

2 *Why Truthmakers*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Consider a certain red rose. The proposition that the rose is red is true because the rose is red. One might say as well that the proposition that the rose is red is made true by the rose's being red. This, it has been thought, does not commit one to a *truthmaker* of the proposition that the rose is red. For there is no entity that makes the proposition true. What makes it true is how the rose is, and how the rose is is not an entity over and above the rose.

Although expressed in other terms, this view has been held by various authors, like David Lewis (1992, 2001a) and Julian Dodd (2002). It is against this view that I shall argue in this paper. I shall argue that a significant class of true propositions, including inessential predications like the proposition that the rose is red, are made true by entities.

No truthmaking without truthmakers is my slogan. Although I have my view about what kinds of entities are truthmakers, I shall not argue for or presuppose that view here.¹ All I shall argue for here is that if a proposition is made true by something, it is made true by some *thing*, but my argument will leave it open what kind of thing that thing is: it could be a fact or state of affairs, a trope, or any other sort of entity.²

I shall presuppose that truthbearers are propositions. The arguments for taking propositions as truthbearers are well known, as well as their strengths and weaknesses. But I am not begging any question by adopting this presupposition, since it is a presupposition that seems to be shared by the opposition.

2. THE TRUTHMAKER PRINCIPLE

A truthmaker is an entity that makes true a proposition. That is, a truthmaker is an entity in virtue of which a certain proposition is true. By the

¹ Succinctly, my view is that truthmakers of propositions like that *a* is *F* are facts (or states of affairs), whose all and only constituents are resembling particulars. See my 2002: 53–4, 85–7, 113–21. (Note that there I took sentences rather than propositions to be truthbearers).

² I am using the words 'entity' and 'thing' interchangeably. I shall use them so throughout the paper.

truthmaker principle I shall understand the claim that necessarily the members of an important class of synthetic true propositions, including inessential predications, have truthmakers.³ So what I shall argue for is the truthmaker principle (TM):

(TM) Necessarily, if $\langle p \rangle$ is true, then there is some entity in virtue of which it is true.⁴

Since my thesis is not that all truths, but that a class of synthetic true propositions including inessential predications have truthmakers, in (TM) ' $\langle p \rangle$ ' should be considered to stand for such truths, not for any truth whatsoever. But for the sake of simplicity and ease of exposition I shall usually speak of propositions in general—the reader should understand that I am referring to this class of synthetic propositions that includes inessential predications.

In virtue of is a primitive notion, not reducible to notions like entailment. Yet that it is primitive does not mean that it is unclear. One can clarify what it means by specifying which propositions are true in virtue of which entities.⁵ And although *in virtue of* is not reducible to entailment, there are connections between the two notions. In particular, if $\langle p \rangle$ is true in virtue of entity e , then $\langle e \text{ exists} \rangle$ entails $\langle p \rangle$. If so e necessitates $\langle p \rangle$ in the sense that there is no possible world where e exists but in which $\langle p \rangle$ is not true. Thus, according to (TM), necessarily, if a proposition is true, there is some entity that necessitates it.

But before arguing for (TM), I shall consider two other principles that have been thought to capture the idea that truths have truthmakers. Problems with finding truthmakers for negative existentials led John Bigelow (1988a: 133) to replace (TM) by the following supervenience principle:

(ST) Necessarily if $\langle p \rangle$ is true, then either at least one entity exists which would not exist, were $\langle p \rangle$ false, or at least one entity does not exist which would exist, were $\langle p \rangle$ false.⁶

Assuming possible worlds, (ST) can be expressed as follows:

(ST*) For every possible world w , w^* , and every proposition $\langle p \rangle$, if w and w^* contain exactly the same entities, then $\langle p \rangle$ is true in w if and only if $\langle p \rangle$ is true in w^* .

³ Remarking that I take inessential predications to have truthmakers is important because some foes of truthmakers like Dodd (2002: 72) accept that essential predications and existential propositions have entities as truthmakers.

⁴ I follow the usual custom of letting ' $\langle p \rangle$ ' stand for 'the proposition that p '.

⁵ I explained the notion of truthmakers in that way in my (2002: 35–40).

⁶ This is not exactly the way Bigelow formulates his principle, but the differences are irrelevant.

(ST) and (ST*) are supervenience principles for they make truth supervene upon being. In particular they make truth supervene upon what entities exist: once you fix what entities exist in a certain world, you have thereby fixed what propositions are true in that world.

Although less controversial than (TM), (ST) and (ST*) also have met resistance. Dodd (2002) argues that (ST) lacks motivation and that there is no good reason to believe in it. And Lewis (2001a) also has proposed to abandon (ST).

I do not propose to abandon (ST) and (ST*). Nevertheless I do reject the idea, presupposed by both proponents and opponents of (ST) and (ST*), that these principles capture the idea that truths have truthmakers. For implicit in the idea of truthmakers there is an important asymmetry, namely that while entities make propositions true, true propositions do not make entities exist.

But the supervenience between truth and being goes both ways: truth and being supervene upon each other. Thus, in the case of (ST*), the following also holds: there are no two possible worlds in which exactly the same propositions are true but which differ as to the entities that exist in them: once you fix what propositions are true in a certain world, you have thereby fixed what entities exist in that world.

Similarly for (ST): necessarily if a certain entity *e* exists, then there is some true proposition, namely that *e* exists, that would be false were *e* not to exist (and some false proposition, namely that *e* does not exist, that would be true were *e* not to exist).

Thus principles (ST) and (ST*) do not capture the idea that truths have truthmakers. There is more to truthmaking than the idea that truth supervenes upon being. So (ST) and (ST*) are not what the friends of truthmakers should propose or defend.

But although truthmaking is more than the supervenience of truth upon being, the supervenience principles follow from (TM). If there can't be a truth without a truthmaker, then there can't be two worlds with the same entities but in which different propositions are true. Thus (ST*) follows from (TM). Similarly, if there can't be a truth without a truthmaker, if a proposition is true there must be an entity that would not have existed if the proposition in question had been false. Thus (ST) follows from (TM).

3. DODD AGAINST THE TRUTHMAKER PRINCIPLE

As I said, Dodd argues that (ST) lacks sound motivation. But even if (ST) does not capture the idea that truths have truthmakers, I have to meet Dodd's challenge. For if (ST) is wrong, then so is (TM), which entails it.

Dodd challenges (ST) with a simple counter-example. Imagine a world w_1 in which a certain rose is red. In that world the proposition that the rose is red is true. Now imagine a possible world w_2 , where exactly the same entities as in w_1 exist, but in which the rose in question is white. In w_2 the proposition that the rose is red is false. These worlds, if possible, are a counter-example to (ST), for they are ontologically equivalent—exactly the same entities, other than propositions, exist in them—but the proposition that the rose is red is true in w_1 and false in w_2 .

Dodd's counter-example is not based on a nominalistic stance. One may be a full realist about properties and so believe in the existence of properties over and above particular things like roses. If so, the proposition that the rose is red is true just in case the rose instantiates the property of *being red*, or the universal *redness*. One may even believe in the relation of *instantiation* as an entity over and above the particulars and the properties they instantiate. But, Dodd argues, it does not follow from the fact that the rose instantiates the property of being red that there is a further entity, over and above the rose, the property of *being red*, and the relation of *instantiation*, namely the *fact* or *state of affairs* that the rose is red.

So even if the properties of *being red* and *being white*, and the relation of *instantiation* exist both in w_1 and w_2 , these two worlds constitute a counter-example to (ST). For they contain the same entities but different propositions are true in them. So what the worlds show is that truth does not supervene upon what entities exist or, what is the same, that truth does not supervene upon *whether* things are. And so (TM) must go, for (TM) makes truth depend on, and supervene upon, what entities exist.

Yet the counter-example is consistent with a weaker supervenience of truth upon being: the supervenience of truth upon *how* things are. For there is no possible world w_n in which things are as they are in w_1 but which differs from w_1 as to what is true in it. In effect, although Dodd rejects that truth supervenes upon whether things are, he accepts that truth supervenes upon how things are. A similar conclusion is reached by Lewis (1992: 204–6; 2001a: 612–14).

4. TRUTH IS GROUNDED

This shows that (TM) is in need of justification. How can we justify it? One way would be to derive it from a plausible and compelling idea. And this is what I shall do.

For the root of the idea of truthmakers is the very plausible and compelling idea that the truth of a proposition is a function of, or is determined by, reality. Thus suppose that the proposition that the rose is red, which makes reference to a particular rose, is true. Then the truth of this

proposition is a function of reality in the sense that the truth of the proposition is determined by reality or a portion of it. Indeed, it is a relevant portion of reality, namely the rose, or perhaps that the rose is red, that determines the truth of the proposition.

Thus the insight behind the idea of truthmakers is that truth is grounded. In other words, truth is not primitive. If a certain proposition is true, then it owes its truth to something else: its truth is not a primitive, brute, ultimate fact. The truth of a proposition thus depends on what reality, and in particular its subject matter, is like. What reality is like is anterior to the truth of the proposition, it gives rise to the truth of the proposition and thereby accounts for it.⁷

Thus the idea that truth is determined by reality sounds grand, but in itself it is a very minimal idea: it is simply the idea that the truth of a truthbearer is determined by its subject matter, or some feature of it, no matter what the nature of the subject matter may be.

That truth is determined by reality is a compelling idea, especially when one notes that it does not commit to any kind of substantive realism. For idealists can accept that truth is determined by reality—they will simply add that this reality is not mind-independent or language-independent.

There is an asymmetry implicit in the idea that truth is grounded, namely that while the truth of a proposition is grounded in reality, reality is not grounded in the truth of propositions. Thus although the truth of the proposition that the rose is red is determined by the rose's being red, the rose's being red is not determined by the truth of the proposition that the rose is red. One explains the truth of the proposition that the rose is red in terms of the rose's being red but not vice versa.

The idea that truth is grounded in reality can be expressed in many different ways. One can say, as I have now been doing it, that the truth of a proposition is *determined* by reality. But one can also say that a proposition is true *in virtue of* reality, or *in virtue of* what reality is like, or *because of* reality. For instance, the proposition that the rose is red is true *in virtue of* what reality is like, namely that the rose is red or the rose's being red, and it is true *because* the rose is red. I take all these locutions to express the idea that the truth of the proposition that the rose is red is grounded, but from now on I shall use mainly the formulation in terms of 'because'.

⁷ This is not true of all propositions. The truth of the proposition that bachelors are not married does not depend on what reality is like—whatever reality is like, bachelors are not married. In general analytic propositions are not grounded in reality. And there may be some non-analytic truths that are not grounded in reality. Nevertheless a vast number of synthetic truths, like the truth that the rose is red, are grounded in reality. But since, as I have said, my aim here is not to defend the idea that all truths have truthmakers, but only that a significant class of them, including inessential predications, have, that some truths are not grounded will not affect my thesis.

5. AGAINST THE PRIMITIVENESS OF TRUTH

The idea that truth is grounded is so compelling that has seemed acceptable to philosophers like W. V. Quine, Paul Horwich, and Crispin Wright, who cannot be suspected of trying to advance the cause of truthmakers.⁸

The plausibility of truth's being grounded in reality is better appreciated when one compares it with the alternatives. For suppose truth was primitive. If so, the following are different possibilities: (a) the truth of the proposition that the rose is red and the rose's being red have nothing to do with each other, and (b) the rose is red because the proposition that the rose is red is true.

(a) is not good. Surely, the rose's being red and the truth of the proposition that the rose is red are connected in some way. The proposition that the rose is red is about the colour of the rose, and so if it is true, it must have to do with the rose's being red.

But (b) is not better than (a). The idea that the colour of the rose depends on the truth of a certain proposition about the rose, duly generalized, commits us to a radical semantic idealism in which reality depends on truth. Propositions, on this account, would be reality-makers and to make the rose red one should just try to make the proposition that the rose is red true. There is no support for either (a) or (b), and there is a lot of evidence against them.

There is a third alternative that consists in the idea that truth is grounded in reality and vice versa. There are a few cases in which the truth of a proposition depends on its subject matter *and* vice versa. One such case is the proposition ⟨this proposition is true⟩. If true, it is true because of what its subject matter is like, i.e. because ⟨this proposition is true⟩ is true. But if its subject matter is true, it is what it is like, namely true, because the proposition ⟨this proposition is true⟩ is true.

But putting this and similar cases aside, in the vast majority of cases the truth of a proposition determines in no way its subject matter. All truths about our rose and all flowers, as well as all truths about non-truthbearers are like that: their truth depends on what their subject matter is like without their subject matter depending in any way on whether they are true or not.⁹

⁸ Quine (1970: 10), Horwich (1998: 105), and Wright (1992: 26) accept that 'snow is white', or the proposition that snow is white, is true because snow is white and try to explain this in terms of their respective theories of truth.

⁹ The case of ⟨this proposition is true⟩ shows that strictly speaking grounding is a non-symmetrical relation rather than an asymmetrical one. But since I am not interested in cases like these I shall continue to speak as if grounding were asymmetrical.

6. WHY TRUTHMAKERS, I

Yet it seems that the idea that truth is grounded in and determined by reality is insufficient to ground (TM). For while what (TM) requires is that truth is determined by whether things are, that truth is grounded in and determined by reality is compatible with truth's being grounded in *how* things are, not in *whether* things are. Thus, it seems, Dodd's counter-example undermines the controversial (TM) but leaves untouched the uncontroversial idea that truth is a function of reality. But I shall argue that the idea that truth is grounded commits us to the idea that truths are made true by entities.

So, can one really maintain that truth is determined by reality without maintaining that there are truthmakers? In other words, can one really maintain that the proposition that the rose is red is made true by how things are but not by whether things are?

Suppose the proposition that the rose is red is made true by how the rose is. But the rose is not only red: it is also light, soft, fragrant, long, thin, etc. This is how the rose is. But if being how it is is what makes the proposition that the rose is red true, being how it is, is also what makes the proposition that the rose is light true, the proposition that the rose is fragrant true, and so on.

But this is wrong. For what makes true that the rose is red is not what makes true that the rose is light. What makes true that the rose is red is that it is *red*, while what makes true that the rose is light is that it is *light*. The idea that truth is determined by reality is the idea that different truths are determined by different portions of reality, or by different features of reality, and so different truths about the same subject matter are determined by different features of the subject matter in question.

So the rose is many ways. One way the rose is, is to be red; another way the rose is, is to be light, and so on. Once we have distinguished different ways the rose is, we can say that the proposition that the rose is red is true in virtue of the rose's being a certain way, namely being red, while the proposition that the rose is light is true in virtue of the rose's being a different way, namely being light. If so, what makes true a certain predication of the rose is a certain way the rose is.

But to distinguish ways presupposes that we can identify them, count them, and quantify over them. But if one can identify, count, and quantify over ways, then ways exist. That is, ways, which are truthmakers, are entities. So we are back to (TM), which claims that true propositions are made true by *entities*, and which entails that truth supervenes upon *whether* things are.¹⁰

¹⁰ This argument may remind one of an argument for possible worlds once advanced by Lewis. Lewis argued *roughly* like this: it is uncontroversially true that things could have been different in many ways; ordinary language permits the existentially quantified paraphrase: there are many

But perhaps one can account for what makes the proposition that the rose is red true without reifying ways? It might be thought that one could say that the proposition that the rose is red is true because the rose instantiates the property of being red, while the proposition that the rose is light is true because the rose instantiates the property of being light. And one could insist that this does not mean that there is an entity over and above the rose, the properties of *being red* and of *being light*, and the *instantiation* relation. If so, the rose can be said to be many different ways because it instantiates many different properties, but ways are not a kind of entity, and there are no entities that make any propositions true.

But this only helps if for the rose to instantiate the property of *being red* is not for it to instantiate the property of *being light*. And this should not mean that there is an entity, the-rose-instantiating-*being-red*, distinct from another entity, the-rose-instantiating-*being-light*. For that means reifying how things are. And reifying how things are is admitting truthmakers.

But if it does not mean that, what does it mean? It might simply mean that the rose could have been red without being light and vice versa. If so, how the rose is could have made true that the rose is red without making true that the rose is light, and vice versa. But this is irrelevant, for the problem is not to account for the fact that what makes true the propositions that the rose is red and that the rose is light could have made true either but not both of them. The problem is to account for the fact that the propositions that the rose is red and that the rose is light are, in the actual world, made true by different features of reality without reifying those features.

Some might suggest that, since there are possible worlds in which the proposition that the rose is red is true and the proposition that the rose is light is false and vice versa, the rose's being red consists simply in that the actual world is one of the worlds where the rose is red, and the rose's being light consists simply in that the actual world is one of the worlds where the

ways things could have been besides the way they actually are; permissible paraphrases of truths are true; therefore, there are many ways things could have been, i.e. there are many possible worlds (Lewis 1973: 84). But my argument is not like this. Firstly, I do not appeal to permissible paraphrases. Secondly, argue for the claim that the rose is many ways: for unless the rose is many different ways we get the result that what makes true that the rose is red is the same as what makes true that the rose is light, which is wrong.

One might think that although strictly different from Lewis's argument, mine fails for the same reasons as his. For, it will be said, what besets Lewis's argument is that it does not follow from the fact that things could have been different ways that there are possible worlds. But what does not follow is that there are possible worlds *understood à la Lewis*, i.e. sums of concrete entities. It does follow, however, that there are ways things could have been. These ways could be uninstantiated abstract properties, sets of propositions, etc. In each case these ways are entities. And all I need for my argument to go through is that the ways the rose is, which make propositions about the rose true, are entities. This follows from the fact that the rose is many ways. Thus my argument does not fail in the way Lewis's does. But what kind of entities (facts, tropes, etc.) ways are is something I shall not discuss here.

rose is light. If so, that truths are made true by how things are means, in the case of the rose, that both the proposition that the rose is red and the proposition that the rose is light are made true by how the world is, since it is both one of the worlds where the rose is red and one of the worlds where the rose is light. This amounts to saying that the truth about the rose, and the truth about everything, is determined by how the *world* is. But this is not satisfactory, for it does not account for the idea that truth is determined by subject matter since according to it all truths, whatever their subject matter, are determined by how the world is.

It may be said that this position still makes room for the idea that truth is determined by subject matter. For the truth of the proposition that the rose is red is determined by how the world is, namely by the world's being one of the worlds where the rose is red, and this in turn is determined by how the rose is. But how the rose is also determines that the world is one where the rose is light, the rose is fragrant, etc. Thus this does not avoid the false idea that the propositions that the rose is red, that the rose is light, that the rose is fragrant, etc., are all true in virtue of the same, namely how the rose is.

7. WHY TRUTHMAKERS, II

Thus I cannot see how one could maintain that the propositions that the rose is red and that the rose is light are true in virtue of different features of reality without reifying those features and thereby introducing truthmakers. But perhaps some are willing to insist that all inessential predications about the rose are made true by, or merely supervene upon, how the rose is. Still, a commitment to truthmakers is unavoidable, provided one accepts that truth is grounded in reality, as the following argument shows:

- (1) Truth is grounded.
- (2) Grounding is a relation.
- (3) Relations link entities.
- (4) Therefore, truth is grounded in entities.

I have stated the argument in a slogan-like fashion to facilitate discussion of the key premises. But a brief gloss will suffice to make clear exactly how the argument must be taken. The import of the second premise is that to be grounded is to be a *relatum* (of the grounding relation). Since the import of the first premise is that every true proposition is grounded, it follows that for every true proposition to be grounded is for it to be a *relatum* of the relation of grounding. The import of the third premise is that all *relata* of a given relation are entities. It follows that the grounding relation links some entities to true propositions. The entities linked by the grounding relation to true

propositions are their grounds.¹¹ Therefore true propositions are grounded in entities, i.e. truth is grounded in entities.

The argument is valid and I have already argued for the first premise of the argument. And as I have said, even people like Quine and Horwich are prepared to accept the first premise. This is surely because they believe they can accept it without accepting truthmakers. But given this argument, any one who wants to maintain premise (1) while denying the conclusion (4), will have to find fault with either premise (2), or premise (3), or both.

Premise (3) is undeniable. It says about relations what the following claim says about properties: properties are had or instantiated by entities. Even Platonists, who believe properties can exist uninstantiated, will agree that if a property is instantiated, it is instantiated by an entity. Surely if a relation is instantiated, if it links anything to anything, then there are some things that it links, and so it links entities. This point is generally recognized. Mellor (1995: 156), for instance, says that for ‘*Obd*’ to be a relational statement, *b* and *d* must exist, ‘since nothing relates anything to nothing’.

This leaves premise (2), which I take to be the favourite target of the foes of truthmakers. But I shall now argue that premise (2) is also true.

As we saw, the proposition that the rose is red is true because the rose is red, but it is not the case that the rose is red because the proposition that the rose is red is true. In general, $\langle p \rangle$ is true because *p* but it is not the case that *p* because $\langle p \rangle$ is true. Thus if grounding is a relation then it is an asymmetrical relation. This asymmetrical relation, which we report when we say that the proposition that the rose is red is true because the rose is red, holds between a true proposition and a thing in the world, e.g. the fact that the rose is red, in virtue of which the proposition is true. The relation in question, which holds between certain entities in the world and propositions, is no other than that of *making true*, or that of *being true in virtue of*.

If grounding is a relation, then truth is a relational property of propositions.¹² Relational properties are those that are had in virtue of an entity’s bearing a certain relation to some thing or things. Thus Diego Maradona has the relational property of *being famous* in virtue of a relation that links him to the millions who have heard of him. Likewise, truth is a relational property that is had by a proposition in virtue of bearing a certain relation to a certain entity, its truthmaker. This does not mean that being a relation is part of the

¹¹ Nothing in the slogan-like argument corresponds to this claim. This is because the claim that what the grounding relation links to true propositions are their grounds is controversial only to the extent that the claims that grounding is a relation and that relations link entities are controversial. Once these claims, which I shall discuss and defend below, have been granted the claim that what the grounding relation links to true propositions are their grounds is obvious.

¹² This is why the truthmaker principle is often associated with the correspondence theory of truth. For the correspondence theory of truth makes truth a relational property based on the relation of correspondence between a truthbearer and a worldly item—normally a fact.

meaning of the truth predicate. All it means is that it applies in virtue of a relation obtaining between that to which it applies and something else.

But if grounding is not a relation—what is it? That is, how can the truth of the proposition that the rose is red be grounded in the rose's being red if grounding is not a relation? What is it, then, for the proposition that the rose is red to be true because the rose is red?

One thing it could be said is that for the truth of the proposition that the rose is red to be grounded in the rose's being red is for that proposition to be true if and only if the rose is red. But this is wrong, for it does not respect the asymmetry of grounding. Indeed, if all it takes for the proposition that the rose is red to be grounded in the rose's being red is that it is true if and only if the rose is red, then we should conclude that the rose's being red is no less grounded in the truth of the proposition than the truth of the proposition is grounded in the rose's being red.

Another thing it could be said is that for the truth of a proposition to be grounded is for the truth of the proposition to be deducible from, and therefore explainable by, premises including the truth condition of the proposition. For instance, from a premise stating that the rose is red, by using the T-biconditionals, we deduce, and thereby explain, that the proposition that the rose is red is true. This is the line taken by Paul Horwich (1998: 105).

But this is wrong. For deducibility does not amount to explanation. Indeed, using the T-biconditionals we can also deduce from a premise stating that the proposition that the rose is red is true that the rose is red. But neither is the rose's being red grounded in the proposition's being true, nor do we explain that the rose is red in terms of the truth of the proposition that the rose is red.

It might be suggested that the rose's being red explains the truth of the proposition that the rose is red because certain counterfactuals hold: if the rose had not been red then the proposition that the rose is red would not have been true.

But this is wrong. First, that the relevant counterfactuals hold is simply that they are true. And so this approach attempts to explain truth by truth, which is not very illuminating. Second, that if the proposition that the rose is red had not been true then the rose would not have been red is no less true than that if the rose had not been red the proposition that the rose is red would not have been true. So that the rose's being red explains that the proposition that the rose is red is true cannot be a mere matter of certain counterfactuals holding. For the relevant counterfactuals hold in both directions.

But perhaps saying that the proposition that the rose is red is true because the rose is red simply means that we explain the truth of the proposition in terms of the rose's being red rather than the other way round? According to

this, the proposition that the rose is red is true because the rose is red *because* we explain the former in terms of the latter. But this is wrong. We explain the truth of the proposition that the rose is red in terms of the rose's being red *because* the proposition that the rose is red is true because the rose is red. Explanation is not and does not account for grounding—on the contrary, grounding is what makes possible and 'grounds' explanation.

Not only that. As David-Hillel Ruben says, what makes explanation possible is the presence of certain determinative relations between entities (Ruben 1990: 210). He puts it like this: 'explanations work only because things make things happen or make things have some feature' (Ruben 1990: 232). So invoking explanation of the truth of the proposition that the rose is red will not save us from postulating a relation (namely grounding) between some entity and the proposition.

But, one might say, all there is behind the fact that the proposition that the rose is red is true because the rose is red is a move of semantic descent. Consider, for instance, the view that the truth predicate is simply a disquotational device. Here the function of the truth predicate is not to ascribe a property to something but simply to cancel linguistic reference so that reference to objects like the rose is restored. So to say that 'The rose is red' is true is simply to say that the rose is red.

In the same pages where he was putting forward the disquotational view, Quine admitted that truth is grounded: 'No sentence is true but reality makes it so' (Quine 1970: 10). Can Quine account for the groundedness of truth without making grounding a relation? It might be thought he can: all it takes for 'The rose is red' to be true because the rose is red is that given that the rose is red we can legitimately apply the disquotational device to 'The rose is red'.

Quine's view is meant to apply to sentences rather than propositions, which I assumed as truthbearers at the beginning of this paper. But something like it could be modelled for propositions. One could simply say that the function of the truth predicate is to cancel propositional reference in order to restore reference to non-propositional objects or entities. So to say that the proposition that the rose is red is true is simply to say that the rose is red. The truth predicate thus functions as a mere device of semantic descent. And, it might be thought, the proponent of this view will say that all it takes for the proposition that the rose is red to be true because the rose is red is that given that the rose is red we can legitimately apply the device of semantic descent to the proposition that the rose is red.

Maybe that is the point of the truth predicate. The predicate is useful because it allows us to indirectly speak about the world even in cases when, due to certain technicalities, we must perform semantic ascent. Paraphrasing Quine (1970: 12), by calling the proposition true, we call the rose red. Perhaps that is what we do and what we need the truth predicate for.

But that this view accounts for the idea that the proposition that the rose is red is true because the rose is red is illusory. This view gets the order of explanation wrong: that the proposition that the rose is red is true because the rose is red accounts for the fact that given that the rose is red we can legitimately apply the device of semantic descent to the proposition that the rose is red—not the other way around.

But, it might be said, the importance of semantic descent lies in that it allows us to speak about what we really want to talk about: the world of roses, snow, and cats. As Quine said, the truth predicate ‘serves as a reminder that though [propositions] are mentioned, reality is still the whole point’ (1970: 11).¹³ This is surely true, but one should avoid trying to explain that the proposition that the rose is red is true because the rose is red in terms of our interests in roses rather than propositions. That we are interested in roses rather than propositions about them does not explain why propositions about roses are grounded in roses. The more likely thing is that the fact that the rose’s being red grounds the truth of the proposition that the rose is red plays some part, even if a modest one, in an explanation of why we are more interested in roses than in propositions about them.

One might try to reject the idea that grounding is a relation from the identity theory of truth, according to which true propositions *are* facts. One could argue thus: (a) what grounds the true proposition that the rose is red is the fact that the rose is red; (b) the true proposition that the rose is red = the fact that the rose is red; (c) if a relation, grounding is an irreflexive relation (at least in the case of propositions about non-truthbearers like roses); therefore, (d) grounding is not a relation (at least in the case of propositions about non-truthbearers like roses).¹⁴

The problem with this argument lies in the conjunction of (a) and (b), which leads to the abandonment of premise (1) of my argument, i.e. to the abandonment of the idea that truth is grounded. For (a) and (b) entail that the proposition that the rose is red is true because it is fact that the rose is red, and that it is a fact that the rose is red because the proposition that the rose is red is true. This, as we saw in §5, is absurd and represents an abandonment of the idea that truth is grounded.

It might be replied that this *sounds* absurd because one is implicitly presupposing that the proposition and the fact that the rose is red are not the

¹³ The bracketed word ‘propositions’ replaces Quine’s word ‘sentences’.

¹⁴ I am not claiming that the identity theory of truth is committed *per se* to claims (a) and (c) in the argument. An identity theorist could maintain that grounding is a reflexive relation, or that truth is not grounded, or that truth is not grounded in facts (e.g. that truths about the rose are grounded in tropes of the rose, or in how the rose is. The latter is very close to Dodd’s view that truths about the rose supervene upon how the rose is, and Dodd is an identity theorist of truth (see his 2000)). The only premise of this argument the identity theory is committed *per se* is (b). All I am doing here is devising an argument against the idea that grounding is a relation that is based on the identity theory of truth.

same entity. But, the objector will say, given that the fact and the proposition are one and the same, there is no absurdity in claiming that the proposition that the rose is red is true because it is a fact that the rose is red, and that it is a fact that the rose is red because the proposition that the rose is red is true. For given the identity between proposition and fact one is not thereby claiming of two entities that they are *mutually* grounded. So, the objector will continue, all (a) and (b) entail is that a true proposition is grounded *in itself*.

But this *is* abandoning the idea that truth is grounded, for it amounts to taking truth as primitive. The proposition that the rose is red is true because it is a fact that the rose is red, but given the identity theory of truth this amounts to saying that it is true because it is true. That it is true is then a primitive fact about the proposition that the rose is red. Saying that the proposition that the rose is red is grounded in itself, and saying that it is not grounded, are one and the same thing.

We can see more clearly the errors that an identity theorist incurs in conjoining (a) and (b). There are two versions of the identity theory, a modest one and a robust one (Dodd 1999c: 227). A robust identity theory takes facts to be entities from the realm of reference whose totality makes up the world. If the world is the totality of facts, they must have things, and perhaps also properties, as their constituents. But if so, given the identity between proposition and fact, what makes the rose red is that the proposition that the rose is red is true, which is absurd.¹⁵

A modest identity theory takes facts to be entities in the Fregean realm of sense. We do not encounter facts in the world of roses, atoms, houses, and people—facts are not made up of these things. On this version of the identity theory to say that the true proposition that the rose is red is grounded in the fact that the rose is red, i.e. to say that the proposition is grounded in itself means to deny that the proposition is grounded in anything about the rose. The modest identity theory, when coupled with the idea that true propositions are grounded in facts, leads to the view that the truth of the proposition about the rose is independent from the rose's being red. This is also clearly wrong.

Thus it is difficult to see what grounding could be if not a relation. But it is easy to see that it is a relation. For consider again the proposition that the rose is red. If the truth predicate applies to it, then it applies in virtue of, or is grounded in, something. Either it is grounded in an intrinsic feature of the

¹⁵ This absurdity is a manifestation of a more basic absurdity of robust identity theories, namely their identification of facts, understood as having things (and perhaps properties) as constituents, and propositions, understood as thinkables, which are entities of different ontological categories. This absurdity is also at the root of the difficulties robust identity theories find in accounting for falsehood. Dodd (1999c: 227) sees a robust identity theory in Hornsby (1997), but Hornsby (1999: 242) rejects the charge.

proposition, or it is grounded in something else. If it is grounded in an intrinsic feature of the proposition then we lose the connection between truth and the world and we are left with some version of primitive truth—something I have already rejected. So it is grounded in something else. So the proposition and that something else that grounds it are related—if they were not related, how could one be true in virtue of the other? And the way in which they are related is that one grounds the other. Therefore grounding is a relation.

8. CONCLUSION

As I have said, analytic truths and some other truths, are not grounded. But the idea that most synthetic truths, including inessential predications about things like roses, cats, planets, and molecules, are grounded is a very plausible idea that most philosophers want to retain. But there is no escape from truthmakers once the groundedness of truth has been admitted. It is not possible to maintain that truth is grounded in how things are without maintaining that truth is grounded in whether things are. Thus (TM) and the idea that truths have truthmakers have been vindicated.

The idea that truths have truthmakers has important and problematic ontological consequences. Not only does one have to admit an extra entity, over and above the rose, to account for what makes true that the rose is red—one also has to find a truthmaker, for instance, for negative existential truths, like the truth that there are no penguins in the Northern Pole. What that truthmaker is, I don't claim to know. All I claim is that there must be one.¹⁶

¹⁶ Versions of this paper were read at a conference in the University of Manchester in 2002, a seminar in Universidad Torcuato Di Tella, a seminar in Oxford, and a colloquium at Bariloche, Argentina. I thank those audiences. I thank the Leverhulme Trust, whose generous Philip Leverhulme Prize made possible to complete this paper. Finally, I also thank the Philosophy Department at CUNY, where I started writing this paper in 2001, and Universidad Torcuato Di Tella, where I finished it in 2002.

