Truth-making: What it is not and What it Could be

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1. Introduction

By the end of the seventies the rise and fall of the correspondence theory of truth in contemporary philosophy seemed to be of interest only to historians of philosophy. Having emerged in works by Moore, Russell, Wittgenstein, correspondence theory had already begun to fall out of favour after Frege's identification of facts and true propositions; it later met its ruin, first with Wittegenstein's criticism of the tractarian conception of language, then with Strawson's questioning of the existence of facts in his attack on Austin's version of the correspondence theory and finally with the stones launched by Davidson's slingshot against the distinctness of facts[1]. Correspondence theory seemed to have been superseded on the one hand by more refined Tarski-style definitions of truth-predicates, and on the other by the growth of the deflationist stance rooted in the work of Ramsey[2].

This was the state of the art until, in 1984, the seminal article *Truth-Makers* by Kevin Mulligan, Peter Simons and Barry Smith appeared[3], shedding new light on the question. At about the same time Australian philosophers, such as David Armstrong and John Bigelow, were defending a realist stance in philosophy, considering the question of what *makes* some true sentences *true* to be the central one for approaching problems in metaphysics and the philosophy of mathematics[4]. On both these philosophical sides it was claimed that at least the central intuition of the correspondence theory was still alive and not sufficiently accounted for by more fashionable approaches to the problem of truth, the intuition at stake being that *truth is grounded in being*. Perhaps facts are mere shadows of language, perhaps there is no way that is both intelligible and general to analyse the relation of correspondence; it was nonetheless felt that at least one thing needed be saved in the correspondence theory: that, for any true truth-bearer (or at least any true truth-bearer in a basic class), there must be something *making* it true, otherwise truth would float in the air; this is what could be called the *correspondence intuition*. According to those philosophers, the expression "something" in "something making it true" was to be read (given their sympathy for the correspondence conception) as meaning "some thing", "some entity".

This meant that the last twenty years have seen a revival of the debate, if not on correspondence theory, at least on the correspondence intuition. The debate has centred on

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[1] See: Moore (1953), Russell (1918), Wittgenstein (1921), (1953), Frege (1918), Strawson (1950), Austin (1950), Davidson (1969).
[2] As to the first strand: Kripke (1975); as to the second: Ramsey (1927), Field (1994), Horwich (1990).
[3] Mulligan, Simons, Smith (1984).
[4] Bigelow (1988); Armstrong (1997).

questions, such as: 1) How many true truth-bearers have entities making them true? 2) What exactly is *making true*?

As to the first question, some have answered that *every* true truth-bearer needs some entity making it true, thus advocating what is called *truth-maker maximalism*. Others have adopted a form of *neo-logical atomism*, answering: only for a basic class of true truth-bearers is it the case that there is some entity making them true. Finally there is the most sceptical reply: only in a very limited number of cases is there some entity making truth-bearers true, so there is not even an extensional tie between truths and truth-makers[5]. As to the second question, some began to characterize *making true* using the modal notion of *necessitation*; others tried to refine the modal approach; while yet others appealed to the notion of internal relation or to the notion of essence[6].

It seems to me that the second question is the most basic, at least from the methodological point of view: in fact answers to the question about how many things are in the relation *R* depend partly on the concept of "*R*" we start with.

In what follows I will discuss two kinds of analyses of the notion of *making true*: modal analyses (in particular those proposed by Smith) and essentialist analyses (in particular one recently proposed by Mulligan). I will show what I believe to be the shortcomings of these analyses. Finally I will put forward an analysis I think is immune from those shortcomings and preferable on independent grounds.

2. Two constraints

As I am going to claim that two analyses of the notion *x makes y true* are unsatisfactory, I want to make explicit two constraints I believe any adequate analysis of this notion should satisfy. I think these constraints are overtly or covertly accepted by everyone engaged in the debate concerning truth-makers and *making true*. The first one is what I call the "*because-constraint*"; its source is a general feature of the notions expressed by instances of the form *x makes y F*[7]. Such instances are used to attribute some explanatory power to *x* being in certain way: *x* being in a certain way explains why *y* is *F*[8]. For instance if I say, "Carlo makes Maria happy", I will be willing to think that Carlo's being in a certain way (for instance, his being so nice to her) explains why Maria is happy: this entitles me to say that Maria is happy *because* Carlo is nice to her. Sometimes what has explanatory power for something being *F* is simply the *existence* of something else. An example of such use is when we say that a given promise

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[5] As to the first answer see: Armstrong (1997); Mulligan (2003), "Two Dogmas of Truthmaking" (in this volume); for the second, Simons (2000), Smith, Simon, "Truthmaker Explanation" (in this volume); for the third, Dodd (2002).

[6] For the modal approach see: Fox (1987), Smith (1999), Smith, Simon (in this volume); for the internal relation approach, Armstrong (1997); for the essentialist approach, Mulligan (2003), (in this volume).

[7] Although both predicates and their nominal parts can be substituted for "*F*" (so that both "*x makes y red*" and "*x makes y run*" count as instances of "*x makes y F*"), in what follows I will narrow the substitution class for "*F*" to the class of nominal parts of predicates.

[8] This is underlined in Mulligan (2003) and Caputo (2005).

makes an action obligatory or that the firing of a certain neuron makes someone sad. In such cases what is claimed is that the mere existence of the promise or of the firing has explanatory power for the action in question being obligatory or the person being sad: only the occurrence of the neuron's firing and nothing else explains why that person is sad; only the existence of the promise and nothing else explains why the particular action is obligatory. The use of "making" generally involved in the debate on truth-making is the latter: what supporters of truth-makers are not willing to deny is that there are entities that simply by existing explain truth-bearers' being true, and are therefore truths' *ontological grounds*.

(BC) *if x makes y F then y is F because x exists*.

The second constraint, which I call the "relevance-constraint", is a consequence of the instance of the *because*-constraint which is obtained replacing "*F*" with "true". What features an entity should have in order to explain why *y* is *F* will depend on what conditions must be satisfied for *y* to be *F*. Conditions that must be satisfied for a given truth-bearer to be true are called *truth-conditions*; therefore whether some entity makes a given truth-bearer true will depend on the truth-conditions of the truth-bearer involved. This dependence can occur in two ways: either the truth-conditions are existential or what grounds their satisfaction is the existence of some entity.

Truth-conditions are closely linked to semantic content, as is shown by the following principle: *if truth-bearer y says that p, then the condition that must be satisfied for y to be true is that p*. So whether some entity makes a given truth-bearer true will also depend on the semantic content of the truth-bearer. This does not mean that whatever makes a truth-bearer true must be represented by it[9]; rather what is needed is the following:

(RC) *if x makes p true then* either *p says that x exists or x's existence grounds the satisfaction of the conditions that, given what p says, must be satisfied for p to be true.*

This means roughly that if *x* makes *p* true then *x* must have something to do with the subject matter of *p*; if the subject matter of *p* is Mary and her being sad, what makes *p* true must have something to do with Mary and her sadness.

3. Modal analyses

The mainstream in the last twenty years' literature on truth-makers has been to analyse the relation of *making true* by using modal notions. *Making true* was initially identified with necessitation[10].

1) *x makes p true* $=_{def}$ *E!x &* $\Box$ *(E!x* $\to$ *p).*

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[9] Here, and in what follows, I use the verb "to represent" and cognate terms in a non theoretically loaded way: for instance when I say things like "Tom is represented by *p*" I mean that Tom is one of the several things *p* can be sensibly said to be about.
[10] Fox (1987).

The reason for this move may have been that it seems correct to consider necessitation as a *necessary* condition for being an ontological ground. Necessitation is in fact a constraint for truth-making which is deducible from the *because*-constraint. If *x* is such that its mere existence and nothing else explains why *y* is *F*, then it should not be possible that *x* exists without *y* being *F*. In fact if this were possible, the world could be different in terms of *y* being *F* without being different in terms of *x* existing and this would be a good reason for believing that something else, in addition to *x*'s existence, is needed to explain why *y* is *F*.

Unfortunately, as was first noticed by Restall, necessitation is not a sufficient condition for truth-making: definition (1) satisfies neither the because- nor the relevance-constraint[11]. In the first place, every existent makes every necessary truth true, although it is not so that necessary truths are true because of the existence of whatever and that they are about whatever. In the second place, for any *a* and *b* such that necessarily if *a* exists so does *b*, *a* makes any proposition true that is made true by *b*; as *b* makes the proposition that *b* exists true, *a* makes this proposition true as well, even though it is not because of the existence of *a* that it is true that *b* exists and even though the proposition that *b* exists cannot be sensibly said to represent either *a* or the existence of *a*[12]. As an instance of this kind of problem, take *a* to be any contingent being and *b* any necessary being (me and God): the definition compels us to say that I make the proposition that God exists true, even if it is not because of my existence that it is true that God exists and in no way can the proposition that God exists be said to be about me or my existence. Against counterexamples of this kind it could be argued that they appeal to dubious entities as necessary beings. To this I reply that it is not necessary for the soundness of the counterexamples that such entities exist; what is sufficient is that assuming their existence is not incoherent. If God existed we would not be disposed to say that it is true that God exists *because* I exist and, as a consequence, we would not be disposed to say that I make true that God exists. So *x necessitates p* does not entail *x makes p true*.

The violation of the *because*-constraint can be better appreciated if we keep in mind that the truth of "$\Box$ (E!*a* → E!*b*)" is usually at least considered as a necessary condition for *a* to be ontologically dependent on *b*. This involves that defining truth-making as necessitation compels us to consider any dependent entity as what makes it true that its *dependé* exists. But this seems to turn things upside down: if *a* is ontologically dependent on *b* it seems more correct to say that it is because of the existence of *b* (perhaps with some further condition) that it is true that *a* exists and not the other way around. As an instance of such a problem, take the brightness of Carola's smile and Carola: the definition under discussion compels us to say that the brightness of Carola's smile makes it true that Carola exists; but the opposite is surely true: it is Carola, perhaps with some further condition, which makes it true that the brightness of her smile exists. After all the brightness of Carola's smile is the way a dependent part of Carola is: so the existence of such brightness can serve at most as evidence of the existence of Carola, as smoke is evidence of fire, but evidence is not ontological ground[13].

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[11] Restall (1996).

[12] Restall (1996) provides a slingshot kind argument to the effect that each existent makes true any true proposition. The argument assumes that instances of "*p v ¬ p*" are necessary truths: since it is not obvious that such instances are necessary truths I will not assume in what follows that this argument is correct.

[13] This problem was already raised by Smith (1999).

Smith tries to overcome these problems using only modal notions plus mereology. The first definition proposed is:

(2) *x makes p true* $=_{def}$ *E!x* & $\Box$*(E!x $\rightarrow$ x $\leq$ σy(yPp))*[14].

"σy(yPp)$" means "the mereological sum of the entities projected by *p*"; the relation of projection is defined as the dual of necessitation:

(3) *xPp* $=_{def}$ *p* & $\Box$*(p $\rightarrow$ E!x)*.

Replacing in (2) "*yPp*" with the *definiens* in (3) we have:

(4) *x makes p true* $=_{def}$ *E!x* & $\Box$*(E!x $\rightarrow$ x $\leq$ σy(p & $\Box$(p $\rightarrow$ E!y)))*.

(4) indeed solves some problems of the definition of truth-making as necessitation, but unfortunately not every problem is solved. Contingent beings no longer make necessary truths true: such truths in fact do not entail the existence of any contingent being. The same holds for contingent and necessary beings: the existence of the latter does not entail the existence of the former. Unfortunately, what is still there is the problem of dependent parts and their wholes. The brightness of Carola's smile satisfies the following condition: it cannot exist except as a part of Carola; Carola is in turn projected by the proposition that Carola exists; so the brightness of Carola's smile is necessarily part of the merological sum of the things projected by the proposition that Carola exists (it is necessarily a dependent part of Carola, which is in turn part of the sum in question). Therefore the brightness of Carola's smile makes the proposition that Carola exists true, contrary to what we would expect: in fact it is not because of the existence of the brightness of Carola's smile that it is true that Carola exists, rather the other way around. Moreover the proposition that Carola exists does not represent Carola's smile, thus the relevance-constraint is also violated.

The second definition proposed by Smith is simpler and more demanding than the first:

(5) *x makes p true* $=_{def}$ *p* & $\Box$ *(E!x $\leftrightarrow$ p)*[15].

(5) is more demanding than (4) because it requires that a truthmaker for *p* be such that its existence is entailed by *p*; so (5) succeeds in excluding dependent parts from what makes the propositions saying that their substances exist true. (5) has however problems of its own.

The main problem is the following: any two necessarily coexistent beings, say *a* and *b*, are such, according to (5), that we can say both that *a* makes the proposition that *b* exists true and *b* makes the proposition that *a* exists true, regardless of either the existence of *a* having explanatory power for it being true that *b* exists or the existence of *b* having explanatory power for it being true that *a* exists and although the two propositions seem not to share any content (except the concept of existence). Using (5), for instance, we are compelled to say that Number 2 makes the proposition that Justice exists true, provided we have a Platonist view of

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[14] Smith (1999).

[15] Smith (1999), Smith, Simon (in this volume).

these entities: if (5) were a correct analysis of "*x* makes *p* true" then every Platonist would be a Pythagorean[16].

It could be replied to this argument that such problems are raised by our fine-grained intuitions, cognitively determined, concerning what is *relevant* for a given truth-bearer and that truth-making has nothing to do with the notion of relevance, cognitively conceived. The notion of truth-making makes its job in the context of a realist conception of truth-conditions, conceived has ways the reality *must* be for a truth-bearer to be true. Truth-making specifies the case when such conditions consist in the existence of a particular entity. Therefore if the existence of *a* is a condition that must be satisfied for *p* to be true and necessarily *b* exists if and only if *a* exists, the existence of *b* is also a condition that must be satisfied in order for *p* to be true; thus *b* makes *p* true[17].

My point against this argument is that it presupposes the modal account of truth-conditions and, of course, accepting such an account also involves accepting a modal account of truth-making. However the considerations above are intended precisely to emphasize the shortcomings of modal accounts of truth-making (and, *a fortiori*, of truth-conditions): they are intended to show that modal accounts violate very strong intuitions about truth-making revealed by the because- and relevance- constraints. It could be countered that because- and relevance- constraints are not important for truth-making; but if they were not important for truth-making, there would not be *any* reason to reject the definition of truth-making as simple necessitation. Smith himself however puts forward his definitions in order to overcome the problem of *malignant* necessitators, which the definition of truth-making as necessitation must face. Malignant necessitators are however malignant precisely for the reason that they violate because- and relevance- constraints; so these constraints *are* important for truth-making and if they are important they are always important and not just up to a certain point.

Finally (5) involves a further problem: sentences of the form "*E!a iff p*" express a symmetric logical relation whereas "because" (and so *making F*) expresses an *asymmetric* relation. A Pythagorean philosopher could believe that Number 2 makes Justice exist and precisely for this reason he would deny that Justice makes Number 2 exist. For this reason he would think that what makes it true that Justice exists is Number 2, while at the same time he would deny that Justice makes it true that Number 2 exists. Nonetheless, if (5) is a definition of *making true* this philosopher is wrong and, what is more important, incoherent: Number 2 makes it true that Justice exists and Justice makes it true that Number 2 exists. The moral is that once the question about the truth of a sentence of the form "*E!a & □ (E!a ↔ p)*" has been settled, there is still room for asking whether or not *a* makes it true that *p*. So the definition in question does not state a sufficient condition for "*x makes p true*".

The reason why modal accounts violate both relevance- and because- constraints is that modal notions are too coarse-grained to grasp representational content and explanatory relations: it is not sufficient that □ *(p ↔ q)* for it to be so either that *q* because *p* or that what is said by *p* has

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[16] Again, as before, the actual existence of any necessary being is not needed for the example to make its case.

[17] Smith and Simon put forward this argument in "The True[TM] Story", a talk presented at the Conference: *Ontologie Analitiche* (Analytic Ontologies), Turin, October 22-25, 2002. I don't know whether they still endorse this argument, so it would better be considered as a point that in principle could be made.

something to do with what is said by *q*. So modal accounts are doomed to failure: while they may define something this is not *making true*.

4. *An essentialist analysis*

In some well-known papers, Kit Fine has underlined the shortcomings of modal accounts in dealing with the problem of what it is for something to be essentially in a certain way: modal notions are more coarse-grained than the notion of essence. So Fine claims that instead of analysing the latter via the former, it should be realized that modal truths are grounded on the essences of the objects they are about[18]. In a recent paper Mulligan remarked that the shortcomings of modal accounts of essence are the same as those of modal accounts of *making true*. This leads him to a natural conclusion: modal accounts of *making true* are mistaken because *making true* is a relation that holds between an entity and a proposition in virtue of their essences.

The first problem we encounter here is the following: to say that truth-making is an essence-induced relation does not reveal much about the nature of truth-making; after all many relations can be exemplified by their *relata* by virtue of the essences of such *relata*. What we would like to know is not so much what the status of the *exemplification* of the truth-making relation is, but rather either what the *nature* of the relation is or, at least, what content the notion of "*x* makes *p* true" has[19].

I will therefore discuss here, *as if* it had explicitly been proposed by Mulligan, a *definition* of truth-making according to which truth-making is not simple necessitation but necessitation induced by the essences of the *relata*.

(6) *x makes p true* $=_{def}$ *E!x &* $_{x/p}$ *$\Box$(E!x $\rightarrow$ true p)*[20].

Here the index "*x/p*" is an essence operator which can be read "*x* and *p* are essentially such that".

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[18] Fine (1994a) (1994b).

[19] This is what Mulligan (2003: 547) says about *immediate* truth-making: "To say that the fact that *p* immediately makes true the proposition that *p* is just to say that the truth-making relation holds in virtue of the essences of each." (I quote from the unpublished English text of the article which was originally published in Italian). This sentence does not help to clarify what truth-making is, for it only presents a *species* of truth-making (immediate truth-making) leaving the general kind *Truth-making* unanalysed. A similar problem arises with the characterization of the truth-making relation as an internal relation which was proposed by Armstrong (1997). That a relation is internal means, given Armstrong's account of *being internal*, that the relation is such that necessarily if the *relata* exist then the relation is exemplified by them. But this leaves open the question concerning what being in that relation amounts to.

[20] It would be more correct to say that what is defined by the definition is the sense of "making" and not of "making true": in fact the truth-predicate reappears in the *definiens*.

The essence of the truth-bearer should, in Mulligan's proposal, "determine what portion of reality the truth-bearer represents"[21], to avoid, together with reference to the essence of the truth-maker, malignant necessitators. For instance, both reference to the essence of Stefano and to the essence of the proposition that $2 + 2 = 4$ prevent Stefano from being a truth-maker for such a proposition. In fact the essence of Stefano does not involve numbers, nor can the proposition that $2 + 2 = 4$ be sensibly said to be about Stefano. Reference to the essence of the proposition that Carola exists prevents the brightness of Carola's smile from being a truth-maker for such a proposition. In fact, although such brightness, if things like *brightnesses* exist, is identity-dependent on Carola (and so it is in virtue of its essence such that it cannot exist without Carola), the proposition that Carola exists does not represent such brightness. The last example allows us to appreciate that, in some critical cases, (6) does its job in virtue only of reference to the essences of truth-bearers, while reference to essences of truth-makers is ineffective. In fact the definitional schema

(7) *x makes p true* $=_{def} E!x$ & $_x\Box$ *(E!x → p)*,

in which the *definiens* is not committed to truth bearers (and, *a fortiori*, to their essences), allows the brightness of Carola's smile to be a truth-maker for the proposition that Carola exists: essential necessitation (as defined in (7)) turns things upside down no less then simple necessitation does.
A stronger version of (7), namely

(8) *x makes p true* $=_{def} E!x$ & $_x\Box$ *(E!x ↔ p)*,

which avoids the case of the brightness of Carola's smile, still has problems. Take the case of a Leibnizian God who, by its very essence (and so necessarily), created the world; it could be claimed (in a Kripkean view of essential properties) that the world essentially involves the existence of its creator. So (8) compels us to say that our world makes the proposition that its creator exists true. And this, again, seems to turn things upside down[22].

How does (6) manage to avoid such problems? It does so precisely thanks to its reference to the essence of the truth-bearer, which should determine what portion of reality the truth-bearer represents: the proposition that Carola exists does not represent the brightness of Carola's smile and the proposition that God exists does not represent the world! This, however, raises a problem: if someone tells us that the proposition that Carola exists is true because of the brightness of Carola's smile and that the proposition that the Leibnizian God exists is true because of the created world, the reason we are astonished seems to be *different* from the reason for which (7) and (8) are not open to counterexamples. What is wrong with the previous statements is not, at least *prima facie*, that speaking about Carola's existence is not speaking about the brightness of her smile, or that speaking about God's existence is not speaking about the created world: the problem seems to be metaphysical rather than semantic. What is wrong seems to be that it is not in virtue of the existence of the brightness of Carola's smile that the truth-conditions of the proposition that Carola exists are satisfied (i.e. it is not in

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[21] Mulligan (2003: 547).
[22] This case is made, in a slightly different way, in Correia (2005) against essentialist conceptions of ontological dependence. The suitability of these examples for our topic should be no surprise: ontological dependence, as Correia has convincingly argued, is the inverse relation of a particular case of *making F*: *making exist*.

virtue of that brightness that Carola exists) and it is not in virtue of the existence of the created world that the truth-conditions of the proposition that God exists are satisfied (i.e. it is not in virtue of the created world that the Creator exists).

Of course, people believing in individual essences can object that it is in virtue of their essences that truth-bearers have their truth-conditions. Even accepting this point, a sentence like "The created world makes the proposition that God exists true" should be considered wrong for two reasons: that the proposition that God exists is true if and only if some specific conditions are satisfied; and that the created world is not what grounds the satisfaction of such truth-conditions. As we saw when stating the relevance-constraint, in order to be what makes a truth-bearer true, an entity should satisfy a disjunctive condition: either the truth-bearer says that it exists or its existence grounds the satisfaction of the conditions that, given what the truth-bearer says, must be satisfied for the truth-bearer to be true. Taking anything whose existence grounds the existence of Carola (for instance the vital processes occurring inside her body), even if the proposition that Carola exists does not represent such entities, it still makes sense to say that these entities are what makes the proposition that Carola exists true. Nevertheless, according to (6), this is false because the vital processes inside Carola are not represented by the proposition that Carola exists. Therefore (6) does not provide necessary conditions for truth-making. A similar case is provided by logically simple propositions ascribing things their contingent properties, like the proposition that this rose (on my desk) is red. There are philosophers who claim that there are entities like tropes, whose mere existence grounds things' having their contingent properties: this rose being red is grounded in the existence of the particular redness of this rose. If these philosophers were right it would seem correct to say that the redness of this rose makes it true that this rose is red. Nonetheless, according to (6), even in such a situation, this would be false. In fact, the predicate "is red" (or the concept of being red) does not represent any particular redness, otherwise the proposition that another (red) rose is red would be false simply because there is a different trope involved in grounding the rose's being red. The point is that (6) can allow the rejection of sentences like "The brightness of her smile makes it true that Carola exists" merely by invoking the fact that the brightness in question is not represented by the proposition. In fact, as far as the metaphysical aspect of the question is concerned, (6) cannot appeal to ontological grounding but only to essence-induced necessitation which, as we saw, is the *opposite* of grounding. So (6) avoids counterexamples for the wrong reasons: it misses the metaphysical reason (ontological grounding) and lets essences of truth-bearers play a mistaken role, the appropriate role being that of determining the truth-conditions of the truth-bearer and not that of preventing what falls outside the representational content from playing the role of truth-maker.

The fact that (6) does not provide necessary conditions for truth-making is also shown by the following case. The case is interesting because it shows that not even being an essence induced necessitator of *p* is a necessary condition for being a truth-maker of *p*. Take any singular existential true proposition, for instance the proposition that I exist; the proposition is about me and it seems perfectly sound to say that it is true that I exist because I exist. So the proposition that I exist - and I - satisfy both because- and relevance- constraints; we would thus be allowed to say that it is me that makes the proposition that I exist true: things themselves make truth-bearers saying that those things exist true. Unfortunately I am not such that in virtue of my essence it is true that I exist! Otherwise I would be something which essentially exists: I would be, like God according to the ontological argument, something that can only be conceived as existent. But that I do not exist seems to be perfectly conceivable, so

essence-induced necessitation is not a *necessary* condition for truth-making: an entity can make a proposition true even if it is not in virtue of its essence that the proposition is true. Therefore truth-making is not essence-induced necessitation.

It could be objected to this argument that existence *is* an essential property of whatever entity, since being an entity is nothing more than being something which exists. I agree with the premise of the argument but I think the argument is not valid: although being an entity is nothing more than being something which exists, it does not follow from this that I am essentially an existent, unless one claims that I am essentially an entity, and I don't agree with this claim: it is perfectly conceivable that I am not among the things which populate the world, therefore among the entities[23].

The supporter of (6) might react to my point simply taking a revisionary stance toward our intuitions: in spite of our willingness to assert things like "It is true that Stefano exists because Stefano exists", Stefano does not make that Stefano exists true; namely for the reason that, even if he is at least one of the things represented by the proposition, he is not such that in virtue of his essence if he exists it is true that Stefano exists. This strategy has, however, the discouraging result that nothing except the state of affairs that Stefano exists can make the proposition that Stefano exists true. Nothing except the state of affairs that Stefano exists can in fact be thought to have both of the following features: a) being what is represented by the proposition that Stefano exists; b) being essentially such that if it exists (obtains) it is true that Stefano exists[24]. (a) is in fact satisfied by states of affairs if one believes that they are what propositions represent; (b) is satisfied by states of affairs (or by facts) because it can be claimed that biconditionals of the form *the state of affairs that p obtains iff it is true that p* or *the fact that p exists iff it is true that p* (if you are content with talk of the existence or non existence of facts) are true in virtue of what facts or states of affairs are, and thus in virtue of their essence.

Why is this discouraging? Because one of the reasons (I suspect the main one) why the notion of *making true* appeared to be philosophically interesting was that it left open the possibility of defending a correspondence conception of truth without being committed to its most controversial points, such as commitment to facts or states of affairs. We now discover that

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[23] The sentence "Stefano exists if and only if it is true that Stefano exists" seems to be true only by virtue of the denominalizing property of the truth predicate; moreover, if we exploit the denominalizing property of the truth predicate in "Stefano exists if and only if it is true that Stefano exists", we are left with "Stefano exists if and only if Stefano exists", which is an instance of the form "$p \rightarrow p$" which, again, seems not to be true in virtue of what Stefano is, but by logic only. Logical truths count as true in virtue of the essence of whatever only if one thinks that essential truths are closed under logical consequence, therefore only if one embraces what Fine (1994b) calls a *consequentialist* notion of essence: but this is precisely the notion of essence that someone willing to avoid the problem of malignant truth-makers *should not* embrace!

[24] Here, and in what follows, *obtaining* is conceived as the way in which states of affairs exist, so that there are no non-obtaining states of affairs (as there are no non-existent entities in general). Talk of obtaining can be turned into talk of existence if one thinks that the existence of facts is nothing but the obtaining of states of affairs, thus if one thinks of facts as obtaining states of affairs. This seems to be the conception endorsed by Mulligan (2003).

we were wrong: there are some *prima facie* logically simple propositions, such as singular existential ones, which can be made true only by states of affairs.

It should be noted that this problem cannot be avoided by relaxing the relevance-constraint and being content with some entity which is essentially such that if it exists Stefano exists although it is not represented by the truth-bearer: this in fact would involve accepting a definitional schema like (7) for *x makes p true*. Unfortunately, as we saw, every individual quality of Stefano satisfies (7) without satisfying the *because*-constraint. To avoid counterexamples of this kind one could choose a more demanding definitional schema, such as (8). But apart from the fact that, as we have just seen, (8) has its own problems as a definitional schema of *x makes p true*, (8) brings us back to the realm of states of affairs. What other than the state of affairs that Stefano exists could be such that in virtue of its essence it is true that it exists (obtains) *iff* Stefano exists? Well, it could be replied, you do not need a state of affairs if you have a metaphysics of substances according to which: a) substances are individuated through their origins; b) there are not only originating substances (such as Stefano's parents), but even originating events which are essentially the originating events of their originated substances (for instance the birth of Stefano). In such a metaphysics the birth of Stefano and Stefano are such that in virtue of their essences it is true that the birth exists *iff* Stefano exists.

This proposal has several problems. First of all it shares with (5) the problem of symmetry: it is both true that the existence of Stefano essentially entails the existence of his birth and that the existence of the latter essentially entails the existence of the former; therefore we can say not only that the birth of Stefano grounds Stefano's existence but even that Stefano grounds the existence of Stefano's birth. But ontological grounding is an asymmetrical relation. The second problem is that the proposal is not generalizable to every singular existential proposition: even granting that essentiality of origins is true for complex substances such as me or the chair I am sitting on, it seems to me that it cannot be true for every existent. First of all, this would start a *metaphysical* regress in the identity of entities. Second, it is a convincing metaphysical thesis that there are primitive entities whose identity and existence is not grounded on the identity or existence of other entities: examples of such entities are, according to some metaphysicians, primitive substances such as *selves* or the basic constituents of matter or both[25], according to others, primitive *tropes* whose combination grounds the existence of all other entities. And if Platonism is right, there are entities, such as abstract entities, for which it makes no sense to speak of origins. Take any of those entities, call it *a*: it seems that there can be nothing which satisfies the formula "E!x & $_{x/a}$ □ (E!x iff E!a)", except, of course, the state of affairs that *a* exists or the fact that *a* exists, provided you have such entities in your ontology and you believe that exemplifications of schemas such as *the state of affairs that p obtains iff p* and *the fact that p exists iff p* are true in virtue of what states of affairs and facts are.

To summarize, my point against (6) is that, in the first place it forces its advocates to take a revisionist stance toward our intuitions concerning what makes what true (and this is a good reason to reject it if you do not wish to be revisionist toward the intuitions that Stefano makes it true that Stefano exists and that it is true that Stefano exists because Stefano exists). In the second place, once this stance is taken, the advocates of (6) are forced into the following dilemma: either there are many logically simple true propositions that are such that there is no

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[25] See Lowe (1998).

entity making them true (so both truth-maker maximalism and truth-maker neo-logical atomism are false), or things like states of affairs (or facts) are truth-makers and we are back to the old problems of the correspondence conception of truth. It would be nice to have a notion of truth-making which does not force us to buy states of affairs just to ensure that every true singular existential proposition has a truth-maker. This could be done through a notion of truth-making according to which any entity makes the proposition that it exists true: unfortunately the essentialist notion of truth-making is not such.

5. *Pleonastic states of affairs as truth-makers and non-immediate truth-making*.

Mulligan adopts a three-step strategy in order to overcome such problems. The first step is to buy states of affairs as truth-makers. The second step is to defend a conception of states of affairs which promise to escape all the sceptical worries the enemies of facts and states of affairs have, namely the conception of states of affairs, in the words of Stephen Schiffer, as *pleonastic entities*[26]: ontological commitment to such entities is guaranteed by trivial linguistic transformations expressed by biconditionals of the form *the state of affairs that p obtains iff p*. The third step consists in introducing the notions of *non-immediate truth-making* and *making obtain*: non-pleonastic entities make pleonastic states of affairs obtain and so make true, non-immediately, the propositions which those states of affairs make immediately true[27].

The most obvious way to criticise such a proposal would be to question the very notion of a pleonastic entity, particularly the idea defended by Schiffer and Mulligan that pleonastic entities are *both* language-created and language-independent. But the point I want to put forward here is a different one: even granted that there is something such as a pleonastic state of affairs, pleonastic states of affairs are not suitable as truth-makers, for they do not survive the *because*-constraint.

Pleonastic states of affairs are "introduced" in the ontology by biconditionals of the form

> 9) *The state of affairs that p obtains iff p*

or

> 10) *The state of affairs that p obtains iff it is true that p.*

The problem is the following: what entitles us, starting from (9) or (10), to say that *it is true that p because the state of affairs that p obtains*? Let us start with (10). In the first place (10) is a *biconditional* which in itself says nothing about the direction of the explanatory relation between the proposition that the state of affairs that *p* obtains and the proposition that it is true that *p*. In the second place if one thinks that the notion of a state of affairs is *introduced* by instances of (10) one should in principle accept that there is a conceptual priority of the notion of truth over the notion of a state of affairs which obtains. But conceptual priority of the

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[26] Schiffer (1996), (2003). Another source of Mulligan's theory is the notion of *ontological free lunch* which was used in Armstrong (1997) in order to explain the ontological status of the relation of *making true*.

[27] For the three-step strategy see Mulligan (2003), (in this volume).

notion expressed by a formula α over the notion expressed by a formula β is a reason to assert "$\beta*$ because $\alpha*$"[28], as in the sentence, "Pietro is a bachelor because he is an unmarried man". So if one considers (10) as a schema of biconditionals which introduce the notion of a state of affairs, one should be willing to say that the state of affairs that p obtains because it is true that p, and this means conceding that states of affairs do not satisfy the *because*-constraint.

Of course the move of the advocate of states of affairs as truth-makers is to deny that states of affairs are introduced by biconditionals of form (10) and to claim that they are introduced by biconditionals like (9). But here the problem is that if states of affairs are introduced by biconditionals like (9), how is the connection between the concept of a state of affairs (which obtains) and the concept of truth made? The most natural answer (for an advocate of pleonastic transformations) would seem to be: using "Tarskian" biconditionals of the form

11) *It is true that p iff p.*

What links states of affairs and truth are thus the right-hand sides of (11) and (9). Given what we said about conceptual priority, (9) and (11) should entitle us to say both

12) *It is true that p because p*[29]

and

13) *The state of affairs that p obtains because p.*

The question is now what entitles us to infer from (12) and (13)

14) *It is true that p because the state of affairs that p obtains.*

Nothing, I believe. "It is true that p" and "The state of affairs that p obtains" are in fact both explained by p, but the simple fact that there is an explanatory relation between both sentences p and q and a third sentence r, is no more a reason to say p *because q* than to say q *because p*. What would be needed is some independent reason to assert one explanation-sentence rather than its converse and neither (9) nor (10) nor (11) provides such a reason, at least as far as I can see.

A way out for the advocate of pleonastic states of affairs as truth-makers is to claim that in (10) the explanation flows from "The state of affairs that p obtains" to "It is true that p" because the concept of truth is introduced by instances of (10), starting from the concept of the obtaining of a state of affairs, a concept which is in turn introduced by instances of (9). So

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[28] $\beta*$ and $\alpha*$ are the relevant closed formulas obtained from β and α. For instance, if β is "x is a state of affairs which obtains", $\beta*$ is "That p is an obtaining states of affairs" and if α is "x is true", $\alpha*$ is "That p is true".

[29] (11) entitles us to (12) because there is a conceptual priority of p over "It is true that p". I think there are good reasons for this claim, not least the fact that, as is stressed by Soames (1999), it is reasonable to suppose that we learn to use the truth-predicate through sentences like "If the cat is on the mat, it is true that the cat is on the mat and if it is not on the mat, it is not true that it is on the mat".

we can say both that *it is true that p because the state of affairs that p obtains* and that *the state of affairs that p obtains because p*. The problem with this proposal is that it seems *ad hoc*. Why should we grant that the concept of truth is introduced through biconditionals like (10) and not through biconditionals like (11)? In the first place, it does not seem that the former biconditionals are more adequate than the latter to account for our use of the truth-predicate (of course anyone who does not believe deflationism will think that *neither* biconditional gives a satisfactory account of the concept of truth). In the second place, instances of (9) make use, on their right-hand sides, of the same sentences which are used on the right-hand sides of (11); therefore it seems that before introducing the notion of a state of affairs through instances of (9), we already have the resources to introduce the concept of truth through instances of (11).

Another way out for an advocate of pleonastic facts as truth-makers, which is at the same time against deflationism in the theory of truth, is to claim that the relation between the concept of truth and the concept of state of affairs is not given by a list of biconditionals but by a *finite* definition of truth which involves the concept of a (pleonastic) state of affairs to which a proposition pleonastically corresponds. This philosopher would defend a *pleonastic correspondence conception of truth*[30]. The problem with pleonastic correspondence is however that it misses the main (and perhaps only) good point of correspondence theory against deflationism: that correspondence theory (unlike deflationism) provides us with a *finite* definition of truth. The problem here is that the pleonastic correspondence definition of truth is only *seemingly* finite: in fact it makes use of a concept of state of affairs which is a concept of a pleonastic entity, so a concept introduced *via* an infinite list of biconditionals like (10); therefore what it is for propositions to correspond to state of affairs of this kind seems to be intelligible just *via* an infinite list: *x corresponds to y iff x is the proposition that p and y is the fact that p, or x is the proposition that q and y is the fact that q…*and so on. The pleonastic correspondence definition of truth is like a house whose foundations lay on shifting soil.

We can conclude, therefore, that pleonastic states of affairs are not truth-makers. What an advocate of states of affairs *as truth-makers* should do is precisely the opposite of defending a pleonastic conception of states of affairs: this philosopher should argue for a conception of states of affairs as metaphysically fundamental entities, a conception which justifies asserting exemplifications of the schema

   15) *p because the state of affairs that p obtains.*

From (15) and (12) we can infer (14), and thus satisfy the *because*-constraint. Arguing for (15) means, in fact, claiming that states of affairs are the entities grounding the satisfaction of the truth-conditions of propositions and this seems a very sensible reason to claim that states of affairs are what make propositions true. Surely if something grounds the satisfaction of the conditions for something else to be *F*, then it grounds the being *F* of such a thing and so

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[30] This conception is defended by Volpe (2005). Ideas of this kind were defended for the first time, as far as I know, by Hill (1999), (2001) in the spirit of reconciling correspondence intuitions with deflationist approaches to truth; aiming at such an ecumenical goal, Hill does not claim, as Volpe does, that the notions of correspondence and of state of affairs enter in a *definition* of truth. He claims only that there are principles connecting *a priori* our concept of truth with these notions.

makes such a thing *F*. Thus, if one wants to have states of affairs as truth-makers, one should do what, in different ways, Wittgenstein in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Russell in *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, and, more recently, Gustav Bergmann in *Realism* and David Armstrong in *A World of States of Affairs*, have done: claim that the world is a world of facts, so that this red rose is nothing but a fact[31]. This metaphysics is plagued with well-known difficulties[32], but at any rate this is the price that must be paid for having states of affairs as truth-makers; otherwise the *because*-constraint will remain unsatisfied.

From what has been said, two conclusions can be drawn which go against the essentialist conception of truth-making. First of all, the case against pleonastic states of affairs is one more example of the fact that the truth of sentences of the form "$_{a/b}$ *(E!a iff Fb)*" is not a sufficient condition for *a* to make *b* F[33]. Secondly, if pleonastic states of affairs are not truth-makers, the advocate of essential truth-making is still left without truth-makers for true singular existentials, for, as we saw, only state of affairs which obtains can be, given the essentialist definition of truth-making, what makes it true that Stefano exists. So even the essentialist about truth-making, who is at the same time an advocate of pleonastic facts, can save neither truth-maker maximalism nor truth-maker neo-logical atomism.

What has been said concerns the first two steps in Mulligan's argument. I want now briefly to say something about the notion of *making obtain* a state of affairs: this notion is supposed to ground pleonastic truth-making in more worldly entities, which make pleonastic states of affairs obtain. This is Mulligan's conception of states of affairs as *tips of icebergs*:

If states of affairs are truth-makers, there will be other entities of which such states of affairs are the tips which will also make these states of affairs obtain and, in some cases, make true (non-immediately) what these states of affairs make true[34].

How should the notion of *making obtain* be understood? From some examples of *making obtain* given by Mulligan it appears that the following could be a schema of axioms for *making obtain*

16) *x makes obtain the state of affairs that $R^n t_1...t_n$ if x makes $t_1...t_n R^n$* [35].

(16) seems to presuppose (13) (*the state of affairs that p obtains because p*) which grounds the obtaining of a state of affairs in the way the world is: since a state of affairs obtains

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[31] This robust fact can be conceived either as one (or more) *obtaining* states of affairs, as in Wittgenstein, or as merely a state of affairs: in this case a state of affairs is the exemplification of a property by a particular, as in Armstrong and Bergmann (1967).

[32] For a battery of such difficulties see: Dodd (1999).

[33] Replacing "E!" with "obtains" (which is the existence-predicate for states of affairs), "*a*" with "the state of affairs that *p*" "*b*" with "the proposition that *p*" and "F" with "is true".

[34] Mulligan (2003), (in this volume).

[35] This schema seems to be implicitly accepted in Mulligan (2003: 552): "A complex of processes including conception and parturition makes *a* the father of *b* and so makes the state of affairs that *a* is the father of *b* obtain".

because things are in a certain way, whatever makes things be in that way makes the state of affairs obtain.

Schema (16) raises two problems. The first is that since the notion of *making obtain* is clarified via the schematic notion of *making R^n* and *making true* is merely an instance of such a form, it is likely that all the problems we encountered in the proposed analyses of the notion of *making true* will still be there with the notion of *making obtain*. Take the case of the obtaining state of affairs that the fundamental and contingent entity *a* exists. If *making R^n* is analyzed in an essentialist way, it is difficult to find an entity that makes obtain, in virtue of its essence, the state of affairs that *a* exists. It could be said that *a* makes obtain, but *not in virtue of its essence*, the state of affairs at stake[36]. This move creates several problems, however. It must be explained how, given schema (16), *a* can make *a* exist, even though not in virtue of its essence; and it seems to me that there is no sense of "making" in which it is true that a contingent entity makes itself exist. The only way out is to consider a sentence like "*a* makes obtain the state of affair that *a* exists" as a primitive conceptual truth about *making obtain*: this sentence is true not in virtue of the essence of *a* but in virtue of the essence of *obtaining* (of a state of affairs). But is this conceptual claim justified? It seems to me that it can only be justified if one considers all instances of schema (13) as conceptual truths concerning the obtaining of states of affairs. Once this is granted, the sentence "the state of affairs that *a* exists obtains because *a* exists" come out conceptually true. But now the question is: what entitles us to infer from the because-sentence in question its make-obtain twin (that is to say "*a* makes obtain the state of affairs that *a* exists")? The inference would be justified if relational concepts of the form "*x* makes *y* F" were analyzed *via* non relational explanatory sentences of the form "*p* because *q*". But this would amount to give up the essentialist and relational analysis in favour of a different one which I am going to defend[37].

A last thing should be noted. We saw that schema (16) presupposes (13); but we have a twin of (13) with the truth-predicate, namely (12) (*it is true that p because p*). This fact should entitle us to write a twin of (16) with the truth-predicate

17) *x makes that R^n $t_1...t_n$ true if x makes $t_1...t_n$ R^n.*

But once we accept (17), whatever makes obtain a state of affairs will make true the proposition made true by the state of affairs. So the notion of *making obtain* seems to be superfluous as a way of grounding truth-making in more worldly entities than states of affairs.

6. *A sketch of a different proposal.*

Modal and essentialist accounts are unable, in different ways, to satisfy the *because*-constraint. This fact suggests a simple move: identifying *making F*, and specifically *making true*, with the *because*-constraint and so with a kind of explanation. This can be done starting from a general claim about *making F* and *making true*, put forward, in slightly different ways, by Wolfgang Künne and Jennifer Hornsby, which is expressed by the following schema:

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[36] Mulligan (2003: 551).

[37] Mulligan (in this volume) seems to agree, at least in part, with this view when he claims that essence-induced truth-making and fact-making are not relations.

18) *nom(p) makes y F (true) iff y is F (true) because p*[38].

where "nom(*p*)" is a schematic expression for which a nominalization of *p* must be substituted in order to obtain an exemplification of the schema. There is an instance of (18) whose right-hand side properly amounts to the *because*-constraint. Such an instance is obtained replacing *p* with a sentence of the form "*a* exists":

19) *nom (a exists) makes y F (true) iff y is F because a exists.*

Ontological ground, or objectual *making F (true)*, can be characterized through the right-hand side of (19):

20) *x makes y F (true)=*$_{def}$ *y is F (true) because x exists*[39].

What it is crucial to notice here is the difference between (18) and (20). While in fact (20) deserves the title of *definition* of *making F* and *making true*, this is not true of (18), since it characterizes *making F* and *making true* only insofar as, in talking about something making something else *F*, we use nominalizations as noun phrases. What is interesting here is that while assuming (18) and a sentence of the form "*b is F because p*" we can infer the correlative sentence of the form "nom(*p*) makes *b F*", it is not obvious that we are allowed to infer from the latter sentence and (20) the sentence "*b is F because* nom(*p*) *exists*". For instance, given (18), if Carola is happy because Gilda is nice to her it is trivially true that Gilda' s being nice to her makes Carola happy; this however is not a reason to believe that Carola is happy because Gilda's being nice to her *exists*. It would not be inconsistent to believe that Carola is happy because Gilda is nice to her (and therefore that Gilda's being nice to her makes Carola happy) and also not believe that there is an entity which is *Gilda's being nice to Carola* and that the existence of such an entity explains why Carola is happy. This means that it is not obvious that there is *any* intersection between the extensions of the notion characterized by (18) and the notion defined by (20). This is perhaps what leads Mulligan to isolate a special kind of truth-making, *immediate* truth-making, as truth-making which holds in virtue of both the essences of the truth-bearer and the truth-maker. But, in the first place, what has been said about the intersection between the extensions of the predicates characterized respectively by (18) and (20) amounts to saying that it is not a trivial matter whether something which immediately makes *y F (true)* is also the ontological ground of *y*'s being *F (true)*[40]. In the second place (18) shows that what Mulligan calls "immediate truth-making" is part of a much more general phenomenon, which is not linked in any specific way to essentiality. For instance, there seems not to be any *essential* connection between Gilda's being nice to Carola and Carola's being happy, but rather a mere causal one. Nonetheless, provided that Carola is happy because Gilda is nice to her, that Gilda's being nice to her makes Carola happy is as trivially true as that the fact that snow is white makes it true that snow is white (provided that it is true that snow is white because snow is white). The

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[38] Although neither Künne (2003) nor Hornsby (2005) explicitly endorse (18), (18) seems to capture their general idea about *making F*. Hornsby for instance put forward the following equivalence: *nom(q) is explained by nom(p) ⫢ q because p*; but the left-hand side of the equivalence is in turn intended as a possible clarification (in more general terms) of the form *x's being G makes y F*.

[39] This definition of "*x makes y* true" is also defended by Schnieder (2006).

[40] In §5 this general claim is applied to pleonastic states of affairs.

systematic phenomenon enlightened by (18) is rather that, when a complex predicate of the form "*x* makes *y* *F*" appears in contexts of the form "nom(*p*) makes *b* *F*", we are in presence of trivial transformations of sentences of the form "*b* is *F* because *p*". Notwithstanding these differences, I will adopt the terminology introduced by Mulligan in distinguishing two different kind of *making F* (and *making true*): the *pleonastic kind* (which is characterized by (18)), **P-making F** (**true**), and the *full-blooded kind* (which is characterized by (20)), **FB-making F** (**true**).

What is important in the analyses proposed is that the right hand sides of (18) and the *definiens* of (20) are explanatory formulas which *do not* say that a relation holds between two entities: "because" is a sentential connective, not a two-place predicate. This allows us to understand the plainly objectual and relational *making* expressed by the *definiendum* of (20) as merely a particular case of a non-objectual and non-relational making which amounts simply to explanation. What is *primarily* at stake in *making F* are *explanations* and not objects! Such objects enter the scene only when and because explanations call them into play. Ian McFetridge was the first to underline the relation between truth-makers and explanations[41]. There is however an important difference between his account and the one put forward here. According to McFetridge "*x* makes *p* true" means "*x* (a fact) explains the fact that *p* is true"; therefore according to him the notion of truth-making is the notion of a particular relation, namely the relation of explanation. On the contrary, I do not think that the notion of explanation is involved in the analysis of the notion of truth-making. The reason is that understanding the sentence "*a* makes it true that *p*" requires neither grasping the concept of *explanation* nor being committed to the existence of facts. Therefore, for instance, the sentences "Andrea makes it true that Andrea exists" and "The fact that Andrea exists explains the fact that it is true that Andrea exists" have different ontological commitments. By using instances of "*a* makes it true that *p*" we are providing explanations; but providing an explanation is not *speaking about* such an explanation (and about the entities which are in the explanatory relation)[42].

What kind of explanation must be involved in the *definiens* of (20) in order to ensure necessitation? The connective "because" can in fact convey different kinds of explanations: when I say that Maria is happy because Carlo is so nice to her, "because" expresses a causal

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[41] McFetridge (1990). On McFetridge and truth-making see Liggins (2005).

[42] Simons has emphasized that there is a relation between truth-makers and reasons: "The idea that truths require truth-makers is an ontological rendering of the principle of sufficient reason, that there needs to be a reason why a truth is true." (Simons, 2000: 17). Nonetheless he wants the sense of "reason" in which truth-makers are reasons to be sharply distinguished from the sense of "reason" as "explanation": "Disambiguating 'reason' in one of two possible ways, truth-makers are entities in the world which ground truths rather than other truths which explain or entail truths." (Simons, 2000: 17-18). Moreover he seems to identify with entailment the way in which the existence of an object is a reason for a proposition being true: "The objects A make the proposition that *p* true *iff* the existence of *A* is sufficient for the truth of the proposition that *p*" (Simons, 2003: 557). I think that this proposal, in addition to sharing the shortcomings of modal characterizations of truth-making has a particular problem: it compels us to consider ambiguous the word "reason", when there is no reason to do so.

explanation; on the contrary when I say that it is true that 2 + 2 = 4 because 2 + 2 = 4 or that this surface is red because it reflects light in such and such a way, what is at stake is not a causal explanation. This is clear with the truth-case but it should be also clear with the red-case: someone saying that this surface is red because it reflects light in such and such a way can believe that being red is *nothing but* reflecting light in such and such a way, but causal relations involve that the *relata* are different! While causal explanations do not involve necessitation non causal explanations do. So it is up to the advocate of the *because*-analysis of *making F* and *making true* to explain what sort of thing is a *non causal* explanation since only this kind of explanation must be involved in the *definiens* of (20) if it is to capture the notion of ontological ground.

According to Künne the particular kind of explanation involved in the non causal *making F* is either conceptual analysis or theoretical reduction[43]. I partially agree. It is certainly true that paradigmatic uses of "*x* makes *y F*" and "*nom(p)* makes *y F*", where "makes" is understood in the non causal sense, are particularisations of claims concerning what it is for something to be *F*. If I say that its reflecting light in a certain way makes this surface red, my claim is an answer to the question: What is it for that thing to be red? And the answer to this question is an instance of the answer to the general questions: What is it for something to be red? Answers to these questions are sometimes given by providing a conceptual analysis (the kind of answers which philosophers like more) and at other times by providing a theoretical reduction (the kind of answers preferred by scientists). But there are also cases of *making F* for which it seems difficult to give such an account. One of these cases is put forward by Mulligan:

> 21) *A particular promise makes, by its very essence, a particular action obligatory.*

One could try to give an account of this case, by claiming that we assert (21) because commitment to the existence of things such as promises is part of our theory of what it is for actions to be obligatory. This can happen, for instance, if we have a contractualist theory of what being obligatory is. But, it could be objected, no particular conception of moral obligatoriness is required to believe that promises make the actions promised obligatory. What is required is simply the mastery of the concept of "being a promise": everyone mastering such a concept knows that if a promise occurs then a particular action (the action promised) is obligatory, merely because of the existence of the promise. This is a conceptual and necessary truth concerning promises and not a necessary truth concerning what it is for something to be obligatory: an action can be obligatory although no promise concerning it has occurred (for instance it can be obligatory because it is prescribed by a law). Therefore, although "your promise makes your action obligatory" is analyzable with "your action is obligatory because there was your promise (concerning it)", in asserting the latter we are not asserting a claim concerning the nature of moral obligatoriness, a claim concerning what it is for an action to be obligatory. What we are doing instead is asserting a primitive truth given the concept of being a promise: given such a concept, the existence of a promise is sufficient (but not necessary) to explain why a particular action (the action promised) is obligatory.

I think that, although the kind of non causal explanation described by Künne is always involved in *truth-making*, there are cases of *truth-making* in which the second kind of non causal explanation is also involved. For instance, two explanatory steps seem to be involved

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[43] Künne (2003).

when I say that a particular promise makes it true that a particular action is obligatory: the first step is that it is true that action *a* is obligatory because action *a* is obligatory; the second step is that action *a* is obligatory because promise *b* occurred. The former explanation must be understood as a kind of conceptual analysis of what it is for a given proposition to be true, but the latter must be understood as a primitive truth given the concept of being a promise.

Let me stress some advantages of the *because*-analysis of *making F* and *making true*. In the first place the *because*-analysis provides a *general* account of expressions of the form *x makes y F*. In the second place the *because*-account does not suffer from the shortcomings of modal and essentialist accounts, both unable to satisfy the *because*-constraint. In fact the *because*-account of "*x* makes *y* true" is identical to the *because*-constraint! Therefore the shortcomings of the rival accounts are by definition overcome. In addition we have a simple explanation of how each entity can be said to make the proposition that says that it exists true. It is sufficient, for instance, to agree that *it is true that Andrea exists because Andrea exists* and that the kind of explanation involved here is a kind of explanation which involves necessitation: in this case what is at stake is a non casual explanation based on conceptual analysis of the concept of *being true* [44]. What is more, the *because*-analysis allows facing an argument which is often put forward by advocates of truth-makers and more generally of the correspondence conception of truth, the argument being that if there is *no thing* making propositions true then there is nothing making propositions true and so truth will be ungrounded[45]. The reply to this argument is that someone who does not believe that there is an entity whose existence explains why it is true that snow is white, can consistently assert that there is something making it true that snow is white: namely snow's being white. The reason is that, according to the because-analysis, an exemplification of (18) can be true although there is no thing which satisfies (20). In fact, according to this analysis, "snow's being white makes it true that snow is white" is no more ontologically committing than the sentence "it is true that snow is white because snow is white"[46]. If this is true, a modest principle concerning making-true, which accounts for the correspondence intuition, can be obtained starting from the following schema whose instances seem to be conceptual truths about truth:

(G) *If it is true that p then it is true that p because p*[47].

(G) together with schema (18) entails

(G1)   *If it is true that p then nom(p) P-makes that p true*

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[44] This claim is made by Künne (2003). I try to provide some reasons for believing that *p* counts as a partial conceptual analysis of "It is true that *p*" in Caputo (2005); these reasons are based upon comparison, in different contexts, between "It is true that *p*" and "*p*" on the one hand, and typical cases of synonymy (such as "*a* is a bachelor"/"*a* is an unmarried man") on the other hand, (with particular attention to *because* contexts). I am aware that this involves a deflationist stance toward truth.

[45] This argument is explicitly stated in Rodriguez-Pereyra (2005).

[46] The advocate of the because-analysis can even agree with the claim that "snow's being white" refers to a pleonastic entity, provided he thinks, as I do, that the existence of entities of this kind does not explain why propositions are true.

[47] This claim is made both by Künne (2003) and Hornsby (2005).

(remember that "*a* P-makes *b* true" expresses the pleonastic truth-making which is characterized by (18)). From (G1) we finally obtain by generalization:

(TM) *If a proposition is true then something P-makes it true*

where "something" should be understood as a substitutional quantifier whose substitution class is the class of expressions of the form *nom(p)*. (TM) should not be confused with the principle

(EXP) *For any true proposition there is an explanation of its being true*

(the explanations in question being provided by the instances of (G))[48]. In fact, although the reason to assert a sentence of the form *nom(p) makes it true that p* is that we are justified in asserting the correlative explanatory sentence of the form *it is true that p because p*, neither sentences are *committed to* explanations (although the latter *is* an explanation). Therefore, although (EXP) and (TM) do not express the same proposition the former expresses the reason we have to believe that the latter is true: *if a proposition is true then something P-makes it true because for any true proposition there is an explanation of its being true*.
(TM) should be carefully distinguished by the following principle:

(Super-TM) *If a proposition is true then something FB-makes it true*.

(Super-TM) is in fact equivalent to the not trivial claim that for any true proposition there is a thing whose existence explains why the proposition is true. Advocates of truth-makers and of the correspondence theory of truth think that (Super-TM) is true. But, if what I said is true, the correspondence intuition does not force one to accept (Super-TM).

What should be done to argue in favour of (Super-TM)? Only true singular existential propositions are in fact such that we know, merely on the basis of our concept of truth, that there are entities *FB-making* them true. But if we assume, as seems plausible, that explanation is transitive, then all that we have to do in order to argue that a given proposition, if true, has some entity *FB-making* it true is to show that a singular existential sentence can count as an explanation (of one of the relevant kinds) of the sentence expressing the truth-conditions of the proposition. Let us take, for instance, the true proposition that this ink is black. The proposition is true because this ink is black. If one manages to show either that what it is for this ink to be black is for a particular entity to exist, or that there is some entity which is for the ink's being black what a promise is for a particular action's being obligatory, then one has, *eo ipso*, shown that the entity in question makes the proposition that this ink is black true.

Lewis was basically right when he said that the question concerning the existence of some entity making the proposition that cats purr true is actually a question concerning the existential ground of purring cats[49]. A different way to express in general terms what is really

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[48] This reading of the correspondence intuition was originally put forward by McFetridge (1990: 42).
[49] See Lewis (2001). It seems to me that the identification of truth-makers with difference-makers does not do justice to the correct intuition of Lewis to the effect that truth-makers are what existentially ground how the world is: number 2 *is* a difference-

at stake in (Super-TM) is the following: the supporter of (Super-TM) claims that what it is for a *n-tuple* of individuals to exemplify an *n-ary* property is for some entity to exist or at least that there are entities which are for things having their properties what promises are for actions' being obligatory. The supporter of (Super-TM) must therefore provide arguments for the claim that *being so and so* is always grounded on the existence of something. A difficult task indeed.

I want finally to discuss some objections to the *because*-account of *making F* and *making true*. The first objection, put forward by Mulligan, is that there are cases of relational-objectual *making* which do not seem to be treatable in the model of *because*-sentences. These are cases involving objects and propositions stating their essential properties or internal relations as in

22) *Orange, yellow and red make the proposition that orange lies between yellow and red true.*

23) *Stefano makes the proposition that Stefano is a man true.*

(22) and (23) make trouble for the *because*-account because they are not equivalent respectively to "It is true that Stefano is a man because Stefano exists" and "It is true that orange lies between yellow and red because orange, yellow and red exist": these latter sentences are in fact clearly false while (22) and (23) are both true. The reason why they are true, the objection goes, is that we have here two cases of essence-induced *making*: Stefano, for instance, makes it true that Stefano is a man not in virtue of its existence but rather in virtue of its individual essence. A supporter, like me, of the *because*-account can react to this objection in two ways. The first one is to deny that (22) and (23) are true (or obviously so): they are theoretically loaded statements which only someone who already believes in something like essence-induced *making* would be willing to accept. What is intuitively true is rather something like the following: that orange, yellow and red are such and such makes it true that orange lies between red and yellow; that Stefano has DNA of a certain kind (or that he is a rational being, or something else) makes it true that Stefano is a man. The second one is to slightly modify the *because*-account of *making F* and *making true* so that it can account for the truth of (22) and (23). This can be done with the following definition:

24) *x makes y F (true)* $=_{\text{def}}$ *y is F (true) either because x exists or because x is what it is*[50]

With (24) the advocate of the *because*-account simply acknowledges that sometimes what explains that something is *F* is not that something exists but rather that something is what it is, and that these can also count as instances of *making F*. An advocate of essence-induced *making* can object to this proposal that the modified *because*-account is actually a covert essentialist account. In fact "what it is" in (24) means "what it *essentially* is", so that reference to the individual essence of a thing is covertly made. To this it can be replied that it is not necessary to understand talk of the nature of something as ontological committing to

maker for the proposition that God exists (if God exists and is a necessary being) but it is not the existential ground of God's existence.

[50] Of course also the *because*-constraint must be modified in similar way.

individual essences: as Fabrice Correia has convincingly argued, such a talk can be understood in terms of talk concerning what it is for a thing to be that thing, what *being that particular thing* is[51].

The second objection is the following: what is at stake in theoretical reductions and conceptual analyses is what being such and such consists in. In fact what makes the difference between theoretical reduction and conceptual analysis, on the one hand, and other kinds of explanations (for example causal explanations) on the other, is precisely that the former and not the latter aim to answer questions such as, "What does being such and such consist in?" This suggests a different way of defining *making F* which does not make use of *because*-sentences and which, the opponent claims, is conceptually prior to *because*-analysis:

25) *x's G-ing makes y F (true)* =$_{def}$ *y's being F (true) consists in x's G-ing.*

26) *x makes y F (true)* =$_{def}$ *y's being F (true) consists in x's existing*[52].

The *consisting-in* analysis, the objection goes, is not only conceptually prior in respect to the *because*-analysis but also metaphysically more revealing: "to consist in" is in fact a relational notion and therefore *making F* and *making true* are basically relational notions, contrary to what the advocate of the *because*-analysis claims!

Two things should be said concerning this proposal. In the first place this analysis is equivalent to the *because*-analysis only insofar as cases like those of promises are excluded: if we also want to account for these cases we must reject the *consisting-in* account: a promise can make an action obligatory even if it is not true that the promise being obligatory consists in the existence of promises. Therefore that something being *F* consists in the existence of something else is not a necessary condition for the latter thing making the former one *F*. In the second place it is an open question whether or not *consisting-in* sentences indeed have any conceptual priority over *because*-sentences and are in any way metaphysically more revealing. Here much depends on the answer one gives to the following question: Are expressions such as "*x*'s *G-ing*" ontologically committed to non pleonastic entities?[53] If they are, the *consisting-in* analysis reintroduces a genuine commitment to objectual and relational truth-making. If they are not (as I believe), understanding such expressions is parasitic on understanding sentences of the form "*x Gs*" and therefore the *consisting-in* analysis will turn out to be a nominalized variant of the *because*-analysis. These are however questions which I

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[51] Correia (2004). Correia also provides some good reasons not to believe that expressions of the form "F-ing" (in which "F" must be replaced by a predicate) denote properties; when one comes to expressions of the form "being *a*" (being that particular thing) these are also reasons not to believe that such expressions refer to a property which is the individual essence of *a*.

[52] This is basically an application of the analysis of the notion of *grounding* put forward by Fine (2001).Vision (2005) has put forward a similar analysis using the notion of *constitution*.

[53] Pleonastic entities must be excluded from the range of putative referents since the argument against pleonastic states of affairs as truth-makers put forward in §5 can be extended to cover any pleonastic entity.

will leave open here: there is still much work to be done to *make a proposal* out of what is just a sketch of a proposal[54].

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