it is true owing to a state of the world. When it is false, that is because the world, or at least the relevant slice of it, is not the way that the proposition expresses it to be. Here is a quasi-official statement of the view:

The truth of a proposition is constituted by a state of the world such that, were the proposition stated, it would state the world to be that way.

Only "quasi" to avoid the impression, first, that this is all there is to say about the subject, and, second, that my explication and defense will be only of this formulation. I shall also try to flesh out some details and defend a broad spectrum of alternative formulations that make use of notions absent (at least explicitly) from my statement of it. The "official" part has to do with the fact that this statement will be enough to go on for much of the discussion to follow, will be repeated when I need to refer back to a plausible summary statement, and is, I believe, a defensible way to state the point.

The view as sketched thus far may seem to be the merest platitude, but discussion of issues raised by the theory has gone on for centuries, and in at least the last century or so it has been so overlaid with claims and counter-claims, quarrels, discursions into minutiae, and the like that we are nowadays confronted with a massive tangle of related inquiries. In the pages to follow, I will address those that seem most urgent or salient, setting aside, with regret, some that drift too far from the focal issues.

It is sometimes remarked that the correspondence theory is the plain man's view. That is scarcely a decisive argument in its favor. Its apparent

commonsensicalness is acknowledged by some of the theory's severest critics. But even if we reject correspondence for one of its competitors, it is our most natural way into the study of truth, and truth is worth the probing. Poetic sentiments and clichés aside, the pursuit of truth is crucial to our ends, whatever our ends.

Perhaps the end of deliberation is action. But action without the ability to size up one's situation isn't of much use to the agent. Here truth is much more valuable than any hitherto contemplated alternatives. Critics may cavil at that. The correspondentist, so the tale goes, claims that Maud succeeds in fetching her umbrella from the rack in part because she believes that her umbrella is in the rack *and that belief is true*. To this the critic responds that the explanation begs the question. Maud succeeds because she believes that her umbrella is in the rack *and her umbrella is in the rack*. Invoking *truth* to bring off the success is superfluous. However, this objection neglects an important point. We may grasp it by asking why the combination

(i) Maud believes that p and p

should account any more for Maud's success than the combination

(ii) Maud believes that p and not- p .

Some may be perplexed at why we so much as raise such a question—the answer seems so clear. But try stating the reason for its obviousness without using truth or a barely disguised substitute. There is a further explanation for (i) to account for its preference, an explanation absent in the latter case: in the former case *the belief is true*. If we were barred from adding that further bit to finish off, to explain, the effectiveness of (i), there would be a mystery about why it is integral to Maud's success. On the other hand, (i) is not a further explanation of Maud's belief's being true. Truth, here, is an explanatory terminus in a way that (i) needn't be. Of course, conversationally (i) is a customary end point: that is, those who understand what (i) says will normally be satisfied with it as an explanation of Maud's cognitive achievement. But, per the explanation in this paragraph, this is because the belief's truth is taken as implicit in (i)'s second conjunct.

The critic's mistake, once pointed out, may seem too obvious to belabor. Nevertheless, we shall encounter it more than once again in subsequent discussion. It is not the truth predicate, or the mention of truth, but the fact that p is true, whether we mention it or even have a truth predicate in our

language, that does the work. It is what guides our understanding of (i), on which the critic relies, and thus it is also what guides our assent to his reformulation of our case.

This may not be the only reason that truth is important, but it is reason enough. We must act, plan, avert, prepare, understand, etc. in a largely indifferent environment—one that hasn't been laid out by benign forces specifically for our sustenance or pleasure. Truth has been of inestimable value in making such action effective. Indeed, despite the fact that we are, and may forever be, largely helpless vis-à-vis the greater world in which we must fend as best we can, truth has made our action effective enough that we are able to engage in purely theoretical enterprises (including this one) aimed at better understanding that world well beyond any immediate practical value it may have for mating, clothing, feeding, or defense. Thus, we become interested in even more truth—truth not tied to what is popularly understood as practical activity.

That relation to action has been for many the chief reason for studying truth, but it is not the end of the story. Given the fact that we find ourselves in a largely alien environment, it is not so much *action* as (mental) *interaction* that may be found the most intriguing. Briefly, we are cognitively connected and disconnected in various complex ways to our surroundings. Some of the connections involve gathering information, and for them perception and ratiocination loom large. Others involve our abilities to think and talk about our cosmic environment, and among the central notions here are reference, attribution, and truth. Belief and related attitudes are crucial to both the input and output sides of our interaction. Thus, truth is a significant part of a larger puzzle about humanity's ability to cope in the global situation in which it finds itself. I believe this nest of issues is the more arresting of the two for those of a philosophical cast of mind.

Some may believe that this way of putting the point already assumes the answer to the most important question we shall be studying, since one major competitor of correspondence is the view that the route through truth doesn't disclose anything about a connection to external reality. But even if things don't pan out for correspondence, this strikes me as a fair way to start. Our inquiry must begin somewhere, and I believe this is as good a description as any of a legitimate first stab. Even those who believe that they have discovered that truth has been a false lead in this regard have done so by first testing such a path and finding it wanting.

The correspondence theory is a natural ally of this view of truth. It is not its only ally by any means: as we will see, other substantive theories can be fitted to this task. But there is a kind of alliance between correspondence and sizing up our situation that blends nicely with this brief capsule of the human condition.

Considerations of this stripe demonstrate the subject's centrality and importance. They are my excuse for giving this much-dissected topic yet another airing.

1.1 A Selection of Theories

Let me get down to business by first mapping the neighborhood in which the correspondence theory resides. That theory is but one, albeit the most common, of a number of what may be called "theories of truth" that have graced the philosophical literature, particularly in the past century. To avoid distracting sub-plots, I begin with a simplified overview. Qualifications can be interjected as needed.

In the main, three traditional theories of truth have contended for supremacy. The most popular is the correspondence theory.¹ We already have a brief statement of it. Its import is that the truth of a proposition consists in its satisfying a relation (correspondence?) to a state of the world, the latter often identified as a "fact." Occasionally discussants add that, with few exceptions, the reality that constitutes truth (= the truthmaker) be mind- or cognition-independent. As shown presently, as a requirement this is too strong. I shall take it as sufficient for the theory that nothing in its conception of truth imposes any cognitive constraints. Also, in mentioning states of the world, I will leave it open whether all those states are empirical. For example, one possibility is that in addition to the empirical facts there are (mind-independent or conventional) mathematical and/or moral facts that serve as truthmakers for their respective propositions. Of course, as I explain in the next chapter, acknowledging distinctive mathematical or moral facts is not required by the theory. Not only might a correspondentist deny that these utterances were either true or false, but if one accepted

1. Where there is a threat of confusion between the theory and the relation, I use 'Correspondence' to designate the theory (similarly for 'Coherence' and 'coherence'). Otherwise, where it is less cumbersome and context eliminates threat of confusion, I use 'correspondence' to designate the theory.

that they were, the theory doesn't demand a set of facts of just type X for each kind X of truth evaluable propositions. However, we should be mindful that the possibility of such facts is not ruled out just by the articles of correspondence. (Various other implications of correspondence are explored in the next section.)

Next is the **coherence theory**. Its distinctive truth bearers are seldom purely abstract propositions; it takes beliefs as canonical.² These may be actual beliefs, however those are counted, or beliefs that would be held under more or less idealized conditions. A coherence theorist maintains that truth consists in the coherence among a certain body of beliefs. With few exceptions, coherence nowadays amounts to a certain evidential relation,³ ranging from mutual entailment between all the beliefs in the system to their mere consistency. For purposes of the present discussion, let me say simply that *the corpus of beliefs* (or, as some prefer, *the theory*) requires only that its constituent beliefs be mutually supporting. This demands more than mere consistency but less than entailment. The usual types of support will be, in a wide sense, inductive and/or explanatory. Nevertheless, entailment may figure as a non-exclusive kind of support, and consistency may be regarded as a necessary condition for inclusion. There is much room for confusion here because some coherentists regard inclusion in a body of mutually supporting beliefs merely as a *criterion* of truth. This is a coherence theory of justification rather than truth. But others (of interest to us here because they clash with correspondentists) take it as *constituting* the truth of individual beliefs. Mutual support, then, is a truthmaker for coherentists.

Finally, we come to **pragmatism**. In its simplest form, pragmatism holds that a belief's or a proposition's truth is constituted by its "working" or "usefulness," where such notions are construed in an appropriately epistemic sense. Working is not a matter of general agreeableness but a matter of satisfying expectations of future experiences raised by the belief in question. It points to *success* in anticipating the future, of an appropriately cognitive

2. Versions whose bearers are a broader selection of propositions (or sentences) encounter difficulties over which bearers to include and how to construe a comprehensive set of them. (For some details, see chapter IV of *Vision* 1988.) Here I limit consideration only to versions current sympathizers have found most defensible.

3. There are some notable exceptions—e.g., F. H. Bradley. But Bradley's identification of truth with reality (1914, 110) may also class him as an identity theorist rather than a coherentist as he is commonly interpreted. (Cf. Baldwin 1991.)

sort, as the truthmaker. As one proceeds through the world, true beliefs do not go unsatisfied. However, a spate of quite different views have been classified as pragmatist. For example, that truth is what we will come to believe at the end of inquiry, or when we achieve an ideal epistemic state, or that it is what we are warranted, or ideally warranted, in asserting, have been ranked as pragmatic theories of truth. So too has the disparaging notion that truth is nothing more than what we are (or take ourselves to be) entitled to believe at whatever happens to be the current stage of our understanding. Indeed, a motley assortment of recent thinkers call themselves pragmatists, and implicate truth in this, only because their doctrines are more practical, naturalistic, or concrete than what they believe to be the current gold standard in philosophy. But it seems that the vast majority of them are not offering us truthmakers; rather, they disdain the search for them in favor of other endeavors. In fact, very few of the thinkers classed as pragmatists have sought to understand truth in the manner of a correspondentist or a coherentist. The closest I have encountered to a straightforward statement of a constitutive version of pragmatism is a remark by F. C. S. Schiller that “social usefulness is the ultimate determinant of ‘truth’” (1912, 60), and even this may have been, by the author’s own lights, an enthusiastic overstatement. The other occupations in which pragmatic discussions of truth seem engaged include replacing our current notion with a better one (say, warranted assertibility), offering *criteria* for recognizing truths, and searching for only particular species of truth, or some combination of these. The truth concepts pragmatists put forward have been attempts at measured reform rather than efforts to describe faithfully the range of our current notion. Nevertheless, pragmatism has been considered one of the three major substantive theories of truth since the early years of the twentieth century .

Coherentism and pragmatism, to the extent that they make proposals about the constitution of truth, can be considered “epistemologized” or “epistemic” theories of truth, since they identify the truth of a bearer with something like our grounds for accepting it or our ability to apprehend it. I shall explore this connection in greater detail in the next chapter, but the typical choice of belief as the focal truth bearer is an important step in this direction. Also, the verificationist view that the truth of a bearer is the method of its verification (if anyone ever held this view) would be an epistemic theory of truth. Occasionally epistemic theories simply begin by

identifying truth with knowledge. Whether this is a deliberate departure from an ordinary concept or an oversight, the result is an epistemologized version of truth.⁴

Past this point there are complications galore. For one thing, not everyone accepts this roster of options. For some, pragmatism is absorbed into coherence. For yet others, in which those two views are distinguished, some of what I have classified as pragmatist has been deemed coherentist. For example, this has been held for versions that first identify truth with warranted assertibility and continue to give a coherentist account of warrant. Then there is the possibility of a mixture of views. For example, one may hold that correspondence works well for certain areas of truth but that, say, coherence works best for others. I shall follow an emerging practice in calling a view that mixes the various theories above, and some views yet to be mentioned, **pluralism**. All instances of that hybrid with which I am familiar hold that correspondence correctly captures truth for some discourses—say, for contingent, empirical propositions—but doesn't suit other subject matters.

In addition, we should consider various accounts which I believe can be regarded as variations on a correspondence theme. Adherents of such views purport to be robustly realist and non-epistemic about truth, but regard themselves as stopping short of correspondence for one reason or another. For example, some don't consider their views correspondentist because they do not believe that brief formulas, such as the one I have displayed, are (or can be) developed sufficiently to count as a theory, or because they believe that their theory can be adequately summarized without subscribing to what they take to be the distinctive and controversial elements of a correspondence theory (e.g., corresponding, facts). Yet others may be wary of the title because they think the world contains too few actual facts for most true propositions to correspond to, so that most of what count as truths link up only with ersatz facts. This makes the correspondence relation, at best, indirect in most cases. The view may be held because one thinks that the only worldly states of affairs that could constitute truth involve the particles and laws of an ideal physics, and few of our true utterances are about those. In addition, depending on one's view

4. Bradley (1914) is an exception: after identifying truth with knowledge, he identifies both with reality.

of propositions, it has been held that propositions are not distinct from facts, or from reality in some grander sense. Such views have been called **identity theories**. (See, e.g., Hornsby 1997.) They cut a broad swathe, some assimilating propositions to extra-propositional reality and others assimilating extra-propositional reality to truth bearers. There are also questions about what to do when one supports a view of truth as an explicit reform, not as an account of our current notion but as an improvement on it. As I noted earlier, some thinkers who call their theories pragmatic are in this line of business rather than the traditional one. And there are some newcomers on the scene. For example, although the view is difficult to distinguish from pluralism, at least one recent entry (Lynch 2001b) regards truth as a higher-order, more abstract, *functional* property that may be realized by any, or some combination, of the views I have mentioned. Thus, were we to focus our gaze more sharply, we would discover a very cluttered, partly disorganized landscape.

However, the picture is far from complete. Another group of thinkers accept a cluster of theories that reject all those preceding. These **deflationists** hold that an examination of the concept truth and/or the predicate 'is true' shows that truth has no nature, and, therefore, traditional metaphysical inquiries about truth are pointless or worse. Using $\langle . . . \rangle$ to abbreviate 'the proposition that' and 'iff' to abbreviate 'if and only if' (that is, biconditionality), deflationary writers may employ the schema

(R) $\langle p \rangle$ is true iff p ,

or, if one prefers sentences as truth bearers,

(D) 'S' is true (in L) iff p

taken by them to show that any instance which can be stated with a truth predicate is equivalent to one that can be stated without it. I shall freely refer to both schemata, and their instances, as *equivalences*. (In (D), the right-hand side of the biconditional is intended as a translation into a metalanguage of the object-language (= L) sentence, whose name—or, more precisely, structural description—appears on the left-hand side. In target cases the object language is usually included in the metalanguage, so that the quoted translation of the metalanguage sentence can serve as a structural description of something in the object language. Thus, for an appropriate L, the following is an instance of (D):

'Coal is black' is true (in L) iff coal is black.

The general idea is that the right-hand side achieves the left-hand result more parsimoniously simply by “disquoting” the sentence described on the left-hand side—hence the moniker ‘disquotationalism’—and placing it in the metalanguage.)

The equivalence of the bearer of which ‘is true’ is predicated with one just like it, but without that predicate, is taken to show that ‘is true’ is redundant or superfluous, or that truth is not a property. Certain deflationists, *soi-disant* **minimalists**, concede that truth is a property but go on to qualify this by claiming that it has no nature (viz., no truth conditions of its own). All deflationists agree that there is no deep philosophical problem about truth and/or that truth hasn’t metaphysical implications. We may also include under the deflationary banner a variety called **prosententialism** in which the phrase ‘that is true’ is taken as canonical but is rendered as a pro-form, likened to a pronoun, in which we should not recognize separately meaningful words—better to write it as ‘that-is-true’—but rather should see it as an unstructured demonstrative or indexical. Other uses of ‘true’ can then be modeled on this basic form. The result is that, once the analysis is complete, ‘is true’ isn’t even a predicate expression; this cuts off any prospect that it expresses a property.⁵

However, some who place such equivalences at the center of their theory of truth are not deflationists. They may be correspondence theorists, or lean in that direction. At any rate, these dissenters generally find something more in the formulas, and they invariably regard themselves as realists about the concept and property truth. They construe the right-hand side as presenting more than merely a proposition that happens to be equivalent to the left-hand side. (R) and (D) themselves are mute on these differences: much depends on what one sees implicit in them, a theme to which I shall return in chapters 5 and 6.

For the deflationists, traditional truth theories—what we may now call *inflationary* theories, and what are also called *substantive* theories—are misguided. According to deflationists, each of the rejected theories makes metaphysical, or at least epistemological, sense out of a notion whose total explanation does not warrant raising any such issues.

To round off our survey, we must add a view I shall call, following Scott Soames, **nihilism**. The rough idea here is that no theory of truth is possible.

5. Some redundancy theorists, including Ayer (1946, 1963) and Stoutland (1999), also hold that ‘true’ isn’t, or doesn’t function as, a predicate.

One reason given is that truth is too fundamental to our thought to be understood in any other terms. These authors hold that it is futile to attempt even an informal account that would allow limited and thus potentially benign forms of circularity. We must recur to truth to explicate a host of other rather basic notions, including perhaps propositionality, belief, meaning, and assertion. But this only exposes truth's fundamental character: it cannot in turn be explained in terms of these or other notions. This outlook is frequently confused with deflationism because both reject inflationary theories *en masse*. But there is a vast gulf between the two views. The deflationist believes that we can achieve an account of truth, although it is more austere than inflationary ones and doesn't involve certain sorts of familiar metaphysical commitment. The nihilist may (but need not) allow that we can say some things about truth. But the nihilist will deny that anything we say can add up to an account of the concept or property. Moreover, nothing in nihilism prohibits truth from being deeply metaphysically implicated. It is simply that the nihilist doesn't claim that this can be captured in an account of truth, since there can be no such account.⁶ Occasionally nihilists may phrase this as truth being too basic to be understood in more primitive terms, and this is sometimes taken as tantamount to stating that there can be no reductive analysis of truth. Since some prominent deflationists (e.g., Horwich) also see their opposition to inflationary theories as stemming from the irreducibility of truth, this is another reason why the differences between deflationism and nihilism may be missed. But we must bear in mind that the deflationist believes that there can be an adequate account of truth, while the nihilist does not. Some nihilists, including Davidson (1996), express their opposition to deflationism, along with other truth theories, quite explicitly.

Figure 1.1, the customary "oil refinery" flowchart, highlights the major distinctions.

In addition to this thick stew of views, there have been many, and occasionally very broad, differences between theories falling under any single rubric. A more detailed map would contain further qualifications. However, I shall not attempt to bring greater order out of this chaos. Additional distinctions can be introduced as they bear on particular issues. The map, such as it is, is intended only to provide enough guidance for an exposition.

6. Partial accounts aren't ruled out in certain nihilist views on record. Moreover, although partial, they might display the metaphysical links of truth.

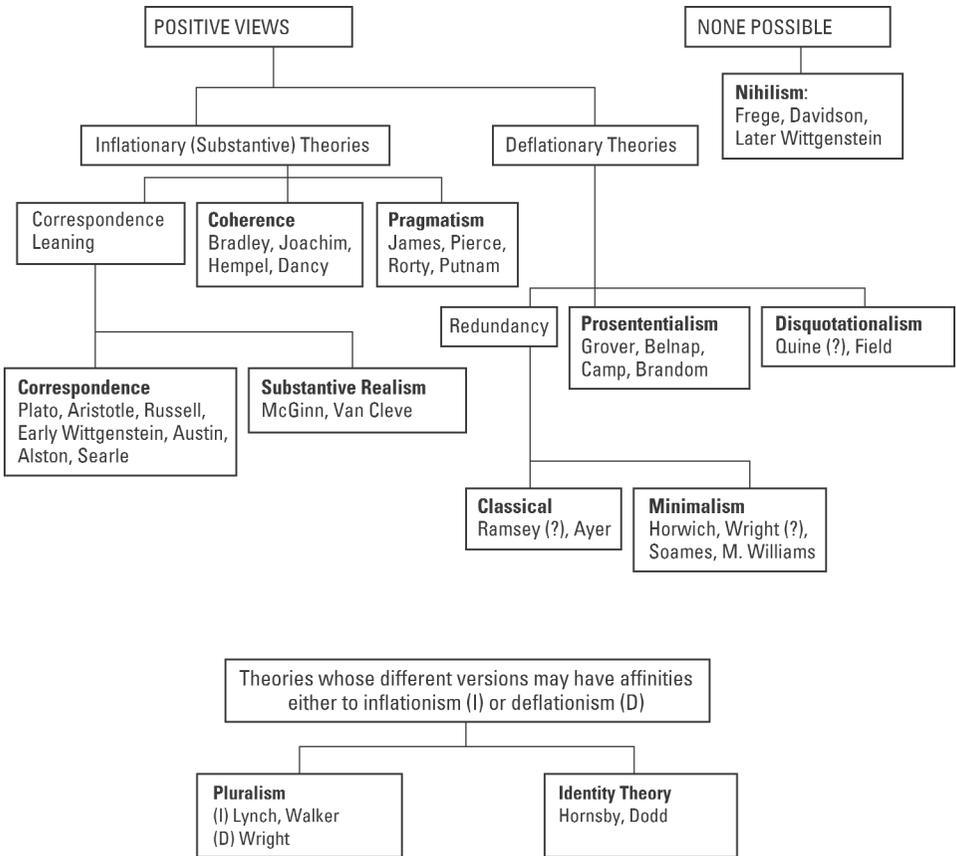


Figure 1.1
Theories of truth.

1.2 Elucidating Correspondence Theories

Once again, the central theme of this essay is the correspondence theory of truth. The basic idea is very old indeed. In Plato’s *Sophist* (263a,b), a Stranger (Plato’s alter ego for the nonce) and Theaetetus are discussing statements made with the sentences ‘Theaetetus sits’ and ‘Theaetetus flies.’ The Stranger asks Theaetetus what sort of character we can assign to each of these statements. Theaetetus replies “One is false, the other true.” The Stranger tacitly agrees, and continues to flesh out Theaetetus’s answer: “. . . and the true one states about you the things that are [or the facts] as

they are . . . whereas the false statement states about you things *different* from the things that are." Pace Rorty (1979, 306ff.), there is no indication that Plato is inventing a new concept of truth. Indeed, this is an echo of a remark Plato earlier put into Ctesippus's mouth, at *Euthydemus* (283e–284a), that one who speaks falsely "speaks of things that are, but not as they are." The classical scholar Francis Cornford (1957, 310) adds: "Ctesippus is evidently quoting a popular definition: 'The true statement speaks of things that are, or states facts, *as they are*.'" (See also *Cratylus* 385b.) The Stranger is eliciting from Theaetetus something that, when made explicit, the latter should acknowledge as beyond dispute. Aristotle, in an oft-quoted remark, agrees: "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, or of what is not that it is not, is true." (*Metaphysics*, book Γ) These are glimmers of Correspondence.

Philosophers have embroidered on this idea, although not as much as one might expect, and there has been much debate about what more, if anything, is wanted for an adequate theory. But here, instead of tackling that issue (it is confronted in chapters 4 and 8), I want to offer some initial clarifications. For a brief statement of the view, one that will not obscure its core idea behind a veil of elaborate refinements, I shall proceed with propositions as canonical truth bearers. This isn't intended to exclude statements, beliefs, sentences, judgments, or other candidates as truth bearers. At this stage, propositions may be taken as the determinate content expressed by all such bearers, and is perfectly neutral with respect to questions of reducibility. Correspondence then can be stated as the view that what *makes* a proposition true, or *constitutes* its truth, is a particular (more or less general) worldly circumstance to which the content of the proposition is related. As I am using 'worldly circumstance' throughout this essay, it is merely a cover term for what others may call facts, states of affairs, situations, events, moments, thick individuals, complexes of particulars and properties, or any similar truthmaker. (As the occasion arises, I may use one of the more specific terms listed instead.) The view needn't assume that such circumstances are nonconventional, or that they are not the products of human endeavor or cognition. The sole requirement is that it not be an inherent feature of the notion of a *worldly circumstance* that it is (like a proposition) semantically evaluable. If it turns out that all states of the world are semantically evaluable items, this will be the outcome of further

inquiry, not a consequence of this particular theory of truth. (More on this shortly.) In sum, our formula implies that propositions have truthmakers (or, constitutive conditions for their truth), and these truthmakers need not be semantically evaluable items.

Stating things thus may make the relationship of correspondence to what has been called “metaphysical realism” easy prey for unsympathetic critics. The relations of those two views must be qualified and further elucidated to avoid both misunderstanding and facile rejections. So I proceed to some disclaimers.

First Disclaimer

The mere acceptance of correspondence doesn't imply that there are very many truths, other than negative ones, of the type it describes. (Of course, every held theory has a conversational implicature of the truth of its own articles; but we can ignore that exception here.) A set of conditions for something's being true doesn't guarantee that there are truths any more than a definition of 'horse' or 'planet' guarantees that there are horses, or planets, or any more than a detailed description of the Loch Ness Monster guarantees its existence. Correspondence yields something important about the conditions affirmative truths would have to meet, but isn't by itself a guarantee that the conditions have been met.

Second Disclaimer

If metaphysical realism is the view that there exists a mind-independent reality, including objects and properties, a correspondence theorist needn't be a metaphysical realist. Indeed, due to the winding path the history of philosophy has traveled, there are instances of idealists, even absolute idealists, who have advocated correspondence—e.g., McTaggart (1921). For an idealist, truthmakers will be cognition-dependent states, although even so seemingly safe a generalization has exceptions. (For example, I take it that Berkeley is certainly an idealist, although he holds that God or God's mind, neither of which is a cognitive content per se, is the ultimate truthmaker.) Or one may embrace antirealism (more of which in the next paragraph) by placing cognizability restrictions upon what counts as a state of the world. Still, it is possible to hold that the very same sort of relationship that the correspondentist had in mind when conceiving the world differently accounts for the truth of propositions about those mind-dependent states.

Just as one can refer to Vienna or to the content of Smith's thought of Vienna, correspondence may be to either type of state of affairs.

For reasons such as the foregoing, I maintain that Putnam, who is not alone in this, employs an unduly restrictive notion of correspondence when he remarks of its states of affairs that they are "to be thought of as non-mental nonlinguistic entities which determinately obtain or do not obtain no matter what we think or say. . . ." (1981, 273; cf. Johnston 1993, 98) To reiterate a point made a few paragraphs ago, what is distinctive about correspondence is that it has nothing to say about the case-by-case mind-dependence of truthmakers. Accordingly, if one chooses to impose as a desideratum that truthmakers be mental or linguistic, this must be based on considerations independent of that theory of truth. As long as the extension of one's truthmakers doesn't flow from the nature of one's theory of truth alone, idealism, cognizability, and other varieties of mind-dependence can be strictly consistent with standard versions of correspondence.

Consider a recent revival of an attenuated verificationism commonly known as antirealism. The leading tenet of such Brand X antirealism is that there is no sense to the notion of a proposition the conditions for whose truth transcend (roughly) human abilities to encounter them (or to manifest them in behavior). Those propositions would include all or some of the following: statements about the distant past (say, beyond living memory), unrestricted universal generalizations, counterfactuals, claims about the "private" mental states of others. Brand X antirealism is not identical with idealism because the situations it allows as correlates for sensible propositions need not be mind-dependent or cognition-dependent in any sense beyond being accessible. But it does impose cognitive restrictions on the sorts of facts or circumstances that a proposition can sensibly be about. Some leading proponents of this restriction have also supposed that correspondence implies realism, and thereby regard their case for antirealism as refuting or heavily qualifying correspondence. But, pace certain antirealist claims, this view doesn't rule out even a hearty correspondence theory. Even for standard realists, most propositions we are likely to entertain or utter express situations that are, in fact, cognitively accessible. Nothing in correspondence rules it out as the correct account of the truth of those propositions. Indeed, imagine that all of reality just happens to be cognitively accessible to creatures such as us, although this is not because of a restriction on what is possible. Perhaps there is an *a priori* proof that this

couldn't happen. Nonetheless, it is at a minimum (epistemically) conceivable. The correspondence theory itself doesn't imply that our world is constituted otherwise. If that were so, correspondence might be the correct account of what truth consisted in in such a world: verification transcendence would be, at most, a counterfactual hypothesis.

However, there is a serious tension between, on the one hand, idealism or other forms of antirealism and, on the other, correspondence; it accounts for the widespread assumption that the views are in conflict. Correspondence does imply at least that truth is cognition-independent in the sense that it is irrelevant to the eligibility of a truthmaker that we have access to it. This implication will be examined at greater length in the next chapter, but for the present it should be noted that if correspondence truth is taken in isolation, excising whatever other metaphysical views one may have, it makes perfectly good sense to suppose that something is true although no one will ever be able to determine that it is so. For example, we are now able to frame two mutually exclusive hypotheses about what happened exactly one hour after the earth cooled enough to support life, but it is possible (perhaps likely) that no one will ever be able to determine which, if either, is true. Moreover, because of our limited cognitive capacities, there may be true propositions that no subject may ever be able to frame. None of this is ruled out by the correspondence theory alone. Thus, this theory of truth is not the source of whatever cognizability requirements a form of antirealism may impose.

This may lead antirealists to choose a truth theory that conforms more closely to their general outlook. If one part of the antirealist package is that there be some substantive (= nondeflationary) theory of truth or other, this could be a natural inducement to replace correspondence with a coherence theory, or perhaps even with pragmatism. Crudely put, an advantage occasionally cited for idealism, or for antirealist metaphysics generally, has been that it brings the world within the ambit of experience, justification, meaning, and/or knowledge (if not our own, then God's or the Absolute's). By contrast, correspondence seems to leave the world at arm's length, a target we can miss without ever being able to confirm whether we have avoided doing so. A common theme among idealists, pragmatists, and verificationists is that metaphysical realism, the view that there is a world of mind-independent objects, implies skepticism. Since we presumably know that wholesale skepticism is false, it is then tempting to conclude that neither

metaphysical realism nor its natural corollary, the correspondence theory, can be right. (The relation of correspondence to skepticism will be examined in greater detail below.)

Although there is nothing strictly inconsistent in, say, being an idealist correspondence theorist, there is at least an incongruity between, on the one hand, a theory of the world and knowledge that makes reality accessible *ex vi termini* and, on the other, a theory of truth that, for all it says, may have inaccessible truthmakers. Coherence, in which a belief is true because it fits evidentially into a larger assemblage of beliefs, seems more attuned to our actual way of estimating our body of truths. Correspondence as a theory of the constitution of truth has nothing to say about the criteria we use for determining truth. On coherence, the counterfactual “If there were no beliefs, there would be no truths” should be true. In fact, given its most popular versions, it should turn out that “If there were no beliefs, there would be no trees” is true as well. For “there are trees” would depend on the truth of the belief that there are trees. No such belief, no such truth. (This is controversial only because it depends in part on the method for evaluating counterfactuals. In fairness it should be noted that some coherentists, for this reason or others, vehemently deny that their theory has such a result, or that their views are incompatible with metaphysical realism as described earlier.) The first of these counterfactuals would be false on a correspondence theory (assuming truth bearers that don’t imply any actual beliefs) using the same method of evaluation, and the second would certainly be false. Consequently, while it is possible for antirealists (i.e., those who deny the existence or intelligibility of a mind-independent or response-independent reality) to be correspondence theorists, the relationship of the doctrines is strained. In insisting that correspondence is compatible with various forms of antirealism, I am not contending that those committed to antirealism should, or are likely to, adopt it. In this sense, correspondence-leaning theories are natural allies of realism.

Third Disclaimer

We have been juggling two senses of ‘realism’ that may be directly implicated with correspondence. In the first, cited above, the correspondence theory is a natural ally of a realist belief in a mind-independent world. In yet a different sense, one’s theory of truth *itself* may be considered realist. In this second sense, to have a realist view about X is to have a theory in

which X , while remaining a legitimate notion, is not mind-dependent. Deflationism as such does not make truth mind-dependent. And whereas it purports to be a complete account, it leaves no room for the addition of mind-dependence. On the other hand, a theory whose terms imply that truth is mind-dependent is an antirealist account of our subject. Given the current state of the literature, antirealist accounts invariably tie truth to an epistemic (or a potentially epistemic) state. Earlier it was noted that some epistemic theories identified truth with warranted assertibility, or with what would be known by ideal observers (say, in a final science), or with mutual evidential support. These are all varieties of cognition-dependence. Certainly correspondence is a realist theory in this sense, but so is deflationism. Truth is similarly realist on all versions of nihilism to the extent that I have described them. In the past some deflationists have rebutted the charge that their view of truth is antirealist (or nonrealist) by citing the fact that their theories aren't epistemic. But the rebuttal so construed stands a good chance of missing the point of the objection. Certainly deflationists do not identify truth with mind-dependence of the sort just reviewed. However, the more serious charge of antirealism likely to be leveled against deflationism is that it implies that the truth of a proposition does not involve, conceptually, any connection to the (nonmental) world: that is, it is antirealist in our first sense.

No attempt has been made here to cover in its entirety the sprawling topic of realism versus antirealism. There are many different kinds of skirmishes between the camps in which truth may be invoked. Here I confine my attention to those disputes most directly concerned with truth's constitution, as opposed to its extension. While the latter issue may eventually envelop questions of the nature of truth, it is always possible to make one's position on those issues compatible with any of the leading truth theories, and, as Horwich (1996) has shown, abstracting from his deflationism, it is also possible to moot those issues in nontruth terms.

Fourth Disclaimer

Since the ominous specter of skepticism has been raised, its relationship to correspondence warrants further comment.

Briefly, skepticism is an epistemological thesis about either knowledge or justified belief (or both). It states that we have no knowledge (justified belief), or much less of it than is commonly assumed, and for both versions

the snag is at justification. As the problem concerns correspondence, it takes off from the question of how we can come to know or to be justified that a proposition is satisfied by its truthmaker. The skeptic draws attention to the fact that on correspondence truth is constituted by something that has nothing to do with any criterion we may have for detecting it. On this account, it is unclear to some how we can ascertain that any particular proposition is true.

A first observation is that any contention that correspondence implies skepticism, whether or not that is regarded as a blemish, is mistaken. The relevant point, stated accurately, is only that nothing in correspondence prohibits skepticism. Correspondence by itself does not rule out a skeptical challenge. Whereas skepticism becomes (or so it is claimed) a nonissue given the implications of popular versions of coherence and pragmatism, clearly it is not ruled out by correspondence. However, many proffered refutations of skepticism are compatible with correspondence, ranging from Moore's appeal to common sense to contextualism and various externalist theories of knowledge (e.g., relevant alternatives, subjunctive conditional accounts, reliabilism).⁷ A larger theory that included correspondence could, but need not, also contain one of these refutations of skepticism. This would be an expanded view, but it would in no way impair the articles of correspondence. Given correspondence's compatibility with such refutations of skepticism, the former couldn't imply skepticism. This is not the occasion for critically evaluating those antiskeptical ploys, and it is conceivable that all of them fail. Still, correspondence is in no worse a position for countering skepticism than a number of well-supported theories of knowledge.

Skepticism cannot take root unless perception (and perhaps reason) is (are) equally vulnerable, for perception is the prime source of our justified beliefs about the nonmental world. The objector might respond here that the mind-independence of truthmakers forces us to adopt just such a vulnerable account of perception. To assess that charge, we would need to look much more closely at recent theories of perception than this inquiry permits. In this context, I can only state dogmatically that the response doesn't seem at all plausible. But, in the end, correspondence is not obliged to do more than be compatible with promising independent epistemological

7. See, e.g., the selections and the introductory essay in DeRose and Warfield 1999.

solutions to problems of skepticism. On the other hand, if all the solutions alluded to should fail, it would show that skepticism should be taken seriously, not that correspondence is flawed *qua* theory of truth.

A more basic question is “Why should we demand as a test of the success of a theory of truth that it be able to solve the problem of universal skepticism?” To explore my own misgivings about this supposed requirement, I want to draw a distinction, neither sharp nor exclusive, between certain epistemic, skeptical challenges and a synoptic metaphysical bent, at least as those challenges relate to correspondence. For various reasons (some historical), the separate types of issues each outlook has raised have become entangled. And it is not stretching things too far to call the anti-correspondentist metaphysical posture a type of skepticism, although antirealism and quietism have been more popular tags for many of the views in this cluster. The looming fact about this metaphysical outlook, under whatever title, is that it *is* incompatible with correspondence. So let us look at it a bit more closely.

The metaphysical animus in question despairs of the intelligibility, sense, meaningfulness, etc. (not merely the justifiableness) of connections between concepts or words and mind-independent objects or properties—truth connections among them. It includes examples that extend over a far-ranging vista, and here I must satisfy myself with a C-ish summary (on an indulgent grading system). In its broadest terms, the view—virtually a collection of philosophical methodologies—states that there is no way outside our forms of life, our language games, the coherence of our beliefs, our conceptual schemes, our contingencies, our horizons, or whatnot—no exit to the uncognized world. The outlook has been a staple of coherence theories. Walker (2001, 155) puts it in the form of a rhetorical question: “How can we say anything about a reality that is genuinely independent of us and of our ways of thinking about it?” And Strawson (1992, 86), while not endorsing the view, has written that “the Coherence Theory insists that you can have no cognitive content with, hence no knowledge of, Reality which does not involve forming a belief, making a judgment, deploying concepts.” Yet another tradition in this constellation, Absolute Idealism, has sought to establish the view that the knowledge and the unqualified truth value of individual propositions are, *sub quadam aeternitatis specie*, distortions. In their campaign against propositional truth, knowledge, and simply propositionality of any kind, proponents of Absolute Idealism

occasionally avail themselves of, among other things, a farrago of objections from the philosophical tradition, including objections drawn from epistemic skepticism. Some of these lines of thought are intended to lead us away from all metaphysical commitment rather than to alternative ones. In the hospitable way I have conceived the outlook, it is also used to scotch any metaphysical explanations involving mind-world or word-world connections. At any rate, that seems to have been its chief employment for post-Wittgensteinian thinkers who make bottom-line use of notions such as “language game” and “form of life.” Many of those who cite conceptual schemes or social constructions appear to agree. (Derrida’s notorious apothegm, “There is nothing outside the text,” looks like a clear affirmation of the outlook, despite efforts of sympathetic commentaries to blunt this appearance.) This leaves us with a myriad of ways, too many to enumerate, to describe how antirealists believe we arrive at this juncture. But all the paths described here employ some metaphysical assumptions or other to agree that the sorts of connections needed for correspondence are unavailable to theorists.

The cardinal point here is that the foregoing metaphysical outlook, unlike its epistemic cousin, does conflict with correspondence. That may seem to be an invitation to a lengthy discussion of metaphysical skepticism. However, aside from incidental comments, the topic will barely enter my further deliberations. When such views are mentioned here, it will be only in connection with issues that may be resolved or clarified without probing too deeply into differences over the larger methodological divide this outlook represents. One reason I ignore the topic is that it appears to embed, and depend on, very different overviews of how to do philosophy and what any philosophical explanation can achieve. I do not deny that these are important issues, but serious consideration of them would shift the present essay’s focus from philosophical to metaphilosophical. Rather, I shall try to show how correspondence can be defended on grounds that do not take us too far afield from the particular territory it purports to cover. This will serve, at the very least, as a standing challenge to advocates of this sort of metaphysical skepticism to show why correspondence is not perfectly respectable as it stands. Another reason, connected, is that transcendental arguments designed to demonstrate the impossibility of philosophical explanations, much less dismissive gestures (all too common on the current scene), strike me as futile when confronted with powerful concrete exam-

ples of such explanations. If the case can't be rebutted on its own terms and on specifics, a general prohibition against a view of its kind based solely on procedural reasons looks fairly amateurish alongside a worked-out proposal. I am writing for those who agree with me about this.

Nor will much be said about the substantive (inflationary) competitors of correspondence. When correspondence is viewed in these pages as under attack, its source is almost exclusively deflationary. Deflationists claim to abolish all metaphysical consequences from their theory of truth, realist and nonrealist ones alike. Their narratives converge with those of metaphysical critics to the extent that they employ methods designed to show that a statement of the basic articles of our theories of truth does not, contrary to popular belief, (sensibly) state anything about proposition-world connections. And at least some prominent deflationists base their views on a more generic anti-representationalist semantics. I shall have more to say about certain of those arguments in subsequent chapters. But many deflationists do not generally reject the possibility of philosophical theses about content-world relations; their rejection of inflationary truth theories is *not* just a special case of this sort of comprehensive antimetaphysical animus.

Against this assortment of opponents, I shall (in the following chapters), first, propose a basis for claiming that correspondence underlies our common understanding of truth; next, mount a series of forays to show that those who believe we can get along with less, or that correspondence formulas are either inadequate or vacuous, have failed to make out their case; and, finally, expose fatal shortcomings in various deflationary counterproposals. All this is interspersed with elucidations and constructive remarks intended to strengthen the case for correspondence.

Thinkers may differ over the breadth of a correspondence theory. Various of them hold that nothing is a correspondence theory unless it explicitly includes a correspondence relation and takes facts (or something close enough to them, such as Armstrong's states of affairs) as the paradigm worldly truthmakers. For example, Davidson (1996, 269) excludes Aristotle and Tarski from the list of correspondence theorists on the ground that they do not "introduce entities like facts or states of affairs for sentences to correspond to." Lewis (2001a, 175) writes that correspondence says "truth is correspondence to fact," and he takes this quite strictly. Of course, Lewis's narrow view isn't quite so wooden. Indeed, Lewis (2001b, esp. 610,

613–614) sympathetically explores the prospects for different varieties of factual truthmakers. Nevertheless, our current pretheoretical notions of correspondence and fact, undetailed as they may be, are taken as the patterns for any terms we may use to replace them; and this sets the agenda for any further explication (and further explication there must be) to be given. Thus, for example, if one rejected facts for nominalist reasons, acknowledging only individuals and their properties, or had an ontology of events but no facts, a correspondence theory would thereby be precluded on this conception.

At the other extreme, my earlier characterization of correspondence mentions neither fact nor correspondence: it is noncommittal on both counts. The only thing that matters with regard to these two aspects is that something that need not be, as such, a subject of semantic evaluation is a determiner of truth. This type of correspondence can accommodate the following characterizations of the view from Tarski:

. . . the truth of a sentence consists in its agreement with . . . reality. (Tarski 1949, 54)

. . . a true sentence is one which says that the state of affairs is so and so, and the state of affairs is indeed so and so. (Tarski 1956, 155)

And it acknowledges the passages from Plato and Aristotle as at least fore-runners (proto-versions) of correspondence. I have elected to go with a broad interpretation. Is either choice more reasonable, or is this simply a matter of taste?

It might be claimed on behalf of a narrow interpretation that something like it is needed to arrive at a definite thesis, or perhaps even to prevent the claim from dissolving into vacuity. It is the obligation of the broad choice to avoid those pitfalls. But it appears that this is easily discharged by showing how the broad position is incompatible with the others on the map. How could something that conflicts with coherence, pragmatism, deflationism, pluralism, nihilism, and any of the other well-defined, explicitly anti-correspondence views in the literature be vacuous? Still, supporters of a narrow characterization may claim that correspondence must yield an additional kind of explanation, one going farther than that implicit in my remarks about conflicting with other views and choosing a slice of nonmental reality as a truth determiner. The requirement isn't very clear. The best one can do is to examine each clarification of it as it comes down the pike. Provisionally the following will have to suffice: when spelled out properly I

have found that the demand either has been met even by brief summaries of the theory or that the imposition it places on such theories is highly questionable. I spell this out in greater detail several paragraphs hence.

But why choose the broad characterization? The short answer is that we forfeit a valuable lesson by not recognizing the similarity of efforts to get at roughly the same thing—viz., the relation that makes for truth between our thoughts and utterances on the one hand, and the potentially uncognized world on the other. Much, if not most, of the energy expended in debates about correspondence and its competitors has been over whether nonmental states of the world (or its *thick* individuals) are truthmakers. And it would redirect us away from this focal issue if it was allowed that this were so, but still that a correspondence theory was out of reach because of a rejection of one or another definition of a technical term in a narrower version. Correspondence is not so much a specific theory—say, one associated with Wittgenstein's 1922 effort—but a cluster of them. It is more like a picture or an outlook that directs its adherents to the particular varieties constructed in accord with the blueprint—better yet, outline—it provides. It is this interesting similarity against which the most influential and toxic critics of correspondence have reacted, and thus it raises the issues that seem to have been of greatest interest to the various parties to the dispute. If we define correspondence more narrowly, we will be more inclined to focus on the pros and cons of specific formulations, and be in danger of losing sight of more basic, broader issues.

It seems to me undeniable that the various more detailed correspondence theories have been attempts to refine the insight summed up earlier by Aristotle. Other substantive theories have claimed to be able to accommodate Aristotle's formula, but none I think can claim to be attempts to elaborate or refine it. If one wishes to avoid a term such as 'theory', which comes with some baggage in philosophy, one can call this the correspondence *project*. It would be as much an oversight not to see this in Aristotle's epigram, Tarski's formula, and Wittgenstein's (1922) discussion as it would not to see dogs and wolves as belonging to a common biological family, even from a strictly Linnaean perspective.

This particular mapping of the dialectical landscape sets the agenda for subsequent discussion to a large extent. I note this if only because it may surprise, not to say disappoint, some who are well-acquainted with this knot of issues. For my defense concentrates heavily on deflecting objections

from these various quarters. This may be surprising because an impressive list of friends and critics alike have seen correspondence's main task to be to produce a highly detailed version, one that would spell out the distinctive notions involved in it. Thus, one might anticipate the main effort of a defender to be directed toward the discovery of a rigorous statement of correspondence, perhaps containing a series of complex clauses to protect it against the odd counterinstance. And in chapter 8, enough of the missing detail is supplied to indicate at least a direction in which such elaborations might go. However, I do not believe a philosophical understanding of correspondence is chiefly advanced by a series of such defensive clauses. Of course, we should never shirk our responsibility to seek rigorous statements of our views. But the history of such disputes indicates that formulations seem relatively unproblematic once the principled objections are no longer threatening and pretty fruitless while they remain. Thus, I shall be primarily interested in examining more closely attacks that are part and parcel of deflationary (and antirealist) outlooks, and postpone offering at least one set of promising details for the correspondence relation and the nature of truth determiners. This does not mean that questions of detail are without exception deferred to chapter 8. Various remarks must also be entered early (e.g., chapter 3) about the relation and truthmakers. But most of this is a contribution toward explaining why imposing a demand for greater detail is, if not an outright mistake, at a minimum a miscalculation of one's priorities.

Although the heart of my defense is contained in chapters 3–6, here is a brief outline of at least one reason why the demand at the outset for a more detailed formulation seems (to me at least) a distraction.⁸ The point now being ventured is that the sorts of general assumptions needed to support such a demand are, at the very least, questionable. For one thing, it is never made reasonably clear just how much detail will satisfy critics. (No doubt, this will differ for different thinkers.) For another, critics point to the fact that at least many correspondence theorists appeal to a general notion of correspondence and their specification of truthmakers is equally latitudinarian. This is regarded as a defect rather than a virtue. Why should the inability to say anything further, in the absence of more specific qualms about what has been said already, be a defect in a view?

8. Of course, detailed formulations aren't wrongheaded. Quite the contrary! However, the complaint now in our sights is that the theory isn't defensible—perhaps doesn't even make a definite claim—until one is produced.

Much of the criticism seems to converge on just this fact: namely, that nothing so brief can be a satisfactory explanation. Why can't explanation just stop here and nevertheless suffice? Is it that a philosophical explanation must never run out of further things to say? Or perhaps the assumption is that there is a natural stopping point in this type of explanation, and we have yet to arrive at it. If so, without demanding much precision, where in general is the natural stopping point located, and what grounds are there for any such claim? Such questions are seldom if ever raised. Of course, some opponents do go on to say why such brief outlines are unsatisfactory. Perhaps there are too many correspondence relations, and picking out the right one without introducing circularity into the account seems an insuperable task. Or perhaps a professional suspicion of claims of simplicity for one's favorite concept places under the same cloud all claims to the effect that nothing more remains to be said. Such objections are legitimate, and I shall attend to them in due course. The relevant point here is that even if one considers my answers unsatisfactory, objections of that form can be addressed. But to rest with the charge that the account is unacceptably brief is too breezy a critique to warrant further concern on the correspondence theorist's part. Until opponents back their demand with a clearer conception of what is being sought, and why it must be sought, it is hard to know even how to address the complaint that the correspondence theorist must provide further detail before being credited with having placed before us a serious candidate.

1.3 Metaphysical Implications

Deflationists maintain that, unlike their view, correspondence has metaphysical implications. I won't probe this issue in any depth here, but I want to call attention to two questions that have been at the heart of claims for the superiority of deflationism. First, is it true that correspondence has metaphysical implications? Second, and more important, if the answer to the first question is affirmative, how exactly does this yield an advantage for deflationism?

We can dispatch the first question quickly. Despite the various qualifications entered earlier with respect to correspondence's involvement with metaphysical realism, we may say that it has at least quasi-implications for there being genuine truthmakers. It is obvious that at least some proposi-

tions are true, and even if the world were to consist only of social constructions, correspondence would require them as truthmakers for propositions about them. Coherence and pragmatism also need truthmakers, though perhaps they do not leave open the possibility that these will be mind-independent (non-epistemic). However, we are now concerned with correspondence. So, for our purposes, a blunt answer to the first question is Yes.

It is the second question that looms large. It supplies the contrast with the nonmetaphysical alternative that deflationists regard as a significant point in their favor.

I am assuming here that ‘metaphysics’ isn’t simply a scare word. In the heyday of logical positivism, legitimate philosophical theses were so circumscribed that any view which had metaphysical implications of any sort, including much of epistemology, was forbidden (e.g., as nonsense, or as not cognitively meaningful, or as emotive). But the complaint of current deflationists is different: their view, lacking as it does such metaphysical implications, has the virtue of (relative) methodological *simplicity*. The fewer the commitments of a theory, the better.⁹ One reason for this might be that a simpler theory supplies fewer hostages to fate. Another might be that a more parsimonious theory (or so it is thought) has fewer ontic commitments. And if one view can do all the same things starting from a more modest, unified, base, doesn’t that indicate that we are on to something? In this light the loser’s additional commitments appear gratuitous. (This is one reading of Ockham’s Razor.) Thus, a metaphysical theory in this sense isn’t faulty per se, but is inferior to a more economical view that carries out just as much of the originally appointed task.

But ultimately these prescriptions aren’t very telling. Here are but two of the reasons.

First, what deflationists regard as correspondence’s additional commitments, the correspondentist may consider its fertility. Having more substantial implications provides a different virtue—fruitfulness. No doubt, this must be tempered by other virtues, such as relative parsimony. Fertility unconstrained can fuel bizarre theorizing. But philosophers typically take their list of methodological virtues from what can be extracted from the practice of theoretical commitment in the sciences. And while simplicity is

9. On ambiguities here, and on potential tradeoffs between ontology and ideology, see Oliver 1996, esp. pp. 5–9.

frequently cited by philosophers, the scientific virtue of fertility is often overlooked. Of course, if the excluded commitments were to dubious theoretical entities, parsimony might have bite: who needs more epicycles? But is the potentially uncognized world a theoretical entity that any serious investigator would want to avoid if possible?

Second, if one grants that correspondence has implications that deflationism lacks, why doesn't this demonstrate that the two theories don't accomplish the same thing? It would appear that having different commitments, when none of those can be independently shown to be bogus, is a sure sign that the same tasks aren't being achieved by the putatively competing theories. What is needed is a description of the tasks for a theory of truth acceptable to deflationists and correspondentists alike. It is unclear that one is in the offing. Deflationists do commonly purport to give just such a description. But their efforts seldom give serious consideration to what correspondence seeks to achieve. The correspondentist is likely to be inclined to complain that the deflationist's assumptions about the point of having theories of truth always leads to a stunted list of its objectives. We shall look more closely at these deflationist characterizations in chapter 6. For the present it is enough to understand the character, and limitations, of the deflationist charge that correspondence engenders metaphysical commitments. Insofar as it is an objection to correspondence, this is only against the background of a competing deflationary view which is, in some sense, more austere. And we have given two reasons, and raised one suspicion, why this summation of the situation is dubious.

1.4 Pathologies of Truth

Old campaigners in these wars may be surprised that the Liar Paradox (or similar semantic antinomies), a salient issue in many such discussions, hasn't been accorded a central place in our deliberations. Here I shall explain why. But first let us consider a version of the paradox. It states that if one attempts to find a truth predicate in the very language one is examining (say, English), one will encounter sentences such as

(L) (L) is false.

(L) says of itself that it is false. If it is true, then (L) can't be false, which is to say that it is false that (L) is false. So, (L) must be *false*. But if it is false,

what it states is true—namely, that (L) is false. Therefore it is *true* that (L) is false. (L) is clearly defective, but there appear to be no linguistic regulations already in place that it violates. Call such instances of contradictory truth-values pathological. One might be tempted simply to devise a rule excluding pathological instances. It doesn't even matter whether the rule is patently *ad hoc*. But take the nonpathological sentence uttered by Smith:

(L') Everything Brown says is false.

And suppose that Brown says only

(L'') What Smith said last night is true

and that (L') is the only thing Smith said last night. Each sentence (and each statement made) by itself is fine. Neither is a peculiarly paradoxical utterance in isolation. However, if Brown's sentence, (L''), is true, then by (L') it is false. And if what Smith says, (L'), is true, then by (L'') it is false. We cannot place the blame on self-referentiality. (See, e.g., Yablo 1993.) In sum, the problem doesn't seem to reside in an isolated group of bad sentences, but is an inescapable consequence of having a truth predicate of bearers in the very language whose bearers are being described.

Reactions to this predicament vary. At one extreme it has been taken to show that a definition (or even a more relaxed consistent account) of the concept of truth is impossible, or that our truth concept is irredeemably muddled. Nevertheless, for various reasons the present work will largely ignore issues stemming from the paradoxes. My reasons can be summed up by saying that even with this threat, the questions over the competing truth theories still present us with issues to be resolved. To wit:

First, many sentences (and their consequences) are nonpathological. Our concept of truth was no doubt forged for those sorts of instances. Indeed, it is obvious why they must certainly precede the constructibility of pathological instances. Thus, even if the concept carved out from nonpathological instances is ultimately confused, there is merit in finding out just what that concept is. Revision is always a possibility, but too many proposals for revision or regimentation in philosophy have simply been founded on inadequate (occasionally perfunctory) overviews of the pretheoretical notions reformers would have us discard. Such hastiness has been a prime ingredient in half-baked theories. So before discarding efforts to understand the overwhelming majority of benign instances, much less contemplating the practical impossibility of discarding the notion of truth, it is a good

policy to examine in greater detail just what, if anything, it is that seems to account for the benign instances.

Next, all the theories discussed in section 1.2 have in practice adopted a policy of ignoring the Liar. They have given accounts of truth despite the prohibitions against doing so that certain theorists would draw from the Liar, and even nihilists who refuse such accounts have not avoided them because of Liar-type paradoxes, but because, quite the contrary, truth is too fundamental to explain in more basic terms. Some may be working on the assumption, or hoping, that the paradoxes are eventually resolvable, or at least that it can be shown that they don't have devastating consequences for nonpathological instances. Whatever their assumptions, the point to emphasize is that they all agree that there is something to be studied here regardless of the problems introduced by the paradoxes. All the competitors are in much the same boat in this regard. We are each confronted with working our way through the options this slate of theories presents us, and the Liar doesn't give a leg up to one of the competitors over the others.

Accordingly, there will be little further mention of pathological instances of truth here. This is not because their study is uninteresting, or even any less interesting than the one on which we are about to embark. Rather it is because the two projects don't seem to share so intimate a common fate. If tomorrow someone were to produce, *mirabile dictu*, a universally acknowledged solution to Liar Paradoxes, the differences between the various accounts of truth would persist. So work on sorting through them remains to be done in any eventuality. Accordingly, I shall proceed in subsequent chapters to try to impress on readers the attractions of correspondence, and the drawbacks of accounts of selected opponents. I now turn to the first of those tasks.