TRUTH-BEARERS AND MODESTY*

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Summary

In this paper I discuss Künne's Modest Theory of truth, and develop a variation on a worry that Field expresses with respect to Horwich's related view. The worry is not that deflationary accounts are false, but rather that, because they take propositions as truth-bearers, they are not philosophically interesting. Compatibly with the intuitions of ordinary speakers, we can understand *proposition* so that the proposals do account for a property that such truth-bearers have. Nevertheless, we saliently apply the truth-concept also to entities such as *utterances* or *assertions*, and the deflationary accounts do not provide a similarly deflationary account for those applications. In fact, there are good reasons to suspect that no such account would be forthcoming; we need something more substantive or inflationary there.

1. *Introduction*

Wolfgang Künne's *Conceptions of Truth* is a wonderful book in many respects. It is written with clarity, precision, and wit. It is informed by the most significant contributions to its topic, not just from philosophers in the Analytic tradition and its Austrian predecessors, but from philosophers whose work spans the whole history of the subject. It judiciously selects from these riches, providing what is in my view the best up-to-date introduction to the subject. Last but not least, it provides a compelling critical

overview of the different approaches to truth, and an interesting proposal of its own which, even if—as the author acknowledges—it is close to others previously advanced, has sufficient novelties to count as original.

The qualification 'modest' places Künne's account in the vicinity of those proposals that have become popular in the past two decades, under epithets such as 'deflationary' or 'minimal'. Künne (2005, 564; 2008, 130ff.) is understandably dissatisfied with the confusing multiplicity of senses that these labels have received in the literature; he (2008, 123) indicates that he would have preferred labels such as 'Quantificational Account' to 'modest' for his view. Yet, his proposal is encapsulated by this definition:

(MOD) $\forall x \, (x \text{ is true} \leftrightarrow \exists p \, ((x = \text{the proposition that } p) \wedge p))$

On Künne's proposal, propositions are the primary truth-bearers. This is a widespread view, which was vigorously defended by two of the earliest pioneers of analytic philosophy, Bernard Bolzano and Gottlob Frege, and which is also a component of Horwich's account. (See Bolzano *WL* I, § 24; Frege 1918; Horwich 1998.)

Also, and even though in a more indirect way, like Horwich's account Künne's proposal is "deflationary" or "minimalist" in a sufficiently precise sense (Patterson 2005, 528; Künne 2005, 564f.; 2008, 132ff.). Together with minimal resources, it implies all instances of a *Denominalization* Schema:

(Den)   The proposition that p is true if and only if p

The proposition expressed in the right-hand side of instances of Den is designated in the left-hand side by a "revealing designator" (one such that anybody who understands it is thereby in a position to know which proposition is designated). As Künne (2005, 564f.) points out, though, the fact that an account of truth entails instances of Den is not enough to count it as deflationary, minimal or, indeed, modest. That crucially depends on what resources the account requires for such entailments—which, as Gupta (2002, 228) notes, will not depend only on pure formal validities. In the case of Horwich's theory, they are indeed minimal: the account simply consists of all infinitely many instances of the schema. Künne's own derivation is more indirect, because his MOD is intended as a generalization, which makes a general claim about truth. Because of this, it has the following advantages over Horwich's account, with which Künne

otherwise sympathizes: it is finitely stated; it tells us what all truths have in common; and it is conceptually slim, so that it escapes the "argument from conceptual overloading" advanced by Gupta (2002), according to which, in order to understand the concept of truth, one must possess all other concepts.

For MOD to be the *bona fide* generalization that it purports to be, its glaringly salient existential quantification into sentence-position should be explained, in ways compatible with the goals of the account. The intelligibility of such quantification is suspect; if explained as substitutional in an intelligible way, we run the risk that the interpretation will turn MOD into a viciously circular account.[1] Künne argues that the quantification is objectual, or ontic, not substitutional; to show that it is intelligible, he argues firstly that we do have in natural language the equivalent of variables corresponding to 'p' in MOD, "pro-sentences" (as we have for variables allowing for quantification into predicate position), and he then provides a semantics for it; Künne (2008, 137–152) has the most recent development.

This is a satisfactory procedure in general, but I am not sure that, in its application to our case, it answers qualms such as those voiced by Gómez-Torrente (2005, 373) and David (2005, 187–190). Künne takes expressions such as 'es verhält sich so' in German, or 'things are that way', as pro-sentences;[2] the concern is that, even if they are, it is not clear that we do have genuine quantification over such variables in natural language. Be that as it may, I am not going to press the point in what follows; I am happy to grant that Künne has done enough to allay such qualms. An issue to me much more pressing is whether such intuitions as we may have about these matters settle in any sufficiently determinate way which are the entities "expressed" or "connoted" by sentences that we quantify over in those cases, and the consequences that this may have for the correctness of Künne's proposal as a full account of truth; I will have more to say about this later, following the lead of David (2005, 189f.).

To sum up, (1) is the kind of thing we might say about truth in the vernacular jargon that Künne appeals to; (2) is an instantiation of the schema Den using that jargon, and MOD* a more vernacular presentation of MOD:

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1. Cf., however, Hill (2002), who offers an account of truth very similar to Künne's using substitutional quantification, and argues that no vicious circularity ensues by introducing the notions of the substitutional quantifiers through inferential rules.

2. Hill (2002, 24–27) invokes similar constructions to contend that his own account in terms of substitutional quantification has close counterparts in ordinary thought and talk.

(1)   Anna thinks that it is almost dawn, and things *are* that way
(Den)   The proposition that it is almost dawn is true just in the case that things are that way
(MOD*)   For all x (x is true just in case x is the proposition that things are a certain way, and things *are* that way)

We can thus conclude that, even if we duly grant Künne's concerns about the imprecision of accusations of deflationism or minimalism, the resources MOD invokes to produce the relevant instances of Den (Künne 2008, 133f.) stay sufficiently close to the minimum set by Horwich's account for his theory to count as deflationary, minimal or, indeed, modest.

In what follows, I am going to develop, against Künne's theory, a variation on a worry that Field (1992, 322) expresses with respect to Horwich: "on most conceptions of proposition, the question of what it is for a proposition to be true is of little interest, […] what is of interest are the issues of what it is for an utterance or a mental attitude to be true (or, to express a truth or represent a truth)." The worry, I will argue, is not that Künne's Modest Account—granting its intelligibility—is false, but rather that it is not very interesting. From a theoretically illuminated perspective, we can interpret its main locutions—'proposition', in particular—in a way fully compatible with whatever the intuitions of ordinary speakers using them might settle, so that the proposal almost incontrovertibly (putting aside concerns with the sentential quantification) accounts for a property that the relevant subclass of truth-bearers, thus understood, do have. Nevertheless, we ordinarily apply the truth-concept to other entities (in a more salient way, I will argue), and the Modest Account does nothing to promote a similarly deflationary, minimal or modest account for those cases. On the contrary, we have good reason to suspect that no such account would be forthcoming; we need something more substantive or inflationary.

Field makes this case by contrasting a deflationary account of the truth of propositions understood as classes of possible worlds or as structured Russellian propositions (true, but trivial) with a deflationary account of the truth of utterances, or mental attitudes (interesting, but possibly wrong). In the next section, I will be making a case for a related distinction between *propositions* understood in either of the ways that Field contemplates, and what I will call *illocutionary types*, including (on an interpretation differ-

ent from his own) Field's "utterances and mental attitudes". In the third section, I will suggest that only a subclass of the latter (*sayings*) are the intuitively underwritten primary truth-bearers. In the final section I will provide some examples relevant for a philosophical discussion of truth (vagueness, vacuous and indeterminate singular terms), regarding which taking *sayings* as primary truth-bearers is philosophically fruitful, and then, in conclusion, I will rehearse the Field-inspired worries about the Modest Account I have just mentioned.

2. *Illocutionary types vs. propositions*

Since Frege, it has been customary in contemporary philosophy to distinguish between *locutionary content* and *illocutionary force*. Two sentences might present different contents with the same force, and vice versa. To illustrate the latter possibility I offer (2)-(4), uttered in the suggested appropriate contexts:

(2) (A to B) Return the book tomorrow!
(3) (B to A) I will return the book tomorrow.
(4) Will B return the book tomorrow?

The difference in illocutionary type is indicated in (2)–(4) by means of a conventional device, mood; it might rather be indicated by what many would count as indirect means, for instance, by following an utterance of (3) with 'I promise' after a pause. This distinction is not important for the main point I want to make here, although it is taken into consideration in the first argument I will invoke.

In his discussion of truth-bearers, Künne (2003, 250–251) makes a common move. He states that "we ascribe truth to a motley multitude of entities such as allegations, beliefs, conjectures, contentions, judgments, reports, statements, suppositions, thoughts, and so on". He then notes that our talk of such entities manifests the usual type-token ambiguity; two so-called statements might be different tokens (have different causes and effects, say) of the same type. Then he moves on to identify the former with (speech, or mental) *acts*, *states* or *events*, and the latter with their contents. This move overlooks a third entity, as abstract as the content might be taken to be, but, unlike contents as ordinarily understood, endowed with force-like features.

Pendlebury (1986), Segal (1990/1), and, more recently, Hanks (2007) argue for these entities.[3] Hanks's first argument for them is also the main argument previously provided by Pendlebury: some such entities, for the specific case of forces conventionally indicated in natural language by mood, are required for an adequate account of the semantics of some propositional attitude embeddings. Thus, for instance, as both Hanks (2007, 144–153) and Pendlebury (1986, 362–367) point out, (5) differs in meaning from (6), as (7) does from (8); however, the propositions signified by the embedded clauses might well be the same:[4]

(5) Jones knows that Smith is tall.
(6) Jones knows whether Smith is tall.
(7) Jones told Smith that he will go to the store.
(8) Jones told Smith to go to the store.[5]

Hanks and Pendlebury consider different alternatives to account for the differences, and plausibly conclude that the best option requires acknowledging different "types of representational states or acts", as Hanks describes them, signified by the embedded clauses. Misleadingly, Hanks proposes

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3. See also Moltmann (ms). A friend of the traditional approach might argue, I fear, that the evidence she provides for recognizing "attitudinal objects" (as she calls them) with force-like features, distinct both from speech and mental acts, on the one hand, and their contents, on the other, can be perfectly well accommodated by the traditional dichotomy of acts and content. The problem I think lies in her additional goal of classifying items in this third category as concrete tropes (but still not mental/speech events or acts). I do not think we need such an ontology; in any case, I assume that, for present purposes, whatever you say assuming an ontology of tropes-plus-similarity relations can be said in one of types.

4. Künne (2003, 253) argues, following Frege, that 'whether'-clauses in indirect discourse may introduce the same propositions as corresponding 'that'-clauses, without apparently noticing the differences in meaning between, say, (5) and (6).

5. Although here I am just reproducing Hanks's and Pendlebury's argument, it will be helpful for me to consider a doubt that the editors raise and that other readers might share. It may seem initially a little less natural to assume that a 'to'-clause, as used in (8), signifies a proposition, than to assume that a 'that'-clause signifies one. One reason is that you can prefix a that-clause with 'the proposition' and also apply predicates such as 'is a true/well-known/curious/ important proposition' to a that-clause. The same isn't true for 'to'-clauses: 'the proposition to go to the store' seems illicit, as does 'to go the store is a true proposition'. Now, perhaps this is a grammatical accident due to the fact that, in the relevant constructions, we have lost the mandatory antecedent for the PRO subject of the 'to'-clause. To me, 'the proposition (or, better, in view of the terminology suggested below, 'the directive/command …') for Smith to go to the store' seems legitimate, and so does 'the directive/command for Smith to go to the store was complied with/came to be true'.

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to call them 'propositions', but I will reserve that name for the forceless features of those types, which a compositional semantics needs anyway (for instance, to ascribe them to disjuncts, antecedents and consequents of conditionals,[6] sentences embedded under modal operators, etc).[7] I will call *questions* what is signified by 'whether'-clauses when they are embedded in sentences such as (6), and *directives* what is signified by 'to'-clauses when they are embedded in sentences such as (8). I will use 'sayings' for the equivalent entity corresponding to declaratives, for reasons I will explain in the next section. What is distinctive about them is that they are not individuated just by what is usually called a *proposition*, but also by some force-like component, distinguishing questions, directives and sayings with the same propositional content. On an accurate semantic treatment, only sayings have truth-conditions, not questions and directives; however, all of them have something of which the truth-conditions of sayings are just a particular case, *fulfillment* conditions.[8] I will not be concerned here with ontological issues; whatever one thinks about propositions can also be said about these entities. Thus, for instance, if one has a pseudo-realist but ultimately fictionalist view about them, of the kind favored by Künne after Schiffer (2003),[9] as far as I can tell one might have the same view about illocutionary types.

A second argument by Hanks for illocutionary types that I like concerns the old problem of the unity of the proposition, to which Gaskin (2008) has recently devoted a long book. I am dissatisfied with Gaskin's proposal, as I am with King's (2007), who, like Gaskin, nonetheless has the merit of acknowledging the problem. It will help us to appreciate the issue to examine reasons for dissatisfaction with King's proposal in some detail.

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6. As Ludwig (1997) rightly points out, the consequents of some conditionals (those expressing conditional assertions, conditional command or conditional questions) also have force-like features.

7. It is not clear to me whether Hanks wants to get rid of propositions/contents, but I think this would be a mistake, for the reasons mentioned in the main text, and it is unsupported by his arguments.

8. Ludwig (1997) and Boisvert & Ludwig (2006) provide an initially plausible proposal, which should be refined at least on the basis of considerations about vagueness and vacuous terms outlined below, in section 4. This is an account in the Wittgensteinian tradition canonically stated in Stenius (1967)—no matter how much their proponents purport to distance themselves from it—which, in addition to its precise articulation, has the merit of applying to conditional directives, questions (which perhaps at first sight do not seem amenable to a treatment in terms of fulfillment conditions) and so on.

9. A view with which, under a different guise, I myself also sympathize, cf. García-Carpintero (2010a).

Both King and Gaskin criticize Frege's and Russell's accounts of the unity of the proposition. The Tractarian *Picture Theory*, that the expressions signifying structured facts/states of affairs are themselves facts/states of affairs, inspires King's account. The main idea is that the unity of the proposition—the glue putting together object and property in a simple atomic proposition such as that expressed by 'Rebecca swims'—is ultimately the syntactic relation syntactically linking (at the proper syntactic level, call it *Logical Form*) 'Rebecca' and 'swims': "that proposition is the fact of there being a context c and there being lexical items a and b in some language L such that a has as its semantic value in c Rebecca and occurs at the left terminal node of the sentential relation R that in L encodes the instantiation function and b occurs at R's right terminal node and has as its semantic value in c the property of swimming" (King 2007, 51).

Now, let us focus on this notion that the relevant syntactic relation R between the lexical items *encodes* the instantiation function. In his initial presentation, King leaves this aspect out of the account, but he then feels compelled to include it, as a result of reflection on "the semantic significance of syntax" (34). The problem is that the very same concatenation relation between 'Rebecca' and 'swims' under R *might signify different things in different languages*. It could signify that the semantic value of 'Rebecca' *does not* instantiate the semantic value of 'swims'; or it could even signify *the sheer concatenation* of the semantic value of 'Rebecca', the instantiation function, and the semantic value of 'swims' (i.e., a list without propositional unity). It is in order to amend the account to deal with this difficulty that King introduces in the characterization of the properly unified proposition the additional feature that the syntactic relation between the lexical items *encodes* the instantiation function.

Now, as he notes, this encoding relation "is … different from the sorts of semantic relations that obtain between words and things like Rebecca and the property of swimming" (King, *op. cit.*, 37); for that is the relation between the syntactic concatenation relation and the instantiation function which obtains in the imagined language in which the sentence is no sentence but a mere list, and its meaning lacks propositional unity. So, what does this difference consist in? What distinguishes this semantic relation between syntax and signified proposition that King calls 'encoding', from the relation between 'Rebecca' and 'swims' and their semantic values? Here is King's proposal: "In effect, we can think of this bit of syntax as giving the instruction to map an object o and a property P to true (at a world) iff

o instantiates *P* (at that world). This instruction has two crucial features. First, it involves a specific function *f*: the function that maps an object and a property to true (at a world) iff the object *instantiates* the property (at the world). Call this function *f the instantiation function*. Second, the instruction tells us that *f is to be applied* to the semantic values of the expressions at the left and right terminal nodes (and a world) to determine the truth value of the sentence (at a world)" (34).

Now the worry should be manifest: this instruction that the syntactic relation encodes is, precisely, the instruction to take the constituents as being in whatever relation it is that characterizes *propositional unity*, whatever relation it is that makes constituents into propositions which *say* something, *represent* a state of affairs, *have* a truth condition. For, as Gaskin (2008, 352) puts it, "what distinguishes a declarative sentence from a mere list of words is that a sentence has the capacity to say something *true* or *false*, whereas a list does not". King's account helps itself without further ado to our understanding of this, which is precisely what we wanted to understand in the first place. King appeals for his account to a very small circle he surprisingly claims to be virtuous.[10]

The failure of these serious and thorough efforts may suggest that it is folly to look for an account of propositional unity: better to take it as a primitive fact to be regarded with Wordsworthian natural piety. Or, rather, as Lewis (1983, 352) puts it in a related context (he is discussing the related "Third Man"-like regresses): "Not every *account* is an *analysis!* A system that takes certain Moorean facts as primitive, as unanalyzed, cannot be accused of failing to make a place for them. It neither shirks the compulsory question nor answers it by denial. It does give an account." However, although I think this is in the end what we will have to accept, non-reductive accounts might be more or less illuminating, depending on how wide they cast their nets. Illocutionary types such as sayings, questions and directives also include ancillary types to which they help themselves, including *referring* and, even more basically, *predicating*—predicating in particular, at the most basic level, feature-placing contents of a contextually given *circumstance* or situation. I suggest that, by casting its net wide in this way, an account that helps itself to illocutionary types in addition to their contents will help us to understand better what the unity of the proposition comes to.

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10. Cf. King's (2007, 50) discussion of the circle. García-Carpintero (forthcoming-a) discusses Gaskin's more complex proposal.

I will conclude this section with a third consideration of my own in favor of illocutionary types, which I will also have to leave here at a rather impressionistic level. Hornsby (2001) and Williamson (2009) provide an account of derogatory words such as 'Boche' by taking the specifically derogatory aspects to be a conventional implicature, rather than a contribution to the specifically asserted content. It is doubtful, however, that an ordinary proposition can adequately capture what, on such views, is conventionally implicated in these cases; intuitively, to capture its properly derogatory nature, something with force-like features—in Alston's (2000) category of *expressives*—is required. Similarly, ancillary speech acts include not just *referring* and *predicating*, but also *presupposing*. On the well-known Stalnakerian (2002) picture, presuppositions are explained in terms of attitudes concerning a "common ground", defined also in terms of attitudes of belief and acceptance about propositions. There are cases—pejoratives might be one, in an alternative account of derogatory words defended by Macià (2002)—which would require taking presuppositions to have force-like features.

Thus, in summary, we have good reason to acknowledge illocutionary types—types of representational states—in addition to the concrete acts, states or events that instantiate them and to the traditional propositions which are their contents: we need them at least to account for the semantics of some embedded clauses, to provide an illuminating account of the unity of the proposition, and to account for the nature of some conventional implicatures and presuppositions.[11] In the next section I will show that some illocutionary types, and not propositions, are intuitively primary truth-bearers; I will then illustrate in the final section what acknowledging illocutionary types can do for us in the theory of truth, by considering some relevant examples (vagueness, vacuous and indeterminate singular terms).

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11. As the editors pointed out to me, there is a more general, less controversial consideration to conclude that there are illocutionary acts, in addition to individual acts. We may have, in general, no problems with talking about types and tokens of things, and with finding many differently individuated types for groups of individual things. Since there is no reason why individual acts should not be grouped according to their illocutionary forces and other speech-act properties, there should be no reason for denying that there are illocutionary types. This consideration gives us a general reason to accept illocutionary types, to the extent that we assume an "abundant" ontology of types (to help myself to the famous distinction by Lewis between two conceptions of properties). The three reasons mentioned in the main text would then provide reasons for acknowledging illocutionary types even in a more sparse ontology of types and properties, as sufficiently "natural"—explanatorily significant—types.

3. *Truth-aptness and what is said*

Truth-aptness poses a well-known problem for forms of deflationism that take linguistic items, sentences-in-context or utterances to be the primary truth-bearers (such as Field's, which adopts this view consistently with his criticism of propositional deflationism mentioned in the first section). Sentences in the imperative or interrogative mood, and utterances thereof, are intuitively not truth-apt; can an adequate notion of truth-aptness be captured on deflationary assumptions about truth? (See Bar-On & Simmons 2006, 625–628 for a discussion.)

Künne (2003, 265, fn) acknowledges that we do not count utterances of a non-declarative sentence ('Did Frege die in 1925?') as true or false even when it "does express a proposition". Deflationists might appeal to what Bar-On & Simmons (2006, 625) call "syntacticism", "according to which a sentence is truth-apt if it displays the appropriate syntax"; something like this is what Künne (p.c.) appears to resort to: "why is it inappropriate to comment in this way [i.e., with 'That's true'] on an utterance of a *non-declarative sentence*? It seems to me that this inappropriateness is (just) a matter of grammar. Roughly, 'That's true' as a comment on an utterance of sentence S is just a laconic version of 'It is true that' followed by S, and this requires that S be a declarative sentence. I say 'roughly' because when you say to me, 'You are F', my 'That's true' comes to the same thing as (my) 'It is true that *I* am F'".

I think that syntacticism is inadequate: as Bar-On & Simmons point out, uttering a sentence in the declarative mood is neither sufficient nor necessary for truth-aptness. It is not sufficient, because we do not find it intuitively plausible to make the comment (seriously, of course), for instance, on a sentence ('Fred has flat feet') written on the board in the course of a logic class so as to illustrate the kind of thing that 'Fa' formalizes, manifestly without the assertoric and ancillary referential intentions usually associated with such sentences (so that, as we may put it, there is no Fred): the student's question, 'who are you talking about? Who is Fred?' would receive the appropriate scolding answer. Künne (p.c.) mentioned as an example of a non-assertoric sentence we would without hesitation classify as true or false the famous first sentence of *Anna Karenina*, "Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way"; but that is a notorious case of a sentence which, while being part of a fiction, can be taken to (also) make a claim: I doubt that we have the same intuitions, say, about

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utterances constituting that same fiction which include the name 'Anna Karenina'.[12]

Or consider an utterance of (3) above, followed by 'I promise'; I do not think we would find it appropriate to respond 'That's true', or even 'That was true' the day afterwards, when the promise has been complied with, even though (3) is still, of course, in the declarative mood in such a case. The proposal is also inadequate because declarative grammar is not necessary for truth-aptness either. Bar-On & Simmons mention as counterexamples sentence-fragments, such as 'no' or 'expensive car that'. Consider also an utterance of 'Are we not at war with Islam?', manifestly intended as an indirect assertion;[13] we could easily react to that with 'That is not true, we are not in any sort of war with Islam'.

So far we have discussed how the problem of truth-aptness afflicts linguistic varieties of deflationism. Künne's reason to qualify as "rough" his syntacticist proposal mentioned above brings up an interesting related problem for propositional varieties. The need for the qualification, intuitively, derives from the same basic facts about our practice of ascribing truth and falsity already suggested by the previous counterexamples to the sufficiency and necessity for truth-aptness of the use of a declarative sentence. As Künne puts it in a text I already quoted, we ascribe truth to entities such as allegations, beliefs, conjectures, contentions, judgements, reports, statements, suppositions, thoughts and so on. If we kept the same indexical type used by the person expressing the relevant truth-bearer, while using it in a different context, we would run the risk of not properly individuating the allegation, contention, statement, or whatever we are ascribing truth to. Now, Künne is right that it is not the particular acts or events that we intuitively ascribe truth to: "When we ascribe truth (or falsity) to beliefs and statements we do not ascribe it to believing or statings,

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12. We may well have the intuition that some other sentences in *Anna Karenina* that are less clearly assertoric than Künne's example (for instance, sentences about the pursuits of the character called 'Napoleon', as one of the editors pointed out to me) are true or false; but for my anti-syntacticist point it is enough that some of them, despite their declarative form, are intuitively not truth-apt. Note, by the way, that here I am just pointing out facts about our intuitions; there are theories of fictional discourse according to which those utterances count as straightforwardly true or false, and, of course, much more—serious theoretical work—is required to reject those views (as one ultimately should, I think, but that is a different issue).

13. Once more, I note that I am just describing intuitions—there are theories of assertion, such as Alston's (2000), cf. fn. 16 below, and many others—that are incompatible with the existence of indirect assertions, because they have as a condition on asserting p that the assertion is made with a sentence that literally conveys the proposition p. Here too, I take this to be a reason to reject them, but that is not the point at stake here.

but rather to *what is believed* and *what is stated*" (*op. cit.*, 250); an act of making an allegation, or contending something, is intuitively not true or false. However, is it a *proposition* what we are counting as such? Given the way Künne proposes to introduce propositions and to individuate them, I take it that these identities are, according to him, all true when they concern the assertion that B made with (3), and the question asked by (4):[14]

(9)   What B asserted = that B would return the book the day after.
(10) What (4) asks = whether B would return the book the day after.

As I already mentioned, Künne (2003, 253) thinks that the same proposition can be introduced both by a that- and a whether-clause: "a yes/no interrogative expresses the same proposition as the corresponding declarative sentence. So propositions can also be specified by whether-clauses, the *oratio oblique* counterparts of such interrogatives. Thus in '*What A asked (herself or B) was whether p*', both clauses single out a proposition". Thus, it appears that the right-hand side of these identities might well refer to the same entity. Now, if the assertion (in the object-sense, not the act-sense) mentioned in the left-hand side of (9) is true, on the basis of Leibniz's Law we seem to be forced to conclude that the question is also true. In fact, even though Künne does not discuss promises, it seems that we can make the same point about the promise B might have made instead by adding 'I promise' to (3), having to conclude also that that promise is true:

(11)   What B promised = that B would return the book the day after

To put it in a nutshell: if truth-bearers are things such as claims and contentions, and these are just propositions, then, assuming that speech-acts in any non-assertive category might represent the same propositions, it seems difficult to understand why we do not intuitively count them also as true or false. This is significant, because Künne's claims about the most fundamental truth-bearers are not intended as revisionary, but, on the contrary, based on straightforward intuitions. This is the problem of truth-aptness for the propositional version of deflationism: explain, using only modest resources, why some representational acts representing propositions that are allegedly identical to truth-bearers such as allegations,

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14. Künne thinks that propositions should be individuated in a fine-grained Fregean way. I will come back to this below; for the moment, I am putting aside issues of individuation; I take it that this does not affect what I say in the main text.

contentions and so on, are not truth-apt. On the proposal sketched in the previous section, this is not a problem; for it is not propositions that on that view are intuitively taken to be truth-bearers, it is rather propositions *qua* alleged, contended, claimed, asserted, stated, believed, and so on and so forth; i.e., entities individuated not just in terms of a traditional proposition, but also in terms of force-like features.[15]

Is there something in common to those forces we take to be truth-evaluable? Several writers, including Salmon (1991) and Bach (1994), usefully distinguish two senses for the ordinary notion of *saying*. In one sense, saying is a speech act, or rather a genus of which speech acts such as assertions, predictions, claims, contentions, allegations, and so on are species—roughly, the one corresponding to Alston's (2000) category of *assertives*; in the other, saying is something like *conveying conventionally encoded contents*, i.e., propositions. Putting aside thorny hermeneutical issues, in Austin's terminology saying in the first sense is a (generic) illocutionary act; saying in the second sense is a locutionary act. Is there a feature characterizing saying (in the illocutionary sense, the one we are interested in here)? I guess it should be the word-to-world *direction of fit* distinctive of assertives—difficult as it has proved to be to define it in a clear-cut way. In the next section I will put the distinction to work, elaborating on the worry with Künne's modest account I presented in the first section.

In this section I have pointed out that we intuitively only count illocutionary acts of certain types, having a particular force, as true and false, and also that this is not just a point of grammar. This at the very least

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15. For a minimalist who tries to deal this problem, cf. Alston (2007, 23–26). Alston crucially appeals to his own account of assertion; although I like its normative features, I consider it misguided. Alston wants to identify assertions as commitments to the truth of the asserted propositions. The obvious problem with this is that other speech acts involve commitments to the truth of represented propositions; for instance, presupposing that *p* also involves commitment to the truth of *p*. To deal with this, Alston adds to his account of assertion the condition that in assertion the asserted proposition is *explicitly* presented. I think this is a mistake. In the first place, the proposal is manifestly *ad hoc*. Why would it be possible to perform any other speech act but an assertion in an indirect way? In addition, it is manifestly counterintuitive; in asking 'Where the heck are you going?', I am asserting that (to put it mildly) you should not go anywhere. Aside from depending on an account of assertion subject to these objections, Alston's proposal about the present issue is unsatisfactory. His proposal is that we feel like applying truth and falsity to assertions, but not to promises, requests, etc., because the propositions whose truth the agents of these acts commit themselves to "are hidden from public view. It takes analytical theorizing to dig them out" (*op. cit.*, 26), while in the case of assertions "it stares one in the face" (*ibid.*). It should be clear that this does not work; in many cases it is just those propositions whose truth the speaker making a promise or a request commits himself to that "stare one in the face".

shows that it is not enough for a philosophical account of *truth* to work well for propositions; it should be shown in addition how the account is to be extended so as to capture the intuitively most salient notion of *truth*, while still respecting the account's fundamental theoretical assumptions. Note, however, that for all I have said the following is still a viable position:

(i)   Theoretically if not intuitively, propositions are the primary truth-bearers.

(ii) Whether an illocutionary act (or type of such as acts) is truth-apt, depends on its force: only acts with the right direction of fit are truth-apt.

(iii) Now if an illocutionary act is truth-apt, its truth/falsity is inherited from the primary truth-bearer expressed by it, i.e. from a proposition.

In the following section we will examine this priority question: what are the *primary* truth-bearers? If Fs are primary truth-bearers, and Gs are non-primary or derivative truth-bearers, then true Gs are true *because* they are related in an appropriate way to Fs (e.g., they *signify* them). When it comes to illocutionary types and propositions, the outlined position would make such a claim: the assertion that p is true because (i) it has the right direction of fit and (ii) it expresses the true proposition that p.

4. *Illocutionary truth and the point of assertion*

In previous work, I have invoked the distinction between sayings as illocutionary types and the propositions they represent in order to provide replies to several objections to the supervaluationist account of vagueness. I will summarize the main points here, for they provide a useful background to restate later the main objection I am raising here for Künne's Modest Account. To fix the terminology, I will use 'express' for the relation between linguistic items and illocutionary types, including sayings, and 'signify' for the relation between both linguistic items and illocutionary types and the propositions encoding their fulfillment conditions.

   (i) *Williamson's argument for bivalence.* Wright (2004, 88) expresses as follows a well-known worry with the supervaluationist rejection of bivalence: "The wide reception of supervaluational semantics for vague discourse is no doubt owing to its promise to conserve classical logic in

territory that looks inhospitable to it. The downside, of course, rightly emphasized by Williamson and others, is the implicit surrender of the T-scheme. In my own view, that is already too high a cost". The argument by Williamson (1994)—further developed in Andjelkovic & Williamson (2000)—that Wright alludes to here appeals to the following schemas:

(T) If an utterance *u* says that *P*, then *u* is true iff *P*
(F) If an utterance *u* says that *P*, then *u* is false iff not *P*
(B) If an utterance *u* says that *P*, then either *u* is true or *u* is false

The conditionalized truth-schema (T) differs from the standard disquotational one. Andjelkovic & Williamson (2000, 216) argue that "[a formalized variant of] (T) is more basic than the disquotational biconditional; it explains both the successes and the failures of the latter." Three kinds of cases are mentioned in support. Firstly, context dependence ('we are Europeans') constitutes a problem for the traditional version, but not for (T). Secondly, the liar paradox "merely falsifies the antecedent" (216). Finally, "[t]he principle [of Bivalence] should not imply that non-declarative sentences are true or false, for presumably they are not intended to say that something is the case. For the same reason, the principle does not imply that a declarative sentence is true or false if it does not say that something is the case" (217f.). Williamson (1994, 187–198) has similar considerations.

Truth-bearers are here assumed to be linguistic items. Here is Williamson's (1994) reason for it: "Bivalence is often formulated with respect to the object of the saying, a proposition (statement, …). The principle then reads: every proposition is either true or false. However, on this reading it does not bear very directly on problems of vagueness. A philosopher might endorse bivalence for propositions, while treating vagueness as the failure of an utterance to express a unique proposition. On this view, a vague utterance in a borderline case expresses some true propositions and some false ones (a form of supervaluationism might result). […] The problem of vagueness is a problem about the classification of utterances. To debate a form of bivalence in which the truth-bearers are propositions is to miss the point of the controversy" (Williamson 1994, 187). I would subscribe to all these points, very much related to Field's objection against propositional deflationism mentioned in the first section that I am developing here against Künne's Modest Account; I myself would take *utterances* not as linguistic items (as Williamson proposes and as Field had in mind), but

as the types of illocutionary contents in the generic category of assertives I am calling sayings. This requires us to distinguish, as I am suggesting we should do, between the sense in which linguistic items "say" (*expressing* sayings), and the sense in which they, and saying themselves, "say" or signify Russellian propositions.[16]

Williamson's (1994) argument for bivalence goes roughly as follows. Take any utterance that allegedly invalidates bivalence, like one of 'TW is thin', assuming TW to be a borderline case of thinness. Now, from the relevant instance of excluded middle, which the supervaluationist accepts, plus (T) and (F), we get (B), the relevant instance of the principle of bivalence. Thus, the supervaluationist must reject (T) or (F), or both. Williamson then challenges him to provide an acceptable motivation for that rejection: "The rationale for (T) and (F) is simple. Given that an utterance says that TW is thin, what it takes for it to be true is just for TW to be thin, and what it takes for it to be false is for TW not to be thin. No more and no less is required. To put the condition for truth and falsity any higher or lower would be to misconceive the nature of truth and falsity" (1994, 190). Williamson's main point thus depends on intuitions about what utterances (or sentences in context) *say*, and the effect of this on their truth-conditions.

It is this challenge—as developed in Andjelkovic & Williamson (2000)—that García-Carpintero (2007) confronts. In the original application of the supervaluationist techniques to empty names by van Fraassen (1966), the main goal was to account for an intuitively correct distribution of truth-values for utterances (13)-(15), made under the reference-fixing stipulation (12). While (13) is neither true nor false, (14) and (15) are true:

(12) Let us give the name 'Vulcan' to the only planet causing perturbations in Mercury's orbit.

(13) Vulcan is bigger than Mars.

(14) Either Vulcan is bigger than Mars or Vulcan is not bigger than Mars.

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16. Williamson (1999, first section) in fact suggests in his reply to Schiffer (1999, first section) that nothing important for his argument hangs on whether we take as truth-bearers linguistic items or rather *contents*—including I think the *sayings* I am positing here. If we take this option, the debate would then be about whether contents satisfy bivalence. If so, the argument I will sum up below purports to establish that, in the relevant cases, the expressed sayings do not allow a (determinate) truth-evaluation; for they collectively signify a plurality of precise propositions, which only individually satisfy bivalence.

(15) Vulcan causes perturbations in Mercury's orbit, if it exists.

The following example presented by Sorensen (2000, 180) provides a second illustration of the use of the techniques. The stipulation (16) is made by explorers before traveling up the river Enigma; after they finally reach the first pair of river branches, they name one branch 'Sumo' and the other 'Wilt'. Sumo is shorter but more voluminous than Wilt, which make them borderline cases of 'tributary'. A supervaluationist diagnostic allows us then to count (17) as neither true nor false, while still counting (18) as true:

(16) Let us give the name 'Acme' to the first tributary of the river Enigma.
(17) Acme is Sumo.
(18) Either Acme is Sumo or Acme is Wilt.

Now, imagine the previous platitudinous quote from Williamson ("Given that an utterance says that TW is thin, what it takes for it to be true is just for TW to be thin, and what it takes for it to be false is for TW not to be thin. No more and no less is required") uttered with either (13) or (17) replacing 'TW is thin'. In the paper I mentioned before, I invoke the distinction between *expressing sayings* and *signifying propositions* in order to elaborate claims along the following lines about these cases. The first is one about their effect on intuitions: far from sounding platitudinous, now they just appear puzzling. The second claim is that a theoretical account of the cases along the previously sketched lines explains the puzzlement. Firstly, there are sayings that utterances (13)–(15), (17)–(18) express; on my proposal, moreover, these sayings are truth-evaluable, in fact those expressed by (14), (15) and (18) are true. But, secondly, on account of failure of reference the saying that (13) expresses only signifies a truncated or "gappy" proposition, while on account of underdetermination of reference the one that (17) expresses signifies a plurality of propositions with a distribution of truth-values that does not allow for a definite evaluation.

   On the view outlined, the puzzlement we feel when considering these versions of Williamson's challenge is due to the fact that while, on the one hand, in its most natural sense the definiteness implicit in phrases such as 'what it takes for u to be true' is not adequately satisfied—due to the truncated character of the candidate in one case, and the existence

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of two candidates producing opposite evaluations in the other—on the other hand we feel that something specific is indeed "said", and thus the antecedents are satisfied. These are theoretical matters, difficult to pinpoint without substantial theoretical mediation; hence the puzzlement. García-Carpintero (2007) develops these and related points about the arguments elaborated in Andjelkovic & Williamson (2000).

(ii) *Schiffer on reports of vague contents.* Schiffer (1998, 196ff.; 2000, 246ff.) advances an argument against supervaluationist accounts of vagueness, based on reports of vague contents. Suppose that Al tells Bob 'Ben was there', pointing to a certain place, and later Bob reports, 'Al said that Ben was there', pointing in the same direction. According to supervaluationist semantics, Schiffer contends, both Al's and Bob's utterances of 'there' indeterminately refer to myriad precise regions of space; Al's utterance is true just in the case that Ben was in either of these precisely bounded regions of space, and Bob's is true just in the case that Al said of each of them that it is where Ben was. However, while the supervaluationist truth-conditions for Al's utterance might be satisfied, those for Bob's cannot; for Al didn't say, of *either* of those precisely delimited regions of space, that it is where Ben was. From a perspective more congenial to supervaluationism than Schiffer's, McGee & McLaughlin (2000, 139–147) pose a related problem about *de re* ascriptions of propositional attitudes and indirect discourse. The same difficulty is gestured at in this argument: "there are additional concerns about the ability of supervaluational proposals to track our intuitions concerning the extension of 'true' among statements involving vague vocabulary: 'No one can knowledgeably identify a precise boundary between those who are tall and those who are not' is plausibly a true claim which is not true under *any* admissible way of making 'tall' precise" (Wright 2004, 88).

In reply, I (2010b) invoke the following theoretical model: "propositional attitude verbs … express relations between agents and *interpreted logical forms* (ILFs). ILFs are annotated constituency graphs or phrase-markers whose nodes pair terminal and nonterminal symbols with a semantic value" (Larson & Ludlow 1993, 305). Larson & Ludlow's semantic values are classical semantic values: objects for terms, sets for predicates, truth-values for sentences. On an alternative version (Pietroski, 1996), symbols are paired with Fregean senses in ILFs (which, in their turn, determine semantic values). Now, ILFs, under either of those proposals, are the sort of entity that can be vague, in the sense that they admit different precisifications, and admit thereby a supervaluationist treatment. Vague ILFs can

be neither true nor false as a result of the fact that (ignoring higher-order vagueness) at least some terminal node (say, the one corresponding to 'Ben' in Schiffer's example) is paired, not with an appropriate semantic value, but with a class of them (its admissible precisifications). On Pietroski's version, this might obtain if the mode of presentation with which the symbol is paired does not determine a unique semantic value, but a class of admissible ones.

Schiffer's objection focuses on *de re* ascriptions, which pose specific problems on which I cannot elaborate here. But, to put it impressionistically, the fundamental assumption elaborated on the basis of the ILF model, as further applied to the case of *de re* ascriptions, goes as follows: Supervaluationism agrees in accepting, besides the precise Russellian propositions indeterminately signified in vague sentences, some "vague entities": i.e., vague sayings, with contents modeled along the ILF accounts. Far from being incompatible with the philosophical account of vagueness that supports the use of supervaluationist techniques, this is taken to be a crucial aspect of it. What matters is that truth and falsity are ultimately determined relative to the class of precisifications.[17]

There are other applications of the distinction between *sayings* and *propositions* relevant for the theory of truth, but the ones I have just summarized should do for present purposes.[18] The arguments in the two preceding sections support the distinction between sayings and propositions, both of which can be evaluated for truth, and the intuitive saliency of the truth of sayings; and the considerations we have briefly reviewed so far in this section show that we cannot mechanically move from the truth of propositions to the truth of sayings. Firstly, a saying might (indeterminately, we are discounting higher-order vagueness here) signify a plurality of propositions, and supervaluationist techniques might be required for its intuitively correct truth-evaluation; secondly, a term in the expression of the saying might fail of reference, which once again might call for

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17. Keefe (2008)—a nice presentation of the main ideas defining supervaluationism—emphasizes the centrality of quantification over precisifications to the account, and its compatibility with "vague entities" of some such representational sort.

18. García-Carpintero (2008) invokes the distinction to reject the truth-relativist argument in Richard (2004), predicated on the vagueness-inducing features of gradable adjectives such as 'rich' or 'tall'; García-Carpintero (forthcoming-b) invokes it to reply to the similar truth-relativist argument in MacFarlane (2003) based on the possibility of the Open Future; García-Carpintero & Pérez-Otero (2009) appeal to the distinction to dispose of anti-conventionalist arguments by Boghossian and others, arguing in fact that, while those arguments appeal to facts concerning the truth of *propositions*, conventionalist claims concern the truth of *sayings*.

supervaluationist techniques. How does this affect our appraisal of Künne's theory?

As I mentioned above, in discussing worries about the quantification into sentence position in MOD in the first section, even if we grant that we do understand this quantification along the lines that Künne proposes, it is still an open question what sort of entity we are committed to in speaking of "ways for things to be". If we just stay at the level of what intuitions underwrite, it is perfectly possible that it is just what I have been calling propositions—the Russellian propositions of contemporary theorists such as Kaplan, Salmon and Soames, which Künne (2003, 261) prefers to classify as *states of affairs*; and this intuitive diagnosis will be more substantively supported by the theoretical considerations I have merely touched on here.

Now, when it comes to the truth of Russellian propositions (or the obtaining of states of affairs, if this is how we prefer to classify them following Künne), I think we should concur with Field (1992, 323): "Russell viewed atomic propositions as complexes consisting of an n-place relation and n objects, in some definite order. But an account of truth for such propositions is obvious: Such a proposition is true iff the objects taken in that order stand in the relation. It can hardly be a matter of philosophical controversy whether this definition of truth is correct, given the notion of proposition in question, so what is there for the minimalist and the full-blooded correspondence theorist to disagree about?" I do not want to sound stingy in my praise here; certainly, even when we consider the truth of propositions of this sort, philosophically it is not the same whether we adopt Horwich's form of minimalism, say, or Künne's; and putting aside the qualms I expressed above, I think Künne has done us an important philosophical service, allowing us to understand his proposal better, and giving us good reasons for it.[19] But, as Field says, this is not the debate confronting minimalists with the defenders of more substantive conceptions of truth—such as some form of the correspondence view, which Künne (2003, 112–174) dismisses.

At this point, a reader of Künne might point out that, structurally, there is not that much difference between what I am proposing and the views he actually advocates. For it is not Russellian propositions that, he argues, his account applies to, but entities individuated by Fregean require-

19. The same applies to Hill (2002), for the alternative account in terms of substitutional quantification.

ments of cognitive significance. And, in fact, he (2003, 351ff.) ends up suggesting a way of rejecting bivalence for propositions thus understood, taking into consideration cases of reference-failure. Moreover, he (2003, 258–263) provides a role for Russellian propositions (states of affairs, in his ontology) as *objects*, not contents of intentional acts. So, where I posit sayings, he has Fregean propositions, which might equally be neither true nor false, and where I have Russellian propositions signified by sayings, he posits states of affairs as intentional objects.

I am doubtful about Künne's two moves. In the first place, to make truth-value gaps compatible with the Modest Account, he needs two negations, "choice" and "exclusion" or "internal" and "external", and I am rather doubtful that such ambiguity exists, or, if we just stipulate it, that it might properly account for gaps. Secondly, it makes sense to me to count as "intentional objects" the actual world that is supposed to provide truth-makers for our sayings, or parts thereof ("situations"); but the Russellian propositions I think we need, signified by illocutionary types, need not of course be fulfilled. Thus, I still think that, while Künne might have provided an acceptably modest account of truth for the contents of "sentence-radicals" (and their mental counterparts)—in Stenius's (1967) Wittgensteinian terminology—we should not thereby remain convinced that any deflationary account for the truth of the intuitively most salient truth-bearers is forthcoming.

Indeed, once we make the sort of distinction I have been advocating, it seems that some form of the correspondence theory emerges as a genuine option for the truth of sayings. As I mentioned above, on a more general account the truth-conditions of sayings are a particular case of the fulfillment-conditions of intentional acts. In the case of those for mental states such as intentions and speech acts such as directives, there are good reasons for positing a dependence relation between the truth of the signified Russellian proposition (or the obtaining of the state of affairs) and the intentional act itself, for the latter to count as properly fulfilled (Ludwig 1997, 38f.). Similarly, in the case of the truth of sayings, it might well be that the (indeterminate, given higher-order vagueness) specification of the plurality of Russellian propositions signified by vague sayings, or of the conditions giving rise to gappiness, would amount to a dependence relation in the opposite direction between the intentional state and the truth-making Russellian propositions;[20] so that, at the end

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20. I think that these opposed dependence relations are what the asymmetry in "direction

of the day, a correspondence account might be vindicated for the truth of sayings.[21]

The kind of correspondence theory I am thinking of is a truth-maker view, but for the limited purposes of this paper it is enough to think of it in the abstract terms suggested by Hill (2002, 145, fn 2). Hill provides a way of capturing the correspondence intuition compatible with his favored substitutional-quantification deflationary account; but he acknowledges that we might intuitively operate with, in fact, two notions of truth, a more robust one that we are deploying when we question that normative claims, or claims with vacuous or vague terms, are either true or false. On the view I have in mind, such an account is required for the intuitively most salient truth-bearers, sayings. How does this leave the priority issue raised at the end of last section? There would not be any suggestion on the view outlined, of course, that the obtaining/truth of state of affairs/Russellian proposition depends in any way on the truth of sayings signifying them; on the contrary, the obtaining/truth of the state of affairs/Russellian propositions signified by sayings provides part of the explanation for their truth. Thus, the fundamentality in the outlined sense of the notion of truth that Künne's proposal might well account for is compatible with the view I have suggested. But that does not suffice to vindicate modest accounts of truth, for there is a notion of truth which plays a fundamental role in our thinking about these matters and does not appear to be explainable merely on modest terms. This, I take it, was the worry that Field was raising.

I have just drawn the barest suggestions, in need of careful philosophical elaboration if they are to stand challenges such as the ones that Künne himself levels against correspondence accounts; but I think they are enough for the present purposes, which were just to substantiate the main charge I am raising against Künne's theory. To sum it up: the notion of proposition is highly theoretical; depending on our choice, propositional truth might well be definable with modest recourses. This leaves unaccounted

of fit" between sayings on the one hand, and directives, questions, promises and so on, on the other, ultimately comes to.

21. A dual account of the envisaged kind (minimalist for the truth of propositions, correspondentist for that of intentional states) is advanced as pinpointing the use of supervaluationist techniques in McGee & McLaughlin (1995); they, however, favor giving prominence to disquotational truth, invoking supervaluationism to account for the determination operator, unlike what I am suggesting here. This is what García-Carpintero (forthcoming-b) suggests for the Open Future, but only because in that case there is a unique signified truth-making fact (true Russellian proposition, or obtaining state of affairs).

for something that requires explanation, as Dummett (1959/1978) insisted a long time ago. A deflationary definition effects a division in the class of propositions, separating the true ones from others. Now, there are other propositional acts, in addition to assertions and judgments; promises and requests have contents, which are the contents of possible assertions and judgments. The deflationary definition also effects a division in the class of promises and requests, exactly as it does in the class of assertions. However, while we call the ones in the second division 'true', we do not do so with the ones in the first; we say that a promise in that group is "complied with", or something of the sort. This suggests at least that, when it comes to characterizing the correctness conditions of propositional acts, something more is required than establishing whether or not "the" intended proposition (if there is just one) is (modestly) true; and the point applies to promises and requests, to assertions and judgments. As Dummett puts it, the deflationary characterization fails to countenance the *point* (the purpose, or normative force) of propositional acts. I have concluded suggesting that a proper characterization of truth as expressing the/a normative point of sayings should end up invoking the "correspondence" intuitions that, for instance, Wright (1999/2003) voices.

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